CRITICAL STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETY

Edited by Jin Cao   Vincent Mosco   Leslie Regan Shade

曹晋　文森特·莫斯可　莱斯莉·里根·谢德　主编

传播与社会的批判研究

英文读本

This collection brings together leading scholars working on the cutting edge of critical inquiry in North America, Europe and China to address the defining issues of power, inequality and resistance that are reshaping the relations between communications and economic and social life across the globe in the digital age. In a series of provocative essays on the shifting dynamics of class, labour, gender, social media, and social movements, they offer a wealth of cogent argument and empirical evidence that lays bare the ideological fragility and human costs of market fundamentalism and summons us to renew the struggle for greater social justice, equality and mutuality. Anyone interested in understanding the contemporary world and even more, in changing it, needs to read this book and engage with its arguments.

—— Professor Graham Murdock, a world-renowned scholar and one of the key founders of scholarly research in the political economy of communication, is currently Professor of Culture and Economy at Loughborough University in the UK.

　　自"社会研究所"在 1920 年代的德国建立以来，"批判研究"随着时代演进，从欧陆移转至美利坚，在传播领域于 1941 年确立了"批判"与"行政"两类研究的视野，战后 1960 年代的社会动荡，更使传播与社会的批判研究随之扩散，持续扩张与更新也自我检视及反省。晚近，资本主义的危机从美欧金融核爆以来，波连世界各国，迄今不歇，探索人类前程的各色知识著述再次勃兴，传播与媒体领域并不例外。近日得知《传播与社会的批判研究》英文读本（Critical Studies in Communication and Society）即将出版，读其搜录的论述，无不具有普遍意义，涵盖范畴与近年的类书，如 Handbook of Political Economy of Communications（2011）或 The Handbook of Global Media and Communication Policy（2011），可说各有专擅。"Critical"则似乎可以说是在"社会阶级（含劳工）与社会性别、新媒体"等传统面向，以及相对新兴，对于更新体制有其特定意义的"社会运动"，提出了别具特色的选读论文，从而通过其选择，向读者传达了重点。大陆的传播研究有其历史脉络与传承，从早年的文史哲视野，大约在 1990 年代逐渐扩张到了俗称的行为研究与行政典范，本世纪以来，似乎批判研究也在适应时代索求的背景，逐渐进入了学人视野。该读本的出版，对于本地新闻与传播乃至于社会研究，无疑具有重要的意义，反映了学人在耕耘经年之后，已经更有能力也更见信心，从选辑与出版相关英语文献于中土，揭示了后出转精的契机业已孕育。

—— 冯建三　台湾政治大学新闻系教授、英国李斯特大学传播学博士
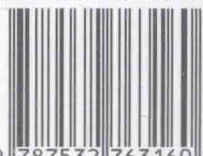
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▓ 目　录

导　论[①]

曹晋（复旦大学新闻学院教授、哈佛燕京学者）
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　　沃勒斯坦（Immanuel Wallerstein）在其《开放的社会科学》论著里阐述过传播学是跨学科的产物（1997 年中文版第 50 页）。[②] 在西方学术界，传播研究（communication studies）的范畴包括大众传播、新闻学和媒介研究（Van Zoonen，中文版 2007 年）。[③] 传播学作为一门学科，毫无疑问，是一种"情境化的知识"（situated knowledge），经过了政治、经济与意识形态的权力规训（Jansen，2002：27 - 29），[④]"传播——甚至是当代传播形式本身，都不能脱离对历史的理解，孤立地就传播而研究传播"（Jansen，2002：27 - 28），[⑤]也如玛丽·曼德尔（Mary Mander）的主张——"传播的核心，无论如何界定，事实就是——传播是被中介的。由于所有传播都是经过中介的，因此，传播的本质必然和历史脉络相关联"（同上）。此一批判传播的研究趋向迥异于二战之后的美国主流传播研究体现的行政导向型（administrative orientation）和市场导向型（marketing orientation）的实证研究（Gitlin，1978），[⑥]后者的终极目标是发展有效的社会行政控制和商业消费影响力，说服策略与说服效果始终为"商业文化的合法性"服务，毫无疑问，这种研究把现有的社会权力结构和媒介制度预设为合理的前提，并以此为基础来研究传播过程与效果。美国实证主义传播研究的定位使传播研究易受历史缺失和文化短视的影响。

　　欧洲的传播研究既有公共广播制度的蓬勃成长背景（Blumler，1985），[⑦]也因其植根于丰厚的人文社会科学知识沃土，表现出整体取向的研究路径（holistic approach），其不仅关注传播机构与过程，重视传播技术发展的社会性，还细察资本主义制度下传播、国家权力与资本的关系，即传播与整个社会的权力运作、政治经济结构、意识形态、历史文化的深层意涵等支配力量的关联。其中，秉持马克思主义批判精髓的法兰克福学派集中力量抨击流行的、单一的、复制的文化产业摧折了精英文化。另有威廉斯（Raymond Williams）、霍加特（Richard Hoggart）、汤普森（Edward . P. Thompson）和霍尔（Stuart Hall）等学者为代表的英国文化研究（其源头是文学研究），吮吸了法兰克福学派、法国结构主义与文化霸权

① 本文的综述性内容吸收了笔者和周宪所著"西方传播研究的点滴勾沉"（《新闻大学》，2006 年第 2 期，第 40—46 页）和《批判的传播理论：权力、媒介、社会性别与科技》（复旦大学出版社 2007 年版，曹晋主译）译著的"译者序"，以及"'情境化的知识'困境：本土传播学研究图貌"（此文选入邓正来《上海学术报告》，上海人民出版社 2011 年版，第 146—151 页）的部分片断，特此说明。
② 沃勒斯坦等著，李锋译（1997），《开放的社会科学》，北京：三联书店。
③ Van Zoonen，L. (1994)，*Feminist media studies*，London：Sage Publications. 中文版由曹晋、曹茂译（2007），《女性主义媒介研究》，南宁：广西师范大学出版社。
④ Jansen，S. C. (2002)，*Critical Communication Theory: Power，Media，Gender，and Technology*，Lanham：Rowman & Littlefield. 中文版由曹晋主译（2007），《批判的传播理论：权力、媒介、社会性别与科技》，上海：复旦大学出版社。
⑤ Van Zoonen，L. (1994)，*Feminist media studies*，London：Sage Publications. 中文版由曹晋、曹茂译（2007），《女性主义媒介研究》，南宁：广西师范大学出版社。
⑥ Gitlin，T. (1978) "Media Sociology：the dominant paradigm." *Theory and Society*，Vol. 6. No. 2. pp. 205 - 253.
⑦ Blumler，J. G. (1985)，"European-American Differences in Communication Research"，in Rogers，E. M. and Balle，F. (Eds.)，*The Media Revolution in America and Western Europe*，Norwood，NJ：Ablex. pp. 185 - 199.

(culture hegemony)理论,以及英国的激进思想,强调知识的主体构成与社会构成,批判意识形态支配与政治权力控制,把文化视为一种普遍的、日常生活的产物而被广泛生产、分配与消费,文化不仅是特权精英的创造,而且是全体社会角色的共同创造。

当下中国本土的传播学研究图貌仍然刻录了西方传播学的踪迹与烙印,不过,其因中国政治、经济与社会的急剧转型,又展现出与西方异质的东方经验的社会历史脉络。一方面,随着中西文化交流的进一步深入,现代新学科在大学越来越体系化,部分本土学者把西方发展起来的传播学逐步引介、消化与吸收,这种实践是在全球化条件下的"理论旅行"的表征,也是中国学者加入国际学术交往并丰富本土教育资源的门径。另一方面,传播学作为外来学科,20世纪80年代之后对中国新闻学界的影响日益深厚,而伴随着国家教育部将其视为新的学科增长点且得到学科目录的正式标注,传播学的学术人口和学术论著与日俱增。

同时,跨学科的学术力量深度涉入社会转型与媒介传播的交叉研究中,学术园地的丰饶有待于不同学派的观点之间持续地相互碰撞与激荡。通过传播学、社会学、政治经济学、文化研究等多学科的学术探索,学者的成果大多体现了将媒介传播体系视为社会、经济、政治、文化基本过程中的一部分,把媒介置于由上述成分产生的生产与再生产的架构之中,也就避免了传播本质主义(essentialism),而将媒介"非中心化"(decenter the media),呼应了文森特·莫斯可(Vincent Mosco)所坚持的传播与社会相互建构的重要论点(Mosco,1996)。①

社会学家彼得·伯杰(Peter Berger)说:"社会学最好不要僵化为一种没有幽默感的科学主义的态度,因为这会使我们看不见与听不见社会景观的诙谐。"(Berger,1963:165)②本领域的知识生产与理论建构的价值诉求就是探究人类的境遇本身,尽可能免除人类的压迫性力量,获得知识解放和人类身心的自由。"如果学者要超越描述层次到解释层次,政治经济学一定处在事业的中心地位。它并不仅仅是传播学的必要的组成部分,它是整个传播学的基石。"(McChesney,2000)③美国实证主义的研究范式曾经主导性地影响早期中国大陆的传播学路径,笔者始终以为静态的、孤立于社会情境的实证数据是研究不可或缺的基础,但不能透彻阐释动态社会,研究必须回到社会情境之中,由研究者依据数据资料的实证分析和文献积累来进行深度的理论阐释和学术对话。彼得·戈丁(Peter Golding)和格拉姆·默多克(Graham Murdock)早年论文④也主张大众传播研究的主要任务不是探索媒介讯息的意义,而是去分析建构媒介讯息意义、与解释媒介讯息意义的社会过程,和形塑与限制这些意义建构的情境与压力。为了达成这点,我们确实需要更多合宜的理论与概念性的图解。但需要的是社会结构与社会进程的论题,而非传播论题(Peter Golding & Graham Murdock,1978)。的确,传播结构是社会结构的再表现之一,传播学的研究需要构连具体的社会历史脉络,揭示出传播背后的人文意涵和社会权力架构。笔者与国际著名传播政治经济学家文森特·莫斯可、青年学者莱斯莉·里根·谢德(Leslie Regan Shade)联合主编的《传播与社会的批判研究》(Critical Studies in Communication and Society)正是秉承上述理念,选取了三十四篇新媒体最新研究的英文论文,主题聚焦全球经济一体化语境中新媒体和商业主义构连的侵蚀、社会运动倡导、劳工抗争、阶级分化、社会性别等级化、技术监控等多种权力关系交织的社会情境如何宰制现代民族国家中的消费主体,为中国大陆学界提供了全球最新的批判传播研究成果。

20世纪末期以来的大陆学界已经渐弃马克思经典的"阶级"讨论,学者似乎不愿意触及这一理论禁区,部分期刊也回避阶级议题,⑤而社会学学者的论述则大多聚焦遮蔽了权力关系的"阶层"问题。笔者

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① Mosco,V.(1996),*The Political Economy of Communication*,London:Sage.
② Berger,P.L.(1963),*Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*,New York:Anchor Books.
③ Robert.W.M.(2000),"The Political Economy of Communication and the Future of the Field",*Media*,*Culture & Society*,Vol.22,No.1,2000.
④ Golding,P. & Graham Murdock(1970),"Theories of Communication and Theories of Society",*Communication Research*,5(3):339-356,1978.
⑤ 笔者通过流移上海的家政钟点女工的手机使用的民族志研究,发现市场经济和技术并没有从根本上解决农村妇女的阶级与社会性别的底层地位或是消灭技术鸿沟,其阶级地位反而在国家经济增长的繁荣期向下流动,无缘西方女性主义传播学者倡导的信息技术时代的主体。当时发表该论文的《新闻与传播研究》(2009年第1期)为顺利通过审核,就删除了该论文阶级部分的论述,题目变为"传播新技术、社会性别:以流移上海的家政钟点女工的手机使用分析为例"。

之所以在新媒体和全球经济一体化脉络中，强调批判传播研究必须重返马克思主义经典的"阶级"分析，原因在于"剥削"（exploitation）仍然是强劲透视信息社会的概念；并且就转型中国而言，以剥削为核心的阶级论述正为研究传播与市场经济深化的一系列不平等问题贡献了最有针对性的理论路径。而且"阶级分析的一个工作就是要探究阶级关系中复杂的细节性问题"①（赖特（Eric Olin Wright），中文版，2011：10），因为"对权力（利）进行再分配的制度使得阶级关系明显脱离了简单、抽象的两极化形式"（同上书：12）。格拉姆·默多克呼吁学界关注当代传播和阶级问题，②他一针见血地指出，"苛严垂直的阶级结构被开阔水平的差异视角取代"，实质是"新个人主义"最完美的学术表达倒逼"阶级撤退"，作者特别指出伴随跨国卫星和计算机网络的出现，其为"跨国资产阶级"（由主导跨国公司的执行官、政治家、媒体大亨等组成）创造条件，此阶级的联合并非诉诸民族国家，而是仰赖全球公司的跨国扩张和运作，在这一形构中，传媒公司扮演至关重要的角色。默多克坚持阶级仍然是考察传播和社会变迁，包括文化研究甚为关键的重镇，修缮阶级分析乃当务之急！

第一章的七篇文章直接探讨了全球化的传播产业和数字新媒体技术与社会阶级的关系构连，确立了阶级分析在当代传播研究中不可或缺的位置。数字媒体的发展不仅参与塑造了新型的阶级构成与关系，也影响了阶级斗争的场所和方式的转变。由传播政治经济学大师文森特·莫斯可撰写的开篇之作"传播与社会阶级"可谓本章要义之精华，其从社会理论对"阶级"的基本定义出发，回顾了近年来对传播产业及文本进行阶级分析的经典研究，并展望了未来传播学对"阶级"概念的多样化运用以及对"知识劳工"这一新阶级的探索潜力。莫斯可指出，以往的研究着重于阶级作为范畴的维度（categorical dimension）对国际传播生产消费秩序的反映，展现统治阶级如何掌控传播资本或媒介如何参与社会阶级的建构。然而作者认为，在新媒体技术引发传播产业革命、传播秩序充满不同阶级间抗争与协商的新语境下，应在研究中更多地将阶级作为关系的维度（relational dimension）和构成的维度（formational dimension）来考察，这尤其能揭示新兴阶级知识劳工在传播劳动中的丰富体验。作者对知识劳工的具体分类以及对他们进行联合抗争的展望也为本书其他章节对此的详述作了铺垫。

克里斯蒂娜·富克斯（Christine Fuchs）和李·阿茨（Lee Artz）的两篇论文以传播政治经济学的本源唯物主义的马克思社会理论为基础，对传播学和阶级的构连作了详尽而扎实的理论分析。来自奥地利萨尔兹堡大学的克里斯蒂娜·富克斯教授"信息资本主义及互联网的劳工"的论文就展现了阶级和新媒体研究的范例。③ 克里斯蒂娜·富克斯在"当下的达拉斯·斯麦兹：受众商品、数字劳工争论、马克思政治经济学和批判理论关于数字劳工价值理论的绪论"中一语道破在资本主义经济危机、新自由主义受到质疑和挑战的大背景下，运用马克思主义理论审视媒介与传播研究的必要性。作为马克思主义媒介理论的先驱，达拉斯·斯麦兹（Dallas W. Smythe）提出的"受众商品论"被置于本文讨论的中心，作者重新定义并诠释了这一概念在新媒体环境里的意义，分析了网络受众对技术，特别是社交媒体的使用和消费如何生产剩余价值、实现网络对数字劳工的剥削。作为"生产消费者"的网络受众形成比达拉斯·斯麦兹所关注的传统媒介受众复杂得多的数字劳工，被信息资本主义的生产过程所强迫、异化和占有。

李·阿茨在"基于物质与辩证法：有关传播的阶级分析"一文中则将马克思主义政治经济概念：生产力、生产关系、阶级形成等穿插于对传播实践的历史唯物主义阐释中，强调传播作为社会产品、工具和过程对于社会生产关系的反映、建构与强化。他批判了主流传播学说关于"传播自由市场"的假设，通过描绘资本主义固有的阶级关系，理论解释了各种传播技术的运用都根植于资本主义生产关系中，为占统

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① 埃里克·欧林·赖特主编（2011年中文版），马磊 吴菲等译，《阶级分析方法》，上海：复旦大学出版社。

② Murdock, G (2000)，"Reconstructing the Ruined Tower: Contemporary Communications and Questions of class". In J. Curran & M. Gurevitch (Eds.), *Mass media and society*, (pp. 7 - 26).

③ Fuchs, C. (2010)，"Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet", *The Information Society*, 26：179 - 196, 2010. 读本限于篇幅而没有收选此文，该论文敏锐地指出马克思主义的阶级具有明确的规范性和政治性，它旨在消灭剥削，建立一个参与式的民主制度。信息资本主义是一个对立的系统；跨国化和信息化为阶级统治和阶级抗争同时创造了潜能。无产阶级不断地通过其实践创造和再创造共同体验的空间，例如互联网、教育机构、知识空间和文化。这些空间和经验被占用，从而被资本征收和剥削以进行资本积累。作者认为对无偿知识劳工——如Web2.0的用户——的剥削，有着被引导上政治诉求轨道的潜能，即要求（公司）为所有无偿知识劳工支付工资；这等同于对引入共同基本收入保障的要求（Fuchs, 2001：179 - 196）。

治地位的资产阶级所服务。作者立足于葛兰西(Antonio Gramsci)的"霸权"理论,着重分析了媒介作为一个霸权机构复制现有阶级关系的功能。值得一提的是,本文在分析中加入了对大众文化全球化的反思,揭示了传播产业在新时代参与资本全球扩张的进程。而他所提出的用唯物主义辩证法的路径分析传播实践中的阶级关系的矛盾与易变性,也为我们深化理解传播在社会形成中的作用以及寻求抗争的可能性提供了启示。

从理论过渡到实践,香港中文大学邱林川教授的研究"中国网络劳工与非精英知识工人"对中国当代非精英知识工人这个特定社会阶级作了初步分析。本文聚焦于这一阶层对信息技术作为雇工工具的使用、工人的组织结构以及网络劳工的形成过程三个方面。作者对理解非精英知识工人、其社会语境和种类及各种类之间的关系提供了概念框架。他尤其深入地探讨了三种新型数字工人,即电话中心接线员、短信写手和游戏玩家的产生过程和空间分布。与此同时,本文还描绘了这些中国大陆的草根工人群体与国际劳工组织的联系,指出通过以 QQ 为代表的新媒体工具创立的非官方网络在跨国知识劳工组织还十分有限的今天,其对中国知识工人的海外联结起到的重要作用。

另一方面,吉尔·泰勒(Jill Tyler)则独辟蹊径,以本书中罕有的文化研究的路径,从微观的角度展现了社会阶级在媒介受众的日常交流中的生产、维持与强化。"媒体俱乐部:社会阶级与媒介文本的共享释义"一文运用参与式观察、深度访谈和批判话语分析等研究方法探索了"媒介俱乐部"的日常话语实践。以布尔迪厄(Pierre Bourdieu)的"惯习"理论和文化批评领域的"收讯理论"(reception theory)为基础,泰勒发现媒介俱乐部的成员运用五种交流策略确立了对文化习俗和社会秩序共通的解读模式,这种经历与思维的共识继而强化了人际关系,稳定了他们对自身社会阶级属性的认知。从宏观角度讲,这是社会秩序与阶级建构维持的重要过程之一。作者的研究体现了微观层面的日常话语与社会整体结构的重要关系。

莱斯莉·里根·谢德的论文"生物专利:商品化、知识产权政体与公共利益"以生命形式专利而引发的诸多伦理问题为切入点,探讨了公共知识和资源私有化和商业化所带来的后果。文章围绕 2002 年加拿大高等法院作出的反对"OncoMouse"专利化的决定这一案例,阐述了当代科技话语是如何与主流经济话语相构连。作者近一步指出,专利在西方的兴起源于知识产权保护需求的增强,因为其被认为是激励创新、刺激经济增长的重要手段。然而,本研究将专利,尤其是私有化公共知识资源的专利国家的弊病暴露无遗。作者认为这种将公共产品转化为私有商品而为资本牟利的做法严重削弱了技术发展推动"公平"、"民主"的初衷。

与之相对应的,弗吉尼亚·尤班克斯(Virginia Eubanks)在"深陷数字鸿沟:论社区信息论的分配范式"中则关注传播结构中的下层人群,即美国纽约上州的低收入妇女作为数字鸿沟中的无产阶级而进行的田野调查。在长达五年的参与式观察中,尤班克斯发现被数字鸿沟争论主流化,也就是对技术和不平等的释义实际上掩饰了妇女与信息技术的日常接触,忽略了她们对技术合理的"批判性的矛盾态度"(critical ambivalence)。作者认为导致这一模糊性的主要原因之一是"分配范式"对理解和解决数字鸿沟问题的主宰。"分配范式"讲社会公正单一地理解为物质产品的公平分配,忽视了公正所包含的许多不具备分配属性的要求。而数字鸿沟也并不仅仅只代表技术的占有和使用问题。受这些底层妇女的启发,作者描绘了她们心中理想的数字平等模型。

查尔斯·蒂莉(Charles Tilly)《社会运动》一书中提出,①社会运动是指普通人通过一系列诉求表演、展示和竞争等方式表达某种集体诉求。社会运动包含了三个核心要素,一是运动,即针对目标当局开展群体性的诉求伸张运动;二是常备剧目,即一连串的诉求表演;三是 WUNC 展示,即价值、统一、规模和奉献的公开表达。所谓新社会运动,是指当代欧洲和美国社会涌现出各式各样的社会运动,如环保运动、妇女运动、同性恋运动、反核运动等,其运动本身具有一种深刻的宗教特质。旧的社会运动如工人运动,其运动最后的目标基本上是指向物质性的回报。相对于传统的社会运动,新社会运动的抗争和诉求往往超越传统的阶级或物质利益等内容,其目标指向新的社会、文化、生命的质素等课题(陈慎庆,2002)。②

①　Tilly, C. (2004). *Social movements, 1768–2004*. London, England: Paradigm.
②　陈慎庆(2002),"基督宗教研究:社会学的进路",收入罗秉祥、江丕盛编,《大学基督宗教研究》,香港:香港浸会大学中华基督宗教研究中心,第 255—276 页。

社会学家麦露西(Alberto Melucci)提出了"集体身份认同"的理论,①强调建构行动系统的过程是新社会运动发展的关键,而集体身份认同的建构在于三个互相关联的元素,包括一套关于目标、手段和行动的认知架构;行动者之间的沟通、相互影响、商议和共同决策、相互联系;行动者对运动付出感情,以致他们在运动中确定自我的位置。新社会运动理论是一种新的集体行动的解释模型,其特点在于强调文化符码(cultural codes)的生产对社会运动的作用,社会行动者对身份认同的商议(negotiation of identity),以及社会运动建构性和互动性的特质(Melucci,1988)。例如妇女另类媒介在女性主义运动中就起到关键性的社会动员作用,而且妇女创办的各类媒介繁荣了女性主义运动的支持局面。

　　第二章以社会运动为核心,收纳了多篇研究数字媒体时代下权力抗争进程的实证佳例。来自各个领域的学者为我们勾勒了传播运动全球拓展的生动图景,一方面展现了各类另类媒体为寻求传播民主与公正参与自行组织社会运动的经历;另一方面则论述了当代主要社会运动尤其是环境保护对媒介的使用及两者间的关系。在对媒介直接参与运动的讨论中,首当其冲的便是加芙列拉·科尔曼(Gabriella Coleman)所撰写的"匿名:从鲁尔兹到集体行动"。作者介绍了基于网络聊天室而形成的社会运动组织"匿名"的简要历史。通过对"匿名"参与的一系列政治抗议活动(攻击科学真理教,wikileaks,突尼斯起义等)的回顾,本文展现了"匿名"从源自以"鲁尔兹"为目的的娱乐消遣"攻击文化"(trolling)转化为组织、指引现实世界集体整治行动的社会运动组织的过程。科尔曼认为"匿名"去权威化、去名人崇拜、去权力中心化和提倡各成员平等广泛参与的组织与伦理逻辑为"极客"群体利用网络等新媒体技术采取政治行动提供了可能。与科尔曼有异曲同工之妙的则是维克托·皮卡德(Victor Pickard)对全球首家独立媒体(IMC)的研究。"对独立媒体激进民主的评估:话语、技术和制度的建构"一文以IMC为例,检视了独立媒体在话语、技术和制度实践中所彰显的激进民主原则。在去权力中心化、政治主体身份多样化、技术空间再分配等激进民主概念的引领下,独立媒体不仅在技术上实现了公开资源、公开发表和维基网页的民主手段,也在组织建构上实践了网络式的以共识为基础的决策过程。作者强调了这两方面的相辅相成,在指出独立媒体运作缺陷的同时也对其实现另类媒介生产和激进民主政治充满信心。

　　而另一些学者则更关注另类媒介为获得政策制定权而进行的斗争。在"传播权利新运动:全球传播中新的利益相关者? 聚焦并超越信息社会世界峰会"一文中,克洛迪娅·帕多瓦尼(Claudia Padovani)和埃莱娜·帕万(Elena Pavan)通过介绍信息社会世界峰会的过程定义了"信息时代"下全球社会运动与传播议题的关系。作者从身份认同、冲突以及网络实践的角度对信息社会世界峰会在全球传播权利运动中的作用进行了评估,指出这一会议过程可以促成对传播权利话语的集体建构,并让该运动在高密度的互动交流与多样化的公民社会经历中得到检视,从而使所产生的共同话语更具有代表性。文章同时倡导由信息社会世界峰会而引出的全球传播管理多方利益相关者协同参与模式(multi-stakeholder approach),强调公民社会团体参与政策制定过程的必要性与重要意义。

　　同样探讨政策制定的多方参与的还有阿尔内·欣茨(Arne Hintz)与斯特凡尼娅·米兰(Stefania Milan)合著的"互联网治理的边缘:草根技术小组与传播政策"。该文检视了在传播政策辩论中被边缘化的草根技术小组作为公民社会媒体行动者的实践。作者致力于将这一重要的信息传播技术(ICT)提供者引入规划公民社会媒体政策的讨论中。文章描绘了草根技术小组的政策目标,追溯了他们与更广大范围内的网络管理机制的关联,并探索了该小组成为政策制定参与者的潜力。虽然主要在政策辩论以外运转,草根技术小组为构建多者参与的传播政策对话提供了独特的视角与贡献,并对规定政策包容性和代表性的基准提出了挑战。

　　作为对媒介社会运动的总结,菲利普·M·纳波利(Philip M. Napoli)在"公益媒体作为一项社会运动的倡导及行动主义:文献综述"里对现存的关于"媒介改革运动"的文献进行了完整而详尽的综述。文章首先定义了媒介改革这一广义运动所包含的"言论自由"、"媒介民主化"、"传播权利"、"文化环境"和"媒介公正"等不同概念框架,并分析比较了这些框架导致的各组织不同的目标与策略。在主要环节,作者追溯了传播学、社会学、历史学和政治学等领域自20世纪60年代以来对"媒介改革运动"的研究,

①　Melucci, A. (1988), "Getting Involved", in *From Structure to Action*, eds. Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi and Sidney Tarrow, Greenwich, C. T. : JAI,, pp. 329 - 348.

展示了其理论导向从"利益群体"理论向"社会运动"理论视角的转移。文章突出了诸多学者人文媒介改革是"民权运动"产物的共识，但作者本人却对此有不同的见解。他指出了媒介改革作为一种社会运动与其他社会运动间密不可分但相互独立的关系。作者最后总结了对这一运动的批判声音，并为未来研究和媒介改革运动今后的走向提出了建议。

另一方面，主流社会运动的新媒体实践也是传播学者关注的焦点。其中理查德·麦克斯韦尔（Richard Maxwell）和托比·米勒（Tobby Miller）合作撰写的"生态伦理和媒介技术"以独到的视角阐述了传统媒介研究忽略的媒介技术生产与使用对生态环境的影响。文章一针见血地指出传播产业对自然资源的滥用是全球化生态危机的罪魁祸首之一。因此媒介技术对物质环境的影响理应受到媒介学者的重视。作者为建立媒介技术研究的伦理导向提供了三种生态伦理视角：即人类中心伦理、生态中心伦理和介于两者之间的中间伦理。通过对各观点不同点及其对媒介技术的不同理解的分析，麦克斯韦尔和米勒指明了媒介技术生态伦理研究的可能性。文章最后借用杂志和手机这两个现实媒介案例为我们如何进行这种伦理思索提供范本。

本章的压轴之作，劳拉·斯泰因（Laura Stein）的"美国环保组织网站及其文化生产内容"同样聚焦于环境运动，运用定量内容分析的方法，检视了美国国内一百零八家环保组织的网络生产实践。结合另类媒介理论，斯泰因发现这些环保运动的行动者有选择性地使用网络生产所能提供的传播功能。这种网站能力与实际使用间的差别的标志之一便是环保网站对"信息提供"功能的偏重和对"情感表达"功能的忽略。论文同时总结了内容分析在理解环保网站生产上的价值与缺陷。作者最后指出，在网络使用领域，学者不应仅仅考虑网络本身如何建构社会运动的传播，更应注重社会运动的实践者如何选择性地使用技术，同时也应更深入考察社会运动网络生产中的结构性力量。

劳工运动本身的危机和劳工研究的危机乃西方社会学的双重危机[①]（Silver，2003：1），警示批判传播研究的学者重新"把劳工带回分析的中心"[②]（Burawoy，1985），也就是学者应当持续地将劳工问题作为传播政治经济学的核心议题。纵观文献，笔者认为"部分海外汉学家和本土学者对中国工人阶级转型的理论阐述资源相当丰富，视野开阔，对本土社会情景也有深入、睿智的洞察，如李静君（1999）、沈园（2006）等，但其研究仍然是传统的国有企业工人和农民工的视野，并没有注意到中国大陆正在扩大化、去权力化的知识劳工阶级及其在市场化境遇中被剥夺和阶级流动的问题"。[③] 中国传播学界对知识劳工的提法首先受益于凯瑟琳·麦克切尔（Catherine McKercher）与文森特·莫斯可（Catherine McKercher & Vincent Mosco，2007）联合主编的论文集《信息社会的知识劳工》（Knowledge Workers in the Information Society）一书（2014 年该书中文版已经由上海译文出版社出版，曹晋、罗真等译），全书十九篇论文汇集了近近知识劳工在新自由主义经济语境中的劳动分析，分别讨论了计算机动画、电影、图书馆、报纸等产业的知识劳工的劳动如何被商品化，这是国际学界关于传播业界知识劳工劳动力贬值与媒介产业商业化关联的批判前沿研究。本书收选了克里斯多弗·马汀（Christopher R. Martin）的论文"抹煞劳工：美国和加拿大劳工报道的衰落"，[④]其文批判传媒集团正在压榨他们的新闻机构以实现更高的利润率。非常有名的一个例子是，总部位于芝加哥的论坛报业公司（Tribune Company）近几年在其拥有的《洛杉矶时报》裁掉了超过 20% 的员工，于是在此期间一直舒舒服服地保持着 18% 的利润率。因此，当公司为了赢得更高的短期利润或取悦投资者而采取各种策略，如将岗位转移到海外，或者进行大规模裁员之时，大部分知识劳工也极易遭受几乎影响着所有劳工的经济不稳定。就像劳工/劳动场所报道一样，新闻业对所有公民——包括那些"普通人"——的忠诚让位给了新闻媒体的政治经济常识：吸引高收入消费者并创造永远增长的公司利润。并非只有传统媒体的知识劳工遭遇朝不保夕的困境，因

①　Silver，B. J.（2003），*Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*，Cambridge：Cambridge University Press.

②　Burawoy，M，（1985），*The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes Under Capitalism and Socialism*，London：Verso.

③　曹晋（2012），"知识女工与中国大陆出版集团的弹性雇佣制度改革"，《传播与社会学刊》（香港）02 期，第 45—73 页。

④　此文见 Catherine McKercher & Vincent Mosco 联合主编的《信息社会的知识劳工》，上海译文出版社 2014 年版，第 43—63 页。

市场经济和传播新科技应运而生的网络编辑群体,作为网络知识劳工的一种类型,也同样难逃资本扩张和劳动重构的不确定性(precariousness)或者高危化(precarization)的趋势。[①] 都市网络编辑与那些 IT产业的管理高层、设计精英或者技术投资专家(属于创意经济的顶端人士)相比,没有占有生产资料,还是只能以日益贬值的劳动力来交换生活资料。可见,文化创意产业内部的深度分化和目前中国阶级分化同步,尽管其处于市场经济转型并且紧跟信息时代步伐的信息社会,但并未因技术和创意劳动而获得消费主体的地位,在不平等的市场经济体系中,消费主体或者劳工主体所蕴藏的价值、权力都相当悬殊。网络知识劳工在转型中国遭遇了宏观社会保障体系的瓦解(尤其是房地产的彻底商品化)、弹性雇佣、强制性消费主义等制度权力的剥夺与宰制,从其生活境遇和工作环境的劣势透视出那些笼罩在传播新科技和文化创意经济"光环"下的都市网络知识劳工逐步陷入无产化、贫困化的困境,这些新媒体环境中的知识劳工并不比传统媒体的"新闻民工"更加具有舒适的生存条件或者能够享受电子民主。

承接前文对阶级和社会运动的论述,本书第三章将目光聚焦社会范畴和过程的主体"劳工"。传播新科技的迅猛发展和新自由主义经济在全球的扩张重新定义了信息社会的传播劳动力价值和劳工的阶级地位。福利国家时代盛行的福特主义向市场经济国家时代深具弹性的后福特主义转变,弹性雇佣制度取代了终身雇佣制度,社会保障网络已随市场经济的深化彻底瓦解,知识劳工的安全感和稳定性逐步消失,转型中国也不能幸免此一全球性资本逻辑的渗透。在数字媒体继承并强化资本主义生产关系,传播从业人员被进一步剥削和异化的大背景下,劳工这一马克思主义政治经济原理的基本概念在传播研究中重新显现了它不可忽视的分析力量。这里的七篇文章分别从理论与实践角度分析了新媒体与知识产业劳工问题,联合探讨了当代信息资本主义使用集团化和弹性雇工等手段在全球范围内强化剥削生产知识、信息通讯和传播技术等产品的劳工以及跨国、跨行业的工会协同相关的劳工运动如何进行抗争的问题。

在理论的层面,尼克·戴尔·威瑟福特(Nick Dyer-Witheford)提出"数字劳工"的概念。在"数字劳工、物种和全球工人"一文中,他重温马克思的早期著作《1844 年经济学哲学手稿》,用青年马克思提出的"物种"概念诠释其称为数字劳工的精神与肉体本质被当下的电子网络和生物技术所进一步异化。本文细致铺叙了"物种形成"的路径,包括世界工厂的形成、未来化的资本积累、全球共意的出现、技术金融及上述因素导致的单一性资本主义等。戴尔·威瑟福特尖锐地指出新科技不仅异化了参与数字生产的劳工的"物种属性",其在生物领域的突破更直接地改变了人类属性本身。基于此,解决异化的政治理想也应实现从简单共产主义到适用于这个属于生物技术、气候变化和全球网络时代的"生物共产主义"的转移。

乌尔苏拉·休斯(Ursula Huws)则将她所关注的群体定名为"创意劳工"。她的文章"表达与剥夺:创意劳动中关于自治和控制的辩证法"以基于欧洲的"知识社会的工作结构重建"(WORKS)项目的研究结果为基础,探索了现代全球化知识经济中创造性劳工与资本相互依存、相互挣脱的矛盾关系。一方面,企业与资本必须在其对创新观点的无尽需求和对知识产权及创造性劳动的控制管理中寻求平衡。另一方面,创造性工人又必须解决他们自我表达的理想与生存需求间的矛盾。这种自主性和安全感之间的矛盾和资本采取的不同形式的管理控制交织在一起,使创意劳工进行持续而合适的抗争变得举步维艰。

与此同时,安达·布罗菲(Enda Brophy)和格雷格·德·彭德(Greig de Penter)采用"非物质劳工"这一概念加入了学术论争。两位作者在"非物质劳工、不确定性与重构"中,因受意大利自由马克思主义和当代欧洲社会运动的理论与实践所启发,对"非物质劳工"及其同"不确定性"在后工业资本主义下的关系做了清晰的构连。本文的主要目的之一是批判主流经济学和社会学界推崇知识劳工的理论话语。作者认为,以生产知识、文化产品和传播技术为实践的非物质工人是劳工在资本的抗争中于特定历史时刻被重构的产物。而作为非物质劳工建构的核心机制,弹性雇工产生的不确定性给这些工人带来了长期的经济与生存危机和不安全感。文章同时描绘了非物质劳工围绕不确定性进行的社会行动,暗喻弹

[①]　曹晋、许秀云(2014),"传播新科技与都市知识劳工的新贫问题研究",《新闻大学》,2014 年第 2 期,第 93—105 页。

性雇工依然有与工会和劳工运动合作的可能。丽莎·麦考林(Lisa Mchaughlin)的论文"探寻女性主义媒介研究中的劳工问题"将社会性别视角引入劳工议题,重申了女性主义媒介研究长期以来对劳工问题的忽视。作者分析了妇女在信息与传播技术产业结构中重要但被压制的地位,认为批判媒介研究应在长期被经济合作与发展组织(简称经合组织,OECD)和联合国研究机构把持的妇女劳工研究领域占得一席之地,从而为信息传播产业的性别平等提供更多反思的声音。这也能使对知识劳工的学术探索不再局限于对阶级的审视,而是延展到对社会性别、种族、国家、性取向、年龄等各个社会种类的分析中。

最后,文森特·莫斯可的"劳动的知识:为什么劳工在信息社会中如此重要?"可谓上述劳工分析的总括与延展。莫斯可淡化了对信息产业劳工的特别命名,而是突出了劳工这一总概念在传播和信息研究中的重要性,这主要是因为"信息是被预言和劳动共同建构的"。作者在文中尤为强调传播和信息产业劳工联合起来进行抗争的可能性,他指出在工会力量于西方国家日趋微薄的今天,作为对技术和企业集合回应的劳工集合(labour convergence)模式以及新型工人组织的建立是应对工会危机的两大途径。文章还检视了全球化进程中这两种途径的跨国实践情况。

而在实践层面,曹晋与格拉姆·默多克的研究"知识女工与中国大陆出版集团化改革的弹性雇佣制度"为知识劳工的理论阐释提供了中国语境下的实例。在这项对中国出版产业的女编辑的研究中,作者通过问卷调查和深度访谈揭示了这些受过高等教育的女工的生存与工作状况如何被出版产业的集团化和福利制度的削弱所建构。其中弹性雇佣制度和改革了的组织结构被认为是知识女工(女编辑)遭遇不平等、工作强化、歧视和不能在劳动力市场流动的主要原因。本文生动展现了中国社会,尤其是文化产业在向市场化转型过程中知识女工的劳动力贬值、社会安全保障体系遭遇瓦解,从而受到市场经济更深程度的剥削的图景。

凯瑟琳·麦克切尔则将视线转向了美国好莱坞的电影工业,从组织而非个人经验的层面论述以演员工会(SAG)为首的好莱坞众工会联合应对"出境电影制作"的行动与策略。面对越来越多的好莱坞电影选择美国以外的地域作为拍摄地点而影响美国经济的情况,演员工会采取了撰写公关报道、游说立法会、公关宣传等方法说服美国联邦与各州政府开放吸引电影拍摄的优惠政策。作者强调,这些策略的成功实施有赖于演员工会与其他公会及公民组织的合作与联盟。而演员工会与AFTRA合并的失败对出境制作的下一步抗争有发人深省的意味。

女性主义传播学者并不是要反科技进步,或者减缓科技文明的速度,而是渴望妇女成为科技发展的受益者,而不是被技术垄断与控制的消费者,尤其是妇女能够参与公正对话,成为信息科技时代的主体。另一女性主义学者达尔·斯彭德(Dale Spender)坚持认为,与印刷时代的来临相比,我们正处于一个文化上深刻转型的时期,早期的印刷文化保护了等级价值和男子气文化的结构,这使其在接下来的五百年有系统地将妇女置于不利的位置。她相信数字化正在重复此一过程。所以,她主张妇女必须改变信息的符号并将新技术调整到女性主义的一端。就她看来,妇女确实需要作好准备也必须做得快一点,因为信息革命既成事实。[①] 休·柯里·詹森(Sue Curry Jansen)在其《批判的传播理论》著作中宣称:"批判的社会理论和批判的女性主义,这两种研究取向都赞成理论和实践的结合。批判的社会理论和批判的女性主义都是启蒙运动未完成的追求平等的抗争产物。两者都指责启蒙运动自由民主观点对社会性别不平等的现实保持了沉默,然而,批判的社会理论和批判的女性主义两者都想把参与民主的理论付诸实践。因此,两者就与被压迫者有一种团结的关系。当他们认识到压迫中的"制度性"的特点,同时又认识到压迫的范畴是流动性的,并且要求持续性地监控,从而使批判的社会理论和批判的女性主义与昨天的底层结盟,而不赋予明日的暴君以权力。"[②](Jansen, 2002:11)目前,国际学界最为前沿的研究是社会性别和政治经济分析的融会贯通,尽管传播政治经济学与女性主义学说之间的鸿沟不可弥合,但鉴于其在学术与政治目标、社会运动实践等方面的一致性和全球化进程中传播资源与权力分配的不平等与不公正问题的紧迫性,两者对社会权力分配、不平等与压迫性的共同关注促成彼此联袂合作的趋势日渐明显(Steeves & Wasko, 2002:16),这使"媒介与社会性别研究"领域的理论建构受益匪浅,若干学者

①   Spender, D. (1996), *Natting on the Net: Women, Power and Cyberspace*, Spinfex Press.
②   Jansen, C. S. (2002), *Critical Communication Theory: Power, Media, Gender and Technology*, Lanham: RowmanLittlefield.

(Dervin，1987；Gallagher，1985 & 1992；Balka，1991；Martin，1991；Meehan & Byars，2000；Fejes，2003)
已经进行了女性主义传播研究的政治经济学分析。[①] 具体而言，女性主义者倡导了妇女的主体位置
(subject positions)处于多种权力压迫同时发生(simultaneity of multiplicity powers oppressions)的社会
情境之中，主张运用交叉分析模式(intersectionality model)才能透视宰制妇女的层层权力。

尽管社会性别问题在本书前几章中已偶有提及，但第四章仍以整章的篇幅专门探讨社会性别的身
份建构与权力关系如何在全球媒介文化产业中的形塑、复制与强化。其中尤以妇女的数字传播生产与
消费经历为各篇文章共同关注的焦点。多位作者看到了妇女成为文化生产和消费主体的表象下仍然受
到不同程度剥削和压制的现实，呼吁以女性主义的视角更深入地审视数字媒体给妇女追求权力平等带
来的机遇和挑战。

玛格丽特·加拉格尔(Margaret Gallagher)在"女性主义问题和全球媒体系统"里总括性地讨论了
全球媒体系统中的性别不平等现象。研究表明妇女在媒介传播实践中受到的压迫是全方位多层次的，
从媒体雇佣和决策过程中对女性的排挤，到媒介新闻文本里女性话语的缺失，乃至于新网络媒体的使用
和话语表达也充满了对妇女的歧视。作者同时列举了女性主义运动为应对这些不平等在政策和政治等
方面所作的抗争。

同样以全球化为背景，由莱斯莉·里根·谢德与尼基·波特(Nikki Porter)合写的"商业帝国和血
汗工厂里的花季少女：全球文化产业的两张面孔"记录了美国著名电视明星奥尔森姐妹创立的 Dualstar
娱乐集团对孟加拉国女工的无情剥削。作者以写实的笔触，揭露了行销全美的奥尔森姐妹时尚品牌光
鲜亮丽的背后，是其位于孟加拉国的工厂禁止其女工放产假的严酷现实。这一案例体现出发达国家服
装时尚产品的丰盛建立在第三世界妇女的血汗劳动、恶劣工作环境和微薄收入上。文章提醒读者在沉
迷于奥尔森姐妹的品牌、风尚和八卦新闻的同时也不应忘记经济全球化对于她们文化帝国中的另一部
分妇女的意义。

而另一些学者则聚焦于妇女对于不同媒介形式的开发和使用。例如玛丽·斯莱斯特·卡尼(Mary
Celeste Kearney)的短文"摄影师女孩玛利亚·奥巴马"就图文并茂地展现了美国"第一女儿"玛利亚·
奥巴马在各公众场合摄影这一现象所暗含的技术与社会性别、女孩文化、种族等的深刻关系。作者以玛
利亚·奥巴马为出发点，追溯女孩摄影的历史，分析照相机和媒介技术在当代女孩生活中占据的不可或
缺的位置，并强调了这一事例彰显黑人女孩自主性的重要意义。

在"社会性别、模拟和游戏：研究综述和重新定向"一文中，耶恩·詹森(Jen Jensen)和苏珊·德·
卡斯特尔(Suzanne de Castell)回顾了近三十年来社会性别与游戏领域的研究，并总结了自该领域创立
之始就一直存在的一系列阻碍其发展的研究方法问题。这些问题包括对社会性别概念的全面忽略、对
游戏种类通过性别进行划分而总结出女性偏爱种类的倾向，以及将社会性别作为非重要度量来研究等
等。作者认为，未来该领域的研究应更重视对游戏玩家和生产者的社会性别身份的记录、解读和质疑。
而后现代、后结构主义、女性主义、后女性主义、酷儿理论等将对此关注点大有助益。

克里斯蒂娜·邓巴-赫斯特(Christina Dunbar-Hester)和加芙列拉·科尔曼则关注于妇女在开放资
源软件(FLOSS)实践中的缺失问题。"赋予社会性别化的变革开放源码背景下的社会性别主张"分析了
导致妇女无法全面参与技术生产的阻碍、内部偏见及错失的机会。更为重要的是，本文记录了在开放资
源软件生产团体内部为促进"多样化"，尤其是性别多样化所做的努力。作者指出开放资源软件生产中
的性别问题不能简单地归结为妇女的缺少，而更关乎在性别-技术关系中对社会性别本身的理解。开放
资源代表了某种特定的男性气质，而其多样化的目标除了女性之外也包括对酷儿和跨性别群体的涵盖。

弗兰克·韦伯斯特(Frank Webster)直言不讳地批判："在很大意义上，资本主义的重组意味着通过
采用新的信息传播技术，去寻求实现成功商业活动的新手段。特别是从 20 世纪 70 年代以来，一种资本
主义的新形式——卡斯特尔称为'信息资本主义'——便利用信息网络来开展活动，从工厂内的活动(工
作的新方式)到世界范围内进行销售，资本主义的迅猛扩张。而且，信息资本主义与长期以来如火如荼
的全球化进程紧密相连，彼此唇齿相依，以至于'网络社会'成为资本主义活动在全球实时开展的环境，

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① 曹晋(2008)，《媒介与社会性别研究：理论与实例》，上海：三联书店，第 33 页。

这一切完全仰赖先进的信息传播技术，否则，不可想象。"(2011 中文版：128)①文化信息的生产、流通与市场控制体系因网络传播技术的普及而实现了赢利的新模式，追逐利润与效益的激烈竞争的企业充分利用这一工具来进行资本的全球扩张，"用户创造内容"的平台与卡斯特尔论述的"发展的信息化模式"(informational mode of development)的出现相伴随。② 格拉姆·默多克 2009 年应邀前来复旦大学新闻学院参与国际会议，他的主题发言论述了"网上的同侪交换行为重组了人际关系和经济关系，因此这标志了礼物经济全方位的回归。我们以'电子社区共享者'(communards，我从 1871 年巴黎公社运动中借用了 communards 这个词来强调参与者的自治性质)而非消费者的身份投入到数字礼物经济的浪潮当中。同侪交换行为针对协同创作，创作成果对所有愿意访问的人免费开放。生产成本由参与者自主负担，他们为所需的技术投资、承担机会成本以及时间成本。作为回报，参与者期望共享网络中的每个人都以回馈自己的劳动力、时间和专业知识的形式来增添其活力"(Murdock，中文版 2010：166)。在他题为"礼物的回馈：网络参与和剥夺"("The Return of the Gift：Participation and Exploitation on the Internet")的课堂演讲中，格拉姆·默多克教授提醒年轻的学子们，新技术发展的确创造了新的融合文化，但同时也为公司提供了接近那些由志愿劳动创造的内容的绝好机遇，传统的消费者正在转变为新型的"产消者"(prosumer)，同时，所有的参与都有被公司汲取利用的可能，互联网促成的合作也可能带来新的剥削(Murdock，2010 年 12 月 14 日英文演讲概要)。作为最早提出"免费劳工"概念的学者，蒂齐亚纳·泰拉诺瓦(Tiziana Terranova)(2000)则用"社会工厂"(social factory)一词来形容网络社会中数字媒体的信息生产，"免费劳工"定义为"同时且自愿地给予并毫无所求，享受并被剥削着"的网上行为方式。泰拉诺瓦认为数字劳工(digital labour)正是"现代'甜品商店'(sweet-shop，即文化产业)的延续，并指向更为贬值的知识劳动"(Terranova，2000：33 - 38)。③ 那些被兴趣、爱好和公共议题动员起来的"产消者"正是社交媒体丰富的"免费劳工"大军，笔者认为社交媒体作为所向披靡的西方商业文明的开路先锋，恰恰体现出资本市场扩张、商业渗透的深化。当今新媒体的众包式的劳动已经解除了劳动雇佣关系，弹性的兴趣劳动为新的信息技术所动员，用"兴趣"和"参与的满足感"最大限度地将散落在世界各地的"爱好者"们组织起来，最大限度地利用其集体智能和剩余生产力，使每个人都成为有经济效率的生产单位，网络上的弹性知识劳工投入网络工作的热情与坚持的意志比签约单位工作更加开心和卖力。这种非货币化与非契约化的弹性工作带来的绝不仅是娱乐的满足，而是众多产消者贡献的"隐形劳动"。④ 戴维·赫斯蒙德哈尔什(David Hesmondhalgh)(2010)在其论文"用户生成内容、免费劳工和文化产业"中指出创意产业和文化生产已经成为研究热点，可是截止到最近，只有一小部分研究集中于创意劳工，而这恰恰是该生产领域的基础。作者强调关注数字媒体的免费劳工以生产为代价的消费如何为公司垄断性的文化产业经济增长做出体力和生命的贡献(Hesmondhalgh，2010：267 - 284)。⑤ 有鉴于此，培育产消者相互支持的感知结构与反思能力何其关键和迫切！

　　本书最后一章围绕数字新技术的主力军"社交媒体"展开，呈现了七篇在社交媒体的语境下探讨自主性、公共性、公民权、隐私权等基本民主概念的佳作。作者们以批判的视角引领读者深入发掘号称促进民主的社交媒体的经济结构和意识形态，倡导用更理性的眼光评析各大知名社交媒体的解放潜力。对社交媒体的政治经济分析揭露了其在资本主义市场逻辑下无可逃遁的对公平正义和公民主体性的压制。

　　在"批判的媒介研究 2.0：一次交互升级"中，马克·安德烈耶维奇(Mark Andrejevic)总体描绘了"媒介 2.0"研究的批判路径。他认为批判学派应揭示在技术剧烈变革的今天，社会权力关系保持不变的原因。本文批驳了新媒体研究中常见的将"交互性"等同于政治批判和民主赋权的观点，并探讨了社

① Webster，Frank 著，曹晋、梁静等译(2011)：《信息社会理论》，北京：北京大学出版社。
② 曹晋、张楠华(2012)"新媒体、知识劳工与弹性的兴趣劳动——以字幕工作组为例"，《新闻与传播研究》(权威)2012 年第 5 期，第 39—47 页。
③ Terranova，T.（2000），"Free labour：Producing Culture for the Digital Economy"，*Social text*，18(2)，33 - 57.
④ 曹晋、张楠华(2012)"新媒体、知识劳工与弹性的兴趣劳动——以字幕工作组为例"，《新闻与传播研究》(权威)2012 年第 5 期，第 46—47 页。
⑤ Hesmondhalgh，D.（2010），"User-generated Content，Free Labour and the Cultural Industries"，*Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization.* 10. 3 - 4，pp. 267 - 284.

会语境吸纳和扭转社交媒体批判和反抗潜力的几种方式。批判媒介研究被认为应发展理解的全新实践、关于剥削的升级理论以及属于数字时代的政治经济学视角。

塔尔顿·L·吉莱斯皮(Tarleton L. Gillespie)的"计算错误?"一文敏锐地点出了"占领华尔街"运动中与推特相关的一个发人深省的现象：尽管这一运动在全球范围内引发重大反响,该话题从未在推特网站上进入"热门趋势"排行榜。作者由此发出对网络技术客观性和中立性的质疑,他认为生产推特趋势的电子公式是由推特公司根据一定的标准人为设置的,这些不够公开透明的标准未必能准确反映推特上公共议题的流传程度和讨论情况。文章警醒读者包括推特趋势在内的众多号称代表民意的技术手段都带有偏颇,尤其当公式和技术受制于私人资本及其奉行的特定意识形态时。

济济·帕帕卡丽斯(Zizi Papacharissi)的文章"隐私如奢侈品"以美国为背景,阐释了隐私权在数字时代怎样转化为一种奢侈商品的原理。以"脸书"网站为首的社交媒体将信息"公开"与"分享"的理念根植于其隐私政策架构中,而社会成员以牺牲自己隐私为代价换取基于网络的社会权利与资源。由此,个人信息成为货币,隐私成为商品,只有拥有较高电脑知识、经济收入和教育水平的某些特定种族群体才能获得这一奢侈品。作者又进一步揭露了支持隐私成为奢侈品的美国相关法律背后的市场逻辑,呼吁立法应更多地考虑隐私权作为一项不可侵犯的人权的价值。

若泽·凡·迪吉克(José van Dijck)在"用户能动性与社交媒体"中理论化地解释了"能动性"(agency)在使用者创造网络内容中的意义。针对主流媒体高呼使用者创造内容的网站(UGC)大大增强使用者自主性的论调,作者从文化和经济的角度分析了 UGC 网站使用者介于受者和参与者之间、生产者和消费者之间的独特地位,指出他们并非完全自主独立,而是受到网站提供商和广告商全方位的制衡。更重要的是,这些使用者作为非职业的"业余爱好者"为网站免费生产内容,形成了新型的劳工群体。因此,更全面地理解新"使用者自主性"需要博采众长,引入文化理论、消费社会学及政治经济学等多种视角。

而在"岌岌可危的公民：数字时代的控制和价值"中,卡塔琳娜·萨丽卡基斯(Katharine Sarikakis)定义了数字时代"公民"概念的全新内涵。文章认为,作为我们理解与建构世界的物质和符号基础,公民权意味着工作权、财产权和自我管理权。而在新媒体技术的冲击下,工作与娱乐的日渐模糊,私人与公共领域也愈发重叠。作者从这两方面讨论了公民权在数字时代遇到的挑战。

克里斯蒂安·富克斯为本书撰写的第二篇文章"Web2.0,产消合一与监控"再次从政治经济学角度解释了包括 YouTube、MySpace、脸书和推特在内的"网络 2.0"平台的经济结构。富克斯以谷歌公司推出的"Buzz"服务为例,勾勒了社交媒体积累资本的理论模型,并运用最基本的马克思主义原理,区分了资本积累中的生产与消费过程。作者强调了监控在"网络 2.0"时代对于资本积累循环的重要作用,指出在基于网络的数据分享、交流、共同制作的实践中,生产、消费与监控形成复杂的共谋关系,促成了网络生产-消费者的商品化。

与前几位作者从理论角度出发批判社交媒体的民主迷思稍有不同的是,达纳·博伊德(danah boyd)关注社交媒体在青少年社交生活中的具体作用。"青年(为主)社交网站何以盛行：论网络公地在青少年社会生活中的角色"是一项观点新颖、论据丰富的实证研究。博伊德以美国高中生使用 MySpace 的情况为例,分析了这些青少年如何创造社交网络主页来维持与同龄人的社会交往,从而建构自己的社会身份与地位、理解文化线索、协商公共生活。博伊德对社交媒体的反思并非完全负面,而是褒贬结合地提出了"网络公地"这一概念,认为社交网络是一种特殊的网络公地,具有持久性、可搜索性、可精确复制性及无形观众等四个特点,这些特点从根本上改变社会动态,使人们的沟通方式更为复杂。文章同时总结了导致美国青少年寻求网络公地的社会历史动因。

针对监控研究领域对解释监控何时与如何发生的偏向,托林·莫纳汉(Torin Monahan)和吉尔·A·菲舍尔(Jill A. Fisher)提出了分析监控失败以及监控阻碍对于削弱监控影响的重要性。在"监控受阻：论医院信息系统部署的刚愎自用"一文中,两位学者共同探讨了美国医院中对抗监控信息系统的各种斗争形式。通过长达三年的田野调查,他们收集了关于医院追踪及识别系统的应用的第一手数据,展现了医院信息系统的许多控制功能都被员工个人反抗所削弱。与此同时,监控系统还受到一系列的技术、物质、经济和文化限制的阻碍。

全球社会历史语境的急剧变迁为本土传播学酝酿了广阔的研究选题,而且"他山之石,可以攻玉",

《传播与社会的批判研究》这一英文读本为大陆传播学界提供了可以借鉴的研究路径。一方面，中国自20世纪80年代以来，社会转型经历了迅速的阶层分化、经济极化、阶级重组以及其他一些社会关系的重构。当代传播学者面对日渐加剧的社会资源配置不公正的尖锐矛盾语境，对处于转型期的中国社会问题的揭示与探讨的力度将会增进传播学的现实社会关怀，还可以提炼相当丰饶与开阔、厚重的学理，为全球传播研究贡献东方经验的本土传播学理论。当然，这需要学者把传播产业的变迁带入全球化语境中国际与中国社会的政治、经济与文化历史的进程，厘清作为中国大陆文化产业的新闻传播的生产、流通与市场消费的商品化逻辑和社会影响，讨论国家、阶级、社会性别、科技、城乡、区域等权力关系如何交织在当下中国媒介传播的结构轴心之中。另一方面，全球传播新科技与经济一体化的迅速渗透，中国在此进程中难以置身事外，媒介产品的生产也逐渐与西方经济生产模式的市场方式和组织结构接轨，并被预期产生社会效益和经济效益以及利润的文化产业转型。全体网民自觉自愿参与信息生产与消费，引导全球监控，无论是用来记账还是受众调查，这些监视系统都强化了商品化的过程，其方式是把由观众选择收集来的信息制造成畅销商品。可见新技术已对用户形成新的宰制性力量，如儿童与青少年对引领潮流的电子智能产品（Ipad、iPhone等）的迷恋依赖，都市家庭可能逐渐演化为苹果公司的消费商场，儿童"玩工"为智能产品消费终端的低龄劳工，其童年为跨国垄断公司贡献了最易驯服且有充裕时间玩乐的市场资源，垄断资本与新技术的圈地运动已经深入家庭与年幼的孩童；[①]社交网络朋友圈子的信任价值被电子商务利用来进行广告宣传、产品推销；网络游戏对家庭亲密关系的瓦解与破坏等。上述问题亟待具有社会关怀的传播学者进行扎实的经验与批判融会贯通的研究，从而解构技术垄断经济生产与日常生活消费的迷思，警醒沉醉于技术赋权与话语解放的受众质疑技术塑造的神话，警惕陷入传播新科技和文化创意经济联合打造的技术异化和被电子商业隐蔽剥夺的数字劳动。

　　而在方法探索方面，把符号学、民族志等研究方法引入传播学的研究乃当务之急，对传播产业及其媒介产品进行质的分析，追寻人类编织的意义之网的深度阐释，而不是机械模拟专业技术主义的科学范式。目的是揭示政治、经济、意识形态如何建构了特定的媒介生产，深刻认识被藏匿的历史起源和迷思在政治社会中的功用，可以弥补量化研究所无法进行的相关联意义的洞察。另一借助参与式观察、访谈及记录等方式收集资料的民族志的调查研究法则是从微观层面透视受众每天所经验的日常生活这一鲜活的文本。自法国年鉴学派开创突破帝王将相历史学研究的新貌伊始，城市与乡村的普通贫民的生活实践进入学术视野，人类学的民族志研究方法作为切入民众日常生活的优选路径已为社会科学界洞察经验社会的重要途径。

　　当下，传播新科技的普及与平等思潮的流通，同性恋团体、妇女以及少数族群等弱势群体进行社会抗争提供了新的抗争力量。弱势族群与社群凭借自己生产的"另类媒介"，争取社会参与的平等地位，并力争差异的权益保障，以及维护其文化认同，从而实践多种文化主义的社会平等理念。如笔者为探索中国大陆另类媒介《朋友通信》的生产，运用"民族志"（ethnography）方法，亲临青岛大学医学院附属医院性健康中心张北川教授的办公室（也是《朋友通信》的编辑部），进行实地观察与深入访谈，在张北川的协助之下，与《朋友通信》的读者、志愿者（他们是同性恋者）和谐交流。同时，又访问上海、成都、昆明的部分同性恋读者，倾听他们对《朋友通信》的收讯（reception）反馈。本研究放弃了问卷调查，因为有同性恋朋友告诉我，他们对问卷比较敏感，并且怀有戒心，学者们对此议题的热衷所产生的"研究疲乏症"（research fatigue）也使问卷调查的方法不太可行，反而会损害笔者与同性恋朋友的信任关系。最后，根据米尔斯和胡柏曼（Miles & Huberman, 1984）所强调的——"参与者的信息反馈是熟悉研究场景和推论相关性的途径"（引自 van Zoonen, 1994：146）的论点，笔者在本文初稿完成之后，为进一步提升研究的内在品质，听取了参与者的反馈结果，研究对象的珍贵见解对论文的修正甚有助益，参与者再次阅读最终的论文定稿，高度认同本文的研究观点与结论，认为笔者的诠释与研究参与者的经验和理解相契合。[②] 再如硕士研究生陈丹敏锐捕捉到网络社群媒介"肝胆相照"论坛的健康传播实践案例，探讨乙肝

①　曹晋、庄乾伟（2013），"指尖上的世界：都市学龄前儿童与电子智能产品侵袭的玩乐"，《开放时代》，2013年第1期，第178—198页。

②　曹晋（2007），"中国大陆另类媒介的生产：以《朋友通信》为例"，《传播与社会学刊》（香港），2012年4月，总第20期，第11—40页。

病毒携带者的反主流话语的维权行动。其硕士论文从乙肝疾病隐喻的形成，到草根社群利用网络社群媒介解构隐喻，话语在特定的社会经济环境背景下建构了隐喻，又在发展变化的技术环境中瓦解了隐喻。在这个过程中，话语传播的空间从现实社会到虚拟环境，再由虚拟环境折回现实社会，网络社群媒介为草根群体把握自己的话语权提供了平台和机会，为乙肝病毒携带者争取平等权利创造了条件。又如社会学家魏伟洞察到以互联网为代表的信息科技的发展，在当代中国同性恋身份的形成过程中扮演了关键的角色。他深入成都同性恋社群进行深入访谈和参与观察，发现媒体对于同性恋问题的日益关注和互联网上同志网站的发展极大地增进了普通公众对于同性恋的意识。[①] 再如传播学界的青年学者吴欢的博士论文别开生面关注老年社群如何使用网络来增加其社会资本，避免因年龄变老而与社会脱节或是缺少精神安慰的诸多问题，而此论题的研究得利于深入上海"老小孩网站"的民族志田野考察。

任何有创造力的学术，也都是批判性的学术，都需要在学术碰撞、交流与修正的进程中发展其论述的有效性。面对知识生产意识形态化、去地方性以及学科细化等趋势对传播学的支解，以及传播学学科理论素养薄弱等问题，甚至近年来产、学、研、政等多重权力关系结合的利益驱动对传播学主体性的削弱，诸多不利因素势必造成传播学的学术自觉、独立洞察、理论阐释力，甚至导致公共议题的广泛辩论和人文关怀的日渐消亡。当然，中国大陆传播学研究的困境并不孤立于社会情境之外，阿尔文·古尔德纳（Alvin Gouldner）说："在每一个理论体系中都隐藏着另外一个体系在不断挣扎。因此每个体系都有一个噩梦，即那个被束缚的体系会破笼而出。"（Gouldner，1980：380）[②]

《传播与社会的批判研究》英文读本凝聚了三位主编者、联合写作序言的龚元博士和研究生助教王娴同学的辛勤汗水。此读本耗时良久，2011 年文森特·莫斯可教授借前来复旦与会的匆忙时光，专门抽出一天时间和笔者面议若干合作议题，承蒙前辈的胸怀、信任和提携，笔者幸得灵感，决定联合国际传播政治经济学的两位泰斗（Vincent Mosco and Graham Murdock）一起创办"新媒体与全球信息社会的公正传播"的学术研究营；[③]另计划尽快编选一本最新动向的传播与社会研究的英文论文读本作为学术研究营的阅读文献在中国大陆出版，免去大陆青年学子求学期间不易获得全文英文文献阅读之苦。青年学者莱斯莉·里根·谢德受文森特·莫斯可教授之邀请参与共同担任英文读本主编，莱斯莉热情开朗，做事勤勉，两位外海外同行纯粹的学术职志与敬业精神激励笔者不曾有丝毫懈怠。我们从 2012 年春季开始，三位主编通过电子邮件频繁商讨并确定研究范畴，2012 年暑假论文筛选结束，王娴同学秋季就立即协助笔者联系作者征集中国大陆出版的免费版权，莱斯莉·里根·谢德女士给予了切实的协调，2013 年终于获得三十四篇英文论文中国出版的免费版权，王娴同学特别在实习阶段的奔忙中对读本的全部论文和序言进行细致审校，龚元博士与笔者就序言反复检查核对，吕笑月同学和孙乙同学也贡献了文字校对与排版技术的睿智。与此同时，国家教育部人文社会科学重点研究基地——复旦大学信息与传播研究中心支持的重大项目"传播新科技、性别政治与现代中国都市文化变迁"（编号：12JJD860001）和 2011 年复旦大学 985 三期整体推进人文科学研究项目"新媒体、新修辞与大众文化的变迁"（编号：2011RAWXKYB050）正好设计该读本为项目阶段性成果，该成果的出版为笔者主持的上海市"媒介与社会性别"精品课程和国际出版研究中心的学术文献积累提供了切实的英文配套读本。更加可喜的是"新闻传播与媒介化社会研究国家哲学社会科学创新研究基地"2014 年又特别邀请文森特·莫斯可教授前来访问研究，该英文读本也作为此行的成果顺利出版！课题组对全球同行文献的深度阅读，犹如学术甘露的浸润，促进笔者携带课题团队在国际比较的视野中，深刻反思本土问题。上海译文出版社张吉人主任和王巧贞编辑积极安排出版计划，不断推动出版进程。最后，我们三位主编要特别致谢三十余位全球学者和李新立领导的慷慨帮助！在大陆获得英文资料仍然比较困难的时期，所有论文学者无条件

授予上海译文出版社免费版权来出版此英文读本,这一知识传播的同侪生产(Peer Production)与分享模式(反版权)正好颠覆了资本壁垒和数字技术高墙,呼应了传播政治经济学反商业化的理念,我们将永远铭记若干未曾谋面的国际同行的珍贵支持!再次感谢文森特·莫斯可前辈真诚的学术情谊!

第一章

Class

1. Communication and Social Class

Vincent Mosco

Class analysis is one of the more well-trodden fields in social science (Weeden and Grusky, 2005; Wright, 2005). The communication and cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1976) begins his analysis of the concept by recognizing that it is an "obviously difficult" one, both in its range of meanings and in the specific application to a social division. The term appears in the Latin *classis* to describe a division according to property among the people of Rome and made its appearance in sixteenth century English in a reference, which Veblen would appreciate, to the various forms of vanity. One of the problems with the term is that it evolved in a very general sense to indicate groups of plants and animals, as well as collections of people, without specific social implications. The modern division among types of social classes such as lower, middle, upper, and working, arose with the Industrial Revolution and particularly superseded other notions of division (such as estate) with the increasing awareness that social divisions are created and not just simply inherited.

Debate on the concept revolves around distinctions among categorical, relational and formational dimensions which are terms usefully applied to all of the major forms of social division including race and gender as well. Social class is *categorical* in the sense that it defines a category of people who occupy a position in society by virtue of its economic standing measured by wealth and or income. Seen as a *relationship*, social class refers to the connections among people based on their location with respect to the primary processes of social production and reproduction. In this sense, class is not a position that adheres to an individual or group, but a relationship that connects capital and the working class, based on ownership of the means of production. According to the relational view, capital does not exist without the working class and vice versa. Social class is therefore embodied in the shifting relationship that connects and divides them. Finally, class is also, as Williams (1976: 58) notes, "a *formation* in which, for historical reasons, consciousness of this situation and the organization to deal with it have developed." According to this view, class exists to the extent that people are aware and act on their class position. From this perspective, class is not just an external category, nor even just an external relationship. It also is a set of values that form an identity.

Although distinguishable as such, these ways of thinking about social class also overlap considerably. For example, much of the work of the social historian E. P. Thompson (1963) is about social class as relational and formational. His history of the working class in England examines how it arose in relationship to a new class of capitalists who needed to employ what was once independent craft and agricultural labour in their new factories. In the process, new industrial workers came to identify with new values that formed the core of what it meant to be working class. There is also a

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long-standing debate about specific dimensions of these definitions. What marks a class category: income, wealth, power, status, some combination of these? What defines the relationship: the means of production? of reproduction? of administration? What constitutes class consciousness: individual awareness? social communication? organized resistance? Widespread differences about these dimensions and about the compatibility of various positions mark contemporary debates about social class.

The political economy of communication includes a literature on social class, principally from a categorical perspective, exploring the significance of class power. These encompass studies demonstrating how media elites produce and reproduce their control over the communication business, such as analyses of its class composition, as well as forms of integration and division within the media elite. Early studies include Mills' (1956) research on media and entertainment elites in the United States and Clement's (1975) assessment of media elites in Canada.

Several types of studies mark contemporary research on social class. The first follows a long tradition by examining the role of media, including both news and entertainment in the construction of social class (Bullock, Wyche, and Williams, 2001; Heider, 2004; Kendall, 2005). This research explores how the media represent class divisions in society and how different social class segments actually behave or should behave in society. Some of these representations reinforce social class stereotypes but in different ways. On the one hand, there is the direct reinforcement that comes from portrayals, for example, of the "authoritarian" working class. On the other hand, there is the popular debasing of the upper class through depictions of the their immoral or downright irrational behavior. Such portrayals suggest that those at top are incapable of self-control, let alone the rational and systematic exploitation of an entire society.

Next, contemporary research on social class and the media also pays greater attention to media outside of North America and to the growing networks of class rule that link mass media to new communication and information technologies (Chakravartty and Zhao, 2008; Chinn and Fairlie, 2006; Graham, 2002; Mansell, 2002; Pendakur, 2003; van Dijk, 2005). There is especially greater attention on developments in China and India where the media and information technology have grown spectacularly over the past decade. Research on the digital divide or the unequal distribution of access to new media services is also prominent, including studies of divides within societies and globally. There are also attempts to move beyond the digital divide idea by examining how to develop a package of communication and information services that would satisfy a fundamental human right to communicate.

Third, there are a growing number of studies that follow in the tradition of C. Wright Mills' classic work on the power elite. These examine the dense network that links media entrepreneurs to the rest of the elite class, through the range of connections on corporate boards, business associations, civic organizations, and private clubs (Artz and Kamalipour, 2003; Chomsky, 1999; Edge, 2007; Herman and Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2000; Rothkoph, 2002; Sussman, 2005). Specifically, it describes how media moguls like the Asper family in Canada are able to build a media empire and influence governments. It also addresses the processes by which a set of powerful institutional "filters" help to shape the construction of news at elite media like *The New York Times*. Some of this work recognizes that media increasingly spill over into the broader information arena and describe how power is applied to such diverse projects as the construction of a high tech business district that saps resources from the needier sectors of society and the promotion of the global brands in newly emerging societies.

Fourth, there are studies that concentrate on the process by which class rule takes place in policy-making and regulation (Burkart and McCourt, 2006; Chakravarty and Sarikakis, 2006; Mosco, 2003;

Schiller, 2007). These also range widely to include struggles over the governance of digital music, the Internet, telecommunications systems, and information resources. Specifically, they document the mobilization of class power to construct a profitable regime of digital rights management over music, the expansion of corporate control over Internet governance, and the shift from public interest to market-based pricing in telecommunications and information.

These forms of class analysis are important because they demonstrate that class tells us a great deal about the production, distribution, and consumption of communication in society. Nevertheless, they treat social class largely in *categorical* terms. The primary interest is in determining membership position in a category and in describing related behavioral patterns, including those responsible for the reproduction of class categories. They foreground social class as structure and treat the process of class formation largely as a problem of reproduction. This work has been essential to the critique of liberal pluralist views that deny or ignore the existence of a class structure and which maintain that the production, distribution, and consumption of media is the natural outcome of a democratic marketplace. According to liberal pluralism, the market may need some adjustment, but because the primary unit of analysis is the individual consumer (defined as a person or a business), its proposed adjustments amount to improved market functioning for the individual, rather than the amelioration of fundamental class divisions.

Categorical class analysis provides a powerful critique of the liberal pluralist view, but its critical warrant can be strengthened by greater attention to three points. First, class analysis in communication would benefit by placing greater weight on *relational* and *formational* conceptions of social class. Second, it would be strengthened by addressing the connections between social class and other entry points in the structuration process, particularly *gender*, *race* and those *social movements* that organize the energies of resistance to class (and other forms of) power. Finally it needs a tighter link to the construction of *hegemony*, or the social constitution of "common sense".

Whereas a categorical approach defines class by what is contained within a specific category, i. e., wealth or income, a relational method looks for the connections or links between categories. According to this view, social class is not designated by what a class contains or lacks, but by its relationship to other classes. There is no ruling class without a working class and vice versa. What principally counts about class is what defines the relationship between classes, for example, ownership and control over the means of production, reproduction, communication, etc. The relationship can be characterized in numerous ideal types including *harmony*, where classes are integrated and mutually accept the class relationship, *separation*, where classes are largely excluded from one another, and *conflict* or *struggle*, where class relations are regularly contested.

In actual research practice, categorical and relational approaches overlap because one cannot speak of a category without some reference to the relationships that different categories form. Hence, even research that focuses almost complete attention on the communication elite will likely include material on the impact of this elite on its workforce and on consumers. Similarly, relational approaches necessarily refer to the categories that different relationships connect or divide. Even though the differences amount in practice to matters of degree or emphasis, these can be significant for the overall analysis of social class. One of the important consequences of a categorical emphasis in political economy is a specific view of class that foregrounds the resources that give class power to the top categories and what, as a result, those categories at the bottom lack. Findings based on this view are significant, but incomplete. It makes an important difference in the meaning of resource distribution to determine the nature of the relationships among classes that sustain or disrupt it.

Of equal significance is the problem of defining a class by what it lacks. Again, it is important to acknowledge the significance of a lack of control over the means of production, reproduction, and

distribution, and of a lack of the wealth, income, and the opportunities that go along with them. In communication, it is equally significant to document the consequences of a lack of access to the means of communication, mass media and telecommunications. However, such a categorical view is limited to the conclusion, however important, that the lower classes are defined by the absence of power-generating resources. Some sociologists have addressed this problem by viewing class structure as a continuum of categories (upper-upper, lower-upper, etc.) in which, as one moves down the continuum, classes exhibit diminishing resources. In communication, Fiske (1989) is most notable in his development of the categorical continuum approach to specifically cultural resources. However well this expands the class structure and recognizes some of the fuzziness at the borders of class categories, it does more to obscure real categorical and relational class differences, than it does to advance either approach. A social relational approach rejects the calls for eliminating categories because it rejects the conclusion that they are merely artifacts of a real continuum and insists on specifying real relations among categories and on addressing class *formation*.

The concept of class formation is central to a structuration approach because it refers to the process by which social agency creates class through the medium of class structure. From this vantage point, one views class as an active process of social formation that makes use of, and is constrained by, the resources available in the class structure. Social class is therefore less a category relatively full or empty of resources, including communication resources, and more appropriately the set of changing social relationships resulting from the actions of social agents making use of, and limited by, the very structure of those relationships. In the process of social action, people constitute themselves and their class relations. This approach is less mechanical than one concentrating on categories because it permits one to see social class as both a central material force in social life and as the product of social action carried out by people on all sides of class relations.

Given the importance of a categorical view, one does not find many examples of social relational and formational approaches to social class in political economy research. This is understandable considering the ability of class power to deepen a sense of alienation, which Bourdieu once argued rests on "a force of something said with authority" by which subaltern classes are:

> Unceasingly asked to accept the point of view of others about themselves, to bear in themselves the viewpoint and judgment of others, they are always exposed to becoming strangers to themselves, to cease being subjects of the judgment they bring to bear on themselves, the centre of the perspective of the view they have of themselves. (Cited in Mattelart and Siegelaub, 1983: 19).

An early starting point for the formational approach is the communication research of Mattelart, who calls this task the search for a "lost paradigm" containing the ways subaltern classes constitute themselves, both in relation to dominant classes, as well as from a self-conscious sense of their own needs and interests. Acknowledging the difficulties of moving beyond a categorical view, Mattelart (1983) addresses the use of the mass media and popular cultural practices outside the West and the tradition of rank-and-file communication among workers in the West. He does so to demonstrate how these people built their own means of communication, developed their own languages, and their own common sense. In the process, they established their own popular hegemony, which, though constituted along with, alongside and in conflict with a hegemony of the ruling classes, nevertheless provided independent grounds for social action, including class struggle. Political economists have begun to respond more substantially to this call for a formational approach to social class (Artz, Macek, and Cloud, 2006; Calabrese and Sparks, 2003; Downing, 2001; Dyer-Witheford, 1999; Fones-Wolf, 2006; Mazepa, 2007; Schiller, 2007a). This has begun to examine working people as actual producers of communication and culture. It is important to extend this discussion by examining a

social class perspective that aims to go beyond the categorical by addressing labour in the communication industries.

Labour and Social Class

The exercise of class power in the workplace has a long history in political economy, with much of the debate in the nineteenth century centering around Marx's brief discussion of the separation of conception from execution at the point of production and reinvigorated in contemporary debates with the work of Braverman (1974). Since there are numerous dimensions to this topic in contemporary research on social class, it is useful to give this more extensive treatment, particularly since there is growing research on the exercise of class power in the communications workplace through the elimination of labour and through the exercise of surveillance-based control over the remaining workforce (Deuze, 2007; Huws, 2003; McKercher and Mosco, 2006, 2007; Mosco and McKercher, 2008). Furthermore, efforts are increasing to build on this research by offering relational and formational perspectives on communication labour and social class.

Because communication and information technology have become so influential, jobs based on these technologies are receiving a great deal of attention with particular emphasis on the class composition of the so-called knowledge occupations. How one addresses this issue has important political as well as theoretical implications. Some have defined knowledge labour narrowly, limiting it to work that directly manipulates symbols to create an original knowledge product, or to add obvious value to an existing one (Florida, 2002). According to this view, knowledge workers are people like writers and artists, web-page designers and software engineers, university professors and film directors. They comprise a so-called creative class that can translate intellectual power into political and economic power, as Daniel Bell predicted they would in his 1973 book *The Coming of Post-industrial Society*.

A broader definition of knowledge work encompasses the labour of those who handle, distribute, and convey information and knowledge. This includes school teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels, most journalists, librarians, media technicians like telecommunication and cable television workers, as well as those who work in the postal services. (See, for example, Day, 2007; Deuze, 2007; Kumar, 2007; Martin, 2007; Tracy and Hayashi, 2007.) These are considered knowledge workers because an increasing amount of their work involves making use of information or information technology to efficiently and effectively deliver a product whose value is intended to expand a recipient's knowledge. In essence, they represent a middle class within the knowledge sector.

Finally, there is growing research asserting that anyone in the chain of producing and distributing knowledge products is a knowledge worker. In this view, the low-wage women workers in Silicon Valley and abroad who manufacture and assemble cables and electronic components are knowledge workers because they are an integral part of the value chain that produces the essential hardware of knowledge work (Pellow and Park, 2002; Smith, Sonnenfeld, and Pellow, 2006). Similarly, call center workers, who sell products and services over telecommunications networks, would also fall within this broad definition of knowledge work because they are central to selling information and because they make use of the products of communication technology to carry out their work. Furthermore, the management and control of their work would be far more difficult were it not for the advanced surveillance technologies made possible by developments in communication and information technology (Head, 2003).

In essence, a categorical class analysis of media and knowledge labour yields a three level hierarchy. But that is not sufficient because it is important to look beyond external criteria and examine the subjective experiences of the workers themselves, including the ways they choose to

organize or structure their trade unions. This takes us to a relational and a formational view of social class. Trade unions like the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and its Canadian counterpart, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), have brought together a diverse range of workers under the same umbrella — journalists and telephone operators, translators and customer service providers, health care workers and printers, as well as the people who write and broadcast the news and those who work the cameras and sound boards to bring it to viewers and listeners. These two unions have had some success in mobilizing all three social class levels of knowledge workers in effective labour actions. However, the mixed pattern of labour convergence across the communication sector in North America, including the failure of some creative unions to unite, leaves open the question of how trade unions themselves bound the term knowledge worker (McKercher and Mosco, 2007; Mosco and McKercher, 2008).

All of this is directly relevant to addressing the importance of social class because debates about the scope of how to think about knowledge work are also debates about social hierarchies. Since much of the research on knowledge work tends to see inclusion in that category as a positive development for the workers who make the move, the type of definition one accepts is also an implicit decision about who and how many are privileged. Limiting the definition to Florida's creative class, or even to his "supercreative" core, gives greater weight to the privilege of being a knowledge worker than would accepting a broader definition that covers different types of workers, including many, such as call center employees, about whom it is far more difficult to justify the privileged label. A creative class opens the door to one type of political change, such as a shift in power to knowledge creators. A more heterogeneous vision of the knowledge work category points to another type of politics, one predicated on questions about whether knowledge workers can unite across occupational and national boundaries, whether they can translate solidarity based on a categorical view of their social class position into a formational view. Finally, what should knowledge workers do with their class solidarity?

Another significant division in the concept of knowledge work holds important but different political implications. Think of the continuum we have just described as operating along a vertical hierarchy, directly creative workers at the top and those who build computer hardware at the bottom. Knowledge workers can also be divided along a horizontal axis, falling into a pure content category at one end of the continuum and a pure technical category at the other with most knowledge and information workers located somewhere in the middle. Content and technical groups both include creative workers in Florida's meaning of the term, but many other types of workers as well. The content category encompasses artists, entertainers, teachers, journalists, musicians, and others who might also be called cultural workers. The technical category covers software designers, biomedical engineers, audiovisual technicians, and those whose creative contribution is the construction of code, the design and manufacture of technologies, and the production of signals. The work of this category makes possible the labour of cultural and other producers of what is typically viewed as content. Examined this way, the difficulties of calling all these people knowledge workers become readily apparent. What do engineers and writers have in common? Journalists and telecommunications specialists? Musicians and cancer scientists? Regardless of whether the concept of knowledge worker is defined broadly or narrowly along the vertical axis, we are still left with the divide between those who focus on creating culture and those who concentrate on technology. This may make sense in a categorical or relational definition of social class but does it make a difference formationally, i. e. , in the class with which these workers identify?

This horizontal divide holds practical significance because cultural and technical workers are increasingly part of the same workplace and participate in the same labour process. This raises the obvious question of whether they can work together in a harmonious way. More importantly, technical

and cultural knowledge workers are often included in the same labour organizations. Unions like the CWA and the CEP have brought together very different types of knowledge workers, not just those who are higher or lower in a vertical status hierarchy but also those who are on one side or the other of the divide between cultural and technical workers. What does this mean for the prospects of building labour solidarity? Can this succeed within a single union, within a single country, across one border, or across one or more oceans? Considering the vertical and horizontal divisions that mark the meaning of knowledge work, it is easy to appreciate the challenge facing those who would unite them. Research in the political economy of communication demonstrates some of the successes and failures (Mosco and McKercher, 2008). But much more needs to be done because the stakes are high. Simply put, answering the question: "Will knowledge workers of the world unite?" will go a long way to shaping the global political economy.

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2. Dallas Smythe Today — The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory. Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value. [①]

Christian Fuchs

Introduction

In 1977, Dallas Smythe published his seminal article *Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism* (Smythe 1977a), in which he argued that Western Marxism has not given enough attention to the complex role of communications in capitalism. The article's publication was followed by an important foundational debate of media sociology that came to be known as *the Blindspot Debate* (Murdock 1978, Livant 1979, Smythe answered with a rejoinder to Murdock: Smythe 1994, 292 – 299) and by another article of Smythe on the same topic (*On the Audience Commodity and its Work*: Smythe 1981, 22 – 51). More than 30 years have passed and the rise of neoliberalism resulted in a turn away from the interest in class and capitalism and in the rise of postmodernism and the logic of the commodification of everything: Marxism became the blindspot of the social sciences. The declining interest in Marx and Marxism is visualized in figure 1 that shows the number of articles in the Social Sciences Citation Index that contain one of the keywords Marx, Marxist or Marxism in the article topic description and were published in the five time periods 1968 – 1977, 1978 – 1987, 1988 – 1997, 1998 – 2007, 2008 – 2011. Choosing these periods allows observing if there has been a change since the start of the new capitalist crisis in 2008 and also makes sense because the 1968 revolt marked a break that also transformed academia.

Figure 1 shows that there was a relatively large academic article output about Marx in the period 1978 – 1987 (2752). Given that the number of articles published increases historically, also the interest in the period 1968 – 1977 seems to have been high. One can observe a clear contraction of the output of

articles that focus on Marx in the periods 1988 – 1997 (1716) and 1998 – 2007 (1248). Given the historical increase of published articles, this contraction is even more severe. This period has also been the time of the intensification of neoliberalism, the commodification of everything (including public service communication in many countries) and a strong turn towards postmodernism and culturalism in the social sciences. One can see that the average number of annual articles published about Marxism in the period 2008 – 2011 (190) has increased in comparisons to the periods 1988 – 2007 (125 per year) and 1988 – 1997 (172 per year). This circumstance is an empirical indicator for a renewed interest in Marx and Marxism in the social sciences as effect of the new capitalist crisis. The question is if and how this interest can be sustained and materialized in institutional transformations.

Due to the rising gap between the rich and the poor, widespread precarious labour, and the new global capitalist crisis, neoliberalism and the silence about class and capitalism have suffered cracks, fissures, and holes. Eagleton (2011) notes that never has a thinker been so travestied as Marx and shows that the contrary of what the common prejudices say about Marx makes up the core of his works. But since the start of the global capitalist crisis in 2008, a relatively large interest in the works of Karl Marx has developed. Slavoj Žižek (2010) argues in this context that the recent world economic crisis has resulted in a renewed interest in the Marxian Critique of the Political Economy. This is also shown by the attention recently paid to Marx in the mainstream media. *Time* magazine, for example, had Marx on its cover and asked about the global financial crisis: What would Marx think? (*Time Magazine*, February 2, 2009). Hobsbawm (2011, 12f) says that for understanding the global dimension of contemporary capitalism, capitalism's contradictions and crises and the existence of socio-economic inequality, we "must ask Marx's questions" (p. 13). "Economic and political liberalism, singly or in combination, cannot provide the solution to the problems of the twenty-first century. Once again the time has come to take Marx seriously" (Hobsbawm 2011, 419). Given the importance of Marx for understanding, interpreting, and changing contemporary society, we should take Smythe's suggestion to develop a Marxist theory of media and communication very serious today. If we want to have a society and media oriented on human interests, then we need a Marxist theory of society and a Marxist theory of media and communication.

The task of this paper is to explore perspectives for the Marxist study of media and communication today. First, I discuss the importance of taking a Marxist approach for studying media and communication (section 2). Second, I give a short overview of the audience commodity debate and its
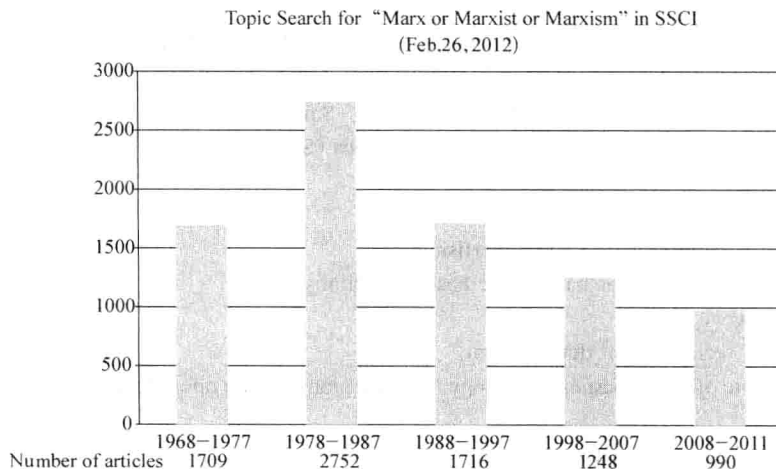
Figure 1   Articles published about Marx and Marxism in the Social Sciences Citation Index

renewal (section 3). In section 4, I analyze social media capital accumulation with the help of the notion of Internet prosumer commodification. Section 5 provides an overview of ideological changes that relate to digital media, perceived changes and the relationship between play and labour in contemporary capitalism (playbour). Section 6 presents a critique of criticisms of the digital labour debate. Finally, I draw some conclusions.

The Importance of Critical Political Economy, Critical Theory and Dallas Smythe Today

Dallas Smythe was a founding figure in the establishment of the Political Economy of Communications and taught the first course in the field (Mosco 2009, 82). He stressed the importance of studying media and communication in a critical and non-administrative way: "By 'critical' researchable problems we mean how to reshape or invent institutions to meet the collective needs of the relevant social community [...] By 'critical' tools, we refer to historical, materialist analysis of the contradictory process in the real world. By 'administrative' ideology, we mean the linking of administrative-type problems and tools, with interpretation of results that supports, or does not seriously disturb, the status quo. By 'critical' ideology, we refer to the linking of 'critical' researchable problems and critical tools with interpretations that involve radical changes in the established order" (Smythe and Dinh 1983, 118).

In the article *On the Political Economy of Communications*, Smythe (1960) defined the "central purpose of the study of the political economy of communications" as the evaluation of "the effects of communication agencies in terms of the policies by which they are organized and operated" and the analysis of "the structure and policies of these communication agencies in their social settings" (Smythe 1960, 564). He identified various communications policy areas in this article. Whereas there are foundations of a general political economy in this paper, there are no traces of Marx in it. Janet Wasko (2004, 311) argues that although "Smythe's discussion at this point did not employ radical or Marxist terminology, it was a major departure from the kind of research that dominated the study of mass communications at that time". Wasko (2004, 312) points out that it was in the "1970s that the political economy of media and communications (PE/C) was explicitly defined again but this time within a more explicitly Marxist framework". She mentions in this context the works of Nicholas Garnham, Peter Golding, Armand Mattelart, Graham Murdock, Dallas Smythe as well as the *Blindspot Debate* (Wasko 2004, 312 – 313).

Later, Smythe (1981) formulated explicitly the need for a Marxist Political Economy of Communications. He spoke of a "Marxist theory of communication" (Smythe 1994, 258) and that critical theory means "Marxist or quasi-Marxist" theory (Smythe 1994, 256). He identified eight core aspects of a Marxist political economy of communications (Smythe 1981, xvi-xviii):

1) materiality,

2) monopoly capitalism,

3) audience commodification and advertising,

4) media communication as part of the base of capitalism,

5) labour power,

6) critique of technological determinism,

7) the dialectic of consciousness, ideology and hegemony on the one side and material practices on the other side,

8) the dialectics of arts and science.

Smythe reminds us of the importance of the engagement with Marx's works for studying the media in capitalism critically.

He argued that Gramsci and the Frankfurt School advanced the concepts of ideology, consciousness, and hegemony as areas "saturated with subjectivism and positivism" (Smythe 1981, xvii). These Marxist thinkers would have advanced an "idealist theory of the communications commodity" (Smythe 1994, 268) that situates the media only on the superstructure of capitalism and forgets to ask what economic functions they serve in capitalism.

In a review of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's (1974) book *The Consciousness Industry*, Smythe on the one hand agreed with Enzensberger that the "mind industry" wants to "sell the existing order" (Enzensberger 1974, 10), but on the other hand disagrees with the assumption that its "main business and concern is not to sell its product" (Enzensberger 1974, 10): "Enzensberger's theory that every social system's communications policy serves the controlling class interest in perpetuating that system is of coruse correct", but to say that "the mass media and consciousness industry have no product" would mean to identify commodity production with "crude physical production" (Smythe 1977b, 200). Smythe (1977b) characterizes Enzensberger's views as bourgeois, idealistic and anarcho-liberal. For Smythe (1994, 266 – 291), the material aspect of communications is that audiences work, are exploited and sold as commodity to advertisers. He was more interested in aspects of surplus value generation of the media than their ideological effects. So Smythe called for analyzing the media more in terms of surplus value and exploitation and less in terms of manipulation. Nicholas Garnham (1990, 30) shares with Smythe the insight that the Political Economy of Communications should "shift attention away from the conception of the mass media as ideological apparatuses" and focus on the analysis of their "economic role" in surplus value generation and advertising. The analysis of media as "vehicles for ideological domination" is for Garnham (2004, 94) "a busted flush" that is not needed for explaining "the relatively smooth reproduction of capitalism".

Given the analyses of Smythe and Garnham, the impression can be created that Frankfurt School Critical Theory focuses on ideology critique and the Political Economy of Media/Communications on the analysis of capital accumulation by and with the help of the media. This is however a misunderstanding. Although wide-read works of the Frankfurt School focused on ideology (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford 1950, Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, Marcuse 1964), other books in its book series *Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie* dealt with the changes of accumulation in what was termed late capitalism or monopoly capitalism (for example: Pollock 1956, Friedmann 1959). The Marxist political economist Henryk Grossmann was one of the most important members of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* in the 1920s and wrote his main work at the Institute (Grossmann 1929). Although only few will today agree with Grossmann's theory of capitalist breakdown, it remains a fact that Marxist political economy was an element of the Institut für Sozialforschung right from its beginning and had with Pollock and Grossmann two important representatives. After Horkheimer had become director of the Institute in 1930, he formulated an interdisciplinary research programme that aimed at bringing together philosophers and scholars from a broad range of disciplines, including economics (Horkheimer 1931). When formulating their general concepts of critical theory, both Horkheimer (2002, 244) and Marcuse (1941) had a combination of philosophy and Marx's Critique of the Political Economy in mind.

Just like Critical Political Economy was not alien to the Frankfurt School, ideology critique has also not been alien to the approach of the Critical Political Economy of the Media and Communication. For Graham Peter Murdock and Golding (1974, 4), the media are organizations that "produce and distribute commodities", are means for distributing advertisements and also have an "ideological dimension" by disseminating "ideas about economic and political structures". Murdock (1978, 469) stressed in the *Blindspot Debate* that there are non-advertising based culture industries (like popular culture) that sell "explanations of social order and structured inequality" and "work with and through

ideology — selling the system" (see also: Artz 2008, 64). Murdock (1978) argued in the *Blindspot Debate* that Smythe did not enough acknowledge Western Marxism in Europe and that one needs a balance between ideology critique and political economy for analyzing the media in capitalism.

Smythe acknowledged himself the importance of ideology when talking about the "consciousness industry" (Smythe 1981, 4 - 9, 270 - 299). Although critical of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's works (Smythe 1977b), Smythe took up Enzensberger's concept of the consciousness industry and interpreted it in his own way. In contrast to the Frankfurt School, Symthe does not understand ideology as false consciousness, but as "system of beliefs, attitudes, and ideas" (Smythe 1981, 171). The task of the consciousness industry is for Smythe to make people buy commodities and pay taxes (Smythe 1994, 250). Its further task is to promote values that favour capitalism and the private property system (Smythe 1994, 251 - 253). One role of the capitalist media would be the "pervasive reinforcement of the ideological basis of the capitalist system", assumptions like "human nature is necessarily selfish and possessive. It has always been this way: You can't change human nature" (Smythe 1994, 251). So while Smythe criticized the Frankfurt School, he advanced and confirmed the importance of ideology critique himself. Robert Babe argues in this context that although Smythe stressed the need for a materialist theory of culture that sees audience power "as the media's main output" (Babe 2000, 133f), his concept of the Consciousness Industry "is 'idealist' in Smythe's sense of the term" (Babe 2000, 134). The circumstance that Smythe took up Enzensberger's terminology and gave space to discussing the attempts of the media to ideologically distort reality shows that although he used fierce words against some represenatives of the Frankfurt School (idealist, bourgeois, etc.), he did not altogether dismiss ideology critique, but rather wanted to open up the debate for also giving attention to the media's capital accumulation strategies that are coupled to its role as mind manager.

A difference between the Critical Political Economy of Media and Communications and Critical Theory is that the first is strongly rooted in economic theory and the second in philosophy and social theory. Dallas Smythe acknowledged this difference: "While the cutting edge of critical theory lies in political economy, critical theory in communications has the transdisciplinary scope of the social sciences, humanities, and arts" (Smythe 1984, 211). Smythe defined critical theory broadly as "criticism of the contradictory aspects of the phenomena in their systemic context" (Smythe and Dinh 1983, 123) and therefore concluded that critical theory is not necessarily Marxist. The historical Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School has its roots in Marxist political philosophy, so the question is if one should really have a broad definition of the term "critical" that does not focus on systemic critique.

The approaches of the Frankfurt School and of the Critique of the Political Economy of Media and Communications should be understood as being complementary. There has been a stronger focus on ideology critique in the Frankfurt School approach for historical reasons. For Horkheimer and Adorno, the rise of German fascism, the Stalinist praxis and American consumer capitalism showed the defeat of the revolutionary potentials of the working class (Habermas 1984, 366f). They wanted to explain why the revolutionary German working class followed Hitler, which brought up the interest in the analysis of the authoritarian personality and media propaganda. As Communists and coming from Jewish families, Horkheimer and Adorno (as well as their colleagues) were directly threatened by the violence of National Socialism and therefore had to escape from Germany. The violent consequences of Nazi ideology may partly explain the relevance that the notion of ideology had throughout their lives in their works. The Anglo-American approach of the Political Economy of the Media and Communications was developed by people like Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller in countries that during the Second World War fought against fascism. Whereas North American capitalism was after 1945 based on liberal ideology, anti-communism and a strong consumer culture that certainly also had

fascist potentials, German post-war capitalism was built on the legacy of National Socialism and a strong persistence of fascist thinking in everyday life and politics.

The lives of Smythe and Schiller themselves were not as in the case of Horkheimer and Adorno directly threatened by fascist regimes. But both showed a lot of concern about fascism, which shaped their thought. Vincent Mosco (2009, 83) writes in this context that contacts with anti-fascists that fought in the Spanish civil war had profound political effects on Smythe's thinking. Serving in the US army in World War II and working for the US government in Germany after the war had "substantial formative influence" (Mosco 2009, 85) on Herbert Schiller. The works of the American economist Robert A. Brady influenced both Smythe's and Schiller's thinking (Schiller 1999). Brady had contacts with Franz Neumann, a representative of the Frankfurt School who was in exile in the USA and just like Brady (1937) wrote an analysis of National Socialism (Neumann 1966). Brady was especially concerned with fascist potentials of capitalism, like in the form of media propaganda and public relations. Neumann (1966) stressed that National Socialism was a form of monopoly capitalism that was based on a leadership cult. Dan Schiller (1999, 100) argues that "Brady endowed the study of the political economy of communications with a critical intellectual legacy". The fascist threat was both a concern for German critical theorists and North American critical political economists.

Horkheimer's (1947) notion of instrumental reason and Marcuse's (1964) notion of technological rationality open up connections between the two approaches. Horkheimer and Marcuse stressed that in capitalism there is a tendency that freedom of action is replaced by instrumental decision making on the part of capital and the state so that the individual is expected to only react and not to act. The two concepts are grounded in Georg Lukács (1923/1972) notion of reification that is a reformulation of Marx's (1867) concept of fetishism. Reification means "that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (Lukács 1923/1972, 83).

The media in capitalism are modes of reification in a multiple sense:

- First, commercial media reduce humans to the status of consumers of advertisements.
- Second, culture is in capitalism to a large degree connected to the commodity form. There are cultural commodities that are bought by consumers and audience and user commodities that media consumers and Internet prosumers become themselves.
- Third, in order to reproduce its existence, capitalism has to present itself as the best possible (or only possible) system and makes use of the media in order to try to keep this message (in all its differentiated forms) hegemonic.

The first and the second dimension constitute the economic dimension of instrumental reason, the third dimension the ideological form of instrumental reason. Capitalist media are necessarily means of advertising and commodification and spaces of ideology. Advertisement and cultural commodification make humans an instrument for economic profit accumulation. Ideology aims at instilling the belief in the system of capital and commodities into human's subjectivity. The goal is that human thoughts and actions do not go beyond capitalism, do not question and revolt against this system and thereby play the role of instruments for the perpetuation of capitalism. It is of course an important question to which extent ideology is always successful and to which degree it is questioned and resisted, but the crucial aspect about ideology is that it encompasses strategies and attempts to make human subjects instrumental in the reproduction of domination and exploitation.

For Marx, the analysis of capitalism starts with the analysis of the commodity: "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form" (Marx 1867, 125). Marx

therefore begins the analysis of capitalism with the analysis of the commodity: its use value, exchange value, value, the labour embodied in it, the value forms of the commodity, including the money form (x commodity A = y amount of money). After this analysis, Marx turns in chapter 1. 4 (The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret) of *Capital*, *Volume 1* to the analysis ideology as immanent feature of the commodity. The "mysterious character of the commodity-form" is that human social relations that create commodities are not visible in the commodity, but appear as "the socio-natural properties of these things". "The definite social relation between men themselves [take in ideologies] [...] the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Marx 1867, 165). Ideologies legitimatize various phenomena by creating the impression that the latter exist always and naturally and by ignoring the historical and social character of things. So for Marx, ideology and commodification are interconnected aspects of capitalism. A Marxist theory of communication should therefore, besides the focus on struggles and alternatives, have a double-focus on the role of media and communication in the context of ideology and commodification.

Smythe said that the "starting point for a general Marxist theory of communications is [...] the theory of commodity exchange" (Smythe 1994, 259). Adorno acknowledged that "the concept of exchange is [...] the hinge connecting the conception of a critical theory of society to the construction of the concept of society as a totality" (Adorno 2000, 32). Commodity and commodity exchange are crucial concepts for Critical Political Economy and Critical Theory. As the commodity concept is connected to both capital accumulation and ideology, both approaches should start simultaneously with the value aspects and the ideology aspects of media commodities.

Accumulation and ideology go hand in hand. An example: "social media". After the dot. com crisis in 2000, there was a need to establish new capital accumulation strategies for the capitalist Internet economy. Investors were reluctant to invest finance capital after the crisis as venture capital into digital media companies. So the discourse on "social media" became focused on new capital accumulation models for the Internet economy. Nobody knew if the users were interested in microblogs, social networking sites, etc. The rise of "social media" as a new capital accumulation model was accompanied by a social media ideology: that "social media" are new ("web 2. 0"), pose new opportunities for participation, will bring about an "economic democracy", enable new forms of political struggle ("Twitter revolution"), more democracy ("participatory culture"), etc. The rise of new media was accompanied by a techno-deterministic and techno-optimistic ideology. This ideology was necessary for convincing investors and users to support the social media capital accumulation model. The political economy of surplus value generation on "social media" and ideology heavily interacted here in order to enable the economic and discursive rise of "social media".

Some scholars tends to say that Frankfurt School and the Critical Political Economy of Media and Communication are pessimistic, elitist, and neglect audiences (see for example: Hall 1986, 1988; Grossberg 1995/1998). They say that the concept of ideology as false consciousness makes "both the masses and the capitalists look like judgemental dopes" (Hall 1986, 33). Hall (1988, 44) criticizes Lukács (whose works have been one of the main influences on the Frankfurt School) by saying that the false consciousness theorem is simplistic (it assumes that "vast numbers of ordinary people, mentally equipped in much the same way as you or I, can simply be thoroughly and systematically duped into misrecognizing entirely where their real interests lie") and elitist ("Even less acceptable is the position that, whereas 'they' — the masses — are the dupes of history, 'we' — the privileged — [...] can see, transitively, right through into the truth, the essence, of a situation").

In other works, Hall advocated a different concept of ideology that is not completely unrelated to the one of the Frankfurt School. In their work *Policing the Crisis*, Hall et al. (1978) showed how the state and the media use moral panics about crime as "the principal ideological consciousness by means

of which a 'silent majority' is won over to the support of increasingly coercive measures" (Hall et al. 1978, 221) and the establishment of a law and order-society. If both the mainstream media and the police argue for increasing law and order policies in the course of a moral panic, then they both legitimate the control process, a mutual enforcement of the "control culture" and a "signification culture" emerges (Hall et al. 1978, 76) so that "the mutual articulation" of the two "create an *effective ideological and control closure* around the issue" (Hall et al. 1978, 76). The media, just like the police, then act as "an apparatus of the control process itself — an 'ideological state apparatus'" (Hall et al. 1978, 76).

Colin Sparks describes the relationship between Stuart Hall's version of Cultural Studies and Marxism as "move towards marxism and move away from marxism" (Sparks 1996, 71). He argues that Hall in the 1970s engaged with structural Marxism, which culminated in the *Policing the Crisis*-book, and that then there was a "slow movement away from any self-identification with marxism" (Sparks 1996, 88) in the 1980s that was influenced by the uptake of Ernesto Laclau's approach. The resulting "distance between cultural studies and marxism" is for Sparks a "retrograde move" (Sparks 1996, 98). Vincent Mosco (2009) argues that Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, Willis and Hall et al. (1976) "maintained a strong commitment to an engaged class analysis" (Mosco 2009, 233), but that later Cultural Studies became "less than clear about its commitment to political projects and purposes" (Mosco 2009, 229) and that therefore it is "hard to make the case that cultural studies has devoted much attention to labor, the activity that occupies most people's waking hours" (Mosco 2009, 214).

Hall in his criticism of Frankfurt School that can be read as self-criticism of his own earlier works misrecognizes that not all people are equally educated because in a class society basic and higher education is to a certain extent also shaped by class differences so that left-wing intellectuals tend to have more time and resources than white and blue collar workers for engaging in studying how capitalism works. Recognizing this circumstance means that ideology critique gives organic intellectuals a role in struggles because they have the potentials of "providing a map of the structure of domination and the terrain of struggle" (Garnham 1995/1998, 607). For Hall, the assumption that ordinary people are active and critical follows from the rejection of the manipulation thesis: "Since ordinary people are not cultural dopes, they are perfectly capable of recognising the way the realities of working-class life are reorganised, reconstructed, and reshaped by the way they are represented (i. e. re-presented) in, say, Coronation Street" (Hall 1981/1998, 447). Lawrence Grossberg (1995/1998) argued that both Frankfurt School and Political Economy have a simple "model of domination in which people are seen as passively manipulated 'cultural dupes'" (616) and that for them "culture matters only as a commodity and an ideological tool of manipulation" (618).

In contrast to such claims, Dallas Smythe had a very balanced view of the audience: capital would attempt to control audiences, but they would have potentials to resist: "People are subject to relentless pressures from Consciousness Industry; they are besieged with an avalanche of consumer goods and services; they are themselves produced as (audience) commodities; they reproduce their own lives and energies as damaged and in commodity form. But people are by no means passive or powerless. People do resist the powerful and manifold pressures of capital as best they can" (Smythe 1981, 270).

Adorno, who is vilified by many scholars as the prototypical cultural pessimist and elitist, had a positive vision for a medium like TV. For television (in German: Fernsehen = literally: to watch into the distance) "to keep the promise still resonating within the word, it must emancipate itself from everything within which it — reckless wish-fulfilment — refutes its own principle and betrays the idea of Good Fortune for the smaller fortunes of the department store" (Adorno 2005, 57). Adorno frequently acknowledges the need and potentials of emancipation. In the case of TV, he points out that enabling watching into the distance beyond capitalism is a good fortune. This is indirectly a call

for the creation of alternative media that question the status quo. Adorno also did not, as falsely claimed by many, despise popular culture. He was for example a fan of Charlie Chaplin and pointed out the critical role of the clown in popular culture (Adorno 1996). Even in the Culture Industry-chapter of the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, the positive elements of popular culture are visible. For example when Adorno writes that "traces of something better persist in those features of the culture industry by which it resembles the circus" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 114). Adorno (1977, 680) in his essay Erziehung nach Auschwitz (Education after Auschwitz) wrote about the positive role that TV could play in anti-fascist education in Germany after Auschwitz. If one goes beyond a superficial and selective reading of Adorno, then one will find his deep belief in the possibility of emancipation and in the role that culture can play in it. English translations of Horkheimer's and Adorno's works are imprecise because the language of the two philosophers is complex and not easily translatable. But besides the problem non-German speakers are facing when reading Horkheimer and Adorno, there seems to be a certain non-willingness to engage thoroughly with the Frankfurt School's and Critical Political Economy's origins in order to set up a straw man.

Karl Marx (1867) titled his opus magnum not *Capital. A Political Economy*, but rather *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*. Political Economy is a broad field, incorporating also traditions of thinking grounded in classical liberal economic thought and thinkers like Malthus, Mill, Petty, Ricardo, Say, Smith, Ure, etc. that Marx studied, sublated, and was highly critical of in his works. His main point of criticism of Political Economy is that it fetishizes capitalism. Its thinkers "confine themselves to systematizing in a pedantic way, and proclaiming for everlasting truths, the banal and complacent notions held by the bourgeois agents of production about their own world, which is to them the best possible one" (Marx 1867, 175). They postulate that categories like commodities, money, exchange value, capital, markets, or competition are anthropological features of all society, thereby ignoring the categories' historical character and enmeshment into class struggles. Marx showed the contradictions of political economy's thought and took classical political economy as starting point for a critique of capitalism that considers "every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion" and analyzes how "the movement of capitalist society is full of contradictions" (Marx 1867, 103), which calls for the "development of the contradictions of a given historical form" by political practice (619) and means that Marx's approach is "in its very essence critical and revolutionary" (Marx 1867, 103).

Marx developed a Critique of the Political Economy of Capitalism, which sees critique as threefold process:

a) an analysis and critique of capitalism,

b) a critique of liberal ideology, thought and academia,

c) transformative practice.

To be precise, one should not speak of Political Economy of Media/Communications, but of the *Critique of the Political Economy of Communication*, *Culture*, *Information and the Media*. Some authors realized this circumstance and stressed that what is needed is a "Marxist theory of communication" (Smythe 1994, 258), that critical theory means "Marxist or quasi-Marxist" theory (Smythe 1994, 256) and that "Critical Political Economy of Communications" is critical in the sense of being "broadly marxisant" (Murdock and Golding 2005, 61).

Robin Mansell (1995, 51) argues that Smythe engaged in establishing a Critical Media and Communication Studies that "had at its core the need to interrogate the systemic character of capitalism as it was expressed through the means of structures of communication" and that his focus was on exposing "through critical research the articulation of political and economic power relations as they were expressed in the institutional relations embedded in technology and the content of communication

in all its forms" (Mansell 1995, 47). Robin Mansell points out the importance of a critical methodology in Smythe's approach. Smythe was interested in developing a "Marxist theory of communication" (Smythe 1994, 258) and argued that critical theory means "Marxist or quasi-Marxist" theory (Smythe 1994, 256). I therefore think that it is consequent and important to characterize Smythe's approach not just as Critical Communication Research — which it certainly also, but not exclusively was —, but as Marxist Communication Studies, which means a unity of theoretical/philosophical, empirical and ethical studies of media and communication that is focused on the analysis of contradictions, structures and practices of domination, exploitation, struggles, ideologies and alternatives to capitalism in relation to media and communication. One should not split off the importance of Marx and Marxism from Smythe's approach and reduce him to having established a critical empirical research methodology. Janet Wasko stresses in this context that Marx's 11th Feuerbach thesis ("The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it") applied to the work and life of Dallas Smythe: "Analyzing and understanding the role of communications in the modern world might be enough for most communication scholars. But Dallas Smythe also sought to change the world, not only by his extensive research and teaching in academia, but in his work in the public sector, and through his life as a social activist" (Wasko 1993, 1).

In the German discussions about the Critique of the Political Economy of the Media, Horst Holzer (1973, 131; 1994, 202ff) and Manfred Knoche (2005a) have distinguished four functions of the media in capitalism that are relevant for the Marxist Critique of the Political Economy of the Media and Communication:

(1) capital accumulation in the media industry;

(2) advertising, public relations and sales promotion for other industries;

(3) legitimization of domination and ideological manipulation;

(4) reproduction, regeneration, and qualification of labour power.

Holzer and Knoche have provided a good framework that is, however, too structuralistic and lacks the aspect of struggles and alternative.

So building on and at the same time going beyond Holzer and Knoche, one can say that the task of a *Critical Theory and the Critique the Political Economy of Communications, Culture, Information and the Media* is to focus on the critique and analysis of the role of communication, culture, information, and the media in capitalism in the context of:

a) processes of capital accumulation (including the analysis of capital, markets, commodity logic, competition, exchange value, the antagonisms of the mode of production, productive forces, crises, advertising, etc.),

b) class relations (with a focus on work, labour, the mode of the exploitation of surplus value, etc.),

c) domination in general and the relationship of forms of domination to exploitation,

d) ideology (both in academia and everyday life) as well as the analysis of and engagement in

e) struggles against the dominant order, which includes the analysis and support of

f) social movement struggles and

g) social movement media that

h) aim at the establishment of a democratic-socialist society that is based on communication commons as part of structures of commonly-owned means of production (Fuchs 2011a).

The approach thereby realizes that in capitalism all forms of domination are connected to forms of exploitation (Fuchs 2008a, 2011a).

So I am arguing for a combination of Critical Theory and Critical Political Economy. However, such an approach does not have to stay pure in terms of its theory connections, it is open for theoretical

links, as my own drawing on certain concepts by authors such as Sigmund Freud, Pierre Bourdieu or Gilles Deleuze in this article shall show. My basic contention is that in establishing such links, it is important to maintain an analytical framework that stresses the importance of capitalism and class, i.e. that is guided by Marxist theory. In the next section, I will give a brief overview of one foundational debate in Critical Media and Communication Studies that has gained new relevance today: the *Blindspot Debate*, in which Dallas Smythe introduced the notion of the audience commodity.

The Renewal of the Audience Commodity Debate

According to Dallas Smythe (Lent 1995, 34), he first formulated the "'blind spot' argument about audience members' work for advertisers" (Lent 1995, 34) in 1951 in the article "The consumer's stake in radio and television" (Smythe 1951). In this paper, Smythe asks what "the nature of the 'product'" (Smythe 1951, 109) of radio and television actually is. First, there would be a market for receivers. Second, "there is that product known as station time, and sometimes as audience loyalty (measured by ratings) which stations sell to advertisers. What is sold is a program for the audience (in whose continuing loyalty the station management has a vital interest), and the probability of developing audience loyalty to the advertiser. [...] In commercial radio and television, our Janus-like product is paid for twice. It is paid for once, as a producer's good, if you please, when the sponsor pays for its production. And it is paid for again, as a consumer's good, when the more or less predictable audience response results in the ringing of cash registers where the sponsor's product is sold to ultimate consumers" (Smythe 1951, 119). It would therefore be a myth that "radio and television programs are 'free'" (Smythe 1951, 110). Smythe here shows a clear concern for the role of advertising in commercial radio and television and the audience as a product. The notion of the audience commodity is already present in the 1951 article in an implicit manner, whereas Smythe formulated it more explicitly in the 1970s.

In 1977, Dallas Smythe argued that the "material reality under monopoly capitalism is that all non-sleeping time of most of the population is work time. [...] Of the off-the-job work time, the largest single block is time of the audiences, which is sold to advertisers. [...] In 'their' time which is sold to advertisers workers (a) perform essential marketing functions for the producers of consumers' goods, and (b) work at the production and reproduction of labour power" (Smythe 1977a, 3). David Hesmondhalgh (2010) remarks that also sleeping time can be seen as reproductive work time that recreates labour power. Smythe stressed this circumstance (not in the *Blindspot*-article, but later) when writing: "For the great majority of the population [...] 24 hours a day is work time" (Smythe 1981, 47).

Media content would be "an inducement (gift, bribe or "Free lunch") to recruit potential members of the audience and to maintain their loyal attention" (Smythe 1977a, 5). Smythe (1977a; 1981, 22 – 51) introduced the notion of the audience commodity for analyzing media advertisement models, in which the audience is sold as a commodity to advertisers: "Because audience power is produced, sold, purchased and consumed, it commands a price and is a commodity. [...] You audience members contribute your unpaid work time and in exchange you receive the program material and the explicit advertisements" (Smythe 1981, 26, 233). Audiences "work to market [...] things to themselves" (Smythe 1981, 4). The "main function of the mass media [...] is to produce audiences prepared to be dutiful consumers" (Smythe 1994, 250). Work would not necessarily be wage labour, but a general category — "doing something creative" (Smythe 1981, 26).

Eileen Meehan (1984) argues that commercial media not only have a commodity message and an audience commodity, but also commodity ratings. She stresses the importance of the question "how do ratings and the ratings industry fit into the production of the commodity message?" (Meehan 1984,

217) for answering the question "what commodity is produced by mass communications industries?" (Meehan 1984, 216). Meehan (1993) says that ratings serve "to set the price that networks" can demand and that advertisers have "to pay for access to the commodity audience" (Meehan 1993, 387). It would depend on the used measurement technique how strongly the audience measurement industry over- or underestimated the audience size. The ratings industry would be highly monopolized and monopoly capitalists (like A. C. Nielsen) would set the standards of measurement. The ratings industry would have a preference for measuring a particular audience that is likely to buy and consume a lot of commodities, therefore "the commodity audience and commodity ratings are entirely artificial and manufactured" (Meehan 1993, 389). Chen (2003) has coined in this context the notion of the fictitious audience commodity. Meehan (2007, 164) stresses: "all television viewers are not in television's commodity audience and [...] some parts of the commodity audience are more valuable than others". Göran Bolin concludes based on Meehan's arguments that there is an "empiric fallacy of Smythe, Jhally and Livant, and Andrejevic, who see statistics as representative of reality" and says that "it is not the viewers who work, but rather the statisticians" (Bolin 2009, 357; see also: Bolin 2011, 37, 84). This claim might be too strong because it implies that the audience cannot be exploited by capital. But there is no doubt that the audience commodity is connected to the rise of the ratings industry that engages in setting prices for audiences. If the audience produces the value of the audience commodity, then the ratings industry sets the price of this commodity and thereby is central in the transformation of audience commodity values into prices. With the rise of commercial Internet platforms, audience ratings no longer need to be approximated, but permanent surveillance of user activities and user content allows the definition of precisely defined consumer groups with specific interests. It is exactly known to which group a consumer belongs and advertising is targeted to these groups.

Eileen Meehan (2002) points out that the audience commodity is gendered:

a) Employees who sell ads tend to be female and low-paid.

b) Advertisers and the advertising industry tend to base assumptions about the audience commodity on sexist values and so "discriminate against anyone outside the commodity audience of white, 18 to-34-year-old, heterosexual, English-speaking, upscale men" (Meehan 2002, 220). Focusing on the connection of gender and class, patriarchy and capitalism, sex and money in the media is an important task that has faced both neglect and mutual interest on the side of feminists and political economists (Meehan and Riordan 2002). Valerie Steeves and Janet Wasko (2002) point out that socialist/Marxist feminism and Marxist political economy are natural allies, but that there has been a turn away from socialism and the interest in the connection of partiarchy and capitalism in feminism. They stress that it is an important task both for feminism and poltical economy to not just focus on words, symbols and discourses of gender and the media, but to realize that "words, symbols, and discourses are important in shaping structures of inequality" (Steeves and Wasko 2002, 26).

Sut Jhally (1987, chapter 2) argues that Dallas Smythe's notion of the audience commodity is too imprecise. Jhally says that advertisers buy the watching time of the audience as a commodity. His central assumption is that one should see "watching time as the media commodity" (Jhally 1987, 73). "When the audience watches commercial television it is working for the media, producing both value and surplus value" (Jhally 1987, 83). He says that the networks buy the watching-power of the audience (Jhally 1987, 75). Jhally argues that the audience watching time is the programme time and that advertising watching time is surplus time (Jhally 1987, 76). The audience's wage would be the programming (Jhally 1987, 85). "The programming, the value of watching-power, is the wage of the audience, the variable capital of the communications industry" (Jhally and Livant 1986/2006, 36). The question that arises is if watching time can be considered to be a wage equivalent in a society whose

main structuring structures are money and capital.

So I disagree with Jhally's argument that the wage that TV viewers receive is the TV programme, that the necessary labour time is the watching of non-advertising programmes and that the surplus labour time is the watching of advertisements. You cannot live by watching TV, so watching TV is not an equivalent to a wage. Göran Bolin argues in this context: "It might be argued that what audiences get is television programmes, but if audiences are working, and if their salary is entertainment shows, how can they further convert this salary? The average viewer cannot buy food for the experience earned in watching an entertainment or any other television show" (Bolin 2005, 297; Bolin 2011, 37). Rather all watching time of commercial TV is surplus labour time. In the "digital labour"-debate, some people employ an argument that is related to the one by Jhally. They argue that Facebook does not exploit users because they receive free access to the platform as a "wage". There is a difference to Jhally because he maintains the notion of exploitation and surplus value, but both arguments ignore that money is the most important structure in capitalism that is privileged over all other structures and relations in terms of the power that it gives to its owners. Therefore Marx argues that in capitalism, money has a "social monopoly [...] to play the part of universal equivalent within the world of commodities" (Marx 1867, 162).

The human is, as Marx (1844) knew, a natural and a social being that needs to eat and to communicate in order to survive. In capitalism, the access to many means of human survival is organized through the commodity and money form: you can only get access to many of the necessary means of survival if you are able to buy commodities. And to do so, you need to get hold of money. And for largest share of people, this circumstance compels them to sell their labour power as a commodity in order to earn a wage that they can use in order to buy means of survival. The means of communication are part of the means of survival. If they are organised as public or common goods, then they can escape the money form and people do not have to pay in order to get access to them. Some means of communication, as e.g. most movies and popular culture, are organised as commodities that are sold. One can only get access by paying for them or by trying to undercut the commodity form (e.g. by downloading them without payment on the Internet). Internet platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide access to means of communication without selling access or content as commodity, yet they do not stand outside the commodity form, but rather commodify users' data. In return for the commodification of data, Facebook and Twitter provide a means of communication to its users. These means could be considered as being in-kind goods provided as return for the users granting the companies the possibility to access and commodify personal data. If the relationship between users and platform were organised in the form of a modern wage relationship, then the users would receive money in return for the commodification of their digital labour power. They could use this money for buying various means of survival. The difference to such monetary payments is that users on Facebook and Twitter do not receive a universal medium of exchange, but rather one specific means of communication. By giving users access to their platforms, Facebook and Twitter do not provide general means of survival, but rather access to particular means of communication whose use serves their own profit interests. This is not to say that I argue for payments to users of corporate Internet platforms that are advertising-financed. I rather argue for the creation of non-commerical non-profit alternatives that altogether escape, sublate and struggle against the commodity form.

The point I want to make is that the means of communication that Facebook and Twitter provide to its users are not simple means of survival and should not be analytically treated as such, but are rather also means of production for the creation of value and profit. This circumstance arises from the simultaneous character of social media users as consumers of technological services and producers of data, commodities, value and profit. The circumstance that the means of consumption/communication

provided by Facebook are not simple means of survival, but that in this consumption all users during the full consumption time produce value for Facebook and Twitter, makes the argument that service access is a form of wage inappropriate. If one buys a can of Coke from parts of the wage one earns and drinks it, one does not produce value (and as a consequence profit for Coca Cola) during the drinking/consumption process, one rather for being able to drink the Coke has to pay money so that Coca Cola realizes monetary profit. The consumption does not directly create value for the company. On Facebook and Twitter, the consumption process of the service entails all online communication and usage time. All of this time is not only reproduction time, i. e. time for the reproduction of labour power, but at the same time labour time that produces data commodities that are offered by Facebook and Twitter for sale to advertising clients. In the consumption process, the users not just reproduce their labour power, but produce commodities. So on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc., all consumption time is commodity production time.

The analytical problem that Smythe and Jhally in relation to TV radio, and newspapers had to cope with was that consuming these media is a rather passive activity. Therefore they had to find a way to argue that this behaviour also produces surplus value. Jhally's analysis that in the case of television watching time is sold as a commodity, equals saying that the more watchers there are, the higher advertising profits are generated. In the case of television, this part of the analysis is feasible, but in the world of the Internet, the situation is different. Here users are not passive watchers, but to a certain degree active creators of content. Advertisers are not only interested in the time that users spend online, but also in the products that are created during this time — user-generated digital content and online behaviour. The users' data — information about their uploaded data, social networks, their interests, demographic data, their browsing and interaction behaviour — is sold to the advertisers as a commodity. Contrary to the world of television that Jhally analyzes, on the Internet the users' subjective creations are commodified. Therefore, Smythe's original formulation holds here that the audience itself — its subjectivity and the results of its subjective creative activity — is sold as a commodity. The Internet is an active medium, where consumers of information are as a tendency also producers of information. Therefore it is better to speak in the case of Facebook and other corporate social media of Internet prosumer commodification (Fuchs 2010). However, also television has today become digital and more interactive so that audience commodification can take place in real-time and make use of consumer profiles and new forms of commerce (T-commerce, U-commerce, etc.) that further advance commodification (Andrejevic 2007, McGuigan 2012).

Brett Caraway (2011) claims that the audience is no commodity because "the activities of the audience are not under the direct control of the capitalist. Nor is it clear that the product of the labor of the audience (whatever that may be) is alienated from the audience" (Caraway 2011, 697). Capitalism uses the force of markets to coerce workers to sell their labour power: if you do not work for a wage, you are unlikely to survive. Whereas wage labour is coerced by the threat of physical violence (the threat is death because of the lack of being able to purchase and consume goods), audience labour is coerced by ideological violence (the threat is to have less social contacts because of missing information from the media and missing communication capacities that are needed for sustaining social relations). Audiences are under the ideological control of capitalists that possess control over the means of communication. If for example people stop using Facebook and social networking sites, they may miss certain social contact opportunities. They can refuse to become a Facebook worker, just like an employee can refuse to work for a wage, but they may as a consequence suffer social disadvantages in society. Commercial media coerce individuals to use them. The more monopoly power they possess, the easier it gets to exert this coercion over media consumers and users.

The product of the working audience is the attention given to programmes that feature advertising

breaks. Access to audience attention is exchanged with money paid by advertisers to commercial media operators. The audience cannot control its attention itself because it does not own, create and control the commercial media, rather their labour and attention is alienated — others, namely the corporate media and their advertising clients, define and control the programme time. The same is true for Facebook and other commercial user-generated content Internet sites, on which user labour generates content and transaction data are surveilled and sold to advertising clients that get access to the attention of specifically targeted groups. Users of commercial social media platforms do not control and own their data, they are alienated from it. The labour that generates audience commodity is exploited because it generates value and products that are owned by others, which constitutes at the same time an alienation process. Digital labour is ideologically coerced. Being coerced, exploited, and alienated makes audience labour a class-in-itself.

David Hesmondhalgh (2010, 280) claims that "Smythe's account is crude, reductionist and functionalist, totally underestimating contradiction and struggle in capitalism" and that it "has totally lost its connection to pragmatic political struggle". Similarly, in a contemporary critique of Smythe's audience commodity theory and its application to digital media, Caraway (2011) argues that "Smythe's theory represents a one-sided class analysis which devalues working-class subjectivity" (696), gives "no discussion of wage struggles, product boycotts, or consumer safety" (700), and thereby conducts "audience commodity fetishism", in which "we are all now merely cogs in the capitalist machine" (700). Caraway's criticism of Critical Political Economy coincides with his celebration of the "creative energy residing in the new media environment" (706), which sets his analysis on par with social media determinists like Henry Jenkins, who argue that "the Web has become a site of consumer participation" (Jenkins 2008, 137) and that media are today a locus of "participatory culture" (Jenkins 2008). These criticisms are based on uninformed or deliberately selective readings of Smythe that ignore his focus on alternative media as counterpart to audience commodification. Smythe does not celebrate audiences as always rebelling and does not argue for social-democratic reformism that tolerates exploitation and misery. His analysis rather implies the need for the overthrow of capitalism in order to humanize society and the overthrow of the capitalist media system in order to humanize the media.

Dallas Smythe did not ignore the ability of humans to create alternative futures, which is shown by the fact that he engaged with the idea of an alternative communication system. For Smythe, political subjectivity is revolutionary subjectivity that aims at fundamentally transforming society and establishing an alternative media system. Critics like Hesmondhalgh and Caraway overlook this aspect of Smythe's approach. Mao wrote in 1957 about big-character posters (Dazibao, Tatsepao): "We should put up big-character posters and hold forums"[1]. In 1958, he said[2]: "The Tatsepao, or big-character poster, is [a] powerful new weapon, a means of criticism and self-criticism which was created by the masses during the rectification movement; at the same time it is used to expose and attack the enemy. It is also a powerful weapon for conducting debate and education in accordance with the broadest mass democracy. People write down their views, suggestions or exposures and criticisms of others in big characters on large sheets of paper and put them up in conspicuous places for people to read".

When Dallas Smythe wrote in the early 1970s about communication in China in his article "After bicycles, what?" (Smythe 1994, 230 – 244), he took up Mao's idea of the big-character posters for thinking about how to democratically organize the broadcasting system. He spoke of a "two-way system

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[1]   http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_65.htm
[2]   http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_09.htm

in which each receiver would have the capability to provide either a voice or voide-and-picture response. [...] a two-way TV system would be like an electronic tatzupao system" (Smythe 1994, 231f). These thoughts paralleled the ideas of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's (1970) concept of emancipatory media use, Walter Benjamin's (1934, 1936/1939) idea of the reader/writer and Bertolt Brecht's (1932/2000) notion of an alternative radio in his radio theory.

Mao had the idea of a media system that is controlled by the people in grassroots processes and Smythe applied this idea to electronic media for formulating a concept of alternative electronic media. Yuezhi Zhao (2011) points out the relevance of Smythe's article and his ideas of an alternative non-capitalist communication system for China. Given a world dominated by the logic of neo-liberal capitalism (both in the West and China), she stresses inspired by Smythe the importance of establishing communications and societies that are based on non-capitalist logic. Zhao (2007, 92) argues that Smythe raised the question "After bicycles, what?" "in the context of China's search for a socialist alternative to capitalist modernity, with the hope that China would avoid the capitalist path of development". She says that although Smythe misjudged the political situation in China in the 1970s in a number of points, his intervention would continue to "offer a useful point of departure in analyzing not only the deployment and development of ICTs in China during the reform era, but also the broad path of China's post-Mao development strategy and its sustainability" (Zhao 2007, 96). The question one would have today to ask about Chinese media in Dallas Smythe's manner, would be: After mobile phones, what? (Zhao 2007). Whereas Smythe answered to the question "After bicycles, what?", that China should create a media structure that favours "public goods and services [...] against goods and services for individual, private use" (Smythe 1994, 243), ICTs would not only serve capitalist purposes, but would "by their very nature" be social and allow "alternative uses", including collective political action (Zhao 2007, 96). The reality of ICTs in China would show the antagonistic character of these technologies as both means of domination and protest.

Dallas Smythe was fundamentally concerned with processes of commodification, which is reflected in his creation of the audience commodity category. Although he was critical of some other Marxist theories of culture, important elements of ideology critique and alternative media accompany his focus on the audience commodity. He was furthermore deeply concerned about social struggles for a better world and democratic communications. Smythe's work was connected to politics, e.g. he worked with unions for improving the working conditions of communications workers, gave testimonies and conducted studies in favour of public ownership of satellites, public service broadcasting and affordable universal access to telecommunications and spoke out against corporate media control and monopolization (Yao 2010). He also was involved in debates about the establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order and acted as public intellectual (ibid.). The claim that Smythe had no connection to political struggles, pragmatic or not, is therefore not feasible.

Janet Wasko (2005, 29) argues that "with the increasing spread of privatized, advertiser-supported media, the audience commodity concept has been accepted by many political economists, as well as other communication theorists". In recent years, this tendency has grown and there has been a revival of the interest in Dallas Smythe's works, especially in relation to the question if the users of commercial "social media" are workers and are exploited. Tiziana Terranova made an early contribution to the digital labour debate by introducing the notion of free Internet labour: "Simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited, free labor on the Net includes the activity of building Web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists, and building virtual spaces on MUDs and MOOs" (Terranova 2000, 33). Terranova connected the concept of free labour to the Autonomist Marxist concept of immaterial labour, but did not think of the connectedness to Dallas Smythe's notion of the audience commodity. Conferences like "Digital

Labour: Workers, Authors, Citizens" (University of Western Ontario, 2009), "The Internet as Playground and Factory" (New School, 2009) and "Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of Social Media" (Uppsala University, 2012) have helped to advance the discourse on digital labour.

I have stressed in my works that Smythe's concept of the audience commodity is very suited for describing the exploitation of user activities by corporate platforms on the contemporary Internet and have in this context coined the notion of the Internet prosumer commodity (Fuchs 2012a, 2011a, b, 2010, 2009). Vince Manzerolle (2010) builds on this analysis and on Smythe's works for analyzing prosumer commodification on the mobile Internet, for which he uses the concept of the mobile audience commodity. Marisol Sandoval (2012) empirically analyzed the reality of Internet prosumer commodification and found that more than 90% of all analyzed web platforms used targeted advertising and the surveillance and commodification of users' data. A qualitative analysis of the terms and policies that legally guarantee Internet prosumer commodification show that they are "confusing, misleading, ideological, or even manipulative. [...] They try to create the impression that the only aim of these platforms is to provide to its users an attractive high-quality service and experience that allows them to produce their own media content and to connect with friends. The fact that these platforms are owned by commercial companies that aim at increasing their profits by selling user information and space for advertisements remains hidden" (Sandoval 2012, 164f).

Vincent Mosco (2009) argues in a discussion of Smythe's audience commodity concept that digital "systems which measure and monitor precisely each information transaction are now used to refine the process of delivering audiences of viewers, listeners, readers, movie fans, telephone and computer users, to advertisers. [...] This is a major refinement in the commodification of viewers over the earlier system of delivering mass audiences and it has been applied to practically every communication medium today, including the Internet, where social networking sites like Facebook provide detailed information on users" (Mosco 2009, 137). Graham Murdock (2011) points out that Internet gifting organized by commercial platforms like Google "points to a more general incorporation of gift relations into the economy of commodities" that signifies "the intensification of exploitation" (Murdock 2011, 30f). One "of the major tasks now facing a critical political economy of culture and communication" would be to argue the case "for a public cultural commons for the digital age" (Murdock 2011, 37).

Nick Dyer-Witheford argues that Smythe's analysis has today gained credibility because the "level of surveillance in the home tends toward that already experienced in the workplace, and the activity of the waged 'watchman' in the automatic factory, described by Marx, becomes integrated with the unpaid 'watching time'" (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 119). Interactive systems would enable "the compilation of comprehensive profiles of consumer behavior" that allows the "ever more precise targeting of consumers differentiated by taste and income" (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 118). He criticizes that Smythe would too "often assume that capital's intended exploitation of audience power is fully successful" (119) and says that activities like online piracy and alternative media are attempts to break capital's dominance.

Mark Andrejevic (2002, 2004, 2007) has applied Sut Jhally's (1987) analysis to reality TV, the Internet, social networking sites and interactive media in general. He says that there the accumulation strategy is not based on exploiting the work of watching, but the work of being watched. Andrejevic (2012) argues that the Marxian concept of exploitation needs to be updated for the online world ("exploitation 2.0") by realizing that on platforms like Google or Facebook "monitoring becomes an integral component of the online value chain both for sites that rely upon direct payment and for user-generated content sties that rely upon indirect payment (advertising)" so that "user activity is redoubled on commercial platforms in the form of productive information about user activity"

(Andrejevic 2012, 84). "It is important to understand that the capture and sale of TGI [= transaction generated information] generates harm by supporting discrimination in markets in ways that capture consumer surplus" (Gandy 2011, 451). Lauer (2008) offers an analysis that is related to the one by Andrejevic.

Cohen (2008) argues based on Smythe that the "labour involved in the production of Web 2. 0 content" is the production of "information, social networks, relationships, and affect". Coté and Pybus (2010) stress that one cannot speak of audience labour on the Internet, therefore they use the term "immaterial labour 2. 0". Bermejo (2009), Couvering (2004, 2011), Kang and McAllister (2011) and Lee (2011) apply the notion of audience commodification to Google and search engines. McStay (2011) uses the audience commodity concept for the analysis of online advertising. Napoli (2010) stresses that audience commodification is being taken one step further online so that users even engage in taking over the work of advertisers by spreading advertising messages online to their contacts or by co-creating advertising content.

The more than 500 pages long *tripleC*-special issue *Marx is Back — The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today* that was edited by Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco (2012) shows the importance of Marx's works for critically understanding the media and communication today. It also shows a sustained interest in and relevance of Dallas Smythe's work, especially in the context of the digital labour debate. Several contributors stress that Smythe's audience commodity theory is very well applicable to digital labour on platforms like Facebook or YouTube (Ekman 2012, Fisher 2012, Hebblewhite 2012, Nixon 2012, Prey 2012, Prodnik 2012).

The discussion shows that Smythe's Marxist political economy of the media and communications has had a crucial influence on the digital labour debate. What the discussed approaches share is the analysis that digital labour is exploited by capital. The exploitation of digital labour involves three elements:

- Coercion: Users are ideologically coerced to use commercial platforms in order to be able to engage in communication, sharing and the creation and maintenance of social relations, without which their lives would be less meaningful.
- Alienation: companies, not the users, own the platforms and the created profit.
- Appropriation: Users spend time on corporate Internet platforms that are funded by targeted advertising capital accumulation models. The time spent on corporate platforms is the value created by their unpaid digital labour. Their digital labour creates social relations, profile data, user-generated content and transaction data (browsing behaviour) — a data commodity that is offered for sale by Internet corporations to advertising clients that can select certain user groups they want to target. The act of exploitation is already created by the circumstance that users create a data commodity, in which their online work time is objectified, that they do not own this data themselves, but that rather corporate Internet platforms with the help of terms of use and privacy policies acquire ownership of this data. Corporate Internet platforms offer the data commodity that is the result of Internet prosumption activity for sale to advertisers. The value realization process, the transformation of value into profit, takes place when targeted users view the advertisement (pay per view) or click on it (pay per click). Not all data commodities are sold all of the time, specific groups of data commodities are more popular than others, but exploitation always takes place at the point of the production and appropriation of the commodity and prior to a commodity's sale.

In section 4, I will provide an analysis of how commodification works on corporate social media platforms. Section 5 will then analyse ideological structures that are associated with digital media. Analysing digital media thereby makes both use of the unity of the critical analysis of commodification

and ideology critique that I argued for in section 2.

Digital Labour: Capital Accumulation and Commodification on Social Media

For a deeper analysis of how the notion of the audience commodity can be applied for analyzing digital labour on "social media", we need to engage with Marx's analysis of capitalism. In the three volumes of *Capital*, Marx analyses the accumulation process of capital. This process, as described by Marx, is visualized in figure 2.
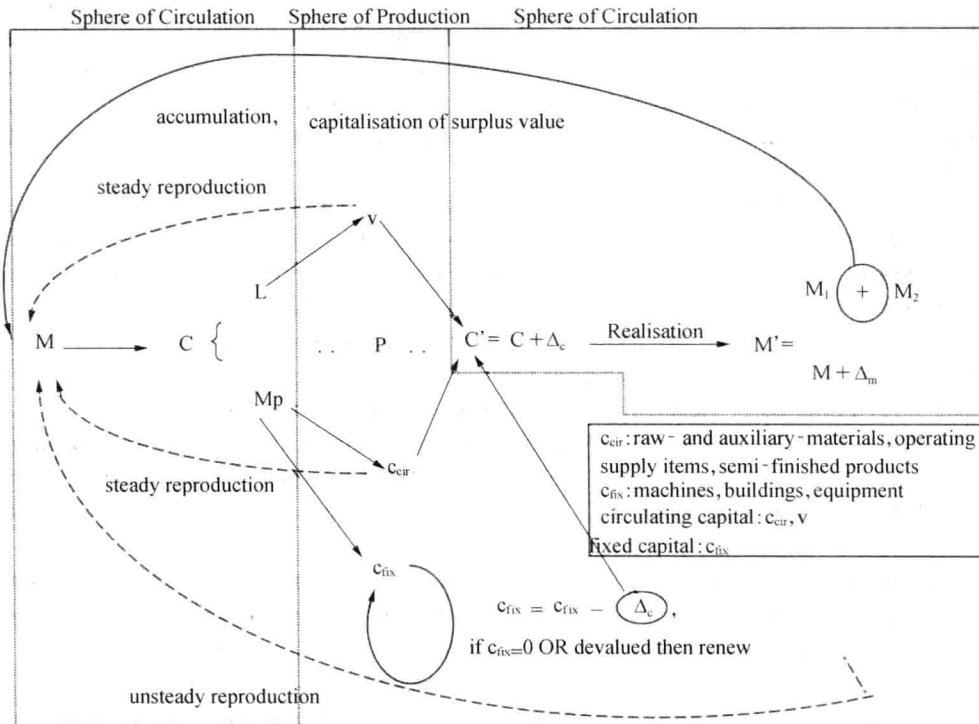
Figure 2   The accumulation/expanded reproduction of capital

In the accumulation of capital, capitalists buy labour power and means of production (raw materials, technologies, etc.) in order to organize the production of new commodities that are sold with the expectation to make money profit that is partly reinvested. Marx distinguishes two spheres of capital accumulation: the circulation sphere and the sphere of production. In the circulation sphere, capital transforms its value form. First money M is transformed into commodities (from the standpoint of the capitalist as buyer) — the capitalist purchases the commodities labour power L and means of production Mp. The process M-C is based on the two purchases M-L and M-Mp. This means that due to private property structures, workers do not own the means of production, the products they produce and the profit they generate. Capitalists own these resources. In the sphere of production, a new good is produced: the value of labour power and the value of the means of production are added to the product. Value takes on the form of productive capital P. The value form of labour is variable capital v (which can be observed as wages), the value form of the means of production constant capital c (which can be observed as the total price of the means of production/producer goods).

In the sphere of production, capital stops its metamorphosis so that capital circulation comes to a halt. There is the production of new value V' of the commodity. V' contains the value of the necessary

constant and variable capital and surplus value Δs of the surplus product. Unpaid labour generates surplus value and profit. Surplus value is the part of the working day that is unpaid. It is the part of the workday (measured in hours) that is used for producing profit. Profit does not belong to workers, but to capitalists. Capitalists do not pay for the production of surplus. Therefore the production of surplus value is a process of exploitation. The value V' of the new commodity after production is $V' = c + v + s$. The commodity then leaves the sphere of production and again enters the circulation sphere, in which capital conducts its next metamorphosis: it is transformed from the commodity form back into the money form by being sold on the market. Surplus value is realized in the form of money. The initial money capital M now takes on the form $M' = M + \Delta m$, it has been increased by an increment Δm that is called profit. Accumulation of capital means that the produced surplus value/profit is (partly) reinvested/capitalized. The end point of one process M' becomes the starting point of a new accumulation process. One part of M', M_1, is reinvested. Accumulation means the aggregation of capital by investment and the exploitation of labour in the capital circuit $M - C . . P . . C' - M'$, in which the end product M' becomes a new starting point M. The total process makes up the dynamic character of capital. Capital is money that is permanently increasing due to the exploitation of surplus value.

Commodities are sold at prices that are higher than the investment costs so that money profit is generated. Marx argues that one decisive quality of capital accumulation is that profit is an emergent property of production that is produced by labour, but owned by capitalists. Without labour, no profit could be made. Workers are forced to enter class relations and to produce profit in order to survive, which enables capital to appropriate surplus. The notion of surplus value is the main concept of Marx's theory, by which he intends to show that capitalism is a class society. "The theory of surplus value is in consequence immediately the theory of exploitation" (Negri 1991, 74). One can add: The theory of surplus value is the theory of class and as a consequence the political demand for a classless society.

Capital is not money, but money that is increased through accumulation, "money which begets money" (Marx 1867, 256). Marx argues that the value of labour power is the average amount of time that is needed for the production of goods that are necessary for survival (necessary labour time). Wages represent the value of necessary labour time at the level of prices. Surplus labour time is labour time that exceeds necessary labour time, remains unpaid, is appropriated for free by capitalists, and transformed into money profit. Surplus value "is in substance the materialization of unpaid labour-time. The secret of the self-valorization of capital resolves itself into the fact that it has at its disposal a definite quantity of the unpaid labour of other people" (Marx 1867, 672). The production of surplus value is "the *differentia specifica* of capitalist production" (Marx 1867, 769) and the "driving force and the final result of the capitalist process of production" (Marx 1867, 976).

Many corporate social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) accumulate capital with the help of targeted advertising that is tailored to individual user data and behaviour. Capitalism is based on the imperative to accumulate ever more capital. To achieve this, capitalists either have to prolong the working day (absolute surplus value production) or to increase the productivity of labour (relative surplus value production) (on relative surplus value, see: Marx 1867, chapter 12). Relative surplus value production means that productivity is increased so that more commodities and more surplus value can be produced in the same time period as before. "For example, suppose a cobbler, with a given set of tools, makes one pair of boots in one working day of 12 hours. If he is to make two pairs in the same time, the productivity of his labour must be doubled; and this cannot be done except by an alteration in his tools or in his mode of working, or both. Hence the conditions of production of his labour, i. e. his mode of production, and the labour process itself, must be revolutionized. By an increase in the productivity of labour, we mean an alteration in the labour process of such a kind as to shorten the labour-time socially necessary for the production of a commodity, and to endow a given

quantity of labour with the power of producing a greater quantity of use-value. [...] I call that surplus-value which is produced by lengthening of the working day, *absolute surplus-value*. In contrast to this, I call that surplus-value which arises from the curtailment of the necessary labour-time, and from the corresponding alteration in the respective lengths of the two components of the working day, *relative surplus-value*" (Marx 1867, 431f).

Sut Jhally (1987, 78) argues that "reorganizing the watching audience in terms of demographics" is a form of relative surplus value production. One can interpret targeted Internet advertising as a form of relative surplus value production: At one point in time, the advertisers show not only one advertisement to the audience as in non-targeted advertising, but they show different advertisements to different user groups depending on the monitoring, assessment and comparison of the users' interests and online behaviour. On traditional forms of television, all watchers see the same advertisements at the same time. In targeted online advertising, advertising companies can present different ads at the same time. The efficiency of advertising is increased: the advertisers can show more advertisements that are likely to fit the interests of consumers in the same time period as in non-targeted advertising. Partly the advertising company's wage labourers and partly the Internet users, whose user-generated data and transaction data are utilized, produce the profit generated from these advertisements. The more targeted advertisements there are, the more likely it is that users recognize ads and click on them.

The users' click-and-buy process is the surplus value realization process of the advertising company. This process transforms surplus value into money profit. Targeted advertising allows Internet companies to present not just one advertisement at one point in time to users, but rather numerous advertisements, so that there is the production of more total advertising time that presents commodities to users. Relative surplus value production means that more surplus value is generated in the same time period as earlier. Targeted online advertising is more productive than non-targeted online advertising because it allows presenting more ads in the same time period. These ads contain more surplus value than the non-targeted ads, i. e., more unpaid labour time of the advertising company's paid employees and of users, who generate user-generated content and transaction data.

Alvin Toffler (1980) introduced the notion of the prosumer in the early 1980s. It means the "progressive blurring of the line that separates producer from consumer" (Toffler 1980, 267). Toffler describes the age of prosumption as the arrival of a new form of economic and political democracy, self-determined work, labour autonomy, local production and autonomous self-production. But he overlooks that prosumption is used for outsourcing work to users and consumers, who work without payment. Thereby corporations reduce their investment- and labour-costs, jobs are destroyed, and consumers who work for free are extremely exploited. They produce surplus value that is appropriated and turned into profit by corporations without paying wages. Notwithstanding Toffler's uncritical optimism, his notion of the "prosumer" describes important changes of media structures and practices and can therefore also be adopted for critical studies.

Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) argue that web 2.0 facilitates the emergence of "prosumer capitalism", that the capitalist economy "has always been dominated by prosumption" (14), and that prosumption is an inherent feature of McDonaldization. The two authors' analysis ignores that prosumption is only one of many tendencies of capitalism, but neither its only nor dominant quality. Capitalism is multidimensional and has multiple interlinked dimensions. It is at the same time finance capitalism, imperialistic capitalism, informational capitalism, hyperindustrial capitalism (oil, gas), crisis capitalism, etc. Not all of these dimensions are equally important (Fuchs 2011a, chapter 5).

We have seen that Dallas Smythe's (1977a, 1981) analysis of the audience commodity has gained new relevance today in the digital labour debate. With the rise of user-generated content, free access

social networking platforms and other free access platforms that yield profit by online advertisement —
a development subsumed under categories such as web 2. 0, social software and social networking
sites —, the web seems to come close to accumulation strategies employed by capital on traditional
mass media like TV or radio. Users who upload photos, and images, write wall posting and comments,
send mail to their contacts, accumulate friends or browse other profiles on Facebook, constitute an
audience commodity that is sold to advertisers. The difference between the audience commodity on
traditional mass media and on the Internet is that in the latter case the users are also content
producers, there is user-generated content, the users engage in permanent creative activity,
communication, community building and content-production. That the users are more active on the
Internet than in the reception of TV or radio content is due to the decentralized structure of the
Internet that allows many-to-many communication. Due to the permanent activity of the recipients and
their status as prosumers, we can say that in the case of corporate social media the audience commodity
is an Internet prosumer commodity (Fuchs 2010). The conflict between Cultural Studies and Critical
Political Economy of the Media (see: Ferguson and Golding 1997, Garnham 1995/1998, Grossberg
1995/1998) about the question of the activity and creativity of the audience has been resolved in
relation to the Internet today: On Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc. , users are fairly active and creative,
which reflects Cultural Studies' insights about the active character of recipients, but this active and
creative user character is the very source of exploitation, which reflects Critical Political Economy's
stress on class and exploitation.

Economic surveillance on corporate social media is surveillance of prosumers, who dynamically
and permanently create and share user-generated content, browse profiles and data, interact with
others, join, create, and build communities and co-create information. The corporate web platform
operators and their third party advertising clients continuously monitor and record personal data and
online activities. They store, merge and analyse collected data. This allows them to create detailed
user profiles and to know a lot about the users' personal interests and online behaviours. Surveillance is
an inherent feature of corporate social media's capital accumulation model (Fuchs 2012a, Sandoval
2012). Social media that are based on targeted advertising sell prosumers as a commodity to advertising
clients. There is an exchange of money for the access to user data that allows economic user
surveillance. The exchange value of the social media prosumer commodity is the money value that the
operators obtain from their clients. Its use value is the multitude of personal data and usage behaviour
that is dominated by the commodity and exchange value form. The corporations' surveillance of the
prosumers' permanently produced use values, i. e. , personal data and interactions, enables targeted
advertising that aims at luring the prosumers into consumption and shopping. It also aims at
manipulating prosumers' desires and needs in the interest of corporations and the commodities they
offer. Whereas audience commodification in newspapers and traditional broadcasting was always based
on statistical assessments of audience rates and characteristics (Bolin 2011), Internet surveillance gives
social media corporations an exact picture of the interests and activities of users. The characteristics
(interests and usage behaviour) and the size (the number of users in a specific interest group) of the
Internet prosumer commodity can therefore be exactly determined and it can also be exactly
determined who is part of a consumer group that should be targeted by specific ads and who is not.

In grounding the approach of a critical political economy of personal information, Oscar Gandy
has introduced the notion of the panoptic sort: "The panoptic sort is a difference machine that sorts
individuals into categories and classes on the basis of routine measurements. It is a discriminatory
technology that allocates options and opportunities on the basis of those measures and the
administrative models that they inform" (Gandy 1993, 15). It is a system of power and disciplinary
surveillance that identifies, classifies and assesses (Gandy 1993, 15). The mechanism of targeted

advertising on social media is the form of surveillance that Gandy has characterized as panoptic sorting: it *identifies* the interests of users by closely surveilling their personal data and usage behaviour, it *classifies* them into consumer groups and *assesses* their interests in comparison to other consumers and to available advertisements that are then targeted at the users.

Social media users are double objects of commodification: they are commodities themselves and through this commodification their consciousness becomes, while online, permanently exposed to commodity logic in the form of advertisements. Most online time is advertising time. On corporate social media, targeted advertising makes use of the users' personal data, interests, interactions, information behaviour and also the interactions with other websites. So while you are using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., it is not just you interacting with others and browsing profiles, all of these activities are framed by advertisements presented to you. These advertisements come about by permanent surveillance of your online activities. Such advertisements do not necessarily represent consumers' real needs and desires because the ads are based on calculated assumptions, whereas needs are much more complex and spontaneous. The ads mainly reflect marketing decisions and economic power relations. They do not simply provide information about products as offers to buy, but information about products of powerful companies.

Figure 3 shows the process of capital accumulation on corporate social media platforms that are funded by targeted advertising. Social media corporations invest money (M) for buying capital: technologies (server space, computers, organizational infrastructure, etc.) and labour power (paid employees). These are the constant capital (c) and the variable capital v1 outlays. The outcome of the production process P1 is not a commodity that is directly sold, but rather a social media service (the specific platforms) that is made available without payment to users. As a consequence of this circumstance, management literature has focused on identifying how to make profit from free Internet services. Chris Anderson (2009) has identified 50 models of how an Internet service is given for free in order to boost the selling of other services or where an Internet service is given for free for one type of customers and sold to others. The waged employees, who create social media online environments that are accessed by users, produce part of the surplus value. The users employ the platform for generating content that they upload (user-generated data). The constant and variable capital invested by social media companies (c, v1) that is objectified in the online environment is the prerequisite for their activities in the production process P2. Their products are user-generated data, personal data, social networks and transaction data about their browsing behaviour and communication behaviour on corporate social media. They invest a certain labour time v2 in this process.

Corporate social media sell the users' data commodity to advertising clients at a price that is larger
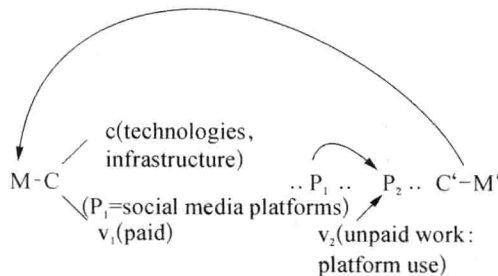
C' = **Internet prosumer commodity**(user-generated content, transaction data, virtual advertising space and time)

most social media services are free to use, they are no commodities.

User data and the users are the social media commodity.

Figure 3   Capital accumulation on corporate social media platforms that are based on targeted advertising

than the invested constant and variable capital. Partly the users and partly the corporations' employees create the surplus value contained in this commodity. The difference is that the users are unpaid and therefore — in monetary terms — infinitely exploited. Once the Internet prosumer commodity that contains the user-generated content, transaction data and the right to access virtual advertising space and time is sold to advertising clients, the commodity is transformed into money capital and surplus value is transformed into money capital. A counter-argument to the insight that commercial social media companies exploit Internet prosumers is that the latter in exchange for their work receive access to a service. One can here however interpose that service access cannot be seen as a salary because users cannot "further convert this salary [...] [They] cannot buy food" (Bolin 2011, 37) by it.

For Marx (1867), the profit rate is the relation of profit to investment costs:

$$p = s/(c + v) = \text{surplus value}/(\text{constant capital } (= \text{fixed costs}) + \text{variable capital } (= \text{wages})).$$

If Internet users become productive prosumers, then in terms of Marxian class theory this means that they become productive labourers who produce surplus value and are exploited by capital because for Marx productive labour generates surplus value (Fuchs 2010). Therefore not merely those who are employed by Internet corporations for programming, updating and maintaining the soft and hardware, performing marketing activities, etc. are exploited surplus value producers, but also the users and prosumers, who engage in the production of user-generated content. New media corporations do not (or hardly) pay the users for the production of content. One accumulation strategy is to give them free access to services and platforms, let them produce content and to accumulate a large number of prosumers that are sold as a commodity to third-party advertisers. Not a product is sold to the users, but the users are sold as a commodity to advertisers. The more users a platform has, the higher the advertising rates can be set. The productive labour time that capital exploits involves on the one hand the labour time of the paid employees and on the other hand all of the time that is spent online by the users. Digital media corporations pay salaries for the first type of knowledge labour. Users produce data that is used and sold by the platforms without payment. They work for free. There are neither variable nor constant investment costs. The formula for the profit rate needs to be transformed for this accumulation strategy:

$$p = s/(c + v1 + v2)$$

s: surplus value, c: constant capital, v1: wages paid to fixed employees, v2: wages paid to users

The typical situation is that $v2 \Rightarrow 0$ and that v2 substitutes v1 ($v1 \Rightarrow v2 = 0$). If the production of content and the time spent online were carried out by paid employees, the variable costs (wages) would rise and profits would therefore decrease. This shows that Internet prosumer activity in a capitalist society can be interpreted as the outsourcing of productive labour to users (in management literature the term "crowdsourcing" has been established, see Howe 2008), who work completely for free and help maximizing the rate of exploitation:

$$e = s/v = \text{surplus value}/\text{variable capital}$$

The rate of exploitation (also called the rate of surplus value) measures the relationship of workers' unpaid work time and paid work time. The higher the rate of exploitation, the more work time is unpaid. Users of commercial social media platforms have no wages ($v = 0$). Therefore the rate of surplus value converges towards infinity. Internet prosumer labour is infinitely exploited by capital. This means that capitalist prosumption is an extreme form of exploitation, in which the prosumers work completely for free. Infinite exploitation means that all or nearly all online activity and time becomes part of commodities and no share of this time is paid. Smythe (1994, 297) spoke of the commercial audience as "mind slaves", so we may speak of commercial social media users as online

slaves. Marx (1867) distinguishes between necessary labour time and surplus labour time. The first is the time a person needs to work in order to create the money equivalent for a wage that is required for buying goods that are needed for survival. The second is all additional labour time. Users are not paid on corporate social media (or for consuming other types of corporate media), therefore they cannot generate money for buying food or other goods needed for survival. Therefore all online time on corporate social media like Google, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter is surplus labour time.

So one line of argument is that on the monetary level, users are infinitely exploited because they do not receive a wage, although platforms like Facebook make monetary profits. There is also a second line of argument: The Facebook platform is a means of communicative survival for users and a means of the capitalist production of value, commodities and profit. It is at the same time means of consumption and means of production. If the platform is considered as in-kind good provided to the users as means of communicative survival, then all costs that Facebook has for providing the platform can be considered as de-facto value of an in-kind good "paid" as means of consumption to its value producers. According to Marx, the value of a good is the sum of constant capital, variable capital and profit: $V = c + v + p$. In the case of the Facebook platform as good, there is no profit because it is not sold as a commodity. Rather, user data is sold as a commodity. Therefore the value of the Facebook platform is the sum of the invested constant and variable capital. This implies that one can consider Facebook's investment costs as constituting the "wages" of its users. In 2011, Facebook's total costs and expenses were 1.955 billion US $ and its revenue was 3.711 billion US $(Facebook SEC Filings: Form S-1 Registration Statement). So Facebook made a profit of 1.756 billion US $ in 2011. If one accepts the argument that the Facebook platform is an in-kind good provided to the users and that therefore Facebook's investment costs form a wage-equivalent for means of consumption, then the rate of exploitation of the total Facebook work force consisting of paid employees and users is e = profits/investment costs = 1.955/1.756 = 1.113 = 111.3%. This means that the profits that Facebook makes are 111% times the monetary value of the investments it makes for services that are consumed by users as "wage-equivalent".

There are however some limitations of this second line of argument. In capitalism, money forms a monopolized generalized means of exchange. With the term wages, Marx means the price of wage labour expressed in monetary terms/the general equivalent of exchange. Marx considers the emergence of wage labour as a specific feature of capitalism. Wage labour is "double free":

1) Workers are not physically owned by capitalists like slaves, they are rather compelled to sell their labour power in exchange for a wage in order to survive.

2) This compulsion is based on the circumstance that they are "free" from/not in control of the ownership of the means of production and capital.

So the notion of the wage in a capitalist society presupposes access to a general equivalent of exchange that can be spent for purchasing various commodities that have different use-values. Therefore Marx (1849) says that "wages are the amount of money which the capitalist pays for a certain period of work or for a certain amount of work. [...] The exchange value of a commodity estimated in money is called its price. Wages therefore are only a special name for the price of labour-power, and are usually called the price of labour; it is the special name for the price of this peculiar commodity, which has no other repository than human flesh and blood". Money is in capitalism the monopolized general equivalent of exchange. It has special relevance because it can be used for getting hold of most use-values. It is therefore not a straight forward argument to treat inkind goods as wage-equivalents. The specific structures of capitalism privilege money as specific and general equivalent of exchange. The money logic therefore has special relevance. I nonetheless want to offer both interpretations of the "wage" of Facebook users for interpretation and discussion. No matter which

interpretation one chooses, both versions imply that Facebook users are workers that are exploited.

Users spent 10.5 billion minutes on Facebook per day in January 2011 (Facebook, SEC Filings, Amendment No. 3 to Form S-1 Registration Statement). We can therefore make the following estimates about the value generated on Facebook:

Value generated on Facebook in 2011: 10.5 billion * 365 = 3832.5 billion minutes = 63.875 billion working hours per year.

Average working hours per year of a full-time worker: 1800

Value generated on Facebook in 2011: 35 486 111 full-time equivalents of work

The rate of exploitation is calculated as the ratio e = surplus labour time/necessary labour time = unpaid labour time/paid labour time. In the case of Facebook, all 64.99 billion working hours were unpaid, so the surplus labour time amounts to the full amount of labour time. Given that Facebook exploits more than 35 billion full-time equivalents of free labour or more than 60 billion hours of unpaid work time, it becomes clear that Facebook's business model is based on the outsourcing/crowdsourcing of paid work time to unpaid work time. Given that Facebook's profits were 1 billion US $ in 2011 (Facebook, SEC Filings, Amendment No. 3 to Form S-1 Registration Statement), it becomes clear that free user labour is at the heart of Facebook's business model. That the rate of exploitation is infinite means that no wages are paid, that all user labour is unremunerated and creates value. Free user labour is what Marx (1867) termed abstract labour, labour that creates value:

By abstract human labour, Marx means that aspect of labour in a commodity-producing society that makes commodities comparable and exchangeable: "Whether 20 yards of linen 1 coat or = 20 coats or = x coats, i. e. whether a given quantity of linen is worth few or many coats, it is always implied, whatever the proportion, that the linen and the coat, as magnitudes of value, are expressions of the same unit, things of the same nature. Linen = coat is the basis of the equation. [...] By equating, for example, the coat as a thing of value to the linen, we equate the labour embedded in the coat with the labour embedded in the linen. Now it is true that the tailoring which makes the coat is concrete labour of a different sort from the weaving which makes the linen. But the act of equating tailoring with weaving reduces the former in fact to what is really equal in the two kinds of labour, to the characteristic they have in common of being human labour. This is a roundabout way of saying that weaving too, in so far as it weaves value, has nothing to distinguish it from tailoring, and, consequently, is abstract human labour. It is only the expression of equivalence between different sorts of commodities which brings to view the specific character of value-creating labour, by actually reducing the different kinds of labour embedded in the different kinds of commodity to their common quality of being human labour in general" (Marx 1867, 141f).

Abstract labour is "abstract" because it is a dimension of labour, at which we have to abstract from the qualitative differences of commodities (their use-values) and see what they have in common, i. e. that they are all products of human labour and objectifications of a certain amount of labour, which makes them comparable and exchangeable in certain relations (x commodity A = y commodity B = ...): "If then we disregard the use-value of commodities, only one property remains, that of being products of labour. But even the product of labour has already been transformed in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use-value, we abstract also from the material constituents and forms which make it a use-value" (Marx 1867, 128). "A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because abstract human labour is objectified or materialized in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? By means of the quantity of the 'value-forming substance', the labour, contained in the article. This quantity is measured by its duration, and the labour-time is itself measured on the particular scale of hours, days etc." (Marx 1867, 129).

At the level of values, we can say that the collective Facebook worker works almost 64 billion

hours per year. The surplus hours and surplus work amount to 64 billion hours per year. Personal and social data is the product that is created in this work time. The more hours users work on Facebook, the more data they generate. The more hours users spend on Facebook, the more ads are generated and presented to them. So productive time is also advertising time (although not all advertising time, but only a portion of it, is turned into money profit).

From Facebook's balance sheet that was published at its stock market registration, we know that Facebook's profit rate 2011 = total profit/total costs and expenses = 1 billion/1.955 billion = 51.2% (data source: Facebook Inc., SEC Filings Facebook, Form S-1 Registration Statement). This is a very high profit rate, especially in times of global economic crisis. Such a rate can mainly be achieved by the circumstance that Facebook has a low number of employees, 3976 at the end of June 2012[①], but can without costs valorize the entire work time of its users for generating its commodity — data commodities. Infinite exploitation of the users (= no wage) allowed Facebook a profit rate of $>$ 50% in 2011. The secret of Facebook's profits is that it mobilizes billion hours of users' work time (at the level of values) that is unpaid (at the level of prices).

Unpaid labour extends to different realms, such as Google, Twitter, YouTube, Baidu, LinkedIn, knowledge creation and reproduction, "reproductive labour" such as housework, care work, educational work, affective work, sexual work, etc. so that the human being in contemporary capitalism spends a lot of working hours every day in creating value for capital by abstract labour that is unpaid. We can therefore say that life has become a factory, factory life. The factory is not limited to the space of wage labour, but extends into everyday life. The secret of corporate social media's capital accumulation is that it mobilizes a huge number of unpaid workers, who engage in a tremendous amount of fully unpaid working hours that generate data commodities that are sold as targeted advertisements. There is a need to mobilize value production and to make it free labour at the same time in order for this capital accumulation to function.

Marx described a contradiction between value and labour time: the development of technological productivity reduces the labour time needed for producing a commodity due to technological productivity, but at the same time labour time is the only measure and source of wealth in capitalism: "Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition — question of life or death — for the necessary" (Marx 1857/58, 706). The result of this contradiction is, as contemporary capitalism shows, unemployment and precarious labour. In contemporary capitalism, this contradiction takes on a second meaning and reality that is at the heart of corporate social media's capital accumulation model: Corporate social media capital tries to push down the costs of necessary labour (wages) to a minimum, but at the same time increases superfluous labour that is unpaid as productive labour that creates surplus value. The contradiction between necessary and superfluous labour takes on its specific form on corporate social media: paid labour is reduced, unpaid labour is increased, value generation is outsourced from paid to unpaid labour. The contradiction between superfluous and necessary labour is sublated so that a new quality emerges: value-creation is transferred to unpaid labour. At the same time, the contradiction is set at a new level and intensified because the propertylessness, poverty, and precariousness of labour on the one hand and the wealth of capital are intensified.

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① Data source: http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx? NewsAreald = 22 (accessed on September 17th, 2012).

Michael A. Lebowitz (1986, 165) argues that Smythe's approach is only a "Marxist-sounding communications theory". Marxism would assume that "surplus value in capitalism is generated in the direct process of production, the process where workers (having surrendered the property rights over the disposition of their labour-power) are *compelled* to work longer than is necessary to produce the equivalent of their wage. Perhaps it is for this reason that there is hesitation in accepting the conception that audiences work, are exploited, and produce surplus value — in that it is a paradigm quite different to the Marxist paradigm" (Lebowitz 1986, 167). Media capitalists would compete "for the expenditures of competing industrial capitalists", help to "increase the commodity sales of industrial capitalists" and their profits would be "a share of the surplus value of industrial capital" (Lebowitz 1986, 169). Smythe's audience commodity approach would advance an "entirely un-Marxian argument with un-Marxian conclusions" (Lebowitz 1986, 170).

Lebowitz bases his argument on three specific assumptions that he claims to be inherent to Marx's works:

1) That industrial capital is the central form of capital.

2) That only work performed under the command of industrial capital is productive labour and creates surplus value.

3) That only wage labour can be exploited.

The immediate theoretical and political consequences of this logic of argumentation are the following ones:

1) Commercial media are subsumed to industrial capital.

2) Slaves, house workers and other unpaid workers are not exploited.

3) The wage and non-wage work performed under the command of media capital is unproductive work. Media companies cannot exploit workers because they create products and services that are part of the circulation sphere of capitalism.

The political question that Lebowitz's argument poses is if one wants to share the implications of a wage-centric theory of exploitation that unpaid workers cannot be exploited. Productive labour, i. e. labour that generates surplus value, is a complex, contradictory and non-consistent topic within Marx's works. In *Capital Volume 1*, Marx distinguishes different concepts of productive labour. In the narrower sense, the "only worker who is productive is one who produces surplus-value for the capitalist, or in other words contributes towards the self valorization of capital" (Marx 1867, 644). This formulation does not imply that only a wageworker can be a producer of surplus value because there can be workers that produce for capital, but are unpaid, i. e. surplus labour time makes up 100% of their work time. In a second definition, Marx argues that for being considered a productive worker, "it is no longer necessary for the individual himself to put his hand to the object; it is sufficient for him to be an organ of the collective labourer, and to perform any one of its subordinate functions" (Marx 1867, 643f). This means that productive labour understood this way implies that a worker, who contributes to a "social product" that is controlled by a capitalist and is the "joint product of a collective labourer" (Marx 1867, 643), is an exploited worker, no matter if s/he receives a wage for it or not. S/he is part of a collective or social worker. In a third approach, Marx abstracts from the capitalist production process and argues in chapter 5 in the German edition and chapter 7 of the English edition of *Capital Volume 1* that all work is productive because it creates products that conditions and results of work.

Given the first two understandings, there is no necessity to assume that Marx saw non-wage workers that contribute to capitalist production processes as "unproductive" and non-exploited. Leibowitz gives one interpretation of Marx's works and claims that this is the only possible interpretation and that one is not a Marxist if one does not share this interpretation. The common

name for this logical procedure is dogmatism. Representatives of wage-labour dogmatism can certainly counter my argument by citing passages from the *Theories of Surplus Value* or *Capital*, *Volume 3*, where Marx argues that circulation workers, commercial workers in trade or servants are unproductive workers. But it remains a fact that in his most thought-out book, namely *Capital Volume 1*, that in contrast to *Volume 2* and *Volume 3* (that were edited by Engels after Marx's death) and the *Theories of Surplus Value* (that were unpublished notes) he authorized for publication and subsequently revised several times, Marx wrote passages that allow a non-wage labour-fetishistic interpretation of the concept of productive labour.

In contrast to wage fetishism, Marx argued that surplus labour — and therefore the concept of exploitation — is not specific for capitalism: "Capital did not invent surplus labour. Wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the worker, free or unfree, must add to the labour-time necessary for his own maintenance an extra quantity of labour-time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owner of the means of production, whether this proprietor be an Athenian kalos kagathon [aristocrat], an Etruscan theocrat, a *civis romanus*, a Norman baron, an American slave-owner, a Wallachian boyar, a modern landlord or a capitalist" (Marx 1867, 344f). Marx argued that the slave performs 100% of his work as unpaid work: "With the *slave*, on the contrary, even that part of his labour which is paid appears to be unpaid. Of course, in order to work the slave must live, and one part of his working day goes to replace the value of his own maintenance. But since no bargain is struck between him and his master, and no acts of selling and buying are going on between the two parties, all his labour seems to be given away for nothing" (Marx 1865).

Although having different origins, contexts and theoretical implications, the works of Dallas Smythe and Autonomist Marxism share the criticism of wage-labour fetishism as well as the concept of a collective work force that contributes to the production of surplus value, is exploited by capital and is constituted in various spaces of capitalism, including the factory, the household, colonies of primitive accumulation and leisure.

In the context of a digital labour theory of value, it is not so easy to fix advertising in the realm of capital circulation and to reduce it to a relationship that is determined by industrial capital. Within the overall capitalist economy, the commercial media and advertising industries certainly take the role that they help other capitalists realize their profits, i. e. they spread messages about why specific commodites should be bought. But they form a capitalist industry in itself that accumulates capital based on the exploitation of work. For Marx, the notion of productive labour is primarily oriented on criticizing the exploitation process. And given that the media and advertising industry is oriented on profit making and makes use of the work of paid employees and unpaid users/media consumers, it follows that this industry makes use of unpaid labour time for creating profit, i. e. the involved work "produces surplus-value for the capitalist" and "contributes towards the self-valorization of capital" (Marx 1867, 644) — which is Marx's definition of productive labour. In addition, in the digital labour context it is not so easy to say that media audiences are just media consumers and therefore located in the consumption and circulation realm because the consumption of digital media to a certain extent produces content, behavioural data, social network data and personal data that is commodified and sold to advertising clients.

Figure 4 shows the connection of the capital accumulation process of commercial digital media that are based on targeted advertising and the capital accumulation process of advertising clients. They both have their relatively autonomous capital accumulation processes that are based on the exploitation of abstract labour and are interdependent in the form of an exchange process $M - C$, in which advertising clients exchange their money for the access to user data commodities.

Jhally (1987, 83) argues that "watching is an extension of factory labour" and that the living room
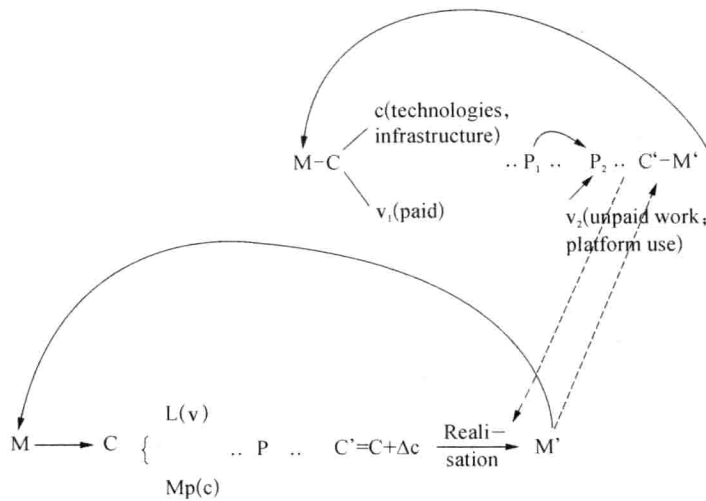
Figure 4   The dialectic of social media capital accumulation and advertising clients' capital accumulation

is one of the factories today. The factory is the space of wage labour, but is also in the living room. Outside of wage labour spaces, the factory is not only in the home — it is everywhere. The Internet is the all-ubiquitous factory and realm of the production of audience commodities. Social media and the mobile Internet make the audience commodity ubiquitous and the factory not limited to your living room and your wage work place — the factory is also in all in-between spaces, the entire planet is today a capitalist factory.

The contemporary globalization of capitalism has dispersed the walls of the wage labour factory all over the globe. Due to the circumstance that capital cannot exist without non-wage labour and exploits the commons that are created by all, society has become a factory. Reflecting this development, Mario Tronti has coined the concept of the social factory: "At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society" (Mario Tronti, quotation translated by and taken from Cleaver 1992, 137) "Now we have the factory planet — or the planet factory, a regime that subsumes not just production, consumption, and social reproduction (as in Fordism), but life's genetic and ecological dimensions" (Dyer-Witheford 2010, 485).

The social worker and the social factory are concepts that allow to go beyond a wage-centric concept of value, labour and exploitation. In fact, especially women, migrant workers, illegal workers, precarious workers, house workers, home workers and the working class in developing countries have long been facing the struggle of surviving in modes of production that feature non-, low- and underpaid work. Especially neoliberalism has generalized the precarious mode of work so that housewifized work that is insecure, low paid, temporary, precarious, individualized, lacks social security, unionization, access to health care and other welfare benefits, etc., has become the normality of work for many. The concept of the exploitation of the social labourer who works in a global social factory allows connecting Marxist political economy to feminism and studies of race and post-colonialism. There is a global division of labour in the organisation of knowledge work. And this division is class-structured, gendered and racist. There is an inherent connection of class, gender and race in the capitalist mode of production. Dallas Smythe, Marxist Feminism and Autonomist Marxism

have stressed that exploitation takes place beyond the confines of the traditional wage-labour factory, which opens up connections between these approaches.

Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher (2008, 62) stress that Dallas Smythe has "established a groundwork for" the research of voluntary, low paid and unpaid labour "by describing the extent of audience labor on the home through the sale of people's attention to advertisers. The connection of capitalism, patriarchy and racism has become ever more obvious in recent years, needs to be more analysed and can be a foundation for solidarity between the different exploited groups that we find in capitalism today". Harry Cleaver (2000, 123) argues that capital "tries to shape all 'leisure', or free-time, activities [...] in its own interests. Thus, rather than viewing unwaged 'non-labour time' automatically as free time or as time completely antithetical to capital, we are forced to recognize that capital has tried to integrate this tiem, too, within its process of accumulation. [...] Put another way, capital has tried to convert 'individual consumption' into 'productive consumption' by creating the social factory". Capitalist media and culture are shaped by a global mode of production, in which houseworkers and consumers shop for commodities, actively reproduce labour power and work as audience for the media, users generate a data commodity on the Internet, slave workers in poor countries extract minerals that are used for the production of hardware, low-paid children, women and other workers in Chinese and other manufacturing companies assemble the hardware of computers, phones and printers under extremely hard and dangerous working conditions, highly paid and overworked software engineers work for companies like Google, Microsoft etc., relatively low-paid knowledge workers in developing countries create, transform, process or edit cultural content and software for firms that are subcontractors to Western media and communications companies, a feminized low-paid workforce takes care of communications services in call-centers and other service factories, etc. The contradictory relations between communications workers in a global value chain pose the question: "Will knowledge workers of the world unite?" (Mosco and McKercher 2008, 13).

"The urban" is "one of the critical sites for contemporary struggle" (David Harvey, in: Harvey, Hardt and Negri 2009). "The metropolis is a factory for the production of the common. [...] With the passage to the hegemony of biopolitical production, the space of economic production and the space of the city tend to overlap. There is no longer a factory wall that divides the one from the other, and "externalities" are no longer external to the site of production that valorizes them. Workers produce throughout the metropolis, in its every crack and crevice. In fact, production of the common is becoming nothing but the life of the city itself" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 250f). Commercial social media show that the Internet is simultaneously a playground and a factory (Scholz 2011). They lock "networked publics in a 'walled garden' where they can be expropriated, where their relationships are put to work, and where their fascinations and desires are monetized" (Scholz 2011, 246). Internet user commodification is part of the tendency of the commodification of everything that has resulted in the generalization of the factory and of exploitation. "Commodification presumes the existence of property rights over processes, things, and social relations, that a price can be put on them, and that they can be traded subject to legal contract. [...] In practice, of course, every society sets some bounds on where commodification begins and ends" (Harvey 2007, 165). Neoliberal capitalism has largely widened the boundaries of what is treated as a commodity. "The commodification of sexuality, culture, history, heritage; of nature as spectacle or as rest cure; [...] — these all amount to putting a price on things that were never actually produced as commodities" (Harvey 2007, 166).

The outsourcing of work to consumers is a general tendency of contemporary capitalism. Facebook has asked users to translate its site into other languages without payment. Javier Olivan, international

manager at Facebook, commented that it would be cool to use the wisdom of the crowds[1]. Pepsi started a competition, in which one could win US $ 10 000 for the best design of a Pepsi can. Ideabounty is a crowdsourcing platform that organizes crowdsourcing projects for corporations as for example RedBull, BMW or Unilever. In such projects, most of the employed work is unpaid. Even if single individuals receive symbolic prize money, most of the work time employed by users and consumers is fully unpaid, which allows companies to outsource paid labour time to consumers or fans that work for free.

Value is a complex concept. Göran Bolin (2011) identifies economic value, moral value, news value, public value, cultural value, aesthetic value, social value, educational value, political value and symbolic/sign value as specific interpretations of the term. Marx shared with Adam Smith and David Ricardo an objective concept of value. The value of a commodity is for them the "quantity of the 'value-forming substance', the labour, contained in the article", "the amount of labour socially necessary" for its production (Marx 1867, 129). Marx argues that goods in capitalism have a dual character. They have a use value-side (they are used for achieving certain aims) and a value-side. There are aspects of concrete and abstract labour. Concrete labour generates the commodity's use value (the good's qualitative character as useful good that satisfies human needs), abstract labour the commodity's value (the good's quantitative side that allows its exchange with other commodities in the form of the relationship x amount of commodity A = y amount of commodity B). Subjective concepts of economic value, as held for example by classical French political economists as Jean-Baptiste Say and Frederic Bastiat or representatives of the neoclassical Austrian school, assume that the worth of a good is determined by humans cognitive evaluations and moral judgements, they interpret the notion of value idealistically. They say that the value of a good is the value given to them by the subjective judgements of humans.

One problem of the value concept is that its subjective and objective meaning are often mixed up. As the moral value of capitalism is economic value, one needs a precise concept of value. To focus the meaning of the term value on economic value does not automatically mean to speak in favour of capitalism and commodification, it only reflects the important role the capitalist economy has in modern society and stresses commodity logic's tendency to attempt to colonize non-commodified realms. For socialists, an important political goal is a world not dominated by economic value. But achieving this goal does not necessarily need a non-economic definition of the value concept.

Marx made a difference between the concept of value and the concept of price. When we talk about the value of a good, we talk about the average number of hours needed for its production, whereas the price is expressed in quantities of money. "The expression of the value of a commodity in gold — x commodity A = Y money commodity — is its money-form or price" (Marx 1867, 189). Marx argued that the value and the price of a commodity do not coincide: "the production price of a commodity is not at all identical with its value [...] It has been shown that the production price of a commodity may stand above or below its value and coincides with it only in exceptional cases" (Marx 1894, 892). He also dealt with the question how values are transformed into prices. Chapter nine of *Capital Vol. 3* (Marx 1894, 254 – 272) is devoted to this question.

Information is a peculiar commodity:
- It is not used-up in consumption.
- It can be infinitely shared and copied by one individual without loosing the good itself. Several people can own it at the same time.

[1] http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24205912 (accessed on August 20, 2011).

- It has no physical wear and tear. Its wear and tear is what Marx (1867, 528) called "moral depreciation": it is caused by competition and the drive of companies to establish new versions of informational commodities, such the newest version of the iPod or iPad or a new song by an artist in order to accumulate ever more capital and by the creation of symbolic difference postulated by advertising and branding so that the older informational commodities appear for consumers to be "outdated".
- It can be easily and cheaply copied and quickly transmitted.
- It is a social good that reflects the history of social interactions and the history of knowledge.
- The value for producing the initial form of information is relatively high (it includes many hours of development costs), whereas starting with the second copy the value is relatively low (work time mainly is the time of copying and distributing the good).
- Information is, however, normally sold at a price that is higher than its value (measured as the amount of hours needed for its production). The difference between value and price is at the heart of profit making in the information industries.

An artwork sold at a high price makes use of the value-price-differential and the ideological belief of the buyers in the superiority of the artist. Similarly, branding can constitute a value-price-differential. It is an ideological mechanism that wants to make consumers believe that a commodity has a symbolic value above its economic value. Consumers' ideological belief in the superiority of a certain commodity allows companies to achieve excess-profit, a profit higher than yielded for similar use values. Related phenomena are financial assets that are sold at prices that do not correspond to the profits the underlying commodities are yielding. Marx (1894) speaks in this respect of fictitious capital and David Harvey (2005) of a temporal fix to overaccumulation that results in the deference of "the re-entry of capital values into circulation into the future" (Harvey 2005, 109) so that the difference between profits and asset price can result in financial bubbles. Just like there can be a difference between value and price of a commodity, there can be a difference between profit and financial market worth of a financial asset.

Bolin (2011) argues that in broadcasting, not audiences, but statisticians work. The advertisers would not buy audiences, but the belief in a certain audience value generated by statisticians that relatively arbitrarily measure audience ratings. "Audiences do not work; It is rather the statisticians and market executives who do" (Bolin 2011, 84). From a Marxist perspective (that Smythe employed), audiences' work time is the time they consume commercial media. The exact quantity of labour value can never be determined, therefore Marx said that the "individual commodity counts […] only as an average sample of its kind" (Marx 1867, 129f). Audiences create the value of the commercial media commodity, whereas audience statistics determine the price of the audience commodity by approximating average audience numbers based on a sample of a certain size. Statistical workers are crucial in setting prices and transforming labour values of the media into prices.

On corporate social media, users create content, browse content, establish and maintain relations with others by communication, and update their profiles. All time they spend on these platforms is work time. The Internet prosumer commodity that an advertiser buys on e. g. Facebook or Google is based on specific demographic data (age, location, education, gender, workplace, etc.) and interests (e. g. certain keywords typed into Google or certain interests identified on Facebook). Thereby a specific group can be identified as target group. All time spent by members of this group on the specific social media platform constitutes the value (work time) of a specific Internet prosumer commodity. This work time contains time for social relationship management and cultural activities that generate reputation. One therefore needs to reflect on how economic value production by the media is connected to what Bourdieu termed social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bolin 2011). Users employ

social media because they strive for a certain degree to achieve what Bourdieu (1986a, b) terms social capital (the accumulation of social relations), cultural capital (the accumulation of qualification, education, knowledge) and symbolic capital (the accumulation of reputation). The time that users spend on commercial social media platforms for generating social, cultural and symbolic capital is in the process of prosumer commodification transformed into economic capital. Labour time on commercial social media is the conversion of Bourdieuian social, cultural and symbolic capital into Marxian value and economic capital.

Marx (1894) stressed the difference between a commodity's value and price. The price of production of a commodity may lie above or below its value and in some cases coincides with its value. The value level measures the labour needed for the production of commodities in work hours, the price level measures for which amount of money a commodity is sold. The ratings industry transforms the value of the audience commodity into prices. Advertisements are linked to certain programmes because one expects specific kinds of audiences to watch certain programmes (or to read certain parts of a newspaper). The value of one specific programme that is interrupted by advertisements is the sum of the time all viewers spend viewing the programme (including the advertisements). It is impossible to measure this value exactly. Rather, as Marx (1894) knew, only approximations of the average value of a commodity are possible. If more viewers watch a certain programme because it is popular, then its value increases. This makes it likely that also the audience price will be higher because more advertisements will be watched. However, there is no automatic correspondence between value and price of the audience commodity: if one million young, urban middle class youngsters who can be expected to buy a lot of commodities watch one programme and two million elderly rural people watch another programme that has the same length, then the second audience commodity's value is higher. However, due to the expectation that young urban people are more consumption-oriented than elderly rural people, the first commodity audience's price (measured as amount of money that an advertiser needs to pay at a certain point of time in the programme slot for a specific advertisement length in order to reach a defined audience of a particular size) may be higher.

Once value has been created on Facebook by online labour, the resulting data commodities are offered to ad clients with the help of either the pay per click (CPC) or the pay per 1000 impressions (CPM) methods of payment. At his point of analysis, we leave the value-level and the commodity production-sphere and enter the price-level and the sphere of commodity sales. How is the social media prosumer commodities' price determined and how is value transformed into money profit? Advertising clients are interested in the access to specific groups that can be targeted with individualized advertisements that fit their interests. Access to this group and data about their interests (information about who is member of a specific consumer group that shares certain interests) are sold to advertisers. On Google and Facebook, advertisers set a maximum budget for one campaign and a maximum they are willing to pay for one click on their advertisement or for 1000 impressions (1 impression = a presentation of an ad on a profile). The exact price for one click or for 1000 impressions is determined in a automated bidding process, in which all advertisers interested in a specific group (all ads targeted at this specific group) compete. In both models, every user is offered as a commodity and commodified, but only certain user groups are sold as commodity. In the pay-per-click model, value is transformed into money (profit is realized) when a user clicks on an ad. In the pay-per-view model, value is transformed into money (profit is realized) when an ad is presented on a user's profile. The price is mathematically determined by an algorithm and based on bids. The number of hours spent online by a specific group of users determines the value of the social media prosumer commodity. The price of this commodity is algorithmically determined.

All hours spent online by users of Facebook, Google, and comparable corporate social media

constitute work time, in which data commodities are generated, as well as potential time for profit realization. The maximum time of a single user that is productive (i. e. results in data commodities) is 100% of the time spent online. The maximum time that the same user contributes to profit realization by clicking on ads or viewing ads is the time that s/he spends on a specific platform. In practice, users only click on a small share of presented ads. So in the pay-per-click accumulation model, work time tends to be much larger than profit realization time. Online labour creates a lot of commodities that are offered for sale, but only a certain share of it is sold and results in profits. This share is still large enough so that companies like Google and Facebook can generate significant profits. Online labour time is at the same time potential profit realization time. Capital tries to increase profit realization time in order to accumulate capital, i. e. to make an ever-larger share of productive labour time also profit realization time.

According to Facebook, the price of an ad in a bid is determined by the number of people competing for a specific ad space/target audience, by ad quality and ad performance (source: Facebook Help Center, Campaign Cost and Budgeting⇒Ads and Sponsored Stories). On Google Ad-Words, the price of an ad depends on the maximum bid that one sets/can afford and ad quality. Ad quality is based on an assessment of how relevant and well-targeted the text of an ad is (source: Google, video "AdWords: Control Your Costs"): the more targeted an ad, the lower the CPC cost. Google's quality score of an ad is based on the number of past clicks for the targeted keyword, the display URL's number of past clicks, the targetedness of the ad text and the number of past clicks for the ad (source: Google AdWords Help: Quality Score). Google offers like Facebook both CPC and CPM as payment methods. How exactly Google's and Facebook's pricing algorithms work is not known because they are not open source.

According to statistics, the most expensive keywords on Google are insurance, loans, mortgage, attorney and credit (http://techcrunch.com/2011/07/18/most-expensive-google-adwords-keywords/). The most viewed ads on Facebook are those from the retail sector (23% of all viewed ads), the food & drinking industry (19%), the finance industry (14%), the entertainment industry (11%) and the games industry (11%) (http://allfacebook.com/facebook-advertising-rates-2_b86020).

A study of Facebook advertising conducted by Comscore (2012) argues that:

- Users spend 40% of their Facebook time in the news feed, therefore exposure to ads is larger there than on brand pages.
- According to DoubleClick, click-through-rates are on average 0.1%.
- Many companies would today mistakenly see the number of fans on brand pages as main success indicator for online advertising.
- People exposed to Facebook ads are more likely to purchase products online or in stores than those who are no. The purchase ratio grows with the length of the advertising campaign. The study therefore suggests the importance of "view-through display ad effectiveness in a medium where click-through rates are known to be lower than average for many campaigns" (Comscore 2012, 3).

Time dimensions play a crucial role in determining the price of an ad: the number of times people click on an ad, the number of times an ad or target URL has already been viewed, the number of times a keyword has been entered, the time that a specific user group spends on the platform. Furthermore, also the bidding maximums used as well as the number of ad clients competing for ad space influence the ad prices. In the pay-per-view method, Facebook and Google earn more with an ad that is targeted on a group that spends a lot of time on Facebook. The larger the target group, the higher Facebook's and Google's profits tend to be. In the pay-per-click method, Facebook and Google only earn money if users click on an ad. According to studies, the average click-through-rate is 0.1% (Comscore 2012).

This means that Facebook and Google tend to gain more profit if ads are presented to more users.

Generally we can say that the higher the total attention time given to adds, the higher Google's and Facebook's profits tend to be. Attention time is determined by the size of a target group and the average time this group spends on the platforms. Online time on corporate social media is both labour time and attention time: All activities are monitored and result in data commodities, so users produce commodities online during their online time. In the pay per view mode, specific online time of specifically targeted groups is also attention time that realizes profit for Facebook or Google. In the pay per click mode, attention time that realizes profit is only the portion of the online time that users devote to click on ads that are presented to them. In both cases, online time is crucial for a) the production of data commodities, b) the realization of profit derived from the sales of the data commodities. Both surveillance of online time (in the sphere of production) and attention time (in the sphere of circulation) given to advertisements play an important role in corporate social media's capital accumulation model.

According to Google Trends, Michael Jackson was one of the top trending search keyword on Google on June 27th, 2012. Using the Google AdWords traffic estimator (on June 27th, 2012) showed that by creating a campaign with a maximum CPC of 10 € and a budget of 1000 Euros per day, one can expect to attract 2867 – 3504 impressions and 112 – 137 clicks for total costs of 900 – 1100 Euros per day if one targets Google users who search for "Michael Jackson". In comparison, I used the same settings for the keyword "Cat Power" (an outstanding American indie rock singer, much less popular and less sought-after on Google than Michael Jackson). In a campaign that targets users who google "Cat Power", one can expect to attract 108 – 132 impressions and 3.9 – 4.7 clicks for total costs of 30.96 – 37.84 Euros per day. The profit that Google makes with the data commodity associated with the keyword "Michael Jackson" is much larger than the one it makes with the keyword "Cat Power" because the first is a more sought-after keyword. And that a keyword is popular means that users spend more collective usage time per day for entering the keyword and reading result pages than for other keywords. The example shows that popular interests, for whose generation and result consumption users spend more labour time on the Internet than for not-so popular keywords, tend to result in higher profits for Google than interests that are not so popular.

Marx formulated the law of value as saying that "the greater the labour-time necessary to produce an article, [. . .] the greater its value" (Marx 1867, 131). The law of value also applies in the case of commercial social media: The more time a user spends on commercial social media, the more data about her/his interests and activities are available and the more advertisements are presented to her/him. Users spending a lot of time online, create more data and more value (work time) that is potentially transformed into profit. That the law of value applies on commercial social media can also be observed by the circumstance that there are high prices for advertisements presented in the context of frequently searched keywords on Google. A lot of users spend their work time on searching for these keywords, i. e. the value (work time) underlying specific keywords is high. This makes the corresponding user commodity more precious (it is likely to be a large group), therefore its price can be set at a high rate.

That surplus value generating labour is an emergent property of capitalist production means that production and accumulation will break down if this labour is withdrawn. It is an essential part of the capitalist production process. That prosumers conduct surplus-generating labour, can also be seen by imagining what would happen if they would stop using Facebook or Google: The number of users would drop, advertisers would stop investments because no objects for their advertising messages and therefore no potential customers for their products could be found, the profits of the new media corporations would drop and they would go bankrupt. If such activities were carried out on a large

scale, a new economy crisis would arise. This thought experiment shows that users are essential for generating profit in the new media economy. Furthermore they produce and coproduce parts of the products and therefore parts of the use value, value, and surplus value that are objectified in these products.

Not all prosumer work on social media is commodified (just like not all audience work is comodified). Work that contributes content, attention or comments to non-commercial non-profit projects (such as Wikipedia or alternative online news media, such as Indymedia, Alternet, Democracy Now!, openDemocracy, WikiLeaks, or the use of social media by NGOs) is work in the sense that it helps creating use values (alternative news, critical discourse etc.), but it is non-commodified work, it cannot be exploited, does not have exchange value and does not yield profit. Non-commercial non-profit online projects are expression of the struggle for a society and an Internet that is not ruled by the logic of commodities and exchange value. Although they are frequently precarious, the existence of alternatives shows that social media and media in general are in capitalism shaped by a) class structures, b) ideological "incorporation and legitimation" and c) "gaps and contradictions" that constitute "cracks and fissures" that allow "currents of criticism and movements of contestation" (Golding and Murdock 1978, 353).

Corporate social media have an immanent connection to finance capital. Google's profits were 9.7 billion US $ in 2011 (SEC Filings Form 10 – K 2011), whereas its financial market valuation (stock market capitalization) was 182 billion US $ on June 26th, 2012[1]. Facebook's profits were 1 billion US $ in 2011 (SEC Filings Form S-1 Registration statement), whereas its stock market capitalization was 70 billion US $ on June 26th, 2012[2]. This shows that the financial market values achieved on the stock market and the profits achieved by Internet prosumer commodification do not coincide. Companies like Facebook and Google are overvalued on the stock market, their profits do not match the high market values. This divergence phenomenon does not lie outside of the logic of Marxist theory, but was rather described by Marx (1894) in the analysis of fictitious capital in *Capital Volume III*.

For Marx, financial capital is based on the formula M (money) – M′ (more money). "Here we have M – M′, money that produces money, self-valorizing value, without the process that mediates the two extremes" (Marx 1894, 515, see also 471). Consumer credits, mortgages, stock, bonds, and derivates are all based on this financial type of accumulation. Finance capital does not itself produce profit, it is only an entitlement to payments that are made in the future and derive from profits or wages (the latter for example in the case of consumer credits). Marx therefore characterizes finance capital as fictitious capital (Marx 1894, 596). The "share is nothing but an ownership title, *pro rata*, to the surplus-value which this capital is to realize. A may sell this title to B, and B to C. These transactions have no essential effect on the matter. A or B has then transformed his title into capital, but C has transformed his capital into a mere ownership title to the surplus-value expected from this share capital" (Marx 1894, 597f). Financial investments in stocks and financial derivates are transformed into operative capital, but they are not capital themselves, only ownership titles to a part of surplus value that is expected to be produced in the future. "All these securities actually represent nothing but accumulated claims, legal titles, to future production" (Marx 1894, 599). The value of shares is therefore speculative and not connected to the actual profits of the company, but only to expectations about future profits that determine buying and selling decisions of stock investors: "The

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① http://money.cnn.com/data/us_markets/
② http://money.cnn.com/data/us_markets/

market value of these securities is partly speculative, since it is determined not just by the actual revenue but rather by the anticipated revenue as reckoned in advance" (Marx 1894, 598, see also 608, 641). The result is a high-risk system of speculation that resembles gambling (Marx 1894, 609) and is crisis-prone (Marx 1894, 621). "Monetary crises, independent of real crises or as an intensification of them, are unavoidable" in capitalism (Marx 1894, 649).

Financialization is a crucial aspect of corporate social media platforms like Facebook and Google. Financialization is a mechanism that Marx described as important element of capitalism. User labour is the source of profit on these platforms. Finance capital invests in platforms like Facebook and Google because it has the expectation of high future profits. The new economy crisis in 2000 has shown that the difference between stock market values and actual profits can result, as Marx knew, in bursting financial bubbles that result in economic crises. Crises can have multiple sources (e.g. lack of sales = overproduction, underconsumption; class struggle that increases investments and negatively impacts profits (profit-squeeze); overaccumulation; crisis events that trigger large-scale sales of stocks and disappointed investment situations; combinations, etc.). The stock market values of companies like Google and Facebook are based on expectations how well these corporations will in the future be able to exploit users' and employees' labour and turn it into profit. The actual profit rates influence, but do not determine stock market investors' buying and selling decisions. The latter are determined by multiple factors and expectations, especially expectations about potential futures, which is the reason why Marx speaks of fictitious capital.

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

After analyzing the commodity and capital side of corporate social media, I will in the next section discuss changes in the relationship between play and labour and relate them to the digital labour debate.

Ideology, Play and Digital Labour

Ideology takes on two distinct forms in relationship to contemporary digital media:

1) The presentation of social media as form of participatory culture and new democracy.

2) The hidden appearance of exploitation as play.

Ideological claims are not specific for what some term "web 2.0", rather also earlier claims about the Internet in the 1990s constituted a "Californian ideology" (Barbrook and Cameron 2001) that stresses individualism, personal responsibility, competition, private property and consumerism, lacks consciousness of inequality and exploitation and is in line with the basic ideas of neoliberalism (Fisher 2010). Neubauer (2011) stresses in this context the existence of a specific ideology of informational neoliberalism that combines the belief in the power of ICTs and neoliberal values.

The turn of the millennium saw a crisis of heavily financialized Internet companies. The "dotcom" crisis destroyed the hopes that the "Internet age" would result in a new age of prosperity and unhampered economic growth. In the years following the crisis, companies such as Facebook (2004), Flickr (2004), LinkedIn (2003), Sina Weibo (2009), Tumblr (2007), Twitter (2006), VK (VKontakte, 2006), Wordpress (2003) and YouTube (2005, sold to Google in 2006) were founded. They provide Internet services that are today among the most accessed web platforms in the world. They represent capitalists' new aspiring hopes to found a new capital accumulation model that is based on targeted advertising.

The rise of these platforms was accompanied by an ideology that celebrated these services as radically new and the rise of an economic democracy and participatory culture. Henry Jenkins (2008, 275) argues that "the Web has become a site of consumer participation" and has supported the rise of a participatory culture. Axel Bruns argues that Flickr, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook are environments of "public participation" (Bruns 2008, 227f) and give rise to "a produsage-based democratic model" (Bruns 2008, 372). John Hartley (2012) describes the emergence of a "dialogical model of communication" (Hartley 2012, 2), in which "everyone is a producer" (Hartley 2012, 3). His general argument is that with the rise of online platforms that support social networking and user-generated content production and diffusion, journalism, the public sphere, universities, the mass media, citizenship, the archive and other institutions have become more democratic because "people have more say in producing as well as consuming" (Hartley 2012, 14). Clay Shirky (2008, 297) says that "web 2.0" means the "democratization of production". Tapscott and Williams see the rise of a new economy they call wikinomics that results in the emergence of "a new economic democracy" (Tapscott and Williams 2006, 267).

Especially management gurus and cultural theorists have made the claim that user-generated content platforms have advanced a participatory economy and culture. They have helped to sell "web 2.0" as the "next big thing" that venture capitalists need to invest in. The hype turned out to be more about capital accumulation than democracy. The discussions about terms such as "social media" and "web 2.0" have started when Tim O'Reilly (2005) introduced the term "web 2.0" in 2005. Although Tim O'Reilly surely thinks that "web 2.0" denotes actual changes and says that the crucial fact about it is that users as a collective intelligence co-create the value of platforms like Google, Amazon, Wikipedia, or craigslist in a "community of connected users" (O'Reilly and Battelle 2009, 1), he admits that the term was mainly created for identifying the need of new economic strategies of Internet companies after the "dot-com" crisis, in which the bursting of financial bubbles caused the collapse of

many Internet companies. So he says in a paper published five years after the creation of the invention of the term "web 2.0", that this category was "a statement about the second coming of the Web after the dotcom bust" at a conference that was "designed to restore confidence in an industry that had lost its way after the dotcom bust" (O'Reilly and Battelle 2009, 1). This means that the person, who coined the notion of "web 2.0" admits that it is an ideology aimed at attracting investors.

Web 2.0 enthusiasts tend to use the notion of participation in a shallow way, forgetting that it main use stems from participatory democracy theory, in which it signifies the control of ownership, decision making and value-definition by all (Fuchs 2011a, chapter 7). Statistics such as the ownership structures of web 2.0 companies, the most viewed videos on YouTube, the most popular Facebook groups, the most popular topics on Google and Twitter, the Twitter users with the highest number of followers show that the corporate web 2.0 is not a democratic space of equal participants, but a space, in which large companies, celebrities and entertainment dominate. They achieve a much higher number of followers, readers, viewers, listeners, re-tweets, likes, etc. than the everyday users (Fuchs 2011a, chapter 7). If a claim about reality is disjointed from actual reality, then one commonly characterizes such a claim as an ideology. "Web 2.0" and "social media", conceived as participatory culture and participatory economy, are ideological categories that serve the interests of the dominant class. They ignore power structures that shape the Internet.

Claims about the power of "social media" are not only trying to attract business investments, but also have a hegemonic side in the life and thought of everyday users. Jodi Dean (2005) speaks in this context of Internet fetishism and argues that it is an ideology to assume that the Internet is inherently political and that "web 2.0" is a form of politics in itself: "Busy people can think they are active — the technology will act for them, alleviating their guilt while assuring them that noting will change too much. [...] By sending an e-mail, signing a petition, responding to an article on a blog, people can feel political. And that feeling feeds communicative capitalism insofar as it leaves behind the time-consuming, incremental and risky efforts of politics. [...] It is a refusal to take a stand, to venture into the dangerous terrain of politicization" (Dean 2005, 70).

But ideology not only takes on the form of overdrawn claims about the democratic implications of "social media". It is also present in the media production process itself, in which exploitation as social relation tends to be hidden in structures of play. The labour side of the capital accumulation strategy of social media corporations is digital playbour. Kücklich (2005) first introduced the term playbour (play + labour). The exploitation of digital playbour is based on the collapse of the distinction between work time and playtime. In the Fordist mode of capitalist production, work time was the time of pain and the time of repression and surplus repression of the human drive for pleasure; whereas leisure time was the time of Eros (Marcuse 1955). In contemporary capitalism, play and labour, Eros and Thanatos, the pleasure principle and the death drive, partially converge: workers are expected to have fun during work time and play time becomes productive and work-like. Playtime and work time intersect and all human time of existence tends to be exploited for the sake of capital accumulation.

Capitalism connects labour and play in a destructive dialectic. Traditionally, play in the form of enjoyment, sex and entertainment was in capitalism only part of spare time, which was rather unproductive (in the sense of producing commodities for sale) and separate from labour time. Freud (1961) argued that the structure of drives is characterized by a dialectic of Eros (the drive for life, sexuality, lust) and Thanatos (the drive for death, destruction, aggression). Humans according to Freud strive for the permanent realization of Eros (pleasure principle), but culture would only become possible by a temporal negation and suspension of Eros and the transformation of erotic energy into culture and labour. Labour would be a productive form of desexualisation — the repression of sexual drives. Freud speaks in this context of the reality principle or sublimation. The reality principle

sublates the pleasure principle. Human culture thereby sublates human nature and becomes man's second nature.

Marcuse (1955) connected Freud's theory of drives to Marx's theory of capitalism. He argued that alienated labour, domination, and capital accumulation have turned the reality principle into a repressive reality principle — the performance principle: alienated labour constitutes a surplus-repression of Eros. The repression of the pleasure principle takes on a quantity that exceeds the culturally necessary suppression. Marcuse connected Marx's notions of necessary labour and surplus labour/value to the Freudian drive structure of humans and argued that necessary labour on the level of drives corresponds to necessary suppression and surplus labour to surplus-repression. This means that in order to exist, a society needs a certain amount of necessary labour (measured in hours of work) and hence a certain corresponding amount of suppression of the pleasure principle (also measured in hours). The exploitation of surplus value (labour that is performed for free and generates profit) results not only in the circumstance that workers are forced to work for free for capital to a certain extent, but also in the circumstance that the pleasure principle must be additionally suppressed.

"Behind the reality principle lies the fundamental fact of Ananke or scarcity (*Lebensnot*), which means that the struggle for existence takes place in a world too poor for the satisfaction of human needs without constant restraint, renunciation, delay. In other words, whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates work, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs. For the duration of work, which occupies practically the entire existence of the mature individual, pleasure is 'suspended' and pain prevails" (Marcuse 1955, 35). In societies that are based on the principle of domination, the reality principle takes on the form of the performance principle: Domination "is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged situation" (Marcuse 1955, 36). The performance principle is connected to surplus-repression, a term that describes "the restrictions necessitated by social domination" (Marcuse 1955, 35). Domination introduces "additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association" (Marcuse 1955, 37).

Marcuse (1955) argues that the performance principle means that Thanatos governs humans and society and that alienation unleashes aggressive drives within humans (repressive desublimation) that result in an overall violent and aggressive society. Due to the high productivity reached in late-modern society, a historical alternative would be possible: the elimination of the repressive reality principle, the reduction of necessary working time to a minimum and the maximization of free time, an eroticization of society and the body, the shaping of society and humans by Eros, the emergence of libidinous social relations. Such a development would be a historical possibility — but one incompatible with capitalism and patriarchy.

Gilles Deleuze (1995) has pointed out that in contemporary capitalism, disciplinary power is transformed in such a way that humans increasingly discipline themselves without direct external violence. He terms this situation the society of (self-)control. It can for example be observed in the strategies of participatory management. This method promotes the use of incentives and the integration of play into labour. It argues that work should be fun, workers should permanently develop new ideas, realize their creativity, enjoy free time within the factory, etc. The boundaries between work time and spare time, labour and play, become fuzzy. Work tends to acquire qualities of play, whereas entertainment in spare time tends to become labour-like. Work time and spare time become inseparable. At the same time work-related stress intensifies and property relations remain unchanged (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007). Corporate social media's exploitation of Internet users is an aspect of this transformation. It signifies that private Internet usage, which is motivated by play, entertainment, fun and joy — aspects of Eros — has become subsumed under capital and has become a

sphere of the exploitation of labour. Internet corporations accumulate profit by exploiting the play labour of users.

Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2007) argue that the rise of participatory management means the emergence of a new spirit of capitalism that subsumes the anti-authoritarian values of the political revolt of 1968 and the subsequently emerging New Left such as autonomy, spontaneity, mobility, creativity, networking, visions, openness, plurality, informality, authenticity, emancipation, and so on, under capital. The topics of the movement would now be put into the service of those forces that it wanted to destroy. The outcome would have been "the construction of the new, so-called 'network' capitalism" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007, 429) so that artistic critique — that calls for authenticity, creativity, freedom and autonomy in contrast to social critique that calls for equality and overcoming class (37f) — today "indirectly serves capitalism and is one of the instruments of its ability to endure" (490).

Table 1 **Pleasures in four modes of society (human essence, society with scarcity, classical capitalism, capitalism in the age of corporate social media), based on a table from: Marcuse 1955, 12**

Essence of human desires:	Reality principle in societies with scarcity	Repressive reality principle in classical capitalism	Repressive reality principle in capitalism in the age of corporate social media
immediate satisfaction	delayed satisfaction	delayed satisfaction	Immediate online satisfaction
Pleasure	restraint of pleasure	leisure time: pleasure, work time: restraint of pleasure, surplus repression of pleasure	Collapse of leisure time and work time, leisure time becomes work time and work time leisure time, all time becomes exploited, online leisure time becomes surplus value-generating, wage labour time = surplus repression time of pleasure, play labour time = surplus value generating pleasure time
joy (play)	toil (work)	leisure time: joy (play), work time: toil (work)	play labour: joy and play as toil and work, toil and work as joy and play
Receptiveness	productiveness	leisure time: receptiveness, work time: productiveness	Collapse of the distinction between leisure time/work time and receptiveness/productiveness, total commodification of human time
absence of repression of pleasure	repression of pleasure	leisure time: absence of repression of pleasure, work time: repression of pleasure	play labour time: surplus value generation appears to be pleasure-like, but serves the logic of repression (the lack of ownership of capital)

Also paid creative industry work is becoming more like play today. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) show the ambivalence of much creative industry work that is precarious, but cherished, because of the fun, contacts, reputation, creativity, and self-determination that it may involve. The difficulty is that labour feels like play and that exploitation and fun thereby become inseparable. Play and labour are today in certain cases indistinguishable. Eros has become fully subsumed under the repressive reality principle. Play is largely commodified, spaces and free time that are not exploited by capital hardly exist today. They are difficult to create and to defend. Play is today productive, surplus value

generating labour that is exploited by capital. All human activities, and therefore also all play, tends under the contemporary conditions to become subsumed under and exploited by capital. Play as an expression of Eros is thereby destroyed, human freedom and human capacities are crippled. On corporate social media, play and labour converge into play labour that is exploited for capital accumulation. The corporate Internet therefore stands for the total commodification and exploitation of time — all human time tends to become surplus-value generating time that is exploited by capital. Table 1 summarizes the application of Marcuse's theory of play, labour and pleasure to corporate social media.

Some authors have criticized the main arguments advanced in the digital labour debate. In the next section, I present and discuss some of the points of criticism.

A Critique of the Critique of Digital Labour

David Hesmondhalgh (2010) argues that Internet labour is not exploited because there is much cultural work in society that is unpaid. "Most cultural production in history has been unpaid, and that continues to be the case today. Consider the millions of people across the world, especially young people, who will, on the day you are reading this, be practising musical instruments, or, to use an example from an industry that I would call a leisure industry rather than a cultural industry, imagine how many young people are practising football or basketball. Now it could be argued that all this represents labour (defined here as the expenditure of effort, under some kind of compulsion; it will usually seem preferable to undertake some other more restful activity) which is vital to the realisation of surplus value in the music industry or the football industry. For this work helps to create a reservoir of workers, from whom these industries can draw" (Hesmondhalgh 2010, 277). Hesmondhalgh says that the claim "that contacting friends and uploading photographs on to Facebook represents some kind of exploited labour is, to my mind, more along the lines of arguing that we should demand that all amateur football coaches be paid for their donation of free time: not impossible to argue for, but hardly a priority — and accompanied by the danger that it may commodify forms of activity that we would ultimately prefer to leave outside the market" (278).

Hesmondhalgh mixes up two different types of activity:

1) hobby or private activities, in which labour power is reproduced, but no commodities are produced (like playing football or sleeping);

2) hobby activities, in which value is generated that is directly appropriated by capitalist companies (using commercial Internet platforms, watching commercial television, etc.).

Hesmondhalgh conflates different activities — reproductive activity that recreates labour power, but produces no commodity that is sold, and reproductive activities that recreate labour power and at the same time create an audience or Internet prosumer commodity. If a wage for either or both of these activities should be demanded (there are pro- and counter-arguments from a left-wing political perspective) is another (political) question, but Hesmondhalgh ignores the direct role of class, commodification and profit in the second type of activity.

The audience and digital labour are definitely exploited on corporate social media because three conditions of exploitation (Wright 1997, 10) are given:

a) the profit accumulated deprives the audience and users of material benefits (inverse interdependent welfare),

b) audience and users are excluded from the ownership of media organizations and the accumulated profit (exclusion),

c) capital appropriates the created profit (appropriation).

Pasquinelli (2009, 2010) argues that Google creates and accumulates value by its page rank

algorithm. He says that Google's profit is a form of cognitive rent. Caraway (2011, 701) shares this analysis on a more general level and argues: "The economic transaction described by Smythe is *rent*. The media owner rents the use of the medium to the industrial capitalist who is interested in gaining access to an audience. The rental may be either for time (broadcasting) or space (print). It is the job of the media owner to create an environment which is conducive to the formation of a particular audience". Rent theories of the Internet substitute categories like class, surplus value, and exploitation by the notion of rent.

Marx (1867) showed that technology never creates value, but is only a tool that is used by living human labour for creating commodities. Therefore it is a technological-deterministic assumption that the page rank algorithm creates value. Marx (1894) argued that rent is exchanged for land and formulated the trinity formula that expresses the three aspects of the value of a commodity (Marx 1894, chapter 48): profit (including interest), rent, wages. Profit is attached to capital, rent to land, and wages to wage labour. The three kinds of revenue are connected to the selling of commodities, land and labour power. Rent is obtained by lending land or real estates. Rent is not the direct result of surplus value production and human labour. No new product is created in the renting process. Rent indirectly stems from surplus value because capitalists take part of the surplus in order to rent houses, but it is created in a secondary process, in which surplus value is used for buying real estates. "First we have the use-value land, which has no value, and the exchange-value rent" (Marx 1894, 956). "Value is labour. So surplus-value cannot be earth" (Marx 1894, 954). Therefore using the category of rent for describing commercial media and Internet practices and their outcomes means to assume that activities on the corporate media and Internet, such as surfing on Google or creating content on YouTube or Facebook, are not exploited and are no form of labour. The category of cognitive rent is not useful for a critical political economy of the media and the Internet. The notion of the Internet prosumer commodity that is created by exploited knowledge labour is more feasible.

Adam Arvidsson formulates a critique of the digital labour hypothesis and of Smythe's audience commodity approach. "As a consequence, the labor theory of value only holds if labor has a price, if it has been transformed into a commodity that can in some way be bought and sold on a market. It is clear already at this point that it is difficult to apply the labor theory of value to productive practices that do not have a given price, that unfold outside of the wage relation" (Arvidsson 2011, 265). "The circumstance that digital labour has no price and that it becomes impossible to distinguish productive time from unproductive time" would make "it difficult to sustain, as Arvidsson (2006), Fuchs (2009a), and Cote and Phybus (2007) have done, that the Marxist concept of 'exploitation' would apply to processes of customer co-production" (Arvidsson 2011, 266f). "But since 'free labor' is free, it has no price, and cannot, consequently, be a source of value" (Arvidsson 2011, 266f). Arvidsson's conclusion is that digital labour is not exploited because it has no price (i.e. it is unpaid).

Digital labour is not the only work that has historically been unpaid, one can think also e.g. of housework or slave work. Marxist feminists have argued that houseworkers are an exploited colony of capitalist patriarchy that is locus of "ongoing primitive accumulation" (Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen and Werlhof 1988, 6): they are unpaid, unfree and fulfil a function for capitalism. They are therefore locus of extreme exploitation. The argument of Marxist feminism is that "subsistence production — mainly performed through the non-wage labour of women and other non-wage labourers as slaves, contracted workers and peasants in the colonies — constitutes the perennial basis upon which 'capitalist productive forces' can be built up and exploited" (Mies 1986, 48).

There is a crucial difference between classical slaves, houseworkers, and corporate Internet users because the first are repressed by physical violence (they are likely to be killed if they stop working), the second are partly coerced by physical violence and feelings of love and affection, whereas the third

are ideologically coerced (they are compelled to use the dominant corporate Internet platforms in order to maintain social relations and reputation, if they stop using the platforms, they do not die, but are likely to be more isolated). But all three forms of labour produce value that is appropriated by others (the slave master, capitalists and wageworkers, corporations). They are unpaid. Others exploit all of their work time. Arvidsson's false assumption that exploitation is only present if a wage is paid downplays the horrors of exploitation and implies also that classical slaves and houseworkers are not exploited. His assumption has therefore problematic implications in the context of racist modes of production and patriarchy. It is furthermore interesting that Arvidsson criticizes himself for having shared the thesis of the exploitation of free labour in an article published in 2006.

iPhones, iPads, iMacs, Nokia phones etc. are "blood phones", "blood pads" and "blood Macs": Many smartphones, laptops, digital cameras, mp3 players, etc. are made out of minerals (e. g. cassiterite, wolframite, coltan, gold, tungsten, tantalum, tin) that are extracted under slave-like conditions from mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries. The existence of the Internet in its current dominant capitalist form is based on various forms of labour: the relatively highly paid wage work of software engineers and low-paid proletarianized workers in Internet companies, the unpaid labour of users, the highly exploited bloody Taylorist work and slave work in developing countries producing hardware and extracting "conflict minerals". Arvidsson's approach implies that unpaid Congolese slave workers that extract the material foundations of ICTs are not exploited, which has problematic implications.

Arvidsson's alternative to the labour theory of value is an idealistic and subjectivist concept of value — ethical value understood as "the ability to create the kinds of affectively significant relations" (Arvidsson 2005, 270) — that ignores the reality of material inequality, precarious labour, and gaps between the rich and the poor and assumes that everything in the contemporary economy has become affective.

Arvidsson (2011, 273) argues that I have come to the "absurd suggestion that Facebook users are subject to 'infinite levels of exploitation' since the exchange value of their labor is zero". In a comment on one of my digital labour articles (Fuchs 2010), Arvidsson and Colleoni argue: "If Facebook made a profit of $355 million in 2010 [...], this means that each Facebook user was a 'victim of exploitation of surplus value' to the extent of $0. 7 a year, [...] hardly [...] 'a rate of exploitation that converges towards infinity' as Fuchs claims" (Arvidsson and Colleoni 2012, 138). Fuchs (2012b) provides a more detailed critique of Arvidsson's work. Arvidsson and his colleague mix up value and price. If 500 million people use a corporate platform that is funded by targeted advertising for an average of 90 hours a year (which is on average 15 minutes a day), then the value created is 45 billion hours of digital labour. All of this online time is monitored and creates a traffic commodity that is offered for sale to advertisers, none of the time is paid. 45 billion hours of work are therefore exploited. Exploitation is constituted by the unpaid work time that is objectified in a commodity and appropriated by capital. To which extent the data commodity can be sold is a question of the transformation of value into profit. If not enough data commodities are sold, then the profit will be low. Workers are however also exploited if the commodities they create are not sold because value and surplus value of a commodity is created before it is sold. Arvidsson's criticism implies that exploitation is based in the sphere of commodity circulation and not in the sphere of commodity production. This assumption is absurd because it implies that workers, who create a commodity that is not sold (e. g. because there is a lack of demand), are not exploited. Arvidsson's criticism is based on a lack of knowledge of Marx.

Marx stressed the difference between a commodity's value and price: The measure of the substance of value of a commodity is the amount of hours needed for its production: "How then is the

magnitude of this value [of a commodity] to be measured? By means of the quantity of the 'value forming substance', the labour, contained in the article. This quantity is measured by its duration, and the labour-time is itself measured on the particular scale of hours, days etc." (Marx 1867, 129). "Every commodity (product or instrument of production) is = the objectification of a given amount of labour time (Marx 1857/58, 140)". Marx formulated the law of value as saying that "the greater the labour-time necessary to produce an article, [...] the greater its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, an inversely as the productivity, of the labour which finds its realization within the commodity. (Now we know the *substance* of value. It is *labour*. We know the *measure of its magnitude*. It is labour-time" (Marx 1867, 131).

Price is not the same as value: "The expression of the value of a commodity in gold x commodity A = y money commodity — is its money-form or price" (Marx 1867, 189). "Price is the moneyname of the labour objectified in a commodity" (Marx 1867, 195f). This means that values are determined at the level of working hours and prices at the level of money. Both are quantitative measures, but use different units of measurement. Value is a measure of the production process, price a measure of the circulation process (selling) of commodities. Labour is extended in time (and space) in the production process, in which commodities are created, and is transformed into profit (measured as a price in money) in the sphere of circulation, i. e. commodity markets, on which commodities are sold for certain prices. This means that *exploitation of labour takes place before the selling of commodities*. Even if a commodity is not sold, once it is produced, labour has been exploited.

When introducing the concept of brand value in an article that also mentions Smythe, Adam Arvidsson (2005, 238) immediately gives figures of brand values in US $, which shows that he thinks of value in terms of money (that signifies only the price of a commodity) and not in working hours (that signify the value of a commodity). The definition of brand value as "the present value of predictable future earnings generated by the brand" (Arvidsson 2005, 238) is not only circular and therefore absurd (definition of value by value), but also makes clear that Arvidsson defines value only at the price level ("earnings").

Conclusion

The global capitalist crisis has resulted in cracks, fissures and holes of neoliberalism and the logic of the commodification of everything. It has however not brought an end to neoliberalism, but a phase of uncertainty. There is a renewed interest in Marx's works, Critical Theory, Critical Political Economy class, and the critique of capitalism. Media and Communication Studies should see the sign of the times and build a strong focus on Marxism, class and capitalism. The engagement with Dallas Smythe's works today is a contribution to the renewal of Marxist Media and Communication Studies.

Smythe spoke of the audience commodity and Jhally/Livant of watching as working for analyzing media commodification. Internet and media watching/reading/listening/using is value-generating labour, the audience commodity and the Internet prosumer commodity are commodities created by the work of watching/reading/listening/using. The audience produces itself as commodity, its work creates the audience and users as commodity.

We can summarize the main points of this chapter:

- Dallas Smythe reminds us of the importance of engagement with Marx's works for studying the media in capitalism critically.
- Both Critical Theory and Critical Political Economy of the Media and Communication have been criticized for being one-sided. Such interpretations are mainly based on selective readings. They ignore that in both approaches there has been with different weightings a focus on aspects of media commodification, audiences, ideology and alternatives. Critical Theory and Critical

Political Economy are complementary and should be combined in Critical Media and Communication Studies today.

- Dallas Smythe's notion of the audience commodity has gained new relevance in the debate about the exploitation of digital labour by corporate Internet providers. The exploitation of digital labour involves processes of coercion, alienation, and appropriation.
- Corporate social media use capital accumulation models that are based on the exploitation of the unpaid labour of Internet users and on the commodification of user generated-data and data about user behaviour that is sold as commodity to advertisers. Targeted advertising and economic surveillance are important aspects of this accumulation model. The category of the audience commodity becomes in the realm of social media transmogrified into the category of the Internet prosumer commodity.
- Corporate "social media" and "web 2.0" do not imply a democratization of the economy and culture, but are rather ideologies that celebrate new capital accumulation models and thereby help to attract investors.
- The exploitation of the Internet prosumer commodity is a manifestation of a stage of capitalism, in which the boundaries between play and labour have become fuzzy and the exploitation of play labour has become a new principle. Exploitation tends to feel like fun and becomes part of free time.
- Critics of the digital labour debate conflate different work activities, tend to trivialize exploitation and to a certain degree misunderstand concepts like surplus value, value, price and rent.

Capitalism is highly contradictory today. The crisis is a manifestation of capitalism's objective immanent contradictions that it is unable to overcome. The reactions to the crisis are contradictory: they range from hyperneoliberalism (politics that want to intensify neoliberalism by implementing "socialism for the rich and banks" and privatizing and cutting public funding for welfare, education, health, etc.) to uproars, riots, protests, demonstrations and occupations (like the Occupy movement or the protests in Greece, Spain, and Portugal), and revolutions (like in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya). These struggles and forms of politics reflect the subjective contradictions of capitalism in crisis times. It is the task of critical intellectuals today to engage in the academic and political struggle for a just world that is based on common goods and services, including the communication commons.

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3. Media Clubs: Social Class and the Shared Interpretations of Media Texts

Jill Tyler

This study explores the discursive practices of media clubs — groups of friends who gather for the purpose of consuming, interpreting, and talking about media messages. Using participant observation, qualitative interviewing, and critical discourse analysis, this study explores media interpretation and explicates the ways in which the microinteractions of friends and the macrostructures of society are mutually constituted in everyday discourse. Five interpretive strategies are identified in the discourse of media clubs: (a) privileging personal experience, (b) negotiating similarity and agreement, (c) establishing moral stances, (d) maintaining the status quo, and (e) arguing aesthetic value. These strategies serve to solidify interpersonal relationships, which, in turn, constitute social hierarchies and structures, stabilizing social membership.

> I just see the world differently when I talk with this group of people. I consider ideas I would never have considered otherwise, and I learn and grow so much. Although we fit together really well, we are very different, and through the books we read and the discussions we have, I have really come to see myself, even, in new ways. (5 - I1 - 4)

Social approaches to communication focus on how the macrostructures of society are connected to the microstructures of everyday discourse, particularly when the discourse is focused on publicly available and culturally meaningful texts. Media clubs are small groups of individuals who gather regularly, face to face, with the explicit purpose of interpreting and interacting about media texts — books, movies, television shows, etc. These intentional gatherings — book clubs, magazine salons, movie clubs, fans who gather to watch sports games in a local bar, viewers who watch a television series together — offer a rich site for the study of human social interaction in relation to public texts and messages. This study brings together insights regarding individual identity and agency with social structure and societal forces, placing them in positions of mutual influence, deepening our understanding of how human interaction serves both personal and social ends.

Social Class and *Habitus*

Class is a powerful influence on individuals and groups today, configuring resources for educational, occupational, political, and cultural opportunities in ways that have become naturalized through both generational and interactional reproduction. But social class is a contested construct in communication study, maintaining a presence, but often diminished to a demographic distinction, rather than being understood in dynamic, relational, and interactional terms. Recognizing that all

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communication occurs within a social context, this study examines the ways interactions are constrained and enabled through social hierarchy and structure.

Social structure consists of "networks of contacts and the communication that takes place within these networks. What people talk about and how they talk to each other determines their relationships, and these relationships make up the various social stratifications of society" (Ellis, 1999, p. xi). As Morley (1992) argued in an early examination of media audiences, social position acts as a central mediator of the interpretive process — not as a determinant of meanings but as a provider of the resources used to interpret media messages. Despite recent preoccupations with subjectivities and identity, "class is still very much with us, if in new and always changing forms" (Morley, 2006, p. 108). By combining the study of interpretative interaction with the study of social class, this project responds to calls for integrating a more critical examination of interpersonal communication processes and relationships (Lannamann, 1991).

Class is both a personal and social construct, and cannot be accomplished alone. As Goffman (1959) observed, class is performed by teams — groups of people who implicitly agree to share a particular interpretation of the scene and presentation of themselves. It is only through cooperation with others in a group and comparison with others in society that a coherent argument of membership in the social hierarchy can be accomplished.

This foregrounding of class performance, along with a confluence of social and cultural dynamics, requires a retooling of the concept of class for communication scholars. Critical theorists list class, along with race and gender, as the "big three" sources of monolithic power that must be challenged in contemporary democratic culture (Rossides, 2003). But although racial, ethnic, and gendered inequalities have been investigated from a number of perspectives and in a variety of contexts, research that foregrounds class is less common in communication studies. This deficiency is especially acute in American cultural settings, where a number of political, social, and personal dynamics serve to limit explorations of class identities and differences. The strong ideological tradition of individualism and equality as well as the myth of class mobility uphold the American dream of meritocracy — that anyone can make it and those who have, have earned it. Class remains contested today more than ever, given a changing demographic landscape and limited vocabularies and opportunities to discuss classed social dynamics. Traditional markers of class — income, wealth, education, and occupation — have become more difficult to discern and easier to manipulate (Zweig, 2004). Class distinctions are no longer made unambiguously with possessions, consumption, appearance, dress, race, political affiliation, or religion. Social class emerges and is stabilized through symbolic and cultural forms, but even a study of class as a discursive construction stands against enduring myths of mobility and meritocracy. Part of the difficulty in defining, describing, and locating social class in contemporary studies is the resistance to acknowledging social differences. This reluctance to name and acknowledge class differences has made the implications of class membership even more insidious, and the silent tolerance of class inequities even more hegemonic, resulting in a tacit definition of class as a consequence of individual choices, circumstances, and, often, deficiencies.

But social status, produced and reproduced in group performances, is clearly more durable, complex, and far-reaching than any individual's motivation or circumstances. More than a membership category, social class is something that is accomplished interactionally in private and public realms (Lawler, 2005). "Newer analyses of class must be concerned with the linguistic, social, and communication processes that foster class membership and consciousness" (Ellis, 1999, p. 195). All groups acquire and express their identity in social interaction:

From a communication standpoint, it is primarily language that is responsible. ... Those in

control of linguistic and communicative resources use these to manage the impressions of others … Those with more communicative resources elicit greater respect, which thereby justifies an unequal distribution of rewards. Because others respect those with symbolic powers, they feel that inequality in the hierarchy of rewards is justified and implicitly legitimated. (Ellis, p. 185)

A compelling early argument for the discursive construction of social hierarchies was made by Paul Willis (1977), who captured the ways working class youth justify, within their own friendship groups, their opposition to educational structures and practices and consequently reproduce their own social placement. Willis's analysis reveals how social class is revealed and instantiated in everyday discourse and how that discourse produces very real material consequences. Class placement emerges in the utterances of spontaneous talk, especially when that talk is doing the moral work of interpretation for a group.

This focus on symbolic power and inequality is informed by the work of French theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) who, through his theory of cultural capital, argued that access to cultural resources (socioeconomic status, wealth, and power) works to produce and reproduce social distinctions such as class. "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier," wrote Bourdieu (1984, p.6), explaining that distinctions of social hierarchy are used to legitimate privileges of those with more economic and symbolic capital — more education, more money, and richer vocabularies. Bourdieu identified four kinds of capital — economic capital (financial resources, income level); cultural capital (tastes, preferences, knowledge, education); social capital (networks, connections, group memberships, relationships); and symbolic capital (the institutionalization of economic, cultural, and social capital). Bourdieu was particularly concerned with the translation of cultural capital into social capital, which is necessary in order for power to be exercised. As shown in this study, the media club offers a site for the display of knowledge about cultural texts, and for exploring the acts and interacts through which knowledge is directly tied to the social and material conditions and the symbolic and cultural power of the group members.

Bourdieu's work offers a useful model for understanding the complex linking of cultural forms to social status as his theory integrates a number of material dynamics into the subjectivity of intimate relationships. In arguing that aesthetic tastes are formed by the cultural artifacts to which one is exposed, Bourdieu moves beyond a structuralist model by explicating the ways in which meaning (action) or "practice" interacts with external controls (or structures) to allow and constrain certain social and cultural behavior. This interplay between practice and structure is mediated by the *habitus*, the set of embedded schemes and ideas that predetermines a person's free will through the limitation of what is, or is not, perceived as possible and appropriate (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* explains that individual agency and action are restricted by an individual's cultural resources, or the system of dispositions that constrain and configure individual choices and behavior. *Habitus* references the interactional tools and resources that are necessary to perform class membership. The *habitus*, or system of dispositions, constitutes and is constituted by the actors' performances, and a careful observation of the actors' performances reveals the subconscious understandings and interpretations that guide behavior, through a kind of "practical logic" or something people just "do." These logics are recognized, practiced, and refined in interactions, particularly as groups gather to interpret mediated texts.

Reception Studies and Discourse Analysis

An exploration of these performances requires an inductive, qualitative mode of inquiry, building on ethnographic methods within an interpretive paradigm. In the context of media clubs, individuals

gather to enact performances of individual and group class identity. Individuals may engage in solitary reading, watch television individually, and go to movies alone, but when public media texts are discussed, argued, negotiated, and interpreted with others, involving an evaluative move, personal, social, and cultural worlds are entwined and much more influential work is accomplished. These interactional performances constitute a social reality that informs and influences meaning-making at personal and societal levels. When a community decides, together, what a given text means, and how the community members feel about that meaning, the moral, political, and social order are implicated. In this way, the discourse of media clubs offers a dynamic site for capturing the communicative performances — choices of action — at the personal level, each of which reflect a bit of the practices — established social orders — through which, ultimately, other choices will be made.

These interpretive performances and practices have been analyzed by scholars in social action media studies who are committed to determining how social actors bring cultural forms and social structures into being through their interpretations and performances (Schoening & Anderson, 1995). Interpretation is conceived not as an automatic reflex or an individual act of decoding but as an ongoing social activity, embedded in material practices of cultural and historical significance.

The study of media clubs is also informed by a rich tradition in ethnographic audience research (Seiter, 1999) that examines the ways that media consumption is embedded in the routines, rituals, and institutions of everyday life. This tradition of inquiry, very active in the 1980s and 1990s, has allowed critical dynamics and concerns to emerge, including questions of class (Morley & Brunsdon, 1999), gender (Radway, 1991), and race (Jhally & Lewis, 1992).

The present study, however, differs from the social action media studies and the ethnographic audience tradition in two important ways. First, rather than focusing on channel, media content, or textual ideology, this study examines the visible discursive strategies of the group members. Although other studies focus on media consumption, particularly television viewing, in domestic settings, most media studies do not focus on the ways that groups mediate the consumption of the text, as participants are accomplishing social affiliation as well as interpretation. Audience analysis frequently relies on interview reports of an individual participant's memories of discussions, which may be suspect, but this study directly captures the discourses of interpretation and the conversational moves that accomplish meaning-making.

Second, this study differs from more traditional critical approaches in that it does not attempt to incorporate any authoritative textual interpretation or analysis. I make no claims about the real or dominant readings of the text and therefore distinguish this study from a top-down, ideologically-driven critical analysis. The present study responds to more recent calls by Seiter (2004) and Morley (2006) to explicate the specific interactional processes through which media audiences achieve their interpretations. Morley acknowledged a need for analyzing "horizontal" modes of participation in addition to the traditional models of transmission of ideology and power. Calling for a better understanding of social class as a source of inequality, Machin and Richardson (2008) challenged scholars to explore how classed inequalities are recontextualized in mass-mediated and everyday interpersonal communication.

The purpose of this project is to explore media clubs — a rich, complex, and previously underconceptualized site of communicative action — and to identify how communication in these small groups functions to connect spontaneous individual discursive action with wider, more abstract social structures that constrain and enable subsequent action.

Methods

This ethnographic audience study used participant observation and qualitative interviewing to

gather data and critical discourse analysis to explore the communicative performances and practices of groups interpreting media texts. This study focuses on eight media clubs identified through convenience sampling assisted by key informants. I attempted to include clubs that discussed various types of media (television, books, movies, magazines) and to recruit clubs from different socioeconomic levels. I attended and recorded two or three meetings of each media club and then conducted interviews with at least three individuals from each club. The analysis focused on the naturally occurring discourse of the club meetings; interviews were conducted to supplement and verify the observations made in the club meetings.

Participants

Eighty-five individuals in eight groups participated: (1) an all-female book club in a small rural community who read popular novels and some young adult literature (e. g. , *My Antonia*, *Bridge to Terabithia*); (2) a mixed-sex magazine salon in an affluent suburb of a large urban area who read the *Utne Reader*; (3) a mixed-sex movie club in a medium-size city, who watched mostly independent films; (4) an all-female book group from a small urban area who read mostly best-selling novels; (5) a mixed-sex book group from a large urban area who read nonfiction and literary fiction; (6) an all-female movie group from an urban community who selected mostly wide release, popular films that had been released on DVD; (7) an all-male television group from a small university community who gathered at the home of a member who subscribed to HBO to watch The *Sopranos*; and (8) an all-female television group from a small rural community who gathered to watch *The Bachelorette*. Thirty-four men and 51 women participated in the study, ranging in age from their early 20s to their early 80s. All were Caucasian.

Media club participants identify as friends who have elected to make the collective consumption and interpretation of media texts a regular element of their friendship. Most group members acknowledged a previous acquaintance with others in the group but described a clear decision to create a formal media club organization. In most cases, the hosting member selects the given text to explore. An exception is the all-female book club (1) in which a club leader and librarian selected the books, often based on availability of multiple copies in the town library. Groups reported fairly fluid boundaries based on broad invitations and self-selection, but the members I interviewed indicated that membership was monitored to assure commitment, attendance, and participation. Group members often maintain other types of professional and community ties and stay connected via telephone trees, e-mail lists, and, in the case of one movie group (3), an Internet blogsite.

Procedures
Participant observation

Participant observation requires the systematic experience and recording of events in social settings (Gans, 1999). I began by reading or watching the selected text and then attended the gathering, usually held in a member's home (the mixed-sex movie club went out to a local bar following the movie), offering an opportunity for entertaining, usually including specially prepared food and beverages. While attending media club gatherings, I recorded the entire meeting and kept in-the-moment notes, daily reflections, and an ongoing journal account of the research project. I described the environment, context, behavior, and discourse I observed in the meetings. Between meetings, I conducted individual interviews with media club members. Interview data was used to explore the participants' feelings about the media club and to check the results as the interpretive strategies began to emerge and stabilize. I audio-recorded and transcribed 20 media club meetings and 33 interviews.

Data analysis

I began analyzing the data immediately — managing and reflecting on, organizing and classifying the data, and reconstructing the data in the form of tentative findings (Silverman, 2001). As I began to discern the ways that social class was operating in the groups' discourse, I used Bourdieu's categories of capital to understand and organize the groups' interpretative processes.

Early in the analysis, the primary organizing question was: "How do these groups interpret media texts in interaction?" As a set of strategies began to emerge, I identified discourse models, the "largely unconscious theories we hold that help us make sense of texts and the world" (Gee, 2005, p. 71). Discourse models are discursively visible traces of *habitus* — the dispositions, taste, habits, and cultural perspectives described by Bourdieu (1984). These dispositions flow from one's social position and the attendant assumptions about money, education, family, and leisure, as well as assumptions about race, gender, and identity (Gee, 2005). Critical discourse analysis identifies ideology revealed in the discursive practices of speaking, thinking, interpreting, and doing, opening a subsequent, larger organizing question: "How do the discourse models used by these groups reflect the macrostructures of social class?" As the primary and explicit goals of media club interaction are the interpretation and evaluation of media texts, I focused my attention on the interpretive strategies and models used by club members. I identified five interpretive models, each of which describes a way in which the immediate interactions of the group serve to link the stability of social structures to the spontaneity of group interaction.

Coding took the form of five broad semantic relationships (Spradley, 1979) reflecting the interpretive strategies. Each instance of interpretive process was identified as one of the five strategies. Throughout the discernment and coding process, these categories were refined to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive of the subset of group interaction focused on interpretation. There was, of course, a great deal of discourse that was performed in the media clubs that was directed toward goals other than interpretation.

Analysis continued throughout data collection and for several months thereafter, as numerous sweeps through the data resulted in more carefully nuanced categorical descriptions and facilitated more claims about the nature of meaning-making and social structure in these groups. These comparative methods, delineating differences and similarities between data units, produced relevant analytic insights and distinctions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Some of the richest insights came from comparisons of different groups or of different meetings of the same group over time, from comparisons of individual contributions to the club meetings and those same individuals' perceptions shared in interviews, and from the reexamination of discourse that remained uncategorized after several analytic sweeps.

The shared interpretive strategies discerned were *privileging personal experience*, which took the discursive forms of storytelling, disclosure, sharing expertise and knowledge, and identifying with characters and situations; *negotiating similarity and agreement*, which included reinforcing perceptions, sharing meanings, and affirming opinions; *establishing moral stances*, which consisted of shared evaluations of right action and reinforcement of societal norms; *maintaining the status quo*, which involved arguing consistency with current and past experiences, resisting change, and identifying with institutional policies and practices; and *arguing aesthetic evaluations*, accomplished by expressing taste, displaying symbolic and material resources, and demonstrating access to cultural capital. Each of these interpretive strategies served to link the microdiscourses of relational communication to the macrostructures of society.

Results

The central premise of this study is that macrostructures of society, such as class, exist in and through the communicative activities of individuals in microsituations. In short, everyday interactions are the grounds on which social structure is built (Ellis, 1999). Each interpretive strategy appears as a spontaneous, agental performance on the part of individuals. These acts, however, are shaped, constrained, and enabled by stable social structures and hierarchies. The interpretive strategies perform dual functions: the interpretation of the media texts and the performance of class affiliation among group members. Each of these five strategies will be explained in detail, using discourse from media club meetings, supported and supplemented with interview data. ①

Privileging Personal Experience

More than any other interpretive strategy, group members use their personal experience to make sense of media texts. In this way, they use their own lived experiences and specialized knowledge of the world, complete with judgments, evaluations, and prejudices, to interpret the media text. Through the use of disclosure, storytelling, and explanation, this move makes an immediate and intimate connection between the text and the group member, which other members must then accept, reject, or accommodate. Some group members report their identification with characters or situations portrayed in the media texts:

> Kelly: I loved it when she asked him how he felt about his mom. That's a good way to figure out whether he is respectful to women and what kind of husband and father he'll be. That's exactly what I asked [my husband] when we were dating. And if he would have said something negative about his mom, I probably wouldn't have gone out with him again. (8 – 2 – 18)

In some cases, the group members draw on their personal experiences, knowledge, and memories to make the texts understandable, accessible, believable, and relevant. In this example, a group member claims authority through expertise and knowledge and subsequently characterizes the text as trustworthy:

> Caroline: I was very interested in the way they talked about the red grasses. The way they had been plowed under everywhere but on Mr. Shimerda's grave. I never knew anything about red grasses — did you, Kathy?
> Kathy: Yes, the red grasses are in Lewis and Clark's diaries, too. The unworked prairie was covered in red, not green, like you think they would be. They write about making their way through waist-high red grass. (1 – 3 – 15)

The privileging of personal knowledge and experience, as described here, accomplishes several purposes for the media clubs. Personal experiences involve disclosure and subsequent affirmation, which strengthens mutual knowledge and understanding. The text acts as a catalyst for opening subjects for discussion, for sharing previously undisclosed information, and for discovering similarities and creating opportunities for empathy and compassion. The sharing of personal experience also establishes a standard for the interpretation and evaluation of the text — namely, "Is this true to our experience?" If the meaning of the text is consistent with our experience, it can be trusted, but if there is contradiction, the text is suspect and the friend is credible. The sharing of personal experience also

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① All participants are identified with pseudonyms and a coding system that identifies the media club (1 – 8), the number of the meeting (1 – 3) or the interview (I), and the page number of the transcript.

perpetuates a perception of uniqueness — a sense that the interpretation and interactions of this group are distinctive.

Negotiating Similarity and Agreement

The primary interpretive drive in media clubs is toward shared meaning. This often takes the form of describing similarities between one another. Similarities are not taken for granted; rather, they are almost aggressively confirmed, as if the first statement of opinion is fragile and requires support from others. These group members demonstrate a typical set of shared agreements as they judge the actions of a character in a television show:

Brad: He shouldn't have done that.
Levi: No, he should never have done that.
Aaron: That was the wrong thing to do.
Sam: I can't imagine what he was thinking. (7 - 2 - 10)

This repetition of agreement points to one of the most compelling ways in which similarity informs the expression of opinions in collective interpretation of media texts shown in this project. This is the power exerted on the group by the first opinion that is expressed in the discussion. As Blumer (1969) suggests in his description of interpretation as a formative process, individual actors first experience the text, developing a set of trial interpretations. They then engage, here in the context of the media club, in a collective meaning-making negotiation. It is difficult to determine whether the individual interpretations that are carried into the discussion are indeed similar, or whether the discussion itself is conducted in such a way that alternative opinions and interpretations are silenced or transformed. This was demonstrated several times in the media club discourse, and one especially vivid example is offered here, taking place as group members left the theatre after a film:

Angie: Whoa — that was intense.
Jerry: Well — that was [pause] interesting.
Sara: Yeah, interesting.
Cody: That's one word for it.
Angie: Come on, you guys.
Doug: That sucked.
Cody: That might have been the worst movie I have ever seen.
Meredith: Oh, no, no, it wasn't the worst movie.
Cody: Yeah, I think it was the worst movie I have ever seen.
Angie: Well, it wasn't uplifting at all, but there were parts of it I liked.
          Overall, yeah, I agree, it was not a great movie. (3 - 3 - 2)

In this excerpt, the first few expressions of opinion are reinforced but are quite ambiguous. Angie, Jerry, and Sara use words like "interesting" and "intense," which could later be used to support either positive or negative evaluations of the film. It is Doug's first statement that sets forth the unambiguous negative evaluation and this is clearly confirmed by Cody's next statement. After this, there is no clear expression that supports a positive evaluation of the movie. In just a few short conversational turns, the group achieves a common and potent evaluation of the media experience.

Given the importance of establishing agreement and similarity that has already been demonstrated in these groups, most groups engineered ways to deal with direct disagreement in the group members' opinions of the text. Bringing those conflicting perspectives into negotiated agreement, or at least an acceptable tension, presented challenges to the group discourse and revealed some of the more

sophisticated and sometimes problematic strategies employed by media clubs in negotiating agreement and protecting relationships. In the following example, when two members express direct disagreement, the first moves quickly to weaken the strength of her previous statement, another group member steps in, and, finally, a fourth group member challenges the opinion of the second speaker, the one who first voiced disagreement:

Holly: She should definitely have gone with Karl. He's much better looking.
Maggie: What?!? No way. He's a jerk. He's so arrogant. I couldn't stand him.
              I can't believe he made it this far.
Holly: Well, he's kinda' stuck up, but he's just cuter than Blaine, that's all.
Genevieve: He *is* cute.
Beth: I don't think he's that much of a jerk. Did you really dislike him that much?
Maggie: Well, no, I guess, he's not that bad. (8 – 2 – 15)

As described earlier, agreement is usually carefully negotiated in media club conversations. When agreement is not affirmed, there is awkwardness and difficulty. Occasionally disagreement is managed through direct, albeit brief, argument. Though some discussions grew louder and members engaged in more interruptions, the arguments themselves remained quite shallow and superficial. Evidence was seldom offered and, if present, was very thin. Assumptions, generalizations, and overstatements were frequent:

Dave: I don't know about the money — I think that's a secondary concern to the human rights issues.
          (2 – 2 – 13)
[Several minutes later in the discussion]
Jim: It has everything to do with money, but Dave says he doesn't care about money. (2 – 2 – 19)

In the above example, Jim reframes and diminishes Dave's statement by oversimplifying it. Dave said money was secondary; Jim strengthens his own "argument" by making an inaccurate characterization of Dave's position as "not caring" about money. Weak arguments give the illusion that the group is engaged in disagreement — that there is an actual diversity of opinion being expressed, even though the weaknesses function to disarm the disagreement and often leave the issue unexamined and the conversation itself unresolved.

A similar technique is demonstrated in the following example, as Shannon immediately softens her stance when she realizes that Jerry disagrees, and the issue then is left open and unfinished, with no workable interpretation being accomplished.

Shannon: That's impossible. No one would believe that.
Jerry: I would believe it.
Shannon: Well, yes, I guess it is possible, but it's not likely — they would not believe that it was
          likely. (3 – 2 – 15)

Group members were usually successful in their attempts to achieve consistency between their personal interpretations, the interpretations of the group, and their shared perceptions of the standards of the wider society. These standards were argued both implicitly and explicitly within the group.

Establishing Moral Stances

Frequently, negotiations included prescriptive evaluations that went beyond describing and interpreting media texts to making evaluative assumptions of how people *should* understand and behave. Group discourse cohered around shared evaluations of right action and, in so doing,

reinforced social norms and conventions. A number of statements carried an implicit "should-ness" and offered cultural patterns that are assumed to be shared in support of their claims. Moral work — the informal but profound enforcement of societal values upon the individual in that society — is accomplished through discussion, a shared sense of evaluation, an expectation of conformity, an adherence to social norms, and mutual accountability (Adams, 2001).

The following examples make interpretations similar to the ones described in the previous section but then go on to layer a moral judgment on top of the meaning-making moves. The speakers are not only negotiating how something should be *understood* but are also making prescriptive evaluations of what is right and wrong, as is shown in this conversation about a television show (that was not the subject of the group's meeting):

> Diane: It's got a fascinating story line about life and death, but the people are so — have so few values, that you end up feeling sorry for them by the end of the show — you think, "you poor people, if you were a little less promiscuous, you might be happier." Don't you think?
> Lynn: Oh, absolutely. (5 – 1 – 6)

When these evaluations are made, there seems to be an understanding in the group that these claims are asserting a value beyond a personal opinion and as such are potentially problematic. The unspoken question that accompanies these expressions of judgment is "Is it all right that I say this?" asked through tentativeness and requests for support. Diane's "don't you think?" is answered by an almost immediate unqualified affirmation from Lynn, expressing agreement with the evaluation and reifying the cultural norm.

Some groups were very confident and comfortable in making cultural evaluations about the morality of characters' actions:

> Shelley: She knew he was unfaithful, but she stayed with him because of the kids. That's the right thing to do — even if she's embarrassed and miserable, and she was ... but she was thinking about them. Kids need a dad and the family is more important than just her happiness. (6 – 1 – 15)

This dual address of a moral position — to both the character on the screen and the friend in the group — is a vivid demonstration of how the social order is imposed on others through the use of the media text. In the example below, group members struggle with their feelings for a given character, based on his poverty and homelessness, but ultimately call out the societal standards of success and achievement to accomplish a shared evaluation, reinforcing the institutionalized model of what it means to be admirable:

> Liz: But he had risked so much — *he's* the one who had put their future at stake and had run their finances into the ground. That was his choice, and the life they were living on the street was the consequence of his choices.
> Amanda: But it was also his choices and his commitment that turned things around for them — he was able to get the job, to finish the training, to compete with everyone else and to win. That's what makes him a, a — so heroic. (6 – 2 – 8)

In a further illustration of the marking of moral boundaries, the following example explores a moment when social class realties were addressed directly in the context of the interpretation. A group makes direct, explicit evaluations regarding social class, and in so doing, places themselves on a given and higher rung of the social hierarchy. The group is discussing the motivation of Ida, the maid, in betraying the confidences of the family she works for:

Allison: But, why would she want to do that? Ida, I mean?

Maxine: She was a working girl, and she was, well, she was vindictive. She was around people with all this money, and she was just — jealous and she lied.

Vicki: That was all the way through this book — how people who were [pause] lower [pause] were — they were — were lying, lazy, drunk. [pause] And she went on and on about the white trash. [Fanning the pages of the book] Full of white trash. (4 - 3 - 33)

The moral stances made here argue that "good people" work hard, don't complain, tell the truth and stay sober. These avowals are offered on behalf of the whole group, delineating a moral boundary between "us" and "them," as well as between "right" and "wrong."

Maintaining the Status Quo

Of particular interest to this project was the ways in which interpretations of texts reinforced the political, economic, and cultural conventions and premises of the members' communities. Although the groups are gathering for the purpose of interpreting novel media messages, a great deal of interactional work serves to reinforce the social realities of the group members. Group members worked to reinforce a sense of "everything is all right," refraining from openly criticizing societal policies, practices, or institutions.

In the following example, the group discusses a magazine article that criticizes the failure of the United States to establish a national policy of paid leave for new parents. Joel stresses a connection with Australia (a country that had been celebrated earlier that evening for producing tasty wine), positing that the US link to Australia lessened the criticism. Dana goes on to say that the absence of a federal policy can be interpreted as a commitment to productivity and efficiency. In this way, even though she says she personally supports an alternative viewpoint (paid parental leave), the cultural status quo of not providing leave is protected and a potential social criticism is redefined as an economic strength:

Joel: You know how the US is always getting compared to third world countries in terms of providing health care and family leave? Well, did you see where the five countries who don't provide paid leave included Australia? That's a developed country, pretty down with it, mate!

Dana: Yeah, that surprised me at first, but I think it's indicative of a cultural concern with production and efficiency, which can, then, result in a more robust economy and social structure. That's just one part.

Margot: What's just one part?

Dana: The paid pregnancy leave for women. Yes, it's an important benefit, and don't get me wrong, I support it, but it works against efficiency and productivity, so yes, some developed countries don't provide it. (2 - 2 - 38)

Through the negotiation of agreement, groups establish a strong sense of the expected and acceptable ways of understanding certain media messages and, consequently, certain personal and social norms. In the example below, Mike and Diane struggle with an author who has argued against watching television. Will, then, softens and redefines the author's argument to allow Mike and Diane to continue to behave as they wish:

Mike: How about her rant against television — no TV in the house? The one-eyed monster? It's pretty hard to agree with her about everything and then say, "Yeah, but I want my television."

Diane: Oh, I know, I know, I felt the same way.

Mike: She made some good points.

Diane: I spent the next day, when I was watching TV, also watching the clock and thinking, "Life is short! I don't have time to be doing this!"

Will: And I think that's what her point was — not that television is a bad thing, but just that we should be more mindful about what we're doing with our time. (5 - 2 - 23)

Social norms and values are stabilized through established and reified systems and policies, such as educational institutions, health organizations, and legal structures. Relying on the authority of institutionalized structures, as shown in the example below in which the members refer to how characters in a movie were forced to deal with a loved one's body, demonstrated one of the ways the status quo (in this case, legal and medical policies) was unquestioningly protected by media club members:

Meredith: But the hospital would never have made them do that, would they? They would have worked with them — the social worker would never have been so rude.

Tracy: Of course not. There are all kinds of accommodations made for bodies when people die in another state. There's a lot of rules about what to do, but they're all meant to help the family, not hurt it. (3 - 1 - 16)

These examples demonstrate the ways in which broader values and perspectives are invoked in conversations about media texts. Social structures are observed, not only in the impersonal text (book, movie, or magazine) but, more powerfully, in personal relationships with friends. Members are encouraged to define their membership in the group and in the broader social structure by demonstrating that they understand the world in similar ways and then by protecting those perceptions and shared practices even in the face of challenging media messages.

Arguing Aesthetic Value

These group memberships were bounded and defined by a shared *habitus* expressing cultural taste and reflecting the social hierarchy. The groups' taste and cultural evaluations were made through the use of shared vocabularies and standards that assessed the worth and beauty of media texts and cultural practices.

As Bourdieu (1984) outlined, working class sensibilities are characterized by a more timid and insecure communication style; a tendency to elevate that which is practical, useful, and necessary; and a drive toward conformity. Likewise, Bourdieu describes upper class sensibilities as characterized by a more confident and secure communication style; a tendency to elevate that which is aesthetically beautiful, rare, or decorative; a preoccupation with form and etiquette; and a drive toward uniqueness. These sets of sensibilities accurately characterize some of the class-based dispositions of participants in this study.

The wider role of art in society, as shown through the subjects, characters, and themes of media texts, was directly discussed in two of the media clubs I observed. The difference between the two groups was striking and provides compelling support for thinking that social class and material circumstances influence the use, interpretation, and understanding of artistic and cultural texts. The first example comes from a group that demonstrates a more practical and conservative *habitus*:

Lucille: I just don't like to be shown all the terrible things that humans can do. I see enough of that on the nightly news on the television. I want to be shown what is good. Yes, bad things happen. We know that, but that isn't what books should be about. Or, if they have to

include it, then just include it and go on.

Thelma:　Yes, just go on with it.

Margaret:　I just want to see the best of who we are and of what we can be.

Virginia:　That's what great literature is. An example.

Nora:　Yes, an example of overcoming the bad things by being honest and hard-working and moral.

Margaret:　Art should show us the best of what we can be. (1 - 2 - 41)

The second discussion occurred in a group that enjoys more access to symbolic and material resources as well as educational opportunities, critical vocabularies, and ways of thinking, as they were discussing a movie seen by one of the members (not the subject of the club).

Dana:　I just didn't like it. It made me so uncomfortable.

Joel:　Art should make you uncomfortable. It should take you out of your comfort zone.

Meredith:　Absolutely. That's what the media's role is in society — to bring to our attention the very messages that will disturb us — that will make us aware of what's going on ... that will keep us from retreating in our comfortable little suburbs and ignoring the rest of the world.

Jason:　When somebody argues against government funding for the arts because the arts seem obscene or profane, that's the very art we should be supporting, because it forces us to see things from a new perspective. Art should disrupt — who said that? (2 - 2 - 19)

These arguments about the role of art in society are beginning to demonstrate the much more stabilized social structures of taste and preference, what Bourdieu (1984) calls cultural capital, that serve to constitute social class and hierarchy.

Although some group members could simply express their opinion ("I liked it"), members of groups that encouraged the use of more critical vocabularies, likely the result of educational opportunities (Ellis, 1999), directed attention more to judgment than unreflective pleasure:

Charles:　I enjoyed reading it. This will never be considered a masterpiece. Don't get me wrong. It's a good read, but it's not that good. (5 - 1 - 41)

Other group members apologized for critical comments and downplayed their own authority when it came to expressing opinions:

Sam:　I don't know what makes a TV show so great; I just know I like to watch it. (7 - 12 - 4)

Often, group members make use of a sophisticated critical stance in acknowledging that even not liking a given text didn't mean that the text was unsatisfactory:

Katie:　I hated reading that book, but I loved that I read it. It was really a wonderful book, even though I was uncomfortable the whole time I was reading it. (4 - 2 - 15)

In other groups, however, the members had little patience for characters or plot conventions that were arguably preoccupied with the impractical:

Kelly:　I was sorry about his past, you know, the crime and the drugs, but I didn't want to hear about it again, you know? Not everybody does stuff just because of their past. That just was what it was, and now the situation is entirely different. (8 - 1 - 9)

This impatience is an indicator of aesthetic preference, or taste, what Bourdieu (1977) describes as symbolic capital. Bourdieu identifies one element of working-class *habitus* as impatience with the exploration of psychological histories, which is perceived as an unnecessary luxury. These expressions

of sensibilities establish a group's set of symbolic resources for making aesthetic evaluations and solidify the connections between social class and taste. Taste may be claimed or treated as a personal response or evaluation, but, as this analysis has shown, aesthetic value is a manifestation of social class that is embedded in personal interpretations and vocabularies and that then emerges in dynamic group discourse.

These discursive models function at the immediate local level as ways of interpreting mediated messages and of constituting and affirming affiliations among groups, and at the wider societal level as ways of constituting and stabilizing social hierarchies and boundaries. As wider social structures are emerging from the mouths and behaviors of intimates, significant implications can be seen for the role of social class in communication study.

Discussion

When people gather in groups to interpret media texts, their discourse reflects and reifies broader social hierarchies and structures. Media clubs establish and use patterns of discourse, or shared interpretive models that reinforce cultural norms and social hierarchies. That groups are forming and gathering regularly to accomplish these interpretations points to the critical role these groups play in many lives. "Help me make sense of the world," we are asking one another. "This is what I count on my friends to do for me. Listen to me. Affirm me." And then, in so doing, "Affirm our shared worldview." To this end, a careful and critical examination of the specific acts and interactions through which these meanings are constructed informs the ways that personal relationships and mediated texts are operating in contemporary social life.

The work these groups do to privilege personal experience, to negotiate similarity and agreement, and to maintain the status quo serve to confirm personal identities and affiliations and then to conform beliefs and values to be more similar to one another. These activities are consistent in groups across varying lifestyles and contexts. By encouraging self-disclosure and sharing of personal knowledge and experiences, group members invite deeper understandings of one another and give ample opportunities for self-expression and self-celebration. But reliance on personal experiences to legitimate and interpret media texts leads to a disregard of new perspectives and issues that might be introduced through the media texts. Selective perception may allow groups to avoid exposure to ideas that contradict the personal experiences of their members, making the world seem small and homogenous. As groups engage in the enthusiastic agreement and shallow argumentative strategies that were primarily observed in this study, which bring their personal interpretations in line with one another, they celebrate their similarity, reflecting a sense of morality and safety, or "ontological security" (Giddens, 1984).

Further, these practices stabilize the communicative strategies available to group members. To argue a certain interpretation requires an individual to claim his or her own expertise and authority, limiting evidence to what is personally available to the group. One of the most compelling arguments to emerge from this data is the demonstration of the very stable set of communicative practices available to these groups as they interpret media texts. A simple interpretation that could achieve at least implicit agreement was, in almost every circumstance, preferred over a more complex interpretation that would require sophisticated and time-consuming meaning-making, but that may offer a challenging or provocative insight. The first clear opinion that was expressed about the meaning and value of a media text was almost always affirmed, effectively silencing what may have been alternative and challenging interpretations.

As a group's cooperative performance of social status is stabilized through the limitations of personal experience, a performed embeddedness within these intimate social groups influences

everyday lives by bringing a disembodied "society" into real interpersonal connectivity. These established and emerging commonalities — geography, socioeconomic position, and cultural consumption — stabilize membership in a social category. Over time, as additional interpretations are shared, commitment grows along with an increased sense of interdependence. In this very intimate way, the wider society is brought into the group as conformity to cultural norms and values. It is this combined commitment to interpersonal proximal groups and broad cultural values that stabilizes an individual's placement in the social hierarchy, strengthening the sense of membership in a social class. Although an individual's income, education, goals, and vocabulary may change, because social class is constituted in team performances, the potential for change or mobility is quite limited, particularly if social groups remain intact.

The group members' interactional moves to protect the status quo at all levels of social opportunity not only prevent the change of certain material conditions but also lock individuals in a certain spot, limiting mobility and personal growth. "This is what I can see, because this is what I have experienced" translates into "This is what is right, because this is the way things are done." These subconscious commitments deny media texts the power to open individuals to new experiences and, despite other arguments of media effects, keep people embroiled in their own life situations and circumstances, thus solidifying the social hierarchy and their places in it.

Powerful cultural evaluations emerged from the conversational interplay between group members, the text, and the social context and hierarchy and are universally accepted as the warrant for interpretations. These enthymematic statements enforce the cultural values of hard work, education, marital and sexual fidelity, patience, honesty, moderation, patriotism, and individualism. Again these strong cultural evaluations emerged from the conversational interplay between group members, the text, and the social context and hierarchy. One can distinguish clearly the communicative practices that reflect societal values by the way they are universally accepted as the warrant for interpretations: "This must be understood in this way, because it is the right thing to do." Those who breach these moral boundaries are seen not just as different but as "wrong," operating not out of a different set of circumstances but out of moral weakness or deficiency.

Moral assessments, aesthetic distinctions, and cultural evaluations make up a set of symbolic resources that solidify the connections between social placement and taste. Taste may be claimed or treated as a personal response, but, as this analysis has shown, aesthetic value is a manifestation of social opportunities and constraints that are embedded in shared interpretations and vocabularies, themselves the result of group interactions.

It is significant that cultural signifiers of social class are marked through the social actors' assumed knowledge and taste, not through a lack of other resources, such as money or education (Lawler, 2005). The ease with which people make aesthetic distinctions appears to be a personal ability to evaluate but is in fact the result of a confluence of social factors that constitute cultural capital. These factors include economic resources that limit exposure to cultural artifacts — access and appreciation, education, vocabularies and opportunities for interpretation and evaluation, as well as cultural resources that limit the security and confidence with which evaluations are made. As this analysis has shown, through the use and acceptance of shared discursive strategies, the very act of collective media consumption stabilizes an oppressive social structure that controls individual agency and social potential.

Limitations

The analytic decision to foreground communication and social class was made in the belief that social structures are reified in more localized ways than has been proposed in traditional sociological

research, and that an analysis of how placement in the social hierarchy influences interactions and interpretations would better explain how social class persists as an ambiguous but insidious presence in social life. Although I attempted to identify media clubs from different class distinctions and sets of sensibilities, membership in these media clubs seems to place their members in a middle-class social category — one that provides relatively easy access to media texts and enough leisure time that several hours a month can be devoted to reading or watching, and talking about media texts. People whose schedules, budgets, and sensibilities do not allow the discretionary use of time and energy to engage in a media club are necessarily omitted from this study as they are not members of media clubs. It is also likely that individuals who have not had access to educational settings where the value of "talking about" what a text "means" has been demonstrated will not seek to participate in a media club.

Identifying shared interpretive models provides a structure for describing the complex conversational moves that facilitate the instantiation of social structure into spontaneous conversation. However, an utterance never does just one thing. Messages are multileveled and so can be used to support many propositions. Therefore, the categorical structure argued here, while comprehensive, is not inclusive of all meaning-making discourse in the media club, nor, given the multiple meanings of given utterances, are the categories mutually exclusive.

By maintaining sensitivity to social class, this analysis may minimize other important issues, such as gender, race, religion, and ethnicity. Committing to the proposition that social class is a phenomenon that emerges in interaction rather than a stable external social category may minimize the very real material and economic circumstances in which these groups operate and may even contribute to the subtle but insidious stance that individuals are responsible for their own social placement. Any study of the discursive constructions of social class must be balanced with an acknowledgment of the material and economic realities that constrain opportunities (Machin & Richardson, 2008). I hope that this study of the discursive realities of social placement serves to remove class from the category of personal subjectivities and to locate it in the practices and performances of the social group.

Contribution to Qualitative Research

The strength of this project is the exploration of a dynamic set of communicative practices and performances that are of consequence to researchers throughout the discipline. The intradisciplinary nature of the inquiry merged ethnographic audience and reception studies with interpersonal social network research, informed by broad social and critical theory. This study demonstrates how qualitative commitments allow the researcher to transcend arbitrary intradisciplinary boundaries in ways that variables and causal connections could not accommodate. The open exploration of these rich and complex sites allowed insights about social class to emerge powerfully, but unexpectedly, from the localized and emergent constructions of friendship groups.

Further, this study informs qualitative research practice by demonstrating how sensitivity to social class influences the validity and effectiveness of designs and procedures. Researchers who undertook a study of media consumption similar to this one recognized that different discursive resources demonstrated by research participants had an impact on the nature of the research interview and on the kind of data collected (Skeggs, Thumin, & Wood, 2008). Using qualitative interviewing focused on self-reflexivity produced a certain type of class performance and positioning of moral authority, often in response to the researcher's performance of social placement.

Directions for Future Research

Finding media clubs as significant sites for the study of interpersonal and mediated interpretations suggests the value of identifying communicative practices and performances that transcend traditional

intradisciplinary boundaries. By combining the insights afforded through social theory, media studies, and relational studies, this project captures some of the dynamic interplay between the many forms of communication. Further, if we as communication scholars can approach social class as emerging from people's mouths — coming out of the discourse of social groups as they engage in meaning-making processes — we can make more precise arguments about social mobility and about the perceived availability of opportunities at the personal and the societal levels. Subsequent research should carefully examine the material and economic realities of these groups and should use critical discourse analysis to examine groups at other levels of the social hierarchy to reveal more subtle and profound dynamics that distinguish social groups in contemporary society.

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4. On the Material and the Dialectic: Toward a Class Analysis of Communication

Lee Artz

Like any other theoretical or practical approach to the social and natural world, Marxism is full of contradictions, in which we ourselves, individually and as a social group, must grasp those contradictions as principles of knowledge and action (Gramsci, 1971, p. 405). It might be easier if Marxism provided simplistic categories for analysis, in the same way that Burkean rhetorical theory has a dramatistic pentad, Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation provides four contextual ingredients for assessment and prediction, or Aristotelean rhetoric evaluates ethos, logos, and pathos. Of course, detractors and supporters alike (as well as "Marxisant" and post-Marxist revisors) often construct a reductionist model for ready dismissal or comprehension, but just as any serious rhetorical critic recognizes that shorthand expressions misrepresent and do injustice to rich and complex theoretical frameworks and their practical value, so too, a more intimate acquaintance with Marxism reveals a substantive, flexible, and irreplaceable methodology, not the fractured dogmatic schema regularly beaten up in journal literature reviews and countless classrooms across the United States.

Marxism has been contested, modified, and deformed, frequently distorted, overstated, and abused by enthusiastic practitioners and promoters — as true of any theory or method, especially one with such longevity and historical consequence. Two characterizations of Marxism have battled for supremacy. One can be described as deterministic, exemplified by the economic determinists of social democracy (for example, Kautksy) and various structuralists (for example, Althusser). The other renders Marxism subjectivist, privileging human agency beyond concrete class relations of force and historical conjunctures (from Sorel and Lukacs to Laclau and Mouffe and the Latin American *guerrillistas* of the 1960s and '70s). A more complete appreciation of Marxist methodology begins with a materialist conception of history that recognizes the dialectical contradictions in all of life. This materialist dialectic appears clearly in the most political concept in Marxism: class struggle. Social classes are brought into being by the relations of production in each social formation — relations that are not just economic as the reductionists assert nor socially arbitrary as the subjectivists would have it, but relations of production that are contradictory, contested, and complementary, relations that include social, cultural, and political practices, with a complex array of individual and collective religious, gender, ethnic, national, psychological, and experiential variations.

Moreover, despite claims by duplicitous detractors and zealous supporters, Marxism has no Biblical reference to resolve interpretations. Nor can Marxism, or any other theory or method, be appraised by the expression of one or another advocate: baking, bricklaying, or aeronautics cannot be

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judged simply by the efforts of an individual or even a collective, but only by the success or failure of efforts by the most resolute and skilled under applicable conditions. Aeronautics cannot be considered unscientific because a paper airplane won't fly. At the same time, repeated efforts by inventors to fly wearing birdlike wings demonstrates their enthusiastic, but limited, understanding of aeronautics. Likewise, Marxism as a method of investigation and guide to action must be continually tested, retested, and updated according to the concrete conditions confronted. This is not to argue that a theory or method cannot be evaluated, dismissing any specific inadequacy as ineptitude or the result of an inappropriate application. Rather there is a materialist dialectic between theory and application: just as we say that "a worker is only as good as the tools," we know that tools alone do not make a worker skilled; the worker, the tools, and the task at hand all must be evaluated individually in their interaction. Marxism likewise must be evaluated by careful consideration of its methodological tools and practices, the methodological application, and the actual, material conditions of its application.

What follows is a series of observations that might inform a methodology based on a materialist dialectic. Although reordering these defining terms of Marxism reverses the primary linguistic term to dialectic, I do so to emphasize the materialist core of Marxism that has been discarded by those who envision flux without regard to actual. I suggest that a rigorous materialism is dialectic because it attends to the contradictions within and around all things, relations, and processes. Consistent materialism cannot be static or deterministic in regards to society, either, because a complete assessment of social relations and human interaction reveals the possibilities (and probabilities) for human agency and its historical determinates, but not the predetermination of history.

Materialism

At its philosophical, scientific core, materialism holds that there is an external condition of life that we do not create but that imposes itself on us (Engels, 1941; Timpanaro, 1980). Nature and its biological processes; and society and its cultural processes, preexist each of us and would exist without our individual presence. As a corollary, we are dependent on nature and other humans for survival; we could not exist without them. In other words, there is a reality outside of and prior to humanity.

This natural material world exists according to laws independent of our thought, language, and conceptualization. Gravity pulls objects together, whether Galileo discovers the law or the Inquisition accepts it. Evolution is not a matter of rhetorical excellence; species have appeared, receded, and been transformed according to natural selection and other more complex natural processes. The reach of the universe does not depend on our perception of it. Yet, although the material world exists with or without our approval, evidence of the material world is continually being tested and verified in practice. Indeed, all of our intellectual and ideological understandings are predicated on our material existence. Moreover, all thoughts, ideas, and concepts are materially real, in that they can be observed, measured and evidenced in synapses, sounds, text, and images, but thoughts, ideas, and concepts that do not refer to or represent material things, relations, or processes are nonetheless fictional in their practical manifestation. The word *unicorn* has a material existence in its linguistic form, or even in its graphic depiction as a work of art or piece of performance. Yet, outside of the fictional world, unicorns do not exist. Klingons are powerful in the *Star Trek* world; they even have a language and culture on television; but no country or universe will ever be subjected to a Klingon invasion. In other words, thoughts, ideas, and concepts are ultimately real only insofar as they have a material expression or can be brought into being. Fictions, novels, lies are real in that they exist-in-themselves, but they are unreal in that they have no other existence outside of their utterance. Things that do not exist outside of language, verbal or nonverbal, have no actual, material existence and thus are not real, although belief in their existence may indeed prompt practical human activity that has

serious material consequence. With or without the existence of a supreme being, the belief in God moves humans to actions in the name of God, but it is not God's existence that is manifest — it is the materiality of human action that matters. In other words, while we identify natural processes with abstract categories for our understanding and use (and humans have done so, at least since the Milesians of the seventh century B.C.), the processes themselves need no label to function.

The dialectic — a diachronic characteristic of the ever changing material world whereby contradictions arise in and through development of phenomena — concretizes materialism in action, allowing us to more fully interpret historical change, including changes in communication use and development. From the continual transformation of the universe to the changing social interactions of everyday life, the material basis of everything that exists moves dialectically — from the processual contradictions within things and among things.

Consequently, with the development of human life and our ability to alter the material conditions of our life, we have become authors and agents in the use of the material world for our own ends. "Between nature and the individual stands the structure of society based upon the mode of producing the necessities of life" (Novack, 1965, p. 24). Moreover, all natural and social progress is contradictory — every act of creation is an act of destruction, as Goethe once said. In other words, the objective, material world (including the forces and relations of production that mediate between nature and humanity) provides both real limits as well as realizable opportunities for human action. The flux of history and humanity can be measured and recorded by how humans first form and then transform their own nature according to the actual material conditions and processes. This materialist analysis recognizes, allows, and encourages conscious action for altering our natural and social conditions, because materialism understands that all social relations "emanate from the social struggle for survival" (Novack, 1965, p. 19). A materialist approach to history, thus, is dialectical without one iota of dogmatism — for the truth lay in the actual, contradictory processes that cannot be fully understood except in their dialectic development because "all known historic conditions are circumstanced" (Labriola, 1966, p. 128).

The materialist dialectic is based on the conflicting movement of forces and relations in history, which has repeatedly demonstrated that the mode of production of life shapes and limits all other sociocultural phenomena and processes. A materialist analysis of these sociohistorical processes finds identifiable social classes in negotiation, alliance, and conflict over how social relations and the relations of production should be organized and mobilized. Marxism, in applying the materialist dialectic, has termed the historical process "class struggle." Whatever terms are used, however, the material conditions of social life have developed and demonstrated in practice that the process of social development has occurred according to the outcome of battles over resources, organization, and preferred human relations, including relations of production. In other words, because history and the social order depend on the productive forces we develop and the social relations that we construct in realizing the power of those productive forces, it follows that conscious practical human action is necessary to alter and improve upon existing productive forces and social relations. As Peter Singer (1980) explains the materialist conception of history, "History is the progress of the real nature of human beings, that is, human beings satisfying their wants and exerting their control over nature by their productive activities" (p. 57). So, although the productive forces always finally exert themselves, they do so "only through the actions of individual humans" (p. 58). The movement of humanity to resolve its dilemmas depends on the productive forces humanity has developed — medicine for illness and injury; cultivation, storage, shipment, and storage for nourishment; cultivation, production, and design for shelter; and education, recreation, science, and entertainment for culture — to allow us to overcome and adjust to the natural world and its impact on our very existence.

A materialist argues that it is thus impossible to understand communication in isolation from the larger social order in which it occurs, develops, and is battled over. In 2005, this means that one cannot meaningfully present communication theories or perspectives outside of global capitalism, its various nation-state formations, its economic, cultural, political, and ideological manifestations, and their existing and developing contradictions. Media reform, alternative media, and individual attempts at democratic communication practices that fail to contextualize their activity according to the class character of local, national, and international social relations will ineluctably be muted at best, or, more likely, be absorbed by the overarching norms of class society. As Elizabeth Fox (1988) and Rick Rockwell and Janus (2004) have demonstrated for Latin American and Central America, media reform has no traction without societal transformation. Under more favorable political conditions, media democracy in Nicaragua (from 1981 to 1990) (Artz, 1994) and media access in Venezuela in 2005 (see TeleSUR, at www.zmag.org/Venezuela_watch.cfm, for example) further substantiate the materialist dialectic: control of production, media and otherwise, precedes transformation of its social use.

This materialist approach to history and communication privileges the social over the individual, but it does not discount the role of individuals in history. Instead, the materialist dialectic recognizes that individual influence on events depends on the historical moment, the historical conjuncture of events. The outcome of historical social processes are not predetermined, but influenced, guided, and disrupted by the behavior and actions of masses of humans — at some moments they/we are inspired or deterred by the actions of just a few, or even one. Dialectically speaking, individual intervention always alters the material conditions of life, but which individual actions will change the inertia, the norm, the structure, and practice of society? That depends on the overall material relations of power at that moment. George W. Bush did not invent the invasion of Iraq — the impulse preceded him by at least a decade, the favorable political climate for his call arose from decades of ideological and cultural grooming by media and political parties in the United States, and ultimately his charge needed 9/11 to terrorize many Americans into accepting "preemptive" war. Hugo Chavez did not begin the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela — his voice was raised at a moment when millions of Venezuelans (and Latin Americans) were searching and ready for alternative ways of being. In each case, and others of historical note, the active political response of millions that was triggered by individual actions depended on the material conditions of those millions that preexisted any individual rhetor: similar settings and similar practices shared by social groups and classes of humans will spur similar responses and similar behaviors. Thus, throughout Latin America in the last ten years, political formations have migrated to the center left as Argentinians, Ecuadorans, Peruvians, Uruguayans, Brazilians, and others have had similar experiences with the Washington Consensus, privatization, and neoliberalism — leading to similar, albeit materially unique, social and national responses. Individuals have influenced these developments in each case, because the material conditions allowed for greater or lesser individual agency in history.

Communication Means and Communication Practices

Throughout history, different communication forms, from oral, written, and printed to aural, televisual, and other electronic modes, have affected our reception of messages. Different social practices encourage or impede all communication, interaction, social awareness, democratic participation, and knowledge construction. In other words, we cannot assume or accept that any particular medium materially predetermines the communication process or practice. Oral communication may be more accessible, more democratic, than other communication forms, but even the use of voice can be restricted, structured, or encouraged. A peasant can physically speak, but the

feudal relations and threat of force by the noble dictates how and when the peasant will speak. Likewise, radio and television do not do anything; the sets must be turned on; programming is produced and broadcast according to prevailing social norms and practices; and the listener/viewer must decide if and how to watch the available programming.

Technologically, radio can receive and transmit. Radio can be democratic and participatory, information rich and easily accessible to the public; it can be bureaucratic and propagandistic, controlled by government censors and broadcasters; it can transmit background music, filled with commercials, and monopolized by deregulated profit-driven media giants. The use of any technology depends on how a particular societal order or social group decides or accepts how to use it. In short, communication practices are the result of the dynamic interaction between communication means (media technology) and social practices (informed by social relations, power, and use).

Frequently, communication texts, especially those concerned with the mass media, focus on the advances of technology and consumer-based information access. However, attending primarily to the pleasure and promise of technology is like being wowed by bells, whistles, and shiny dials, overlooking the social substance and use of media technology. Privileging technology reduces humans to respondents, not agents, and misses possible alternative, democratic uses of media technology. This emphasis depends on a widely held assumption in media studies that consumer markets are a given, an almost natural condition of communication in the modern world. Many texts discuss media and mass communication practices within an ambiguous "free marketplace of ideas," where all citizens (defined as consumers) have equal access to information reception, production, and distribution; democracy amounts to popularity in the marketplace. Thus, any idea that has merit must naturally achieve commercial success — it's what the people want! Conversely, lacking widespread distribution and acceptance in society, nondominant ideas and little-known information are simply indications that the public has rejected them because such nonpopular ideas must lack merit or value. Even in texts that recognize media consolidation and the impact of advertising and public relations on information production and distribution, citizens are conceived of as individual consumers of information, who will seek out information to meet their own uses and gratifications, eventually creating a market for new ideas (for example, Folkerts & Lacy, 2001; Vivian, 2004). Public information, public interest, and cooperative, collective, citizen action receive scant attention in the midst of the celebration of new media products that promise new personal freedom and exciting cultural experiences.

High expectations for media and other technology have marked each invention and innovation in mass communication history. But none has singularly delivered individual liberation nor brought abundance to all of society, as promised. Indeed, the social upheaval that came with each transformation of mass communication practices (such as literacy, the penny press, or radio broadcasting) did not resolve social inequality or unrest, because the impulse for research, development, and promotion of particular media practices most often corresponded to the communication needs of the politically, socially, and economically dominant classes. Of course, every media technology and communication practice is subject to the contradictions and conflicts that afflict society as a whole. The use and impact of any communication means or practice ultimately depends more on the material social relations between classes and the attending cultural and social norms than on the inherent nature of any particular technology. A television set in the living room doesn't "make" kids aggressive, even if it's left on 24/7. In the United States, networks and their advertisers decide the programming and messages sent, and audiences watch and interpret messages according to dominant social and cultural norms that encourage boys to be tough, girls to be nurturing, authorities to use any violent means necessary to catch the "perp," and stories to have happy endings with the status quo intact. In past studies, it was found that the cartoons that prompted aggressive behavior in

American child viewers did not affect Japanese children in the same way — their popular culture was not awash in confrontation and coercion, social acceptance of violence, and encouragement of in-your-face individualism was not prevalent in the larger culture. In other words, media and communication and their functional consequences, in general, occur within particular social contexts. Media and communication both reflect and reproduce the practices and values of the society in which they function.

Ideas and the communication of ideas always occur in the context of relations of power, relations that exist at discrete, yet ongoing, historical moments. All ideas and the communication of ideas are produced, distributed, and understood within social relations that give rise to those ideas. Thus ideas and their communication are always in flux because social relations are always in the midst of being reproduced, contested, and modified or transformed. Language itself is the result of human interaction with nature, including other humans. The material conditions of life prompt humans to create language to express their connections. Inuit words for "snow" are plenty, but ! Kung words for "snow" in Namibia are few. In contemporary society, ideas and their communication are related to how we interact with nature and each other, according to the complex realities of life in capitalist America — mostly "conditions not of our own making."

None of this is particularly profound. Linguists, cultural anthropologists, social constructionists, and semioticians have made similar claims. Yet, we still ask: What is the source of the social power that infuses language with meaning or determines the specific use of a communication medium? What Marxism has to offer is a materialist analysis of linguistic and ideological power and media practices, an analysis that identifies the connections between communication practices and social relations within social formations. Following Marx and Engels, who were inspired by Morgan, Darwin, Adam Smith, Ricardo, and others, Marxists have recognized that social relations materially arise alongside relations of production: how humans organize their survival prompts, how they interact, how they express that interaction, and how they might reproduce or transform/overturn social relations that privilege existing relations of production, including the division of labor, the distribution of resources, and decision-making powers. A vital part of social relations is communication — the symbolic and practical means for organizing, understanding, and changing our social relations: interacting with each other, we communicate, we produce communication, we use communication, and we as communicators change in the process.

Social Product, Social Tool, Social Process

Social Product

Every communication practice is simultaneously a social product, a social tool, and a social process. Every dominant communication practice arises as the resulting social product of habitual social interaction. As a species, humans must collectively interact with nature and each other to sustain life. In the process, human interaction produces communication in the form of sounds, speech, words, language, and nonverbal codes. In English, the sign *e* is pronounced "ē." In Spanish, the sign *e* is pronounced "ā." The pronunciation of other signs, in these and other languages, follows ritualized practices of centuries of use in culturally specific languages. Likewise, groupings of these signs and sounds express words with meanings drawn from shared experiences. In our modern world, we produce and reproduce our way of life by exploiting nature in complex and often convoluted ways; we construct communication practices that roughly correspond to how our physical and social existence has been constructed. The use of computers, for instance, prompts vocabularies representing the associated practices of computer use: PC, download, hypertext, burn, and so on. Reflecting accepted social practices and existing social relations, the English-language vocabulary for women and blacks has a

considerably longer list of derogatory words than the vocabulary list for men and whites. The words in use, the words we know, have been produced over time in and by societies that have had white European males in power. A racist society will produce racially biased vocabularies. Whether derogatory or favorable, meanings for words associated with women, men, blacks, and whites are social products communicating the corresponding social power of women, men, blacks, and whites. Find a negative word to describe a British citizen. *Limey*? A list of negative words for Italian, Polish, or Mexican citizens would be considerably longer and considerably more derogatory. Why? It is not that the English language can't be composed to insult English-speaking people. Nor is it that dominant members of society gathered in secret to create words of derision for their "inferiors." Rather, the practice of racial insult, like all communication practice, is a social product. Because Britain was a colonial superpower — in the eighteenth century, the sun never set on the British empire — its language reflected its social and economic dominance. Words were created that reflected existing social relations; words did not appear that did not reflect those relations. Hence, words for Brits were/are predominantly favorable in the English language; English-language words describing subordinate nations and peoples reflected their actual subordinate social position in the global relations of production of life.

Media technology is also a social product, not merely the invention of creative genius. Gutenberg is credited with inventing the printing press, but the press was in use centuries before in China and Korea. Even in Europe, dozens of other artisans and mechanics assembled similar machines for printing. More importantly, the scientific knowledge, mechanical principles, and material prerequisites (such as paper, ink, solvent, metallurgy) were the result of contributions of generations of thinkers and tinkerers. The development of radio and television progressed in a similar fashion, the social product of particular societies having needs, opportunities, resources, knowledge, and other material prerequisites. Indeed, who can be dubbed the "father" of radio remains in dispute: Heinrich Hertz, Guglielmo Marconi, Edwin Armstrong, Lee DeForest, Reginald Fessenden? Each inventor worked from the material and technical knowledge available at the time. Each contributed to the collective effort, and several arrived at similar, yet unique, conclusions. But radio transmission and reception was possible only as their individual accomplishments progressed and were synthesized — often contentiously. And who "invented" television? The Utah farmboy Philo T. Farnsworth, or a host of other inventors? In any case, each studied the physics, electronics, and mechanics of centuries of scientific discovery that was systematically presented to him in his school curriculum — also the result of an advanced industrial society that set aside resources for public education. This is not to discount individual genius or creativity, but only to underscore that in these media, and all others, including film, photography, data transmission, satellite technology, and the Internet, technology was produced socially by thousands sharing knowledge, dividing labor tasks, and providing necessary time and resources for the development of each medium.

Social Tool

Socially produced and practiced, communication is also a social tool. Words produced by an agrarian society become tools for farmers to express and organize their agricultural activities. Words produced by a racist society become tools for maintaining race discrimination. Historically speaking, words arise through collective practice, but once produced word use becomes a social tool for organizing future actions and relations. Naming objects, persons, and relations not only identifies and defines them, but also expresses the social values, perspectives, and expectations favoring existing social relations, including preferences for those who have some influence over naming and defining. Thus, the dozens of Inuit words for "snow" not only reflect the categorizations produced, but indicate

that Inuits use these words for noting distinctions that are significant for their daily life: thick snow, wet snow, light snow, changing snow, and so on can indicate weather patterns, seasonal changes, animal migrations, or conditions essential to survival. For most of contemporary North America, in contrast, distinctions in snow type are less significant. Given that weather has been mitigated by housing, heating, travel, and other cultural conditions, words for snow varieties — those linguistic tools for expressing meaning — are less prevalent and less important. From the natural world to the social and cultural world, words are used for signifying distinguishing characteristics and making evaluations. Words are social tools for marking who will be accepted and included and who will be identified as deviant and outside. Thus, those who can name or influence word choice have the power to affect other social relations. In the 1500s, the conquistadors demanded that the colonized indigenous people in Central America speak Spanish or have their tongues cut off: to control the population, the conquerors felt compelled to control language as a tool of conquest. In the United States, it was illegal for black slaves to learn to read and write: slaveholders correctly understood that literacy could be a tool for liberation. Given U. S. dominance in the world, the expression and implementation of the word *terrorist* becomes a tool for evaluating nations, adjusting military policies, determining domestic civil liberties, and justifying incarceration of combatants and citizens. The word *terrorist* can be a tool for distinguishing actual threats or a tool used to intimidate political opponents: in 2004, the National Education Association (NEA), an organization of 400,000 public and private school teachers, was deemed "terrorist" by the Secretary of Education because the NEA challenged federal education initiatives.

In a similar way, media technology has been and is a social tool for those who control its use and application. Media technology improves the distribution of information, persuasion, and entertainment. Those who own or control media can influence what news and information will be disseminated, what social norms will be highlighted and valued, which persuasive messages will be transmitted. Media may be used to consolidate power, as the Catholic Church and European nation-states attempted to do with their use of the printing press; or media may be used to challenge and resist power, as Thomas Paine, Ben Franklin, and other colonialists did with their use of the printing press in colonial America in the eighteenth century. Authoritarian governments on every continent have attempted to use radio and television broadcasting for social control; in each case, from Bolivian miners to Mexican peasants, popular organizations have employed alternative, more democratic media for political mobilization and liberation. In the United States, radio began as a social tool of organization and affiliation by communities, universities, schools, and religious and political groups. With the 1934 Federal Communication Commission regulations, radio became a social tool for advertising and entertainment, as commercial interests were granted exclusive licenses for nationwide mass broadcast. The experience of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in England illustrates a different use for radio — public service, public information, nonprofit cultural entertainment. Whatever the myriad possibilities within any particular society, including its rules, regulations, and norms, media always appear as social tools for the producers, directors, and decision makers of each medium. Whether it is which language can be spoken, what terms will be used to describe our fellow human beings, who can read and write, what passes for news criteria, or who has access to radio broadcast, those who influence and control communication practices wield a powerful social, political, and cultural tool.

Social Process

Understanding communication, materially, as always simultaneously a product and tool recognizes the changing, contradictory, and dynamic nature of communication as a social process.

Communication is a shared and yet contested practice that must constantly be negotiated and reconstructed even as it expresses and organizes human understandings. As societies change, communication changes, and as communication changes in use by diverse contesting social groups, societies change. To be tan in the nineteenth century was a sign of underclass; manual laborers and hard workers got "farmer's tans" — darker skin indicated further social inferiority in keeping with the race relations of the time. Elites who lived more leisurely spent less time in the fields, used umbrellas at the beach, and relished their alabaster skin. Today, the situation is somewhat reversed. Tans often represent winter trips to resorts in Mexico or Florida or on the Riviera and suggest expendable income; paleness, in contrast, indicates that one has been laboring indoors during the "vacation" months. Simpler examples include words such as *bad*, which may mean "good," or *cool*, which can also mean "hot." The words we use change over time and in particular contexts, because all communication is fluid, changing, the outcome of social processes of battles over meaning and use. Certainly, communication shapes our perception of the world, yet we alter our perceptions and communication to achieve our own ends, which often conflict with existing, accepted meanings.

Conflicts over meaning are frequently inscribed in disparities between what is intended and what is understood, described by Stuart Hall (1990) as a social imbalance between encoding and decoding dominant, negotiated, alternative, or oppositional meanings. Dominant meanings are those preferred by the message source and generally in keeping with the norms and values of dominant society. Whenever preferred dominant readings of particular messages are unclear or unacceptable, various publics or groups construct a negotiated meaning, based largely on the dominant interpretation painted with a particular experience, preference, or understanding. Occasionally, groups or individuals will consciously reject a dominant message as not in their interest and construct their own alternative understanding — gas-powered SUVs are seen as environmentally damaging, so one buys a hybrid compact car, which doesn't challenge Detroit or the fossil fuel industry but does present an alternative meaning for gasoline-powered transportation. On occasion, usually coinciding with a moment of serious social or political crisis, groups or individuals will respond to messages oppositionally — when segregated schools were no longer acceptable, the system of public education was rejected and politically challenged.

These multiple readings of meanings and messages produced in culture do not reside primarily in the discursive field, but indeed indicate that social groups are continually competing over resources other than media and communication, using communication as a catalyst for social change or a prop for the status quo. In other words, we may create our own worlds, but we do so in response to conditions that we confront. The NAACP was formed in 1905 as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. At the time, *colored* was the social product of a race-conscious society that denigrated "black" citizens. *Black* — as a social product of race-prejudiced society — was negative in most contexts; blackball, black sheep, and black mark on your record were undesirable. In contrast, white sheep, white lies, and white as snow were more favorable concepts. The meaning of *black* has its roots in archaic Indo-European sounds resulting from negotiations over humanly recognizable colors. Additionally, the social-political meaning of *black* has its roots in historically identifiable relations between racialized humans — largely in the European world and languages. Thus, *black* is a social product expressing human interaction according to the outcome of the contested significance of natural markers — skin color in chattel slavery European colonies. To be black in the United States was to be second-class and thus the communication of multiple negative synonyms for *black* would be expected in the symbol system of that society — symbols that kept black Americans "in their place." In the mid-twentieth century, even the leading black company in the United States made profits by selling bleaching skin cream. In short, *black* and *white* were communication terms produced according to

existing social relations of inequality. In short order — almost simultaneously — *black* became a social tool for maintaining discriminatory social relations based on racial difference. Despite centuries of conflict and resistance, and as long as race relations remained relatively static, *black* (and its more demeaning synonyms as epithets) carried a negative meaning in keeping with existing dominant social relations. Yet, as opponents of race inequality and segregation politically organized, as the civil rights and black nationalist movements gained power and prestige, social relations changed, social practices changed: *black* was transformed into a positive marker of identity: black power, black pride, black is beautiful. The social process of challenge and disruption to existing social relations, and their ensuing limited adjustment, resulted in a new linguistic social product: *black* now also expresses the changed, yet still contested and contradictory, relations of race (*race*: a word with meaning also produced by a particular society to express material social relations and practices, a word that is a social tool for categorizing humans for particular relations, a word that someday will undergo a social process of transformation, and hopefully disuse, as humanity progresses).

We are born into a world of communication created by existing and prior symbolic and socioeconomic activity. We learn and act and work with the language, knowledge, values, and meanings we receive, and then alter (or try to alter) that inheritance in response to our experiences, our interests, and our goals. The production and use of words, language, and images are created by those who came before us; we share and contest communication in the present and will accept, alter, or discard some practices in the future — all in the process of learning about, challenging, and changing our social conditions.

Media too have changed as competing groups and individuals have discovered and experimented with possible uses for each technology. Inventors and innovators have often been supplanted by more powerful, more organized agents, often orchestrating or relying on legal maneuvers to secure control of particular media. In the 1930s, RCA, NBC, and CBS used their economic and industrial power to influence the Federal Communications Commission to capture radio broadcasting for commercial interests and manufacture radios as receivers only. Within just a few years, from 1928 to 1935, nonprofit, educational broadcasters who once appeared on almost 40 percent of the radio dial were pushed to the frequency edges with less than 4 percent of airtime across the country (McChesney, 1993). In the process, radio in the United States became less a medium of citizen mass communication and more a system for commercial broadcasting. Radio was prevented from becoming a means for democratic mass communication. Public service, educational, and democratically accessible radio was aborted as the airwaves were soon flooded with advertisements and mass entertainment produced by giant for-profit broadcasters. In other words, from a materialist dialectic, radio as a social product and social tool underwent a dramatic social process of transformation, from a means of horizontal, democratic communication by citizens to a medium for the vertical transmission of mass entertainment for consumers.

Mass communication practices, ideological frames, and the meanings of words and symbols are the products of changing cultural needs and norms that respond to and influence changing political and social relations. Participatory communication practices might serve as tools for developing community and democracy, while dominant media practices serve clear and identifiable economic interests, advertising, and even short-term political agendas and ideologies. Each emerging mass medium, from print to the latest media communications technology, has been contested as the tension between technological opportunity and unequal social relations posed questions over possible use. Marxism understands that historically the battle has been between competing social classes over the power to communicate, over the power to organize society.

Communication and Its Social Contradictions

Compare two expressions and their practical manifestations from two different societies involved in differing social-political trajectories (that reflect opposing socioeconomic priorities and social class interests): employee quality circles in the United States and *cogestion* (worker's co-management) in Venezuela. In the United States, many large corporations have company-led co-management teams to encourage workers to make suggestions for improving efficiency. Several companies have even initiated "communities of practice" that "govern themselves and choose their own leaders, often in contested elections" (Wessel, 2005, p. A2). For what purpose? To create "islands of democracy in a hierarchical capitalist sea" that will provide knowledge and expertise "for the benefit of shareholders" and society (p. A2). In Venezuela, a similar term has a dramatically different application due to the political direction of the government and the political power of the mass movements. *Cogestion* still translates as "co-management" as in Europe and still "means making production more efficient." But, now it also means "getting rid of bureaucracy, mismanagement and corruption" (Martin, 2005). Managers are elected and may be recalled, and profits are distributed for social programs according to votes by worker's and citizen's assemblies (Jorquera, 2005). *Cogestion* politically translates as "worker's control." To make any sense, the linguistic translations of *co-management* must recognize the political processes that are the primary mediators of the larger conflicts between social forces seeking to either reproduce or transform the social formations of capitalism in the United States and Venezuela.

Likewise, the political consequence of the two "co-management" plans cannot be understood linguistically. A self-governing "community of practice" at Schlumberger, Ltd., an oil-field services company of 52,000 employees, cannot be cast as a "real democratic institution" simply because it holds contested elections: it is no "worker-run kibbutz" (Wessel, 2005, p. A2); it is a means for managing and motivating technical professionals for increasing company profits. In contrast, *cogestion* at CVG — the largest aluminum plant in Venezuela — is a different kind of co-management that redefines the political consequence of the term.

> There are regular meetings to discuss what is being produced, how it is being produced and what quantity and quality is being produced. So management is effectively in the hands of the workers. No significant decision is taken without the active participation of the workers. The process is also being opened up to the local community. Increasingly discussions are being held between factories and the local community about the role it plays in the local economy ... they discuss what projects the company should be supporting in the local area. (Jorquera, 2005)

Two ideologies share a similar vocabulary, but their articulations stretch the linguistic boundaries in proportion to how their ideological practices (in management, production, and decision making) stretch the boundaries of political relations within the existing social formation. It is not linguistics or ideology writ small in Venezuela that worries North American capitalism. Rather it is the political consequence of an ideology in practice that threatens to overturn the entire capitalist formation in Venezuela. As President Hugo Chavez declared on his weekly TV show, *Alo Presidente!*, the Venezuelan revolution is "a process in which new ideas and models are born, while old ideas die, and in the Bolivarian revolution it is capitalism that will be eliminated!" (Martin, 2005).

Marxism makes sense of these "rhetorical turns" as material manifestations of dialectical social contradictions active in and on capitalist institutions and in the more concentrated social contradictions in Venezuela. Ideas did not spring forth from the mind of Schlumberger's CEO Euan Baird or Venezuelan president Chavez. Their ideas occurred in the context of economic pressures (oil depletion and exploration, declining profit margins, reduced national budgets, imbalances in international trade,

competition, deregulation, privatization) and political tensions (middle-class anxiety and volatility, worker demands for social and economic security, widespread dissatisfaction with neoliberal policies and politicians). Each offers leadership for multiple social class forces; each proposes solutions to urgent or emerging social and economic crises. A Marxist analysis would suggest that the degree of success of each will depend on how their linguistic/ideological offerings spur political actions by socially and politically powerful classes that can reproduce or transform the existing social relations.

The Presence of Class

Dominant modes of communication permeate the relations of production in every society. Contrary to the technological determinists, the means of communication — which do have technological parameters — do not have inherent social applications or consequences. Indeed, the use of any particular means of communication depends on how existing social relations develop and employ that technology — that is, on the outcome of negotiations, battles, or alliances among class forces within that society and how they decide to produce and reproduce life. These same means of communication may function differently whenever the social relations that determine their use are changed: radio in Nicaragua went from a military instrument of U.S. occupation, to a tool for business and trade reports, to a vehicle for mass entertainment and propaganda by the Somoza dictatorship, to a means of propaganda and mobilization by the Sandinista resistance, to a public forum for participatory, democratic communication, locally and nationally (Artz, 1994). Whoever had power over the microphone determined the professional practices of the medium and the social function of its communication. As Robin Murray and Tom Wengraf (1979) write in explaining access to media, in class societies the dominant communication systems will operate to "confirm and enhance the power and cohesion of the dominant class and to confirm and control the fragmentation and subordination of the subordinated classes" (p. 185). In other words, "asymmetrical social relations" distort or restrict the possibilities for democratic communication and media use.

This observation understood narrowly is not solely the purview of Marxism. "Who must listen, who can speak, when and how, are questions always worth asking" (Murray & Wengraf, 1979, p. 185). What Marxism provides is the understanding that the determinants of public access to the means of communication depend on the political economy of the social formation, providing a theoretical stance for measuring democracy, identifying the social forces in contention, and explaining and predicting dominant communication practices according to which social classes have power or attain leadership in that society.

Here then is the value of Marxist insight: our understanding of the workings of communication and culture in society is improved by attending to social class relations. Accepted wisdom in most media, rhetoric, and other communication textbooks — as well as other academic social sciences in the United States — would have it that social class is an archaic concept, theoretically and materially. In mass media accounts, the significance of social class has been overcome by the workings of the pluralist democratic system, the leveling effect of affordable consumer goods, and everywhere superseded by identity politics or other more prevalent social divisions unrelated to the division of labor. Marxism rejects these surface readings of dynamic, complex social relations that define the material reality of capitalist society, the division of labor, and corresponding social relations and cultural practices. Positing social practice as the site of human agency (Kraidy, 2005) gains credence only when the material and historical class basis for social practice is identified.

Class characterizes the materialist analysis of communication because it encapsulates an important tenet of Marxist methodology: there really are rulers and ruled; classes really do exist in all modern societies. Admittedly, this claim requires much more than the following short presentation on social

relations and the production of life, but this brief should at least suggest the materialist approach being promoted.

Toward a Class Analysis of Communication

The Production of Life

Metal, wood, oil, and other raw materials are used by humanity for its survival and development, but as long as they remain underground or standing in the forest, they are useless. It takes human labor to transform natural resources into usable items (a fact consciously obscured by advertising and the culture industry, from Nike and Coors to Disney and Microsoft). A variety of techniques and practices have been employed over the thousands of years of human existence and in the process of expropriation of nature and production of things men and women have developed social relations that coincide with the organization of their productive activities. Indeed, one cannot speak of productive practices without speaking of social practices — as intimate parts of the same organic process. Societies have been formed through the combination of productive practices and their accompanying social relations, as varied as the multiple ways we have interacted with nature and each other: primitive communism, chattel slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism being a few of the more well known.

Every society can be characterized by how its members enter into social relations for the production of life — relations that organize the harvest, discovery, expropriation, production, distribution, and use of resources, necessities, goods, and services for life; relations that also inform their cultural manifestations (for example, dance, art, music, vernacular speech, recreation, entertainment, cuisine, and so on). Advanced capitalist societies, such as the United States, have highly industrialized productive forces with the collective efforts of millions using available means of production to manufacture goods and services according to stratified social relations that distribute benefits, rights, and responsibilities hierarchically. Productive forces include the whole range of technical means available for exploiting nature and producing material goods for human use; means of production include natural resources (coal, wood, oil, water, and so on) and the instruments of production (tools, machinery, technology, transportation, electricity, and so on).

Human life is produced by the gathering of natural resources by human labor using various means of production. Hence, labor power — the human capacity to work — is the material prerequisite for the transformation of natural resources to usable things, because labor power is also what changes natural resources into progressively more advanced instruments of production. Capitalism is a social system in which the means of production are privately owned and operated for individual profit. Capitalism organizes labor power as wage labor — workers are paid for labor time and skill, but not their total productivity. Machinery and technology and the skill and experience embodied in machines and technology through science, knowledge, invention, and innovation improve the efficient use of labor power acting on nature by employing those instruments of production on nature. Contemporary American capitalism organizes the immense productive capacity of collective international labor into wage labor working with the latest technology and most advanced equipment available to produce commodities for corporate sale.

The social relations of production in the United States are not as advanced, progressive, or socially egalitarian as the productive forces and means of production would allow. Production is highly socialized; the labor process is collectively organized according to an extensive division of labor, increasingly on an international scale. Producers do not sew their own clothing, grow their own food, or build their own furniture. Instead, to meet the needs and desires of society as a whole, clothing, cereal, sofas, music, and most other socially useful items are mass produced in privately owned enterprises that involve thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people in labor. Individuals with

many different skills perform many different tasks: discovery, design, extraction, transport, manual labor, skilled machining, packaging, inspection, and maintenance of machinery. Producers "are not simply individual workers, side-by-side in a given enterprise," but workers who "have been made into a real 'collective' worker by the division and organization of labor" (Jalée, 1977, p. 12) and by the production of commodities for others sold for private profit. In the globalized capitalist system, even the smallest item destined for mass consumption requires a highly socialized, coordinated international productive effort.

In contrast to the highly socialized production process, neither the actual producers of goods nor citizens as a whole direct, control, or decide the goals or practices of production. Instead, the means of production — from raw materials and factories to railroads, from oil and oil rigs to tankers — are privately owned, operated, and managed for individual private profit. Mineral deposits, forests, water, and even the air may be ostensibly "owned" by the public, and thousands of workers participate in the actual transformation of nature into material goods, but the decisions on when and how to use those resources, costs (including environmental and human consequences), and profits resulting from collective human effort are held privately. In other words, production is socialized, but the decisions over production are private. Moreover, the benefits from the collective knowledge and efforts of humanity are unevenly distributed among social groups and individuals.

The Production of Class Relations

This combination of advanced productive forces and private ownership of the means of production creates social relations that require millions of workers and managers, who own no productive resources beyond their own labor, to sell their labor power to capitalist owners in order to live. Thus, on one side, we have workers (including laborers, technicians, and engineers, for example), without whom no production would be possible, struggling to maximize their wages and salaries, often by working more hours. On the other side, there are capitalists, who own the means of production, without which no production would be possible, seeking maximum profits from their machinery and property by increasing the productivity of the labor power they employ. Importantly, for Marxism, these contradictory relations of production are not relations between individuals per se but are social relations between classes of individuals linked to each other by an insurmountable contradiction. "The contradiction between the private ownership of the means of production and the social nature of production" (Jalée, 1977, p. 13) provides the material ground for the production and negotiation of other corresponding, yet contradictory, social and cultural practices.

The primary social contradiction within capitalism is structurally expressed as an antagonism within productive relations — not simply personal relations but social relations between classes. From a Marxist perspective, social classes appear as a group of people who relate to production in similar ways and share a common location in the relations of production (Therborn, 1983, p. 39). The capitalist class owns the means of production but rarely works there. The working class does not own the means of production but gives them material expression by physically using tools, machinery, and labor power (mental and manual) on raw materials and their products. In terms of production, the working class owns only its labor power, which must be sold to the capitalist for a wage, whereas the capitalist depends on the worker to create goods, which must be sold for a profit. Other classes can also be defined according to their relationship to the means of production. For example, the managerial middle class is excluded from ownership of the means of production and as an administrator is also generally excluded from actually using the means of production; instead its position is defined by organizing the productive process.

Of course, these broad categories are very rough outlines. In each case, more specific class

groupings within a class can be recognized in relation to the overall social structure (Wright, 1985). Industrial workers have a different relationship to the means of production than do transit workers, retail clerks, or communication workers. Finance capitalists have a different relationship to the means of production than do industrial capitalists or small business owners. There are obviously multiple and complex differences between sections of classes and between the same classes in different conjunctural moments in different capitalist countries. Nonetheless, defining social class according to its relationship to the means of production and its position in the productive process provides an analytical lens for making sense of social, political, and cultural practices, including communication and media.

The material existence of these structurally situated classes is insufficient for explaining, predicting, or transforming social relations, however. Structures don't act; people do. As surmised from the above, the production of things coincides with the production of social relations that construct preferred social and cultural practices, including media practices, sport, entertainment, recreation, and so on. In other words, social class has a subjective human agency component; not only is social class a structural condition, but it also "is a process, is defined in relation to other classes" that are also in process, and "is historically contingent" (McNall, Levine, & Fantasia, 1991, p.4).

The power of any class depends only in part on its relation to the means of production. It also depends partly on its relation to other classes and society as a whole — relations that change as classes change and struggle over time. Once capitalism became the predominant mode of production, the capitalist class became the leading class economically, politically, and ideologically as emergent "nation-states" enforced the capitalist class's economic, political, and cultural rule. The social power of all other classes was decisively altered in the process. The nobility lost its feudal privilege and its political and cultural power, as well; the peasantry declined in number and significance; the working class grew rapidly. The feudal order positioned all classes in relationship to the land; the capitalist order positioned all classes in relationship to manufacture of commodities; international capitalism positions all classes in relationship to the global division of labor. The social significance and political and economic power of each class comes from the combination of its economic and social relationship to the structure of the means of production and its political and cultural relationship to other classes.

This dense narrative does not do justice to the complex concept of social class, which is essential to any complete understanding of communication practices, but for purposes of discussion, three conclusions might be drawn from the above account:

1. The social organization of the means of production provides a useful guide for identifying social class.
2. Based on the relationship to the means of production and to other classes and groupings, social classes have varying degrees and kinds of power.
3. The political power and social impact of each class depends on the outcome of its interactions (battles, alliances, and negotiations) with other classes.

These conclusions pose several questions: What is the relationship between social position and the political organization and power of any particular class? How does the social structure affect the capacity for subordinate class action? How do individuals and classes experience or understand the social structure and their class position?

Class Formation

Class structure does not determine class formations but only determines their probabilities (Wright, 1985, 1991); classes politically emerge from the social relations and interactions within and between classes. Structured social relations limit possible class formations, but do not determine, such

that "one cannot group anyone with anyone while ignoring fundamental differences, particularly economic and cultural ones. But this never entirely excludes the possibility of organizing agents in accordance with other principles of division" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 8). Gender, race, ideology, and political action by government and other organized agencies also shape the political formation of classes and prompt and inform cultural practices, such that entertainment reflects patriarchy, sport reflects race prejudice. Even cuisine (which follows cultural development across space and time) has ideological impulses and overtones of class markers: upscale versus fast food; five-star versus drive-through . . .

In other words, class structure is simply the material context for other social processes (Wright, 1997, p. 9), such that social classes confront real limits on the material and political resources available for group action. Materialism finds that similar class structures allow for different class formations, as history has revealed (Cohen, 1990; Levine, 1988; Poulanzas, 1978). Stephens (1979) found that differences in organized working class political strength and action led to different class formations in seventeen Western capitalist nations after World War II, similar to Valocchi (1991). As Wright (1997) says, class formations, are "created through the strategies of actors attempting to build collective organizations capable of realizing class interests" (p. 19). As actors become aware of their lived experience, they choose strategies based in large part on how their class position and activity has informed and framed their experiences. For Marxist communication scholars, the condition of social structure is an important material prerequisite for evaluating real and proposed social practices, including rhetorical, ideological, and other political messages. Communication that is more consciously cognizant of how groups and individuals are connected to the social structure will likely be more successful in constituting certain class formations. The materialist dialectic understands that humans may act to transform conditions, to make revolutions against social orders that fail to meet changing human needs.

The current class structure provides more immediate material and political resources to the dominant capitalist classes than it does to the subordinate working classes, because the current socioeconomic system, which is being globalized by transnational corporations and international trade relations, can still provide for the relative material well-being of a majority of the working population in North America and Europe. Although social movements and class struggles have modified the political landscape in the United States, the judicial dispensing of structurally available material and political benefits to oppositional classes and groups has allowed capitalist class representatives to maintain the legitimacy of capitalism (and preemptively defend it militarily around the globe). However, the rapid adjustment to the world division of labor for private profit hurtles us toward major class conflict, most likely obscured by national resistance to international relations and Northern interventions, as is currently transpiring in Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Chad, India, and elsewhere. These ruptures will create antagonisms within the United States, as resources for the working and middle classes will necessarily be diverted by the capitalist order to defend its interests globally, and national social classes will be repositioned in relation to their counterparts in other nations and regions. We are about to enter a new era of class confrontation and negotiation over what kind of world we will have.

The social and political process of class contradiction and class negotiation is expressed in Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Hegemony is the process of moral, philosophical, and political leadership that a social group attains only with the active consent of other important social groups (Artz & Murphy, 2000, p. 1). Hegemony is preconditioned on the social and economic power of the working class — without the continued support of the majority of working people, capitalist society would collapse and alternative social relations could be proposed, as happened in France 1968, Chile in

1970, Portugal in 1975, Nicaragua in 1979, Poland in 1980, the Soviet Union in the 1990s, and in Venezuela today, to name a few examples. Dominant classes that are too self-serving in their political, social, and economic leadership (or lacking the material resources to provide benefits to all) will inevitably confront serious challenges by other social groups. In North America and Europe, working and middle classes consent to capitalist hegemony because (absent alternatives) it provides some modicum of tangible material benefits, coherent political leaderships, and meaningful cultural practices. Hegemony does not just occur naturally; it must be constructed and institutionalized. In every stable hegemonic order, leaderships direct society through hegemonic institutions that help regulate, communicate, and popularize practices, norms, and values necessary for reproducing dominant social relations.

Hegemonic Institutions

The function of hegemonic institutions is to reproduce the social order and its relations of production, which include (1) everyday practices such as the work day, school day, and consumerist diversions, including hobbies, recreation, media, and other entertainments that are commodified (the singular profit-driven production of products); (2) the educational system, including an appropriate curriculum and organization, in class- and race-based public institutions and for-hire private institutions; (3) the legal system, including laws, enforcement, and incarceration for infringement on property and personal rights; (4) the political system, including the two-headed one-party system of representation, staged, nonissue election campaigns, deference to the executive administrators of the state, and the popularization of this "democratic" system via the media; and (5) the institutionalized cultural system, including sport, music, entertainment, recreation, and ideological practices that will reproduce the social order, such as religious rituals, nuclear family childrearing tasks, gendered fashion, commodified narrowcast media genres, charity, and other vehicles for promoting atomized hyperindividualism, spectatorship, deference to expert authority, and other norms that will obstruct or preclude group solidarity, democratic participation and access to communication, and any commitment to social justice. As Kate Crehan (2002) observes, "Those groups that have power act, often in extremely subtle ways, to stifle the emergence of understandings of the world that challenge their accounts of reality" (p. 146). This is more than a public relations function, although publicists certainly act to advance particular worldviews. As noted above, relations of production can never be understood only as economics or the material manufacture of goods. Rather, relations of production are understood in their totality, as a whole complex of coordinated, negotiated, and contradictory human activities that seek to reinforce social class positions relative to the mode of production in operation. The production of life includes activities that create and develop personal relations, institutional relations, and preferred and naturalized practices of work, as well as the ideological supports that explain and justify the social arrangements. The social order is not a neutral playing field in which "different, autonomous cultures happily coexist; they are fields of struggle, in which those espousing radically different conceptions of the world strive for primacy." At any one time, there are certain class groups that are hegemonic, although that leadership is never total — "it is always, although to various degrees, a struggle in process" (Crehan, 2002, p. 146).

Media Hegemony

The relations of production of communication and media exist within the complex of the relations of production of life in each social order. Cultural practices are essential to the reproduction of the hegemonic order, which needs the assistance of the merger of common sense, folklore, and mass popular culture. Dominant classes and their representatives appropriate the means of communication

for the production and dissemination of ideologies (in word and deed) that will reproduce their preferred relations of production of life, but they rely upon the creative offerings of subordinate classes and groups for inspiration. Hegemonic success often depends on how well the dominant classes and their representatives can incorporate contributions and challenges from subordinate classes into an ideology (in word and deed) that may modify but reinforce and protect the existing social relations of production of life.

Thus, the preferred mode of communication for a class society employs the available technology for applications appropriate for reproducing the existing relations of production, both in the productive practices and the symbolic output. Media, for instance, have historically been developed "only when the time was ripe — which shows that a technical innovation can prosper only if it meets a social need" (Escarpit, 1979, p. 195). Printing not only needed the material prerequisites for its technical development, as described above, but also the material class prerequisites, as book publishing went through several "mutations" in response to the needs and uses, first of the "international aristocracy," then of the "nascent capitalist industry" as the "popular book had a strong puritanical bias, and the stress lay more on its moral code than on its revolutionary value," later when "its efficiency as a social determinant" "played a part in the building of progressive opinion" of the emerging American capitalist democracy, and finally, "the inevitable consequences of capitalist industrialization" that turned books into simple commodities for sale to millions (Escarpit, 1979, p. 197). James Carey (2001) describes in some detail the rise of a journalism that met the needs of advertising, capitalist business and finance, and a newly urbanized working class in the United States in the nineteenth century, which meant that the journalism of the penny press presented a style, timing, and content beneficial to capitalist relations of production, including orienting the working classes to the appropriate symbols, practices, and norms. In each instance, and still today, the cultural production roughly followed the contours of the larger political and economic needs of the dominant classes. As Armand Mattelart summarizes, "Mass culture fulfills a need engendered by the political system of representative democracy, which appeared along with the development of capitalism" in the United States. . . . Just as the locomotive and the telegraph accompanied capitalism's need to open up new markets, and find new sources of raw materials, in order to permit the advance of its mode of production, for a similar reason, the mass communication and mass culture network accompanied the bourgeoisie's need for an opening towards other classes" (Mattelart & Siegelaub, 1979, p. 3-23). This includes the recruitment and ideological and technical training of creative workers and production staff. Scriptwriters must turn their stories into marketable narratives for commodity sale; artists must aspire to become the next "American Idol"; and all must be convinced and pleased by the fairy-tale worlds of self-gratification accorded to the consumption of consumer goods. Here, the functions of mass culture correspond to the functions Gramsci (1971) accords hegemony, or class leadership: to organize "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (p. 12).

Marxism does not fetishize the product, but sees the material basis for production in the structure of relations and in the social and cultural practices accompanying those relations. Hence, a materialist analysis of any text, discourse, or media practice would move beyond the instant semiotic to the social semiotic, arising from the relations of production. Marxism does not fetishize the structure, but recognizes the likely practices fitting those structures and the contradictions arising from those same practices that conflict with the class interests of the subordinate groups. Thus, the materialist dialectic — in contrast to Althusser's static structuralism that always already "interpellates" actors

through ideological and repressive state apparati — sees social, cultural, and political practices as material expressions of the materially existing contradictions between social classes, giving rise to reproduction, resistance, or revolution that can transform and replace the structure of social life. Marxism does not fetishize the practice, but sees public relations, advertising, organizational and political communication, journalism, and other communication practices as attending to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. Communication has meaning only in the concrete, in the materially identifiable, dialectically contradictory historical conditions under which it occurs. Thus, for example, without connection to a social movement challenging capitalism and its various nation-state configurations, media reform will be still-born or even improve the persuasive appeal of capitalist ideologues — as documented in repeated studies on Latin American media (Fox, 1988). New communication practices — whether reciprocal as in Dianne Rucinski (1991) or democratic and participatory as in Bertolt Brecht (1981), Lee Artz (1994), and Guillermo Rothschuh (1986) — need new communication structures, which need new relations of production.

Material Power and Dialectical Interaction

Although relations of production create social relations that link social classes, the strength of one class is not directly proportional to the weakness of others: each class has its own strengths and weaknesses. Therborn (1983) identifies the power resources of three major classes in capitalism: the fundamental resource of the capitalist class is the *expanding market* and its ability to materially satisfy other classes; the resource of the middle class of small business people is its *autonomy*, or independence from employers, workers, landowners; the fundamental resource available to the working class is its *collectivity* — in action it can stop or unleash productive power, political power, and social change. Therborn argues that the capacity of each class to provide political leadership for organizing society and reproduce or transform the social order depends on its ability to deploy its intrinsic capacity to or against other classes. Thus, communication by and for capitalism promotes entertainment and consumption in order to economically and ideologically reproduce market values and practices. The communication of entrepreneurs stresses individuality — a value easily incorporated into the consumer culture. In contrast, a conscious working class communication would express solidarity, community, collective social responsibility, decision making, and concern for humanity as a whole. Obviously, media technology would be and is used differently in promoting these differing class interests, values, and political resources. The daily practices of Clear Channel radio and U. S. television networks illustrate one use, one ideology; the practices of PBS or NPR suggest possible alternative uses; while dozens of U. S. community radio stations, Nicaraguan popular radio in the 1980s, and other international examples demonstrate more collectively democratic uses and transformative ideologies. The professional practices and organizational norms of communication in each case begin to make sense in light of a materialist conception of social class and social formation.

Communication practices always occur under particular social conditions and social formations, such that technology used/developed both reflects and is intended to reproduce that social formation, even as certain conditions of that formation change. In other words, private ownership of media can function with no government regulation or with considerable government regulation, including limits on time, audience, content, synergy, and even ownership share. Private ownership can be so limited under a capitalist social formation that public media dominate, as the BBC does in the UK. Yet, from one extreme to the other, dominant media practices reinforce and reproduce the capitalist formation by popularizing, normalizing, and promoting values and practices essential (or at least tolerable) to the capitalist system. Only during exceptional crises would such practices be replaced. Likewise, it is also an exception for private media to disregard its stated professional practices that obscure class relations

or present existing social relations as natural, normal, and preferred. Of course, under extreme challenge, the capitalist private media will do its job of defending the social formation. Thus, the *New York Times* called for a U. S. boycott of UNESCO after the organization asserted that media and culture were public resources. The *New York Times* also found the means to support the U. S. war on Iraq, distorting its journalistic claims to balance, objectivity, and truth (Artz, 2004b). Even more revealing is the leading role of the Cisneros media group in Venezuela, which used its dominant media position to orchestrate demonstrations, strikes, and ultimately a coup against a democratically elected government. At least since 1999, Venevisión has established and implemented its own system of censorship, propaganda, and public exhortation to defend the interests of Venezuelan capitalism and its established norms of government, trade, and social welfare.

Media are subject to class power through the control mechanisms of ownership or direction, the professional practices influenced or determined by the control mechanisms, and the social function set by the control mechanisms. The mode of communication depends on the relationship between the means (media technology available for use) and the social conditions, including social relations within the formation. Without this vision, even the most insightful researchers stumble, as evidenced by leading cultural imperialism and hybridity theorists who ultimately shy from class analysis: Herbert Schiller (1976) writes of "dominating stratum" and "dominating centers" (P. 9) without identifying the class character of the dominant; Marwan Kraidy (2005) reclaims hybridity from "the free marketeers" to redefine it as "a social issue with human implications" because people are not merely "individuals who constantly recreate themselves by way of consumption," but he goes no further than finding agency in ill-defined, nonclass "translocal and intercontextual" social practices (pp. 151-52). Capitalism (national and international) may well have a variety of social relations and cultural forms, varying from bureaucratic and autocratic norms, to censorship, to more "enlightened" co-management, or even a more laissez-faire system of production all expressed in a variety of hybrid, transcultural, contradictory cultural practices. Yet, as Gramsci writes, the "kernel" of capitalist relations — private profit from expropriated surplus labor — is always protected. Thus one witnesses Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes at Fox or Michael Eisner at ABC/Disney closely attending to daily operations that include assuaging cultural refinements for diverse audiences, from China, Indonesia, and Latin America. Meanwhile, the equally profitable Mideast satellite network Al-Jazeera remains fairly independent from the owners, who are removed from daily operations, but nonetheless has a consistent self-described pan-Arab perspective.

These instances indicate the need to analyze the concrete relations and practices: How does communication occur and function? Who decides what and how? What tensions and contradictions exist and how are they resolved or intensified? What is the relationship between this communication or cultural practice and the rest of the social order — regulators, instigators, evaluators, spectators, facilitators, benefactors, and beneficiaries — and how does this communication practice reinforce, reproduce, challenge, or potentially transform those relations and why? For Marxism, communication has no fixed meaning, but it has actual material consequence as it occurs — both materially in the products, the institutions, the actions related to communication and symbolically in the language, rituals, and meanings that are loosely strapped to those material practices.

Disney feature animations are a case in point. The ideology of hierarchy, individualism, and authority that are consistently narrated in Disney animations coincides with the social relations that Disney finds necessary to produce, distribute, and export its products. Disney characters, dialogues, and story lines invariably reject social responsibility, democracy, and group solidarity in favor of the hero/heroine's self-interest, even when that self-interest legitimates and advances monarchy, autocracy, and antidemocratic diegeses (Artz, 2004a). The political economy of the Disney

corporation illustrates those stories in practice: nonunion, underpaid workers, artists, and technicians are encouraged to obey corporate orders to advance corporate income, while multimillions are provided to CEOs and shareholders in the corporate circle of life (Giroux, 1999). The narrative moral of Disney features is not determined by the animation genre nor by the film or video medium; rather Disney decides how the means of communication can advance its product distribution and income flow in tandem with clothing, toys, games, theme parks, cruise ships, and other branded merchandise.

In a slightly different example, journalism demonstrates how norms and practices meet the needs and values of a social formation. The construction of "objectivity" presented as nonpartisan relies on forms — credible sources, balanced reporting, the inverted-pyramid style, headlines, column-one news, editorial sections, and other standardized norms — that conform seamlessly to the time and space requirements of the business cycle, advertising requirements, and corporate profit drives. Whenever these forms obstruct or conflict with the fundamental interests of the capitalist system, they are quickly modified or discarded by the corporate media suddenly dedicated to the "national interest," which apparently can be defended only by more partisan political forms that can mobilize citizens against social forces that threaten to transform the capitalist order or important parts of that order. Thus, we have Venevisión, Nicaragua's *La Prensa*, Fox, *the New York Times*, and others adjusting their practices to represent the ideological needs of the leading social classes and their power.

Class power is diffuse, but nonetheless it has names and addresses. Media conglomerates have significant interlocking directorships (Henwood, 1989) ensuring the sharing of corporate goals, the review of tactics and plans (such as embedding journalists during the U.S. war on Iraq), and reinforcing ideological stances (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). This is not conspiracy; rather it is the efficient implementation of a shared interest in a social system for the production of life based on private profit from wage labor, by administering political decisions and cultural practices that will reproduce existing social relations and norms; norms and relations that are essential to the smooth operation of the entire capitalist social formation in the United States and globally — for example, deregulation, privatization, commercialization, and citizen atomization through spectatorship, consumption, "family values," and deference to authority, among others.

This political leadership, this development of norms, is class power, power that is fronted by representing and representative individuals and groups. Whether Bush or Kerry, the U.S. war on Iraq was on the capitalist class agenda. FDR may have nationalized banking and industries, but even the National Association of Manufacturers understood that the "liberal" was saving the system from a worse fate, with a radicalizing, organizing working class on the horizon. When the representatives perform poorly for the class, they are isolated and removed under pressure from multiple class institutions, especially the media. Anastasio Somoza infringed on the interests and profits of Nicaraguan capitalists and thus lost his political base, exemplified by the opposition of *La Prensa*. Nixon failed to heed the advice of the capitalist think tanks, the prestige press, and the representative system; Watergate was resurrected by the elite media as the excuse to dump the liability. Politicians, party officials, government agents, and their publicists are recruited, screened, and well trained before they are allowed to administer the capitalist state (Domhoff, 1967, 1979; Therborn, 1980). With occasional and temporary exception, this truism holds for the workings of all major institutions in the United States, whether government or civil society: public schools and colleges, law enforcement, social services, national charities, media and culture industries, and other repressive and ideological apparatuses. If an individual deviates too far from the norm acceptable to dominant ideology, he/she is suddenly and severely castigated or shunned, usually before gaining public recognition, but even then the wolves will keep them in line — as during the McCarthy-era witch hunt, more recently in the instance of award-winning journalist Peter Arnett being fired after he openly opposed the U.S. war in

Iraq, and in the case of the Dixie Chicks, who were publicly berated and boycotted by Clear Channel Communications radio and others for their similar antiwar statements. The venues and instances of harassment and isolation are frequent and historically verified (see, for example, Zinn, 1980).

Mass Culture

Mass culture, often termed popular culture by the mass media, arose with the development of the conditions of capitalist production and now follow the latest economic practices: streamlined lean production, extreme commodification, centralization of decision making, risk aversion, homogenized market segmentation, globalization of standardized models (Artz & Kamalipour, 2004), and the exploitation of the labor and creativity of diverse communities. The tedious base/superstructure debate has been materially superseded: the media and culture industries are now base; media and entertainment are the leading U. S. exports. In this mix, the collective interests of humanity do not appear, except as anathema or threat to the social order (Chavez is criticized as a danger to Latin America because he diverts oil profits from shareholders to public education, public health, housing, and other human services). Mass culture reproduces very specific political and social norms. Mass culture promotes values, images, and practices that tend to reproduce dominant social relations (Dines & Humez, 1995) — even allowing for conflicting fact claims or alternative, but not oppositional, social practices. Mass culture assumes access to all, but access is limited to the reception of themes and values and the purchase of products — both of which reproduce the social relations of production of commodities. At the same time, because capitalist mass culture must appropriate genre, images, topics, and forms from subordinate classes, in order to both sell commodities and popularize consumerist ideologies, the content is often available for reappropriation and rearticulation by the subordinate — vaguely recognized as hybridity in international communication and cultural studies texts. A prime example is sport, which is unequivocally authoritarian, diversionary, and hegemonic in its cross-class appeal in the United States. Elsewhere (particularly in more repressive nations), sport has frequently allowed for resistive voices. Under the Franco dictatorship in Spain, Salazar in Portugal, Somoza in Nicaragua, and other military regimes around the world, soccer matches became a form of popular resistance. "In the absence of constitutional liberties, such as the right of assembly, freedom of speech and opinion, as well as the impossibility of publicly authorized solidarity, the stadium became one of the only places where the collectivity could meet and express itself" (Mattelart, 1979, p. 49). Likewise, early rap music fulfilled a similar function in the U. S. , where it became the "CNN of the black community" in the words of Chuck D, producer of rap group Public Enemy. In these realities of little or no access to public communication, products of mass culture may become "'free areas' that provide occasions for the expression of popular discontent" (Mattelart, 1979, p. 49). Ironically, whenever such expressions of resistance are unattached to social movements of the working class and the discontented, the capitalist producers of mass culture pick them as if fruit from a colonial banana republic, to be effaced of politics, reprocessed, and sold back to the subordinate as evidence of the "best of all possible worlds. " For Marxism, political expressions from cultural activity can never be more than laments unless they are connected to the material power of organized political-social movements that can articulate new meanings, new practices, and new relations of production.

This becomes abundantly clear through the process of globalization of capitalist relations. Globalization is not a new historical process, but it is a new stage in the expansion of capitalism. It represents the urgent need for advanced capitalist nations to find new markets for their products and the simultaneous need for cheap labor. Although expanding the contradiction between overproduction and shrinking markets from the G8 countries to the rest of the world does not bode well for capitalism, "the globalization of the more insidious networks of cultural invasion was carried out when the need for

a new international division of labor became evident to the ruling classes" (Mattelart, 1979, p. 48). For similar reasons, the hybridization of mass culture in respective national and domestic markets now accompanies international capitalism's need for cooperative national elites and compliant working classes as both producers and consumers of cheap cultural commodities — creating the actual conditions of what might be termed cultural imperialism.

The abuse heaped on the theory of cultural imperialism articulated by Schiller (1976) (Tomlinson, 1991) has been possible for the same reasons Marxism has been disparaged: insufficient clarity in meaning and reductive explanations suitable for political attack. Perhaps the biggest shortcoming of the cultural imperialism perspective is that it is not Marxist enough. It has often been used "with ill-defined meaning," and "without intending to, many studies are devoted to, and actually re-validate the myth of imperialism's omnipotence and omniscience" (Mattelart, 1979, pp. 57, 58). Critics that identify widespread resistance to the North's cultural exports have it half-right: the increasing attempts at social control through cultural seduction in the mode of the Argentinian movie *Tie Me up, Tie Me Down*, where the "seducer" who restrains his "lover" is subsequently desired, is a fiction. The attempts by the metropolis of the North at domination, political, economic, military, or cultural cannot be equated with success. Subordinate nations and classes within nations resist. Thus, recognizing the impetus and appearance of cultural imperialism (and for that matter resistance to domination) should not be confused with the ability to succeed in imposing or overcoming dominance. (Indeed, resistance by itself only mitigates power). Once again, materialist analysis could resolve the apparently deadlocked debate.

The missing half of the critique that salvages human agency from the reductionist notion of cultural imperialism's invincibility is that an exclusive focus on the limits of cultural imperialism too easily slides to a rejection of any structural conditions on subordinate cultural production. As if active audiences rule, as if free flow of information really were free flow, critics of cultural imperialism (for example, Straubhaar, 1984, 1991) fail to recognize the material conditions of mass cultural export: the dominant media empires of the North; the cooperative national and regional capitalist partners assembled in government institutions or in powerful joint ventures; the exclusion of subordinate classes from national media production and distribution; the actual appeal of the North's cultural products; and, perhaps most importantly, the reproduction of the Northern empire's *model* in domestic comprador production.

Marxism tracks a clearer path for understanding, explaining, and transforming the process of globalization than most current studies provide. In real history, as Gramsci (1971) writes, it is necessary "to take into account the fact that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique, and historically concrete combinations. A particular ideology, for instance, born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations" (p. 110). Hybridity is more than a diversionary answer to a cultural imperialism thesis cast reductively — it is the actual material of culture on the ground in specific locales at specific historical moments. This issue is not the material existence of hybrid cultural forms — whether Brazil has become a net exporter of soap operas or whether Mexican producers appropriate WWE's popularization of wrestling into a children's cartoon for export to the United States — the issue is what concretely is the hybrid product or practice (Kraidy, 2005). Who produces? Who uses? What is the political and social consequence of the hybrid culture? Media are not free-floating entities; they have owners (and classes of owners), directors, programmers, and other media workers. Whatever the complexity of the translocal, classes are the impulse for production and the contradictory, refracting polyvalent lens for interpretation. Marxism's insistence on working from the frame of relations of production of life, including social class power, would have us ask, What are

the political contours of the cultural hybrid and which social relations of production are reproduced ideologically and in other material ways?

The materialist analysis requires both a macro and a micro analysis that can place the appearance of a specific telenovela, musical genre, lifestyle choice, or other cultural practice in the context of the totality of the relations of production, locally, nationally, and internationally at each historical conjuncture. Doing so, even cursorily, we find that while the North does not impose its cultural products on the South, its model predominates as national and regional ruling classes adapt the cultural successes of the North to vehicles more useful for distribution to subordinate classes in the South. Hence, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* becomes a television hit in India as *So You Want to Be a Multi-Millionaire* in rupees (Crabtree & Malhotra, 2004), with questions drawn from India's history and popular culture. WWE has successfully expanded its empire by adapting its presentation to the cultural specificities of different nations from Mexico to Japan, while a local entrepreneur in Bolivia has amassed a cultural following with the production of indigenous women wrestlers replete in traditional dress. And the regional media powerhouse Brazil? Does it pose a counterpole to Western ideology because it is the leading producer of soap operas in the South (Straubhaar, 1984)? Telenovelas from Brazil ate closer to the experience of Rio and São Paolo and hence other Latin American experiences, but their stylistic hybridity mutes their political potential: few positive images of the Brazilian working class, no political solutions that challenge Brazilian capitalism, and only slight hints of solidarity among the poor appear. Indeed, telenovelas excel at diversion from political conversation and the promotion of consumerism throughout the countries of the South. As in the United States, advertising and ratings drive the telenovels, their narratives, their timing. The appearance of more controversial racial and sexual subjects may attract more viewers than an American import, but those subjects do little to challenge the Brazilian capitalist system and its relations of production — including the popular pastime of television viewing as spectators/consumers. The issue is not culture, it is the politics of culture.

The macro and the micro combine with a Brazilian accent to promote individualism, consumerism, spectatorship, and authority — the hybrid is robust, pleasures many audiences, and still serves international capitalism well (including through academic treatments that cannot see the forest of transnational capitalist media models taking root around the world). The cultural synthesis of communication and other social practices cannot be stripped from existing social relations, nationally or internationally, nor does a cultural synthesis negate the political power of the dominant. At best, cultural hybridity can be an impulse for and assistant to other social practices, including political action, which may transform the production of life, socially, culturally, politically, and economically.

The Material and the Dialectic

Consistent materialism is nuanced, tentative, and concrete. It is also dialectic, because material reality is dynamic — all that is comes into being, develops, and passes away. Complete materialist analyses must recognize the contradictions at work within every phenomenon, contradictions that must always and everywhere be present, because for anything to exist it must be materially active in production, reproduction, or degeneration.

Communication is no exception to this materialist tenet. Within every communication practice, system, or utterance there exist tensions reflecting contradictions among social class relations. The meaning of any particular word or act is constantly in flux, depending on the context, personal and political relations, and dominant interpretations that we accept or modify in practice. When we speak we enter into battle, as it were, by proposing or challenging the dominant meaning of each word uttered, and by extension take a position on existing relations of power. We recognize the continual reappearance of "rhetorical situations" that are marked with exigencies — urgent problems subject to

human resolution. Hence, all rhetorical utterances must occur under specific material conditions: real human agents, real human audiences, identifiable or defined problems, materially available discourses, and possible actions. Marxism indicates that each rhetorical situation also always occurs within a particular society, with all of its contradictory social relations, political practices, and cultural norms at work to one degree or another at that particular historical conjuncture. The rhetorical situation is not just a date, or a place, or an audience; it is that moment in history in which humans must respond to concrete conditions, and they must act in accord with or in opposition to dominant norms of behavior, belief, values, and relations of social class power. The "correct" response to 9/11 depends on the political consciousness of those hearing appeals for action. Discarding journalistic norms of objectivity and fact-checking were rhetorically apropos for capitalist partisan media in the United States at that moment, as was the partisanship of their Venezuelan counterparts at the moment of the capitalist coup against democracy, and of the British media at the moment of defense of colonial occupation in the Malvinas — if we recognize that capitalist media institutions exist not for some abstract dedication to the truth but as institutions that function to reproduce capitalist relations of production, preferably with the cloak of nonpartisan objectivity, but if necessary with the naked assertion of the right of market power to rule.

This is not a deterministic gloss. Rather it is the materialist recognition of the relationship between the mode of production of life in a given society, the flexible ideology constructed for the reproduction of that social order, the rhetorical flourishes that abound at moments of crisis, and the particular articulations that are necessary to those political forces that attempt to resolve the contradictions in favor of the existing structure by meeting the demands of its challengers. "These incessant and persistent efforts" by representatives and defenders of the existing social order form the terrain for possible social change, as oppositional forces "seek to demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible" transformations to the existing unsatisfactory social system (Gramsci, 1979, p. 108). The material conditions are thus always active, always unsettled, always subject to change. Yet, within these material conditions parameters exist. The task of materialist analysis is to "find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural . . . in the first case there is an overestimation of [structural] causes, in the second, an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element" (Gramsci, 1979, p. 109). In other words, materialist analysis seeks to identify the dialectical processes and trajectories of the various class forces and their relative political strength and relations of power. Analyses of communication and media provide important indicators of the relative strength and organization of various class forces as they evolve, and thus may contribute to the communication and other actions that can change the "conjunctural" situation.

Political economic analyses of media companies may or may not have Marxist lenses. To be frank, case studies of media ownership, network practices, or even governmental regulation are insufficient to explain why and how media practices occur. Such insights must be connected to a materialist dialectic — a historical analysis of the totality of the social relations of production. Media power does not reside solely in shareholder investment decisions or in production studios; rather it is connected to the tensions and contradictions in the entire capitalist system. Although not expressed in these terms, Glenda Baias's (2004) recounting of moments in the neutering of public television in the United States indicates that proposals, controversies, and broadcasting practices had more to do with the alignment of class forces at each conjuncture and less to do with the articulated critiques and proposals for broadcasting regulation. The articulation of public service or public access had little purchase without the rhetorical power of a social movement capable of disrupting the network's and the FCC's business as usual. What Balas provides (that many more conscious political economic accounts do not) is a diachronic appreciation of the changing social relations through the prism of the FCC and public

broadcast debates. Today, various attempts at media reform fail to grasp the nature of the relations of production of communication. Forty-five percent monopoly ownership, thirty-five percent, or even less has little bearing on the commercial requirements and practices of media in the United States. Political economy case studies reveal much, but often say little, when they fail to put the history of media practices in class relief. Whether television or radio media are owned by six, ten, or a thousand, if the media remain privatized, commercialized, and thus dependent on advertising, the public, the majority in subordinate classes and marginalized social groups, will still have little access to media production. Unless and until organized movements of the working class, black and Hispanic communities, women, youth, and other disenfranchised groups seek their own communication means, the media will remain a vehicle of entertainment and propaganda, because materially it is organically nourished and dependent on the market. The alienation of the audience from media programming does not occur just from the content, any more than alienation from the political system stems simply from the unattractive candidates — rather both result from the structural obstacles that create social relations of commodity exchange, and the accompanying disconnectedness among citizens and between citizens and their society, because workers, professionals, managers, and others are removed from decision making in media and politics. We make daily choices only in consumer goods, a singularly unsatisfying form of self-realization. Moreover, we ourselves have become commodities.

Dallas Smythe's "discovery" of audiences as commodities identifies a further ingredient in the relationship between communication and the mode of production of communication in its current capitalist formation. Program content must first fit the needs of advertisers, who demand receptive audiences for their commercials. Programs thus must conform in duration, frequency, narrative, and style to the requirements of advertisers. A fundamental prerequisite for commercial advertising is the production of the social need for consumption, triggered by a variety of production techniques but carried by an ideology of individual gratification at the expense of human solidarity and social responsibility: one must not look to the future and the consequences of production for profit, planned obsolescence, and overconsumption. Obesity is not a social problem, but a further opportunity for commodity sales to individual consumers persuaded to diet, exercise, or retrofit their clothing to plus sizes. Air pollution is not a social problem, but a further opportunity for commodity sales of air purifiers, asthma drugs, or hybrid vehicles to the environmentally conscious individual. Media will stop producing audiences only when they are controlled and managed by social classes opposed to human relations based on exchange and profit.

A Marxist political economy not only explains the history of class antagonisms, battles, and negotiated settlements, but also predicts media practices according to their position in the totality of social relations. Because the mediated production of communication exists within the totality of relations of production in any society, it necessarily functions primarily according to state intervention and regulation that seeks to reproduce dominant social class relations. (Internationally this is ensured through various regulatory agencies, such as the International Telecommunications Union, which now admits corporations as members with rights accorded to nations [Thussu, 2000].) Thus, in the United States today, journalists, programmers, editors, and other media workers are confronted with a Patriot Act (supported by media owners) that compels their compliance in government investigation, restricts their reporting activities, and affects the behavior and attitude of their potential sources. Copyright laws impinge on public access to entertainment and information, restrict creative reconfigurations and educational activities, and serve the interests of private enterprise in publishing. The specter of school expulsions, library surveillance, and even imprisonment appears on the horizon of a stronger, more secure America. The standard textbook treatments of media activity have little to say about these very real, very material conditions of communication production and exchange.

For Marxism, communication is not static, not predetermined: it occurs from, and in opposition to active class forces. Thus, any analysis of media or communication in the United States today must consider the contradictions apparent in the new state regulations as capitalist class forces feel besieged internationally in trade, access to resources, and competition. Nothing that now exists, including dominant media practices, will be the same as capitalist class forces reorganize and adjust for maintaining their rule.

A materialist analysis that recognizes class interests indicates upcoming economic and social crises, political repressions, military occupations, massive resistance by subordinate classes, and countless opportunities for constructing a democratic social order. Communication and media of, by, and for the subordinate classes will be one of the determinants in the outcome of the coming world crises. Attention to the changing material conditions, including media and communication practices in the core of capitalism and its international peripheries, and mapping the trajectories, strengths, and conjunctural relations of force is the order of the day. The history of all working class struggles from the Paris commune to the Nicaraguan revolution and the movements in Brazil and Venezuela today reveals that transformation of capitalist society cannot occur without knowledge of the social relations that oppress and depress subordinate classes. To make change, one must understand change, and that begins with an awareness of the interrelationships between different classes and the material relations of the society. Hopefully, this book makes a contribution to preparing that assessment for practical action.

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5. Patenting Life: Commodification, the Patent Regime, and the Public Interest[①]

Leslie Regan Shade

This paper examines bioinformatics and the various ethical issues raised by the patenting of life forms. Debates over life patents, specifically the 2002 Canadian Supreme Court decision which ruled against patenting the OncoMouse ®, highlight how technological discourses on science and technology are inextricably integrated with prevailing economic discourses. The paper will also critique the creation of a patent regime which has privatized public knowledge and resources, and its institutionalization through the World Trade Organization's TRIPS — the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights — and the tensions inherent when power is vested in the hands of corporations and public goods become transmogrified into private commodities.

Introduction

Technological philosopher Langdon Winner persuasively argues that democratic norms must be a conscious facet of new technological development and assessment. When any new technological system is proposed or introduced, a democratic system would involve

> ... citizens or their representatives... examin[ing] the social contract implied by building that system in a particular form. They would ask, How well do the proposed conditions match our best sense of who we are and what we want this society to be? Who gains and who loses power in the proposed change? Are the conditions produced by the changes compatible with equality, social justice, and the common good? (Winner, 1986, 55 – 56).

Democracy and economic equality, arguably, are important, perhaps even necessary, for environmental well-being: these principles and conditions imply that benefits will not be concentrated nor harms diffused — as is often, if not indeed usually the case, with concentrations of economic and political power. Biotechnological innovations, however, have been developed and introduced without widespread public scrutiny in an increasingly privatized and closed system. Huge life-science corporations, lucrative corporate-academic ties, and an intellectual property system that favors patents without consideration of the public interest, is the normal operating ethos. This system certainly does not meet Winner's criteria of equality, social justice, and the common good.

This paper will look at bioinformatics and the various ethical issues raised by the patenting of life forms. Debates over life patents, specifically the 2002 Canadian Supreme Court decision which ruled

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against patenting the OncoMouse ® , highlight how technological discourses on science and technology are inextricably integrated with prevailing economic discourses.

Taking a cultural ecology approach (Babe, 2006), this paper will ask whether the conditions produced by the changes in biotechnology, such as the creation of new life forms and their consequent commercialization, are consistent with Winner's admonitions for ensuring that technologies are democratic in design, development, and diffusion. Can new hybrid biotech forms be compatible with equality, social justice, and the common good? The political, economic, social and environmental stakes are high, as biotechnology practices highlight the need for more informed public debate about the nature of scientific values, our conception of human and other life, and what sort of regulatory regime should be enacted to avoid ecological catastrophe.

The first part of this paper will briefly examine bioinformatics and its ethical issues through a discussion of the OncoMouse ® and the 2002 Supreme Court of Canada case (*Harvard College v. Canada* (Commissioner of Patents)). The second part will consider the creation of a patent regime which has privatized public knowledge and resources, and its institutionalization through the World Trade Organization's TRIPS — the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights — and the tensions inherent when power is vested in the hands of corporations and public goods become transmogrified into private commodities.

The Business of Bioinformatics

Biotechnology is a huge growth industry, with revenues increasing from $8 billion USD in 1992 to $34.8B USD in 2001, according to the U. S. Biotechnology Industry Organization. Total U. S. biotechnology patents granted has mushroomed from over 2,000 in 1989 to almost 8,000 in 2002. [1] The Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee (CBAC) estimates that per capita there are more biotechnology companies in Canada than any other country. 1999 revenues netted almost $2 billion, including $718 million in exports, with expected revenues in 2002 to exceed $5 billion (CBAC, 2002).

Biotechnology firms are part of the giant Life Science industry, which encompasses companies developing research and development and technology transfer resources not just in the field of biotechnology but in biomedical devices, pharmaceuticals, life systems technologies, food processing, nutraceuticals, and cosmeceuticals. Mergers and acquisitions amongst various players are leading "towards the emergence of clusters of multinationals co-operating in achieving complete command of the food chain, from patent protection of transgenic germplasm, through chemical-assisted growing to the collection and distribution of harvests and their processing into food" (Bowring, 2003, 71). Some of the major players include Monsanto (developers of the chemical defoliant Agent Orange, widely deployed in the Vietnam war, the food and beverage sweetener Aspartame, bovine somatotropin (BST), the herbicide Roundup; and producer of genetically altered seeds, including the "terminator" seed sterilizer); DuPont; Novartis AG; Aventis SA; Syngenta; and Bayer.

In Canada research and development expenses by biotechnology firms capped $827M in 1999, with a commensurate increase in federal government spending: $378M in 2000 – 2001. (Statistics Canada, 2003). New organizational structures, such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Canada Research Chairs, Network Centres of Excellence, and the Canadian Institute of Health

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[1] See Biotechnology Industry Organization at http://www.bio.org/er/statistics.asp.

Research, have all contributed to this increase in R&D spending. ①

Bioinformatics encompasses genomics and molecular modeling (DNA and RNA protein synthesizing), databases for humans, plants, and microorganisms, gene therapy (gene identification and construction). Genetic engineering has received a great deal of attention with the classification of the human genome. By 2000 the DNA sequence of the human genome had been mapped, and two competing bodies were vying to bring these results to the public, albeit in different ways and with divergent rationales. The publicly funded Human Genome Project, conceived as an international public-sector project, had as its objective to keep the data in the public domain. Several private companies, notably Celera Genomics, were created in order to license data for a fee (Eisenberg and Nelson, 2002). Securing patent protection on various DNA sequences became a race amongst the private companies, mostly U. S. and Japanese. The U. S. Patent Office issued approximately 8,000 patents on variations of human genes and methods by 1998, and two years later, "over 160,000 patent applications had been filed on human DNA sequences by firms based in the US, Western Europe and Japan, with the top ten companies accounting for seventy per cent of them" (Bowring, 96).

Patenting life forms in the U. S. was prohibited until the Supreme Court heard *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* in 1979. Ananda Chakrabarty, a General Electric biochemist, sought a patent for his bioengineering of a bacterium that ate oil slicks. The U. S. Patent Office turned down his claim on the basis that no patents could be issued for living organisms that are products of nature. Seven years later, when the Supreme Court heard his case, biotechnology firms were on the rise and university research and grants reflected this trend. As Kevles (2002) documents, amicus briefs were filed on his behalf, from organizations and associations with vested interests, including the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, Genentech, the American Patent Law Association, and the American Society for Microbiology. Opposing voices included Jeremy Rifkin's People's Business Commission, who objected to the patent on both economic and moral grounds. Economically, issuing rights on such patents would endanger food security, opening the door to monopolistic food practices; ethically, granting patents on life forms would diminish the sanctity of life. Overturning the decision of the Patent Office, the Court ruled that Chakrabarty's bacterium was his own created product, not a product of nature, and thus patentable.

The OncoMouse® is Engineered

Oncomice are inserted with a cancer-promoting gene (oncogene) into fertilised mouse eggs, thus producing transgenic mice that are more susceptible to tumors, an aid for clinical work in cancer research. The OncoMouse® was developed at Harvard Medical School in the 1980s and later licensed exclusively to DuPont, a major scientific developer whose products include dyes, pesticides, textiles, explosives, fluorochemicals, refrigerants, and plastics, under the trade names of Freon®, Teflon®, Dacron®, Lycra®, Kevlar®, and Tyvek®. This was one of the first blatant examples of university-corporate biotech research. The OncoMouse® was developed by two Harvard Medical School researchers with funds from the DuPont Corporation. The terms of agreement stipulated that Harvard would give DuPont "the exclusive right to license and thus profit from the mouse" (Wiener, 1989, 12).

According to DuPont, the commercial efficacy of the OncoMouse® lies in its ability to "create

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① Although increased federal funding has gone into creating these new research-intensive programs in universities, critics such as the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) have commented how the federal government has not addressed the need for sustained core operating funding for universities. See Canadian Association for University Teachers, *Canada's Innovation Agenda: CAUT's Response*, 2003 at http://www.caut.ca/english/issues/commercialization/innovationagenda.asp.

eukaryotic transgenic animals with a propensity for neoplasm development. Because of their sensitivity to carcinogens, such animals reduce the test cycles and costs of experiments on suspected carcinogens. These transgenic animals are also useful in studying the pathogenesis of cancer."[①] Briefly, then, arguments for the usefulness of the OncoMouse® and its beneficial nature hinge on its applications in finding a cure for cancer.

Patented in the U.S. in 1988, the OncoMouse® is also patented in Australia, Japan, and other European countries. However, although the European Patent Office (EPO) has upheld the patent through the EU's 1998 Directive on Biopatents, ruling that the societal benefit is greater than the suffering to animals, the patent has since been limited to rodents, and there is widespread protest against it (Meek and Brown, 2000).

Patenting of the OncoMouse® generated controversy in the U.S. as well. Hearings on patents held in the late 1980s by the House Judiciary Subcommittee generated divergent viewpoints: "animal rights activists contended that such patents would exacerbate the degradation of animals; environmentalists argued that genetically engineered animals would escape and threaten the integrity of wildlife; clerics claimed that patenting reduced God's creatures to mere material objects; and farm spokespersons worried about the economic effected of patented animals on small farmers" (Kevles 2002, 86). These ethical issues were overpowered by the economic arguments and rationale put forth by the biotechnology industry and large research universities.

OncoMouse® vs. Canada

In December 2002 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that it is prohibitive to patent higher life forms — the test case being Harvard University's OncoMouse®. In a 5 – 4 decision, the Court ruled that living mice cannot be patented, even if their genes are genetically modified. The Court also ruled that, under the terms of the federal Patent Act of 1869, the OncoMouse® fails to meet the definition of an invention, thus barring its right to patentability (*Harvard University v. Canada*, 2002).

The Court's majority ruled that Section 2 of the Canadian Patents Act should be strictly interpreted and that therefore higher life forms, such as the mouse, are not absolutely built-in to the definition of an invention. In its decision, the Supreme Court raised several ethical issues about the patenting of higher life forms, admitting that such patenting is "a complex one that cannot be readily dismissed by reference to the *Charter*. It is not an appropriate judicial function of the courts to create an exception from patentability for human life given that such an exception requires one to consider both what is human and which aspects of human life should be excluded" (*Harvard College v. Canada*, 2002).

In order for Harvard University to get the OncoMouse® patented under the Canadian Patent Act, it would have to persuasively argue that all non-human mammals, including the OncoMouse®, fall under the Patent Act provisions of "any new and useful art, process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement in any art, process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter."

Focusing on whether the definition of "invention" under the Patent Act can include a higher life form such as the OnoMouse®, which is separate from the *process* by which the OncoMouse® was engineered, the Court paid particular attention to two phrases within the definition of invention in the Patent Act: "manufacture" and "composition of matter". "Manufacture", according to the Court, should be limited in interpretation to represent a non-living mechanistic product or process — thus

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① DuPont Technology Bank, http://dupont. t2h. yet2. com/t2h/page/techpak? id = 2612&&sid = 0&abc = 0&page = novelty.

excluding the OncoMouse®. As for "composition of matter", the Court argued that since the definition of invention in the Patent Act did not refer to higher life forms, Parliament thus did not intend for "composition of matter" to include higher life forms. So, while the process — the genetic engineering techniques that create the OncoMouse®, can be patented — the actual OncoMouse® itself may not be patented under Canada's patent laws.

Issues of "manufacture" and the circumference of "composition of matter" aside, OncoMouse® raises significant moral, environmental, and social issues, as demonstrated by the briefs to the court of such interveners as: the Canadian Council of Churches, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Greenpeace Canada, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Canadian Institute of Environmental Law and Policy, Animal Alliance of Canada, International Fund for Animal Welfare Inc., and Zoocheck Canada Inc. Environmental groups were concerned that patenting life forms would harm human health and the environment, and pose grave threats to biodiversity. These include the unanticipated consequences of transgenic products leading to gene mutations, unknown diseases, and in the case of transgenic crops, the instability of global food security through the modification of native seeds. Faith groups, likewise, were concerned that granting patentability to life forms would create a morally problematic shift in how we view and respect the natural world.

The intervener statement on behalf of Animal Alliance of Canada, International Fund for Animal Welfare and Zoocheck Canada, filed by lawyers Clayton Ruby and Lesli Bisgould, raised other salient issues. First, can animals be considered "things" that can be invented, and is it proper to grant anyone — particularly corporations — proprietary interests in a group of animals? Second, can non-human mammals be considered an "invention" under the definitions within the Patent Act? Surveying the history of attitudes towards animals, the interveners argued that current law needs to reflect developments in societal attitudes towards animals — the burgeoning animal rights movement, discoveries of the biological kinship between animals and humans, and changes in law, such as the Criminal Code, which regard animals not simply as property or things, rather than their 18th c. conceptions as "machines".

The intervener argument warned, moreover, that a patent on the OncoMouse® could lead to a slippery slope, as newer developments in genetic engineering, such as xenotransplantation — where animals are bred to supply body parts and organs for transplantation to humans — blurs the lines between animals and humans. The OncoMouse®, the interveners argued finally, was not invented by Harvard University — only the *process* which could lead to the birth of animals with a predisposition towards cancer. Patenting the process could be allowable, but a patent to "ensure that life itself is redefined as a manufactured process, subject to patenting and ownership by private corporations" (Ruby and Bisgould, 2001, Para 76) should not be allowed. At stake are the profound issues of the sanctity and dignity of life in a democratic society:

> Patenting an animal entrenches a particular attitude toward the most profound existential questions (such as the nature of our existence as humans, our relationship with the world around us, including all of its inhabitants, and our ability to manipulate and control that world) which extend far beyond the legal notions of invention, ownership or property. Patenting the mouse will cement a particular viewpoint in law without the democratic discussion and critique which this subject so badly needs (Ibid., Para 70).

The factum of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Greenpeace Canada, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and

Concentration, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, alongside the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, considered the public interest issues of patenting the OncoMouse®. The public interest aspects include the nature of innovation and the social construction and knowledge dissemination of science, equitable access to biodiversity, and environmental and health aspects.

The patent system, as will be discussed further below, has consolidated and concentrated knowledge through commercialization, often leading to inaccessibility and barriers for public research. In particular, patent protection on transgenic mice has created a system whereby public health research has been stymied. Although an agreement has since been struck between DuPont and the U.S. Public Health Service allowing nonprofit academic medical researchers to have access to the mice at a nominal cost, securing this negotiation was costly in terms of litigation and time.

Ensuring biodiversity is another concern, particularly in developing countries, as patenting life forms may result in inequitable access to biodiversity given their exclusivity over ownership of rights. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the only international treaty that recognizes the importance of traditional knowledge, the integrity of innovations, the vitality of practices and their salient role in preserving conservation and sustainable development. Emanating from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the CBD's sustainability goals include conserving biological diversity, sustaining its components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits deriving from genetic resources. Of concern as well is the recognition, protection and provision and recompense for indigenous knowledge.

Risks associated with patenting life forms are another issue. What are the environmental and health concerns? Can such new life forms be reproduced and replicated in ways contrary to their intended use? The Royal Society of Canada's report on the regulation of food biotechnology raised many issues of concern, including risks of increasing toxicity and allergenicity, the potential transference of genes from genetically modified crops to wild plants, and loss of biodiversity (Royal Society of Canada, 2001).

Responding to the Supreme Court decision, BIOTECanada, the national association of biotechnology researchers and practitioners, lamented the impact of the decision on the Canadian biotech industry, claiming that it is "bad news for consumers and the Canadian biotechnology community... destroys our Canadian infrastructure of knowledge and innovation, creates an even greater brain drain" and places Canada at risk in "influencing how and where society accepts this technology."[①] Industry groups claimed that over 1,500 pending patents on plants and animals were left in the lurch with this decision. However, inventors are allowed to register patents in countries outside of Canada. Despite this there will be continuing pressure put upon the Canadian government to align their patent laws on higher life forms with those of other countries.

In wake of the Supreme Court decision in OncoMouse®, the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee (CBAC) recommended that if the Government wishes to patent higher life forms, that amendments be proposed to the *Patent Act* for agreement by Parliament (CBAC, 2003). Furthermore, the CBAC recommended that the Minister of Industry introduce recommendations to the Patent Act that make non-human life forms patentable with particular safeguards:

"Human Beings Not Patentable"

1. We recommend that the Patent Act be amended to include the following statement:

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① See press release "BIOTECanada responds to Supreme Court Decision on Harvard Mouse Case", December 5, 2002 at URL: http://www.newswire.ca/releases/December2002/05/c0202.html.

No patent shall be granted on human bodies at any stage of development.

"Patentability of Higher Life Forms"

2. We recommend that higher life forms (i. e. , plants, seeds and non-human animals) that meet the criteria of novelty, non-obviousness and utility be recognized as patentable. The scope of the patent rights in respect of these higher life forms is to be determined in accordance with Recommendations 3, 4 and 5.

Inclusion of a Farmer's Privilege — "that farmers be permitted to save and sow seeds from patented plants or to reproduce patented animals, as long as these progeny are not sold as commercial propagating material or in a manner that undermines the commercial value to its creator of a genetically engineered animal" is the basis of Recommendation 3. Recommendation 4 protects "innocent bystanders" from "claims of patent infringement with respect to adventitious spreading of patented seed, patented genetic material, or the insemination of an animal by a patented animal." Utilizing a patented process for non-commercial or private use forms the basis of Recommendation 5. ①
These recommendations, however, leave the door open for further interpretations in the definitional divide between humans and non-humans in an epoch of transgenics.

What were the conditions that set in place the current patent regime? Patents, as part of the intellectual property system, have been subject to intense debates amongst academics and activists. The next section looks at the divergent viewpoints on patenting life forms and the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPs).

The Problem with Patents

Canada's biotechnology industry is dependent upon patents for intellectual property protection for their innovations. Patents in Canada can be granted on inventions if they meet the definitions of "novelty," "non-obviousness" and "utility" under the *Patent Act*. Inventions imply "any new and useful art, process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement in any art, process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter". The Supreme Court ruled that for a higher life form to meet this definition, it needs to be considered a "manufacture" or "composition of matter", and that these are generally understood as consisting of

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① Other issues included:

"Farmer's Privilege"

3. We recommend that a farmers' privilege provision be included in the *Patent Act*. It should specify that farmers be permitted to save and sow seeds from patented plants or to reproduce patented animals, as long as these progeny are not sold as commercial propagating material or in a manner that undermines the commercial value to its creator of a genetically engineered animal, respectively. The drafting of this provision must be sensitive to the differences that exist both in the nature and use of plants and non-human animals.

"Innocent Bystanders"

4. We recommend that the *Patent Act* include provisions that protect innocent bystanders from claims of patent infringement with respect to adventitious spreading of patented seed, patented genetic material, or the insemination of an animal by a patented animal.

"Research and Experimental Use"

5. We recommend that the *Patent Act* be amended to include a research and experimental use exception that states as follows:

It is not an infringement of a patent to use a patented process or product either a. privately and for non-commercial purposes, or b. to study the subject-matter of the patented invention to investigate its properties, improve upon it, or create a new product or process. (CBAC, June 2002)

See the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee (CBAC). June 2002. *Patenting of Higher Life Forms and Related Issues*: Report to the Government of Canada Biotechnology Ministerial Coordinating Committee: 2. URL: http://cbaccccb.ca/epic/internet/incbac-cccb.nsf/vwGeneratedInterE/ah00188e.html.

non-living and *mechanistic* processes or products. Furthermore, the Court ruled that complex higher life forms cannot be considered compositions of matter. If a patent is secured, the holder has the right to prevent others from making, using, importing or selling their invention for twenty years from the date the patent application was first filed.

Securing patents had become almost maniacal, producing some would argue conflicts between private interests versus public interests, a Western economic system versus an indigenous gift economy, and ecological plundering versus ecological sustainability; the discussion below is intended to cast some light on these controversies. Patent law reflects, moreover, a Western conception of property and market orientation, increasingly geared towards the private pursuits and purposes of corporations and has led to, arguably, what Bollier (2001) calls "the private plunder of our common wealth."

The rise in Western patents has come about because of a perceived need for more protection of intellectual property creations (deemed as "rights") and the suggestion that such protectionist measures will stimulate innovation, thus leading to economic gains for their creators. The Western patent lobby contends that patents are good for growth and the maintenance of a free and competitive market. Patents, they say, stimulate investment (particularly foreign direct investment — FDI) and technology transfer from the North to the South. The biotechnology industry argues that patents provide financial incentives for companies to both conduct extensive and costly research and development and to attract investors. This form of "public good", they argue, ensures that the public reaps the rewards of their research and investment in applications that benefit society — through healthcare, environmental, and agricultural products. They argue that patents thus protect proprietary interests by guaranteeing that competitors will not be able to steal their ideas. Another argument forwarded by those in favor of strong patent protection is that patents ensure a more democratic process in the scientific community through the open communicative nature of patent laws; once a patent is filed, it is available to the public. But, as Lessig cautions, "control, when complex, can often increase the costs of using a resource; increasing those costs can easily chill innovation" (2001, 215). This is certainly the case with the OncoMouse®, as almost fifteen years after its patenting by DuPont cancer researchers are complaining that private ownership is impeding potential public health progress. DuPont's aggressive patent licensing has led to the halting of research at some universities and curtailed its use by smaller biotech firms. What is at risk is the furthering of viable and vital scientific knowledge:

> In the case of the OncoMouse, DuPont's restrictions have curbed access to a key vehicle for emerging gene-related cancer treatments (such as synthetic proteins). The higher the costs of obtaining this model organism, the more biomedical innovations will be impeded, as researchers in the early stages of their work may choose to look elsewhere, not willing to pay steep up-front costs or abide by unyielding restrictions (Shorett, 2002).

The commons versus enclosure ideologies have been a powerful metaphor for describing the new climate of intellectual property that encourages both a patent and a legal regime that favors corporate rights over citizen rights. Boyle (2002) likens it to a second enclosure movement that threatens to weaken the public domain. These arguments have resonated with many intellectuals and activists, who have raised alarms about the stultifying and disempowering effects strong intellectual property can wreak on the public good. At issue is no less the fate of the political and cultural ecology of the world's citizens, crucially: biodiversity, environmental protection, agricultural sustainability, indigenous rights, and consumer rights.

On the other hand, many liken the current patent regime to the 15th century English enclosure movement, wherein common land was re-appropriated into private property. Many examples could be cited here to support this contention, but perhaps one will suffice: that of neem.

Indian environmental activist Vandana Shiva has called for public education and awareness on the commercialization of biological and life forms, which she calls biopiracy: "the use of intellectual property systems to legitimize the exclusive ownership and control over biological resources, products and processes that have been used over centuries in non-industrialized cultures"(2001, 49).

Shiva documents how Western corporations are "stealing from the pharmacy of the poor," via the appropriation of indigenous plants, indigenous medical knowledge, and homeopathics, and their consequent repackaging and patenting by Western biopharmaceutical transnational corporations (TNCs). When indigenous technology is pirated and patented by intellectual property systems, developing countries lose money in unpaid royalties for their agricultural seeds and plants. The patent system drains technology and wealth from the South to the North. Perhaps the most notorious example is the W. R. Grace Corporation patent from the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office for a method of stabilizing the neem tree seed extract. Grace has set up a manufacturing plant in India to commercialize this product, dubbed the "free tree" of India. *Azadirachta indica*, or neem, has been used for centuries in India for medicinal and agricultural purposes:

> The neem is mentioned in Indian texts written over 2,000 years ago as an air purifier and as a cure for almost all types of human and animal diseases because of its insect and pest-repellant properties. It is used on every far in every house, almost everyday in India. Research has shown that neem extracts can influence nearly 200 species of insects, many of which are resistant to pesticides (Shiva, 2001, 57).

Although there are many commercial applications and products using neem in India, because of the 1970 Patent Act of India that prohibits patents on agricultural and medicinal products, there have been no proprietary attempts to acquire the neem formulae. Grace's commandeering of neem in India has resulted, according to Shiva, in unacceptably high costs of neem seed for ordinary citizens and a shortage of free neem seed because of Grace's stockpiling.

Patenting life forms have been equated also with old-style imperialism. According to Godrej, "Patents on life actually represent ancient Western obsessions — conquest and colonization. Except here science, in the deep pocket of corporate finance, seeks to subdue the natural world and venture boldly into the 'interior spaces' of genes and cell lines." (Godrej, 2002) Maathai (1998), reflecting on Africa, also raises the specter of a new form of colonialism and repression: "if we thought that slavery and colonialism were gross violations of human rights, we have to wake up to what is awaiting us down the secretive road of biopiracy, patenting of life arid genetic engineering. Genocide from ßhunger, such as we have not yet seen, becomes a haunting possibility."

Furthermore, trade liberalization and its various agreements that have pushed for a patent regime have strengthened the protections of the pharmaceutical and agrichemical companies to the detriment of the creation of innovative and new varieties of seeds and affordable drugs (Dawkins, 2001). The political economy of patents resides in a culture wherein research in labs and academic is privatized, and life-sciences corporations are conglomerated and concentrated in Western countries.

Patents, because they are promoted as the predominant mechanism for protecting innovations in computer and biotechnology, have been at the focus of these disputes, and protected within the confines of the TRIPS pact.

TRIPS — Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) — is an international agreement on intellectual property that was added to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, the precursor to the World Trade Organization-WTO) at the end of the Uruguay Round in 1994. ①

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① For a description of TRIPS by the WTO see Intellectual Property: Protection and Enforcement at URL: http://www. wto. org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/agrm7_e. htm.

Because of TRIPS, trade policy became explicitly linked to the IP regime. Ratification of TRIPS became a compulsory requirement of WTO membership; so much so that any country that wishes to obtain access to markets opened up by the WTO must adhere to TRIPS. This set the stage for the "global recognition of an investment morality that sees knowledge as a private, rather than public, good" (Drahos, Braithwaite, 2002, 10).

Both Sell (2003) and Drahos and Braithwaite (2002) have admirably documented the creation of TRIPS by a small cohort of western businessmen who were able to lobby, cajole, and insinuate their self-serving vision of intellectual property rights within the structure of what is now the WTO. As a paean to the rise and power of the transnational capitalist class, TRIPS is unsurpassed. As a stunning example of the failure of democratic processes and the decline of the public domain, the tale of how TRIPS came to be is also unrivaled. More than just a cautionary narrative, TRIPS can also be seen as a scurrilous structure that mobilized a transnational activism focusing on farmers' rights, demands for an accountable pharmaceutical industry, protection of indigenous knowledge and culture, respect for nature and life through a renewed ethos of sustainability, and a heightened moral responsibility for citizens of the world.

Blatant knowledge usurpation by corporations reflects a Western bias against other cultures, and promotes the supremacy of Western science. Indigenous knowledge systems, when transferred to western knowledge systems, are then treated as *innovations*.

Brett (2003) cautions against arguments that tout the economic indicators spawned by patents. Because much of biological "innovation" depends upon privatizing and repackaging natural and public resources, the benefits accrue not to the public, but to particular companies. These economic activities may not be productive: "If a corporation discovered a way to remove much of the oxygen from the earth's atmosphere and sell it to us in canisters, they would engender a huge amount of economic activity in the process of privatizing a resource that we have held in common. However, in doing this, the company would have made our lives considerably worse" (88).

Of ChickieNobs and Pigoons

Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel, *Oryx and Crake* is set in the not-to-distant future, providing a moral tale of science gone amok, a believable image of a biotechnological apocalypse. Class, race, and socioeconomic divisions are stark — the biotech scientists live in gated communities belonging to the large multi-national corporations that they work for, while the bleak urban "pleeblands" house a teeming array of disconnected citizens. The protagonist's father is a genographer for OrganInc Farms and one of the architects of the pigoon project:

> The goal of the pigoon project was to grow an assortment of foolproof humantissue organs in a transgenic knockout pig host — organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, but would also be able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses, of which there were more strains every year. A rapid-maturity gene was spliced in so the pigoon kidneys and livers and hearts would be ready sooner and now they were perfecting a pigoon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time. Such a host animal could be reaped of it extra kidneys; then, rather than being destroyed, it could keep on living and grow more organs, much as a lobster could grow another claw to replace a missing one. That would be less wasteful, as it took a lot of food and care to grow a pigoon. A great deal of investment money had gone into OrganInc Farms (Atwood, 2003, 22 – 23).

In the novel, elite students attend Watson-Crick, a. k. a. "Aspergers U", where in the NeoAgriculturals program they develop new products. One of these is ChickieNobs, "a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy

tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb (Ibid, 202). The fleshy tubes are breasts —— ChickieNobs are chickens manufactured to contain multiple organ parts for high growth rate: "you get chicken breasts in two weeks —— that's a three-week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operation so far devised" (Ibid, 203). The students, who receive half the royalties for their inventions, later sell it to a take-out franchise operation.

Although Atwood's novel is speculative fiction, her descriptions of biotechnological inventions and scientific practice are eerily prescient. Consider the ongoing U. S. patent application of Dr. Stuart Newman at the New York Medical College for a chimera —— a method for hybridizing two or more species that won't cross-breed:

> The exact results are largely unpredictable except for the certainty that the chimera will contain cells of each species proportionate to the numbers placed in the embryo. A creature made from an equal number of cells from two species could look like one species but contain the genes, organs, and intelligence of the other (Downie, 2004, 50).

It should be noted that Newman is seeking the patent because of his repulsion at the amorality of current biotech developments. By securing such a patent (which will last twenty years) Newman has taken an activist stance to thwart future biotech developments in this vein, because he will hold the licensing rights and can thus foil researchers who need to rely upon this patent.

A cultural ecology approach to environmental understanding, whereby our approach to the economy conforms to ecological considerations, places an emphasis on the impact of culture on environment. Such an approach is concerned with dissecting the double-edged nature of science and technology and the political economy of knowledge and discourse. With biotechnology what counts as an innovation is contested —— can it include life forms, or non-human mammals? How do such innovations impact upon biodiversity? What is seen as a sustainable commons for all to enjoy and prosper? What are the unanticipated consequences of these innovations, and can they be subject to a social impacts assessment? Can the public be part of constructing a regulatory environment and policy apparatus that reflects their sensibility of how they want society to be?

Bowring (2003, 73) has documented the various mergers and acquisitions in the life sciences industry, and concludes that the four major companies —— Syngenta, Monsanto, Aventis, and DuPont —— "account for virtually the entire global market for transgenic seeds, while the addition of the German chemical giant BASF gives these top five companies a seventy per cent monopoly of the world's pesticide sales. " Seventy-five per cent of the agro-biotech patents granted by the US Patent and Trademark Office are held by a mere six companies (Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Dow, Aventis, and Grupo Pulsar). Such "consolidation of power and concentration of ownership in the life science industry, and the concomitant growth of food chain monopolies" has led to what Bowring refers to as "bioserfdom" for many farmers. Local autonomy and control of resources has been overtaken by large multinationals, concerned with industrial models of farming, competition in the global marketplace, and profit orientation.

This paper argues that applying economic principles to the ecosystem is disastrous. *Oryx and Crake* and Dr. Newman's chimera illustrate well this concern. The dispassion that can emit from such unregulated scientific experimentations is awesome. The case of the OncoMouse® reflects a Baconian stance toward technology, that of increasing power over nature, of subduing and "engineering" nature. Transgenic discourses have reduced human life to mere matter, and the patent system has favored the mantra of "global economic competitiveness" over the public interest.

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6. Trapped in the Digital Divide: The Distributive Paradigm in Community Informatics[①]

Virginia E. Eubanks

This paper argues that over-reliance on a "distributive paradigm" in community informatics practice has restricted the scope of the high tech equity agenda. Drawing on five years of participatory action research with low-income women in upstate New York, I explore the ways in which distributive understandings of technology and inequality obscure the day-to-day interactions these women have with ICT and overlook their justified critical ambivalence towards technology. Finally, I offer unique insights and powerful strategies of resistance suggested by my research collaborators in a drawing exercise intended to elicit alternative articulations of digital equity. If we begin from their points of view, the problems and solutions that can and should be entertained in our scholarship and practice look quite different.

It is becoming fairly common to argue that many of the efforts to ameliorate inequality in the information economy grouped under the rubric of the "Digital Divide" were misguided, both empirically and practically (see, for example, Gurstein 2003). As a salient issue, the Digital Divide has faded from public consciousness and disappeared from the priorities of funding agencies in the United States. This is largely an effect of the Bush administration's decision to eliminate critical digital opportunity programs. Moreover, as I argue below, as community practitioners, scholars, and activists, our focus on universal access and internet ubiquity is not sufficient to provide for a more just technological present. As an illustration, I describe my experiences attempting to construct popular technology education programs at the YWCA of Troy-Cohoes, a residential facility in a small urban community in mid-New York State for about 90 highly resourceful women living in transitional circumstances and seeking to craft the lives they want for themselves. In particular, I discuss a sketching exercise used to illustrate low-income women's alternative articulations of inequality in the information society. Their unique visions suggest that our myopia has limited the scope of what might be called the "high-tech equity agenda" and has trapped us in the Digital Divide.

Following Iris Marion Young, I argue that there is a "distributive paradigm", which "defines social justice as the morally proper distribution of social benefits and burdens among society's members"

(Young 1990: 18)[1], and which is at the heart of much of our work in community informatics. This distributive paradigm acts to restrict the scope of the high-tech equity agenda because: 1) its demographic cast cannot account for the complex inequalities of the information economy; 2) its commodity focus precludes understanding ICT as a "technology of citizenship"; and 3) it forces us to conceive of all high-tech equity issues as "access" issues. These oversights are an effect of the mismatch between the lived reality of low-income people's interactions with information technology and the normative solutions suggested by ICT policy and activism. In this article I explore that the ways in which Digital Divide interventions have been framed acts to *obscure* the kinds of day-to-day interactions low-income women have with technology; and how the powerful symbolism equating computers with technological and social progress contradicts these women's experiences, resulting in a critical ambivalence towards technology; and finally present some of the unique insights and powerful strategies of resistance suggested by my community research collaborators. If we begin from their points of view, the problems and solutions that can and should be entertained in ICT policy and activism look quite different from those that remain trapped in the Digital Divide.

Background: The Digital Divide

Lloyd Morrisett, founder of the Sesame Street Workshop and then president of the Markle Foundation, is credited with inventing the term the "Digital Divide" in 1996[2] to describe the chasm that purportedly separates "information haves" from "information have-nots". Though the U. S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) began in 1995 releasing a series of reports entitled "Falling Through the Net" — which outline how access to the national US information infrastructure varies across geographical, racial, and income lines — the "Digital Divide" did not begin to fire the popular (and policy) imagination until 1998. In 1998, the agency's second report ("Falling Through the Net II: New Data on the Digital Divide") included the "Digital Divide" phrase in its subtitle, and current President Bill Clinton promised to aggressively pursue wiring every classroom in the nation by the year 2000 and every home by the year 2007 (NetDay 1998)[3]. But it was the agency's third report ("Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide") that most alarmed and activated the public and policy-makers. The report concluded that, contrary to popular opinion which held that market forces would eventually provide universal access on their own,

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[1] I should note here that I use the phrase "distributive paradigm" to describe a particular regime of (re) distributive policies within the context of the market-oriented representative democracy of the contemporary United States. There are, of course, many other varieties of distributive government policies, some of which provide for the needs of citizens quite a bit better than do that of the US (for example, in the social democracies of Scandinavia and much of Western Europe). Nevertheless, I argue that there are vital social justice issues that cannot be articulated within a distributive paradigm of any kind: the freedom of women to be free of sexual violence, for example.

[2] Some credit Donna Hoffman and Tom Novak with inventing the phrase. Novak and Hoffman (2000) and Compaine (2001) credit Morissette. Morissette himself expresses doubts about the term's origin in Compaine 2001. Nevertheless, the phrase reached popular currency after the NTIA's 1998 report used it in its subtitle.

[3] The Clinton administration's attention to universal access to IT considerably anticipated the "digital divide" rhetoric, however. At the G7 Information Summit in early 1995, Vice President Al Gore explained that the Clinton administration's position on Universal Access was a commitment "to wire every classroom, every library, every hospital, and every clinic to the national and international information infrastructure." At the International Telecommunication Union World Telecommunication Development Conference later that year, he "called for all nations of the world to co-operate in building the Global Information Infrastructure founded on principles of universal access, the right to communicate, and diversity of expression." (Gore 1995 and Tarjanne 1995, quoted in Compaine 2001: 162–163).

The data reveal that the digital divide — the disparities in access to telephones, personal computers (PCs), and the Internet across certain demographic groups — still exists and, in many cases, has *widened significantly*. The gap for computers and Internet access has generally grown larger by categories of education, income, and race (NTIA 1999: 2).

The release of the NTIA reports mobilized scholars, politicians, local community-building organizations and international NGOs to inquire whether or not ICT could address the needs of the poor, and how exactly to "fit" low income people into the information society (Attali 2000; Brown 2001; Rischard 1996; Yunus 2001).

Between 1999 and 2003, there were a slew of publications that sought to examine, support, go beyond, or do away with the concept of the Digital Divide. Some (like Compaine 2001) are critical of Digital Divide approaches because they represent "welfarist" strategies of governance, promote unfair and opaque forms of wealth redistribution, or stand in the way of robust commercial competition and the "natural and inevitable" market mechanisms of distribution. Some seek to expand the "access" rhetoric of the Digital Divide beyond simple physical access. These scholars and activists insist that issues such as the production of relevant, useful, appropriate, and affordable content; language and literacy barriers; effective use of information; the role of the user as a producer rather than a passive consumer; infrastructure; community control; and sustainability of programs have to be addressed simultaneously (Besser 2001; Children's Partnership 2002; Servon 2002; Wilhelm, et al. 2002). Still others insist that the Digital Divide is simply the most visible manifestation of new forms of "virtual" inequality: these following and reinforcing the social and economic stratification that already exists — and is worsening — in the United States today (Mack 2001; Mossberger et al. 2003; Norris 2001). These scholars insist that the Digital Divide responds and contributes to other kinds of "divides," naming the democratic divide, the global divide, the information divide, the opportunity divide, the racial divide, and the social divide among them.

Critical Ambivalence and Critical Theory

As debate raged around whether the Digital Divide exists, its causes, its effects, and its potential solutions, community technology centers around the country and the world were tirelessly wiring communities, providing them with affordable access to information and communication resources, nurturing generations of trainer/activists and preparing the ground from which community-produced content could grow. But the basic assumption of much Digital Divide policy — "If you build it, they will come" — is partially contradicted by my research described below.

One class offered at the YWCA — "How Does the D@mn Thing Work?" — illustrates why. The workshop was very loosely structured around the demolition of an unusable donated computer. We took the cover off the machine, handed out screwdrivers, told participants that it was going to the dumpster anyway, and then let them do whatever they wanted to it. As parts came out of the computer, we passed them around and told everybody what each part did. For a few minutes, the women in the workshop carefully extracted cards and drives from the PC and gingerly passed them around the room. After a bit of time and some convincing (women were particularly concerned about waste — they wanted to be absolutely sure that no one in the YWCA or elsewhere could use the computer before they took it apart), they started to believe that they could actually demolish the computer, and the mayhem began. People hacked at the computer. Broke pieces off and then broke them into smaller pieces. They tore apart bundles of wires, wedged off covers to see the motors and chips, all with a palpable sense of glee.

This was not just the excitement of "opening the black box" and discovering what makes a

computer work. It was an act of resistance, of rebelling against the tyranny of the box itself (and of the institutions it represents and enables). This gleeful destruction was a sign of women's complicated experiences of technology, a marker of women taking power back from a symbol of the system. In a later interview, Meredith Vary, a participant in the workshop, commented,

> MV: That taking apart the computer thing really helped [engage women who feel out of the technology loop]. Because I know Patti . . .
>
> V: Got into it . . .
>
> M: . . . Yeah! I never saw her at any computer type stuff before and that seemed to help her get into it . . . What's in the inside guts? I can break it apart! It's not this big scary thing, I can *kick* it and things come off. That helped. Stuff like that that shows that computers are not these big infallible immortal objects (Vary 2003: 20).

This complicated symbolism of computers is profound, yet it is rarely considered in the context of "accessibility" for low-income people (with the notable exception of Mack 2002). The technology itself seems simultaneously too fragile and utterly infallible — the face of "the System" in contexts ranging from the low-wage workplace to the welfare office. Low-income women in the United States disproportionately bear the negative effects of high-tech development. They are more likely to be subject to intense technologically-mediated surveillance on the job via technologies like keystroke counters and practices like phone and email monitoring (Sewell 1998, Sewell and Wilkinson 1992). Their interactions with technologies of state administration, including criminal justice technologies like "offender management" systems (Virtual Arrest 2002), and social service technologies like electronic benefits dispersal (Newcombe 1993). They often live in the most technologically degraded environments, suffering higher rates of asthma and environmental cancers (Bullard 2000; SVTC 1997; WEACT 2002). They are most likely to lose jobs to technological change and worker deskilling, and are the last to be rehired or retrained after sustained unemployment (Barney 2000; Buckberg and Thomas 1995; Gans 1995; Gibbs 1995). Experiences with technology in their everyday lives often contradict the powerful stories about IT that pervade popular media and policy discourse. The mismatch between the stories these women hear about the potential for ICT to change their lives for the better and their disproportionate experience of its negative effects creates critical ambivalence.

Critical ambivalence, I realized over time, is a sign of incipient analysis. I noticed, for example, that women would repeatedly and enthusiastically sign up for classes in a newly created community technology lab, and simply not show up. This was a symptom of the mismatch between the image of computers as the route to social and economic progress and these women's own experience of technology as exploitative, intrusive, and limiting. Rather than being "information poor" in any simple way, participants in popular technology education programs at the YWCA had copious direct experience with large-scale bureaucratic IT systems.

My collaborators provided extremely articulate and astute critiques of the ways that ICT is deployed within the social service system to limit their dignity, freedom, and opportunities. For example, many believed that ICT is one thread that binds together with the local department of social services (DSS) and broader socioeconomic strands of injustice to create a net of constraint they commonly refer to as "the system." Because of this, it is often difficult to separate views about DSS, racism, poverty, or sexism — more generally — from views on information technologies and computers specifically. The insight that ICT, state service offices, and structural inequality combine to create a system of disempowerment proved enormously productive for our collaborative educational

processes, both in conversation and in collaborative project design①. This was particularly the case when we re-examined what is often misread as adult women's "reluctance" or "inability" to engage with technological training, and when we puzzled through participants' resistance to viewing ICT as a tool for social change and justice.

I use critical ambivalence here in Feenberg's sense — it is a part of an emergent critical theory of technology that popular technology education is intended to unleash. "Critical theory," Feenberg writes, "argues that technology is not a thing in the ordinary sense of the term, but an 'ambivalent' process of development suspended between different possibilities. This 'ambivalence' of technology is distinguished from neutrality by the role it attributes to social values in the design, and not merely the use, of technical systems. On this view, technology is not a destiny but a scene of struggle" (Feenberg 1990). For Feenberg, critical theories of technology can be realized by rewriting "technical code," by using theory in a Freirian sense to both inspire action that changes society and technology for the better, and to see the relationship between technology and people as intrinsic to modern social justice goals. The goal of popular technology education is to undermine the myth of technological neutrality by finding "tipping points" that can guide development and design out of its "suspension between possibilities" and towards social justice②.

It is important to note, however, that despite their ambivalence, women in the YWCA community showed remarkable perseverance when trying to access ICT tools, and even some optimism describing the possibilities of technological change. When I asked the women I interviewed to finish the sentence "A computer is like a...," they responded with "a window," "the future," "a lifesaver." They consistently disproved reports like the "Ever-Shifting Internet Population" by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, which claims that "technological pessimism" is a significant barrier to participation in the "information age" (Pew 2003: 41).

In this context it is urgent to nurture optimism that ICT can be used as a tool of social change, even though the commitment to digital equity has waned under President Bush's administration. As the Bush administration began to call for the elimination of funding for critical digital opportunity programs in 2002, the digital divide was still a significant problem, but community technology investments were beginning to pay off (Benton Foundation 2002). National funding to bridge the digital divide peaked in 2001. That year, the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) received $42.5 million and the Community Technology Centers Program (CTC) received $65 million. In President Bush's fiscal year 2003 budget request, both programs were slated for elimination (OMB Watch 2002)③.

I hope to make it clear that I am deeply committed to, and supportive of, the critical work being done by community technology centers around the country as they struggle to provide the most basic

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① This experience tends to support the claims of Freire, Horton, and other popular educators, who insist that radical, "problemposing" education truly starts when facilitators reflect back to participants the contradictions that shape their lives for analysis and action. I argue, therefore, that my collaborators' critical ambivalence in the face of technology is a sign of incipient analysis rather than apathy, fear or ignorance.

② Like Freire, Feenberg sees critical theory as the rejection of value neutrality in analysis, and the move towards more coherent and engaged understandings of the world.

③ In 2002, the CTC program was funded at $32.5 million and TOP was funded at $15.5 million. Bush eliminated the program, but requested level funding of HUD's Neighborhood Networks program (at $20 million in FY 2002 and 2003). The Technology Opportunities Program was eliminated outright. In July 2002, the Senate restored the CTC and TOP programs to FY 2002 levels in its Fiscal Year 2003 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill (National Institute for Literacy 2002). The Bush administration called again for both programs' elimination in the fiscal year 2004 budget proposal (CivilRights.org 2003).

access to technological tools for the nation's poorest citizens. Not surprisingly, we have yet to reach the Clinton administration's goal of wiring every classroom, every library, every hospital, and every clinic to the national and global information infrastructures. We are even less likely to do so under current political conditions. However, as my collaborators richly illustrate, the question of access alone does not prove sufficient to provide for a more just technological present. As activists and organizers, many of our own strategies and tactics left us vulnerable to attack as the political winds changed under Bush. The disaggregated demographic sources we relied on to argue for a widening technology gap left us unprepared to counter the complex forms of inequality inherent in the information economy. The commodity focus of many government efforts (putting hardware and cable into schools without teacher training or software support under E * Rate, for example) undermined our ability to argue that the market alone cannot provide adequately for the public interest. Even NGOs occasionally fell prey to the commodity-focus of digital divide understandings, limiting opportunities for social mobilization by privileging elite use patterns and focusing on technological fixes. Our myopic commitment to the organizing concept of "access" has left us unable to articulate high-tech equity issues that are not distributive in nature.

The Distributive Paradigm

The demographic approach favored by the NTIA and the commodified understanding of citizenship favored by government and NGOs alike do not capture the experiences of low-income women in the information economy. Even extremely well-developed, multifaceted, holistic models of access, like Clement and Shade's "Access Rainbow" (2000, 2002) — which includes seven overlapping dimensions of access, including carriage, devices, software tools, content/services, service providers, literacy/social facilitation, and governance — are caught in the distributive paradigm. The provision of material, social, and "informational" goods in the face of many women's severe deprivation is certainly an imperative issue. As Iris Marion Young attests,

> There are certainly pressing reasons... to attend to... issues of the distribution of wealth and resources. In a society and world with vast differences in the amount of material goods to which individuals have access, where millions starve while others can have anything they want, any conception of justice must address the distribution of material goods. The immediate provision of basic material goods for people now suffering severe deprivation must be a first priority for any program that seeks to make the world more just (1990: 19 – 20).

However, in contemporary welfare capitalist societies, insurgent social movements' calls for justice include many concerns that are not of a distributive nature, including, for example, demands to be free of cultural imperialism, to work in safe and fulfilling environments, and to end gender-based violence. In the information economy, non-distributive social justice issues include demands for increased transparency and accountability in the use of data in the social service and criminal justice systems, opportunities to design and produce culturally and socially sensitive software and hardware, freedom from excessive surveillance in the workplace, and proper attention to health and welfare issues in high-tech work. Other issues like childcare, transportation, healthy communities, self-sufficiency wages, educational equity and prison reform may seem incongruent with a "high-tech equity agenda," but are also necessary to provide for a more just and sustainable information society[1]. Some,

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[1] All of these issues are action items on ARISE's (A Regional Initiative Supporting Empowerment) agenda. ARISE is a faithbased organization dedicated to developing a "high-tech equity agenda" for the Capital Region of upstate New York.

but not all, of these issues are distributive in nature.

Young argues that "a focus on the distribution of material goods and resources inappropriately restricts the scope of justice" (*ibid*: 20). It fails to bring social structure and institutional contexts — like decision-making procedures, the sexual division of labor, and culture — under evaluation. It presupposes social atomism and self-interest, or "possessive individualism." In addition, the distributive paradigm misrepresents nonmaterial "goods" and resources — like power, self-respect, rights and opportunity — when its logic is extended to them. Power and rights, like citizenship, are learned and practiced in relationship with others in the context of specific institutions. They are relational practices, not possessions. Like Darrin Barney (2000), who argues that the moral imperative of "access" to technology corresponds to the particular demands of late-capitalist information economies, Young argues that the distributive paradigm of justice,

> [C]orresponds to the primary formulation of public debate in [welfare capitalist] societies. Processes of interest-group pluralism restrict public conflict primarily to distribution; issues of the organization of production, public and private decision-making structures, and the social meanings that confer status or reinforce disadvantage go unraised (*ibid*: 66).

The distributive paradigm "privatizes the citizen" by defining her primarily as a client-consumer, and fragments and depoliticizes public life by discouraging deliberation about collective decisions.

Even the best calls to broaden the definition of IT equity still center on the concept of access. Lisa Servon, for example, argues that IT access is a weak solution to persistent poverty and inequality, but her solution is to broaden the idea of access beyond narrow ideas of "possession or permission" to include opportunities for resources, education, and skills (Servon 2003). Mossberger, et al. advocate moving beyond the narrow boundaries of current definitions of the digital divide, writing that the access divide is only one dimension of a problem that also includes a skills divide, an economic opportunity divide, and a democracy divide. These authors council increased attention to the skills divide at public access points, limited experiments with an educational technology subsidy, and equal educational opportunity and an investment in lifelong learning as solutions to these distributive dilemmas (Mossberger, et al. 2003).

The distributive paradigm in IT policy and community informatics practice acts to restrict the scope of the high-tech equity agenda. It relies on a deficit orientation that underestimates the considerable resources, skills, and experiences of low-income communities to interact with, design and produce "popular technologies," rather than being passive recipients of elite-produced technology tools. It underestimates the considerable (but often negative) interaction low income women already have with technology at work and in their everyday lives. It obscures the operation of powerful institutions like the criminal justice system, the social service system, and the low-wage workplace to structure women's relationship to IT (Eubanks 2006). It privatizes and individualizes digital equity issues, limiting opportunities for social mobilization. These limitations have left digital equity programs unable to counter the free-market enthusiasm of conservative critics. Unlike many critics of Digital Divide policy (e. g., Compaine 2001), I have little faith that market mechanisms will rapidly — or even eventually — provide for increased economic and social equality in the age of IT. In fact, I think Digital Divide policy does not go too far, but rather not nearly far enough. The over-reliance on the distributive paradigm by policy makers and organizers alike is at the heart of contemporary U.S. public policy's inability to articulate technological citizenship as if low-income women mattered.

Alternative Articulations: Revisioning Digital Equity

When I started interviewing women at the YWCA of Troy-Cohoes in the summer of 2003, I had

been working in the community for two years. Ruth Delgado Gutzman and I met through the *Women's Economic Empowerment Series*, held in the YWCA's Sally Catlin Resource Center the previous summer. Ruth is an engaged and articulate Puerto Rican woman who was completing her Masters in Education at Russell Sage College in Troy. Deeply committed to the wellbeing of children, and hoping to become a high school counselor, she possesses a sharp wit and an abiding interest in social justice issues.

The Sally Catlin Resource Center was flooded with sunlight on July 29, 2003. The windows were open over State Street and oscillating fans worked to move the air in the room when we met to talk about ICT and social justice. Other members of the YW community typed quietly on the public computers, and the intercom cut in and out of our conversation, announcing phone calls and visitors for YW residents and staff. Ruth was quick to name the goal she feels we both share: creating a "technology for people." She described her experiences with technology as generally "very, very positive," and explained that she believes very strongly that technology can be used as a tool of social change.

However, she expressed disappointment with current means for producing information for the internet and assessing its validity, as well as reservations about most scholarship describing women's technological inequality, and with the public policy geared towards alleviating it. She insisted,

> People who say that women are afraid of technology, or don't know how important it is, are missing the point... When you're just surviving, you're in survival mode. You don't think about technology, you don't think about the latest anything. You are surviving. And that takes your whole life — just to survive... Especially women! Women love to learn and are able to learn. They really like technology and want technology. If you offered women a system that they created, for everyone, they would want it, they would engage with it. But it's not like that (Gutzman 2003: 17).

Computers, software and internet architecture are designed for financial people and for business people, for professionals, she said. "But where are the mothers," she asked, "or people who work and struggle to stay afloat? The homeless?" "Technology for people" would be different from universal access to existing computer systems, she argued. It would mix systems "designed by women, for everybody" with educational programs that combine practical/functional goals with technology skills training in order to increase people's well-being financially, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. The prospect of brainstorming just such systems had been her primary reason for joining *Women at the YWCA Making Social Movement* (WYMSM), our participatory design group.

As we talked, we doodled pictures to try to reach a mutual understanding. I sketched a quick rendition of the popular concept of the Digital Divide:

Ruth admitted that she did sometimes feel out of the loop, "like a dinosaur," because she doesn't have a laptop, but she thought that "Digital Divide" rhetoric was also missing the point. If policymakers just aren't getting it, I asked, could we describe the problem — and its potential solutions — better? She insisted, "It's not technology that will make our lives better. That will make us 'haves.' It's social conditions, financial conditions, the

Figure 1. **My drawing of the Digital Divide, During Interview with Ruth Delgado Gutzman, July 29, 2003.**

environment. Technology is just a little part of it ... it's not *justice*" (ibid.: 36). Though inexpensive or free computers and internet access would be a fundamental step toward "technology for people," she

took the pen out of my hand and re-drew the picture to correct the "deficit model" of Digital Divide policy.

Figure 2 A copy of Ruth Delgado Gutzman's re-articulation of the Digital Divide, Reproduced for clarity — the original was drawn by her in the margin of her informed consent form. July 29, 2003.

Figure 3 Cathy Roylance's articulation of the Digital Divide. She was speaking, I was drawing. From our interview, January 19, 2004.

She explained that people on *both* sides of the putative "divide" have skills, strengths, and resources to share with each other. Technology, in the best-case scenario, should connect people — strengthened by their diverse experiences, across levels of social stratification — in systems of equal barter and exchange. After she finished drawing, she said to me, "If you take one message from our conversation to policymakers, it's this. We don't need to look at the hole. We need to look at the 'net'" (ibid.: 47.5, emphasis mine).

This early exchange was an important site of both empirical and methodological insight: after I interviewed Ruth, I worked the process of "doodling the Divide" into many of my interviews. It proved to be an enormously productive technique for breaking through pat responses to interview questions ("Computers are the future," etc.) to point towards the structural and interpretive questions at the heart of the critical ambivalence that characterized many women's interactions with technology.

These sketches illustrate three major critiques of digital divide rhetoric. First, women I spoke with argued that the characterization of "haves" and "have-nots" is overly simplistic; it does not describe their experiences and obscures structural inequality. For example, Cathy Roylance renamed the "haves" technology "hoarders" and the "have-nots" technology "survivors" (or, "the man" and "the rest of us"). Others explained that people in different social and structural positions have access to different kinds of material and intellectual resources. While it may be true that folks on the "have-not" side lack the consumer power that folks on the "have" side possess, they insisted that "have-nots" possess many different kinds of local knowledge: community knowledge, knowledge of "the system," double consciousness, more finely attuned social Geiger counters, as well as social networks, navigation skills, and an ethic of sharing.

Following this insight, most women argued that the have/have-not divide should be re-imagined and renamed. Jes Constantine, for example, renamed it the "People Divide," arguing that the medium was irrelevant, and that thoughtful participation, action, and collaboration is the only route to the openness and respect that makes communication across difference possible. Secondly, several women

pointed out that the "divide" was actually a product of social structure. For example, Jenn Rose renamed it "systemic inequality," and Cosandra Jennings renamed it "a crack in the system." Amanda Demers, Jennings, and Roylance all argued that systemic inequality would not persist if someone was not profiting from it. Jennings pointed out, for example, that both labor and money go from the "have-not" to the "have" side in order to support technological development, and wrote across the crack in the system "systemic payoff in [the] disconnect." Exploitations — extraction of resources from the poor to profit the wealthy — is represented in Jennings' drawing by the red circle of the system, the money and labor arrows that point from left to right (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 4   **Jes Constantine's "People Divide"**
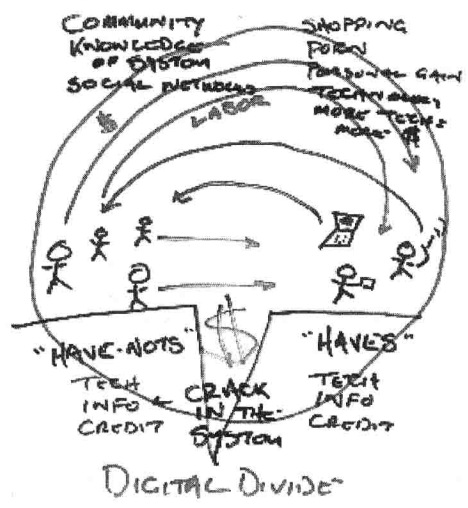
Figure 5   **Cosandra Jenning's articulation of the Digital Divide: a crackin the system. She was speaking, I was drawing. From our interview, January 24, 2004.**

Figure 6   **Cosandra Jennings, detail.**

Amanda Demers described the persistence of this structural inequality when she explained that "have-nots come from have-nots" and "haves come from haves." Almost all of the women who sketched the divide with me argued that for all these reasons, technology alone had little chance of significantly impacting social inequality. More pressing, they argued, were issues of racial prejudice, greed, classism, economic exploitation, basic needs, education, and other social supports.

Finally, women offered alternative solutions that leveraged technology and diverse local knowledges to build networks based on truth, trust, reciprocity, and reconciliation. The problems they described, while daunting, are not insurmountable. Some even saw a role technology could play in creating positive social change, seizing on ICT's ability to act as an interface across social differences. Jennings argued that ICT can be used to educate people on the "have" side of the divide about the realities of life on the "have-not" side. This is represented by the solid line leading from "knowledge of

system," through a computer, onto the "haves" side. As the dotted line labeled "maybe" shows, she was less optimistic about the possibility of creating social networks via computers (see Figure 6).
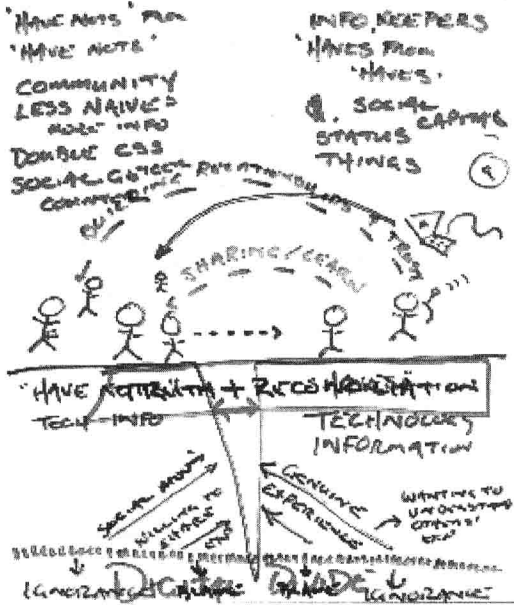
Figure 7   **Amanda Demers' articulation. The green lines at bottom represent the "grassroots." She was speaking, I was drawing. From our interview, February 2, 2004.**
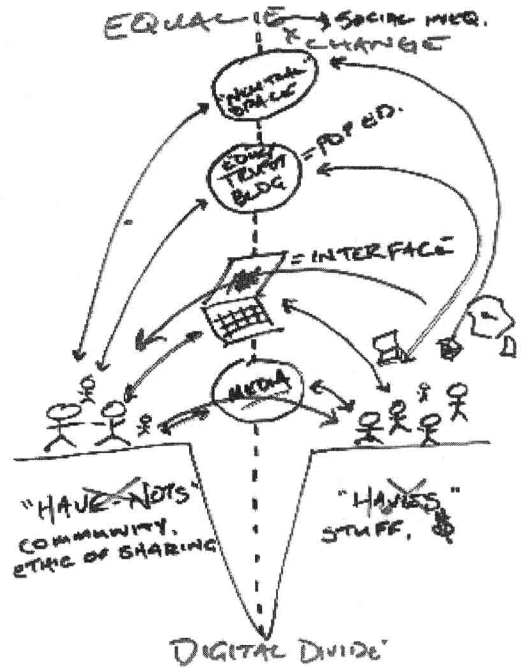
Figure 8   **Jenn Rose's articulation of one solution to the Digital Divide: creating nodes of equal exchange across social stratification. She was speaking, I was drawing. From our interview, January 11, 2004.**

Constantine, Demers and Roylance offered more people-centered than network-centered solutions. Roylance suggested person-to-person mentoring and exchange. Constantine wrote in large capital letters across her drawing, for example, that "Technology won't do a single thing unless the people on either end can work together." Demers called for a grassroots social movement that bridges the gap, overcoming blame and ignorance through each person's willingness to share their own experience and reciprocal desire to understand the experiences of others. Jenn Rose, like Gutzman, had more faith in the networking potential of ICT. In her drawing, she used technology as one of four nodes — in addition to "neutral" space, education and trust building, and media — that can mediate across social structure by creating a network of equal exchange (see Figure 8).

Conclusion

All of the women who participated in these sketching exercises with me expressed dissatisfaction with digital equity being expressed through the metaphor of a "bridge" stretching over a "digital divide." Ruth Delgado Gutzman looked at her drawing: a computer balanced between the putative "haves" and the putative "have-nots," providing a node in a network that can support *all* people. She pointed out that ICT can play into the strengths of low-income communities — particularly their ability to network resources and skills. Rather than focusing on the digital divide, she argued, we should be focusing on creating a "technology for people" that uses ICT as an interface across levels of social

stratification. "Have-nots," she argued, actually *have* a wealth of knowledge and skills, as well as their labor, to trade and barter. Traditional "haves" have technology and financing at their disposal, as well as a different but valuable set of skills. Technology for people can translate and connect needs to assets across different realms of experience. ICT is particularly well suited to this purpose, because of its openness and capacity to support networks. As Ruth remarked, "If you offered women a system that they created," she said, "for everyone, they would want it, they would engage with it. But it's not like that" (Gutzman 2003: 20.1). If it was, technology might become part of low-income people's set of tools for survival. She remarked,

> RDG: Hey, we all need salaries, so I'm not going to say that everything should be free. But for less cash, or for services rendered — bargaining, barter! That would be the perfect way for people who are in the middle [the gap in the digital divide] to get services, to get technology, to get access to a lot of different things. Let's barter.
>
> VE: Then, is one of the things technology for the people can do connecting up these points? So it's not at all like a bridge.
>
> RDG: Yeah, it's not going to happen like that. Remember that these people are not going to want to share. People [on the "haves" side of the divide], socially, are used to being comfortable HERE. It might be racial, or economic. . .and they don't recognize all the things that people on the OTHER side have! (ibid.: 45.5)

A bridge across the digital divide is an inadequate metaphor on which to base a high-tech equity agenda. A bridge can connect only two points: white to black, rich to poor, "haves" to "have-nots." A bridge over the digital divide can only create equity in terms of the demographic profiles of internet users. Rather than look solely at the *composition* of users — or potential users — of ICT, scholars and activists should turn our attention to underlying *structures* of inequality in the information economy, like workplace and labor market restructuring and the gender and racial divisions of labor (McCall 2001: 8). A bridge over the digital divide underestimates the skills and resources of the people on the "deficit" side of the divide. It also distorts the very qualities of networked communication that *can* make it a powerful tool for social change: its flexibility, its openness, and its ability to connect people to people.

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第二章

Social Movements

7. Anonymous: From the Lulz to Collective Action

E. Gabriella Coleman

Taken as a whole, Anonymous resists straightforward definition as it is a name currently called into being to coordinate a range of disconnected actions, from trolling to political protests. [1] Originally a name used to coordinate Internet pranks, in the winter of 2008 some wings of Anonymous also became political, focusing on protesting the abuses of the Church of Scientology. By September 2010 another distinct political arm emerged as Operation Payback and did so to protest the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and a few months later this arm shifted its energies to Wikileaks, as

did much of the world's attention. It was this manifestation of Anonymous that garnered substantial media coverage due the spectacular waves of distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks they launched (against PayPal and Mastercard in support of Wikileaks). Despite this notoriety and despite the fact that Anonymous had already coordinated protests against the Church of Scientology, commentators struggled to describe its ethics, sociology, and history using traditional analytical categories.

This difficulty follows from the fact that Anonymous is, like its name suggests, shrouded in some degree of deliberate mystery. It purports to have no leaders, no hierarchical structure, nor any geographical epicenter. While there are forms of organization and cultural logics that undeniably shape its multiple expressions, it is a name that any individual or group can take on as their own. In this capacity, Anonymous functions as what Marco Deseriis defines as an improper name: "The adoption of the same alias by organized collectives, affinity groups, and individual authors." [2] For instance, those coordinating the DDoS attacks may not be the same people who write manifestos, or launch blogs or news sites under this name; the protests in support of Wikileaks were, for the most part, unconnected to the arm of Anonymous currently protesting the abuses of the Church of Scientology, a fact overlooked by many writing on this topic.

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[1] I would like to thank Luke Simcoe, Quinn Norton, Alex Leavitt, Nicholas Mirzoeff, James Hodges, and various participants from the different faces of Anonymous who provided invaluable feedback.

[2] In a dissertation on the topic, Deseriis examines a range of these multiple use names, including those of Captain Ludd and Luther Blissett.

A small cadre of participants in Anonymous are hackers: these are skilled programmers, security researchers, and system administrators who identify as such. Many, although not all of them, are motivated by some version of a desire for information freedom. A much larger group I describe not as hackers, but instead provisionally, as "geeks." These geek participants hold a number of digital media literacies such as video editing, design skills, collaborative writing tools, and enough technical know-how to be able to use Internet Relay Chat. Other participants may not qualify nor identify as geeks or hackers, but through participation in this digital domain, they start to learn some of the cultural codes and digital literacies that can make them over time into geeks themselves, or at least familiar with them.

In this piece I will provide a brief historical description of how the multiple political operations under the banner of Anonymous came into being, and then describe in broad strokes some of their key organizational and ethical logics. Although in no way should this be taken as comprehensive, it will clear up some of the more common misconceptions surrounding the political wings of Anonymous. In so doing, we will also see how part of Anonymous has over the last three years moved from disaggregated practices rooted in the culture of trolling to also become a rhizomatic and collective form of action catalyzed and moved forward by a series of world events and political interventions.

Political Birth

Anonymous emerged out of an enormously popular and anonymous image board, 4chan. It was primarily associated with a phenomenon — trolling — known at times to unfold there. Trolling on 4chan often consists of an unpredictable combination of the following: telephone pranking, having many unpaid pizzas sent to the target's home, DDoSing, and most especially, splattering personal information, preferably humilating, all over the Internet. Since at least 2006, "Anonymous" has conducted many such trolling campaigns. The motivating force and emotional consequence for the instigators of many acts of trolling, including those on 4chan, are cited as the "lulz," a pluralization and bastardization of laugh out loud (lol). Lulz denotes the pleasures of trolling, but the lulz is not exclusive to trolling. The lulz can also refer more generally to lighthearted and amusing jokes, images, and pranks.

In 2008 Anonymous conducted a now-legendary wave of trolling when they decided to unleash their collective and unpredictable fury against the Church of Scientology. The Church was making a vigorous attempt to halt the circulation of a leaked church video (meant only for internal church viewing), featuring Tom Cruise exuberantly praising the practices and theology of Scientology. The Church threatened online publishers, such as Gawker, with legal action (citing violation of the DMCA) if they did not take down the video. Anonymous responded by leading a series of what they call "raids" against the Church between January 15th and January 27th 2008. These acts were described by one participant in characteristically offensive but accurate terms as "ultra-coordinated motherfuckary." Consistent with previous actions, Anonymous trolled the Church of Scientology largely for the sake of the lulz, picking on a target that geeks love to hate.

Soon after the first waves of trolling the course of Anonymous veered toward more traditional political territory. What led to this transformation? A set of videos were key instigators in this change of course. Over the span of a week in late January of 2008, the videos were made and circulated, material that led to days of fiery debate among participants in the attacks as to the purpose and meaning of their raiding. The first and now the most famous declared war against the Church of Scientology. However this video was not a wholly sincere declaration; it was made for the lulz. Five days later another video appeared, this time recorded by a long-time critic of the Church Mark Bunker who asked Anonymous to renounce its trollish ways and deploy more serious and especially legal tactics

in order to fight what he and his political cohort understood as a dangerous cult. This was soon followed by a more sincere call for political action by some participants of Anonymous. These home-brewed videos catalyzed a period of heated debate on IRC channels. One of the recurrent questions was whether Anonymous should leave the Internet to protest the Church.

Enough participants decided to move forward to organize a global day of action — a set of protests remarkably well executed and attended. On February 10, 2008 over six thousand people protested across North America, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia, many in front of Scientology Churches. A sizable chunk of protesters at these first protests lacked what we commonly associate with street protests: political intentionality and consciousness. At the New York City protests the atmosphere was carnivalesque. People were making fun of the Church and speaking in hyper-charged Internet jargon about lol cats, long cats, the lulz, and mudkips. These actions were impressive for their high levels of attendance and aesthetic bravado, which included a performance of their anonymity: Most protesters arrived wearing Guy Fawkes masks, now a staple part of Anonymous' iconography.

Soon after the global day of protests, a separation occurred. Many participants receded back to the Internet from whence they came, but those that remained continue to organize more traditional protests focused on the human rights abuses of the church, and now don a more recognizable political subjectivity (although many still don the Guy Fawkes mask as well). "I came for the lulz but stayed for the outrage," as one Irish Anonymous participant told me in August, voicing a common sentiment. The lulz, however, have not simply evaporated. Protesters continue to engage in a sometimes difficult juggling act between traditional street protest and the more wild, grotesque, humorous, and offensive elements that are part and parcel of the lulz.

Starting in the winter of 2008 and continuing through the fall of 2010, the more traditional political face of Anonymous was largely, although not exclusively, focused on lambasting the abuses of the Church of Scientology. ① In September 2010 the name Anonymous was yet again mobilized on 4chan to launch a new political operation: Operation Payback. Coming in the form of politically motivated DDoS attacks, Anonymous targeted the MPAA (and eventually other organizations and companies) to show support for the famous file-sharing site, The Pirate Bay soon after its servers were DDoSed by an Indian software firm that had been hired by the MPAA to engage in this form of digital privateering.

Like previous operations this one was first concocted on 4chan, but migrated onto IRC due to the impracticalities of coordinating on an anonymous image board. Although some participants participated in both Operation Payback and the protests against Scientology, the MPAA-targeting operation was sociologically distinct from the protests against the Church of Scientology. They were organized on different IRC networks and initiated largely by a different group of people.

In December 2010, soon after Wikileaks released a small trove of diplomatic cables, those participating in Operation Payback shifted their energies to engage in the largest and most spectacular

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① During this time period, the name Anonymous was still called into being on various sites to help coordinate trolling and there were some smaller political operations, including Project Skynet, Anonymous Iran, Operation Baylout, and Project Cntroll.

set of actions to date. Anonymous did not protest only to register its support of Wikileaks; they launched into actions in response to PayPal, Mastercard, and Amazon pulling all support and services for Wikileaks, despite the organization not been charged with any infraction.

This operation, which disabled the websites of some of the world's most powerful corporations for a few days, was exceptional. It led, for instance, to one of the most populated channels in the history of Internet Relay Chat with a large infantry of geeks logging on to IRC to watch or lend a helping hand — at one point there were over seven thousand people on the main channel. Despite the chaotic feel of interactions among these hefty numbers of participants, they managed to control the DDoS with a notable degree of deliberation and care. For instance, participants chose targets through polling, collectively wrote documents to explain who to and who not to attack, and constantly reminded other participants of this on IRC.
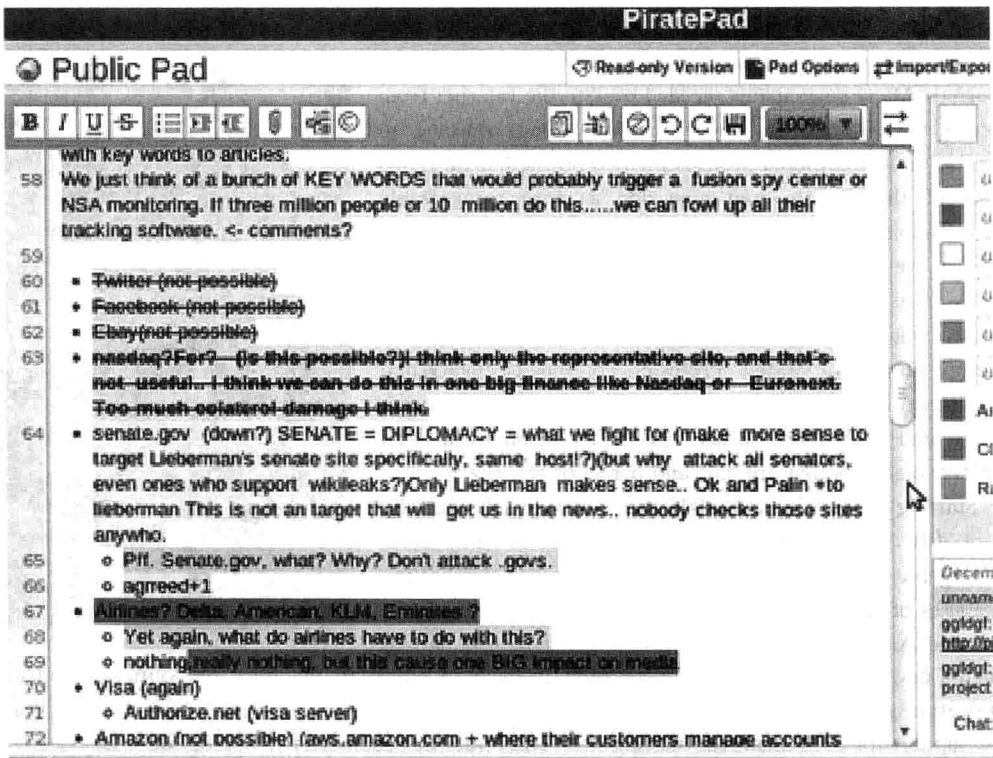
Not all participants took part in this form of digital dissent. Others made and released dozens of images and videos. In this period those protesting the Church continued to do so, some of them lending a helping hand wtih this other wing of Anonymous. Many others were just watching to see what would happen, and some, like a number of geeks and hackers, were ethically appraising the use of DDoS as a tactic for protest and dissent. ①

In late December soon after these attacks waned, Anonymous lent a helping hand in what seemed

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① Not only was there no agreement among hackers and digital activists over the ethical legitimacy of these particular attacks, the positions were wildly divergent. Some hackers, like Richard Stallman, described them as "mass demo against control" while RopGonggrijp during the December 2010 annual Computer Chaos Club Congress keynote talk chastised the actions as immature.

to be an unlikely place: Tunisia. They did so well before the North American and European media started to report with any depth and accuracy on the protests against the government brewing so strongly on the ground. On January 2, 2011 Anonymous initiated "OpTunisia" after the government blocked Wikileaks from the Internet and they continued to offer aid as street protests more strongly swept the country. In keeping with tradition, they DDoSed government and tourist websites, but also funneled videos of the street violence out of Tunisia and created packets for Tunisian cyberactivists and protesters providing information for evading governmental surveillance. In the Anonymous care packet, some anons also gestured toward the very limits of their own cyberacitivism by stating "This is * your * revolution. It will neither be Twittered nor televised or [sic] IRC'ed. You * must * hit the streets or you * will * loose [sic] the fight. Always stay safe, once you got [sic] arrested you cannot do anything for yourself or your people. Your government * is * watching you." OpTunisia represented another turning point in the political formation of Anonymous as a protest movement. Whereas most previous operations resided in the realm of Internet politics or censorship, this operation moved squarely into human rights activism as it converged with an existing social movement. OpTunisia also attracted a large number of participants.

Since this period, Anonymous has continued to initiate a diverse range of operations. As Tunisia helped spark the astounding protests in Egypt, attention also moved there. Along with operations in Libya and New Zealand among many other places, they have also led attacks in Italy as Silvio Berlusconi faced accusations of sleeping with an underage prostitute, and in Wisconsin to protest a law that seeks to shred collective bargaining rights of public unions. In early April they aggressively targeted Sony as a response to the lawsuit the corporate giant issued against George Hotz, a gamer-hacker who bypassed the digital protections on the PlayStation.

Authority and Power within Anonymous

With this basic picture in place, we can turn to the following questions: who participates in Anonymous? What connects the different faces? Where and how does authority lie, pool, and disperse?

Technically, Anonymous is open to all and erects no formal barriers to participation. However there are forms of tacit and explicit knowledge, skills, and sympathies that lead some people and not others to politically engage in this domain. In contrast to most organizations, including Wikileaks, it is easier to contribute to Anonymous as it offers numerous micro-protest opportunities coordinated at the drop of a hat, among other possibilities for participation.

To grasp some of the power dynamics at play in Anonymous, it is imperative to address the technical architecture where many spend a significant time chatting and coordinating action: Internet Relay Chat. And it is worth emphasizing that there are currently two distinct and unconnected IRC networks where participants coordinate different efforts: Anonet and Anonops. Contrary to a number of media reports, these are open to the public. However a good deal of the public has no idea how to find or use Internet Relay Chat, although it is not technically difficult to use. ①

Within each IRC network there are also scores of channels, although there is usually only a dozen or so that are well populated at a given time. There are some channels devoted to social topics and lighthearted and humorous (ie: lulzy) banter, as many participants still value the lulz. The lulz provides "a release valve," as one participant explained, a valve that makes the hard and sometimes depressing work of political engagement more bearable. Other channels exist to address technical

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① One arm of Anonymous links to their server on their website.

issues, and of course, there are also multiple channels where the many political operations are coordinated; some participants have a pivotal role to play in many of them, others are only involved in a few channels.

On IRC there is a class of participants who hold more authority, those vested with infrastructural power: the IRC operators ("ops" are common to all IRC networks not only those of Anonymous). Tasked with maintaining order, they have the power to kick and ban individuals from the IRC network, which they might do for various reasons, including violating network and cultural norms, such as constantly connecting and disconnecting or in the case of Anonops, targeting the media or promoting violence. There are dozens of ops on each independent irc network. To be an op does not require that one be highly technically skilled. Although their opinions carry more weight during the many debates that unfold on these networks, they do not determine the course of every action or operation within Anonymous. Some are there simply to provide infrastructural support, others also engage in many of the political operations.

Authority and order also come in the form of policy, ethical sensibilities, and norms, all of which develop over time and often continuously formed and reformed in reaction to historical events. Participants across both networks are oriented towards issues of censorship, information freedom, and as their name so obviously signals, they tend to be overwhelmingly committed to the long-standing liberal principle that anonymous speech is necessary for a healthy democratic society. In the case of Anonops there is now an established policy to refrain from attacking the news outlets, even in nation-states where the media is seen to be a corrupt arm of state power, as in Iran. This provision is not universally accepted, and there have been periods when some participants violated this norm, leading to what is common to any political protest movement: debate and discord.

Finally, to understand the dynamics of power and authority in Anonymous one must confront what is one of the most interesting, prevalent, and socially-vibrant norms within Anonymous: its anti-leader and anti-celebrity ethic. This ethic that modulates, even if it does not fully eliminate, the concentration of power. Anonymous provides what Mike Wesch had described as "a scathing critique of the postmodern cult of celebrity, individualism, and identity while serving itself as the inverted alternative."① It is key to note that participants do not only wax philosophical about this commitment; they enact it. Participants remind each other with remarkable frequency that one should not behave like a leader, nor seek personal attention in the media, calling the practice "name fagging" or "leaderfagging."② If you do "leaderfag", you most certainly will receive a private or public drubbing, and if you have called a lot of attention to yourself, then with a mere keystroke, you might be instantly banished from IRC.

I was recently witness to just this very act after a participant had been too public about himself to a reporter, an anon who had not even built social capital by putting himself at risk participating in the DDoS attacks. After reading the article where he had been featured, one interlocutor condensed the collective mood in a mere sentence:"Attempting to use all the work that so many have done for your personal promotion is something I will not tolerate." Then he was killed off — exiled from the IRC

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① In Press "Anonymous, Anonymity, and the End(s) of Identity and Groups Online: Lessons from 'the First Internet-Based Superconsciousness'" in *Human No More*, eds. Neil Whitehead and Michael Wesch. University of Colorado Press.

② The terms "fag" and "fagging" are very common on 4chan, the Anonymous networks, and other troll-heavy sites, as part of the offensive language common among their users. Often used as an insult, it can also be used as a term of endearment. On Anonops, it has its own particular valence as there is also a sizable cohort of queer participants.

network.

Does the existence of this ethic mean that power never pools, that there are no forms of authority? Or is Anonymous just living out a lie? Neither. To be sure, when it comes to certain actions, such as targeted hacking, only a small group of talented hackers can successfully pull this off; unsurprisingly, Anonymous is secretive about these types of operations. This fact does not mean, as this Gawker piece argued that a small group of hackers are the leaders; they are confusing the power to hack, which is certainly powerful, with the power to lead all actions within Anonymous. As stated earlier, those who are more present on the network and have put in more work carry more authority; and even they don't necessarily call all the shots. A more compelling rendition of these power dynamics would examine the dialectic between the creation of centralized power and its dispersal, which is common to many other geeky and hacker domains of collaboration. The uneasy relation between these two tendencies is partially resolved when anons constantly remind each other to refrain from behaving like a leader, and thus push participants to strive for consensus as the preferred mode of decision-making.

Conclusion: Political Gateway

Due to its multifaceted and layered attributes, Anonymous, as this informative article has argued persuasively, is a challenge to study. However, is Anonymous simply, as the piece concludes, "Cyber-lynch mobs that are organized via the Internet, who share the common meme of 'Anonymous', where a few people say 'hey let's do this', and those of like mind go do it while the others sit it out and post lolcat pictures on 4chan"? If one spends time examining the political wings of Anonymous, it is clear that they have enough coherence, history, and ethical substance to separate them in some fashion from some other facets of 4chan or troll culture; even if the lulz is still part of the political arms of anonymous and trolling is still one of the actions coordinated under this moniker, the whole of the Anonymous cannot simply be reduced to cyber-lynching, nor can the whole of Anonymous be reduced to the forms of politics I have examined here.

Although I have sought to contextualize Anonymous within the cultural milieu from which it arose (4chan, trolling, and the lulz), I have primarily honed in on the various political expressions of Anonymous. We can locate the political arms of Anonymous by virtue of the IRC networks they use, the regular participants who show up to contribute their time and their labor, the messages they broadcast via videos, manifestos, and messages, and the norms by which they devise, enact, and tranform. Here I have only scratched at the surface as to how authority, ethical and behavioral norms, and political tactics arise and function within some nodes of Anonymous. There is much more to learn, study, and say.

What we can note about Anonymous is that since the winter of 2008 it has become a political gateway for geeks (and others) to take action. Among other opportunities, Anonymous provides discrete micro-protest possibilities that aren't otherwise present in a way that allows individuals to be part of something greater. You don't have to fill out a form with your personal information, you aren't being asked to send money, you don't even have to even give your name but you do feel like you are actually part of something larger. The decision to engage in political action has to happen somehow, via a concrete path of action, a set of events, or influences; Anonymous is precisely that path for many.

8. Assessing the Radical Democracy of Indymedia: Discursive, Technical, and Institutional Constructions[①]

Victor W. Pickard

This study examines the radical democratic principles manifest in Indymedia's discursive, technical, and institutional practices. By focusing on a case study of the Seattle Independent Media Center and contextualizing it within theories and critiques of radical democracy, this article fleshes out strengths, weaknesses, and recurring tensions endemic to Indymedia's internet-based activism. These findings have important implications for alternative media making and radical politics in general.

Alternative Media; Cyberactivism; Democratic Theory; Independent Media Centers; Indymedia; Networks; Radical Democracy; Social Movements

Independent media centers (IMCs, popularly referred to as "Indymedia") are simultaneously interactive grassroots news websites, nodes within a rapidly expanding global network, and activist institutions deeply rooted in the social movements for global justice and media democracy. Thus, Indymedia is an institutional exemplar of the internet-mediated activism increasingly prevalent among progressive global movements. Many stories can be told about the sudden rise of the independent media center. However, in my view and in the view of many activists, Indymedia's most important innovation is its actualization of radical democracy.

Even casual observers will note that Indymedia puts forth a radical vision for media democracy. Indymedia's celebrated slogan, "be the media," suggests that media production and telling of stories is something to which all people should have access. However, Indymedia's radical democratic practice extends beyond website content and mission statements to encompass institutional practices, use of internet technology, and global network operations. To be more specific, Indymedia's radical democratic practice entails an active renegotiation of all power relationships by democratizing the media (exemplified by an interactive web-based interface), leveling power hierarchies (exemplified by consensus-based decision-making), and countering proprietary logic (exemplified by open-source software). Inherent in these practices are significant strengths, weaknesses, and recurrent tensions,

which I trace in the following case study of the Seattle Independent Media Center. ① I focus on how Indymedia activists, through institutional practices and the amplifying effects of internet technology, are actualizing radical democratic principles.

A Brief History of Indymedia

On November 24, 1999 (to herald the protests against the World Trade Organization), the first Indymedia news story was posted by "Maffew & Manse" to the prototype IMC website:

> The resistance is global. ... The web dramatically alters the balance between multinational and activist media. With just a bit of coding and some cheap equipment, we can setup a live automated website that rivals the corporates'. Prepare to be swamped by the tide of activist media makers on the ground in Seattle and around the world, telling the real story behind the World Trade Agreement. (http://seattle.indymedia.org/en/1999/11/2.shtml)

Created by media democracy activists who gathered in a downtown Seattle storefront during the weeks leading up to the WTO protests, the IMC was fashioned as a grassroots news organization to provide non-corporate accounts of street-level events. Over 400 journalists, many of them donning IMC press passes, joined a 50,000 – person throng of global justice protestors and produced various media for the IMC website and their newspaper, *The Blindspot*. Indymedia journalists broke stories on police brutality and the use of rubber bullets on demonstrators at pointblank range. The site, Indymedia.org (it became seattle.indymedia.org), registered over 1 million hits by the end of the week. The open source code structuring the original IMC site made it an easily replicated model. Within the first year, 24 new IMCs emerged around the world in places like Quebec City, Prague, and Washington, DC, often in conjunction with large global justice protests against neoliberal institutions such as the IMF and World Bank or the G8. As of April 2005, Indymedia comprises a network of over 150 sites in 50 countries across six continents. Despite an overall uniformity in website architecture and political ethos across Indymedia sites, there are significant differences among individual IMCs including but not limited to cultural particulars regarding editorial policy, membership criteria, and the size and location of the IMC.

The Seattle IMC is also a physical space in an urban setting; its Indymedia members meet on a regular basis to create news content, plan fundraisers, deal with administrative issues, and other activities. ② As a community resource rich in news and information production, it produces email lists, video, audio, and print media. Although most Seattle IMC activists are essentially left-of-center, they are ideologically diverse. Counted among their membership are all manner of liberal democrats, progressives, anarchists, Green Party members, civil libertarians, and socialists. Most are ideologically united by a radical participatory ideal of media democracy, which aims to politicize media-related issues in terms of diversity and justice in media representation, while simultaneously widening accessibility to the means of media production. As one activist put it: "Indymedia goes to where the silences are." More broadly, as clearly manifest in the Indymedia central code, a document called "the principles of unity," Indymedia activists are united by their adherence to principles of radical democracy.

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① Henceforth I reserve "Indymedia" for the global network in general. I refer to the "Seattle IMC" when I am talking about it specifically.

② In the late fall and early winter of 2003 – 2004 the Seattle IMC went through a tumultuous period. It temporarily closed down, in part due to financial problems with maintaining a large space in downtown Seattle. It has since reopened a space in Seattle but no longer in the central downtown area.

Previous Scholarship

While a scattered few book chapters have begun to look seriously at Indymedia, few studies, in-depth, look at the linkages between Indymedia's radical democratic logic and specific technical and institutional practices. The first component of Indymedia that scholars often note is its news production and open newswire, which allows anyone with internet access to post a news story to the website (Jankowski & Jansen, 2003; Platon & Deuze, 2003). Although this is a significant development on multiple levels, I share the view of many Indymedia activists that the most salient features of Indymedia lie with its radical democratic practices that include — but are not limited to — the technical innovation of open publishing and Indymedia's capacity as a news organization.

Several scholars have started to historicize Indymedia. Downing (2003), the radical media theorist, historicizes Indymedia by locating it in socialist and anarchist traditions of radical media whose roots go back to the Spanish Civil War and the 1968 Paris uprising. Media activist and scholar Halleck (2002) looks at Indymedia based on her experiences in the media democracy movement, going back at least to the early 1980s. Likewise, Morris (2004), who approaches its organizational practices from a sociological perspective, places Indymedia firmly within the media democracy movement. Kidd (2003) likens Indymedia to reclaiming a metaphorical commons originally lost at the dawn of capitalism. I have studied the sustainability of Indymedia as a social movement and global network (2006).

Meanwhile, a small but growing body of literature regarding cyberactivism (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Meikle, 2003) and alternative media (Atton, 2002; Hamilton, 2000) has emerged in recent years, with several good collections tracing the intersections of alternative media, internet activism, and social movements (Couldry & Curran, 2003; Opel & Pompper, 2003; Van De Donk, Loader, Nixon, Rucht, & Dahlgren, 2004). Scholars have long pointed out the importance of participatory media in giving voice to marginalized groups, including women (Steiner, 1992) and citizens of the global south (Rodriguez, 2001). Much of the above literature helps bring into focus both the larger contexts within which these media are produced and the institutional practices buttressing technological innovations and news content, though much more work needs to be done to understand the relationships between organizational and political practices, technological innovations and news production.

Atton (2002) asserts that any attempt to understand experimental media should foreground institutional practices that are inextricably linked to front-end media production. Likewise, the innovative technology of Indymedia cannot be fully understood without accounting for the underlying institutional structure. Using the Seattle IMC as a case study, I attempt to illustrate these linkages and demonstrate how radical democratic principles are consistently manifest across Indymedia practices. In tracing these principles, my analysis focuses on Indymedia's discursive, technical, and institutional constructions while drawing heavily from democratic theory.

Democratic Theory

I situate Indymedia practice within a body of theory and praxis best described as "radical democracy." This framework draws from several threads of radical democratic theory. Broadly speaking, democratic theory in the United States and Europe has undergone a quiet sea change over the last few decades. With Marxist class analysis having fallen out of favor (Hauptmann, 2001), much scholarly attention in the 1990s focused on liberal democratic theory categorized under rubrics such as the political liberalism of Rawls (1993) and the deliberative democracy of Habermas (1989). These foci have led to scholarship centered on deliberative forums, public spheres, and efforts towards

revitalizing civic engagement (Gastil, 2000).

Contemporaneously, oppositional models based on more radical theories and practices have emerged. These models are inspired by a focus on participatory politics (Polletta, 2002), post-structuralist conceptions of power (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), and concerns about global social justice (Della Porta, 2004). Unlike traditional Marxism, these models conceive power and resistance in ways that refuse to privilege the contestation of certain power hierarchies (such as class) over others (gender, race, and sexuality). While many activists adhering to these radical democratic models are adamantly opposed to corporate capitalism, they are loath to subscribe to what they often see as another totalizing grand narrative and instead favor radically nonhierarchical and decentralized structures — hallmarks of radical democracy.

Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conception of radical democracy consists of celebrating difference in political subjectivities and identity formations; focusing on discursive formations of power; and distrusting civil society's ability and commitment to advance democratic practices. Two books titled *Radical Democracy*, both published in 1996, similarly call for a more radical project that breaks from liberal values of rational deliberation, enlightened self-interest, individuality, and private property to confront power in all of its complex and subtle guises (Lummis, 1996; Trend, 1996). Lummis (1996) equates radical democracy with a radically empowered people contesting all forms of centralized power. His conception is similar to Barber's "Strong Democracy" which has citizens actively involved with all levels of political decision-making. These analyses trace the failures of democracy to the failures of liberalism and its general uneasiness with participatory democracy. In Trend's edited volume, Aronowitz (1996) argues that radical democracy should replace stigmatized socialism as the political program of the left. Fraser, also critical of a lukewarm liberalism that leaves status quo inequities intact, advances a radical modification to Habermas's original formulation that allows for multiple overlapping public spheres, especially for marginal groups, which she refers to as "subaltern public spheres" (Fraser, 1992). Clearly, as I will illustrate below, Indymedia activists exhibit a politics that attempts, and achieves with varying degrees of success, putting radical democratic theory into practice.

Indymedia's democratic project embodies elements from these various positions on radical democratic theory. Aiming to empower marginalized voices, Indymedia goes beyond advocating greater voice in policymaking or a seat at the table. It seeks active re-appropriation and redistribution of space, technology, and other resources to democratize society and thus would level all hierarchies. Thus, much of the structure defining Indymedia as an institution can be described as anarchic (Epstein, 2001) or as "radical participatory democracy" (Polletta, 2002). My use of "radical democracy" indicates an expansive version of participatory democracy that seeks to equalize power hierarchies, correct structural inequities in all institutions, and counter proprietary logic. Such radical democratic practices as Indymedia's consensus decision-making and open internet technology are invested with values of inclusiveness, diversity, openness, co-operation, transparency, and collective decision making.

Research Questions and Methods

In order to trace democratic values manifest in Indymedia technical and institutional practice and to identify tensions endemic to this infrequently explored terrain, I ask: How are radical democratic values expressed discursively, technically, and institutionally in Indymedia? What are the recurring tensions in Indymedia's radical democratic practices? The primary case study for most of my analysis is the Seattle Independent Media Center (see http://www. seattle. indymedia. org). Although occasionally I reference more recent events, my analysis is primarily focused on the Seattle IMC up

until August 2003, when I moved from Seattle, thus bringing my participant observations to an end.

The Seattle IMC and the entire global Indymedia network are not static but continue to evolve. Pivotal events since then fall beyond the scope of this study. I do not over-generalize my observations to the entire Indymedia network, since each local IMC is situated in particular social and cultural milieus that lead to significant differences in institutional norms. That said, my analysis is deepened by my experiences over the last two years as a member of the Urbana-Champaign (IL) IMC. These experiences further sensitize me to what was idiosyncratic in the Seattle IMC and what is more symptomatic of principles and tensions shared by the global network.

These cautions notwithstanding, there is a remarkable degree of uniformity based on the common architecture of all IMC websites and the shared narrative manifest in the "principles of unity," a central document that acts as a kind of constitution or charter that some members have described as "network glue." Also binding the network are the global IMC listservs upon which network-wide debates unfold. Therefore, I can generalize to Indymedia as a whole when discussing institutional practice around consensus decision-making, internet technology, and the guiding principles of radical democracy, and regarding how these issues are negotiated throughout the network. Finally, because the Seattle IMC was the first Indymedia institution, it influenced the entire network in profound ways, albeit much less so as the network evolves. The operations of the Seattle IMC illuminate common tensions experienced by other individual IMCs within the network.

Following Atton's (2002) call for case studies that combine ethnography with close textual and organizational readings, I strive to present a holistic view of Indymedia's multi-dimensionality by isolating key components while showing how they are interrelated and consistently inscribed with radical democratic values. First I inductively analyze Indymedia discourse by fleshing out recurring themes from documents linked to their website. Then I use these themes as indices for examining radical democratic values in Indymedia's technical and institutional fields and highlight general consonance and linkages. Finally, I sketch recurring pressure points and tensions by facing off critiques of participatory models with my observations of Indymedia practice.

My approach to an institutional analysis of Indymedia is informed by extensive background information stemming from nearly three years of volunteering for and participant observation of the Seattle IMC beginning in October 2000. During this time I kept detailed field notes from general and tasked-focused meetings, wrote news stories for the Seattle IMC newswire, and volunteered for occasional events. My data also include email I received daily from the general, media, media literacy, and liaison IMC listservs (archived online); I closely examined approximately 600 of these, particularly those dealing with process-related issues. I interviewed ten active, veteran IMC members, in addition to conducting scores of informative conversations and email exchanges. Following the example set by Gastil's study of the institutional practices of a small co-op (1993), I recorded participant observations regarding the strengths and weaknesses in the IMC's participatory model. I also gauged the degree to which institutional practices remain consonant with IMC rhetoric, which entailed noting recurrent disjunctures, tensions, and the familiar cleavages where these processes often break down — what Polletta (2002) calls "pressure points."

My analysis of IMC technology (as exemplified by the Seattle IMC) focuses primarily on the IMC web interface, wiki pages, and underlying software. Inspired by Flanagin, Maynard, Farinola, and Metzger's (2000) adaptation of Feenberg's (1995) technical code model, I examine the social codes manifest in Indymedia's distinctive internet technology by teasing out the underlying values. Similarly, given my interest in how Indymedia applies internet technology towards radical democratic ends, I look specifically at the extent to which Indymedia's technical design encourages collective non-hierarchical participation. Previous literature shows how interfaces — from MUDs to personal websites — are not

neutral; they are socially, politically, and technically constructed (Kolko, 2000; Reid, 1998). The maintenance of user interactivity, the selection of hyperlinks, and the organization of content are all political decisions; they help determine what actions can take place on the website, who is linked to, and what information is available (Preece, 2000). Examining such strategic choices sheds light on how IMC social values are embodied by applications of internet technology.

Discursive Constructions

Recurring themes of radical participatory democracy, democratizing the media, and countering corporate power emerge from Indymedia documents linked to all IMC websites. Themes of media democracy and anti-corporate power are invoked in the mission statement on the main page: "Indymedia is a collective of independent media institutions and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate, non-commercial coverage of important social and political issues in Seattle and worldwide." Indymedia's anti-corporate stance is evidenced by a rare content restriction (one of several editorial controls discussed below) that under no circumstances may any advertisements or corporate promotions be posted. Community empowerment through media production is also a strong theme. For example, the FAQ page states that Indymedia is "committed to using media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social and economic justice." Elsewhere on the FAQ page, IMC activists claim that Indymedia "encourages people to become the media by posting their own articles, analysis and information to the site." Under "What is Indymedia" the IMC is defined as "a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth."

Principles of Unity

The "principles of unity" document is the clearest articulation of network-wide goals, ideals, and policies. It continues to be controversial, however, because some individual IMCs tend to resist central authority imposed upon them by the larger network. Initially drawn up during the second year of Indymedia's existence by a small, dedicated core of Indymedia activists, the principles of unity codify the radical democratic mission of Indymedia, acting as a kind of unofficial constitution. The network as a whole has yet to ratify formally the ten principles of unity as a binding document. Nevertheless, to be accepted into the network, all new IMCs must demonstrate adherence to these principles; the induction process is initiated by filling out a form and submitting it to the New IMC email list for global network consensus.

The first principle establishes that all IMCs are "based upon principles of equality, decentralization and local autonomy." The second principle emphasizes openness: "All IMCs consider open exchange of and open access to information a prerequisite to the building of a more free and just society." The fourth principle says that all IMCs must allow individuals, groups, and institutions to express their views via open publishing on IMC websites. Principle five declares that all IMCs must remain not-for-profit, thus barring any commercial enterprises from using the newswire. Perhaps the most defining principle is number six, which mandates consensus-based decision-making, Indymedia's signature institutional practice:

> All IMCs recognize the importance of process to social change and are committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics. Therefore, [all IMCs] shall organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a direct, participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership. (http://docs. indymedia. org/view/Global/Principles OfUnity)

Although many members consider these principles central to Indymedia identity, how they are interpreted and implemented remains a contentious topic at meetings and on various local and global email lists. Different renderings of consensus decision-making (defined in the sixth principle) have led to competing visions of Indymedia process. For example, some IMC activists have advocated for "consensus minus one," to avoid letting individuals derail the process. Even a form of majoritarian voting has been seriously discussed in some cases. These variations are increasing, given the growing number of newly admitted IMCs from a multitude of specific socio-political contexts.

Technical Constructions

With its user-driven news production, collective editing, and open source practices, Indymedia has been in the vanguard of implementing technical strategies that engender and amplify democratic processes. As an innovative web-based communications model, Indymedia utilizes a special type of "open-publishing" software allowing anyone with internet access to "be the media" by posting their own news stories for immediate upload onto the website as part of the newswire. Combining such democratic rhetoric with straightforward instructions for the IMC newswire facilitates public participation and decentralized news production.

Open Source

The ninth principle of unity states, "All IMCs shall be committed to the use of free source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software." The Seattle IMC accordingly relies on open source software for many of its functions. Open source software is typically protected under "copyleft" restrictions, which reverses copyright law by granting permission to run, modify, and distribute the program as long as no new restrictions are added. This provides a general public license to users of software; protected under copyleft, software remains free and deprivatized (Stallman, 1999). In addition, open source has a strategic dimension:

When multiple programmers contribute, software can be written more quickly, efficiently, and creatively. To encourage these democratic, non-proprietary practices, IMC software must remain widely accessible and have limited restrictions on user innovations. These technological attributes have benefited Indymedia: Individual IMCs develop and adopt new generations of the original IMC code, such as when Seattle upgraded from Active to Mir. These improved models make it easier to replicate, update, and modify the IMC website; they usually run on the open source Linux, allowing activists to distribute information easily through shared calendars, group listings, and multimedia news discussions.

Open Publishing

Open source and open publishing are similar technological applications implemented by Indymedia to promote radical democratic values such as de-privatizing technology, increasing and decentralizing participation in news production, and leveling bureaucratic hierarchies. Open publishing guidelines allow users to contribute original content or to comment on other postings. Arnison (2001) defines open publishing as a process of creating news that is transparent to readers:

> They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. . . . They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free and change it and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news, they can, preferably on an

open publishing site. (¶ 26)

Open publishing allows information to be corrected and supplemented faster and more efficiently. As described on a web page linked to the IMC site, open publishing is "an essential element of the Indymedia project that allows independent journalists and publications to publish the news they gather instantaneously on a globally accessible web site." (http://docs. indymedia. org/view/Global/ FrequentlyAskedQues tionEn#newswire) Lawson and Gleason suggest:

> The content produced by open publishing makes browsing Indymedia sites a mixed bag of thoughtful analyses, activist dispatches, on-the-street news items, rants, and reprinted media from unknown publications or institutions. Without a central editorial authority dispatching reports (or fact checking stories), readers are obliged to think critically as they are reading — to allow a story to provoke further research, further reading, and — perhaps — further writing. (2002, p. 12)

Sheri Herndon (2003), a core member involved with the Seattle IMC since its nascence, says:

> [Openness] has been a guiding principle with strong roots in that first IMC and openness is one of the core principles that gets at the heart of our success and our uniqueness. When we speak of open publishing, it is not just a technological phenomenon; it is a philosophical underpinning that forms a foundation of policy and praxis. (¶ 2)

Wikis and Twikis

The growing prevalence of wikis in individual IMCs — indeed, now increasingly prevalent across the internet — takes Indymedia's radical democratic logic even further. Wikis are web-based, open documents that allow multiple people to write into and change the content of a web page. Wiki web pages, or "topics," function as "collective blackboards." The homepage for twikis (a version of wikis emphasizing tracked editing) describes the underlying concept of "radical egalitarianism" since everyone can collaborate on content. *Wiki wiki* means "quick" in Hawaiian and the software's advantages include immediate and uncomplicated web editing. Wiki pages have a very simple markup that can be edited merely by using a web browser. Each edit creates a new version; since it leaves footprints or traces, mistakes and inappropriate edits are easy to correct. Some wiki pages require passwords while others do not.

Increasingly, IMCs are moving important policy discussions to wiki pages to create what some users have called "living documents," such as "The Indymedia Documentation Project" (http://docs. indymedia. org/). In Seattle, notes from general meetings are being posted in wikis for others to add details that the note-taker left out. Wikis render documents more collaborative, organic, and fluid. An email to the general listserv extolled wikis in the following way: "The burden of maintaining quality is higher than a normal web site, but the opportunity for equal participation increases the number of eyeballs and keyboards attending to the task at hand." Some IMC activists — especially self-defined "tech geeks" (members of the technology working group) — say the wiki is perfect for non-hierarchical institutions such as the IMC. But several less tech-savvy activists whom I interviewed say wikis have mixed results. Some feel that introducing such a new tech-heavy tool — despite being userfriendly — has alienated many people who were just becoming comfortable with webbased organizing. Familiar tech-related barriers present themselves with wikis, such as lack of access, expertise, and confidence. Nevertheless, the values underlying such technical code are clearly related to a commitment to radical democracy based on egalitarianism, openness, and transparency.

Flanagin et al. (2000) assert that all technical codes have social and ideological values written into them. Accordingly, it is clear that IMC rhetoric and technical design are remarkably consonant along

radical democratic lines, though not without their ongoing tensions, especially those regarding structural inequities. For example, Indymedia's technocentric means of communication seems to privilege white North American males, a recurring grievance and one addressed throughout the network. Flanagin et al. suggest that users' behavior serves as the best indicator of underlying social and cultural norms in technology. Clearly, those using the IMC web page interface are following radical democratic procedures by providing the majority of the site's content. Indeed, the slogan "be the media" seems indicative of the design features and underlying values of the IMC site. However, these technological applications demand certain institutional practices to sustain them.

Institutional Constructions

IMCs' commitment to grassroots organizing is exemplified by dependence on volunteer labor, which also makes them more prone to activist fatigue. Many Seattle IMC members hold full-time jobs. Notable exceptions to such volunteerism are occasional paid interns, albeit usually IMC members. Questions involving money — how it is raised and spent — are debated in meetings and on email lists.

Network-wide Decision-making

For any institution, decision-making is one of the most central and fragile processes — not least because it entails negotiating power. Many IMCs face a lowlevel, but constant, tension between the global network and the local or regional IMC. Based on the anarchic, radically democratic ethic guiding Indymedia, each IMC is an autonomous node within the network, united only by a uniform design, hyperlink connections, and a shared commitment to the principles of unity. For the few decisions being made that affect the entire network, such as the handling of large sums of money, the large distributed network of autonomous collectives must somehow come to consensus despite cultural and international differences.

Spokes Council Model

The Seattle IMC follows a spokes council model that was first perfected during the 1999 WTO protests by the Direct Action Network (DAN), a loose coalition of hundreds of activist groups. The spokes council model has its roots in the anarchic affinity model, an institutional structure initiated by anarcho-syndicalists during the Spanish Civil War, and is characterized by small groups loosely coordinated via temporary representatives chosen by group consensus. The spokes council model allows for mediation between autonomous working/affinity groups, or nodes within the network, and the larger institutional body. This model is seen at work both at the local IMC collective and the global network — the latter based on the notion that sustainability for large networks like Indymedia depends on this less bureaucratic and more collectivist system. Accordingly, Seattle's IMC institutional structure is based on a non-hierarchical collective comprising nearly a dozen smaller volunteer collectives, or working groups, including editorial, finance, liaison, spokes council, media, space, and tech. These collectives meet separately with varying degrees of regularity. Some groups are relatively inactive while new ad hoc groups may spring up spontaneously to face a particular challenge. Several groups maintain their own listservs and wiki pages.

In theory, representatives from each working group are empowered by the general Seattle IMC collective to become "spokes" within the "spokes council," which acts as an organizing and coordinating body authorized to take action when decisions need to be made more rapidly. The Seattle IMC collective as a whole may also delegate additional projects or responsibilities to the spokes council. A core group is appointed by the general collective to serve limited terms. This raises potential problems with hierarchy formation, so there is a frequent turnover of positions. Although consensus

for spokes nominations is usually a smooth process, Polletta (2002) identifies the potential challenge for a token leadership position as a common pressure point where the consensus process may falter, especially since often no default voting procedure is in place.

Open Meetings

The Seattle IMC is one of the privileged IMCs that maintains a physical site where members meet on a regular basis. In addition to the working group meetings, bimonthly general meetings are held to decide policy. In Seattle, these meetings are open to anyone. They are usually long and sometimes contentious. Meeting topics range from the philosophical, such as the meaning of the "principles of unity," to the banal, such as toilet-cleaning duty. As with most IMC communications, many issues discussed during general meetings are negotiated as much — if not more — online, though face-to-face meetings are considered vital, especially for airing out tensions that may build up during computer-mediated communications. Online discussions take place at the local level on any number of working group or general membership listservs. Several listservs are dedicated to global-level discussions, such as "Process," "Communications," "Finance," and "New IMC." These network-wide discussions also sometimes occur during real-time online chats via a program called Internet Relay Chat (IRC). The IRC serves as a kind of meeting place for representatives from far-flung IMCs to gather at designated times. However, the utility of IRC for making global network-wide decisions has been limited thus far.

Consensus-based Decision-making

The most exemplary of Indymedia's radical democratic institutional codes is an adherence to a consensus-based decision-making model. All IMCs utilize some form of consensus decision-making, which is codified in IMC documents. The success of consensus decision-making is based on institutional memory, constant reflexivity concerning process, and strong interpersonal relationships founded on trust. The Seattle IMC describes its consensus process in a website-linked document titled "Detailed Description of Consensus Decision Making," which is part of an online publication, *On Conflict and Consensus*, published by members of the Consensus Network (Butler & Rothstein, 1987; see http://www.consensus.net). This online resource occasionally is referred to on the general listserv and during meetings. It addresses efficiency, leadership, discussion, and equality; it suggests that proposals be considered and, if necessary, reworked by the group to reach the best decision for the community as a whole.

For activist groups like Indymedia, consensus is understood to mean that everyone feels that his or her input was considered in the decision-making process (Polletta, 2002). The Seattle IMC's meetings allow for several levels of consensus and ways to register dissent without derailing the process, including "reservations" (have concerns), "non-support" or a state of "non-disagreement" (the person sees no need for the decision), or "stand aside" (it may be a mistake but a person can live with it). Making a "block" indicates that the person feels the decision goes against fundamental IMC principles. This stops any affirmative decision, discussed below.

Consensus in IMC practice

Typically, at a Seattle IMC meeting somewhere between one and two dozen members sit in a circle. People are asked to volunteer to facilitate for that meeting, take minutes, and convene the next meeting. Some consensus-based groups also have a designated "vibes watcher" to check for unspoken feelings within the group or to note if certain people (especially men over women) are dominating the conversation. At the Seattle IMC, the facilitator, with the timekeeper's help, takes on these duties.

The facilitator is also responsible for overseeing "stacking," a practice that allows an orderly progression of people voicing opinions, and discourages others from speaking out of turn. Consensus is sought each time proposals are put forth, discussed, and possibly amended. IMC members display consent by wiggling their fingers in the air, or "twinkling" — a hand motion purportedly adopted from DAN activists, who probably learned it from Quaker meetings (Polletta, 2002). Proposals pass unless someone withholds his or her consent with a block.

The block is a rare, but important event. Reserved for when members feel that fundamental IMC principles are being defied, the block forces open discussion of the group's implicit rules and values. Occasionally, however, some members think the blocking privilege is being abused, especially when infrequent attendees show up to meetings and begin blocking proposals. Over the course of several general meetings during the winter of 2002, for example, an argument erupted regarding the perceived elitism of the word "culture" to describe a facet of the Seattle IMC membership criteria. An individual who was not very active in the IMC said the word was too elitist and began blocking all moves towards consensus around the proposal, which was aimed at adopting sorely needed membership rules. This episode spurred an internal education campaign in the Seattle IMC: A descriptive flowchart was prominently displayed during meetings to help discourage capricious blocking.

Some IMC activists have noted that failures of consensus often result from lack of education about a process that is neither intuitive nor in tune with much of Western socialization (Riismandel, 2002). Adding to the complexity are gray areas in membership criteria. In the Seattle IMC, a member is defined as someone who attends three consecutive general meetings, belongs to a working group, and volunteers eight hours per month. Despite explicit membership rules, by this strict definition only a few most dedicated IMC activists would qualify as members, given inconsistent volunteerism. In any case, many members who fade in and out of involvement with the Seattle IMC believe they retain blocking privileges.

Strengths and Limitations of Indymedia's Radical Democracy

The remarkable degree to which Indymedia discourse, technology, and institutional structure are consonant with radical democratic ideals is nearly equaled by the significant tensions in sustaining such participatory practices, especially consensus decision-making. Some theorists see consensus as critical to ideal democratic practice. Cohen (1997, p. 75) writes, "Ideal deliberation aims to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus — to find reasons that are persuasive to all who are committed to acting on the results of a free and reasoned assessment of alternatives by equals." However, some democratic theorists are quick to note the drawbacks of consensus based decision-making, not least because the idea of "equal" is problematic (Young, 2000). Gastil (1993) also notes typical drawbacks in small group democracy, such as long meetings, unequal involvement and commitment, cliques, differences in skills and styles, and personality conflicts — tensions constantly negotiated within the Seattle IMC. For Indymedia in general and the Seattle IMC in particular these tensions may act as barriers to actualizing radical democracy. I organize these systemic problems in the following section according to three "tyrannies."

The Tyranny of Structurelessness

Hauptmann (2001) suggests that radical participatory democracy was tried but failed during the 1960s and that deliberative democrats should distance themselves from such a position because it is inherently flawed. Some theorists reach back to Michels' (1915) "iron law of oligarchy" to argue that radical organizations — especially larger groups — tend to become more bureaucratic and conservative over time. With this bureaucratization, idealistic and democratic institutions often come to be

dominated by a small group of people. The formation of such an elite group, Michel argues, inevitably leads to oligarchy. Clearly, there is evidence of this developing in the Seattle IMC, where over time the most active members accrue respectability that translates to more de facto power within the collective.

Polletta acknowledges these oligarchic tendencies, but argues that increasingly activists are adapting sophisticated tactics to offset them. She convincingly argues that contemporary activists are more reflexive than in past eras by constantly reexamining their internal structures and processes, as evidenced by the institutionalizing of a "vibes watcher" in some radical democratic groups. Such reflexivity renders implicit power relationships more explicit, and helps bring into focus structural power inequities associated with class, race, and gender arrangements that persist even in seemingly non-hierarchical practices like consensus-based decision-making. Further evidence of corrective measures is the intense focus on process-related issues during and after meetings — to the point of what Polletta characterizes as "fetishizing process," which has its own set of drawbacks, such as excessively long meetings. In fact, some activists have decried being "processed to death." In the spring of 2003 a "process v. progress" theme animated debate during IMC meetings and across the general email list several activists argued for less attention to procedure and more concern with concrete actions such as media making. This core tension is an ongoing debate in many Indymedia circles.

In another important critique, Bookchin (1994) argues that consensus dissuades the creative process of "dissensus" since it tends to pressure dissenters into silence. Allowing that consensus may be an appropriate form of decision-making in small groups of people familiar with one another, Bookchin argues that consensus is less successful with larger groups because consensus-based groups gravitate towards the least controversial. Therefore, he believes that such a process creates a pull towards mediocrity with the lowest common intellectual denominator prevailing, and permits an unintentional, but insidious, authoritarianism.

This position echoes what Freeman (1972) called "the tyranny of structurelessness." In her classic critique on consensus, Freeman argues that when devotion to structurelessness reaches the level of dogma, it ceases being a progressive force. Freeman charges that within the power vacuum of structurelessness, "informal elites" arise that, when combined with the myth of non-hierarchy, can create an antidemocratic space. In this scenario, structurelessness masks power. Freeman also argues that unstructured groups are rendered politically impotent by their inability to accomplish the simplest of tasks. She offers a list of strategies that she claims are both democratic and effective: delegating discrete tasks to specific people by democratic procedures; requiring those with authority to be responsible to the entire group; distributing authority; rotating tasks; allocating tasks in a rational way so that task and individual are not mismatched; and providing equal access to information and other crucial resources.

Many Indymedia activists I have spoken with argue that the strength of the consensus model rests on the fact that it *is* structured, as demonstrated by the complex flow chart placed in view of the membership during each general meeting. Further, many of Freeman's proposed strategies are already implemented by the IMC, such as mandating that all spokes positions operate on a rotating schedule, empowering certain groups and individuals to operate in ad hoc fashion beyond consensus, and relying on rational self-selection, although the latter may lead to informal reputation hierarchies by which the most socially outgoing and confident people, not to mention those with the luxury of time on their hands, take on a majority of tasks and begin to wield a certain amount of power.

The Tyranny of Ideology

It is incorrect to assume that Indymedia activists always strictly adhere to new "grand narratives"

of participatory politics. Many activists argue for a less purist approach. In describing today's increasingly hybridized activism, Polletta (2002) suggests, "No one believes any longer that decisions can be made by strict consensus. Activists are more comfortable with rules, less hostile to power, and more attuned to inequalities concealed in informal relations" (p. 202). Similarly, many Indymedia activists are increasingly flexible and pragmatic about rules, so they can adapt quickly to new situations through ad hoc procedures.

Nevertheless, allowing codified processes to become rigid and unyielding to special situations and diversity of opinions is a potential peril symptomatic of the Indymedia model. A failure to reach consensus on accepting a Ford Foundation Grant in the fall of 2002 was a spectacular example of how ideological obeisance may lead to institutional paralysis in the Indymedia network (Pickard, in press). The money, which had been earmarked for funding a desperately needed international IMC conference, was turned down due to perceived corporate connections. Additionally, some Indymedia activists, in particular members of the Argentina IMC, were alarmed by what they saw as North American IMCs dominating the network decision process. Though such instances may evidence how an ideological pull towards strict consensus leads to inaction, proliferating evidence suggests that Indymedia activists are more comfortable with this constant friction — indeed, even regard such tensions as a positive force — and thus privilege pragmatic concerns over ideological purity.

The Tyranny of the Editor

Radical openness causes similar tensions on the technology side of Indymedia, especially regarding editorial processes and the relationship between the open published newswire and featured articles. The featured articles section takes up the center of any IMC homepage, whereas the open publishing newswire — though still a significant component on the right hand side of the IMC site — is only allotted about one third the website space given to the featured articles. Unlike the newswire where anyone with internet access can post news stories, featured articles go through an editorial selection process, suggesting the existence of a hierarchical value system based on subjective criteria contrary to IMC's "be the media" mission.

Editorial policy is not specifically prescribed in the principles of unity and is one of the most important decisions left largely up to individual IMCs. Addressing this tension between the radically democratic newswire and the editorially selected featured articles, Jonathan Lawson of the Seattle IMC editorial collective explained the selection process as follows:

> A member comes up with an idea, usually referencing one or more articles from the IMC newswire [or] significant stories published by other media sites or institutions. The member composes the feature, which then goes through an approval process by the editorial collective as a whole. In selecting features, we look for stories that strike us as particularly prominent (this is, of course, subjective for each member), pithy, well-written, etc. ... We generally attempt to gauge the credibility of items we feature. We also take seriously requests for features which come from outside our circle, and are constantly inviting other people to join our group. (personal communication, March 13, 2002)

For the sake of transparency, editorial management of the Seattle IMC newswire is limited to "hiding" inappropriate posts, such as duplicates, hate speech, and advertisements. These posts are moved to a specific location on the site with an explanation for why they were hidden. Further, editorial working group meetings are open; anyone can participate and give input to all editorial processes.

As an institution, Indymedia is torn between aspiring to become a credible news institution able to

challenge corporate mainstream representations, and wanting to be inclusive so as not to repel large numbers of people who may not be able — due to lack of privilege and education — to produce content according to mainstream news quality standards. This openness has also led to common abuse of the newswire by hate groups such as neo-nazis, which, in turn, has led to significant consternation and rife among IMC activists trying to decide how to deal with the problem. This tension has often led to conflict between those advocating for a pure radical democratic approach by leaving the newswire unmanaged, and others who advocate a more pragmatic approach (Beckerman, 2003).

In keeping with a democratizing agenda, some IMC activists have advocated for technological solutions to help lessen the central role of human editorial control. For example, some IMC members have discussed reputation schemes, by which individual users rate news stories, thus allowing a general consensus to emerge around the perceived quality of a contribution and contributor. However, as one Seattle IMC activist put it, "reputation schemes are controversial as hell," and may even worsen the tendency towards elitism by introducing elements of competition and potential for abusing power. As individuals accrue higher reputation "points," they may not always use that power towards egalitarian ends. Another possibility is using a syndication model similar to the umbrella IMC site's model, which automatically draws content from local sites. However, some Seattle IMC members say this would be another way of privileging certain kinds of content, thus reifying the very power structures they aim to upset. Therefore, an easy technical fix proves elusive as the perennial tensions endemic to Indymedia practice — between quality and equity, and participation and elitism — map onto Indymedia uses of internet technology.

Conclusion

Radical democratic values structure the technological and institutional processes of Indymedia in complex and, in some cases, unprecedented ways. Some tensions plaguing Indymedia have been present in radical politics since 17th-century England, when revolutionary groups like the Diggers and Levelers threatened the propertied class with an effusion of radically egalitarian ideas (Hill, 1972). Nonetheless, negotiating these tensions with new technologies such as the internet brings to the fore new power configurations, new strengths, and new weaknesses. Ranging from editorial decisions about open-published news stories to coordinating a vast global network, Internet operations combined with Indymedia activists' adherence to their principles of unity have unleashed new opportunities and challenges in the push for radical democracy. These efforts reflect Indymedia's modeling according to a vision that prefigures a more ideal society. IMC activists actively try to redefine relationships instead of replicating the power inequities, structural biases, and systemic failures that they organize against. Yet anti-democratic tendencies persist and are sometimes even exacerbated by the very processes used to counteract them. Mansbridge's (1983) study of how consensus decision-making reproduces gender hierarchies supports the notion that some tensions remain or are even worsened.

Another often-overlooked aspect of these radical democratic practices is their strategic value. Traditionally, social scientists have treated these prefigurative politics as high-principled, but strategically disadvantageous (Polletta, 2002). Indymedia activists demonstrate what Polletta described: Radical democratic practice encourages innovation, solidarity, and dispersion of leadership skills. Further, maintaining a decentralized, non-hierarchical structure makes groups like Indymedia more resistant to state repression (De Armond, 2001). For example, no state can arrest the "leader" of Indymedia, nor can they sue or close down the entire network. This resilience was demonstrated in the fall of 2004 when, for reasons that were hidden from the public, authorities seized two IMC servers in London, taking down over a dozen IMC sites. Yet no arrests were made and within days the sites were back up online.

The leveling role of the internet is a significant new development in the evolving repertoire of radical political groups. The internet amplifies Indymedia activists' potential for radical democracy by democratizing media production, increasing non-hierarchical communications, and redistributing power to facilitate coordinated, co-operative action. Indeed, considering that internet communications — ranging from email lists and easily uploaded news stories to collective online documents and even a shared website architecture — enable operation of these institutional structures, in the case of Indymedia the technology and institutional structure are mutually constitutive. Undoing one would disable the other. In other words, the radical openness of Indymedia's technology is predicated on a radical democratic institutional structure; this structure could not exist without internet communications, especially on the global network level. Although face-to-face interaction remains crucial on the local level, the Indymedia network continues to function by consensus — a consensus reached amongst thousands of actors who will never meet in person. Important questions remain regarding the often-passive nature of this consensus; we should interrogate whether silence on an email list can constitute participatory democracy. Nevertheless, building on notions from earlier projects for participatory democracy and pluralistic egalitarianism, today's Indymedia activists are succeeding in actualizing radical democratic in unprecedented ways, especially as they elevate such logic to the global network level. Whether this model is sustainable remains an important question.

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9. At the Margins of Internet Governance: Grassroots Tech Groups and Communication Policy

Arne Hintz   Stefania Milan

This article examines grassroots tech groups as civil society media (CSM) actors marginalised in the communications policy debate. We aim to insert these key providers of information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure into discussions on enabling CSM policy agendas. The article maps their policy objectives, traces their connections to broader Internet governance mechanisms and explores their potential roles as policy stakeholders. We conclude that grassroots tech groups, while operating largely outside of the debate, offer unique perspectives and contributions to multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, challenging norms of inclusion and representation.

Introduction

"Summit Breaks New Ground with Multi-Stakeholder Approach" headlined the official press statement published at the end of the preparation process for the first World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva in 2003 (ITU 2003). Focusing on process innovations rather than thematic outcomes was symptomatic for the summit debates which stretched for more than five years and during which the question of participation of non-state actors often displaced discussions on information and communication issues. The main summit organiser, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), had promised a "new kind of summit" based on the "full participation" of "new" actors, particularly business and civil society. [1] Expectations were high that an entirely new form of global governance would be tested, with non-state actors participating on equal footing with government delegations. However, while some sections of (organised) civil society were included in the process, others remained outside, lacking the resources, the organisational structure or the will to participate (Hintz 2009). WSIS served as a laboratory for multistakeholderism (Raboy 2004), but it lacked "significant participation from those working directly at the grassroots in initiating and implementing ICTs" (Gurstein 2005a).

In this article we will look at some of these actors: grassroots media activists, radical tech collectives and alternative Internet Service Providers (ISPs). As typically loose and fluid civil society

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[1] In this article we refer to "civil society" as the non-governmental and non-commercial sector, that is, a social sphere beyond state and business, and we thus follow recent definitions used within the United Nations (Cardoso et al. 2004: 13).

networks with a precarious financial basis, these groups are likely to face challenges with regards to their inclusion in forums of policy debate. The emerging field of Internet governance offers a test case for the participation of these grassroots actors in policy-making. Such groups have contributed substantial innovations to the development of online infrastructure (see, e. g. Kahn 2004) and are immediately affected by policy changes, thus it would seem reasonable that their policy concerns are reflected in relevant debates. As a core post-WSIS policy arena, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) offers opportunities to trace the development of "multi-stakeholderism".

This article presents the results of online interviews that we conducted with members of grassroots tech groups. We identify policy preferences and attitudes towards a policy space such as the IGF, and develop a broader perspective on the relation between grassroots activists in media, communication and policy arenas. First, we clarify what we mean by "grassroots tech groups", point to the multi-stakeholder experiences at WSIS and IGF, then summarise and analyse their responses on policy objectives and governance structures. Finally, we extract challenges and suggestions for the development of participatory media governance. [1]

Grassroots Tech Groups

Definition and Role: Running Servers for Social Change

In using the term "grassroots tech groups", we refer to groups providing alternative communication infrastructure to civil society activists and citizens on a voluntary basis through collective organising principles, with the aim of counteracting commercial as well as state pressures on information content, media access and the privacy of media users. [2] Grassroots tech groups usually offer web-based services such as website hosting, e-mail and mailing list services, chats and other tools such as anonymous re-mailers and instant messaging; or provide platforms for self-production of information. [3] Common elements amongst these actors include[4]:

- Autonomy and emancipation: Developing self-organised alternative infrastructures is a means of emancipation from predominant providers of information and communication channels, and from over-arching business and government control.
- Direct action: Implementing an alternative production mode, they reject capitalist logic and government intervention. Their cultural and political backgrounds include anarchist thought, do-it-yourself culture and cyber-libertarianism. Such perspectives overlap with the values of early Internet pioneers who advocated minimal state regulation and maximum freedom for technical experts and civil society actors to develop infrastructures according to their

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[1]   Adilson Cabral from Fluminense University, Brazil, contributed valuable comments and participated in the drafting of this paper. We wish to thank him for his important contribution.

[2]   This definition is to be intended as analytical tool which tries to incorporate procedural and identity aspects which are relevant to our study, and to be as inclusive as possible. A recent People's Global Action (PGA) meeting on communication infrastructures identified alternative ISPs as "organisations running a server to support movements for political change to get direct access and participatory access to the web and media" (People's Global Action 2007). The "group" is seen as "functional units that can make decisions" (idem).

[3]   Examples include the Spanish SinDominio (www. sindominio. net), the Italian Autistici/Inventati (www. autistici. org), the German Nadir (www. nadir. org), the Dutch ASCII and PUSCII (puscii. squat. net), the North American riseup. net, and the open-publishing platforms of the Indymedia network (www. indymedia. org).

[4]   The following list draws from interviews with grassroots tech activists and analysis of website content (mission statements and calls for action).

needs. ①

- Collectivism: They are often organised as collectives of equals working on a voluntary basis, with horizontal consensus-building and a rejection of formal leadership and representation — in the words of one activist:"free, networked collaboration and shared production" (Interviewee 1 2007). The sustainability of the projects depends on the voluntary contribution of knowledge, skills, time and financial support.

- Service for, and members of, social movements: They seek to empower activists and civil society actors by providing communication infrastructure and information exchange tools:"our tech activism involves spreading voices so that they can't be shut by authorities" (People's Global Action 2006). Supporting other struggles, they constitute a form of "meta-organisation activism" (Interviewee 8 2008). At the same time they are an intrinsic part of social movements, and contribute to their agenda-setting by raising awareness of privacy protection and knowledge issues, "rejecting the globalising cultural and mediatic censorship of imagination and the attempts to sell us pre-digested dreams" (Autistici/Inventati 2002). Members are often active also in other fields, such as environmental politics, anti-racism and anti-fascism.

A typical radical tech collective would consist of half a dozen volunteer media activists who are often, but not necessarily, based in the same town. Some have weekly meetings for strategic discussions and decisions, some even operate a computer laboratory or an Internet cafe, but most communication and work takes place online via e-mail and chat. Daily tasks include managing webservers and list-servs, larger projects may include developing software tools, such as content management systems or encryption programmes that other civil society activists can use for their communication and campaigns.

They become more visible when they step out of cyberspace. Radical tech groups have established media centres at major protest events such as those against G8 meetings. Indymedia UK, for example, have set up tents with computer equipment in the middle of actions and action camps to allow other activists to write and upload reports directly from the street. The group Nadir once transformed a countryside barn in a remote North German village into a high-tech media hub that provided thousands of environmental activists with sophisticated communication infrastructure, enabling them to send out their reports on a protest against nuclear waste shipments to a global audience.

Grassroots Tech Groups and Civil Society Media

Within the increasing academic interest in community media (Howley 2005), alternative media (Atton 2002; Coyer, Dowmunt and Fountain 2007), radical media (Downing 2001) and citizens media (Rodriguez 2001), as well as the emerging interest by policy-makers in these media (European Parliament 2007; Lewis 2007), grassroots tech groups have received little attention. The prime concern of these studies is with the production of content and thus with radios, newsletters, community TV stations and websites as content providers, not with developers of communication infrastructure.

However, we do believe that grassroots tech groups are an integral and crucial player in the broader field of civil society media as defined by Hadl and Hintz (2009). They adhere to the main characteristics of the sector, such as civil society ownership and control; non-profit, social objectives;

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① Based on Dave Clark's famous creed from 1992 — "We reject kings, presidents and voting. We believe in rough consensus and running code" — cyberlibertarians oppose state interventions into the innovations and the creativity of individual developers (Barlow 1996), civil society-based creators of information technology and small businesses. In the rare cases in which state regulation is considered, it should be based on the prerogative:"First, do no harm" (Cerf 2004: 13).

democratic and participatory structures; and most of them either provide alternative content or assist others in doing so. Furthermore, they bring in new perspectives on access to, and participation in, media-making, connect with more recent innovations regarding free software, user-generated content and individualised media production, and thus provide an important link between the organisational and political approaches of "older" civil society media and newer technological as well as social developments.

Multi-stakeholderism at WSIS and Beyond

World Summits and Civil Society

The nation state-centred world, in which sovereign states represented the basic units in the international system and international policymaking based on inter-state diplomacy, has increasingly been challenged by, amongst other factors, the growing capacities, power and resources of transnational business and civil society. Accordingly, the concept of global governance has gained prominence, focusing on systems of rules and interdependent problem-solving by a diversity of actors on a diversity of policy levels. Control has become more dispersed, and capacity for decision-making and implementation more widely distributed, forming "layers of governance spreading within and across political boundaries" and transforming "sovereignty into the shared exercise of power" (Held and McGrew 2003: 11).

The world conferences of the 1990s offered construction sites for global governance. They invented a "new dramaturgy of world politics" (Messner and Nuscheler 2003: 4) by going beyond the diplomatic exclusivity of states. The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 set a precedent, and a series of summits on core concerns such as human rights, cities, gender and development followed.

The preparation process towards the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) promised further progress, with private sector and civil society to be recognised as "partners" and to be treated "as peers and equals to nation-states" (Ó Siochrú 2004: 334). A large number of NGOs and other civil society actors came to participate and created effective mechanisms for lobbying and thematic exchange. However, they also faced serious obstacles in accessing the summit stage and in participating meaningfully, particularly with regards to accreditation, funding and exclusion from negotiations.

The requirements for receiving accreditation for the WSIS process were geared towards formal NGOs and failed to consider the structural background of those civil society actors that are organised as loose grassroots groups, non-hierarchical networks and temporary coalitions.[1] The registration process for the summit involved privacy infringements (Bendrath and Panganiban 2003), which discouraged some civil society activists from participating. Several groups, such as Reporters Sans Frontiers and Tunisian human rights groups, were not allowed to participate at all. Financially, effective participation in WSIS preparatory conferences involved covering flight tickets and two weeks of hotel accommodation, food and drinks in an expensive Swiss city — several times a year. Little funding was provided for civil society delegates by the WSIS organisers. Again, only larger NGOs, which could mobilise sufficient funds, for example through established contacts with potential donors, could cope with this restriction. Finally, and despite the initial promises by summit organisers, the new non-governmental "stakeholders" were reduced to the status of "observers" (WSIS Executive Secretariat 2002) who were allowed to attend only "public" (WSIS Executive Secretariat 2002) sessions and who

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[1] In their WSIS evaluation "Much more could have been achieved", civil society participants of the WSIS process expressed the urgent need to develop "clearer and less bureaucratic rules of recognition for accrediting Civil Society organisations in the UN system" (Civil Society Plenary 2005: 15).

were excluded from actual decision-making processes and spaces. Only the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) came close to a true multi-stakeholder design (WGIG 2004).

Broad Participation?

Participants and observers agree that WSIS has helped to open previously closed spaces of inter-governmental debate to organised groups of citizens and activists. Civil society groups praised the "innovative rules and practices of participation" established in some areas of the WSIS process and highlighted WGIG as a particularly innovative format "where governmental and Civil Society actors worked on an equal footing" (Civil Society Plenary 2005: 7). The high degree of formalisation of civil society involvement in WSIS as well as the autonomous structures created by civil society participants, argues media scholar and WSIS observer Marc Raboy, "form the basis of a new model of representation and legitimation of non-governmental input to global affairs", and as a result, "the rules and parameters of global governance have shifted" (Raboy 2004: 349). However, access by non-state actors to the negotiation process "was fragile, was frequently challenged and regularly withdrawn" (Ó Siochrú 2004: 338). Insufficient opportunities for participation risked to reduce multistakeholderism to a "rhetoric exercise aimed at neutralising criticism through the adoption of an unproblematic consensual understanding of political life" (Padovani and Pavan 2007: 100).

Such lack of participation concerned the North-South divide, leading to an overall European dominance in civil society attendance at WSIS (Cammaerts and Carpentier 2006). Yet, it also concerned the separation in established NGOs, on the one side, and broader social movements, on the other, which has characterised recent institutional processes. Many of those who were building the information society in their everyday practices were either missing or participated in alternative events outside the summit compound. Few autonomous media practitioners, free software developers and creators of grassroots communication infrastructure, such as citizen-based community wireless networks, attended the summits. Community informatics researcher Michael Gurstein noted that "while there has been a very considerable degree of 'talking about' ICTs for Development there has been remarkably little 'talking with' those who are actually doing the job on the ground" (Gurstein 2005b), which would then lead to the question of "how to provide a meaningful and effective voice for this 'larger civil society'" (Gurstein 2005a).

Internet Governance Forum

The most prominent outcome of WSIS has been the establishment of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), a new forum for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on Internet policy. Its mandate has been to "discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet" (IGF 2006a) and to involve all relevant stakeholders in this debate. The IGF does not have a decision-making role and cannot negotiate binding agreements but it can set policy agendas.

The first meeting of the IGF took place in Athens, Greece in 2006. It followed in the footsteps of WGIG[1] by allowing for open debate, advancing WSIS practices and moving closer to "full participation".[2] One innovation has been the establishment of "Dynamic Coalitions" in which members of all stakeholder groups discuss specific Internet policy sub-themes — such as spam, privacy, freedom of expression, linguistic diversity — and try to find common positions. However, despite

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[1] For a comprehensive historical overview from the WSIS to the first IGF, see Shtern 2007.

[2] However governmental and institutional delegates do retain a slightly more prominent role at IGF, for example in the IGF advisory group, see IGF (2006b).

these progressive steps, several of the above-mentioned access challenges persist. A large number of NGO representatives have participated in meetings and debates, but grassroots tech groups, as we define them, are missing. Internet governance researcher Elena Pavan (2007) has criticised the predominance of Western views in IGF deliberations and the lack of representativeness of civil society actors.

Methodology

In collecting data for this article we adopted a qualitative approach, conducting e-mail interviews. E-mail interviewing is a specific form of online interaction, consisting of an asynchronous exchange of questions and answers (Kivitz 2005). We chose this method because radical tech groups are typically online-based and we believe that the researcher should relate to the object of inquiry according to the ways "in which social practices are defined and experienced" (Hine 2005: 1). Interviews took place over a period of several weeks around the IGF 2007. Activists were asked to provide details about threats and obstacles to their activities, values underlying their activism, their vision on Internet regulation, their attitude towards policy fora and more specifically the IGF. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish and Portuguese. One third of interviewees asked to submit their answers encrypted with the widely-used encryption programme Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) or similar tools.

The interviewees were members of eight different radical tech groups based in Europe. Occupational and class backgrounds were diverse, ranging from information technology (IT) professionals, academics and freelance programmers to students, temporary workers and unemployed. Age varied between early twenties and early forties, gender was predominantly male. A first group of interviewees were asked to reply as individual members of a group or as individual Internet activists. In this, we assumed that individuals reflect a group culture. A second set of interviewees replied collectively following an internal group debate. This was time-consuming but appropriate, since, as one of our interviewees put it, "alternative ISPs are collective enterprises and by contacting and making questions to individual people you are breaking down the collective dimension" (Interviewee 3 2007).

To protect interviewees' privacy, they are identified in this text only as "Interviewee", followed by a number. Several radical tech collectives have faced serious repression due to their vital support for social and dissident movements. Connecting their names and/or the names of their collectives directly with particular activities or political statements may increase the risk of repression and would expose information about particular groups and individuals — information that can potentially be used against them.

Internet Governance and Grassroots Tech Groups: a Missing Link?

This section will analyse the perceptions and attitudes of grassroots tech activists towards institutional policy processes. It draws from the interview transcripts to specify what these groups consider as threats to their projects and values, and which aspects of the Internet should be regulated in which way from their perspective.

Threats: State Repression and Corporate Interventions

Grassroots media activists identify state repression as a primary threat and obstacle to their work. As most of the projects operate on a local or national basis, state intervention "is the most immediate repressive frame" (Interviewee 7 2007), despite the supposedly global and borderless nature of the Internet. Grassroots media projects are facing surveillance and harassment in many countries, including Western democracies. In Europe, some have been targeted with anti-terrorism charges (e. g.

SO36 in Germany and Autistici/Inventati in Italy) and had their equipment confiscated and members' flats raided by police. According to one interviewee, governments increasingly seek to "intimidate members of the group" as "they see us as part of a dissident movement" (Interviewee 2 2007). In some countries (for example, Oaxaca, Mexico), activists are facing arrests, disappearance, rape in custody and even death (Interviewee 4 2007). Some claim that state repression has included "political attack against our websites" (Interviewee 7 2007), that is, technical sabotage.

Interviewees see a major threat in national policies and supranational regulations, particularly as they concern increasing state surveillance, for example through new legislation in many countries on data retention, which "forces us to disclose information about our users to the government" (Interviewee 2 2007). This places tech groups "in a severe ideological dilemma between having to accept the law and power, and at the same time guarantee the right to the privacy of our users. Whenever we refuse 'to collaborate' with the judicial authority, we must face a judicial process, which, financially, is very expensive for activist projects" (Interviewee 7 2007). A second tier of obstructive legislation is seen in intellectual property regulation, which contrasts the groups' objectives of enhancing free knowledge exchange with obligations to limit such exchange. Corporate interventions constitute a further obstacle, as business players interfere with the operations of grassroots tech groups through technological means (e. g. domain name filters provided by telecommunication companies) and legal means. Several interviewees report libel cases against small media projects that do not have the resources to defend themselves in court and therefore have to obey and/or pay compensation charges, placing a heavy burden on their scarce funds — even when the legal situation is unclear. Finally, the dominant role of major political and corporate actors in standard-setting and policy formulation is seen as a more general obstacle, as it leads to unfavourable policy priorities and shapes the Internet in a way that is problematic for media activists.

Overall, the actors who are seen as the major source of threats are also seen as dominating transnational policy processes — governments and large businesses. There is less reference amongst interviewees to North-South divides than there was amongst NGO members at WSIS. The interviewees regard both Northern and Southern governments as threats and as potential (or actual) censors, and they mistrust "democratisation" agendas that involve governments.

The Best Regulation is User-based Self-regulation

With regards to policy objectives, interviewees emphasise freedom of the Internet and freedom of information. According to most interviewees, all policy and regulation should be geared towards this primary aim. While generally sceptical of regulatory measures, they consider regulation compatible or even necessary in two areas: anti-monopoly regulation and privacy protection.

Anti-monopoly measures are important to check and balance business power, "assuring that the Internet remains a free space for communication" (Interviewee 3 2007). For the same reason, open technological standards are to be supported and preserved. Privacy and rights protection are seen as crucial means to limit excessive state surveillance and protect the right to anonymity and the rights to political dissent.

However, interviewees are highly sceptical of the notion that transnational policy dialogue can achieve progress in these areas: "I am not convinced at all that any major institution or international body would try to regulate, or create policy, in a way that it would not favour states and corporations" (Interviewee 4 2007). Regulation would necessarily "defend concrete ideological interests" (Interviewee 7 2007) that are diametrically opposed to the interests of social movements. Therefore, most interviewees emphasise a "hands-off" approach in sensitive areas such as content, freedom of expression and privacy. The "basic rights of the Internet user: privacy of communications, right to

anonymity, right to freedom of expression and to political dissent" (Interviewee 7 2007) should be "unregulated" in a way that "we reject any regulatory attempt by the state or supranational institutions on these issues" (Interviewee 7 2007). Content "should be regulated only by the end users themselves" (Interviewee 2 2007). Internet-specific legislation is seen as a particular threat. "If fraud is a crime it is equally a crime on the Internet and should be pursued but not by introducing additional regulatory or control procedures" (Interviewee 3 2007). Also, "intellectual property should not be a regulatory principle since there is just no sense of property if the goods are infinite (no regulation of human oxygen intake is needed if there is air for everyone)" (Interviewee 3 2007).

Interviewees suggest self-regulation by those who are actually developing and using the Internet. This includes "non-binding standards that gain popularity based on their quality, usefulness and ease of use/implementation" (Interviewee 5 2007). Most importantly, any regulation should be done with the maximum possible degree of plurality and inclusion of the "Internet community" (Interviewee 7 2007). One interviewee argues, "democratically chosen groups of technical experts that operate in a very open and transparent way are the best approach for this kind of regulation" (Interviewee 3 2007).

"*In Principle, No*": *Criticising Policy-making Arenas*

The immediate answer of most interviewees to the question on whether they would get involved in policy-making processes if invited to is a strong "no". Most suspect that civil society participation is just "decorative" (Interviewee 3 2007), that the actual decisions are taken elsewhere, that is by corporate and government actors, and that "the invitation would be just for the record, so the institution or the body would gain political and cultural capital" (Interviewee 4 2007). Participation, in that sense, would "legitimize the decisions taken by other agents (corporations, governments, lobbies, etc.)" (Interviewee 3 2007). Therefore, "we want to maintain a certain distance from this institutional and falsely 'democratic' internet [regulation]" (Interviewee 7 2007). ①

Furthermore, the interviewed media activists stress that their focus is on creating actual communications infrastructure, rather than on advocacy. One interviewee: "I don't think we need to focus in 'asking' or 'having a voice'. I think we have 'to do', 'keep doing' and keep building working structures and alternatives that are diametrically opposed to the ways capitalism forces us to function in our everyday lives. Our job, as activists, is to create self-managed infrastructures that work regardless of 'their' regulations, laws or any other form of governance" (Interviewee 4 2007).

The scarce time and energy available to media activists (all interviewees work as volunteers), is "better spent building alternatives outside the system" (Interviewee 1 2007), whereas policy-making processes are seen as "distraction" (Interviewee 4 2007) that would keep activists away from their core activities. Connecting the practical focus with the policy level, one interviewee says: "Any policy which does not come from the spontaneous understanding of the people or the personal dedication of a group of individuals is unworthy of developing" (Interviewee 5 2007).

Lack of interest in the WSIS debate was due to different priorities combined with a perception that the process "look[ed] too complicated" (Interviewee 2 2007). The hurdle of procedural complication mirrors the hurdle of technical understanding that many WSIS participants were facing. The WSIS

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① One of the possible risks is the cooptation of activists by comparably "friendly" governments. For example, the government of Brasil which raised a strong voice in favour of progressive values, such as access to knowledge and free software, in the WSIS process, seeks to incorporate media activists in its programmes of "digital inclusion". The resulting dislocation of activists (and their expertise) from the grassroots to governmental initiatives can weaken grassroots projects and create tensions within the broader social movement and civil society networks.

process, in the view of media activists, compromised its legitimacy by assembling actors with procedural but not necessarily technical skills. It created a perception that, at policy fora such as WSIS, "stakeholders who have decision making powers demonstrate their utter ignorance of the systems that they are supposed to govern" (Interviewee 5 2007).

The aspect of "norm change", which is usually seen in the social movement literature as core motivation and strategy of civil society actors participating in policy processes (Sikkink 2005), does not play a major role for the media activists that were interviewed. There is no trust in norm change through participation in policy processes, but only through practical deeds and the development of concrete alternatives.

IGF, that Big Unknown. And, by the Way, "Is There Really any Power There?"[1]

Awareness levels of the details of policy debates at the Internet Governance Forum are generally low.[2] The reasons given overlap with the responses to the interest in transnational policy-making, and develop around two claims: (a) marginal impact of the process, (b) the need to focus on practical work at the expense of advocacy. Policy fora such as the IGF are believed to have little actual impact and there is deep distrust in their outcomes and in the usefulness of engaging with them. Civil society participation is not expected to lead to substantial change. As one of the respondents put it, "it is a puppet theatre, internet governance is being decided somewhere else (Microsoft, Cisco, IP international regulation ...)" (Interviewee 3 2007).

Moreover, interviewees lay the focus of their activities on practical work and on the local or national level: "I guess in my case it is a matter of time more than a lack of interest. I would not mind knowing more about it, but then again, as I said, our focus is to 'keep doing', and to learn and develop by doing so. To put it in a crude example: if I have to choose between debating issues of governance, or setting up a Public Access Point at the No Border Camp for example, I'm afraid I'll chose the second" (Interviewee 4 2007). There is more trust in achieving change through practical social and technological development than through advocacy: "by the time the governance forum arrives to any conclusions, we will have moved on anyway" (Interviewee 4 2007). However, there is also little understanding on how the IGF differs from WSIS and other UN-based fora.

Multi-stakeholderism Revisited

If a policy process is to be fully legitimate, the preferences of a broad range of actors would need to be included into policy agendas, and fundamental access barriers to global governance arenas would need to be lowered. This section will provide some considerations on reviewing multi-stakeholder governance and summarise issues that may need to be strengthened in media policy debates.

Policy Objectives

As the interviews have shown, members of grassroots tech groups question the need for extensive regulation. They only accept regulatory action where it maintains and enhances the freedom of the Internet and user/citizen/civil rights, by preventing excessive interventions by powerful private and state actors. Open technological standards, the right to anonymity, network neutrality, privacy, freedom of expression and the free flow of knowledge and information (and thus the absence of both direct and indirect restrictions, such as censorship and intellectual property rights) would constitute

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[1] Interviewee 3 2007.

[2] Only one activist declared interest in the IGF but "my personal aim is to prove scientifically the futileness of the process in terms of direct practical outcomes" (Interviewee 5 2007).

core demands, but interviewees doubt that these can be enforced in government- and business-led policy arenas.

They put more faith in developing technical by-passes around policy challenges, in self-regulation by end-users, and in non-binding standards that allow the best solution for a particular problem to flourish. They, thus, show connections with anarchist thought but also with a cyberlibertarian belief in openness, transparency and the power of users and of technical experts, and they uncover links with the demands for self-regulation by the private sector. Grassroots tech groups create an "autonomous zone" which needs protection from the threats coming from outside that zone, threats which originate from the business sector and the state. Yet the means of protecting that zone is technological self-defence, rather than advocacy and participation in policy processes.

This roughly-sketched agenda is consistent with the more elaborate policy goals developed by media activists around the WSIS process, particularly at the alternative series of events WSIS? WeSeize! that took place parallel to the first WSIS summit in Geneva. WSIS? WeSeize! promoted the development of autonomous and civil society-based media infrastructures, highlighted openness as a practice to counter state- and business-led policies of privatisation and control, criticised state censorship and surveillance as well as the privatisation of ideas through intellectual property law, and discussed the exploitation of immaterial work and informationalised labour. WSIS? WeSeize! participants questioned underlying power relations in the current arrangement of global governance, particularly at global summits and in international institutions, and they rejected WSIS as an illegitimate attempt by business and state elites to regulate (in their view: control, repress and appropriate) processes which had been initiated in the civil society and grassroots realm (Hintz 2009).

Obstacles to Participation

Members of grassroots tech groups point to a variety of reasons why they do not participate in policy processes such as WSIS and IGF:

- Time and resources: As voluntary activists, they lack the time for advocacy. Financial resources to pay advocacy-related salaries may theoretically ease time pressures but would be seen as a contradiction to the voluntary, collective and non-hierarchical character of the projects.
- Focus on practices: There is a strong priority on setting up grassroots infrastructure and establishing alternatives to mainstream content, infrastructure and organisational models. Some think this is the only way to achieve change.
- Scepticism towards policy processes: Institutional arenas and policy debates are criticised for their deep imbalances, with certain state and business actors setting the agenda.
- Core values: This scepticism, furthermore, is consistent with the core values that all interviewees highlight as a foundation of their work, particularly autonomy and diversity, thus a rejection of centralist decision-making.

This brief overview suggests that the most straightforward remedies which were identified, for example, around the WSIS process — such as providing financial assistance and changing rules for registration and accreditation — may be necessary preconditions but would not be sufficient for involving a broader set of actors. A policy forum such as IGF would also need to respond to structural challenges which grassroots tech groups highlight and to transform the policy process more fundamentally. We will point to some of these challenges and transformations in the next section.

Towards Participatory Governance

Grassroots tech groups (and, generally, a growing number of social movements, civil society

groups and citizen initiatives) are structured in a way that is incompatible with current institutional processes. As collective enterprises they regard consensus decision-making and consultation of all members as a foundation of their work, and they therefore reject traditional forms of representation — both political representation through election and organisational representation through leaders, chairs or CEOs. Assigning decision-making power to a representative, for example to one member participating in a policy forum, conflicts with collective organising principles. Moreover, time-consuming collective decision processes make it difficult to rapidly respond to policy deliberations and to quickly-evolving document drafts at, for example, UN summits. The latter, therefore, offers no suitable space for non-representational collectives.

A different yet related challenge concerns the role of individuals in information/communication activism. Informal online movements, temporary "tactical media" (Garcia and Lovink 1999), individualised online campaigning and the emergence of technological developer-activists have all changed the face of civil society and have diversified the latter beyond the classical formally-established non-governmental organisation (NGO). If policy institutions are serious about including "civil society", they need to create mechanisms to accommodate such informal and individual activism. Some media developers and activists have thus proposed to transform the NGO-oriented civil society participation models into "a free assembly of women and men, each equal to each other" (Bertola 2005) that allow "people to speak for themselves in the forums in which decisions (...) are made and not require that they act through artificial proxies" (Auerbach 2005). This would certainly conflict with the collective approach favoured by grassroots tech groups. However, both approaches point to the disintegration of traditional forms of formal organisation, which affects both organised civil society and inter-national (inter-state) policy-making.

Developing a response may require "a new logics of politics" characterised by "non-representational democratic models of decision making" (Lovink and Rossiter 2005). Concepts such as "organised networks" (Lovink and Rossiter 2005) and "United Constituencies" (Kleinwächter 2005) relate to this challenge. "Constituencies" have emerged as an important social category, which identifies members not according to citizenship and geographical territory, but according to common interest, a common history, and common language. "Constituencies", thus, take note of the "reconfiguration of social space" towards "relative deterritorialization" and growing "supraterritoriality" (Scholte 2000: 46, 50). ①

A "new logics of politics", however, may not stop at the "United Constituencies" replacing or complementing the United Nations. The concept of "unity", and thus centralist regulatory measures, may be equally out-dated. From the perspective of grassroots tech groups, a united global summit or forum increasingly looks like a dinosaur that belongs to another era. Rather, these groups speak to a radical decentralisation of global governance and to a bottom-up approach to policy-making, which places those that are directly affected by policy measures at the centre of governance efforts. This may not just imply an increased involvement of civil society actors but a restructuring towards a more decentralised network of interrelated policy clusters.

Conclusion

Grassroots tech groups offer an interesting perspective on the relation between civil society media and policy. They not only contribute a distinct policy agenda that centres on privacy, information

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① Using similar terminology, but leaving the "territory" of national concepts further behind, the Indymedia UK network which consists of several local groups all over the United Kingdom uses the abbreviation "UK" for "United Kollectives".

rights, openness and self-regulation, but they also favour a praxis-focused approach over policy advocacy. Developing alternative infrastructure and technological "bypasses" around laws and regulations is valued more than participating in policy dialogue with governments and the private sector. They largely operate "beyond" policy processes, that is, they do not interact directly with the policy level, and thus they differ from both "insiders" who pursue a cooperative strategy of active engagement in institutional processes, and "outsiders" who adopt confrontational forms of protest (also see Milan and Hintz 2007).

Their political agenda enriches the debate on civil society media policy, but it also leaves a few question marks. Their strong focus on self regulation by users and technical experts shows overlaps with cyberlibertarian myths and the policy preferences of the private sector. They also display limited concern with structural factors that interfere with free self-regulation. Such factors would include the uneven distribution of technical knowledge and thus the concentration of influence amongst a small number of technical experts, and North-South dimensions that may require different policies (and a different governmental role) in the global North and South to deal with fundamental and long-lasting disparities.

Grassroots tech groups provide us with a view on the deficiencies of current multi-stakeholder global governance. They highlight the importance of considering broader parts of civil society, in addition to established NGOs, if transnational policy-making is to be democratic, participatory and thus legitimate. At the same time they show that it would be insufficient to just invite those broader sets of actors to existing policy debates. The concept of "inclusion", which has been so prominent at WSIS and elsewhere, is a double-edged sword. An "inclusive" process that continues to be led by the "old" powers of the governmental and inter-governmental realm or the "new" powers of the business realm will remain unacceptable for many of "those working directly at the grass roots in initiating and implementing ICTs" (Gurstein 2005a, see above). "Inclusion" is not the only — and, arguably, not the main — challenge for participatory and legitimate governance; but "creation" of new governance mechanisms that reflect the aspirations, skills, roles and organisational structures of all actors that make a relevant contribution to the further development of, or are affected by, the issues that are at stake.

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10. Ecological Ethics and Media Technology

Richard Maxwell   Toby Miller

After seeing electricity, I lost interest in nature. Not up to date enough.
                    ~ Vladimir Mayakovsky[①]
Brought along some gadgets for you to see
Here's a crazy little thing we call TV
Do you have electricity?
We're humans from earth
We're humans from earth
You have nothing at all to fear
I think we're gonna like it here
                    ~ T-Bone Burnett, "Humans from Earth."

Ecological ethics barely figures into the way media and communication researchers think about media technology. By ecological ethics, we mean the subset of ethics concerned with "how human beings ought to behave in relation to non-human nature" (Curry, 2006, p. 47). The environmental impact of electronic waste (e-waste) is just now starting to gain attraction in media and communication studies (Sterne, 2007; Parks, 2007; Ellis, 2007, pp. 217 – 219; Maxwell & Miller, in press; Miller, 2007b). Here the ethical response focuses on the environmental (including human-bodily) harms associated with disposal, dismantling, and recycling of media technologies. However piecemeal, this interest in e-waste is a salutary advance toward an eco-ethics in media studies; it is one among many environmental issues that pertains to the study of media technologies. The essay aims to alert media and communication scholars and students to the ecological context of the technologies that the field has expertly studied during its half century existence.

But why should media studies develop an eco-ethics at all? The answer is hammering hard from outside the academy. We inhabit an ecological crisis that demands rethinking of first principles, research frameworks, methods, activism, and policy work. Among other interconnected problems, this crisis consists of climate change (global warming) caused by: 1) overproduction of carbon dioxide (CO_2); 2) pollution in the over-developed world; 3) industrial dumping in less-developed regions (disrupting the biological development and immune, endocrine, and hormone systems of "virtually all organisms"); 4) rapidly diminishing biodiversity, the Earth's "sixth great extinction," unique for being caused by one species (guess who?); and, 5) the rapid decline of habitat (50% of the Earth's forests are gone, as are 25% of sea habitats) (Curry, 2006, pp. 10 – 13). The public response to this crisis in

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① Quoted in Macauley, 1996, p. 114.

the U. S. has seen a doubling in membership of environmental groups between 1980 and 2000, with numbers rivaling membership in political parties (Dalton, 2005). Meanwhile, calls for interdisciplinary efforts to confront the eco-crisis have grown within the academy (Rose & Robin, 2004).

There is a spectrum of relevant ecological concerns that the field of media studies could confront as ethical challenges in the near future. Note these examples: Media owners are numbers 1, 3, 16, 22, and 39 among the top 100 polluters in the U. S. (Political Economy Research Institute, 2004). An estimated 2% of all carbon dioxide emissions come from the global information and communication industry, or about the same as the aviation industry (Gartner Estimates, 2007; cf. Corbett & Turco). Approximately 1. 5% of the U. S. electrical supply (about US $4. 5 billion worth) is consumed by server "farms" powering our network society (Wald, 2007). High-end magazine publishing in the U. S. needs about 35 million trees annually to produce 18 million titles, 90% of which are trashed within a year of publication (Independent Press Association et al. , 2001, pp. 5 – 10). Communication towers and wires kill up to 50 million birds annually in the U. S. alone (in the past, the FCC required annual reports on this problem) ("Avian/Communication Tower Collisions, " 2004).

In addition, we should be confronting other imposed health effects such as the following phenomena: wildlife gradually being poisoned by toxic emissions; a rising body burden of toxins caused by discarded electronics (Grossman, 2006; Rydh, 2003); radiation exposure from TVs, computer monitors, cell phones, laptops, telecommunication and electrical towers, power lines, etc. (Cox, 2007; Lean, 2008); space junk from communication satellites (more than 330 million pieces orbiting earth) with messy discharges of toxic chemicals and compounds, as well as nuclear waste (Broad, 2007); and now mediarelated nanotechnology, whose toxic byproducts and waste are not well understood at the atomic scale (Center for Responsible Nanotechnology <crnano. org>; Schoenfeld, 2007).

Generic Electronics Supply Chain in an Ecological Context

Understanding the ecological context adds a new level of complexity to the study of media and society. The sheer materiality of the technology begs the question about the neglect of its environmental impact in the key writings of our discipline. In 30 years of growing awareness of a global ecological crisis, where has the environment figured in the histories of media technology, in our industrial and institutional research/political-economic work? We have analyses of symbolic environments in the metaphors of McLuhanites and media ecologists and in notions of "new" media-environs (cyberspace, interface, etc.). We have analyses of environmental policy as an information and cultural phenomenon (Felleman, 1997). And we have some valuable engagement with media coverage of the environment (see an account in Miller, 2007a, chaps. 3 – 4), and critical writing on environmental themes in popular culture (Carmichael, 2006; Cubitt, 2005; Hochman, 1998; Ingram, 2000). But none of these reach into the material environmental impact of media technologies.

What would happen to game studies if, rather than rehearsing debates about ludological, narratological, and effects approaches, it confronted the fact that millions of cartridges of Atari's game adaptation of *E. T. The Extraterrestrial* (Steven Spielberg, 1981) were buried in a New Mexico landfill, broken up by a heavy roller, and covered in concrete to consign them to history; or that cables in Sony's PlayStation 1 consoles were found to contain deadly levels of cadmium, a fiasco that cost Sony US $85 million to fix (Engardio, 2007)? What would it mean if film studies were required as
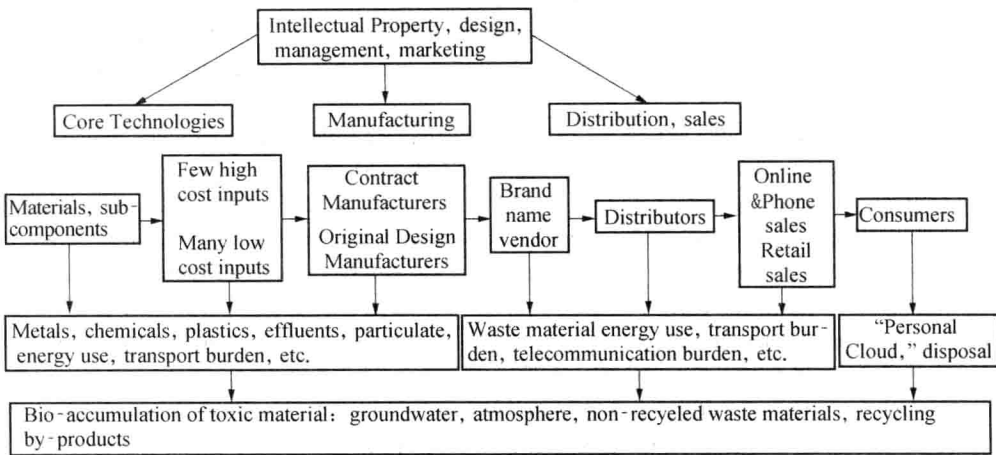
Source Modified from Linden et al. , 2007: 3. ①

an ordinary part of its work to evaluate motion picture production ecologically?② What would it make, for example, of *The Beach* (Danny Boyle, 2000)? Thai environmental and pro-democracy activists publicized the arrogant despoliation they experienced when Fox was making this movie in Maya Bay, part of Phi Phi Islands National Park. Natural scenery was bulldozed in late 1998 because it did not fit the fantasy of a tropical idyll. Sand dunes were relocated, flora rearranged, and a "new" strip of coconut palms planted. The producers paid off the government with a donation to the Royal Forestry Department and a campaign with the Tourism Authority of Thailand to twin the film as a promotion for the country. Meanwhile, the next monsoon saw the damaged sand dunes of the region collapse. Natural defenses against erosion had been destroyed by Hollywood bulldozers. All the while, director Boyle claimed the film was "raising environmental consciousness" among a local population that was allegedly "behind" U. S. levels of "awareness" (Miller et al. , 2005). Is this question on our agenda when we examine the film industry? If not, why not?

Rather than glibly respond that *It's the Hardware, Stupid!* we recognize that media and communication scholars have had no problem in the past dealing with a range of critical insights to other ethical problems, including those related to social harms (violence), cultural harms (prejudicial stereotypes), economic harms (ownership), or political harms (propaganda). Surely we can extend these ethical commitments to environmental concerns and at least provide an additional chapter to such otherwise useful recent titles as *Media, Risk and Science* (Allan, 2002) or *Media Technology: Critical Perspectives* (van Loon, 2008)? The eco-crisis presents media studies with an eco-ethical choice: either continue to document and assess the growing consumption of media technologies without understanding their ecological context, or advocate policies and influence polities to reduce the consumption of media technologies — not an easy choice for a field hooked on iPodpeople and PCers. We think it's time to

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① This table was modified to correct the impression that this value chain exists outside a real, material ecosystem. The authors called the iPod the latest triumph of Apple's "thriving ecosystem" — i. e. , the New International Division of Cultural Labor — by assemblage across Korea, Japan, China, Singapore, Taiwan, and the U. S. , in keeping with a US $8 billion corporation that has half its liquid assets held by overseas subsidiaries from Ireland to Singapore (Linden *et al.* , 2007, pp. 2, 6; Schaefer & Durham, 2007, p. 49; for an approach to the New International Division of Cultural Labor cf. Miller et al. , 2005).

② Though focused on waste-management issues related to Los Angeles-based film production, Corbett and Turco (2006) illustrate the complexity of such research and provide examples of greenish production practices.

assume intellectual responsibility for the ecological dimension of the media, and deal with difficult ethical challenges posed by the eco-crisis.

A point of departure could be the equation used in environmental ethics. It explains the eco-crisis as the product of four inter-related factors: Population, Lifestyle, Organization of Society, and Technology (Impact = $P \times L \times O \times T$). While none of the factors can be extricated from the complex interdependence causing the crisis (Curry, 2006, pp. 13 - 18), they point to distinct ethical challenges in media research and analysis. Media and communication researchers might be mindful of population size as a factor contributing to the eco-crisis, but the field's strengths are probably best directed at questions of lifestyle, social organization, and technology. Lifestyle in this ecological context refers to (over-) consumption of resources and material goods as well as the global infrastructure of consumption, characterized by stratification that pits the overindulgent rich — the 5% producing the largest amount of greenhouse gasses and consuming 40% of the Earth's resources — against have-not regions, with gaps increasing annually. Consider that it would take three planet Earths for the current global population to enjoy an "American lifestyle" (Curry, 2006 p. 15). The factor of social organization refers to the way differently organized societies (social democratic, capitalist, and socialist) respond to the eco-crisis, and here media policy and political economic approaches to the media could contribute. Again, this area would have difficult choices regarding our ethical and political commitments: can an ecological ethics wedge its way into research and advocacy that now focuses on ownership policy, content diversity, and democratic media reform?

The technology factor of the eco-crisis poses the clearest ethical challenge (or set of challenges) to media studies, a field of great depth in historical and critical work on media technology (for examples, see among others, Barnouw, 1990; Douglas, 1989; Noble, 1977; Schiller, 2007; Starr, 2004; Sterling & Kittross, 2002; Winston, 1998; Castells, 1996 - 1998). Edging this research into environmental problems means it will have to address the ecological context of media technology: 1) the environmental burdens of energy generation and consumption throughout a medium's life cycle, from production to consumption and disposal, including transportation throughout this cycle; 2) a medium's chemical and heavy metal composition; 3) prior inputs from the earth (extracted via mining, drilling, logging, etc.) — the *source function* of the eco-system; and 4) subsequent outputs into the earth (deposits into air, land, and water) — the *sink function* (Korten, 1996, p. 23; Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition). The effects of these inputs and outputs outlive the medium's existence, in some cases for generations, through deforestation, CO_2 emissions, and bio-accumulative poisons like PCBs, dioxin, and so on. The ecological dimension of media technology points to ethical questions that the field must not shy away from. The most challenging will be how much communication and entertainment media is enough to attain a system that serves everyone on the planet fairly without contributing to "ecological suicide."

Media studies could draw on three schools of ecological ethics to develop an ethical orientation to the study of media technology: at two extremes are anthropocentric ("light-green") ethics and ecocentric ("dark-green") ethics, with an intermediate ("mid-green") ethics combining elements of the others (Curry, 2006). These schools of eco-ethics can be distinguished by their answers to questions of value (what is valued, what entities qualify for moral consideration, and what matters most), rights (duties and rules that protect individual and collective entities that are valued), and consequences (utilitarian considerations of actions and motives that affect the well-being or happiness of those with moral standing). The lines separating these are often blurry (like all ethics, there are no iron-clad rules of operation), but each in its own way has virtues (and limitations) that can inform an eco-ethics in media studies.

For anthropocentric eco-ethics, non-human nature has no moral standing (hence no rights) except

in relation to how humans are affected by changes in nature. Humans rule the Earth by virtue of their intrinsic value, but they need not rule out an ecological ethics that helps them flourish, for example, by finding instrumental value in nature as a means to human happiness (in its utilitarian/ consequentialist versions). A communication philosopher might argue that all eco-ethics are unavoidably anthropocentric because questions of value, meaning, and interpretation are always centered on human experience, perception, and language. Good point, but the eco-ethical response asks whether "the privileging of human beings … at the expense of all other forms of life" is justified (Curry, 2006, p. 45). There are other aspects of anthropocentrism, foremost among these that it has provided the most politically expedient form of ethical discourse shaping environmental policy (at least in capitalist societies), namely, self-interest. But even this is a complex matter, for the narrow confines of self-interest can allow for a virtuous ethics oriented to non-human nature, i. e., living an ecologically sound life that accumulates ethical substance to one's character.

In contrast to human-centered ethics, ecocentric ethics holds that nature (subsuming humanity in some versions) is the "ultimate source" of all value and attempts to specify right/wrong and good/bad human action in relation to this particular interpretation of value. Ecocentrists are convinced that "some or all natural beings, in the broadest sense, have independent moral status" (Curry, 2006, p. 64). Human domination of nature is fundamentally wrong/bad, and there is a right/good way to live an ecologically healthy life by putting the Earth's well-being first. For some, this is a matter of an ethical regard for the integrity and ineffability of nature (think of Aldo Leopold's "land ethical" wonder at the sleepy skunk stirring during a mid-winter thaw [1949] or William Connolly's "affinity of affect" for an unruly Australian cockroach [2005, p. 90]). For others, as in Gaia theory, ecocentric ethics reside in the notion of Earth as the one-big-organism. It also informs eco-political critiques of class, race, and gender oppression that Left biocentrists and ecofeminists have argued is inextricably tied to capitalist/masculinist subjugation of nature under the sign of growth (Callicott, 1994, pp. 36 – 41; Curry, 2006, pp. 63 – 100).

An intermediate form of ecological ethics accords some intrinsic value to non-human nature but not as completely as ecocentrism does. Mid-green ethics is not fully anthropocentric, though it rests on the principle that humans' "moral considerability" can be extended to other (sentient) beings, primarily non-human animals. Proponents of mid-green ethics can be found among advocates of animal liberation (Peter Singer) and animal rights (Tom Regan) as well as in biocentrism or life-centered ethics (Paul Taylor). However, when there is a conflict between humans and other life forms, this intermediate ethics tends to privilege human interests (Curry, 2006, pp. 55 – 62).

How would these apply to media studies? Anthropocentric ethics is fundamentally individualist but relies rhetorically on collectivist political discourse. Most environmental policy debates make sense via anthropocentric eco-ethics by pointing out the cost of environmental degradation to collective human life. This characterizes the consequentialist assumptions of research on e-waste, global warming, alternative energy, air and water pollution, greening of industry, and so on, where humanity is seen as the ultimate loser of bad ecological action (Curry, 2006, chap. 6). In this eco-ethics, media technologies carry both promise and peril for the environment. Media technologies are tolerable and good because they enhance people's ability to act and communicate as green consumers and concerned eco-citizens; they work against our well-being when they pose hazards and deposit toxins into the eco-system or diminish our enjoyment of nature (those ugly towers and cables) or otherwise foul the lives of creatures sharing the Earth with us. While the ultimate source of value resides in our species, this ethical orientation has the potential to sustain enough empathy for non-human nature to introduce important qualitative concerns into research and discussions of media technology (within limits discussed below). This could entail revisionist work on everything from media technology's

environmental impact on habitats and biodiversity to how the environmental movement itself uses polluting media technologies as tools of activism (cf. Castells, 1997, chap. 3).

Likewise, there is room for an intermediate eco-ethics in media studies to influence research on the development and deployment of media technologies, for example, in order to attenuate harm to non human animals that share the Earth with *numero uno*. There are limitations to this "midgreen" ecoethics that the field would have to confront, including the problem of moral extensionism (which has difficulty perceiving the collective interdependence of non-human nature in its assumption that rights can be extended to individual species other than humans under certain circumstances) or the way that the replacement of human chauvinism with animal chauvinism (animal rights) can preempt debate (Curry, 2006, pp. 55 - 62).

But media studies would be profoundly disrupted were it to install an ecocentric ethics into its thinking on media technology. Basically, an ecocentric media studies cannot embrace a technology that degrades non-human nature in order to flourish within it. That's a real deal breaker. But let's think about how media studies would have to change its take on media technology from an ecocentric ethical position, *if it could*. There are possibilities and limits to this happening. The possibilities will depend on whether media studies can make a fundamental shift in first principles to give the Earth's well-being preeminence in the study of media technology. For the ecocentrist, the eco-crisis makes this necessary. This shift requires an absence of moral self-righteousness about the value of media technology, a conviction that "everything on this Earth depends on it and its vital constituent parts," and the resolve to accept that when "*human good, values and interests clearly conflict with the well-being of the Earth, the former must give way*." This last "realization cannot ever be taken for granted — as much as possible and wherever and whenever possible, *it must be argued, publicized, fought for and lived*" (Curry, 2006, p. 112; emphasis in original). At this point in time, this particular ecocentric ethics can only advance by acting pragmatically in a pluralist world in which it must live and work, with agonistic respect, alongside both light- and midgreen eco-ethics; it must be ready to forge alliances, but not at the expense of ecocentric principles (Curry, 2006, p. 113). With this reservation in hand, an ecocentric ethics in media studies would still require a paradigm shift far more radical than either anthropocentric or intermediate eco-ethics demands. In short, it would entail a disenchantment of technology and a reenchantment of non-human nature (McLaughlin, 1993).

The enchantment of technology is entwined with the transcendence of non-human nature as key indices of modernity (in both capitalist and socialist versions). The domination of nature by science and industry blends chemical magic with rationality, reason with machinery, to transform the Earth into an instrument without intrinsic value or meaning (McLaughlin, 1993). The genealogy of "millenarianism, rationalism, and Christian redemption" profited from this disenchantment of non-human nature, gaining dominion and stewardship over the Earth as its rewards (Callicott, 1994, pp. 14 - 21; Dinerstein, 2006, p. 569; Nye, 2006, p. 598; Curry, 2006, pp. 26 - 27; & McLaughlin, 1993, p. 99). Enchantment attached itself to technological invention to the same degree that non-human nature was dislodged from pre-modern ways of seeing which, along with nature, became ridiculous, inert, a spectacle to adorn nation-building and an object of domination and exploitation (cf. Callicott, 1994). Frederick Engels was one of the first to suggest otherwise when he perceived and documented in vivid detail the environmental ugliness of industrialism, albeit in anthropocentric terms as a shameful blight on English workers' lives (Engels, 1845/1892).

Since the 19th century, labor has been thought of as something to be controlled long-distance, connected to transnational textual and military domination but also set against itself via an ever-grander division of itself. Similarly, geographical enlargement of the division of labor driven by capitalist expansion changed our relation to the global environment, as resources supplying industry were

increasingly drawn from outside local ecosystems. This global system thus brought about a dislocation of experience of environmental conditions that transformed "ecosystem people" into "biosphere people" (McLaughlin, 1993, p. 21) — marking the parallel alienation of intrinsic value from both labor and non-human nature. Ned Lud and his followers recognized that capitalists who did not do productive work controlled machinery, which controlled the lives of those who *did* work; what they couldn't yet perceive was the growing interdependence between their exploitation, the enchantment of technology, and the degradation and disenchantment of non-human nature. (*A propos*, Lord Byron sought the death penalty for opponents of machines in his maiden speech in the Lords, just months after summering with the Shelleys, even as the first Luddite piece of science fiction [*Frankenstein*] was being created by Mary) (Pynchon, 1984).

Media and communication technology inherited their own enchanted life from these antecedents (Mosco, 2004). The advent of the train, the telegraph, and the photograph was "a victory over time and space" (quoted in Briggs & Burke, 2003, p. 104). By the 1890s, even as vast a country as the United States could see space and time "enclosed ... running on the same clock of awareness and existing within a homogeneous national space." National networks were designed to homogenize conduct, both governmentally and commercially (Carey, 2003, p. 186). The rhetoric about electricity promised that it would be possible to "talk in our voices hundreds of miles away" and record votes and the latest popular melodies (quoted in Briggs & Burke, 2003, p. 147). Debates over the possibility of a new world order, brought on by the spread of media to the people, foretold an end to the chauvinism of sovereign-states (Marvin, 1988, pp. 192 – 193). This combination of domineering overreach and utopian imagination by state and capital were as typical then as in our own time — just substitute "Internet" for "telegraph," "radio," or "television."

With each binding and unbinding of time and space, the visibility and audibility of signs from elsewhere stimulated discussion of the sublime qualities of media technology (both utopic and dystopic) but further obscured the ecological context (here and elsewhere) of such marvels. As capital and capitol alike continued to press communication technology into service for social and commercial dominion in the 20th century, a new boosterism placed media at the center of economic innovation by asserting that they encompass corporate and governmental information technology (which is where even more money is made and yet greater power exercised) (Garnham, 2005). By the 21st century, a former Chair of the U. S. Federal Communications Commission, Reed Hundt, and one of his offsiders, claimed that the principal goal of communications policy was to increase productivity through "decreases in the price of transmission and increases in the amount of information that can be cheaply and rapidly moved from place to place" (Hundt & Rosston, 2006, p. 2). The enchantment of media technology achieved a new luster with the promotion of information networks alongside water and power as the bedrock of this new world economy (Bar with Simard, 2006). At the same time, consumers embraced the new "information" technologies, encouraged no doubt by pervasive marketing and advertising of digital gadgetry. By the early 21st century, the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that U. S. residents owned approximately three billion electronic devices (2007, p. 1) with well over half these purchases made by women (Twist, 2005). The Consumer Electronics Association said that US $145 billion was expended in the sector in 2006 in the U. S. alone, up 13% on the previous year, referring joyously to "the consumer love affair with technology continuing at a healthy clip" ("CEA," 2007).

Meanwhile, media and communication research on technology surged to comprise over one-fifth of the field's book titles available in the U. S. (Aslama et al. , 2007, pp. 59, 82). But it seems that none of them thoroughly investigate the ecological context of media technology, not to mention ethical concerns with lifestyle and societal organization as factors of the eco-crisis (please prove us wrong).

Still, it is not necessary for media studies to make a wholesale conversion to ecocentric ethics, even if it could, in order to develop an ethical regard for non-human nature. But it *is* vital to recognize that the enchantment of technology that grips even the most critical work in the field cannot be sustained in the face of the worsening eco-crisis. In our time, the political role for ecocentric ethics will have to be modest (*contra* unhelpful dogmatic versions), hoping at best "to acquire sufficient influence in the world to *check* anthropocentrism, instrumentalism and utilitarianism" (Curry, 2006, p. 67; emphasis in original). With this in mind, a "light-green" eco-ethics might begin the disenchantment of technology in media studies, to nudge research seeking a balance that lightens environmental burdens while allowing us to "enjoy, invent and be free in the modern world" (Robins & Webster, 1999, p. 62). Let's see how that goes.

In anthropocentric eco-ethics, we can find seriously divergent interpretations of the value of humanity, because not all anthropocentric eco-ethics accords equal value to all populations. In the U.S., for example, environmental policy is based entirely on cost-benefit analysis (CBA), a risk-management technique that lies at one extreme of anthropocentric eco-ethics. CBA is used to determine whether a particular regulation justifies its cost (this can influence decisions about whether mandated recycling is an efficient use of resources, or if losses to the logging economy outweigh benefits of protecting endangered wildlife, etc.). CBA works by monetizing human and non-human life through various methods, such as "hedonic pricing," which would determine the market value of a forest, for example, by correlating housing prices with proximity to undeveloped land. In this case, the benefit of not developing *all* the forestland would justify mandated conservation of *part* of it. Critiques of this approach include the arbitrariness of assigning monetary value to human life and other non-market goods, the failure to account for intergenerational equity, and elevation of technocratic decision-making at the expense of public input and participation (Clowney, 2006). CBA also practices a spatial politics that fails to address inter-territorial equity. Its eco-ethics, such as they are, stick to the kind of concentric thinking that presumes the zones of the biosphere in which it is applied have merely relative connections to zones beyond the boundaries of the analysis. This concentric view of the earth allows for a number of other cultural assumptions about the relative value of communities living across multiple lines of difference, territorial or otherwise (Connolly, 2005, pp. 41 – 42).

Media studies has had to deal with CBA in almost all matters associated with policy and regulation, so this might be one area where the field's potential "light-green" eco-ethics could get a foothold. Consider the concentric logic at work in e-waste recycling, keeping in mind the way it relativizes cultural norms across different societies. Most electronics recycling is done in the Third World by pre-teen Chinese, Nigerian, and Indian girls, picking away without protection of any kind at discarded First World electronics in order to find precious metals, then dumping the remains in landfills. Dust laden with harmful heavy metals from circuit boards and other components settles in workshops and blows onto roads and other public places, while the recovered metals are gathered and sold to recyclers, who do not use landfills or labor in the First World because of environmental and industrial legislation *contra* the destruction to soil, water, and workers (Basel Action Network & Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, 2002; Lee, 2002; Leung et al., 2008; Pelta-Heller, 2007; Shabi, 2002; Tong & Wang, 2004; Wong et al., 2007, pp. 435, 441). Here, pollution in the Global North is culturally intolerable (if politically tolerated), while being treated as culturally and politically acceptable in poorer regions of the world, a move that exports environmental risks as per the notorious prescription of former World Bank econocrat and Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers (to wit: "Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs (lesser developed countries?").

Underlying the tensions between "bean counters" and "tree huggers" (Clowney, 2006, p. 109) is a

techno-scientific ideology that determines how environmental risk is distributed. The discourse of risk management masks the fact that decisions are actually made to define the number habitats and creatures that will die or be sickened by environmental harms. Science (or more narrowly, techno-science) plays a role in this moral detachment by providing legitimacy via measurement of "safe amounts" of exposure to toxins and pollutants (science's role is paradoxical and deserving of a longer discussion, but it should be noted that scientific research is also the primary source of important quantitative measures of the ecocrisis, along with providing a language of critique and an array of expert-activists). The language of risk management puts ethical considerations in an apolitical frame of technocracy, as compared to language that denotes more precisely the politics of what institutions like the Environmental Protection Agency do: they determine how a particular harm will be allocated (Michaelson, 1996, p.1907). If we press this ethico-political point into our studies of the global flows of harms, that is without the pretensions of risk managerialism, we can provide a critical framework for understanding the politics of recycling, hazardous waste disposal, and the like. Routine environmental despoliation, global labor competition, cyclical recession, declining life-long employment, massive international migration, developments in communication technology, and the rolling back of the welfare state ... alongside income redistribution toward the wealthy have left denizens of post-industrial societies factoring costs and benefits into everyday life as never before — while their sense of being able to determine their future through choice is diminished (Latour with Kastrissianakis, 2007; Rikagos & Hadden, 2001; O'Malley, 2001). This is why some have called managerialism one of the ecological "curses of our time," for its "belief that human beings have not only the 'right' but the ability, even if only potentially, to successfully manage the world" (Curry, 2006, p.28).

Anthropocentric eco-ethics contains alternatives to environmental CBA and risk management, including the *precautionary principle*, *absolute prescriptions*, *sustainable development*, and *cost-benefit shortcuts* (Clowney, 2006, p.125). The precautionary principle holds that "our knowledge of the effects of our actions is always exceeded by our ignorance" (Curry, 2006, p.48). This standard lays the burden of proof on those who would introduce potentially harmful substances or practices into the environment in circumstances where there is no scientific consensus about such actions' consequences. This "better safe than sorry" environmental principle is very strong in international agreements and offers the most serious challenge to CBA "bean counters." Absolute prescriptions are unconditional bans on known pollutants and toxins; this was the standard that informed much of 1970s' environmental law. Sustainable development refers to efficient use and equitable distribution of natural resources for long-term socio-economic development. CBA short-cuts include technological fixes that offer qualitative improvements without strict adherence to quantitative factors of regulation (Clowney, 2006, pp.125 – 130).

Of all these alternatives, sustainable development has been rendered the most controversial through its casual overuse by actors across the political spectrum, from free marketers to left ecocentrists. Ideally, the term denotes a standard that "rules out all practices except those that are indefinitely sustainable" by the Earth's ecosystem (Curry, 2006, p.48). Sustainability is more commonly deployed as meaning a balance struck between economic development and environmental protection, though this tends to mean qualitative development rather than pure quantitative growth. As environmental economists point out, there is no such thing as sustainable growth: it's "a bad oxymoron — self contradictory as prose and unevocative as poetry" (Daly, 1996, p.193). The virtues of sustainable development are that: it accounts for intra- and intergenerational equity; it allows for open participation, if not by affected communities at least by their representatives; and it is recognized in international agreements to assure a scale of inter-territorial equity, even when the parties disagree

on its meaning. It thus offers a more equitable alternative to CBA's concentric comprehension of the world.

The disadvantages of sustainable development concentrate at the point at which the question of quantitative economic development overtakes other concerns. In its weakest form, sustainable development becomes "little more than 'sustainable' capitalism" (Pepper, 2000, p. 451; Deutsch, 2007, p. C1). Economic self-interest pushes eco-ethical self-interest into a little corner of sustainability. Herein lies a key vulnerability of anthropocentric eco-ethics. Self-interest that does not perceive the intimate relation between human and non-human beings will tilt the balance towards satisfying human needs.

A new direction in anthropocentric eco-ethics could derive from "green citizenship." According to political theorist Hartley Dean (2001), environmentalism has affected citizenship in three ways:

- Claims to rights have expanded to include clean air and water (this was suggested at least as early as 1739 when Benjamin Franklin argued that "public rights" over Philadelphia's air and water should supersede private rights of industry).
- National boundaries and interests have been brought into question by the border crossing impact of despoliation (multi-lateral agreements were sought throughout the 20th century, but it was the 1967 United Nations conference on the environment that inaugurated international environmental policy (Hopgood, 1998, p. 2).
- Corporate economic citizenship has been rearticulated beyond gleeful receipt of welfare.

More than an addition to the rights and responsibilities of territorially-based citizenship, this amounts to a critique of them within the sustainability framework of anthropocentric ethics. While still essentially human-centered, this ethico-political corrective is focused on saving infrastructure and heritage from unsustainable capitalist expansion, and thus dowses the global public sphere with green intentions that must necessarily confront challenges posed by the eco-crisis. Rather than looking to the next generation to carry on, forecasts must look centuries ahead in order to guide policy today, so elemental are the risks created by industry (Dobson, 2003).

This is the kind of inter-generational thinking that must pervade our field if we are to confront our logo-centric interdependence on the technology we engage, criticize and promote. We conclude with two examples of eco-ethical challenges that face media studies. One case is relatively uncomplicated, the other complex and difficult. We offer these illustrations as primitive attempts to think with eco-ethics about media technologies.

Magazines

By the end of the 20th century, "the pulp and paper industry was the second largest consumer of energy" in the U. S. (Independent Press Association et al., 2001, p. 6). The Southern states comprised the "largest paper-producing region in the world" (Wear & Greis, 2001). The pulp and paper industry became "the single largest consumer of water used in industrial activities in the wealth democracies of the [Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development] OECD and the third largest greenhouse gas emitter, after the chemical and steel industries" (OECD, 2001, p. 218). Per capita paper consumption declined somewhat between 2000 and 2005, especially in the European Union, causing some paperlesssociety boosters to predict the ultimate passing of paper-based media — a vision that discounts the rapid growth of paper consumption in China and other developing countries and ignores the problems of increased energy consumption from the technologies replacing paper (scanners, charging cameras and laptops, etc.) (Fairfield, 2008). Moreover, claims that vital or cherished content can be permanently stored on hard drives and other media are proving to be fragile. According to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences study, "The Digital Dilemma," there

are good grounds both to doubt the long-term viability of storage media (they disintegrate or become obsolete faster than older media of paper and film) and to raise significantly the cost estimates of transferring content from one generation of storage media to the next, as well as the long-term energy commitments to support electronic storage model (Cieply, 2007).

Paper Production in Selected Nations 1998

Source   Hassan et al., 2005, p.435
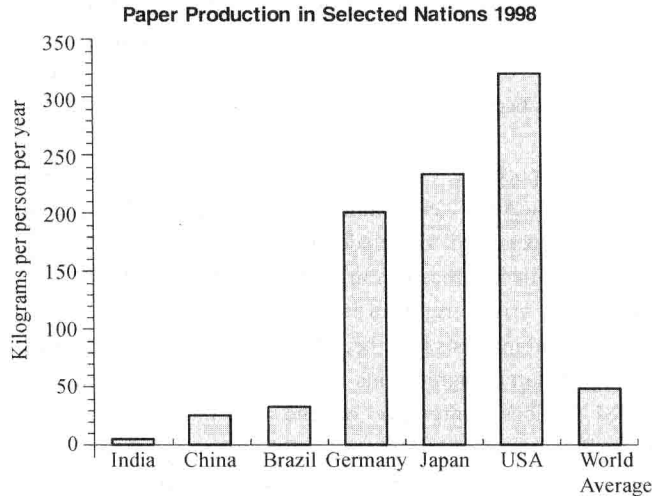
Paper consumption will continue to pose a core eco-ethical challenge to media studies. At least one paper-based medium offers a clear case of needless over-consumption: high-end commercial magazines. Since 2000, magazine publishing has been eating up forests at a rate higher than any other print medium — the glossier the magazine, the more new, or virgin wood is needed. By that year, 18,000 magazine titles were published annually in the U. S., which added up to an estimated annual print run of 12 billion copies, the equivalent of more than 35 million trees. Two-thirds of all copies are not purchased, leaving 90% to be trashed within a year of publication, of which just 19% are recycled. The rest, about two million tons, ends up in landfills or incinerators. This wasteful business is perpetuated by wholesale distributors, market research firms, and retail sellers who have no incentives for comprehending the meaning of sustainable publishing (Independent Press Association et al., 2001, pp.5 - 10).

Annual Environmental Impact of the Production of 12 Billion Magazines

Environmental Impact	Annual Amount	Annual Equivalent
Wood Use	5,110,398 tons	Amount of copy paper used by 109 million people (39% of U.S. population)
Energy Use	72,220,086 million British Thermal Units	Enough to power 694,000 households
Greenhouse Gases (CO_2 Equivalents)	13,408,395,941 pounds	As much as the emissions produced by 1.2 million cars
Solid Waste	4,917,979,277 pounds	As much as the garbage produced by 1.2 million households
Wastewater	34,241,543,545 gallons	As much as the sewage produced by 352,000 households
Particulate Emissions	23,572,856 pounds	N/A

Source   Alliance for Environmental Innovation/Environmental Defense, cited in Independent Press Association et al., 2001, p.6.

The economic context of magazine publishing shows that the business model — overproduction — fails to address the limits of growth of publishing. With annual revenue increases of 1 to 2% in this sector (Wheaton, 2007, p.14), advertisers get squeamish at any fluctuations in magazine circulation and threaten to abandon magazines altogether — though this is not unheard of as a ploy to hammer advertising rates down, especially when the money is really still being made in print ad spending, not on-line ("Out of Vogue," 2007).

For ecocentric and intermediate eco-ethics, little time would be spent weighing the Earth's well being against a human-centered value derived from the "pleasing characteristics of magazines — their portability and glossiness" ("Out of Vogue," 2007). This glossy medium in its current form would have to yield to the Earth. And our contribution? Media studies could introduce research on lifestyle and social organization to deepen the case against profligate deforestation, but the pressure must really come from the eco-crisis itself, which necessitates an immediate end to the existing papermaking process and disposal problem underpinning high-end commercial magazine publishing. Even "light-green" eco-ethics could find common ground for action here, but once drawn into the risk managerialism of CBA, environmentalists might find themselves compromising for an ecologically unsound outcome. Alternative sources of pulp could replace virgin forests (recycling, hemp, etc.), but would not provide the quality of paper currently used by the magazine industry. And as we've pointed out, electronic alternatives are not problem-free. The point of this illustration is to introduce an eco-ethical challenge that media studies could help resolve given its knowledge base and resources for research and analysis of this medium and its markets. From our point of view, gloss may be desirable, but it must be dispensable; forests transcend that calculus.

Cell Phones

The cell phone is a very compelling media technology. As Castells et al., (2007, pp. 246 – 258) argue, it is used by hundreds of millions of people worldwide. It's the technology of choice for developing countries trying to overcome internal "connectivity gaps." Mobiles outnumber landline phones, and they provide tools for youth culture and social networks. Their uses are malleable, multimedia, and multimodal. They broaden channels of communication within a realm of personal safety, coordinate fragmented family life, improve individuals' experience ("choice") of peer groups, speed up rendezvous, and make users feel important. Moreover, there are additional features: users produce content, create their own language, and draw important meanings from the exterior design.

On the downside, however, there are many drawbacks: cell phones cause a new form of inequality (lack of access to the new sociality), are biased toward young eyes and dexterous fingers, can spread rumors quickly, are vulnerable to viruses, distract drivers and pedestrians, cause interpersonal conflicts between callers, and so on. Dan Schiller (2007, pp. 162 – 173) offers a contrasting view of mobile telephony, from a political-economic perspective. He challenges cell phone enthusiasts to query the way social stresses are not merely fueling new consumer needs, but are exploited at the expense of consumers who rush to buy inferior services at high cost. This is particularly the case in the U.S., where the decline in government oversight of telecommunication industries since World War II has resulted in increasing privatization, with diminishing emphasis on quality guarantees, standards, and regulation of competition. Schiller argues that poor-quality service in the U.S. is a function of these companies' abilities to exploit a social need for connectedness in times of social fragmentation. He draws on Raymond Williams' analysis of TV in the 1970s to describe the experience of displacement and deracination in modern life that settled into a mode of sociality in which individualization (separateness and privacy) combined with mobility (transportation and widening access to the world). Williams suggested the term "mobile privatization" to capture the paradoxical

feelings of being at once more separated from others and more capable of connecting with them. Whereas broadcast technology, in Williams' view, was a social product of this industrial form of sociality (1975, p. 26), much like Castells et al. 's suggestion that mobile technology fits an analogous structure of feeling in the network society (timeless time, space of flows), Schiller argues that political-economic arrangements allowed mobile telephony to emerge in a form befitting divided societies. In the U. S. , telecommunications and postal services responded to this vulnerability under the guidance of public policy shaped in the public interest. The Internet and mobile telephony, by contrast, arrived in the U. S. under market criteria that privileged mobile privatization, and the fragmented forms of sociality from which it originated. They were exploited for profit, and their technical basis was inferior to Asian and European counterparts.

These two studies offer substantive analyses of lifestyle and organizational factors that have fueled the growth of mobile phone technology. Eco-ethics shifts the scholastic perspective to the reality of the eco-crisis and redirects analysis first to the ecological context of the cell phone: the production chain, life-cycle energy requirements, raw materials (source functions), environmental outputs (sink functions), or post-consumer existence (spent batteries, disposal, recycling, and so on). We can fill in certain airbrushed absences from this picture.

The source materials used in cell phones vary among manufacturers — but all contain lead and other heavy metals (circuit boards), frequently at levels that exceed U. S. toxicity standards (keep in mind the allocation of risk behind the notion of "safe amounts"). All involve chemical processing associated with chip production, including many toxic detergents and etchants; most contain mercury (screens) and flame retardants made of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (bioaccumulative synthetic chemical compounds are persistent organic pollutants known to cause neurological problems, though they are still not well understood); all contain tantalum, the mining of which has caused "disastrous" social and environmental harm in Africa; and all contain batteries (Grossman, 2006, pp. 18 – 20, 44 – 45, and chap. 5). Compounds in batteries are toxic (among the substances they house are nickel-cadmium, lead-acid, nickel metalhydride, lithium-ion, and lithium-polymer components). Like generators, batteries are not primary-energy sources, but instead require energy inputs prior to production and distribution and during recharging (including the "no-load" burden of plugged, but empty chargers) (Rydh, 2003). And additionally, results of recent research on long-term handset usage have confirmed links between brain tumors and radiation from mobile phones, causing the European Environment Agency to call for design changes (Lean, 2008). Cell phones do dread post-consumption work: about 130 million cell phones are trashed each year in the U. S. alone (with an estimated half billion old phones sitting in drawers), and Americans now purchase replacements every 12 months on average (Crosby, 2007; Mooallem, 2008, pp. 40 – 41). As one environmental health scientist warned:"In a phone that you hold in the palm of your hand, you now have more than 200 chemical compounds. To try to separate them out and study what health effects may be associated with burning or sinking it in water — that's a lifetime of work for a toxicologist" (quoted in Mooallem, 2008, p. 42).

Clearly, manufacturers could help reduce environmental burdens by looking for non-toxic source materials, while manufacturers and distributors could help with buyback or recycling programs to keep spent phones and batteries out of landfills, as per 2006 legislation in California — not merely consumer/user refunctioning outlined in Castells et al. (2007). Nevertheless, progress in this policy area has been hampered by cost-benefit-analysis rigmarole (the current impasse in New York City government provides a good case study on the limits of "light green" approaches to the eco-crises) ("One Small Step for Electronic Waste," 2008). Policy matters aside, what might media studies say about this very complex ethical challenge?

Ecocentrists would have us remember that the eco-crisis demands immediate termination of all unsound ecological practices associated with the cell phone, letting the Earth's well-being take precedence over the human good. Intermediate eco-ethics would press into this argument calls for action to stem the body and environmental burden of cell phone manufacturing, use, and disposal — studies of persistent organic pollutants in land, air and water would accompany epidemiological research to help guide solutions. And anthropocentric ecoethicists would have a range of responses, from calls for immediate application of the precautionary principle to applications of CBA that would settle for compromises and slow reforms to ensure greater technological efficiency in the manufacture and disposal of the cell-phones (with risks distributed along existing lines of stratification). The dilemma here is clear and the issues are daunting, but it's time for media and communication studies to intervene in this ecological challenge, interrogating our own investments in the technological sublime then deploying our critical skills to reassess the role of the media in shaping the environment. We believe that eco-ethics is a good point of departure for this endeavor, especially when it is linked to domains of knowledge and activism that are already important to our field, such as feminism, which can be articulated to environmental feminism, and critical race theory, articulated to environmental justice (Pellow & Park, 2002).

We have introduced the possibility of an eco-ethics in the field. Our ideas are raw and contestable. We recognize that media and communication studies do not suffer from complete "technological somnambulism" (Winner, 1986); but the field contributes to the enchantment of media technologies and the disenchantment of non-human nature. To that extent, we either do nothing about the eco-crisis, or even enable it. We think this has to end.

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11. Public Interest Media Activism and Advocacy as a Social Movement: A Review of the Literature[①]

Philip M. Napoli

This report examines the academic literature focused on public interest media and communications activism and advocacy within the U. S. and abroad (labeled, in the name of brevity, the "media reform" movement throughout this report).

This report first seeks to outline the parameters of the movement under consideration, in terms of the primary conceptual frames employed, outcomes pursued, and strategic approaches. As this section illustrates, the media reform movement is characterized by a diverse array of conceptual frames (ranging from "media reform" to "media justice" to "communication rights" to "media democracy"), and a hesitancy at this point to coalesce around a single unifying frame. The movement is similarly diverse in terms of its outcome priorities and in terms of the strategic approaches employed by its various member organizations.

The second section of the report charts the origins and evolution of the research in this field. As this section illustrates, over time the analytical approach that scholars have brought to the topic increasingly has adopted a social movement theory perspective.

The third section considers the media reform movement as a social movement, identifying key recurring themes in the literature related to the interaction between media reform and other social movements, to the relationship between social movements and the media, and to the organization and performance of the organizations driving the media reform movement. As this section illustrates, media reform is unique in the extent to which its goals can facilitate the success of other social movements, but also is uniquely hampered by the extent to which traditional mainstream media are motivated to deny press coverage to media reform. This section also highlights some of the most common critiques leveled at the media reform movement, ranging from a lack of coordination and collaboration between groups, to a lack of a strong nation-wide constituency, to a primarily reactive orientation toward policy issues.

The concluding section summarizes the key findings of the report and offers a series of recommendations related to strategic approaches for the movement and to avenues for future research.

Key Findings

- The academic literature on the media reform movement is much more extensive than has

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previously been suggested, due in large part to tremendous growth in the literature in recent years, as well as due to the diverse terminology used to describe the movement (which can confound efforts to assemble an appropriately inclusive body of literature).

■ A significant proportion of the literature is internally generated (i. e. , produced by individuals involved in the movement).

■ The tendency among scholars to conceptualize media reform as a social movement has become more common in recent years.

■ The media reform movement frequently has been characterized as unique due to the extent to which the ends of the movement support key means by which other social movements achieve their goals.

■ The media reform movement frequently has been characterized as subservient to broader social movements, given its tight linkages throughout its history to social movements such as civil rights, yet evidence of strong and systematic linkages between media reform and other social movements has been lacking.

■ The media reform movement frequently has been characterized as highly fragmented, lacking substantial inter-group coordination, and lacking a sufficiently large constituency.

■ The media reform movement frequently has been characterized as reaching its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but also becoming highly rejuvenated within the past decade, in terms of public interest organization activity, citizen interest, and funding support.

Recommendations

■ Although the media reform movement reached its zenith as an outgrowth of the civil rights movement, the absence of evidence of a long-term, systematic, and mutually beneficial relationship between media reform and civil rights, as well as the increased prominence of media and communications institutions and technologies to contemporary political, cultural, and economic life, raise questions about the appropriateness of perpetuating strategic approaches that place media reform as subservient to other social movements.

■ The consistent finding that, throughout the media reform movement's history, it has been a highly fragmented and decentralized movement highlights the need for the development of strategic approaches that seek to capitalize on this fragmentation, rather than eliminate it, as the persistence of this characteristic may suggest a certain intractability.

■ Future research needs to engage in long-term assessments of media reform issues and organizations in an effort to track over time the factors that can contribute to the long term success of the movement.

■ Future research needs to focus on the under-studied issues and time periods in the history of the movement, such as telecommunications services and ownership and cable regulation.

■ Future research needs to develop thorough and rigorous indicators of success or institutional change achieved by the media reform movement in order to facilitate objective assessments of the movement's impact.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in citizen awareness of — and concern for — issues in the media and communications policy arena. Issues ranging from ownership regulation to access to communications technologies to the development of community media now resonate far beyond the policymaking sector. Many observers have associated this phenomenon with the growth of public interest organization activism in these areas — growth that has taken place along such lines and that has had such influence that the field increasingly is being characterized as a legitimate social movement

(e. g. , Atton, 2003; Calabrese, 2004; Hackett & Adam, 1999; Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Howley, 2004; Mueller, Page, & Kuerbis, 2004; Noriega, 2000; O'Siochru, 1999; Schiller, 1999; Thomas, 2006; White, 1995). Others have documented tremendous growth in recent years in policymaking activity in the communications policy area (see Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004), which may both reflect and encourage citizen interest and public interest activity. In any case, the growing profile of activism and advocacy work in the media and communications policy area underscores the need for scholarship that examines these activities, that places them into broader historical and theoretical contexts, and that assesses the structure and behavior of the organizations engaged in these activities.

This paper is an effort to assess and synthesize the scholarly literature to date that has addressed these issues. The goals of this paper are to provide a roadmap of the scholarship examining citizen and public interest advocacy in media and communications policy in terms of its primary points of origins and theoretical perspectives; as well as to synthesize the key findings of this literature as they relate to the strategies employed by actors in this area and to our understanding of these activities as representative of a larger social movement.

It is important to emphasize that this paper does not seek to provide a detailed history of this movement, though certainly discussions of key historical moments and figures will take place in the course of addressing the paper's main areas of emphasis. Detailed historical accounts of the movement and its key figures can be found elsewhere (e. g., Classen, 2004; Fratkin, 2002; Korn, 1991; Horwitz, 1997; McChesney, 1993; Mills, 2004; Schiller, 1999; Toro, 2000). Indeed, if there are (and there are) critical events, organizations, or time periods related to media and communications policy activism and advocacy that do not receive detailed discussion in this review, this does not reflect the author's judgment regarding their importance (or lack thereof) to media policymaking or to the movement; rather, it reflects the fact that these events, organizations, or time periods have, for any number of possible reasons, not yet generated attention from academic researchers. Indeed, the identification of such possible gaps is a key motivating factor behind this review. The identification of such gaps — and the possible reasons for their existence — will be discussed in the concluding section of this paper.

A Note on the Search Methodology

In locating and compiling the academic literature on public interest advocacy and activism in media and communications policy, a key strategic objective was to cast a deliberately wide net, in terms of how the field is defined, in terms of the academic disciplines/fields of interest and in terms of geographical reach. It should be noted, however, to the extent that this review is limited to English language publications, it is far less comprehensive in its review of scholarship related to international manifestations of public interest advocacy and activism in the media and communications sector it is in terms of the U. S.

The review also sought to be inclusive in terms of its technological orientation. Traditional mass media, telecommunications, and the Internet all have been incorporated under the umbrella framework employed for this review; though, as will also become clear, scholarly attention to public interest advocacy and activism activities and organizations has tended to focus on mass media (particularly broadcasting) and (more recently) the Internet, with less attention to telecommunications-specific areas such as telephony (for exceptions, see Rhodes, 2006; Schiller, 1999, 2007). [1]

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[1] The scholarly neglect of public interest activism in the telecommunications sector may be a result of the tendency to treat key mobilizing telecommunications issues such as rates and access as issues characteristic of the broader consumer movement (see Rhodes, 2006). Schiller (2007) has characterized consumer movements in the telecommunications sector as "little-studied" (p. 19).

The search strategy for this literature review included disciplinary databases of the academic literature across a wide range of disciplines, including law, communication/media studies, sociology, history, political science, public policy, and cultural studies. Search terms employed included "media reform," "media democracy/democratization," "media justice," "communication rights," "telecommunications reform," as well as the use of the terms "media" and "telecommunications" in conjunction with terms including "public interest," "advocacy," and "activism." The bibliographies of those studies located via these search terms were then scanned to identify additional items of relevance that may not have been located using these various search terms. [①] This review not only sought to include books, book chapters, and academic journal articles, but also as much of the more elusive "grey literature" (i. e., conference papers, reports issued by non-profits and advocacy organizations, dissertations, and theses) as could be located.

The scope of this paper does not, however, encompass the related, though distinct, area of activity typically referred to as media development, which primarily involves efforts to reformulate media institutions and practices in developing or transitional nations. Although such work is guided by many of the same principles and objectives as public interest media advocacy and activism (see Fox, 1986; Kumar, 2006; Milton, 2001), it is a sufficiently distinct and extensive undertaking in its own right (with its own substantial body of literature) to best be defined as beyond the scope of the current analysis.

Summary of the State of the Literature on Public Interest Media Activism and Advocacy

According to some assessments, the state of knowledge on public interest media advocacy and activism has been lacking (see, e. g., Thomas, 2006). As Mueller, Page, and Kuerbis (2004) recently noted, while the literature on social movements has paid substantial attention to the role of information technologies in the enabling of activism, "almost none of this literature looks at communications and information policy as object of activism" (p. 170). Such characterizations may overstate the case somewhat (as this review will illustrate) for a number of possible reasons. The first reason may be these authors' focus on literature that examines this movement *specifically* through the lens of social movement theory. As this review will indicate, the application of this analytical approach to this area is a relatively recent phenomenon, with earlier analyses more often grounded in theories of regulatory decision-making or the policymaking process, or, being primarily historical narratives lacking in a particular theoretical grounding.

Second, as will also become clear, this movement has operated under many guises, and with a wide array of labels, particularly when the scope of the analysis is global in nature. And while it is the case that those within the movement (or one of its associated sectors) have undeniably legitimate and compelling reasons for the adherence to one particular terminology over another (i. e., media reform vs. media justice, vs. media democracy, vs. communication rights, etc.), this review of the literature has cast a wide net with the goal of developing a broad-based account of the accumulated knowledge in this area. This approach mirrors that of other recent studies, which have incorporated all of the relevant subcomponents of the movement (e. g., media reform, media justice, media democracy) into a single analytical frame (see Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Listening Project, 2004; Surveying the Capacity to Succeed, 2006).

Consequently, this review is only secondarily concerned with parsing out the different contours of

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① Often, available electronic databases do not extend particularly far back in time, which makes the bibliographies of published studies a key mechanism for locating older work.

the media reform movement versus the media justice movement or the communication rights movement. This set of priorities reflects the notion that even those within these different movement sectors would likely acknowledge that the movement for the improvement of the media and communications system, no matter how it is defined or the specific priorities articulated, can be usefully studied as a somewhat integrated whole. As Opel (2004) notes, "Regardless of the term … all refer to a large umbrella of issues and organizations addressing the role of the media in the modern world" (p.25; see also Klein, 2001).

For the sake of brevity, a single referent needs to be employed throughout the remainder of this paper, and the term *media reform* has been selected. This term has been selected in full recognition of its inadequacies in terms of capturing the full range of concerns that characterize the citizens' groups and public interest organizations concerned with improving the performance of media systems and the formulation of media and communications policy, but also out of a desire to not muddy the waters further by the introduction of a new effort at a sufficiently all-encompassing term. Indeed, these issues of terminology will be discussed in detail below. Among the various terminologies currently employed, however, the term media reform is likely the most widely used, and for that reason alone it is being used as the designated shorthand for what is inarguably a more complex and multi-faceted movement than the traditional definition of media reform encapsulates.

A final reason for this paper's departure from earlier assessments of the state of research in this area is the very recent growth in the academic literature exploring the media reform movement. Just the past three years have seen the publication of at least ten *book-length* treatments of this topic (Classen, 2004; Fones-Wolf, 2006b; Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Klinenberg, 2007; McChesney, 2004; McChesney, Newman, & Scott, 2005; Mills, 2004; Opel, 2004; Rhodes, 2006; Stole, 2007), in addition to a host of journal articles and book chapters across a variety of disciplines, including sociology (Brinson, 2006; Klinenberg, 2004), communications (Carroll & Hackett, 2006; Pickard, 2006; Raboy, 2004; Thomas, 2006), cultural studies (Calabrese, 2004; O'Siochru, 2004; Stengrim, 2005; Wible, 2004), and history (Fones-Wolf, 2006a; Mason, 2006; Pike & Winseck, 2004).

Organization of the Report

Thus, it is an extensive, varied, and highly inter-disciplinary body of literature that is the focus of this analysis. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The first section outlines the scope of the literature under review via a discussion of the issue of the different terminologies, and the associated different definitions and areas of emphasis that characterize what is being (inadequately) labeled here the "media reform" movement. This section considers both domestic and international manifestations of the movement. [1] The second section offers a roadmap of the evolution of this area of research, considering the theoretical perspectives that have been employed over the years, as well as the key points of origin for this research. As this section will illustrate, the evolution of research on the media reform movement has in many ways mirrored the movement itself in that early research was heavily legally oriented, but gradually branched out into other social sciences (particularly those interested in the dynamics of the policymaking process), and, most recently, has drawn quite heavily from existing theory and research related to social movements. The third section attempts to synthesize the key findings of this literature, with a particular focus on those findings related to how social movement theory helps us to understand key structural and organizational characteristics of the movement, the

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[1] For a thorough recent study of the media reform/media democratization movement in both the U. S. and abroad, see Hackett and Carroll (2006).

strategies it employs, and its overall effectiveness in creating institutional change. The concluding section summarizes the paper's key findings and offers suggestions for further research.

Defining a Fragmented Movement: From Media Reform to Media Justice to Media Democracy and Beyond

For a social movement that has been characterized as relatively small and even (at times) ineffectual (see Mueller, Page, & Kuerbis, 2004a, 2004b; Rowland, 1982), the media reform movement has sustained several distinct, though tightly inter-related, sectors of activity throughout its history. Often these sectors all are operating simultaneously, though there also has occurred a rising and falling of particular sectors over time (see Mueller, Page, & Kuerbis, 2004). Certain sectors, such as those revolving around the notion of a New World Information and Communication Order (see Galtung & Vincent, 1992; Roach, 1990; Traber & Nordenstreng, 1992) and the Cultural Environment Movement (see Duncan, 1999) have largely come and gone (Carlsson, 2003; Hackett & Carroll, 2004), [1] though to be replaced by sectors and organizations that maintain some of the same policy priorities and rhetorical approaches, but that also reflect changes in the broader technological and policymaking environment. In the most thorough study to date of the organizational ecology of the media reform field, Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page (2004) illustrate how the number of public interest advocacy organizations involved in communication and information policy issues grew rapidly through the 1960s and 1970s, diminished in the 1980s, and experienced a resurgence in the 1990s. These authors also note that the more recently founded public interest advocacy organizations have focused less on issues of media content and more on issues of individual rights and economics — a reflection of the nature of the core policy issues surrounding the Internet, which these authors see as a key driver of the recent growth of public interest and advocacy organizations in the information and communications policy area (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004).

The media reform movement is hardly monolithic. Rather, it is comprised of a diverse and dynamic array of sub-sectors that overlap significantly in their motivations and guiding principles, but that also maintain distinct identifies. These various components of the media reform movement distinguish themselves from one another across a number of criteria, including their framing of the issues, their policy priorities, and their key strategic activities. It is important to address these issues at the outset in order to establish the frame of reference for this analysis.

Framing

Looking first at framing, Hackett and Carroll (2006) outline the primary frames that have characterized media and communications activism over the years and across the globe. These frames include: a) a *free press, freedom of expression* frame, which emphasizes First Amendment values, but also encroachment on such values from both government and corporate sources (e. g. , Heinz & Beckles, 2005); b) a *media democratization* frame, which emphasizes an informed citizenry and effective self-governance, and the role and responsibilities of the media in relation to these objectives (see Hackett & Adam, 1999; McChesney & Nichols, 2005); c) a *right to communicate* frame, which emphasizes the connection between communication and other human rights, most frequently at the global level (see Birdsall, 2006; Brinson, 2006; Calabrese, 2004; Costanza-Chock, 2002; McCiver, Birdsall, & Rasmussen, 2004; Raboy, 2004; Thomas, 2005, 2006); d) a *cultural environment* frame

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[1]   Dichter (2005) recounts the rise and fall of other organizations involved in the media reform movement in the 1990s, including the Telecommunications Policy Roundtable and Videazimut.

that seeks to make strong parallels between media activism and environmental activism via an emphasis on harmful or distasteful media content (see, e. g. , Duncan, 1999); [1] and e) a *media justice* frame, which is relatively new in its explicit articulation, but draws upon many of the civil rights values and concerns with minority representation and participation in the media and the marginalization of various sectors of society that characterized early media activism in the U. S. (see Cyril, 2005; Davis & the Applied Research Center, n. d. ; Rubin, 2002).

The existence of these many frames is in part a reflection of the wide range of concerns that characterize participants in this movement, as well as the movement's international scope (O'Siochru, 2005). [2] This diversity of frames also is a reflection of a distinct lack of consensus in terms of the most appropriate means of framing the broader movement to the general public. That is, some sectors of the movement find particular framing approaches unacceptable for a variety of reasons. For instance, some sectors of the movement find heavy reliance on "democracy" as a core principle problematic, particularly in international contexts where the term democracy has developed strong negative affiliations with perceived associated processes of commercialization and cultural imperialism (Rubin, 2002). Others see the democracy frame as inherently ambiguous and lacking in the necessary specificity to achieve widespread appeal and identification (see Belden, Russonello, & Stewart, 2006; Hackett & Carroll, 2006). More specifically, Hackett (2000) notes that, for market liberals, media democratization means private ownership of media, protection from government censorship, and the removal of government-imposed public-interest regulations. Obviously such an interpretation of the term runs directly counter to the principles of virtually all sectors of the media reform movement, which undermines the utility of media democratization as a focal concept in the minds of many movement participants.

The communication rights frame, which seeks to place communication within a comprehensive human rights framework (see McIver, et al. , 2002), has undergone similar criticism. Some within the movement see the communication rights frame as too abstract and unable to connect concretely with citizens' day-to-day concerns and needs (O'Siochru, 2005). Others see it as being too legalistic in its orientation (Hackett & Carroll, 2006).

The media justice frame, in particular, has arisen in response to a general dissatisfaction with many of the more established frames (Dichter, 2004; Rubin, 2002). As research directed at members of the media justice community has noted:

> The terms "media democracy," "media advocacy," and "media reform" also are used by those who struggle for progressive change in media policy. Although some feel that the distinction between these terms is largely semantic, whether one chooses "media democracy" rather than "media justice" to describe their work actually reveals a significant political divide. This divide occurs in part on the basis of race and age — groups run by younger staff, often of color, have consciously developed their media activism through a justice lens. ... they see the term "media justice" as deliberately addressing issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality within the broad field of media (Davis & Applied Research Center, n. d. , pp. 17 - 18).

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[1] For a more recent effort to impose an environmental frame on communications policy, see Boyle's (1997) approach to intellectual property law and policy as analogous to the environmental movement — only focused on the Internet environment. Well-known media reform advocates Robert McChesney and John Nichols (2002) similarly have drawn parallels to the environmental movement, arguing that media reformers have much to learn from the strategies and tactics that have contributed to its growth.

[2] As O'Siochru (2005) notes, "framing the issue is difficult in transnational context since diverse cultural, political, and economic circumstances must be addressed" (p. 297).

The media reform frame can be interpreted as too narrow to encompass efforts such as the development of alternative media — given the "reform" terminology's potential for being interpreted exclusively in terms of changing existing media structures rather than promoting the development of alternative media structures (see, e.g., Opel, 2004; Powers, 2005), which, as is discussed below, very much has been — and continues to be — part of the broader movement under consideration here.

Thus, it should be fairly clear at this point that members of the media reform movement often perceive significant differences between themselves and those who are part of what can, at least superficially, be considered allied groups (see Surveying the Capacity to Succeed, 2006) when it comes to the key guiding frame for the movement (though, as the discussion above suggests, these differences also can run deeper than mere framing). Hackett and Carrol (2004) suggest that the construction of an agreed-upon collective identity may be more difficult for media reformers than for members of other social movements because the identity of "media reformer" is not as deeply held or resonant an identity as those associated with other social movements (e.g., environmentalism).

Nonetheless, the potential importance of reconciling these varied approaches to the field is reflected in recent research conducted for the Ford Foundation that asked members of different sectors of the movement to offer their perceptions of the connotations of different terminologies. Media justice, for instance, was found not only to reflect the priorities outlined above, but also to reflect an intentional opposition to the more traditional media reform sector, which has been perceived as less radical in its strategic approach and goals than the media justice sector (Belden, Russonello, & Stewart, 2006). Dichter (2004) goes so far as to describe the media justice movement as "in contrast and opposition to the existing field of media reformers" (p. 2).

Hackett and Carroll (2006) contend that "a multiplicity of frames is not necessarily a barrier to movement mobilization; there is even an advantage that different frames can appeal to different constituencies" (p. 79). Recent research suggests that leaders in the organizations comprising these various sectors "do not think they need an overarching term, or way of articulating a common goal to their work. ... most of them are more likely to want to explain their work in some detail rather than with a more approachable shorthand. These leaders also reveal little sense that their work would benefit from having all their efforts fly under one banner" (Belden, Russonello & Stewart, 2006, p. 5).

Arguing on behalf of the development of a unified frame, O'Siochru (2005) contends that "An overarching, unifying frame is needed in order to build the kind of broad movement that alone can be successful" (p. 304). In order to effectively capture the complexity of the movement, O'Siochru (2005) specifically advocates the use of the Right to Communicate as an overarching, "high-level" frame, under which more concrete "sub-frames" could be developed that would divide media and communications issues into several discrete, though inter-related, elements (p. 305). Possible sub-frames identified by O'Siochru (2005) include the public sphere, political and cultural diversity, information commons, and civil rights. These sub-frames then could be used to build "horizontal linkages" with related social movements (p. 305). Dichter (2004), in contrast, has argued that efforts to develop a single overarching framework for the movement and its activities may not be a pre-condition to a more widespread and influential social movement and therefore may not be an appropriate point of focus for the movement's energies.

Outcome Priorities

Differences in the key framing principles that have characterized different components of the media reform movement have, to some degree, been reflected in different areas of emphasis in terms of outcomes, as different components of the movement have tended to emphasize different outcomes. Hackett and Adam (1999) offer a basic "structure" versus "content" categorization scheme, in which

some components of the movement emphasize efforts to influence (i. e., improve) media content (particularly in areas such as minority representation, political coverage, and children's/educational content) (see, e. g., Duncan, 1999; Montgomery, 1989; Noriega, 2000; Swanson, 2000), while others focus primarily on structural issues pertaining to ownership and technological infrastructure (i. e., ownership concentration, minority ownership, access to communications technologies) (see, e. g., Klinenberg, 2007; Opel, 2004; Scott, 2004).

Of course, these categories are far from mutually exclusive (Hackett & Adam, 1999), as structural change frequently is presumed to lead to content change. Indeed, the very origins of the modern media reform movement in the U. S. help illustrate this point. As will be discussed in greater detail below, many scholars point to the activities of the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ (UCC) in the 1960s as the beginning of the modern media reform movement. The UCC worked to challenge the broadcast license of a television station in Mississippi that was providing racially biased programming and neglecting the needs and interests of the African-American community (see Classen, 2004; Clift, 1976; Mills, 2004). The UCC's efforts ultimately took the form of a license challenge in conjunction with civil rights groups that resulted in a license revocation, a change in station ownership, and, ultimately, programming that better reflected and served the needs of the African-American community. Here, then, we see concerns about content (in this case, racist programming practices) ultimately addressed via structural intervention (change in ownership). From this point onward, structure and content have been tightly linked in both media policymaking (see Napoli, 2001) and in the advocacy efforts of the media reform movement. [1]

It is important to emphasize that a broad conceptualization of this movement incorporates efforts to affect the structure and content of traditional mainstream media and communications systems *as well as* efforts to support and develop alternative media and communications systems (see, e. g., Atton, 2003; Beatty, 2000; Dagron, 2001; Pickard, 2006; Stengrim, 2005; Williams, 2001). Alternative media generally refer to media operated and controlled by self-organized, independent groups or associations, that often are non-commercial in their orientation, and that are less hierarchical, bureaucratic, and commercial in their orientation than traditional mainstream commercial media outlets (see Hintz, 2007; Howley, 2005). Historically, conceptions of alternative media (particularly in the U. S.) have focused on the public broadcasting sector (see, e. g., Williams, 2001) and public access cable (see, e. g., Higgins, 1999; Steiner, 2005), but due to developments in media technology such as the Internet, WiFi, and LPFM, the realm of alternative media is now much more broadly constituted (see Howley, 2005). [2]

While there is some disagreement within the movement as to the relative value of emphasizing reforming mainstream media versus developing alternative media (see, e. g., Hackett & Carroll, 2006), [3] it often is

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[1] Wible (2004) argues for the importance of advocates for structural change and advocates for content change to "link more directly" (p. 43).

[2] For a detailed discussion of the various conceptualizations of alternative/independent media, see Hamilton (2001).

[3] McChesney and Nichols (2002), for instance, advise against focusing exclusively on alternative media, arguing that "there are inherent limitations to what can be done with independent media, even with access to the Internet. Too often, the alternative media remain on the margins, seemingly confirming that commercial media conglomerates have become so massive because they 'give the people what they want.' The problem with this disconnect is that it suggests that corporate media have mastered the marketplace on the basis of their wit and wisdom. In fact ... our media system is not the legitimate result of free market competition ..." (p. 123). Chester (2006), in contrast, sees efforts to reform traditional mainstream media as largely unsuccessful, emphasizing instead the importance of "parallel efforts. . to give the public more access to the airwaves, so that they might create their *own* public interest programming" (p. 6).

the case that both activities are pursued simultaneously by individual media reform organizations (see, e. g. , Klinenberg, 2004). A recent study of non-profits working in the media reform sector found that equally high proportions (96% of all organizations surveyed) were working on both mainstream and independent media issues, but with a slightly higher percentage (75% versus 69%) expending "significant effort" on mainstream media issues (Louie & Luckey, 2006, p. 10).

It also is the case that both activities involve engagement in the policymaking process. Such engagement is quite apparent in relation to the traditional mainstream media, as media reform advocates long have focused substantial energy on preserving or imposing policies directed at these media that foster goals such as diversity of ownership of media outlets, the availability of public interest-oriented content, and the development of widely accessible communications infrastructures (see Lloyd, 2007; Napoli, 2001). Efforts to develop alternative media also frequently require engagement with the policy sphere, as the development of such media frequently require specific policy actions. Thus, for instance, the recent growth of low power FM radio was dependent upon the adoption of specific policies by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that allowed for the licensing of LPFM stations (see, e. g. , Hamilton, 2004; Howley, 2004; Opel, 2004).

Strategies and Tactics

Lines of demarcation across the various actors involved in these different components of the broader media reform movement also can be drawn along strategic dimensions. Different outcome priorities often require different strategic approaches. Thus, in efforts to influence industry behavior directly (be it in terms of content or employment practices), the movement has employed tactics such as direct meetings and negotiations, protests, program monitoring, and boycotts (see, e. g. , Fahey, 1991; Garay, 1978; Kim, 2001; Montgomery, 1981, 1989; Swanson, 2000).[1] Noriega (2000), for instance, documents the efforts of the Chicano media reform movement in the 1960s and 1970s to discourage stereotypical portrayals of Chicanos in television programming and advertising in which particular emphasis was placed on organized boycotts of advertisers' products and particular television programs, as well as on direct engagement with programmers and advertisers (see also Montgomery, 1989). In the realm of structure, on the other hand, focus has been placed on the policy process, with efforts devoted to participation in administrative proceedings, adjudication, and legislative activity (see, e. g. , Schneyer, 1977).[2]

Hackett and Adam (1999) distinguish between "insider" and "outsider" strategies, with outsider strategies involving explicit and aggressive media criticism and protest and insider strategies focusing instead on efforts to alter the system from within, via tactics such as advocating for changes in hiring practices or via seeking regulatory change via traditional policy advocacy mechanisms. Along related lines, it is important to emphasize the distinction between components of the movement that have targeted their activities at the policymaking sector (one could call these "indirect" strategies) and those that have targeted their activities directly at influencing the behavior of media organizations — i. e. , "direct" strategies (see, e. g. , Fahey, 1991; Hanks & Pickett, 1979; Montgomery, 1981, 1989; Turow, 1984). The use of the direct and indirect terminology here reflects the notion that via policy

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[1] For an overview and assessment of advocacy groups' efforts to influence broadcast content via boycotts, see Fahey (1991).

[2] A recent assessment of the advocacy work of the Latino community (Wible, 2004) concluded that the institutional and philosophical changes that have taken place in the policymaking sector require that advocates focus their efforts on appealing to the economic logic of the industries at issue, rather than pursuing institutional change via the policymaking process.

avenues, reformers typically seek a reorientation of the media system that it is hoped will produce many of the content and behavioral outcomes that those advocating more direct strategies (be they in terms of influencing traditional mainstream media or in terms of establishing alternative media) also seek.

When we consider the current range of activities in light of what is widely considered the modern point of origin for the movement in the U.S., it is important to recognize once again the extent to which the movement's modern origins straddled (albeit unintentionally at first) both the industry engagement and policy engagement approaches to affecting change. Indeed, much of the work of the UCC and the many public interest organizations spawned in the years following the WLBT decision focused less on influencing policy and more on directly influencing the behavior of individual broadcasters (see, e.g., Hanks & Pickett, 1979; Padden, 1972), only moving into the policy realm (via license renewal challenges) after direct efforts to alter broadcaster behavior broke down (see, e.g., Grundfest, 1977; Noriega, 2000; Schement, Gutierrez, Gandy, Haight, & Soriano, 1977).[1] And, when we look at media reform efforts prior to the 1960s, we see this same focus on seeking behavioral change within the industry rather than seeking policy change within the FCC or Congress (Toro, 2000).

Origins and Evolution: A Roadmap of the Media Reform Literature

This section attempts to trace the growth and evolution of this extensive body of literature, and to offer some observations as to where this literature has originated (and why), as well as how it has changed over time. Thus, this section considers the literature on the media reform movement less in terms of its particular findings, but rather in terms of its theoretical evolution and points of origin.

Theoretical Evolution

The nature of the primary theoretical lenses directed at the media reform movement has changed substantially over time. Early work lacked a strong theoretical perspective and was in fact highly legalistic in its orientation. That is, to the extent that the 60s and 70s era manifestation of the media reform movement was seen largely as an outgrowth of "public interest law," due to the success at gaining legally recognized "standing" for citizens' groups in the policymaking process that was a key element of the UCC's accomplishments (see Horwitz, 1997), early assessments of the movement were focused very much on issues such as the appropriate role and function of these new public interest law organizations spawned by the UCC's actions (see Schneyer, 1977; Schneyer & Lloyd, 1976) and on the various legal implications of the reconfigured dynamics of the policymaking process (see Padden, 1972; Garay, 1978; Grundfest, 1977).

When later work did employ a theoretical perspective, it tended to draw heavily from what often are called "interest group" theories of the policymaking process (see Galperin, 2004). Krasnow, Longley, and Terry's (1982) well-known text on the politics of broadcast regulation (first published in 1978) has proven very influential (perhaps too influential) on research examining the dynamics of communications policymaking (Napoli, 2001). Their interest group approach consists primarily of identifying the key stakeholder groups involved in the policymaking process and developing an inventory of their tools of influence. Assessing outcomes then involves identifying which groups were able to use their influence tools effectively and why.

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[1] As Fratkin (2002) notes, 342 petitions to deny broadcast license renewals were filed in the period from 1971 to 1973 alone. For a detailed study of the role of women's groups in license renewal challenges, see Lewis (1986).

When this theoretical framework is employed, representatives of the public interest/advocacy community tend to reside very much at the fringes of the policymaking process (Napoli, 2001). As Galperin (2004) notes, "Most varieties of interest group approaches see a rather small margin for public interest advocacy," (p. 160) due in large part to the "free rider" problem that characterizes public interest groups and, more broadly, social movements (see also Raboy, 1994). Such entities are constrained by the fact that most beneficiaries of a successful movement lack incentives to undertake the necessary work for the movement to be successful, since the costs are greater than the benefits that the individual would personally receive (Hackett, 2000; Thomas, 2006). This creates a disincentive for direct citizen involvement or for citizen support for the public interest/advocacy organizations presumably working on their behalf.

The prominence of this theoretical perspective meant that, in most scholarly assessments, the public and the public interest groups that work (presumably) on their behalf traditionally have been given very marginal status in the policymaking process, particularly in relation to industry stakeholders (see, e. g., Cantor & Cantor, 1986; Hanks & Pickett, 1979; Turow, 1984). Some early work (e. g., Grundfest, 1977) even considered the increased citizen influence in communications policymaking achieved by the media reform movement in the 1960s and 1970s as something of an anomaly with the potential to unfavorably disrupt the established — and desired — dynamics of policymaking.

Analyses that employ an interest-group theory approach to the policymaking process have, perhaps inevitably, tended to focus on chronicling particular policy issues, the stakeholder battle surrounding these issues, and the generally marginal influence that the public interest/advocacy field ultimately was able to have on the outcome. Thus, as a result of this analytical orientation, there is a substantial component of the academic literature on communications and media policymaking in which the activities of media reform organizations receive scant consideration (for a review of this literature, see Napoli, 2001). During this prolonged period, even scholarship that inquired into the possibility that media reform could constitute a distinct social movement concluded that such a transformation had yet to take place (Broderick, 1984).

Recent research, however, has been much more inclined to conceptualize the activities of citizens and public interest and advocacy organizations as the manifestation of a legitimate social movement, and in so doing, its analytical focus broadens beyond the policymaking process, into the (often intersecting) realms of the development of alternative and community media forms and citizen activism at the local level. Thus, Howley's (2004) assessment that "movement studies and media studies alike have failed to recognize an emerging media democratization movement" (p. 222) seems less appropriate today than in years past. A multitude of recent studies have conceptualized media reform as a social movement and have applied social movement theory in an effort to enhance our understanding of the movement itself, its prospects, as well as social movements in general (see, e. g., Atton, 2003; Calabrese, 2004; Brinson, 2006, 2007; Carroll & Hackett, 2006; Hackett & Adam, 1999; Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Opel, 2004; Mueller, Page, & Kuerbis, 2004; Noriega, 2000; Schiller, 1999; O'Siochru, 1999; Thomas, 2006; White, 1995).

This pattern is interesting considering that what frequently has been considered the heyday of the media reform movement (at least in the U. S.) — the 1960s and 1970s — seldom was approached by scholars from a social movement theory perspective. This may be a reflection of the extent to which the movement at that point was deeply embedded within (and in fact emerged from) the civil rights movement (Classen, 2004; Horwitz, 1997; see below). Such embedding perhaps concealed media reform from scholarly attention beneath a much broader and higher-profile social movement, or at the very least discouraged a narrow and exclusive social movement focus on media reform.

Today, however, a more compelling case can be made that media reform is increasingly establishing its own identity as a more independent and self-sustaining social movement, based on criteria such as the prominence of media and communications policy issues on the government agenda (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004); an increased public awareness of — and concern about — media and communications policy issues as exhibited in public opinion polls (see Scott, 2004); the growth in the number of public interest and advocacy organizations that focus on such issues (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004); the constituency/membership growth of these organizations (McChesney & Nichols, 2005); and the growth in the interest of the funding community in media reform issues (Louie & Luckey, 2006). These indicators of the growing independence and self-sustaining nature of the media reform movement may then be driving the blossoming of social movement scholarship that has taken media reform as its point of focus.

As the patterns outlined above would suggest, there has been some shift in terms of the academic disciplines/fields from which research examining the media reform movement has originated. Recent years have seen a particular increase in attention to media reform from within sociology (e. g., Atton, 2003; Brinson, 2006, 2007; Klinenberg, 2004, 2007), a discipline that traditionally has devoted substantial attention to the study of social movements. That being said, the study of the media reform movement has been, and continues to be, a highly inter-disciplinary point of focus for scholarship. Not surprisingly, the inherently interdisciplinary field of communications/media studies has been perhaps the most consistent in its focus on the media reform movement, given the centrality of many of the issues reflected in the media reform movement to the communications field (see, e. g., Beatty, 2000; Hackett & Carroll, 2006b; McChesney, 1993; Pickard, 2006; Schiller, 2007). As cultural studies has emerged as an independent field, it too has devoted substantial attention to media reform (e. g., Calabrese, 2004; O'Siochru, 2004; Stengrim, 2005; Wible, 2004).

Disciplines in which the study of media reform has, historically, been less prominent include political science, public policy, and law. This may be a reflection of: a) the extent to which the study of media-related issues has been, and to some degree continues to be, a topic that the political science and public policy fields consider of marginal significance within traditional parameters of the discipline;[①] and b) the extent to which the media reform movement has extended beyond its origins within the field of public interest law, leading legal scholars' interest in the subject to wane in the years since the movement's original heyday in the late 1960s and 1970s (see, e. g., Branscomb & Savage, 1978; Grundfest, 1977; Padden, 1972; Schneyer, 1977; Schneyer & Lloyd, 1976). It is likely also the case that the period of time when the media reform movement represented a dramatic reconfiguration of the status quo of communications policymaking led to the period of pronounced attention from the legal community that has since waned as the movement has matured and its place within the policymaking process has become less disruptive to the institutional dynamics of policymaking.

The Movement as Self-Generator of Scholarship

One key characteristic of the academic literature on the media reform movement is that it has, to a significant degree, been internally-generated. That is, many of the researchers examining the movement from an academic perspective are (or were) themselves participants in the movement (e. g., Chester, 2006; Dichter, 2004; Lloyd, 2007; Pickard, 2006; Scott, 2004). Participants in the

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① This observation comes from discussions with colleagues in the political science field who have noted being discouraged from studying media issues during their academic training due to the subject's perceived trivial nature. It also has been noted (see Napoli, 2006) that communications and media policy curricula are virtually non-existent in public policy programs within U.S. universities.

micro-radio movement in the U.S. have been particularly active in terms of turning a scholarly lens upon their activities and those of their colleagues (e. g., Brinson, 2006, 2007; Coopman, 2000; Howley, 2000, 2004; Opel, 2004) as have international activists engaged in global policy deliberations such as WSIS and ICANN (Hintz, 2007; Klein, 2001, 2004; Mueller, 2002a, 2002b; O'Siochru, 2004).

This pattern is not surprising given the increasingly (and, many would argue, appropriately) blurred line between scholarship and advocacy that characterizes the media policy field (see Dutton, 2005). This pattern also may reflect a broader pattern in social movement scholarship, in which participants in the movement often are key actors in developing the relevant scholarly literature and placing the movement on the broader academic research agenda. Social movement scholars Eyerman and Jamison (1991), for instance, noted such a pattern in their assessment of the student anti-war movement in the U.S. in the 1960s: "Being a movement dominated by actors engaged primarily in intellectual pursuits, it should thus not be surprising that student activists began to develop their own theoretical understandings of the movement." (p. 20) Todd Gitlin's (2003) well-known analysis of the interaction between the media and the student movement is a prime example of that social movement's scholarship emerging from within the movement itself. Unfortunately, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) offer little reflection on what having such a self-generating process at the core of social movement scholarship might mean for our understanding of these social movements.

What are the implications (if any) of the prominence of internally-generated scholarship to our understanding of social movements such as media reform? One could argue that the credibility of such work is enhanced by the level of access afforded by such participant-observation approaches. One could also argue that such approaches may be lacking in the desired degree of academic objectivity and critical distance from the subject. When considering these questions, it is important to emphasize that it is not the entirety of the scholarship on media reform that has been generated from within, only that a significant component of this literature has such a point of origin. At the very least, this pattern makes clear that the traditional barriers that have separated scholars and activists in the media policy field appear to be breaking down. But it may be that the continued diffusion of media reform scholarship beyond those immersed in the movement can provide a broader array of analytical perspectives, conclusions, and recommendations.

Media Reform as Social Movement: Key Findings, Recommendations, and Critiques

This section explores recurring themes within the substantive findings on the research examining the media reform movement. This section is concerned with: a) determining how the application of a social movement perspective has enhanced our understanding of media reform; b) distilling the key critiques and recommendations for the media reform movement that have emerged from these analyses.

Media Reform as a Social Movement

Exploring media reform through a social movement lens first requires that we establish definitional parameters for a social movement. Social movements have been defined as "sentiment [s] or activit[ies] shared by two or more people oriented toward changes in social relations or in the social system" (Ash Garner & Zald, 1987, p. 293). A specific focus of many social movements is institutional change, which can be thought of as systematic adjustments in the "rules-based processes that channel social interaction" (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004). These adjustments generally involve changes in rules and norms that alter the distribution of wealth and power in a significant way, and that become legitimate and self-reproducing over time (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004).

Media reform increasingly has been viewed by social movement scholars as meeting these criteria, due in large part to the extent to which the issues at the core of media reform are beginning to resonate more widely, and thereby contribute to a more intensive public pressure on policymakers and industry actors than has characterized media and communications policy issues throughout much of their history (see Brinson, 2006; Calabrese, 2004; Hackett & Carroll, 2006). However, assessments of media reform as a social movement do still tend to conclude that the movement remains largely on the periphery of the national and international issue agenda (Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004); and therefore there is a need to assess the movement's current state in an effort to identify mechanisms for enhancing its stability and status within the broader political sphere. The sections that follow explore other defining characteristics of social movements and their applicability to media reform, in an effort to generate insights into the unique challenges and opportunities facing the movement and into particular strategic approaches to be employed in order to strengthen the movement.

The Ebb and Flow of the Media Reform Movement

As Calabrese (2004) notes, "Social movements are, by their very nature, *episodic* and *issue driven*" (p. 324). This characterization certainly fits for the media reform movement, where individual policy issues have, at various times, galvanized both public and public interest/advocacy group attention. When we look at the media reform movement's history — as represented through the scholarship it has generated — we see very clearly how its progression appears very much episodic, and very much a function of particular policy events or the emergence of particular policy issues.

As was noted above, many scholars of the media reform movement identify the court case *Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ v. Federal Communications Commission* (1966) as a watershed moment in the development of this movement (Branscomb & Savage, 1978; Rubin, 2002; Schneyer & Lloyd, 1976),[1] though, as Horwitz (1997) notes, the movement that emerged from this decision in many respects "represented a resurrection of the old 1930s broadcast reform coalition. But this time the educators, religious people, and intellectuals were part of a broader tapestry of liberal activist groups in civil society" (p. 313).

McChesney's (1993) provides a thorough account of the rise and decline of this earlier manifestation of the media reform movement, which developed primarily around the introduction of radio broadcasting and the associated debate over how best to structure and oversee the new system of radio broadcasting in the United States. Thus, there were historical moments that galvanized the media reform movement well before the UCC's battle with Mississippi broadcasters and the Federal Communications Commission, and that were less explicitly tied to civil rights issues. Indeed, as Toro (2000) notes, it would be a mistake to assume that the media reform movement originated as recently as the 1960s. Both Toro (2000) and Williams (2001) provide detailed historical accounts of media reform activity across a wide range of areas (including educational/public broadcasting, broadcaster public interest obligations, license challenges, and even involving petitioning for citizens groups' rights to participate in the policymaking process) that extend from the 1930s through the 1950s and early 1960s. Schiller (1999) traces the history back even further, chronicling the (largely unsuccessful) activities of trade unions, civic reformers, and academics from 1894 through 1919 directed at the development of the telephone infrastructure, particularly in terms of advocating on behalf of universal access and municipal ownership during a time of policymaker uncertainty over how best to regulate

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[1] According to Rubin (2002), "The single most important media victory in the last half of the 20th century was United Church of Christ vs. FCC, a case which gave the modern media reform movement its birth" (p. 2).

telephony (not unlike the later period of uncertainty over how best to regulate broadcasting). ①

A key difference between these earlier historical moments and the UCC/FCC conflict in the 1960s, however, was that the UCC's success establishing standing for citizens and citizens' groups in FCC proceedings served as a springboard for the continued growth of the movement. According to Branscomb and Savage (1978), organizations ranging from Action for Children's Television, the Gray Panther Media Task Force, the Media Committee of the National Organization for Women, the Chinese for Affirmative Action, and the National Black Media Coalition, were direct outgrowths of the UCC decision. ② Quantitative assessments of the organizational ecology of the communications and information policy advocacy field confirm this perspective, documenting the fastest growth in advocacy organizations over the past 40 years taking place during the late 1960s and 1970s (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004). A key factor in the growth of these organizations during this time period was their ability to attract funding from foundations that had developed in interest in communications policy issues, such as the Ford Foundation (a key early funder of the Office of Communications of the United Church of Christ) and the Markle Foundation (a key early funder of the UCC spin-off, the Media Access Project) (see Kopp, 1997; Lenert, 2003).

This growth of media reform activity in the U. S. was accompanied internationally by the growth of the New World Information and Communication Order movement, which was motivated in large part by the increasing prominence of transnational media flows, concerns over cultural imperialism, and growing disparities in communications infrastructures (Galtung & Vincent, 2002; Traber & Nordenstreng, 1992). It is out of this movement that the associated communication rights movement (which has recently re-emerged [see below] as the Communication Rights for the Information Society movement) first developed, via the articulation by the UNESCO-appointed MacBride (1980) Commission of the right to communicate as a distinctive and multi-faceted human right.

Both domestically and internationally, however, the 1980s and early 1990s have been characterized by many researchers as a period of significant decline in the activities of the media reform movement (Bollier, 2000; Chester, 2007; Kopp, 2000). During this time period, the number of public interest and advocacy organizations working in this field diminished dramatically (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004). This drop-off has been attributed to a number of causes, including changing funding priorities among the relatively few private foundations that were devoted to supporting organizations in this area, the growth of industry lobbying efforts, and associated deregulatory changes that undermined media reform organizations' traditional avenues of influence (Broderick, 1984). ③

In the early 1990s, however, many scholars noted an upsurge in media reform activity, spurred this time by developments in telecommunications technology and infrastructure usage, accessibility, and affordability — particularly in relation to the emergence of the Internet. On the global scale,

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① For an internationally-focused historical analysis of early iterations of the media reform movement, see Pike and Winseck (2004).

② See Fratkin (2002) for a chronicle of the rise and decline of one of the most significant national media reform organizations during this time period, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, founded and led by former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson (see also Johnson, 1967).

③ As Thomas (2006) notes, organizational survival in the media reform field is difficult "in a context in which funding priorities change constantly. New media funding preferences often result in the marginalization of old media projects" (p. 306). Kopp (1997) illustrates how funding for public interest/advocacy work in the media and communications policy field has historically been confined to very few large foundations (e. g. , Ford and Rockefeller); thus, when funding priorities at these organizations changed, opportunities for the continued growth and development of the media reform movement largely dried up.

these developments spurred the movement for Communication Rights for the Information Society (Powers, 2005), while in the U. S. the movement focused its energies on the Clinton administration's efforts to develop a National Information Infrastructure (Drake, 1997; Munn, 1999). The rise of international policymaking fora in the late 1990s such as the United Nation's World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) further mobilized the broadly-constituted media reform community by providing specific avenues for potential influence (see Franklin, 2005; Hintz, 2007; Mueller, 2002a, 2002b; O'Siochru, 2004; Selian, 2004).

The primary concerns during this time period (both domestically and internationally) involved whether the developing, and increasingly vital, communications infrastructure was going to be universally accessible; whether free speech rights and privacy rights were going to be respected in its development and administration; and whether diversity and community were going to be policy priorities (Munn, 1999; Powers, 2005). And during this time period, as was the case in the 1960s, the movement was broadly constituted, with "organizations ranging from traditional media watchdogs, civil liberties advocates and consumer groups, to advocates for schools and libraries, children, the elderly, disabled, minorities and the poor" becoming involved in the policymaking process (Munn, 1999, p. 71). Munn (1999) attributes this phenomenon to "the widespread perception of advanced information technologies and services as a solution to pressing social problems and to the excitement of their potential and promise for improving the circumstances of people and communities" (p. 77). The potential social, political, and economic significance of these developments in the media and communications sector in turn helped attract the attention of funders, many of whom had exited the media and communications policy advocacy arena in the late 1970s and 1980s (see Bollier, 2000; Kopp, 1997). A recent assessment of the funding environment for media reform has noted that "the last few years have seen an influx of philanthropic funders' interest in the public policies that shape how our media are created and distributed, as well as how we, as citizens, engage with it" (Louie & Luckey, 2006, p. 4).

Hackett and Carroll (2004) specifically note the growth in momentum for the media reform movement since 1996. It was during this time that the Cultural Environment Movement (founded by well-known communications scholar George Gerbner) was launched in an effort to explicitly link the concerns and rhetorical approaches of the media reform movement — particularly those related to content — with those of the environmental movement (Duncan, 1999). It was also during this time that the first of two Media and Democracy Congresses were held. And while these particular institutions did not endure, a significant number of related institutions arose to take their place (see Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004).

Hackett and Carroll (2004) attribute this upsurge in the movement's activity to a number of factors, including widespread discontent with the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and, years later, to the apparent disinformation — and the role of the news media in the propagation of this information — associated with the U. S.'s involvement in Iraq (see also McChesney & Nichols, 2005), as well as to the tangible demise of local programming in radio, the industry sector most profoundly and visibly affected by the deregulatory initiatives of the 1996 Act. ① Like Hackett and Carroll (2004), Mueller, Kuerbis, and Page (2004) also emphasize the transformative nature of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, though they interpret the Act's key significance as reorienting

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① McChesney (2004) credits the Telecommunications Act of 1996 with "fan[ning] the flames of this burgeoning movement" (p. 255).

activists groups away from their traditional focus on mass media content and toward infrastructure regulation issues (see also Drake, 1997; Lenert, 2003). Other scholars have emphasized the late-90s attention generated by the pirate/free radio movement and the resulting FCC initiative on low power FM radio (see Brinson, 2006) as a key force in the revitalization of the media reform movement (Brinson, 2007; Dick & McDowell, 2000; Howley, 2000; Opel, 2004; Stavitsky, Avery, & Vanhala, 2001). ①

The recent resurgence in the media reform movement in the U. S. also has been attributed in large part to the FCC's biennial (now quadrennial) media ownership proceeding — particularly the 2002/ 2003 proceeding (e. g., Brown & Blevins, 2005; McChesney, 2004; Scott, 2004). The galvanizing of public attention to this issue is well-illustrated by the fact that over 500,000 comments — many of them by individual citizens — were submitted to the FCC in connection with the ownership proceeding (Holman, 2005). FCC Commissioner Michael Copps described the ownership proceeding as awakening "a sleeping giant" in terms of focusing citizen attention, concern, and most important, influence, on media policy issues to an extent never before seen in the U. S. (quoted in Newman & Scott, 2005, p. 25). ② The movement's success on this front was perceived not only in terms of preventing the FCC's effort to further relax the existing media ownership rules, but also in terms of the emergence of new organizations devoted to media reform, fostering new collaborations between existing groups, and in terms of generating an overall heightened interest in media policy issues within the broader public (Chester, 2007; Matani, Spilka, Borgman-Arboleda, & Dichter, 2003) and the funding community (Louie & Luckey, 2006). It would also appear that this uptick in media reform activity is less concentrated in the legal sector than was the case during the movement's earlier peak in the 1960s and 1970s. Longitudinal research indicates that in 1975 public interest law organizations devoted an average of 14% of their time and resources to media reform, but only 5% in 2004 (Nielsen & Albiston, 2006).

Media Reform Linkages with Other Social Movements

As should be clear, then, the media reform movement adheres to the characteristics of other social movements in terms of the extent to which its progression appears highly episodic and tightly linked with specific public, or public policy, issues. However, when we continue to apply a social movement theory framework to media reform, we also see important ways that media reform may be unique in relation to other social movements.

White (1995) identifies a number of points of intersection between social movement theory and the media reform movement. These include: a) that social movements are themselves essentially communication patterns that emerge "'outside' and in opposition to the existing institutional, hierarchical (non-democratic) structure of communications in a society" (White, 1995, p. 93); b) that social movements tend to introduce and legitimate alternative patterns of communication that tend to be more egalitarian and participatory; c) that social movements "renovate and democratize virtually all aspects of the communication process" (White, 1995, p. 93), be it in terms of participation, use of new technologies, the definition of professional roles and training, or in terms of new codes of ethics and values guiding policy; and d) that social movements that introduce major socio-cultural shifts also

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① According to McChesney (2003), as a result of LPFM process, "Media reform activists learned that organizing around tangible reform proposals could generate popular support and sustained attention on Capitol Hill" (p. 225). For a history of "micro-radio" in its various permutations (e. g., Class D, LPFM), see Stavitsky, Avery, & Vanhala (2001).

② For an historical overview of the "waves of media democratization" from 1965 through 2005, see Hackett and Carroll (2006, pp. 92 – 97). For an historical analysis of a largely unstudied component of 1990s-era media reform — the free air time for political candidates campaign initiated by the Alliance for Better Campaigns, see Mason (2006).

tend to introduce a new culture of public communication. In these ways, it would appear that the movement to reform or democratize the system of public communication is inextricably intertwined with central dimensions of all social movements. Thus, from a social movement standpoint media reform is unique in that it "treats communication as simultaneously means and end of struggle" (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 96).

It is in fact this unique aspect of the relationship between media reform and social movements more broadly that has generated as substantial amount of scholarly discussion — with the specific issue being whether media reform is best conceptualized as an independent, free-standing social movement rather than purely an integral component of all social movements. Research by Hackett and Adam (1999) suggests that participants within media reform often do not see the movement as being able to stand on its own; rather, "media reform must be linked to other progressive movements" (p. 127). Others have observed that the origins of the media reform movement (at least in the U.S.), as well as the movement's greatest successes, have been derived primarily from the movement's positioning within broader social movements. Mueller (2002b) characterizes media policy issues as "the tail, not the dog" in terms of public interest activism in the United States during the formative years of the modern media reform movement. That is, according to Mueller (2002b), "advocacy in media policy was completely subordinate to, and reflective of, the agenda of broader social movements regarding civil rights, environmentalism and consumerism" (p. 8). Echoing this perspective, Horwitz (1997) concludes that the success of the 60s/70s-era media reform movement in the U.S. "stemmed largely from its connection to the broader social movement of Civil Rights" (p. 344). A mid-1980s assessment of what strategies and tactics should be employed to foster a legitimate social movement in the area of media reform (determining, obviously, at that point, that such a movement did not yet exist) concluded that the movement should build upon its original ties to the civil rights movement (Broderick, 1984).

If media reform is conceived as an integral subcomponent of, and thus primarily subordinate to, other social movements, then its success depends in large part upon developing successful linkages with these movements. Analyses of specific linking strategies have emphasized focusing on groups with at least a tangential stake in a transformed communications environment, whether it be organized labor, human rights organizations, or groups working on behalf of the poor or underprivileged (e. g., Costanza-Chock, 2002). A number of scholars and activists have consequently sought to articulate the ways in which a reformed media environment would facilitate improved communication to potential constituencies for other social movements (Carroll & Hackett, 2006; Brinson, 2006). As Carroll and Hackett (2006) argue, "If media activist groups are successful in their efforts to open up mainstream media to a diversity of voices and to create effective alternative media ... the political beneficiaries will be none other than other progressive movements" (p. 91; see also Brinson, 2007). As a result, "media reform can change the playing field on which actors compete for media attention, strengthening the positions of some actors (in this case, social movement actors) relative to others" (Brinson, 2006, p. 564). Reflecting this perspective, Pozner (2005) argues that substantive media reform is an essential prerequisite for the development of the feminist movement. McChesney and Nichols (2002) see the media reform movement as possessing a broad array of "natural allies, organizations that should be sympathetic to media reform ... organized labor, teachers, librarians, civil libertarians, artists, religious denominations, and groups involved with a broad range of civil rights advocacy" (p. 127). From this perspective, the media reform movement can be perceived, as one activist has described it, as a "'meta-movement, a movement of movements,' precisely due to the strategic centrality of mediated communication in contemporary society" (Hackett & Carroll, 2006, p. 188).

Many studies of the movement have, however, concluded that the strong linking of media reform with other social movements has not, for the most part, been accomplished effectively (e. g. , Mason, 2006; Thomas, 2006). Hackett and Carroll (2006) found, for instance, that none of the non-media activists interviewed in their research named media activist groups as important constituents of a potential coalition. Gangadharan (2007) claims that prominent civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Rainbow Coalition, and the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights have been "conspicuously silent on media policy and law" (p. 1).

Brinson (2006) suggests that foregrounding media reform as a mechanism for facilitating the development of other social movements may lack appeal to these movements due to the fact that it is very much a "long-term strategy" (p. 547) at a time when most organizations involved in social movements lack the luxury of adopting a long-term perspective. As Brinson (2006) argues, "it may be unwise or inefficient for most social movements to choose this strategy to achieve their goals since reform of the media may not be a primary movement objective" (p. 561). Along these lines, it is worth noting that a recent assessment of the interaction between law, the media, and environmental policy, which focused in large part on the importance of mainstream media coverage to successful environmental advocacy, contained a series of recommendations about how environmental advocates could better engage the media, but did not address at all how media reform efforts could play a role in the movement's efforts to obtain more and better media coverage (Plater, 2006). Instead, the media system, with its increased concentration, increasingly commercial orientation, and diminished commitment to hard news reporting (all characteristics identified in the study), is treated as a static system that environmental advocates must figure out how to navigate effectively (Plater, 2006).

Labor unions, in particular, have been identified in a number of studies as a constituency that would seem to potentially benefit tremendously from successful media reform efforts, but that has, for the most part, neglected to interact with the media reform movement (Fones-Wolf, 2006a; Hackett & Carroll, 2006). Fones-Wolf (2006a, 2006b) has documented how organized labor, was, in fact, an integral component of the post-World War II media reform movement in the U.S., particularly in terms of developing the notion of "listener's rights" that has become an integral element of contemporary media reform (see Toro, 2000) and in terms of spearheading efforts to bring a greater diversity of sources and viewpoints to the airwaves. [1] However, by the 1950s and 1960s, due in large part to the political climate surrounding the Cold War, labor become marginalized from the policymaking process and, as a result, "labor was never again a major force in the media reform movement, leaving it to become the province primarily of middle-class intellectuals" (Fones-Wolf, 2006b, p. 515).

Along related lines, constituency groups with a more direct stake in media reform outcomes, such as media industry trade unions, the advertising industry, or the creative community (see Batt, Katz, & Keefe, 1999; Dolber, 2007; Mosco, 2007) would also seem to represent natural strategic partners if media reform's relationship with labor were conceptualized a bit more narrowly (i. e. , to focus only on those sectors *directly* affected by changes in the media system). Hackett and Carroll (2006), in their model of the "social sources" for media democratization, place groups within and around media industries, such as journalists, media workers, and librarians, at the core of their concentric spheres of actors contributing to the media reform movement. Yet, as these same authors note, constituent

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[1]   For additional research examining the role of labor in the establishment of alternative media, see Tracy's (2007) historical case study of *The Dubuque Leader* newspaper in the 1930s.

groups such as journalists have, for the most part, maintained their distance from the media reform movement despite the many ways in which their working conditions and career prospects could be improved if the media environment were to change along the lines advocated by reformists (Hackett & Carroll, 2006). Part of the problem may be that journalists themselves often are the target of criticism of media reform groups, which undermines the likelihood of any alliance-building. The journalistic culture of objectivity may further impede linkages between journalistic organizations and media reform advocacy organizations (Hackett & Carroll, 2006). [1]

To the extent that media reform is theoretically intertwined with all social movements via its concern with developing and maintaining a robust and free-flowing communications environment, and to the extent that the firm embedding of media reform into the agendas of other social movements has not taken place, then there would seem to be the need to explore possible disconnects between theory and practice. Failures to tightly link media reform with broader social issues — particularly in the U. S. — may be a reflection of what Eyerman and Jamison (1991) see as a key characteristic of U. S. social movements — that they "have been almost aggressively single-issue oriented" (p. 37). If this is indeed the case, then we probably should question whether a long-term strategy in which media reform is consistently piggy-backing on larger and potentially more salient public issues is an appropriate path for the media reform movement to follow.

The media reform movement's ability to accomplish its goals — whether they be considered free-standing or ancillary to those of other social movements — may, however, face a unique challenge. It has been well-documented how both the traditional mass media and, increasingly, newer communications technologies such as the Internet, factor significantly in the creation and mobilization of any social movement, including the media reform movement (see, e. g., Cogburn, 2004; Coopman, 2000; Holman, 2005; Klein, 1995; Meikle, 2002). Mainstream media coverage is necessary for any social movement to: a) attract public attention and support; b) achieve a measure of validation and legitimization within public discourse and, by association the general public and policymakers; and c) broaden the scope of the conflict to sympathetic third parties (Gamson & Wolfsfield, 1993).

And so, while communication is both the means and ends of media reform, in terms of means, the movement's ability to attract the media coverage necessary to accomplish the functions outlined above may be uniquely compromised (see Hackett & Carroll, 2004). As Thomas (2006) states, "While there are no guarantees for the positive media coverage of any given social movement, reporting media reform movements is doubly complicated for the simple reason that the primary targets for reform are media structures and practices" (p. 294). This creates a tremendous disincentive for mainstream media organizations to inform the public about the activities and concerns of the media reform movement. Some observers have gone so far as to describe this situation as a conflict of interest (Broderick, 1984, p. 317). A number of studies have, in fact, confirmed these suspicions, documenting dismal levels of news media coverage for media policy issues, as well as patterns in the coverage that would suggest that the policy interests of the media organizations are exerting a strong influence over such decisions (Gilens & Hertzman, 2000; Snider, 2005). [2] This situation poses something of a troubling Catch-22 for

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[1]   For an alternative perspective, see Foley (2005), who argues that the Newspaper Guild — Communication Workers of America (CWA) "has been one of the most enduring and effective media reform organizations in the United States" (p. 41).

[2]   A 2003/2004 study by Charles Layton published in the *American Journalism Review* documented how the mainstream news media provided virtually no news coverage of the FCC's 2002/2003 reassessment of its media ownership rules.

the media reform movement — one of the key mechanisms by which the movement can accomplish its goals may be foreclosed it, precisely because of the nature of the movement's goals.

This set of circumstances allows for a somewhat different interpretation of the oft-made observation that the issues at the core of media reform movement are not likely to reach the top of citizens' policy priorities in the face of more tangible concerns such as health care, taxes, or education. As Thomas (2005) has noted within the context of the Communication Rights for the Information Society movement, "The public salience of a number of issues currently prioritized by the communication rights movement ... is low precisely because these issues do not affect the day to day lives of the vast majority of global citizens" (p. 7). Similarly, Broderick (1984) has emphasized that many of the positive and negative impacts of communications technologies simply "are not concrete enough to organize people around" (p. 316; see also Toro, 2000). A number of scholars have emphasized the communication difficulties associated with articulating the range of concerns associated with media reform in the kind of fairly simple language that is necessary to attract newcomers and the uninitiated to the movement and that is necessary for the conduct of an effective campaign (O'Siochrú, 2005; Thomas, 2006). While these may, in fact, be characteristics of the media reform movement's core issues that undermine broad public resonance, it may very well be the case that these limitations are compounded by the fact that the mainstream media coverage that traditionally has been considered essential to generating the kind of issue salience and citizen awareness necessary to support a free-standing social movement is uniquely difficult to achieve in the realm of media reform.

Media Reform Movement Critiques

Contained within the wide-ranging literature on the media reform movement are a number of recurring critiques about the movement's organization and effectiveness. A social movement analytical lens helps illustrate how many of these critiques reflect characteristics common to all social movements. For instance, scholars of social movements have recognized that, particularly in the U. S., "social movements are often, if not always, two movements in one" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 37), with activists at the local grassroots level speaking different languages to different audiences, and utilizing different strategies for change than the D. C.-based advocacy organizations that represent the public interest within the federal policymaking sector but are largely cut off from the grassroots organizations and activities. This dynamic frequently has been identified as a source of tension in U. S. social movements, and this bifurcated nature has been reflected in two distinct academic traditions in the study of social movements (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page's (2004) analysis of the evolution of media activism noted just such a distinction. The authors emphasize the importance of distinguishing between the grass roots level of "*activism* or *social movement activity*" and the more formally organized citizens groups that interact directly with policymakers, which the authors refer to as "*advocacy* ... rooted in *advocacy organizations*" (Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004, p. 6).

The critique that arises from this structural tendency, however, is that there seldom appears to be sufficient coordination and communication between the federally-focused and grassroots advocacy organizations (see, e. g., Dichter, 2005; Hackett & Adam, 1999; Listening Project, 2004; McChesney & Nichols, 2002; Schneyer & Lloyd, 1976). Studies ranging from those examining the 1930s-era media reform movement in the U. S. (McChesney, 1993) to those examining the contemporary Communication Rights for the Information Society movement (Thomas, 2006) to those examining community-based youth media justice organizations (Klinenberg, 2004) have been consistent in their assessment that the broadly-defined media reform movement has been hampered by a failure of the organizations that comprise the movement to work in unison. Even at the movement's first high point in the 1960s and 1970s, it "did not constitute a unified, coherent set of organizations," but rather "a very loose confederation of groups that shared a common bond" (Munn, 1999, p. 62).

Brinson (2007) has examined this issue of cooperation (or lack thereof) between the grassroots and the federal-level activist organizations within the context of the free radio movement. He concludes that policy change should not be seen as purely the province of the D. C.-based advocacy organizations, contending instead that "actions by grassroots activists outside the policy arena can contribute in significant ways towards making those changes" (Brinson, 2007, p. 2). As he also notes, the combined influence of the grassroots and the federal-level advocacy organizations on policy that contributed to the development of low-power FM radio took place with very little cooperative or coordinated activity taking place between these two groups.

One explanation for this persistent observation of a lack of collaboration and cooperation may be the intense competition among many groups for a relatively small pool of available funding that has frequently been noted (Hackett & Adam, 1999; Klinenberg, 2007; Thomas, 2006). This dynamic has been described as discouraging openness and information-sharing, particularly given the traditional tendency of funders in this area to tend to fund specific projects rather than long-term institution building (Hackett, 2000),[1] and the availability of such funding to be highly dependent upon the priorities of individuals within these funding organizations, which can, of course, change as the decision-makers involved change (Mueller, 2002b).[2]

More generally, this competition for funding has been seen as contributing to a persistent fragmentation of the movement, as organizations emphasize establishing and maintaining their own distinctive identity and mission — and even potentially narrowing their focus — in order to stand out to potential funders. These tendencies reflect a broader identity-related phenomenon related to interest groups labeled *issue niche theory* by political scientist William Browne (1990), in which advocacy organizations establish increasingly narrow niches for themselves in an effort to maintain their long-term viability.[3] As one media justice activist interviewed by Klinenberg (2004) noted, "The fear of collaborating is that funders can just write one of us off — they have to know how each of us is different" (p. 187). In this way, funding shortages may be a key driver of fragmentation and diminished cooperation.[4] Finally, this dynamic also has been characterized as encouraging tendencies to denigrate the activities of other sectors of the movement, and thereby undermine efforts at

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[1] As Hackett and Carroll (2006) note, the liberal foundations that historically have provided the backbone of support for the media reform movement "tend to fund specific projects rather than supply ongoing operating funds, forcing activist groups to invest substantial time in generating and writing grant proposals. By contrast, wealthy conservative foundations have invested in long-term institution building" (p. 131). Fratkin (2002) illustrates this tendency in her study of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, which was unable to maintain support from the Marke Foundation because the foundation believed that the NCCB would be unable to broaden its base of support, from the Stern Foundation because, according to one source "they never stick with anything too long," and from the ARCA Foundation because the NCCB represented a long-term commitment that the foundation lacked the patience to support absent seeing immediate short-term results (p. 173). Similarly, Kopp (1997) asserts that the Ford Foundation's support for media reform organizations has been "short-term action and results oriented" (p. 191).

[2] For discussions of the role of private foundations in communications policymaking, see Brown (1986), Kopp (1997), and Lenert (2003).

[3] According to issue niche theory, interest groups "cultivate specific recognizable identities ... by concentrating on very narrow issues" and refraining from imposing on the similarly narrow issue spaces carved out by other interest groups (Browne, 1990, p. 472). For a critique of issue niche theory, see Heaney (2007).

[4] However, it would also seem possible that *increases* in available funding in a particular sector (as has been happening in the media reform area; see Louie & Luckey, 2006) also can contribute to fragmentation, as a greater quantity and variety of available funders may result in a greater diversity of specific interests being supported. Such a tendency may then reflect the need for significant collaboration and coordination among funders.

collaboration and division of labor (Hackett and Carroll, 2006). ①

A second common observation among assessments of the organizational dynamics of the media reform movement is the tendency for key organizations within the movement to be established and sustained through the leadership of a single individual. This centralization of leadership has led, according to some assessments, to relatively limited efforts on the parts of these organizations to achieve broad, far-reaching memberships or to seek alliances with other organizations, due to reasons ranging from limited resources to a desire to maintain highly centralized and autonomous decision-making (see, e.g., Branscomb & Savage, 1978). Following in a similar vein, research by Dichter (2005) suggests that the reform movement long has been characterized by a significant centralization and hierarchy of power, a lack of diversity in the leadership ranks, and a failure to integrate the full range of interested stakeholders into the movement's activities and decision-making.

Extending such critiques, Sherman (2004) has provided what is, to date, the most detailed inquiry into the extent to which organizations within the movement reflect the needs and interests of the broader public. The overarching concern that guides her study is that "Leaders of public interest groups, by not actively engaging citizens as part of their daily activities, can easily find themselves perpetuating their own personal interests" (Sherman, 2004, p.4). According to Sherman (2004), such tendencies can undermine the extent to which public interest organizations develop appropriate policy positions, as well as the extent to which these groups can be held accountable for their decisions. Of course, such concerns are complicated by the extent to which the general public is often perceived by the public interest community as insuffiently informed in regards to communications policy issues (Sherman, 2004), ② and the extent to common manifestations of public opinion (e.g., polling data) appear to play a relatively insignificant role in media policy debates (Gandy, 2003). Nonetheless, Sherman (2004) concludes that the public interest/advocacy community is, for the most part, too detached from the broader constituency they presumably represent. ③

Such dynamics have led to questions, both within and outside of the academic literature, as to whether such a movement can truly be considered representative of the broader public interest (e.g., Padden, 1972). That is, are the organizations that comprise the media reform movement truly representative of the broader "public interest?" As Kim (2001) has noted within the context of audience-based reform movements in Korea, "what right do audience representative bodies have to speak on behalf of all audiences?" (p.105). To the extent that the reform movement tends to be dominated by groups of individuals who may not be representative of the population as a whole, questions of the legitimacy of these groups may naturally arise (see, e.g., Dichter, 2004; Kim, 2001). As Schneyer and Lloyd (1976) noted in one of the earliest assessments of the media reform movement in the U.S., "the legitimacy of national media-reform organizations extends no farther than their service to client consumer groups" (p.21). To the extent that generating strong and broad-based public support is a fundamental component of a legitimate social movement (see, e.g., Ash Garner & Zald, 1987; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991), or even to the establishment of a clear identity in the

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① Hackett and Carroll (2006), for instance, illustrate the tendency among some sectors of the media reform movement to criticize the efforts of those who focus primarily on structural media reform.

② In Sherman's (2004) interviews with members of public interest/advocacy organizations that focus on communications policy, she finds that they give the public an average grade of D in their knowledge of policy issues (p. 131). Of course, such low levels of knowledge likely are at least in part a function of the demonstrated tendency of the mainstream media to avoid coverage of communications and media policy issues.

③ For a discussion of the importance of public participation in the communications policymaking process, see Raboy (1994).

policymaking environment for any interest group (Heaney, 2007). ① the extent to which media reform remains to some extent the province of an insular group of committed activists and advocates undermines its status as a full-fledged social movement and the extent to which we can anticipate the large-scale institutional change that many social movements have been able to achieve. However, recent events such as the National Conference on Media Reform (the most recent of which attracted over 3,500 attendees from around the country) and the public outcry over the FCC's 2003 media ownership decision (see Scott, 2004) suggest that characterizations of the movement as more insular may require revision.

Finally, perhaps one of the most difficult and controversial topics addressed within the literature on the media reform movement involves the assessment of the extent to which the movement has been successful in its activities. Certainly, critiques such as those outlined above suggest that the media reform movement has not reached its full potential in terms of its ability to create institutional change. Nonetheless, throughout its history, the media reform movement has been attributed with a wide range of successes. The 1970s have been characterized as a particularly successful time period, when media reform organizations achieved success in the arenas of policymaking, industry influence, and viewer education (see Branscomb and Savage, 1978 and Hanks & Pickett, 1979, for a detailed review). ② Chester (2006) documents a broad array of movement successes dating from the 1960s through the present. Specific actions such as the creation of Low Power FM radio and the defeat of the FCC's 2003 effort to relax media ownership rules are some recent examples of what are widely considered successes of the movement (Chester, 2007).

However, other analyses have reached starkly different conclusions (see, e. g. , Cantor & Cantor, 1986). Rowland (1982), for instance, describes the media reform movement's record throughout the 1970s as "mixed and uneven" (p. 34), arguing that the movement's impact during this time was constrained by the policymaking process in which its activities focused, that the movement was not able to keep pace with technological and institutional change, and that it failed to generate a "clear, broad-based national constituency nor any form of organization consistently capable of helping translate their criticisms into comprehensive political action" (p. 36). At best, according to Rowland (1982), "the reform movement has succeeded to date in nudging the policymaking and regulatory process only a degree or two off course" (p. 36), due in large part to the movement's willingness to press for change within — rather than outside of — established institutional channels. More recent analyses have adopted a similar perspective (e. g., Hamilton, 2004; Hintz, 2007; Jakubowicz, 1993; Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004), including within narrower reform contexts such as the Chicano media reform movement (Maxwell, 1988; Noriega, 2000). The underlying sentiment of many of these analyses is that the media reform movement seldom has been as radical as it needs to be to successfully initiate significant institutional change.

A common related critique has been that throughout much of its history and throughout its many international incarnations, the movement has taken a primarily defensive stance, often advocating preservation of the status quo in the face of potentially substantial deregulatory initiatives, rather than developing and advocating original policy alternatives (McChesney & Nichols, 2002; Mueller, Kuerbis, & Page, 2004; O'Siochru, 2004). A recent assessment of the legal needs of media reform organizations characterized the

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① Heaney (2007) argues that interest groups often need to employ a "representation strategy," in which the organization grounds its identity in its ability to facilitate a connection between policymakers and a broad constituency (p. 281).

② For a similar review of the successes of the Communications Rights for the Information Society movement, see Thomas (2005).

movement as "largely reactive," but concluded that with greater legal support, could "begin thinking strategically about how to proceed proactively" (Trivedi, 2006, pp. 32 – 33). ①

The ability of the media reform movement to be more proactive in its efforts must also be considered against a backdrop in which there have been a series of developments over the past 30 years that have effectively recast the dynamics of the policymaking process in ways that work against media reform activities. Thus, for instance, in the wake of substantial media reform influence on broadcast license renewals, the FCC altered the process in ways that effectively insulate broadcasters from the license renewal challenges that were a defining component of the media reform movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Levi, 1996). ② A wide range of deregulatory initiatives that have characterized much of the past 30 years of communications policymaking (see Horwitz, 1989) effectively transfer decision-making from government to private parties, thereby undermining many of the traditional channels of influence utilized by public interest organizations (see Montgomery, 1989). Chester (2007) cites the "loss of regulatory leverage at the FCC" that resulted from deregulation as one of the key factors contributing to the decline of the media reform movement in the 1980s and 1990s (p. 103). As Toro (2000) notes:

> The decline of public participation was not merely an unanticipated byproduct of deregulation. . . . deregulation at the Federal Communications Commission can be attributed to the strong reaction that the broadcast industry and the Commission had to the new "public participation era." Ironically, the FCC used public participation as a justification for the elimination of regulations that public participants thought it so important to enforce. The Commission argued that it no longer needed so many regulations, because it could rely on citizens to monitor broadcasters and report problems to the Commission. (p. 316)

However, at the same time that these kinds of monitoring functions have been ceded to the citizenry, policymakers also have largely withdrawn from gathering much of the information necessary to make such monitoring possible (Napoli & Seaton, 2007). Indeed, a key component of the deregulatory process has included a reduction in the information reporting obligations of the regulated industries and the information gathering activities of the regulatory agencies (see Napoli & Karaganis, 2007). This creates a paradoxical situation that has been well-described by Andrew Schwartzman of the Media Access Project: "When the agency deregulates, and stops collecting data, they say 'we're going to rely on marketplace forces and public complaints to make us aware of problems.' . . . [However, the lack of available data] takes away the means of members of the public to do that monitoring." (quoted in Dunbar, 2003)

Focusing also on the deregulatory process, Mueller, Kuerbis, and Page (2004) argue that the transition in the 1980s and the 1990s toward telecommunications liberalization, and its associated emphasis on the benefits of deregulation and the primacy of economic analysis meant that "media activists who were focused more on culture and content had a difficult time participating in this dialogue" (p. 57), which contributed to the marginalization of these groups during this time

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① This conclusion should be tempered by the fact that the sponsoring organization for the study was seeking financial support specifically to provide legal support to the media reform community.

② As Levi (1996) illustrates, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 essentially eliminated the traditional comparative renewal hearing for broadcast licenses, while also extending the license term to eight years — actions that can be seen as specific efforts to insulate licensees from the external pressures of media reform organizations.

period. ① More recently, we have seen similar observations within the context of WSIS, in which, Franklin (2005) argues, grassroots media/ICT activist groups — particularly those concerned with gender issues — found themselves marginalized as a result of the "'hard-nosed' techno-economic and hi-tech" formulations of the key issues and problems to be addressed by WSIS (p. 40).

Assessing the effectiveness of any social movement is complicated by the question of where the analyst is looking when he/she looks for success or influence on the policymaking process. It may often be the case that influence has taken place in areas other than the final decision outcome for a particular policy issue. In a 70s-era analysis of the media reform movement, Chisman (1977) concludes that citizens' groups can have their greatest potential for influence in the early stages of the policymaking process, when issues are in their infancy. Similarly, in an analysis of 1990s-era advocacy surrounding the development of the National Information Infrastructure in the U.S., Munn (1999) concludes that the media reform movement achieved its greatest success in redefining how the policy issues were framed (in this case, successfully foregrounding issues of access). Research by Bauer, et al. (2005) found that media reform organizations play a critical role in introducing research and ideas generated in the academic sector into the policymaking process.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to provide a detailed review and synthesis of the academic literature on the media reform movement. As this review has illustrated, previous characterizations of this literature as sparse seem less appropriate when the parameters of the movement are defined broadly (both geographically and conceptually) and when the very recent surge of research on this topic is taken into consideration. As this review also has shown, it has become increasingly common for researchers to approach media reform from the perspective of social movement theory, a phenomenon that may reflect the increased recognition of media reform as a distinctive social movement, or that may reflect an alteration of the self-perceptions of the academics/activists within the movement, who also generate much of the scholarship about the movement.

Recommendations

In any case, approaching media reform within the context of social movements helps to identify a number of key themes. The first involves the linkage between media reform and other social movements. Social movement researchers have emphasized that while all social movements seek to alter media behavior in the pursuit of broader social objectives, media reform is unique in that the alteration of media is both a means and ends for the movement. Thus, the ends of media reform are, in many ways, part of the means of other social movements. The goals of media reform in many ways provide the communications environment that is fundamental to the growth and development of other social movements.

How should this relationship impact the organization and conduct of the media reform movement? Should it remain ancillary to other social movements or should it operate under the assumption that a distinctive independent identity can — and in fact must — be achieved for the movement to be successful? Or does this latter perspective overstate the prominence that media issues could ever achieve in the broader socio-political environment, particularly one in which garnering mainstream media

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① Kopp (1997) credits the Markle Foundation with playing a very influential role, via its funding decisions, in shifting the parameters of communications policy debates heavily in favor of marketplace paradigms. Simone (2006) documents how policymakers' increasingly economic orientation in their interpretation of the "public interest" standard with the interpretations employed by members of the media reform movement.

coverage may be uniquely difficult?

In light of the evidence to date, which suggests that other social movements are not inclined to consistently and systematically devote meaningful resources and attention to media reform, and in light of the extent to which media and communications technologies and industries have developed into a central dimension of global economic and political life, it would seem that, moving forward, the more appropriate strategy would be to continue to work to solidify and expand media reform as a free standing social movement, while being opportunistic in regard to potential linkages with other movements. Dependence upon the ebb and flow of the energies, issues, and resources of other social movements puts media reform in a position of dependence and subservience that makes it unlikely to be able to respond effectively to the largely independent ebb and flow of policy issues and citizen attention in the media and communications arena. Moreover, the continued development and effectiveness of alternative communication channels such as the Internet undermine the extent to which other social movements are likely to see media reform as central to their needs. At the same time, these alternative communication channels enhance the extent to which media reform can cultivate the necessary constituency to function as a free-standing social movement without significant mainstream media coverage. And finally, it would seem that the contemporary political-economic environment is one in which issues pertaining to media and communications policy are becoming increasingly — and recognizably — central to the economic, political, and cultural life of the citizenry — more so than was the case in years past. Thus, the contemporary Information Society would seem to represent an environment in which media reform should be more capable, and, as the past 5 – 10 years would suggest, is more capable of standing independently as a social movement worthy of the attention, support, and commitment of the citizenry — though certainly one with underlying motivations that trace very tangibly back to issues of civil rights in many cases.

The second major dimension of the media reform movement that is highlighted via a social movement perspective involves organizational cooperation and collaboration, particularly in relation to the relationship between grassroots activist groups and federal-level advocacy organizations. This tendency toward fragmentation and independent operation has characterized assessments of the movement from its earliest days to the present. Early scholarship examining the media reform movement in fact identifies as much fragmentation back then as characterizes the movement today (Schneyer & Lloyd, 1976). Hackett and Carroll's (2006) observation that the media reform movement possesses an "organizational ecology with distinct niches" (p. 65) seems to be a persistent characteristic of the movement.

With these observations in mind, it would seem at this point particularly important to move away from considering how best to alleviate the persistent disjuncture between national organizations and grassroots organizations, as well as the tendency toward organizational fragmentation within the field, and instead focus on possible strategic approaches to making these characteristics sources of strength for the movement. That is, how best can the movement capitalize on the different skill sets and areas of expertise that the diverse participants in the movement bring to the table and on the opportunities for specialization in knowledge and skill sets that presumably arise from the maintenance of distinct divisions between federal and local level activities? As recent research by Brinson (2007) suggests, significant policy change can be achieved even when the grassroots activists and federal-level advocacy organizations operate with only loose coordination of efforts. Hackett and Carroll (2006) emphasize how the movement could benefit from a better-coordinated division of labor, something that presumably could be achieved even if the grassroots and federal levels of the movement remain fairly independent. Perhaps the emphasis in the future should be on the creation of liaison-type organizations focused primarily on coordination and communication across levels of activity, thereby freeing the

grassroots- and federal-level organizations from having to try to engage in such tasks.

Future Research

Despite the depth and scope of the existing research on the media reform movement, there are some avenues of inquiry still needing to be pursued. Perhaps the most pressing is research of a long-term nature that seeks to track and assess media reform movement activities and organizations over a long period of time, with a particular eye on assessing the strategies, tactics, and organizational structures that appear most closely related effecting institutional change. As far back as 1979, Hanks and Pickett advocated for longitudinal research examining long-range effectiveness and seeking to "isolate the factors best predictive of change" (p. 105). Unfortunately, other than a few recent exceptions (e. g. , Mueller, Page, & Kuerbis, 2004), we are, 30 years later, still in need of research in this vein, and calls for work of this type persist (see Mueller & Lentz, 2004). To the extent that a number of critical analyses of the media reform movement have emphasized a relative lack of long-term change versus short-term change (see, e. g. , Hanks & Pickett, 1979; Rowland, 1982), research in this vein may prove to be particularly valuable in strengthening the long-term success of the movement.

Of particular value of research in this vein would be studies examining issues and time periods that have yet to receive meaningful scholarly attention. That is, there has been a tendency for academic research to cluster around a few key issues or time periods, most notably the media reform movement's origins and heyday in the 1960s and 1970s surrounding broadcast 55 television, its revitalization in the wake of the policy debates surrounding LPFM, and media ownership, and its increasingly global orientation in the wake of the formation of WSIS and ICANN. Such tendencies have meant that other significant periods of public interest and advocacy organization activity, such as those surrounding the break-up of AT&T, or the rise, fall, and rise again of cable television regulation, have not been featured prominently in the literature gathered for this review. This review has illustrated fairly clearly that there has been a much greater emphasis on public interest activism in the mass media sector, as opposed to the telecommunications sector. This tendency may reflect researchers' perceptions of telecommunications-related activism as part of the broader consumer movement (see Rhodes, 2006), and thus being more reflective of traditional economic regulation, rather than reflective of the social regulation issues and concerns that have better characterized the areas of emphasis of the media reform movement. Unfortunately, within scholarship on the consumer movement, telecommunications-related activities have been, according to Schiller (2007), "little studied" (p. 19), and thus seems to have slipped through the cracks between different academic points of focus. Clearly, then, there is a need for more research that explores activism in the telecom-sector through a media reform lens (see, e. g. , Schiller, 1999, 2007). There may be a number of reasons for the existence of such gaps in the literature, ranging from the differing tendencies of those involved in different policy issues to self-generate scholarship; to variations in the availability of the types of information sources (individuals, primary documents, etc.) necessary to conduct scholarly research; to the ebbs and flows within the academic community in regards the perceived resonance and significance of different research topics.

The bigger issue in this particular case, however, may relate back to the relationship between media reform and social movements. Specifically, scholars appear to have been much more likely to conceptualize media reform as an outgrowth of the civil rights movement than to have conceptualized media reform as an outgrowth of the consumer movement (for exceptions, see Fratkin, 2002; Newman, 2002) — a movement that also has frequently provided a strong frame of reference, motivating logic, and energy and expertise, to the cause of media reform. As a result, those issues and organizations involving topics related to media and social justice or media and the democratic process

have received much more scholarly attention at this point than those related to less political charged issues related to media and consumer choice or consumer rights. This pattern perhaps reflects the kinds of topics more likely to attract those scholars with an interest in media reform, for whom issues related to social justice and the democratic process may resonate more strongly. [1] Whatever the reason, it would certainly seem that there is a need, from a social movement scholarship standpoint, to better investigate and document the role and influence of the consumer movement on media reform to the same extent that has been accomplished for the civil rights movement.

More work also needs to be done in developing a sufficiently inclusive inventory of the indicators of success or institutional change for the movement. As was discussed previously, a social movement's influence can occur at a variety of levels, and further inquiry into how these various avenues of influence can best be identified would be helpful in providing a more well-rounded assessment of the media reform movement's impact.

Research also needs to examine more extensively other social movements (civil rights, the environment, etc.) in an effort to develop a more detailed assessment of exactly where media reform stands within their hierarchy of their perceived needs in order to effect their desired institutional change. It may very well be that perceptions within the media reform movement of the centrality of media to other social movements, and even the theoretical centrality of media reform to the effectiveness of other social movements, do not correspond with the practical realities to be found if the perceived importance of media reform within these other social movements is thoroughly investigated. Such research is necessary to determine if, when, and to what extent the linking of media reform with other social movements is an appropriate long-term strategy for the movement to pursue.

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[1] When scholars have focused on the role of the consumer movement in the media/communications realm, they often have focused on issues of advertising regulation (see, e. g. , Ryans, Samiee, & Wills, 2002; Stole, 2000) — issues that have, for whatever reason, tended to reside at the periphery of the media reform movement.

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12. The Emerging Global Movement on Communication Rights: A New Stakeholder in Global Communication Governance? Converging at WSIS but Looking Beyond

Claudia Padovani   Elena Pavan

In order to conceptualize the connection between global social mobilizations and communication issues in the "information age", this paper looks at the experience of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), a United Nations high level gathering that was held in two phases, a first one in Geneva, in December 2003, and a second one in Tunis, in November 2005.

In previous works we placed the engagement of civil society organizations in the "space of discourse" created by WSIS in a longer term perspective, since we believe today's mobilizations around communication issues are a legacy of former international debates (Padovani, 2005c). We also suggested that a "social movement dynamic," not just an "advocacy coalition" emerged during the WSIS process (Padovani & Tuzzi, 2005). In this article we address a number of specific questions: Has a global mobilization dynamic developed around communication issues in the early 2000s? What has the WSIS process, and civil society participation within it, shown in terms of framing the communication rights discourse? What encounters and events have contributed to a common vision, strategy and shared identity for this emerging movement? Through which methods and conceptual lenses can researchers investigate these phenomena to gain a better understanding of their potential impact on global processes?

Our ultimate aim is to assess the relevance of this specific event as a step in the evolution of contemporary mobilizations around communication rights, considering civil society as a "stakeholder" in global communication governance for the 21st century.

Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), a high level political gathering aiming at defining a common vision of the information society, was a space of convergences: among actors and visions, strands of debate (O'Siorchu, 2004a), and civil society realities and practices (Padovani & Tuzzi, 2005). We refer to civil society organizations (CSOs) as a not for profit plurality of expressions, relatively autonomous from both the state and the market, in which citizens organise and relate to each other addressing social and political issues and goals.

As it has been outlined in several scholarly contributions, part of the WSIS relevance to both communication issues and global politics depended on the formal involvement of non-governmental actors in the process, particularly civil society entities. Much has been written to assess civil society

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participation in WSIS as a "multi-stakeholder" experience (Raboy, 2004; Kleinwachter, 2004; Padovani, 2004; Peugeot, 2004; Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2004; Dany, 2004). Some investigation has also focused on what the WSIS has shown in terms of the growing global mobilization around communication issues and communication rights (O'Siochru, 2004b; Calabrese, 2004, Raboy & Landry, 2005), such as the use of ICTs, the strengthening of trans-national connections and the identification of priorities for action.

These aspects continue to call for scholarly attention, given the growing importance of ICT use by trans-national actors alongside the growing awareness, within the global justice movement, of the challenges posed by communication and information issues to contemporary societies (Mueller et al., 2004; Milan, 2003). Civil society presence and action within the WSIS should, in fact, be conceived as a partial yet meaningful epiphany of worldwide mobilizations: the level and quality of civil society activities inside and around WSIS could not have happened unless much knowledge and expertise had developed elsewhere in former years. The WSIS process provided the opportunity to cooperate and create synergies among various civil society initiatives and organizations that had specific interests and competencies in information and communication. It offered a world stage to make their actions and concerns visible to the broader public. Acting within the process "forced" CSOs to adopt rules of conduct and operational structures in order to channel their concerns. This also helped to increase cohesion amongst those highly diversified groups and to develop cooperative habits. Converging in a defined physical and political space, characterized by formal procedures and informal interactions, favoured a learning process of consensus building through the elaboration of documents and clarification of concepts and priorities. Finally the WSIS experience prompted reflections on issues of participation, accountability and legitimacy in governance, and encouraged creative ideas on how to innovate political processes, from the local to the global level.

Almost a decade has gone since the WSIS, and the momentum it provided to transnational activism seems to have given ground to more dispersed, localized, theme-specific struggles — such as those concerning Internet governance; intellectual property and access to knowledge; information gathering and distribution in the environment created by Web 2.0, including in times of political crisis; control, security and privacy of communication, still major challenges as far as freedom of expression and pluralism in knowledge societies. Yet, we argue there is space to continue a critical reflection upon the lessons learned in the WSIS process; especially if transnational mobilizations are conceived of as characterized by "waves" of contention and of visibility (Padovani & Calabrese, forthcoming). In fact, waves of mobilization can be promoted, fostered and prompted by international events and transformations in the supra-national structures of opportunities. In this sense, given the current centrality of ICTs-related issues and, more in general, of information and communication matters, we can expect to witness future continuations of the mobilizations which emerged in the WSIS context. At the same time, specific attention should be paid to the unveiling of connections between these waves of mobilization with existing, though less visible, locally and culturally grounded experiences that developed beside and beyond the WSIS itself. Understanding the multi-level character of social mobilizations around communication issues still remains a challenge, and we argue that a focus on experiences of the recent past (such as the WSIS) does offer interesting insights to clarify this aspect.

To this aim, we start from a conceptualization of social movements as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups or associations, engaged in political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani, 2003). The author further suggested that, in order to clarify the nature of social movements as different from other collective action dynamics (such as coalitional or organizational processes), three dimensions should be considered in an analytical space: presence or absence of conflictual orientations to clearly identified opponents; dense

or sparse informal exchanges between entities engaged in collective projects; and strong or weak collective identity between members of those networks. "We get closer to a social movement dynamic the more there is a coupling of the informal networks, collective identity, and conflict." (Diani, 2003: 301) We keep these three dimensions in mind — informal networking, identity and conflict/ cooperative orientation — while elaborating on civil society mobilizations around communication issues at WSIS as a useful site for analysis.

Though the focus of the Summit was very broad, much of the civil society discourse and action within it was grounded in a number of shared principles and values, which have been expressed in the Civil Society Declaration adopted in Geneva in 2003, which stated "We, women and men from different continents, cultural backgrounds, perspectives, experience and expertise, acting as members of different constituencies of an emerging global civil society ... have been working for two years inside the process, devoting our efforts to shaping a people-centred, inclusive and equitable concept of information and communication societies" (Preamble)[1]. We suggest it is possible to look at the mobilization efforts on communication issues through a critical examination of this vision thus considering identity and networking/connections as our two main analytical dimensions. In this sense, we argue that the vision crystallized in the Preamble of the Civil Society declaration can be summarized into a coherent, and still evolving, "communication rights" framework grounded on discursive practices established between the multiplicity of constituencies and perspectives from CSOs that converged into the WSIS space and that accompanied, complemented and, more often, challenged that of institutions and of the private sector.

To inquiry the dimension of identity, we reconstruct the "framing efforts" conducted inside and around WSIS, using lexical-content analysis (Tuzzi, 2003) to interpret documents that aimed at conceptually defining the connection between human dignity and communication issues in the globalized knowledge society. Framing, in fact, is not just about concept clarification. It is a conversational dynamic, a "relation-building activity" (Mische, 2003: 258). The "conversation on communication rights" should therefore be examined closely: documents elaborated at WSIS have been publicly available for some time now, and widely referred to by groups and individuals acting to promote communication justice on the ground in different contexts. They therefore have come to constitute a "socially structured phenomenon that composes relationships both within and across multiple network formations that give form and life to social movements" (Mische, 2003: 259), as well as normative references to a plurality of actors.

In order to look at the interactional/networking dimension, instead, we proceed to map some of the actors that have made up mobilizations around communication rights, as they have become visible at WSIS in connection to specific issues and with the aim to identify some of the characteristic features of what has been considered an "emerging global movement" (Padovani & Pavan, 2009). Lastly we pose some open issues for further research in order to uncover the significance of that specific experience to civil society as an actor in multi-stakeholder communication governance[2].

WSIS and the Framing of Communication Rights. The Discourse

International recognition of the centrality of information to human rights dates back to the

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[1] The "alternative" Declaration "Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs" was adopted in Geneva on the 11th of December 2003.

[2] The discourse on "multi-stakeholderism" as a participatory practice in global governance has characterized the WSIS process and given origin to several critical reflections. See Kleinwachter (2005) and Padovani (2005 a, b).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), where article 19 states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."[1] Yet it was not until 1969 that the concept of a universal "right to communicate" emerged. In the words of Jean D'Arcy, former director of the Radio and Visual Service at the Office of Public Information for the UN:"The time will come when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will have to encompass a more extensive right than man's right to information, first laid down twenty-one years ago in Article 19. This is the right of man to communicate."(D'Arcy, 1969)

At that time, satellite technology was perceived as a potentially democratic tool, which could allow the world's people not only to transmit and receive information, but also to communicate with each other and foster the interactive dimension of human relations. The "right to communicate" concept was further elaborated in the following years, within the context of the so-called Media Debate that took place at UNESCO, between 1976 and the mid 1980s. These debates led to the proposal of a New World Information and Communication Order and its elaboration in the "MacBride Report" in 1980[2]. The "right to communicate" synthesized the will to overcome inequality in international flows of information between Northern and Southern countries and to democratize international relations. Given the harsh controversies that accompanied those debates, fully immersed in the climate of the Cold War, the idea of a right to communicate was afterwards marginalized from international debates, though it remained central to some academic reflection and grassroots initiatives. During the 1990s, the challenges brought about by technological changes, globalizing trends and neo-liberal policies worldwide, catalyzed new attempts to foster coalitions among interested organizations as well as efforts to re-propose the idea of a right to communicate for the 21st century. But this vision of communication as a human right did not find another truly international stage until the WSIS process, which offered a chance to re-open the discussion. It did so through the official process, where harsh debates took place in the early stages when different governments expressed different positions in relation to the role and weight to be given to human rights in the final documents[3]. But most of all the WSIS offered civil society groups a chance to discuss over the meaning and content of communication rights.

In fact, one of the first working groups to be set up by civil society organizations at WSIS was the Human Rights Caucus[4]. The caucus was active throughout the process and managed to gather consensus on the "Centrality of Human Rights" to information and communication societies. This consensus was expressed in section 2.2 of the Civil Society Declaration, which identified core human rights to be guaranteed in the information society: freedom of expression; privacy; the right to

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[1] The recognition actually came earlier, in 1946, with UN Resolution 59 (1) that refers to freedom of information as the essence of all human rights.

[2] For matter of brevity, we offer just few elements to contextualize the development of the idea of communication rights from a historical point of view. Reflection and critical analysis of NWICO debate can be found in Golding & Harris (1997), Vincent, Nordenstreng & Traber (1999), Carlsson (2003), Pasquali (2005), Padovani (2005).

[3] The Geneva Declaration reads:"We reaffirm the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, as enshrined in the Vienna Declaration." (Geneva Declaration, par. 3) But it should be remembered that this is the outcome of controversial discussions amongst governmental delegates.

[4] http://www.iris.sgdg.org/actions/smsi/hr-wsis/. The HR Caucus was born with three main goals: a) putting human rights, as defined in international documents such as UDHR, ICESCR and ICCPR, on the agenda of the WSIS; b) developing inputs to translate such general principles in the specific framework of the information and communication society; c) rising public and NGOs awareness on the importance of addressing human rights in the debate on information society.

participate in public affairs; workers', women's, children's and indigenous peoples' rights; rights of persons with disabilities. Meanwhile the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign[1], launched in November 2001 by a coalition of organizations active for communication rights in former years, became strongly involved in WSIS with the aim of enriching the Summit's official agenda through a communication rights perspective while fostering civil society participation in the process.

At the time of the second Preparatory Committee of WSIS I (February 2003), a lively debate took place on the basis of a draft Declaration on the Right to Communicate elaborated by CRIS members, which produced reactions from other non-governmental organizations. Amongst them Article 19, who responded with an own document describing the right to communicate as "not a new, independent right, but rather an umbrella right". At the same time, in the German context, another document was elaborated as a contribution to WSIS discussions, thanks to the coordinating effort of Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF): the Charter of Civil Rights for a Sustainable Knowledge Society. On the basis of these initial documents, several "conversations" took place among individuals and organizations, in the official premises of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and in informal contexts[2], leading to a refinement of the "communication rights" concept. The focus was no longer on the need to recognize a new human right, but on the need for a coherent approach to all "those rights — codified in international and regional human rights instruments — that pertain to standards of performance with regard to the provision of information and the functioning of communication processes in society" (Hamelink & Hoffman, 2004)[3].

Just before the Geneva Summit, in December 2003 the CRIS campaign organized in Geneva a meeting on "Framing Communication Rights." Fifty activists, academics and media professionals gathered with the goal of sharing their understanding of communication rights in the different regions of the world. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Human Rights Caucus and Heinrich Boell Foundation, the CRIS Campaign organized a "World Forum on Communication Rights" as a side event of the WSIS. Over three hundred people participated in this one day event, to discuss what communication rights mean in the daily lives of millions of peoples in relation to issues of poverty, copyright standards, conflict and peace. The Forum presented testimonies, showed video and adopted a Statement on Communication Rights. It thus facilitated the emergence of a more pragmatic definition of communication rights, based not only on reference to international legal instruments, but on the very experience of people "on the ground". This pragmatic vision combined various elements of human rights as they relate to different moments of societal communication processes, including the production of knowledge and ideas and the capacity to use them for economic, political and cultural purposes (CRIS Global Governance Project, 2004).

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[1] www. crisinfo. org. For a review of CRIS antecedents and motivations that led to the constitution of the campaign and its involvement in WSIS, see O'Siochru (2004). See also next paragraph in this chapter.

[2] Euricom meeting "Information Society: visions and governance. The WSIS and beyond", Venice (5 - 7 May 2003).

[3] Other communication and human rights related initiatives took place in Geneva right before and during the Summit. "An International Symposium on the Information Society, Human Dignity and Human Rights" (2 - 4 November 2003) was organized by the People's Movement for Human Rights Education (PDHRE, www. pdhre. igc. org/wsis/homepage. html) with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation and the European Commission, with the aim of examining opportunities and threats which the development of ICTs brings for human dignity and human rights. Independent experts who participated in the meeting elaborated a Statement in which divides and exclusion are indicated as the main dangers for human rights in information societies, while rights to learning, to freedom of expression, to privacy, to cultural and linguistic diversity, to the public domain and democratic governance are highlighted as problematic areas.

After Geneva, discussions about communication rights continued in other spaces and more documents were drafted. Among them: the International Researchers' Charter for Knowledge Societies (by IAMCR), the Council of Europe Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on Human Rights on the Rule of Law in the Information Society, and the Charter on Rights of Citizens in the Knowledge Society elaborated by Telecities[1].

We have analyzed all these documents[2] addressing some specific questions: is it possible to identify common elements that formed the "core" of the communication rights discourse in the WSIS context? Has WSIS favoured the emergence of a common understanding of communication as a right (or a set or rights)? What does document analysis tell us about the three analytical dimensions of networking, identity and conflict/cooperative orientation that are relevant to distinguish social movement dynamics?

The language of those documents reveals that few words were shared by all speakers and utilized with more or less the same frequency: information, content, government, freedom, access, media, Internet and democracy. Yet, each group articulated communication rights on its own terms, expressing similar concerns, but privileging different aspects and terminologies.

The *Article 19 Statement* showed more concern with freedom, pluralism and media, and regards states as privileged interlocutors. It attempts to articulate communication rights as an umbrella term by stating that

> ... Key elements of this right (to communicate) include the right to a diverse, pluralistic media; equitable access to the means of communication, as well as to the media; the right to practice and express one's culture ...; the right to participate in public decision-making processes; the right to access information, including from public bodies; the right to be free from undue restrictions on content; and privacy rights, including the right to communicate anonymously (Article 19, 2003).

The *Charter of Civil Rights* by the Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF) focused on sustainability, access, infrastructures and technological aspects of communication, combined with diversity and equality in the electronic environment.

The *International Researchers' Charter* (IAMCR) stressed the cultural and access dimensions of communication, as well as the relevance of communities, insisting on a conception of knowledge as a common good and on the need to adopt open standards.

The *Council of Europe* (CoE) stressed the need to extend already guaranteed rights — such as freedom of expression, respect to private life, right to education, prohibition of slavery and right to free elections — to the electronic environment. The only innovative reference was to the WSIS-inspired "multi-stakeholder" approach, namely the formal recognition that not only governments, but also private entities and civil society organizations should be included in the construction and steering of the information society.

The *Charter on Rights of Citizens* (Telecities) approached human rights in the electronic environment including rights to access, education, online information and online participation. This document focused on the challenges brought about by new information and communication technologies, but said nothing about traditional media, pluralism and cultural diversity.

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[1] This Charter was actually presented at the World Summit of Local Authorities in the Information Society, held in Lyon in December 2003.

[2] The documents considered in our analysis, conducted through both ex-post codifying and lexical-content analysis, are identified according to the "author", with acronyms in brackets (es: Statement from the World Forum on Communication Rights is referred to as WFCR).

Finally the *Statement on Communication Rights* (WFCR) introduced a comprehensive framework: it made claims for freedom, inclusiveness, diversity and participation in order to evaluate the potential of information technology and to address the problems it raises. It also addressed issues of political control, freedom of expression, concentration in media ownership and commercialization, and the exclusion of large numbers from "human interaction ... through which identities and meanings are shaped".

Some documents read more "conservative" in their approach: Article 19 and Council of Europe, in fact, mainly referred to existing rights which need to be fostered and guaranteed. Other texts appeared more innovative in their attempts to address the challenges posed by information technologies: HBF, IAMCR and Telecities insisted on the potential and risks of communication in terms of access to knowledge and participation. In between these positions, the Statement on Communication Rights made reference to existing international standards, but also outlined the basic principles that could contribute in developing a framework capable of holding together "old" rights and new aspirations.

We consider that in spite of the different vocabularies and priorities, a consensus on core principles of communication rights was nevertheless traceable throughout the documents. This is synthesised in the following table, where principles[1] are taken as starting points (left column) while already internationally recognized rights (in blue) as well as proposals for new rights to be developed (in orange) are derived from the terminology adopted in the analysed texts.

Table 1   Core principles and communication rights[2]

Core principles	Communication rights	WFCR	ART19	HBF	IAMCR	CoE	Telecities
Freedom	Freedom of expression/ opinion	X	X	X	X	X	
	Freedom of assembly			X		X	
	Prohibition of slavery/ forced labour					X	
	Respect for private life/correspondence/ personal data	X	X	X		X	X
	Freedom of communication	X	X	X			X

continued

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[1]   We elaborate on the Statement on Communication Rights and discussions conducted in different framing settings. We acknowledge Prof. Cees Hamelink's long term commitment and groundbreaking work on this subject.

[2]   This framework draws explicitly, and elaborates, on Prof. Cees Hamelink's work in framing communication as a human right, from the People's Communication Charter to the Statement on Communication Rights which he presented at the World Forum on Communication Rights, and research projects developed at the University of Amsterdam. For reference to international standards concerning Communication Rights see: Statement on Communication Rights and O'Siochru (2005) *Handbook on Communication Rights*, available on the CRIS website. A compilation of international standards relevant to Communication Rights from UN adopted binding and non binding documents have been elaborated by Padovani (2005).

Core principles	Communication rights	WFCR	ART19	HBF	IAMCR	CoE	Telecities
Inclusion/ access	Access to public information/informed participation	X	X	X			X
	Access to old and new media	X	X	X			X
	Reducing divides	X	X	X		X	
	Right to education/life long learning/media education			X		X	X
Diversity/ pluralism	Cultural diversity	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Media diversity/media ownership	X	X	X			
	Creativity/innovation			X	X		
Participation	Free election					X	
	Participation in cultural life of communities				X		X
	Promote democratic environment	X	X	X	X	X	X
	On-line participation/e-democracy						X
Knowledge as a common good/ sharing & sustainability	Knowledge for better understanding				X		
	Open access/standards		X	X	X		
	Knowledge as a common good/public domain	X		X	X		
	Sustainability of knowledge societies	X		X			

Wide agreement seem to have been found on basic rights such as freedom of expression and opinion and cultural diversity, but also on the need to promote a democratic environment. For each principle all documents referred to at least one relevant right or proposal, which support our hypothesis that a set of core principles is recognized (though often implicitly) by all speakers. The only exception was the conception of knowledge as a common good which was not mentioned in the Council of Europe's and the Telecities' documents, showing that institutional speakers did not perceive, at the time, intellectual works and the production of knowledge as a ground for struggle.

To conclude, we can say that the analysis of the set of documents elaborated in the context of the

WSIS process does show that an evolutionary discourse on communication rights was emerging, which aimed at holding together aspects of information, communication, culture and knowledge thus providing the bases for a collective and shared identity. Core principles, such as inclusion and participation, were identified as relevant to protect human rights in the knowledge society, though it is debateable if this has also led to a shared understanding of their interdependence. As time has gone by it has become evident that efforts at different levels — from the global to the local — need to be made in order to "translate" discourses and frames into a language and concrete proposals for action, thus raising awareness and support among the broader public (O'Siochru, 2005).

Converging at WSIS. The Practice

Providing an articulated overview of the different actors that have engaged in framing efforts as well as formal and informal discursive exchanges in the WSIS context can help indicating which directions these efforts may take in the future. A useful point of entry is to look at those realities of civil society that converged at WSIS, both in terms of different "typologies" of civil society entities and of experiences and themes which they reflected.

As far as "types" of civil society entities, WSIS has witnessed the participation of international NGOs cooperating with regional and global intergovernmental organizations (IGOs): these were the more "institutional" version of civil society. Organizations like CONGO[1] and the NGLS[2] contributed, through their knowledge of global processes, to professionalize the activities of the Civil Society Sector and to foster communication channels with the official process[3]. But Geneva and Tunis also witnessed a more "globalization from below" approach, through the informal interaction of individuals, groups and coalitions that got organized on the occasion of the Summit, being more innovative in the articulation of issues and focused on setting the agenda. We have already mentioned the CRIS Campaign, but we can also think of most of the thematic working groups as performing this networking kind of function.

Conversations between activists, grassroots groups, exponents of epistemic communities and NGOs, the former being more creative and agenda-oriented and the latter helpfully mediating the formal presence of civil society in the process, have taken place at WSIS, fostering a sense of being part of a variegated yet single constituency. Joining these diverse experiences, we have identified five clusters of civil society working groups in the process (Figure 1)[4].

Firstly, the WSIS offered to a number of individuals and loose coalitions, who had been active for years in the promotion of an open and democratic use of communication technologies, a reason to come together and act. For some of those actors it is possible to find historical and conceptual roots in the debates of the '70s and '80s (O'Siochru, 2005; Padovani, 2005c): when NWICO was no longer on the international agenda, some observers started to call for an international mobilization around communication issues:

> At present, the forum for debate over NWICO has been left to scholars and communication specialists ... What is needed is to bring the concerns of the MacBride Report to general attention, and encourage further debate and study by concerned individuals and non-governmental organizations. (Traber & Nordenstreng, 1992: 1)

[1] Conference on Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC: http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/.
[2] UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service: http://www.un-ngls.org/.
[3] For details on the organizational history of civil society at WSIS, see and Raboy & Landry (2005).
[4] The clusters are identified in the figure through different colours, from dark green to orange.

Loose initiatives such as the MacBride Roundtables[1], the proposal for a People's Communication Charter[2] or the Platform for Democratic Communication were developed in the '90s. Meanwhile associational structures with international reach, such as the World Association of Community Radio (AMARC), the Association for Progressive Communication (APC), the Cultural Environment Movement (CEM) and Videazimut emerged[3]. They all supported the idea of media reform and prompted mobilization from the ground up[4].

A few years before the WSIS, Vincent, Nordenstreng and Traber were writing:

> What started, historically, with the proposed restructuring of the international information and communication order has grown into an alliance of grassroots organizations, women's groups, ecology networks, social activists, and committed academics ... There is a new NWICO in the making which sees itself as a network of networks based in civil society. (1999: ix - x)

At WSIS this "new NWICO in the making", focused on (mainly) traditional media and communication processes, met with more recent experiences of ICT use for an "*Internet citoyen et solidaire*"; with the open source movement, exponents of the Indymedia movement and the many groups aiming to reduce the so-called digital-divide, conceived as the new barrier to equity in world relations. All these actors can be clustered in a second group, mostly interested in the challenges and opportunities brought about by ICTs and technological convergence, operating to redefine the concept and practices of citizenship in the information society.

WSIS also witnessed the articulation of a discourse on information justice from social movements active on such diverse issues as gender inequalities, indigenous peoples discrimination and rights, environmental sustainability. Within this discourse, the broad perspective of global justice to be attained through equity in world relations was to be connected to media reforms and the promotion of communication rights. Exponents from these diverse movements have demonstrated that transnational mobilizations in the 21st century are highly aware and concerned about the challenges posed by information and communication technologies (ICTs) to sustainable development, equality and the empowerment of individuals and communities. We have called this cluster "social movements converging at WSIS".

Fourthly, WSIS stimulated reflections and actions in regional contexts. Through official preparatory meetings[5], aimed at defining regional priorities and challenges in building inclusive information societies, and through the organization of caucuses that were representative of different regional areas, many groups have developed context-oriented readings and concrete proposals. This is the cluster of "regional perspectives".

A fifth, more generic, cluster is added in the figure to locate groups such as those focusing on Finance, Youth and its priorities or the Local Authority Caucuses, which expressed specific/new

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[1] The Round Table was set up by a number of NGO and communication scholars who got together in Harare in 1989, in the spirit of the MacBride Commission, to foster the ideas expressed in the Report without political pressures from governments or international organization. It met yearly until 1999.

[2] Elaborated by Cees Hamelink, the text is available at www.pcc.org.

[3] A network grounded on a vision of communication as a basic human right, which re-asserted its international presence through the launch of a Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign on the occasion of the WSIS. For an in depth review, see O'Siochru (2004).

[4] For an interesting assessment of international initiatives in the field of communication rights between 1990 and 2005, see Dichter (2005).

[5] Official regional meetings for the first phase took place in Bamako, Bucharest, Tokyo, Beirut and Bavaro between May 2002 and February 2003. Meetings for the second phase took place between November 2004 and June 2005.

instances within WSIS.

It therefore becomes clear that civil society actors, at the WSIS, were concerned with diverse issues and came from diverse experiences of engagement in global settings. Nevertheless, they managed to connect and to come, eventually, to the elaboration of consensual documents such as the alternative Geneva Declaration, the "Seven benchmarks document" outlining the basics for a civil society vision of information societies, and the Final Statement adopted after the Tunis phase of the process, a comprehensive critical assessment of the entire WSIS process. These documents[1], articulating and connecting such diverse themes like social justice and people-centred sustainable development, or the interplay between culture, knowledge and the public domain, represent a synthesis of the plural roots of communication-centered mobilizations at WSIS. Moreover, they have come to constitute a normative reference for those willing to promote information justice and communication rights, in the aftermath of the UN process.

However, the outcome of encounters between civil society groups was not foreseeable: different experiences and political cultures could produced fragmentation and conflict. Nevertheless, our direct observation and empirical analyses suggested a different result: these actors displayed a capacity to build dialogues and organize for collective elaboration. They attempted to respect the plurality of voices while addressing the challenge posed by controversial issues or opposition expressed by other stakeholders. Converging at WSIS and working together for over four years favoured a learning process that was not just focused inward, toward the official process, but also outward, sometimes towards the intentional engagement of local civil society actors in the development of a global platform capable of supporting mobilizations elsewhere.

The Communication Rights Landscape beyond WSIS

To grasp a better sense of the different possible implications of mobilizing transnationally taking advantage of a specific opportunity, it may be interesting to outline what the communication rights landscape looked like in the years immediately after WSIS. To do so, we briefly look at initiatives for which a communication rights discourse is central and we cluster them into four strands, briefly introduced through examples.

Promoting Awareness of Communication Rights "on the Ground"

Attempts to make communication rights meaningful for the daily life of people in different national contexts, were the Global Governance Project[2](GGP) promoted by the CRIS Campaign in 2004, and a number of monitoring projects carried on by coalitions of organizations, such as the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)[3].

The goal of the GGP was to promote a broad understanding of communication rights and to reform governance in relation to them. It involved teams of activists and researchers in Colombia, Brazil, Kenya and the Philippines, who applied an ad hoc-developed framework for the assessment of the different aspects of the communication dynamic: the need for pluralism to promote a democratic public sphere, privacy and freedom from surveillance, knowledge creation and sharing, the respect of cultural diversity. Research, workshops and the production of documents by each team favoured interaction and cooperation among different actors, in some cases involving institutions and promoting

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① All available at www.worldsummit2005.de.
② www.cris-italia.info/cris/indices/index_1628.html.
③ Many more could be mentioned: Freedom House, Article 19, Privacy International, Index on censorship, Statewhatch, MediaChannel, Media Watch Global.

OUTSIDE OFFICIAL PROCESS   PARALLEL INITIATIVES

INSIDE OFFICIAL PROCESS

CIVIL SOCIETY ALTERNATIVE DECLARATION
SHAPING INFORMATION SOCIETY FOR HUMAN NEEDS

WORKING GROUP ON FINANCING

WORKING GROUP ON CONTENT AND THEMES

WORKING GROUP ON PARTICIPATION

Environment and ICTs
Human Rights Caucus
NGOs Gender Strategies WG
Gender Caucus
Indigenous People
Trade Union Caucus
Community Media Caucus
Media Caucus
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
Values and Ethics WG
E−Government & E−democracy
Healt and ICTs WG
Patents, Copyrights & Trademarks
Privacy and Security WG
ICTs Global Governance Caucus
WG on Volunteering and new ICTs
Persons with Disabilities
Scientific Information WG
Education and Academia Caucus
Education and Academia Caucus for Latin America and Caribbeans
Africa
Latin America and Caribbeans
Asia−Pacific
Europe
North America
Western Asia and Middle East
Arab Countries
Finance Caucus
Youth Caucus
Cities and Local Authorities

CIVIL SOCIETY PLENARY ASSEMBLY

VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY (converging in the plenary)
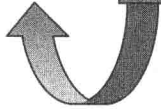
awareness of communication-related issues in each country. The main product of the GGP was a *Handbook on Communication Rights* accompanied by an Advocacy Toolkit[1]. Publicized in different international settings, from the Tunis phase of WSIS to the World Social Fora, they have been translated in different languages and used as advocacy tools by local groups. The Campaign concluded its activities with the end of the Tunis phase of the WSIS.

IFEX[2], established in 1992 and still very active, is comprised of sixty four civil society organizations. Its decentralized structure makes it a dynamic and international body, capable of catalyzing collective energies for conducting monitoring activities on specific situations. In the months leading to Tunis, monitoring missions were organized in Tunisia and the resulting reports were publicized and presented to international institutions, including the Secretary General of the UN. Those Reports were not only assessing the violations of human and communication rights in the country, but also calling for specific actions, such as diplomatic interventions. At the same time they were used as a way to publicly expose responsibilities of the Tunisian government. IFEX took advantage of the international exposure afforded by the WSIS in order to respond to criticism about the choice to organize a UN Summit on the Information Society in a country where freedom of expression and information are not guaranteed. As the WSIS concluded, IFEX interventions immediately became less visible to the general public, but certainly not less relevant, as demonstrated by the contribution offered during the 2011 "Arab spring" precisely in those countries where it had been active in collecting information and connecting advocates for freedom of expression for several years.

Forum of Discussion Where Communication Rights Remained Core Topics

Subsequent meetings of the World Social Forum, the broadest public gathering of the so-called no-global/new-global mobilizations[3], have paid growing attention to information issues. They developed innovative mechanisms to be effective in their communication towards the outside[4] while, particularly in 2005, being paralleled by thematic Information and Communication Fora, promoted by AMARC, IBASE, Inter Press Service, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Media Watch Global and Oxfam Netherlands. These fora aimed at strengthening relations between civil society and the communication sectors; they analysed the problematic features of the global information order in the digital age, from media ownership and concentration to the growing surveillance of communication activities. They showed that "another communication" was, and still is, a necessary component of "another world possible". Communication rights have thus found their place alongside other concerns in the WSF, so much so that in 2005 supporters called "on social movements to work together in building a communication rights movement from the bottom up ..." (final Statement to the Social Movement Assembly, Porto Alegre 2005), and in the 2012 Porto Alegre edition, the fifth thematic axis of discussion was devoted to the "Right to knowledge and media".

In a smaller setting, the Incommunicado Conference[5] organized by the Institute of Network Cultures (Amsterdam, June 2005) surveyed the state of "info-development", from corporate interest to community project struggles, critically analysing emerging conflicts and alliances. Again

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[1]   Accessibile at www.crisinfo.org.

[2]   www.ifex.org.

[3]   http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/.

[4]   Through the Ciranda initiative, an electronic publication coordinated by the site Planeta Puerto Alegre, aimed to promote a free and independent press and to give an independent overlook to the WSF process http://www.ciranda.net/.

[5]   http://incommunicado.info/conference.

communication rights were a central issue, addressed with an even more radical approach, manifested in a critique of ICT for development and through a framework that stressed the "info-politics of rights". Another interesting example was the International Festival of Radical Communication① held in 2005: the organizers of the festival encourage students in communication, sociology and visual arts to contribute their talents to collective counter-culture. Visual artists were invited to respond to the People's Communication Charter, an international manifesto on communication rights created in 1993. Such discussions and events may be signs not only of the growing relevance of information technology and related issues to contemporary social struggles, but also of how such struggles have, in the aftermath of the WSIS, growingly being framed in terms of communication rights.

Ongoing Mobilizations in Global Settings

Many such mobilizations continue: many groups are debating the future, operating in the post-WSIS scenarios, some of them engaging with the Internet Governance Forum, a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue mandated by the Tunis summit, for the period 2006 - 2011, to discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet. In that context several Dynamic Coalitions were set up as informal, issue-specific groups comprising members of various stakeholder groups, with the crucial contribution of many civil society organizations that channelled their energies and competence from WSIS to IGF (Pavan 2012).

Others are engaged in transnational efforts to implement the Convention on Cultural Diversity, promoted by UNESCO and adopted in October 2005, just one month before the Tunis summit. Amongst these the International Network for Cultural Diversity②, a worldwide network of artists and cultural groups who contributed to the drafting of the Convention, with the aim of countering the homogenizing effects of globalization on culture and of promoting the respect for cultural goods not just as economic commodities but as common goods. Explicit reference to some of the basic principles of a communication rights approach — freedom, diversity and inclusion — shows the potential for joining forces among different of transnational networks.

Space constrains allow here to only mention how the Web 2. 0 environment — composed of software, web applications and technological platforms: from Facebook to Twitter, Flickr and YouTube to very specific operations like Ushahidi③— has transformed over the past few years social interactions that are central to ideate, promote and engage with activism in the new decade of the new millennium; including information networks and professional practices, policy responses and local environmental struggles as well as transnational campaigning. A whole new strand of research around transnational mobilizations have emerged in response to such changes, where communication is finally to be conceived as tool and channel, and content and stake.

Research Activities and Academic Reflections

Attempts to map the articulated mobilization around communication issues have also been developed in the years after the WSIS. Projects carried out at the Convergence Centre④ at Syracuse

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① http://www.memefest.org.
② http://incd.net/incden.html.
③ A non-profit tech company that specializes in developing free and open source software to collect information and visualize it, as tools for democratizing information, increasing transparency and lowering the barriers for individuals to share their stories, particularly in crisis situations. http://www.ushahidi.com/.
④ http://www.//dcc.syr.edu/overview.htm.

University deal with the potential of public interest advocacy to shape international institutions' positions on information and communication policy. This policy encompasses the laws, standards and international agreements governing the electronic mass media, Internet and telecommunication, and involves issues of free expression, privacy, trade, cultural diversity, intellectual property and development. It may be noticed that though the wording may be different, referring to "information and communication policy", the substance of these activities is fully consistent with a "communication rights framework". Mention could also be made of worldwide survey on communication advocacy groups conducted by the Centre for International Media Action[1](CIMA) taking as a staring point the World Forum on Communication Rights in Geneva (Dichter, 2005). These initiatives, that aim at understanding the deepening and extension of mobilizations by looking at how actors interact with each other, have identified social actors' priorities and assessed their impact in the global regulatory environment. They could, thus, be in themselves considered as part of a global networks of informal interactions around communication rights.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude we discuss what WSIS, and subsequent social practices, has shown in terms of identity, conflict and networking practice of communication rights transnational mobilizations.

As far as identity is concerned, the WSIS process has been the occasion for a collective exercise in framing a communication rights discourse. Core principles — inclusion, freedom, diversity and participation — have been agreed upon through a conversational dynamic, which has given "form and life" (Mische, 2003) to multiple network configurations some of which, as in the case of the IGF, may still be keeping the dialogue going even in official settings. Every principle will be articulated in the future according to the specific interests of networks and coalitions, but the shared experience seems to offer a collective memory which may be relevant to strengthening identity aspects of mobilizations, while a common concept.

As far as the networking practice, what emerges from our investigations is a set of features that have characterized the mobilizations under scrutiny: *density* of interaction has been facilitated and promoted through the WSIS. *Diverse* civil society experiences have strengthened *reciprocity* in information flows and articulated a common discourse that seems to find recognition beyond the WSIS. Density, diversity and reciprocity are, according to Keck and Sikkink (1998), crucial resources through which transnational mobilizations improve their capacity of intervention. During the WSIS oprocess communication rights mobilizations have proven they can operate as *transnational networks*; they have experienced a multilevel *modus operandi* that connected global mobilizations with local or regional struggles. Finally, a *self-reflective* approach stimulated individuals and organizations to constantly assess their impact on communication governance structures.

For a few years, between 2001 and the end of the decade, dense informal exchanges among individuals and organizations lead to collective initiatives of conflictual (and sometimes cooperative) orientations to identified opponents, while sharing an *in-fieri* collective identity. At the time a transnational social movement dynamic around communication rights seemed to be "in the making" (Padovani & Pavan, 2009). But changes in the communication environment happen very fast and, due to the pervasiveness of communication tools, they affect the very existence of transnational mobilizations, making them "emerge" or "disappear" according to the political and discursive opportunities they can take advantage of: when the opportunity provided by an official process such as the WSIS is no longer valid, nor perceived as an opportunity, social dynamics of dispersion, struggle

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[1] http://www.mediaactioncentre.org.

localization, definition of alternative thematic priorities may all be possible outcomes.

Today, we see that the struggle on communication issues continues to focus on "traditional" objects of controversy — e. g., the WTO, the WIPO and, to some extent, also the UNESCO. However, we witness also the multiplication of efforts connected to more localized and/or regional matters, as the cases of the SOPA, PIPA in the United States[1] or the international ACTA[2] demonstrate. In terms of waves of mobilizations on communication rights, there seem to be a shared understanding of where collective energies should be channelled, from the national to the global sphere. But it is also important to notice that the WSIS approach to stakeholders' participation, with its openings and shortcoming, invites to further investigate the tension between conflictual and cooperative modes of interaction between civil society entities and other actors in the struggle for communication rights beside and beyond known and WSIS-related targets of action.

Overall, the WSIS carries the responsibility of having explicitly placed the so-called "multi-stakeholder approach" on the global agenda of communication governance, affirming the need for

> new forms of solidarity, partnership and cooperation among governments and other stakeholders . . . (who) should work together . . . (and who) have an important role and responsibility in the development of the Information Society and, as appropriate, in decision making processes. (Geneva Declaration n. 17, 20)

It has formally recognized the need to integrate civil society organizations into policy processes which may be only partially effective without those actors' expertise and knowledge. Thus the challenge for the future of communication governance, is to develop effective governing arrangements grounded in the basic democratic principles of transparency, openness, responsibility but also freedom, plurality and participation. One of the reasons for civil society organizations to become involved in those processes is precisely to foster such principles; as stakeholders they can contribute by performing specific functions including: informing, monitoring, framing issues, agenda setting, suggesting solutions to complex problems. Social mobilizations around communication rights certainly have a role to play in this context, but, in order to do this, they should on the one side be recognized as actors entitled to fully and effectively participate, and on the other they should adopt a longitudinal perspective and build on the lessons learned on previous occasions of engagement, including those described in this chapter.

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[1]　Bills proposed to expand the ability of U. S. law enforcement to fight online trafficking in copyrighted intellectual property and counterfeit goods and opposed on the ground that the proposed legislation threatens free speech and innovation.

[2]　The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), a multinational treaty for the purpose of establishing international standards for intellectual property rights enforcement, has solicited bottom-up initiatives and campaigns to denounce how the convention adversely affects fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and privacy.

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13. US Environmental Group Websites and the Content of Cultural Production

Laura Stein

This study examines the website production practices of US-based national environmental groups using a quantitative content analysis of 108 websites. The study seeks to answer two descriptive research questions: How frequently do US-based, national environmental groups instantiate relevant website features? How prevalent are different social movement communication functions across these websites? Drawing on alternative media scholarship and reflexive examinations of environmental websites, the study identifies the relevant capabilities that website production offers environmental groups and devises a typology of social movement communication functions and their attendant online features. Using this typology, the study provides quantitative data on how an important set of social movement actors utilizes their websites as a communication medium, and highlights some gaps between website capabilities and use. The study also discusses the value and limits of content analysis in understanding environmental website production in light of structuration theory, which considers the relationship between a technology's capabilities and a users' actions. The study concludes that, within this important domain of internet use, scholars should consider not only how the internet may be reshaping social movement communication, but how particular social movement groups are selectively engaging the technology. It ends with suggestions for how future research might further explore the structural forces at play in social movement website production.

Websites, Environmental Organizations, Social Movements, Alternative Media, Internet

Many scholars argue that the internet constitutes a vital communication tool for social movement actors. Social movements are social networks whose participants engage in sustained collective action, share common interests and purposes, and pose challenges to existing institutions and authorities (Castells 2001; Tarrow 2005; Tilly 1998). Moreover, they are spaces in which members of civil society promote interests and issues that markets and states are often reticent to address (Mueller et al. 2004). Many scholars have noted the internet's ability to level the playing field between social movement actors and their better resourced opponents (Bimber 1998; Davis & Zald 2005; Owens & Palmer 2003). They assert that for relatively little cost, the internet offers politically and economically disadvantaged groups the opportunity to engage in communication that is unmediated by mainstream media, uninhibited by slow production and distribution processes, and unconstrained by space or time (Davis & Zald 2005; Diani 2001; Pickerill 2003). Scholars have also recognized the internet's

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contributions to social movement activism, including its role in generating international support and recognition for the Zapatista movement in Chiapas (Ford & Gil 2001), facilitating the coordination and mobilization of the multi-faceted global justice movement (Juris 2005), and circulating counter-information for the second US anti-Gulf war movement (Kahn & Kellner 2004).

Environmental groups have a long history of media production, and are potentially well poised to take advantage of the internet's production capabilities, including those available through the World Wide Web. The environmental movement, a grassroots response to the social and economic conditions of the modern, industrialized world, is one of the most prominent and wide-ranging social movements of our era (Castells 2001; Habermas 1981; Hutchins & Lester 2006; Yearley 2005). Movement members share an interest in reshaping what is understood as deleterious relations between humans and the natural environment and in opposing the dominant structural and institutional modus operandi of modern societies (Castells, 2001). In addition to a strategic focus on mainstream media relations (Anderson 1997; DeLuca 1999; Pickerill 2000), environmentalists have long produced their own media, including newsletters, books, photographs, film and video (Anderson 1997; Stoll 2007). Since the 1990s, most major environmental groups have had their own websites and a number of environmentally focused web applications have appeared, including specialized internet news services, web-based television, web logs, maps, and others (Cox 2006; Kline 2007). In addition to having a strong web presence, the movement has garnered widespread support from the US public (Cox 2006; Kline 2007; Sale 1997), giving it a large base of supporters with whom it might communicate. ①

Environmental and other social movement groups also encounter several difficulties with mainstream media coverage that give them added incentive to undertake website production. Numerous studies indicate that mainstream media practices and biases often lead to unfavorable movement coverage. Mainstream media may fail to cover movements at critical times (Raboy 1981), frame movement groups and issues in ways that reinforce existing power structures and denigrate movement legitimacy (Gitlin 1980; McLeod & Detenber 1999; Olien, Tichenor, & Donohue 1989; Shoemaker 1982 1984), or cover movement stories only when they conform to news values privileging social conflict, violence or emotionality (DeLuca & Peebles 2002; Gamson 1990; Kielbowicz & Scherer 1986). In addition, special difficulties face environmental actors who seek mainstream media coverage. Many environmental problems defy mainstream media news conventions, including the preference for straightforward, dramatic and event-centered stories, and thus hinder in depth reportage on environmental problems and their causes (Anderson 1997; Cox 2006). Mainstream media may also feel pressure to avoid environmental stories that are unfavorable to specific businesses or the overall business climate (Cox 2006). Finally, environmental and other social movement sources often have less access to news reporters, have less ability to define the issues at stake, and face more scrutiny than those whose views they seek to challenge (Anderson 1997; Hutchins & Lester 2006). Given these difficulties, environmental groups have incentive to communicate directly with potential and established supporters.

While many scholars suggest that the internet could be a vital resource for social movements, generalizable studies of how and why different movement groups use the internet are rare. Indeed, Downing (2008) points out a dearth of scholarship on how social movements use their own media. Where they do occur, empirical investigations of social movement internet use have focused on case studies and on new or transnational forms of organizing. Some case studies, such as those of the

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① A 2007 Gallup Poll found that 70% of Americans reported they were active in or sympathetic towards the environmental movement (Dunlap 2007).

Zapatistas in Chiapas, the antiwar movement in the US, and the global justice movement, describe vanguard attempts at mobilization, networking and identity building online (Ford & Gil 2001; Kahn & Kellner 2004; Van Aelst & Walgrave 2002). Others focus on the internet's ability to facilitate transnational activism and new forms of movement organization (Bennett 2003a 2003b; Cammaerts & Van Audenhove 2005; Downing 2003). For example, Bennett (2003a) and Gerlach (2001) suggest that technology enables the formation of new movement organizations made up of segmented, polycentric, and integrated networks, and Rheingold (2003) heralds the rise of smart mobs, or groups who coordinate intelligent action through networked technologies. Only Pickerill (2003) offers case studies of environmental internet use, examining the online campaigns of several environmental groups. However, none of these studies use methods that indicate how widespread various internet practices may be among particular types of movement actors (Garrett 2006; Kenix 2007).

This study examines the production practices of US-based national environmental groups using a quantitative content analysis of the websites of 108 groups. The study seeks to answer two descriptive research questions:

> RQ1: How frequently do US-based, national environmental groups instantiate relevant website features?
>
> RQ2: How prevalent are different social movement communication functions across these websites?

In order to answer these questions, the study first identifies the relevant capabilities that website production offers environmental groups. Drawing on alternative media scholarship and reflexive examinations of environmental websites, the study devises a typology of social movement communication functions and their attendant online features. This typology is used then to help identify these groups' patterns of technology use, including an assessment of the frequency with which they use relevant website features (RQ1) and the overall prevalence of various communication functions on their websites (RQ2).

This research investigates how US-based, national environmental groups engage in website production. Ultimately, the study develops a research typology applicable to social movement website communication, provides quantitative data on how an important set of social movement actors utilizes their websites as a communication medium, and highlights some gaps between website capabilities and use. Moreover, it identifies the range of capabilities one critical forum for internet communication — organizational websites — provides environmental groups and measures the relevant features and functions available to, and instantiated on, these websites. The discussion draws on structuration of technology theory, which considers the relationship between a technology's capabilities and a users' actions, to situate the value and limits of content analysis in understanding environmental website production. The study concludes that, within this important domain of internet use, scholars should consider not only how the internet may be reshaping social movement communication, but how particular social movement groups are selectively engaging the technology. It ends with suggestions for how future research might explore the structural forces at play in social movement website production.

Alternative Media and Social Movement Website Production

This study uses alternative media theory to identify the dimensions of social movement communication, specifying a comprehensive set of communication functions and attendant features which environmental groups may selectively enact on their websites. Alternative media scholarship focuses largely on social change media that: publicly contest social and cultural codes, identities, and interests (Kessler 1984; Rodriguez 2001; Steiner 1992), envision and express oppositional cultures

(Raboy 1981), and raise the visibility of marginalized or oppressed groups (Gillett 2003). Drawing on alternative media scholarship and ongoing examinations of social movement websites, the study proposes a typology of social movement communication that includes six theoretically distinct, though in practice interrelated, functions. These are:

- providing information
- making lateral linkages
- assisting in action and mobilization
- promoting resource generation and fundraising
- facilitating interaction and dialogue
- serving as an outlet for creative expression

While a more thorough review of this literature is available elsewhere[1], the remainder of this section offers a brief definition and explanation of each function (For a complete list of the features associated with these functions, see Tables 1 – 6 in the findings section).

Providing information refers to the dissemination of information related to movement identity, issues, and viewpoints (Downing 2001; Kessler 1984; Rodriguez 2001). Social movements have a fundamental interest in making people aware of their presence, offering information and viewpoints that contest those of prevailing power structures, and communicating that information to key actors and allies. Salient features of providing information include: information about organization descriptions, histories, staffs, boards of directors, and issue positions; the posting of news articles, audio and video reports, documentary photographs, leadership communication, internal and external reports and studies, newsletters, press releases, and mainstream media critiques; and the availability of Really Simple Syndication (allowing users to subscribe to regular feeds from the website), searchable databases, and read-only listservs.

Lateral linkages refer to intentional connections made between a movement group and others that enhance lateral communication or network building among movement members (Barlow 1988; Kessler 1984; Steiner 1992). Following Foot and Schneider (2006), this study operationalizes lateral links as conceptual links offering endorsements or statements of support and hyperlinks connecting one group's site to another's. Hyperlinks are strategic choices that acknowledge other actors' presence, constitute interconnected spheres of websites, and may signal a group's desire to share information contributed by others (Foot & Schneider 2006; Rogers & Marres 2000). Hyperlinks may also help likeminded nongovernmental organizations develop issue networks that enhance the visibility of included groups' aims and goals (Shumate & Lipp 2008; Shumate & Dewitt 2008). In addition to displaying conceptual links, national social movement actors may include hyperlinks to the sites of external environmental and social movement groups, news sites, political parties and candidates, government sites, voter registration sites, web portals, research groups, and corporations.

Action and mobilization involve readying people to engage in collective action and initiatives intended to produce specific outcomes, as well as cultivating viewpoints aimed at galvanizing action (Barlow 2002; Gamson 1990; Kessler 1984; Kahn & Kellner 2004). Movements need to communicate information about their campaigns and how to participate in them, and websites can function as ongoing avenues for such communication, as well as sites for new forms of electronic activism. On the web, action and mobilization features include the organization of denial of service attacks, letters to editors and opinion-editorials, other letter-writing campaigns, online petitions, and action alerts, as well as posting campaign descriptions and news.

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[1] See Stein (2009).

Resource generation and fundraising refer to groups' attempts to increase financial support, membership and human resources (Costanza-Chock 2003; Van Aelst & Walgrave 2002). All organizations need resources to survive, whether those resources are time, money, knowledge, materials, or other contributions. Research generation features include: providing information about grants, leadership/activist education/training, and jobs; allowing members to join the organization or pay dues online; selling subscriptions and merchandise; carrying advertising; soliciting donations and volunteers; and offering member only areas.

Interaction and dialogue denote ongoing opportunities for two-way communication and discussion that can help create alternative spheres of discourse between and among social movement groups and supporters (Downing 2003; Fraser 1993; Kahn & Kellner 2004). These alternative discursive spheres allow actors to collectively raise and formulate oppositional interpretations, identities, analyses, social visions and courses of action. Features that facilitate interaction and dialog include: organization contact information; member profiles and contacts; online polls, events and wikis; explanations of organizational decision-making processes; and interactive weblogs and publishing forums.

Lastly, *creative expression* refers to emotional, imaginative and aesthetic expression, as opposed to expression that primarily informs and documents (Costanza-Chock 2003; Downing 2001). Social movement use of creative expression recognizes that political communication takes place not only through rational argument, but through a myriad of persuasive appeals, including humor, affect, and empathy. Creative expression features may make use of a variety of media forms, including parodies/ culture jams, creative written words, games, cartoons/comics, music/audio, film/video, and other visual works.

The above typology of social movement communication represents the relevant communication functions environmental groups may enact on their websites. It reflects the communicative values and goals that environmental groups potentially bring to their website production. Groups may instantiate these communicative functions and their attendant features through the basic technical features provided by web pages, which include the ability to post content (print, visual, audio, video or multimedia), host various interactive applications (such as blogging or online petitions), and make links. This typology informs a content analysis designed to describe the potential and actual website communication practices of US-based, national environmental groups.

The Study

This study aimed to include all US-based organizations that fit the description of national environmental groups with members or supporters. National environmental groups are those that frame their activities and goals as nationwide in scope (rather than local or regional), share predominantly environmental goals, and are sustained over time. A team of researchers first identified US-based, national environmental groups using the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, *National*. Scholars often use the *Encyclopedia of Associations* to locate social movement groups who are difficult to find by any other means (McCarthy 2005). In addition to serving as the most comprehensive directory of national nonprofit organizations in the US, it captures 90%–95% of existing organizations at any one time (Hunt 2005; K. Swartout, personal e-mail communication, October 12 2006). Researchers reviewed the *Encyclopedia's* keywords index for any and all terms, such as "environment," "conservation," and "pollution control," broadly related to environmentalism. They then reviewed the self-reported descriptions of organizations to determine whether these fit the study's definition of environmental groups. This list was augmented with two secondary sources, *The Conservation Directory* (National Wildlife Federation 2005–2006) and the *Website Source Book* (Smith 2006). Finally, researchers examined all links made from the environmental websites to other environmental organizations using a

program called *Sitemapper*. *Sitemapper* produced a list of links present on each website, and researchers manually checked all links located in the .org or .net domain in order to determine whether their organizations qualified for inclusion. If a group was included, its website was then examined using *Sitemapper*. The fifth generation search found only two new qualifying groups. Although the master list of 108 US-based, national environmental groups with members or supporters may fall short of a census, it likely represents nearly all organizations in that category. [1]

All of the groups examined had their own websites, and researchers conducted a content analysis of these in November and December of 2007. Coding forms listed the six communication functions and their attendant features. An accompanying instruction sheet defined each function and its associated features. The Oxford English dictionary, web-based reference sources like Wikipedia, and similar studies of web-based political communication, including most notably Foot and Schneider (2006) and Gibson, Nixon and Ward (2003), informed the study's definition of features. Researchers examined all web pages at each group's website and coded each feature as present or absent. Researchers also recorded any additional features observed in an "other" category, which led to the inclusion of several additional items. Among the sixty-three features reported here in Tables 1-6, eighteen were related to providing information, six to action and mobilization, eleven to lateral linkages, eleven to resource generation and fundraising, ten to interaction and dialogue, and seven to creative expression.

Coders participated in two training sessions. In the first session, coders learned the coding protocol, coded sample websites selected for their range of features and potential difficulties, and discussed any issues and concerns. Each coder was asked to code ten randomly selected websites. In a second training session, coders reviewed discrepancies in the initial coding, discussed problem areas, and received clarifications. After this meeting, the coding protocol was revised and a few additional items were added to the coding form. Each coder coded all of the sites and filled out all sections of the coding form. Krippendorf's alpha, a measure of how the proportion of observed disagreement to expected chance disagreement differs from perfect agreement, was used to determine coder reliability on a subsample of ten websites examined by three coders. Krippendorf's apha is an appropriate and conservative measure for content analyses that include three or more coders and multiple ratio and nominal variables (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken 2005). The study considered all items with alphas of .667 or greater acceptably reliable given the inherent conservativeness of Krippendorf's alpha, the stronger reliability gained by using three coders, and the exploratory nature of the study (Krippendorf 2004; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken 2005). Ten items with alphas below .667 were eliminated from the study. [2] The data tables include the alphas for each item reported.

Content Analysis Findings

RQ1 asked how frequently US-based, national environmental groups instantiate various website features. Many of the groups provided information about their identity, viewpoints and issues. Table 1

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[1]   Researchers recorded the annual budgets and membership figures of each organization for comparative purposes. However, since less than half the organizations reported these numbers, the study did not undertake any comparisons.

[2]   Eliminated items include posts mainstream news articles (.61), online distribution of campaign/mobilization materials (.65), offline distribution of campaign/mobilization materials (.65), offline actions (.65), link to information or support service (.61), link to other chapter of the same organization (.61), link to mainstream news site (.65), interactive informational services (.64), educational events (.29) and email campaigns (.33). While the 8 items with alphas greater than .61 but less than .667 do not constitute scientifically reliable data, they do indicate more than chance agreement about the presence of an item and may be successfully captured with a more refined protocol.

indicates that more than three-quarters of the groups published descriptions of their central mission, purpose or activities, their positions on environmental issues, and documentary photographs of movement events, participants or leaders. Over half the groups offered descriptions of staff and board members, organization histories, and newsletters or internal reports and studies. Just under half included materials designed for press members. Roughly one-third or less posted reports, studies, or speeches from movement leaders, posted articles from alternative news sources, offered searchable online databases, or made use of computer specific applications (Really Simple Syndication services or ready-only listservs) or multimedia formats (audio or video reports). None offered critiques of mainstream media.

Table 1   Frequency of providing information features on websites N=108

Providing Information	Frequency	Percentage	Alpha
Mainstream media critique	0	0%	1.00
Audio news or documentary reports	8	7.4%	1.00
Really Simple Syndication (RSS)	15	13.9%	1.00
Video news or documentary reports	18	16.7%	1.00
Read-only listservs	18	16.7%	.98
Posts alternative news articles	24	22.2%	1.00
Leadership speeches/articles	28	25.9%	1.00
Searchable database	30	27.8%	.74
Outside reports or studies	39	36.1%	1.00
Media/press releases	49	45.4%	1.00
Newsletter	58	53.7%	1.00
Board of Directors	64	59.3%	.74
Internal reports or studies	64	59.3%	1.00
Organization history	66	61.1%	.78
Staff/personnel	75	69.4%	.77
Issue positions	82	75.9%	.85
Documentary Photographs	82	75.9%	.98
Organization description	97	89.8%	1.00

The content analyses results for lateral links is shown in Table 2. Lateral linkages include hyperlinks to other organizations and conceptual links that associate one actor with another. The most common lateral links were to other environmental organizations. In addition, nearly half the groups linked to other, nonenvironmental social movement sites. Close to half of the groups had hyperlinks to alternative news sites; and somewhat fewer, to national, state or local government sites. Around two-fifths made use of conceptual links, including outside entities' endorsements or statements of support and sponsorship. Less common were links to research or corporate sites and to web portals that served as information gateways to diverse resources. Least common were links to mainstream political entities, such as political candidates, political parties, and voter registration sites.

Table 2   Frequency of lateral linkages features on websites N=108

Lateral Linkages	Frequency	Percentage	Alpha
Links to Voter registration	4	3.7%	1.00
Link to political party site	5	4.6%	1.00
Link to political politician or political candidate site	11	10.2%	.93
Link to portal site	29	26.9%	.71
Link to research site	32	29.6%	1.00
Link to corporate site	38	35.2%	.84
Endorsements/statements of support or sponsorship	42	38.9%	.98
Link to government site	46	42.6%	1.00
Link to alternative news site	48	44.4%	.82
Link to external social movement organization	59	47.2%	.81
Link to external environmental groups	87	80.6%	.73

Another set of features, labeled action and mobilization, were intended to galvanize collective action, initiatives, and viewpoints aimed at action. Table 3 indicates that more than four-fifths of the groups described their current projects or campaigns, and at least half allowed visitors to receive email action alerts or encouraged letter writing to key decision-makers. Less than one-quarter facilitated or advocated signing online petitions, or writing letters to editors and opinion editorials. Only two sites informed visitors of how to engage in denial of service attacks against an opponent's servers.

Table 3   Frequency of action and mobilization features on websites N=108

Action and Mobilization	Frequency	Percentage	Alpha
Denial of service attacks	2	1.9%	1.00
Send letters to editors or write opinion editorials (op-eds)	24	22.2%	.84
Online or e-petitions	26	24.1%	1.00
Action alerts	54	50%	1.00
Surface or e-mail letter-writing campaigns	60	55.6%	.74
Project or campaign descriptions or news	89	82.4%	1.00

Resource generation and fundraising, namely efforts to raise financial support, to recruit new members or to increase human resources, constituted another set of relevant features (see Table 4). More than half the groups solicited donations online or allowed members to join or renew their memberships online. Less than half sold merchandise, enabled members to pay dues, or listed jobs online. A quarter or fewer enabled volunteer sign-ups, utilized member only areas, sold product or service subscriptions, or carried advertising. Only a few provided grants or activist training and education materials online.

Table 4   Frequency of resource generation and fundraising features on websites N=108

Resource Generation and Fundraising	Frequency	Percentage	Alpha
Provides grants/funds	2	1.9%	1.00
Leadership/activism training and education	3	2.8%	1.00
Advertising	14	13%	.96
Sells subscriptions	16	14.8%	.68
Member only areas	24	22.2%	1.00
Volunteer sign-up	27	25%	1.00
Pay dues	31	28.7%	1.00
Jobs listed	40	37%	1.00
Sells merchandise	45	41.7%	1.00
Membership	63	58.3%	1.00
Solicits donations	87	80.6%	1.00

Interaction and dialogue features that attempted to expand bidirectional communication between movement organizations and supporters, or multilateral communication among movement members, were relatively rare. Table 5 indicates that while the vast majority of groups enabled visitors to contact them by providing organizational email addresses or other contact information, other forms of interaction and dialogue were rare. Less than one-fifth of the groups offered weblogs or publishing 10 forums that allowed visitors to post comments or content, posted member contact information or profiles, conducted opinion polls or surveys, webcast live events online or allowed visitors to observe or participate in organizational decision-making. Only one group used wikis, tools that enable collaborative writing and editing of documents.

Table 5   Frequency of interaction and dialogue features on websites N=108

Interaction and Dialogue	Frequency	Percentage	Alpha
Wikis	1	.9%	1.00
Online events	8	7.4%	1.00
Organizational governance/decision-making processes	8	7.4%	1.00
Online opinion polls or surveys	10	9.3%	.68
Member profiles	11	10.2%	.99
Member contact information	12	11.1%	1.00
Interactive weblogs	15	13.9%	1.00
Publishing forums	19	17.6%	.99
Organization contact information other than email	92	85.2%	1.00
Organization Email address	100	92.6%	.69

The last set of features, labeled creative expression, referred to imaginative or artistic works that address movement issues, topics or events, rather than predominantly informing or news-oriented expression. Table 6 indicates that over half the websites displayed creative visual works, such as photos, paintings, collages, drawings and other graphics. Slightly more than a quarter offered creative

fictional, narrative, experimental or documentary film or video pieces. Around a tenth or less offered creative music or audio work, cartoons or comics, and games. Only a handful made use of creative written words, parodies or culture jams (the latter being creative works that satirize or spoof the words or images of opponents).

Table 6   Frequency of creative expression features on websites N＝108

Creative Expression	Frequency	Percentage	Alpha
Written Word	2	1.9%	1.00
Parodies/culture jams	4	3.7%	1.00
Games	8	7.4%	1.00
Cartoons and comics	10	9.3%	.73
Music/audio	12	11.1%	1.00
Film/video	29	26.9%	.68
Visual work	57	52.8%	.93

RQ2 asked how prevalent various communication functions were across these websites. In order to answer this question, the total number of features possible within each of the six communication functions detailed in Tables 1 - 6 was divided into three roughly equal sets representing low, moderate and high prevalence of each function. A group's placement in the no, low, moderate or high prevalence category depended on the ratio between the number of features displayed and the number of features possible in that category. ① For example, providing information contained 18 possible features. Groups who displayed between 1 - 6 features were coded as having a low prevalence of providing information, those with between 7 - 12 features as having a moderate prevalence, and those with 13 or more features as having a high prevalence. Table 7 indicates the relative prevalence of each communication function.

Table 7   Prevalence of communication functions on websites N＝108

Communication Function	No Prevalence	Low Prevalence	Moderate Prevalence	High Prevalence
Creative	32	65	11	0
Expression	29.6%	60.2%	10.2%	0%
Interaction &	3	88	16	1
Dialogue	2.8%	81.5%	14.8%	.9%
Resource/Fund	9	57	41	1
Generation	8.3	52.8%	38%	.9%
Action &	7	57	39	5
Mobilization	6.5%	52.8%	36.1%	4.6%
Lateral Linkages	11	44	46	7
	10.2%	40.7%	42.6%	6.5%
Providing	1	38	63	6
Information	.9%	35.2%	58.3%	5.6%

①   For categories whose total number of features was not divisible by three, the extra numbers were assigned first to the high and then to the medium categories.

Providing information was the most prevalent communication function. Nearly all of the groups provided information online, with nearly two-thirds doing so at moderate or high levels. The next most common function was lateral linkages, with just under half the groups making lateral links at moderate or high levels. Groups engaged in roughly equal levels of mobilization and resource generation, with about two-fifths displaying features from these categories at moderate to high levels. The least common communication functions were interaction and dialogue and creative expression. The vast majority of groups undertook interaction and dialogue at low levels. Creative expression fared most poorly with nine-tenths of the groups engaging in no or low levels of creative expression. Additionally, similar to my findings in an earlier study of groups operating across different social movements (Stein 2009), the content analysis revealed very few environmental groups utilizing any particular communication function at a high degree. [1]

Discussion

To summarize the findings, RQ1 asked how frequently do US-based, national environmental groups engage various website features. The findings indicated that despite the range of relevant features available, the majority of groups (50% or more) adopted relatively few features in practice. Commonly adopted features included: organizational descriptions and histories; informational photographs; issue positions; identification of staff, personnel, and board members; internal reports, studies and newsletters; links to other environmental groups; action alerts; letter-writing campaigns; campaign descriptions and news; membership recruitment; donation solicitation; organizational email and contact information; and creative visual work. In addition, the majority of communication features found on these websites made use of the web's technical abilities to post written content and make links rather than to post audio, video or multimedia content or to host applications. RQ2 called for an estimation of the prevalence of various communication functions on these websites. Providing information was by far the most prevalent function, followed by lateral linkages, action and mobilization and resource generation. In contrast, very few groups engaged in interaction and dialogue or creative expression.

Content analysis is an important tool in the study of website cultural production, particularly when viewed in conjunction with structuration theory. Structuration theory understands all actions as the outcome of mutually constituting relationships between human agents and structural conditions (Giddens 1984). When applied to technology, structuration refers to the rules and resources instantiated in recurrent social practice, of which technology is a part (DeSanctis & Poole 1994; Orlikowski 2000). Understanding how humans and technology mutually shape action and activity requires an examination of the structures recurrently enacted in technology use, or what Orlikowski (2000) terms technologies-in-practice. In practice, technology use takes shape through the mutual and ongoing interplay between an artifact's capabilities and a user's actions. However, although intertwined in practice, these processes can be treated as conceptually distinct for analytical purposes (DeSanctis & Poole 1994; Orlikowski 1992).

Content analysis offers a way to delimit the relevant capabilities a technology offers users and to identify various agents' direct appropriation of technology. Technology appropriation, the active selection or adoption of practices and features, is a function not only of the structural features, or capabilities, that a given technology's design offers users, but also the relevant goals or values

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[1] Only ten groups evinced moderate or high levels of prevalence across two or more categories of communication functions. Three groups did so across three categories, and only one group did so across four categories.

supported by these features, including those visible in its range of features and range of typical user interactions (DeSanctis & Poole 1994). Both design and goals or values constitute potential structures that groups might selectively appropriate in their actions. Thus, while the World Wide Web by design offers users inordinate flexibility in which content, features and applications to include and exclude, in practice these capabilities are circumscribed by the social movement communication functions identified in alternative media theory. Environmental groups draw on a repertoire of relevant communication functions and features that serve as organizing structures for website production. These features and functions serve as structuring genres, or socially recognized types of communicative action associated with a given community (Yates, Orlikowski & Okamura 1999). Hence, posting content (a core structural capability) can enable a variety of social movement-relevant communication features, including an organization history, a campaign description, or a statement of support. Likewise, specific applications can allow various movement-relevant activities, such as enabling online donations, signing up for action alerts, or commenting on blogs. In the case of a highly malleable technology like websites, users' communication goals are important explanatory factors in identifying and understanding the capabilities it provides.

Content analysis also provides visible evidence of the website capabilities engaged by measuring the direct use of some features and the absence of others, or what DeSanctis and Poole (1994) have called direct appropriation. Among the relevant communication functions available to them, national environmental group websites engaged in providing information, lateral links, mobilization and resource generation far more than interaction/dialogue and creative expression. Nevertheless, most groups failed to enact a wide range of available website features and engaged in communication functions at low or moderate levels. These results suggest a gap between the relevant range of website capabilities and their actual appropriation in everyday practice. They thus raise questions about what other structuring forces may influence environmental group website production.

This study also has some limitations. First, it investigates only website production and leaves out the other ways in which social movement groups may use the internet to communicate with the public, including email, social networking sites, and video sharing sites. However, while email and social networking sites may extend the presence of social movement groups and provide them with some ready-made features and functionalities, their own websites continue to serve as a primary, always-available presence and identity online. Unlike social networking sites, organizational websites are entirely within an organization's control. For the majority of the public, these groups' websites are the primary means of encountering them online, and thus remain a critical site for social movement communication. Second, the study measures the prevalence of communication functions by the number of different features employed, weighing all features equally when determining low, moderate or high prevalence of these functions. The study does not measure how extensively discrete features were employed or consider whether some features were more important or relevant than others to particular communication functions. Instead, this study focused on the selective uses social movement actors made of their websites in light of the full range of relevant capabilities made available to them. Its chief concern was the range of features that might serve different communication goals, rather than the degree to which various features were employed.

Future research could extend this content analysis to include all of the platforms and tools social movements employ, and to compare the features and functionalities utilized on different platforms. ①

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① This study was conducted at the end of 2007. The subsequent rise of social networking sites, such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, present an opportunity to extend this research approach to social movement communication on other content-hosting sites.

It could also measure the degree to which various features are employed, such as counting the number of times various features appear (rather than the presence or absence of features) or measuring the attention devoted to various features (such as the number of words devoted to different aspects of providing information). Future research could also examine additional structuring elements shaping environmental groups' technology appropriation. These structures might include the specifics tasks people seek to accomplish through the technology, the organizational environment (including cultural beliefs, work procedures and available resources), and traits of user groups (including style of interacting, degree of knowledge and experience, and degree of perceived support for technology use) (DeSanctis & Poole 1994). While this study used a content analysis of website pages to examine technology appropriation and the structures engaged, future research could utilize ethnographic observation, discourse analysis and interviews to examine environmental groups' interactions with technology. These methods could be used to study appropriation moves (choices groups make when confronted with technology structures), instrumental uses (the intended purposes and meanings assigned to the technology), and attitudes toward the technology appropriation (including comfort level with the technology, perception of the technology's value, and challenges experienced in using the technology) (DeSanctis & Poole 1994). Such studies could focus on social movement groups' capacities to produce websites, further specify the motivations and goals these actors have in doing so, and assess whether they are able to accomplish their intended goals.

Conclusion

Utilizing a content analysis of websites, this study examined the extent to which US-based, national environmental groups employed relevant communication features and the prevalence of different communication functions on these websites. Despite the Web's flexibility and myriad capabilities, environmental groups engaged in limited uses of its relevant functions and features on their websites. These groups used their websites primarily to provide information, link, mobilize, and generate resources, rather than to engage in dialogue or creative expression, and most groups employed relevant website features at low or moderate levels. Moreover, this research described how website content, which serves as visible evidence of the technological appropriations made by environmental groups, reflects the communication functions of social movements identified by alternative media theory. The ability of non-technological, structural factors to shape technology-in-practice on organizational websites suggests that any eventual transformation of social movement organizations and practices, such as those posited by popular and scholarly accounts of technological change, will not occur through a one-way progression from technology design to user actions, but will be an iterative process in which non-technological structures also have an influence over technology use.

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第三章

Labour

14. Digital Labour, Species-Becoming and the Global Worker

Nick Dyer-Witheford

This paper places digital labour in the context of recently revived interest in the young Marx's concept of "species-being" (Gatungswesen). Cryptically and fragmentarily announced in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, *but largely abandoned in Marx's later work, the idea has passed in and then, apparently decisively, out of fashion amongst his interpreters. But the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a renewed interest surely due in part to the manifest capacities of electronic networks and biotechnologies to alter the cognitive and corporeal attributes of the human. After proposing an historical, rather than essentialist, understanding of Gatungswesen the paper goes on to suggest some categories that might be adequate to a situation where the stakes in class conflict are nothing less than the trajectory of a contemporary "species-becoming": planet factory, futuristic accumulation, global worker, techno-finance, singularity capitalism, bio-communism.*

Introduction: Firewood

The current persecutions of information leakers and savage repression of youthful dissidents around the world means the following story will come as no surprise. A student radical in a peripheral zone of global capital attracts the attention of state censors for indie-media activities exposing the enclosure of a local bio-commons. Threatened by the state security apparatus, he flees to a foreign metropolis, where, while engaged in political organizing, he keeps up a blog, re-mixing the ideas of other theorists in occasional, associative reflections. From this process emerges a concept crucial to understanding digital labour — a concept no sooner posted than promptly forgotten.

These events occurred a mere one hundred and sixty seven years ago, in 1844; the young academic activist is Karl Marx; the peripheral zone of capital is Prussia; the indie-media platform the short-lived liberal paper Das Rheinische Zeitung; the bio-commons story concerns peasants prosecuted by landlords for collecting firewood from the local forest; the foreign metropolis is Paris, the blog the Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts, episodic, broken-off, heavily hyper-linked to Hegel and Feuerbach (see Tedman, 2004), brilliant shards, with, in their time, zero-comments; and the idea that passes from its pages into oblivion at net-speed is that of "species-being" (Gattungswesen). Long-eclipsed, species-being is now, however, timely again. This paper discusses why this revival is relevant to the topic of digital labour, and then, building on a revisited version of Gattungswesen, proposes some further analytic categories with which to situate such labour: the planet factory, futuristic accumulation, global worker, techno-finance, singularity capitalism, biocommunism.

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Species-Becoming in the Planet Factory

In the Manuscripts Marx says that private ownership of the means of production imposes on humans a four-fold alienation: from the process of production, from its products, from other producers, and from their species-being (see Ollman, 1971: 138). While the first three stages of this process have been subject to extensive exegesis, the last, the fourth alienation, is neglected. In the Manuscripts, its discussion is cryptic, fugitive, tantalizing. It is, however, clear that Marx did not mean simply human existence as a biologically reproductive group. Species-being is rather the capacity to collectively transform this natural basis, making "life activity itself an object of will and consciousness" (Marx, 1964: 67). Witnessing the titanic processes of nascent factory capitalism Marx describes species-being as manifested in the cooperative organization of labour, the increasing power of humans to affect their natural environment, the emancipation of women, the formation of metropolis, and the application of science and technology not only to industry but to the very "forming of the five senses" (1964: 112, 129, 134, 141).

Having introduced Gattungswesen in the Manuscripts, Marx shortly thereafter abandoned it, except for fleeting mentions in Grundrisse and Capital. Because the Manuscripts were not published until 1932, species-being never entered the Leninist lexicon. It was, however, enthusiastically embraced by Marcuse (1972) and Lukacs (1978). No sooner had species-being been resurrected by the Frankfort School, however, than it was repudiated by Althusser (1969), for whom the idea lay on the wrong side of the epistemological chasm between early, immature, and late, scientific Marxism. It reeked of essentialism and teleology. Question of species-being, of the relations of the human to the "hedgehog, dragonfly, rhododendron" were a philosophic trap, belonging to separate theoretical universe than the proper Marxist concepts of "the mode of production, productive forces ... the relations of production ... determination in the last instance by the economy ... and so on and so forth" (Althusser, 2003: 279, 264). This verdict, resonating so strongly with the post-structural critique of "man," held sway for some time.

In the last decade, however, the concept has drawn renewed comment from Gayatri Spivak (1999), David Harvey (2000), Jason Read (2003), Paolo Virno (2004), Eugene Thacker (2005), and, more obliquely, Melinda Cooper (2008) and others. Ideas do not fall from the sky; this sudden burst of Gattungswesen chatter is not coincidental, but conjunctural — a Mayday signal, perhaps. If in 1844 we had the factory, and in the mid 20th century the social factory of Fordism, now we have the factory planet — or the planet factory, a regime that subsumes not just production, consumption, and social reproduction (as in Fordism), but life's genetic and ecological dimensions.

This is most immediately apparent in the ecological register. In an essay on climate change, "Humanity's Meltdown", Marxist urbanist Mike Davis (2008), reports a unanimous decision by the twenty-one member Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society of London, to affirm that humanity is now in the era of the "Anthropocene", an epoch defined by the emergence of urban-industrial society as a geological force. The Commission tracks "mass extinctions, speciation events, and abrupt changes in atmospheric chemistry" recorded in the earth's sedimentary strata. On the basis of this evidence, it determined that the Holocene, the interglacial span of stable climate that saw the emergence of agriculture and urban civilization, was over, and Earth had entered "a stratigraphic interval without close parallel in the last several million years." In addition to the buildup of greenhouse gases, they cited human landscape transformations, agricultural monocultures, acidification of the oceans, global species migrations and the destruction of biota, factors resulting in "a distinctive contemporary biostratigraphic signal". These human-induced effects are, the Commission observed, permanent, as future evolution will take place from surviving (and frequently

anthropogenically relocated) stocks. Davis spells out the conclusion: "Evolution itself has been forced into a new trajectory."

Information technologies, the product of digital labour, should, I suggest, also be understood as part of this radical change, both as contributors to the overall, earth-altering scale of industrial activity, but also in more specific ways. In production, capital's long march to automate has proceeded from the assembly line to super-computers and robots that scuttle awkwardly towards the contested status of "artificial intelligence". In circulation, digital communications create both virtual territories for "second lives" and pop-up perceptual guides and filters for this one. In social reproduction, biotechnologies — inextricably dependent on computerization for gene-sequencing and bioinformatics — already offer screening and selection processes, and, in conjunction with a booming neuro-pharmaceuticals industry, promises cognitive, affective and physical augmentation. And this accelerated genetic manipulation is part of a managed reproduction of nature in which, for example, drought resistant plants, Enviro-pigs, and Franken-salmon are all part of comprehensive geo-engineering strategies by which we, or some of us, may ride out climate change.

Digital labour now includes the creation by biotechnologist Craig Venter and his research team of "Synthia", a bacterium with a genome designed and created from chemicals, with distinctive strings of DNA implanted to prove that is not a natural object, spelling out, in code, a website address, the names of the researchers at the company Synthetic Genomics, and apt quotations such as "What I cannot build, I cannot understand" (Singer, 2010: 21). This is the moment Marx intersects with Foucault (1984) and capital becomes a regime of "biopower" (Hardt & Negri, 2000). Rhododendrons are spliced with frog genes to increase the harvest of flower plantations, hedgehogs are prized inhabitants of bioprospected megadiversity zones, and the Pentagon designs dragonfly-like insectoid bomb-sniffer robots. In Capital, Marx (1973: 104) notes that the concept of "labour" only became thinkable once capitalist mechanization and marketization homogenized or abstracted a range of work or trades — smith, cooper, weaver — so that they could be theorized as sharing an identity, being made of the same "stuff". Today, "life itself", abstracted as information, becomes a productive force: species-being becomes theorize-able not as some human essence or destiny, but because capital has made it a real abstraction.

In this context we return to the Manuscripts, where as Donna Haraway (2008: 323) remarks Marx is "both at his most humanist and at the edge of something else". Gattungswesen might really better termed "species-becoming", the activity of a species whose only "essence" is its historical plasticity. "Labour" is humanity's paradoxical anti-essential essence, its natural ability to change its nature. Gattungswesen can be thought of as the emergent capacity of a human collectivity to identify, assemble and alter itself — to be a species not only in itself, but for itself and also transforming itself, directing its own evolution. Marx's account warns against apocalyptic or euphoric views of this; it reminds us that humans have always made themselves by a series of grafts, symbioses and prostheses with tools, nutrients, and altered landscapes, so that, as Katherine Hayles put it, "we have always been post human" (1999: 278 – 279). But it is also a critique of this process. For Marx understands the unfolding of species-being as determined by class and conflict. Alienation, the central problematic of the Manuscripts, is not an issue of estrangement from a normative, natural condition, but rather of who, or what, controls collective self-transformation. It is the concentration of this control in a sub-section of the species, a clade or class of the species — who then acts as gods (albeit possibly incompetent gods) — to direct the trajectory of the rest.

Futuristic Accumulation

In the Manuscripts Marx observes that scientific activity, even when apparently pursued in

isolation, is a manifestation of "communal activity, and communal mind" (1964: 137). The collective character of science and technological innovation are repeated themes in his later work, from the "fragment on machines" in Grundrisse (1973: 690 – 712), with its famous allusion to "general intellect", to Capital's account of "all scientific work, all discovery and invention" as "universal labour" brought about "partly by the cooperation of men now living, but partly also by building on earlier work" (1981: 199). Today the expropriation of general intellect and universal labour are the basis for the alienation of species-being in a process I call "futuristic accumulation".

Futuristic accumulation is the commodification of publicly created scientific knowledge, which via copyright and patent, is privatized as intellectual property for the extraction of monopolistic technological rents. Its central site is the research university, whose entrainment to business gradually evolved over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both Europe and North America but reached a watershed in the United States' mobilization of university knowledge for atomic weapons, cryptography, ballistics and military projects by the United States during the Second World War. This process, intensified in the Cold War, directly linked academy and industry.

In his study of contemporary "technocapitalism" Luis Suarez-Villa (2009) describes the emergence this new modality of accumulation. The "massification of higher education" created a reservoir of publicly funded knowledge, and an infrastructure of laboratory facilities supported by communication systems, into which corporations could tap. A growing emphasis on applied technological research was matched by increasingly overt forms of corporate university partnership, and a steep rise in patenting by US corporations (which multiplied four fold in US in second half of twentieth century). This process began in the 1940s, but would only come to fruition several decades later when "a critical mass of highly talented technologists with corporate experience had formed, based on numerous waves of university graduates in the sciences and engineering" (2009: 23).

Futuristic accumulation was, however, only fully activated as a capitalist strategy in the 1970s in response to the crisis of Fordism, when, in answer to competitive threats to its traditional areas of industrial supremacy, and to the Vietnam war-era cycle of domestic and international struggles, North American capital increasingly turned to the development of high-technologies. The most important moment, foundational for digital labour, was the development of the US commercial computing industry from the 1970s on. This was generated by the three way partnership between the Pentagon, top rank research universities such as Stanford and MIT, and defense industries. From this "iron triangle" (Edwards, 1997: 44) computing knowledge flowed — mediated, ironically, by hacking and homebrew computing cultures that believed "information wants to be free" — to entrepreneurial ventures in office software (e. g. Microsoft) and video-gaming (e. g. Atari), and the creation of Silicon Valley culture.

This crucial instance of academic-capital collaboration was followed by other moments ringing changes on the same theme. "Biocapital" (Rajan, 2005) was incubated in the 1980s in the couplings of academic molecular biologists, biotechnology entrepreneurs and venture capital that bred gene-decoding companies, mining "sequences that could be sold or licensed to pharmaceutical, chemical or agro-industrial companies" or adopting research regimes targeted to exploit the most lucrative medical markets (Suarez-Villa, 2009: 26). A decade later, in the 1990s, the explosion of Internet dot. coms was ignited by Netscape's commercialization of an academically developed technology, the web browser, and sustained by spin-offs from computing science departments. In all these moments, sectors of US capital acquired the rights to exploit innovations arising from publicly funded research.

This subordination of public science to private capital does not always go smoothly. The most famous apparent breakdown was the race to decode the human genome between the publicly funded Human Genome Project and Craig Ventner's company, Celera. This conflict has been variously

narrated as triumph of agile private capital over stodgy state science (Shreeve, 2004) or as staunch defense of the public interest by academic researchers (Spufford, 2004). As Ronald Loeppky (2005) argues, however, such reportage overplays the conflict; despite the real hostility between the two projects, the public program was, he argues, ultimately as dedicated to placing genetic knowledge at the disposal of industry as the private one. The distinction was between research assisting capital in general, and the proprietorial claim of one specific capital.

Even such limited friction is rare. Far more representative are harmonious arrangements such as the $500 million research consortium formed between British Petroleum and the University of California, for the Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI), which embeds corporate research on biotechnologically produced biofuels at the heart of Berkley campus despite manifest conflicts of interest (Herper, 2007) — a single example nevertheless paradigmatic of a normalized range of research partnerships, campus research parks, academic-commercial knowledge transfers and spin-offs.

According to Suarez-Villa commercial "experimentalism" now directs the emergence of "critical masses of knowledge and ... infrastructure" in "fields that become emblematic of the twenty-first century", including "every area of biotechnology, proteomics, genomics, biopharmaceuticals, and biomedicine, the nascent field of nanotechnology and all its innumerable future medical and mechanical applications, molecular computing, bioinformatics, and ... biorobotics" (2009: 10). It brings with it a systematized orientation of research to the extraction of value, deploying analytic templates, incentives, and a "permanent state of urgency". It involves an acceptance of planned obsolescence; a blurring of boundaries between basic science and technological application; networks of "contact, diffusion and transaction", social institutions of legitimation and individual subject formation (2009: 28). The scale of these processes is, he suggests, "mega" — that is "all encompassing"; they "increasingly set the agenda for entire societies", with an "intrusive reach" and "scope and range" greater than, say, the nineteenth century factory or twentieth century mass production (2009: 16), but, "like its predecessor, dynamizing the accumulation of capital by concocting means to seize it in ever faster and larger quantities" (2009: 19).

"Futuristic accumulation" suggests an analogy and contrast between this process and primitive accumulations, the process by which agrarian populations were, by enclosure, dispossessed from common lands to become a proletarian workforce. This laid the basis for capital's normal process of expanded reproduction in which the extraction of surplus value from workers proceeds through the buying and selling of labour power. Primitive accumulation and expanded reproduction are today ongoing processes: around the planet people continue to be displaced from the land by agribusiness and extractive industries into shanty towns, to work in industrial factories pouring out commodities of all sorts. But futuristic accumulation adds something new. It does not dispossess people from existing territories, but expropriates from them the emergent domains of life produced by advanced technoscientific innovations. These innovations deal with the basic building blocks of human existence, cognition, and biology, thought and the body: in exposing their deep structures digital labour create new territories — the genome and cyberspace. By imposing property rights on these scientific commons, capital commodifies and commands the evolution of life itself. This is the enclosure of the future, the alienation of species-becoming.

Global Worker

The young Marx witnessed the industrial transformation of species-being in the factory workplace, in whose infernal labour process men, women and children alike were reduced to "beasts" and "machines" (1964: 70), as mechanization annihilated the craft skills of the artisanal worker and began

to the formation of the "mass worker". To understand the informational metamorphoses of species-being, and the place of digital labour, we need another concept, that of the "global worker".

Capitalism has always drawn on world-wide labours: the slave trade, super-exploited colonial workers, and peasantry of the periphery all attest to this usually brutal truth. What differs today however is the direct subsumption of global labour force under the wage form, in production systems that are increasingly integrated, flexible and mobile. The process begins historically in the late 1960s and 1970s as part of the same crisis of profitability that spurred the futuristic accumulation of high technologies. To circumvent mass worker militancy and welfare state demands, North American and European corporations embarked large-scale off-shoring and out-sourcing, using innovations in communication and transportation to move production to Latin America, Eastern Europe and, most of all, Asia-where it can buy cheaper and unregulated labour power. The idea of a "global working class", which a decade ago would have been dismissed as leftist phantasm, is attracting increasing attention (Baranov, 2003; Linden, 2008; Mason, 2007; Struna, 2009; Breathnach, 2010).

"Global worker" designates collective labour that is: i) internationalized by the world-scale expansion of capital, a process in whose long historical arc a turning point is the doubling of the available global labour-power occasioned by the 1989 fall of the socialist states; ii) variegated by an increasingly complex division of labour, conventionally termed "the growth of the service sector" (Soubbotina, 2000), describable in Marxist terms as an expansion of employment in the spheres of circulation and social reproduction; iii) universalized by the inclusion of women — aka "the feminization of work" (Morini, 2007), the growth of production centers outside the global north-west, and flows of migrant labour, all shattering the notion of a white, male working class; iv) connected, albeit to very differing degrees and with many stratifications, to digitalized communications systems — crude but telling indicators are the global count of two billion Internet users and five billion cell phones; v) precarious in its conditions, with a chronic insecurity underpinned by capital's access to a transcontinental reserve army of the unemployed, a surplus population whose task it is to survive in a state of readiness for work; vi) planet-changing in the effects of its labours, effects that, while historically cumulative, are only now becoming visible in global bio-crisis.

The global worker is not just an aggregate, the sum of all labours directly and indirectly mobilized by capital, a reckoning that could have been made at any time in the last three hundred years. What gives this abstraction a contemporary concreteness is its organizational form: the "value chain". Subject since the 1980s of a burgeoning managerial study, value chains (Porter, 1985) — also variously termed "supply chains" (Tsing, 2009), "commodity chains" (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994) and "global production networks" (Henderson et al., 2002; Levy, 2008) — are institutionally and technologically linked sequences of labour-processes that "add value" at every stage, from research and development to assembly and marketing, dispersed to locations around the planet calculated, in terms of production costs, resource availability, and proximity to markets, to maximize profits. Some sensitive analysts prefer to avoid the "linear connotations" of "chains" (Levy, 2008: 2), highlighting the "intricate links — horizontal, diagonal as well as vertical — forming multi-dimensional, multi-layered lattices of economic activity" (Henderson et al., 2002: 442). The construction of value chains require organizational power and geographic reach of the sort generally only commanded by multinational corporations, often entails foreign direct investment (FDI), international trade agreements, and "complex forms of governance at multiple levels" (Levy, 2008: 2). The value chain form is enabled by neoliberal globalization policies, and driven by the financialization of corporate practices in which "need to meet capital market expectations and appease mutual fund managers" necessitates cutting costs and increasing efficiencies at every level (Levy, 2008: 35, citing Williams, 2000).

Digital technologies are a sine qua non for value chains, which depend on a telecommunications infrastructure to reduce the transaction costs of "coordinating dispersed operations" and on software systems for "modular production processes that rely on standards and routinized interfaces with suppliers and customers" (Levy, 2008: 8). Equally important is the use of electronic communication to integrate transportation with systems of retail or business-to-business distribution: the icon of this "the elevated significance of logistics" is the digitized Universal Product Code (Sealey, 2010: 28).

Conversely, however, value chains are necessary for digital technologies, which are produced in world-wide division of labour that links very different kinds of labour. The computer industry can be schematically divided into two main sectors: software and hardware. In the software sector, key areas such as business applications and digital games display a characteristic pattern where key creative design and engineering functions are located in high-end studio or campus ambiences in North America, Western European and Japan. Routinized programming is increasingly outsourced and off-shored to subcontracted enterprises, whether in Bangalore, Ho-Chi Minh City, Dublin or Budapest, where wages and working conditions are an order of magnitude lower. This value-adding logic also extends to the incorporation of "free labour" (Terranova, 2000) through selective use of open-source programming initiatives or user-generated content, such as game mods. If one ignores the role of janitorial, cleaning and service staff, characteristically migrant, often female, who maintain the environments of programmers and designers working through the "death marches" and "crunch times" routinely demanded by the industry, much of this software work falls within the scope of "immaterial labour" (Hardt & Negri, 2000: 290 – 294), even if with a very high degree of stratification.

Where the full scope of the labours necessary to a Microsoft, an Apple or Sony becomes apparent is, however, on the hardware side (Smith et al. , 2006). Here again, the key design and prototyping for an Xbox, an iPad or iPod or a Playstation3 is likely to be done by high level engineers and architects. The semiconductors required, which a decade or so ago might have come from toxic chip fabrication lines, will today more likely be produced in highly automated Taiwanese plants. When one comes to the actually assembly of the devices, however, this will performed by in Central America, Eastern Europe, or — most probably — in Southern China, with its manufactories of silent, serried work, obligatory unofficial overtime and incessant industrial accidents: reports suggest as many as 40,000 fingers a year are lost in Pearl River factory lines, giving "digital labour" a grim signification (Barboza, 2008). Beyond this, the role of manual labour in the making of computing devices plunges off into yet more abyssal directions — on one hand into the mining of columbine tantalite and other minerals indispensable to consumer electronics amidst the carnage of the Eastern Congo, and on the other to the toxic e-waste disposal sites of Asia and Africa where computers and game consoles go to die, in their expiration poisoning the workers who excavate their remains (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009). The point here is not just that manual work continues to exist in a so-called digital age as some residual hold over: it is rather that the profitability of digital products depends on the incessant re-positing of cheap, degraded labour, so that new technoscience and human exhaustion accompany one another hand in hand.

Anna Tsing's (2009: 48) apparently portentous claim that analysis of supply chain capitalism is "necessary to understand the dilemmas of the human condition today" is thus correct. Global capital unites humanity, then divides it again. Class is defined by who appropriates surplus value from whom. In the planet factory, command flows down the value chain, but value flows upward in an inverse cascade, from the one billion absolutely immiserated people living at the edge of malnutrition (the involuntary regulators of the price of labour power for the system as a whole), stopping at a series of intermediate plateau or shallow pools — the old and new industrial proletariat classbathes "immaterial labour", and passes though a range of intermediate and contradictory positions (managers and

technocrats) before ascending to condense in the bodies of a global ruling class. The process by which the rich live longer, in better health, with more beautiful bodies, sensory extensions and mobility now, in the age nanobots and immortality enzymes, promises to become a veritable plutocratic mutation.

Techno-Finance

In the Manuscripts, Marx's reflects on the supremacy of money in capitalist society:"If money is the bond binding me to human life, binding society to me, binding me and nature and man, is not money the bond of all bonds?" Reflecting on the "overturning and confounding of all human and natural qualities, the fraternization of impossibilities" made possible by finance, Marx writes that its "divine power" lies in its character as humanity's "estranged, alienating and self-disposing species nature"; money is "the alienated ability of mankind". Marx also metaphorically links money to the new technologies unleashed by industry, calling it "the universal galvano-chemical power of society" (1964: 167 - 168). Today, the crisis of financialization shows not only that money has attained an ascendancy Marx could not dream of, but that its link to technological power has become literal.

In her study of the relation of technology to financial bubbles Carlotta Perez (2003) shows how, historically, successive waves of technological innovation have ignited frenzies of speculative activity, followed by spectacular crashes. Finance capital both buys shares in new technologies, and itself adopts them, using enhanced communication, from roads and canals to telegraph, to enlarge the scope, speed and complexity of its operations. These two processes were on display in the run up to the crash of 2008, with the technology in question being the computer network. The commercial exploitation of the Internet depended on speculative investment by techno-scientifically oriented venture capital — the process that underlie the dot. com boom and bust of 2001. The subsequent, larger speculative financial bubble that burst in 2008 depended not only on the easy-money policies by which the US Federal Reserve sought to escape the consequences of that earlier crisis, but also on the cybernetic instruments finance capital had adopted. Though the crashes of 2001 and 2008 had different epicenters — one in stratospheric cyber-space, the other in all-too down to earth evictions and foreclosures — according to Perez they should be seen as two moments of a single episode (Perez, 2009).

The first electronic trading floor conversion was NASDAQ, the centre of the dot. com bust. But finances flows metamorphosis into digital form, from "pits to bits", trading floors to networks, outcry to cyberspace, from frenzied hand signals to streams and screens of data, only really got under way in the 1990s, led by derivative markets trading in the complex financial instruments that would bring down the system a decade later (Gorham & Singh, 2009). What accelerated the process were both the diminishing cost of computers, and the availability of excess bandwidth created by the mile-upon-mile of unused fiber optics left by the telecommunications crash that had followed the dot. com collapse. "Dark fiber" provided the material infrastructure for the expansion of "dark pools" of secret finance and shadow banking (Leinweber, 2009).

Marx went on from the Manuscripts to write in Volumes II and III of Capital about financial capital and the role credit in the crises of business cycle, but he could not have conceived the scale this enterprise would attain in the early 21st century. In 2008 the derivatives market, valued at $596 trillion, was reportedly worth three times more than all stock, bonds, and bank deposits in the world (Leibenluft, 2008). Behind this techno-financialization lay a deeper dynamic. The globalization capital embarked on the 1970s to escape the rigidities of trades union and welfare state claims at its core was largely successful: digitally-linked global value-chains ensured wage rates at the centre were held in check by the low wages in the new production zones. But this very success pushed down purchasing power to buy commodities, threatening a realization crisis. Financialization was a means of resolving these problems using two main instruments, credit and derivatives. Credit both created

consumption, and, through interest, generated a new stream of revenue for financialized capital. Derivatives and other speculative instruments created a new market out of risk, enabling gambling on whether or not, and under what conditions, commodities, including money itself, would trade. Credit and speculation met in the sub-prime mortgage bonds that eventually brought the whole system down.

Financialization is an attempt by capital to jump out of its own skin, short its own circuit, and make money without having to go through the messy process of procuring labour and resources, combine them in production, make commodities and get them to market, but instead going directly from M (Money) to M′ (more money). Several authors describe the derivatives market as "meta-capital", capital commodifying its own operations, curving round recursively on itself, spiraling up to a higher level, a financial overworld (Bryan & Rafferty, 2006: 13). If this spiral of meta-capital originated in the realization crisis of low-wage globalization, digital communications provided its conditions of possibility. Financial markets now depend on dedicated, ultra-fast global networks, fully or semi-automated trading programs, and risk modeling programmed by the best and brightest of graduates in mathematics, physics, and computing science — the "quants". Algorithmic, high-frequency trading is necessary because of the speed at which risk-based transactions must be identified and executed, taking advantage of arbitrage possibilities that exist for fractions of a second; stock exchanges build aircraft-carrier sized computing facilities adjacent to their main trading sites because the time lags of satellite uplinks is too long. Financial networks are second in sophistication only to the Pentagon's, and indeed borrow largely from military research. They are a prime site of experimentation for innovations in self-training artificial intelligences. The "universal galvano-chemical power of society" has become the "money grid" (Patterson, 2010: 119).

In the ultimate failure of this techno-financial grid we can see what the young Marx meant when he termed money "the alienated ability of mankind". The estimated cost of the global bail-out of financial capital tops seven trillion dollars. Alternative purposes to which this expenditure could have been directed include global poverty alleviation, health care, education, and environmental cleaning. Within the logic of capital, however, such projects are of less importance than saving banks. This, concretely, is what it means to say that, as money, humanity's "species nature" becomes "estranged, alienating and self-disposing".

Singularity Capitalism

"In the end", Marx writes, "an inhuman power rules over everything, including the capitalist himself" (1964: 156). The immediate manifestation of the alienation of species-becoming described in Manuscripts is the subjection of the worker to the rule of the factory master. Behind this, however is a deeper process in which the system of commodity exchange assumes an autonomy to which both worker and capitalist are subordinated. Today, however, there is visible a further stage, as this system generates micro-systems of control assembled from digital, genetic and mechanical components which approach a life of their own.

That capitalism favors the rise of the machines is recognized in classical Marxist theory as a secular tendency towards alteration in its "organic composition" — that is, the ratio between "constant capital" — buildings, raw materials, and, especially, machines, and "variable" capital — living labour (Marx, 1977: 762). The long-term tendency of the capitalist system, driven by competition, is to raise the proportion of constant capital to variable capital. Though Marx had in mind mechanization at the point of production, it his argument can be extended to include technological means of speeding up circulation and reproduction. Since the direction is, broadly, an increase in the ratio of technology to humans, it might be better termed a rise in the inorganic composition of capital, a system whose metabolism grows increasingly machinic.

The organic composition of capital usually figures in complex debates about a declining rate of profit arising from the increasing proportion of constant to variable capital. This essay does not enter that discussion (though the historical path it has sketched, from the crisis of the industrial factory to the creation of global workforce and financial meltdown does suggest that capital's resort to high technology brings it increasingly baroque and ramified economic problems). The point here, however, is that the rise in the organic composition of capital becomes a change in species-composition.

In Marx's time the increase in C relative to V — aka industrialization — drove a massive increase in the mechanical and built environment, the creation of a "second nature" (Lukács, 1972: 19). This is now overlain by the "third nature" (Wark, 1994: 86) of informational technologies which do not just increase the ratio of C to V but break down the distinctions between them in new forms of bio-technological and nano-technological production, creating "cyborgs" (Haraway, 1985), "flesh machines" (Critical Art Ensemble, 1998), and "cyber-carnal" composites (Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 132). This process works along two axes — on the one hand, the exploration, via molecular sciences and other life-sciences of the assembled, machinic, and hence engineer-able, basis of biological life; on the other, the construction — via computing science — of increasingly intelligent, and hence life-like, machines. At the point where these paths converge, changes in the organic composition of capital, driven by the imperatives of surplus extraction, becomes a transformation of species composition, in which the distinction between organic and inorganic is slowly collapsed into emergent entities shaped by the priorities of accumulation.

The momentum of capital thus eventually points to an attempt to break through the barriers posed to accumulation by the current form of the human, by generating a "successor species". This trajectory today does not lack for explicit ideologists: Hans Moravec (1990), patriarch for "mind children" who will upload their consciousnesses into cybernetic entities; Ray Kurzweil (2006), proselytizer of a "singularity" produced by human — AI fusion; Kevin Kelly (2010), celebrant of a self-determining "technium", and a whole array of trans-humanists and extropians, many situated within the research centers of the high-technology industries. It is easy to ridicule these confident predictors of humanity's technological self-supersession — the "rapture of the nerds" (McLeod, 2000: 115). But these millennial prophecies intersect too closely with the prosaic systemic demands for faster turn-over and more accurate weapons delivery to be safely ignored.

Marx's account of species-being is an affirmation of the dynamic capacity of humans to change themselves. But singularity capitalism promises such transformations to a few, denies any meaningful determination of the direction of the process and dictates that some step onto the train across the backs of others. Today's species transformations are fueled not just by the continuing labours of an industrial proletariat, building machines for its own replacement, but a new realm of bio-workers whose role is to provide the raw materials for the creation of alien life, for the fabrication of successor species: the organ sellers, surrogate mothers, experimental subjects of big pharma, plant and animal breeders dispossessed by corporate biopiracy, coltan miners, e-waste scavengers, and chip assemblers, the labourers of the singularity, whose destroyed lives feed the next mutation in life itself.

When the bio-rifts of neoliberalism make the masters of the planetary economy more and more literally alien from those they rule, no wonder archaic fundamentalisms are the reactive response. The Manuscripts identify two forms in which species-being is alienated: capital and religion (Marx, 1964: 111). As these two complicit alienations of species-being, futuristic capital and atavistic faith, twine around and turn on each other and on themselves in increasingly terrifying wars, all these species-altering forces converge in the one activity where Marx underestimated capital's transforming powers: the means of destruction. Today, the American armies operating in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan are an allied force of humans and robots, with over 7,000 semi- or fully-self directed autonomous

mechanical agents — robots drones and tanks, such as the Predator, the Reaper, and the Talon — conducting reconnaissance, disarming IEDs, identifying targets, launching attacks (Singer, 2009; Economist, 2010).

This post-humanized military apparatus has its own escalatory dynamic. The video output from Unmanned Autonomous Vehicles (UAVs) flying over the Iraq and Af-Pak theatres is so large that the combined total for the single year 2010 "would take one person four decades to watch". That volume will increase as America deploys drones equipped with a new surveillance system, Gorgon Stare, that "stitches together images from lots of cameras to provide live video of an area as big as a town," with users zooming-in to look at "whatever takes their interest: a particular house, say, or a car" (Economist, 2010). The answer to this looming information overload is the development of systems such as ALADDIN (Autonomous Learning Agents for Decentralized Data and Information Networks) being researched in a $5 million collaboration between defense giant BAE and a consortium of British universities. This would allow automated agents to process the massive data streams flowing in from UAV observations, soldier-based sensors, satellite data, and other intelligence sources, and bargain or bid according to preset algorithms over what to do in battlefield situations. It is in the light of such experiments that we must now read the passages in the Manuscripts that speak of expropriated labour standing over and against the human as a force not only "alien" but "hostile" (Marx, 1964: 108).

A Biocommunist Prospectus

Four years after the Manuscripts came the Manifesto. What can be said today about prospects for anti-capitalist reappropriation of the products of digital labour?

At the turn of the millennium, the advent of the planet factory generated a so-called anti-globalization movement that was, ironically, the first outburst of the global worker. Integral to that wave of activism was the lateral connection of struggles in the street convergences of summit activism, the meetings of the World Social Forum, and, especially, through digital communication. Altermondialisme was a movement of "electronic fabrics of struggle" (Cleaver, 1994: 20), of digital civil disobedience (CAE, 1996) and virtual temporary autonomous zones (Bey, 1991). The Internet disseminated the example the Zapatistas, and after the Battle of Seattle Indymedia Centers spread summit activism.

The "movement of movements" (Mertes et al., 2004) was also, however, a movement of many internal contradictions, both tactical and strategic: between social democrats and anti-capitalist, verticalists and horizontalists, violent and non-violent resisters. How, or if, these might have been resolved in time is impossible to tell. Anti-globalization was abruptly cut short by 9/11. The destruction of the Twin Towers revealed that the planet factory had bred problems deeper than most imagined — an armed, militant, profoundly reactionary counterforce. War on terror hijacked public attention, chilled activism, and redirected the remaining street-energies on opposing invasions.

Many activists have, however, suggested that, beyond internal division and imperial war, the counter-globalization movements had another problem — overreliance on the Net. Enchantment with the fast virtual coordination of summit demonstrations led to a neglect of long term organization. The Net speed that gave the movement of movement its élan also made it evanescent. This suggests a strange parallelism. If digital technology was part of finance capitalism's nemesis, leading it to attempt a bypass of material production by a leap to ephemeral forms, it might be that the global justice movement similarly attempted to short circuit the materiality by reliance on the virtual, so that at times there was more news about struggle than actual struggle — a circuit without nodes.

The brief window in which virtual culture seemed galvanized by dissident energies was, moreover, closing quickly. In the aftermath of the dot. com crash, digital capital was already finding ways to

subsume network experimentation, absorbing many apparently subversive initiatives — creative commons, user-generated content, open source software — into "Web 2.0" business models, so that virtual activism seemed lost amongst the simulacral forms of capital's real abstractions.

Thus when in 2007 financial capital suddenly started to auto-cannibalize itself, anti-capitalist networks went silent. If in the US the disaster translated into Obama's electoral win, enlisting the digital acumen of many activists to party campaigning, this was an ambiguous victory. Crisis at the arcane heights of capitalist command, amongst networks indecipherable even to their owners, didn't present the same targets as the sitting-duck summits of the WTO. In addition, the very conditions that produced the meltdown incapacitated opposition to its consequences. This was not a crisis ignited by worker militancy, but the cardiac attack of a system struck down by its own victorious excess. The working class confronted the near collapse of the system in a state of demobilization, with union and social movement organization worn down by a quarter century of neoliberal attack, precariously employed, heavily indebted, and also speeded-up to a state of pathological exhaustion by 24/7 financial networks and digitalized value-chains. Because of the left's silence, opposition to corporate power travelled right, to tea parties and militias, filling the blogosphere with simultaneous denunciations of big government, bankers and black presidents in a toxic right wing populism. The momentum is not towards a re-compositionary circulation of struggle, but of a de-compositionary antagonism of struggles, leading to, at best, a restoration of capitalist discipline, possibly to something worse.

Nonetheless, even in North America there is left resistance to the austerity regimes by which capital intends to pay for its crisis: anti-eviction movements, the 2009 wave of student occupations against university cutbacks; and, in Canada, an anti-G20 protest that resulted in the country's largest mass arrests ever. As the epicenter of the crisis travels towards the Euro-zone larger and longer-lasting mobilizations have appeared in Greece, France, Britain, Spain and Italy.

The question confronting all these efforts is whether, as the editorial collective of the journal Upping the Ante puts it, "novel patterns of political affinity, practical activity and leadership — the building blocks of a new 'we' — can emerge from the radical left as it currently exists" (Editors, 2010: 36). This search for a new organizational plateau is so nascent and involves so many experiments, some from within older vanguard or trades unions traditions that have learned from horizontalism, others from younger activists who find rhizomes not everything they were cracked up to be, that generalization is almost inevitably premature.

One feature, however, seems to be the creation new physical spaces for aggregation, allowing a persistence and connection lost by overreliance on virtual communication. The people's assembly is a characteristic form. So too are what Tiqqun (2001) calls "zones of offensive opacity", militant cells intentionally avoiding the surveillance and chatter of the virtual scene. At the same time, however, these resistances also practice sophisticated digital communication strategies, whether of organizing wild demonstrations, or more strategically in circulating news of struggles. It seems symbolic of this counter-offensive "on all fronts" that the street battles with police of the British students protesting university cutbacks unfold almost simultaneously with the explosion of hacker activity around Wiki-Leaks.

These new struggles are driven by anger and desperation very different from the relative optimism of the counter-globalization movement; they are the insurgencies of a generation for whom capital has, in so many dimensions, decreed "no future." Yet the question of a strategic objective is inescapable. David Harvey (2009) remarks that, in an era when all liberal and social democratic ameliorations have weakly prostrated themselves before the prime directives of finance capital, the question is not is another world possible, but "is another communism possible?" Oppositional rebellions face a "double blockage" because "the lack of an alternative vision prevents the formation of an oppositional

movement, while the absence of such a movement precludes the articulation of an alternative" (Harvey, 2010: 227).

Can one start to think a communism adequate to the era of climate change, synthetic biologies and global networks? The gamble of Marxism is that liberation lies through, not prior to, alienation: there is no way home, only the capture of the strange planet to which the global worker has been abducted. A politics against the fourth alienation, the alienation of species-becoming, will have to produce a post-capitalism order as different from industrial socialism as industrial socialism was from the agrarian commune, an intensification of tendencies to socialization implicit in the new forces of production and destruction — something we might call a biocommunism.

Powerful technology-systems produce large-scale effects rationally incommensurate with private ownership and market allocation. These effects are both constructive and destructive. They include both catastrophic ecological hazards and the productivity necessary for large sectors of the global populations to emerge from chronic immiseration. Confronting this contradiction, socialist progressivism and romantic primitivism alike appear hopelessly linear and one-sided. A diagonal approach that puts to the front the question of the social form within which technologies are produced and deployed is required.

The autonomist tradition inverted the concept of the organic composition of capital to produce the concept of class composition: the technical composition of the class, the labour process in which it was involved, became the basis for a political composition, a capacity to become a counter-power against capitalist command. Extending this line of thought, perhaps we can say that the objective of political struggle is to replace organic composition of capital with the organic composition of the communal, in which decisions of resource allocation and investment are determined in a collective and democratic fashion.

In such a composition, the creations of digital labour could have at least three important roles. First, productivity increases from computerization could be translated, not into profits, but into resources, not just of goods but of time, allowing collective participation in decision making. Second, "open source" circulation of knowledge and inventions would be an important element of new forms of cooperative production. Third, networks would be part of the architecture of an infrastructure of distributed democratic planning and debate of the difficult questions a biocommunist society would face: slowing or mitigating climate change, the role of genetic engineering outside corporate ownership, and, recursively, the level of virtualization that is commensurate with collective democratic planning. As Marx (1977: 447) put it, in one of his very few allusions to Gattungswesen in his later writings, "when the worker cooperates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species".

Economic crisis is colliding with climate chaos, ecological exhaustion, energy depletion and emergent challenges to a fiscally bankrupt but militarily dominant imperial hegemon. To foresee cataclysmic instabilities ahead is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but a historically-informed extrapolation from current tendencies. In this context, it becomes realistic to consider the cycle of university rebellions now traversing Europe, the pulsing of industrial revolt in Southern China, the climate change assemblies of the farmers and miners of Bolivia and the migrant worker movements raging from Phoenix to Marseilles as anticipations of larger tumults to come.

As this essay undergoes final revision, the contending potentials of planetary labour under digital conditions have become dramatically visible in the popular revolts sweeping North Africa and the Middle East, revolts whose main antagonists are dictatorial and kleptocratic client regimes of global capital. On the one hand, the ignition of these uprisings — one of whose immediate catalysts was the Wikileaks exposure of the corruption of the Tunisian regime — and their rapid circulation, via satellite

television, mobile phone, and social media networks, testify to how contemporary means of communication can, despite censorship and black-out, abruptly burst apart the limits on thought, speech and action imposed by the dominant order. On the other, however, the insurgents who fought out against security forces in streets and squares with stones, sticks and small arms, in the most brutally immediate combat, are a defiant, collective self- assertion by subjects who have been *excluded* from the benefits of the so-called information economy. They are an eruption of populations consigned by the world market to the margins of high-technology development, to labour at its ignored material base, in oil fields and gas pipelines, mines, waste sites and farms. They are consigned to a reserve army of the un- and under-employed, suffering gyrations in food prices dictated by climate change and financial speculation in an immiseration from which migration offers the only escape. Western media have focused on the first part of this equation — the undeniable importance of computer networks — for the uprisings; but in doing so they have created a narrative that not only focuses on the most affluent elements in the insurgent movements, but also complacently affirms the merits of market-driven technological progress. What such narratives underplay is the second, crucial, aspect of the uprisings, namely the explosive stockpile of equally market-driven unemployment, exploitation and inequality — that is to say, of class conflict — that underlies the revolts.

Regardless of their outcome, whether catastrophic, compromised or victorious in unimaginably experimental ways, these uprisings have already returned to the political horizon possibilities of radical self-organization that have in so many places been banished for a generation. They are revolutions detonated by the meeting of extraordinary high technological development and extreme inequality, a contradiction that defines the condition of the global worker, and whose resolution will determine the trajectory of human species-becoming. In such struggles, the future of the "actual living species" (Marx, 1964: 112) will depend on the level of biocommunist organization.

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15. Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour

Ursula Huws

Creative labour occupies a highly contradictory position in modern, global, "knowledge-based" economies. On the one hand, companies have to balance their insatiable need for a stream of innovative ideas with the equally strong imperative to gain control over intellectual property and manage a creative workforce. On the other, creative workers have to find a balance between the urge for self-expression and recognition and the need to earn a living. This article explores the interplay between these doubly contradictory impulses, drawing on the results of European research carried out within the scope of the WORKS project as well as other research by the author. It argues that the co-existence of multiple forms of control makes it difficult for workers to find appropriate forms of resistance. Combined with increasing tensions between the urges to compete and to collaborate, these contradictions pose formidable obstacles to the development of coherent resistance strategies by creative workers.

Introduction

Creative labour occupies a highly contradictory position in modern, global, "knowledge-based" economies. On the one hand, companies have to balance their insatiable need for a stream of innovative ideas with the equal strong imperative to gain control over intellectual property and manage a creative workforce. On the other, creative workers have to find a balance between the urge for self-expression and recognition and the need to earn a living. The interplay between these antagonistic imperatives produces a complex set of relations, encompassing a variety of forms both of collusion and of conflict between managers, clients and workers, with each action provoking a counter-reaction in a dynamic movement that resembles an elaborate minuet, in which some steps follow formal conventions but new moves are constantly being invented.

This dialectical dance forms the subject of this article. The choice of topic is rooted in a general interest in the contradictory role of creative workers in the restructuring of global capital, a role which renders them simultaneously both complicit agents of restructuring and victims of it (see Huws, 2006). However the immediate stimulus for the article was the results of some European research carried out

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by the WORKS (Work Organisation Restructuring in the Knowledge Society) project[1] which carried out extensive research across the EU between 2005 and 2009. Alongside quantitative and theoretical analysis, this project carried out in-depth case studies on the impacts of value chain restructuring on work organisation and the quality of working life, across a range of different industries (Flecker et al., 2008) and occupational groups (Valenduc et al., 2007) and in contrasting national settings.

These studies uncovered major differences between countries, industries and occupational groups. Nevertheless, there were some very striking common trends that cut across all these variables, in particular a noticeable standardisation and intensification of work and a speed-up of its pace. Linked in many cases with a growing precariousness of work, these had strongly negative impacts not only on the quality of work but also on feelings of security and career prospects as well as on the quality of life outside the workplace, especially for people with children or other care responsibilities (Flecker et al., 2009; Krings et al., 2009; Huws et al., 2009). These results, which were confirmed by an analysis of the results of the European Working Conditions Survey (Greenan, Kalugina and Walkowiak, 2007), were particularly pronounced amongst white-collar workers, who were being put under pressure from a number of different directions, including the need to work to externally-determined targets, to respond directly to demands from customers, sometimes in different time zones, and to exercise a growing range of communications and emotional skills on top of their core tasks (Ramioul and De Vroom, 2009).

Despite the fact that a high proportion of the workers interviewed experienced these effects as negative and that many of the 57 in-depth organisational case studies were carried out in companies and industries that were unionised, and quite a few in countries with a strong tradition of collective bargaining that is consensual, at least in comparison to the USA or UK (e. g. Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands), it was striking that there had been remarkably little resistance to these changes. As Meil, Tengblad and Docherty (2009: 65) concluded, "Union or works council response was generally passive or reactive and focused mainly on dealing with the employment consequences of restructuring rather than influencing the shape of the new structure"; and "very few (if any) examples of representation influence the change itself. The management prerogative in defining restructuring seems almost total" (ibid: 69).

The 300-odd workers interviewed in the 30 "occupational case studies" linked to the 57 "organisational case studies" included a range of different groups, some of whom might be regarded as having quite a bit of individual negotiating power with employers or clients (fashion designers, researchers in R&D for IT products, and software engineers), so it might be expected that some would resist in individualised and personal ways rather than collective ones. However the interviews showed little evidence of this either.

In fact it was software engineers, who might be supposed to be more individualistic than the manual or clerical workers also included in the study, who provided the only instance of a strong collective response to restructuring, with one group of IT workers taking strike action in an attempt to resist outsourcing (Dahlmann, 2007; 2008).

In retrospect, this failure of "knowledge workers" to resist restructuring of their work even when they know that it will be deleterious is one of the most surprising results of the whole project. Like the dog that failed to bark in the night in the Sherlock Holmes story, it provokes the question: "Why not?"

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[1] This project was funded under the European Commission's 6th Framework programme as an integrated Project, under the leadership of Monique Ramioul, at the Higher Institute of Labour Studies of the Catholic University of Leuven, with 17 partner institutes in 14 EU countries. See http://www.worksproject.be for further information.

What can account for this failure to resist these negative changes either individually or collectively?

It occurred to me that, although this question was not directly addressed in the WORKS research design, it might be productive to re-examine the rich mass of data from the project to see what light it could shed on the contradictory position of "creative" or "knowledge" workers in value chain restructuring. In particular, I wondered whether these results might illuminate the complex and dynamic interplay between management's drive to control the creative workforce on the one hand, and workers' urges for autonomy on the other. This article is a first result of this process, looking at the results of the WORKS case studies but also drawing on some of my other past research as well as work by other authors. It begins by outlining the role of knowledge workers in value chain restructuring. Then it looks at what is distinctive about "creative" knowledge-based work. It then moves on to a summary of current trends in the reorganisation of knowledge work before embarking on an analysis of the multiple forms of control that operate in knowledge work and the ways in which their interactions might impede effective resistance to management imperatives. Finally I draw some brief conclusions.

I have used the overlapping terms "knowledge worker" and "creative worker" somewhat interchangeably throughout, aware that neither is really adequate, especially when the knowledge which forms the content of the work and contributes to the occupational identities of many non-manual workers is undergoing a rapid process of commodification, degradation and reconstruction. I have discussed this vexed question of definition in greater depth elsewhere (Huws, 2003). By discussing the role that creativity plays within "knowledge" work, as I do below, I hope to avoid too much terminological confusion.

The Role of Creative Workers in Capitalist Development

It is more or less axiomatic, at least in a capitalist economic system, that growth depends on innovation. And the more global and competitive that system is, then the greater is the need for rapidity in this innovation. Since all innovation comes, ultimately, from human creativity, then creative workers are *ipso facto* integral to any development process.

This assertion is easily made, but distinguishing "creative workers" from the general crowd of the global labour force is by no means a simple task, such is the complexity and interconnectedness of the division of labour in which each activity is linked interdependently with so many others across spatial, temporal and corporate boundaries.

There is a sense in which all economic activity requires human ingenuity and knowledge. Just as basic human needs — for food, shelter, warmth, etc. — have not really changed over the millennia, neither have the tasks required to meet them. Human beings still extract and harvest the planet's natural resources, manipulate and recombine them, distribute them, consume them and dispose of the waste, as well as caring for and entertaining each other. Back in the mists of time, no doubt, many of these activities were carried out by workers who were fairly autonomous and free to improvise within the constraints of the resources and time available to them. However, over the centuries diverse social systems have developed complex divisions of labour, usually strongly gendered, many involving hierarchical forms of control. In these divisions of labour those who give orders have removed much of the scope for creativity of those who follow these orders. Under capitalism, changes in this division of labour have been highly dynamic — a continuous, if uneven, process of destruction and recomposition of sectors, organisations, labour processes and skills, driven by the imperative of maximising the extraction of value from any given unit of labour. In this process there has been an ongoing process of separation of tasks, in particular a separation of routine activities from those requiring initiative and imagination. Braverman (1974: 85 – 121) analysed and documented the use of Taylor's (1911) scientific management approach and its extension from the factory to office work (Braverman, 1974:

124 - 137) and introduced the concept of "deskilling" as an essential component of this process, showing the ways in which the tacit knowledge of workers, as expressed in their labour processes, could be captured by managers, analysed, standardised and mechanised to create simplified processes that could be carried out by less skilled (and hence cheaper) workers. Followers of Braverman have tended to emphasise this "deskilling" aspect of the restructuring of labour processes. However Braverman himself, like Taylor before him, made it clear that he regarded the separation of "mental" activities from "manual" ones as a process that also involved the creation of some new, more highly skilled activities. There is a close connection between the simplification of routine tasks and an expansion in the role of the manager. As Taylor put it: "The management must take over and perform much of the work which is now left to the men; almost every act of the workman should be preceded by one or more preparatory acts of the management which enable him [*sic*] to do his work better and quicker than he otherwise could. " (Taylor, 1911; Introduction)

As the results of the past division of labour become increasingly embedded in technologies, social systems and the physical infrastructure, and the current division of labour becomes more complex and geographically and contractually extended, there is often a separation between these "mental" and "manual" activities that makes it difficult to perceive their interconnections. When workers are in different companies, on different continents, linked only, perhaps, through a shared software platform, occasional meetings between intermediaries or the presence of the same logo, the interdependence of their activities (and their shared origins in a previously integrated job description) are rendered invisible.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand the role of creative labour in the overall development process without some analysis of the interlinkages between the different components of global value chains. Only then does it become possible to gain an insight into the functional relationship between creative work and capitalist development and, in doing so, the contradictory pressures which shape, and reshape, creative work, simultaneously generating new openings for innovation, and new skill-sets associated with emerging technologies, whilst routinising and deskilling, or even rendering obsolete, older occupations.

What, then, are these roles, and what imperatives shape them?

One important creative function is the *invention of new products*. There are several ways this can take place under advanced capitalism. One is a simple appropriation of something that has traditionally been made using craft methods and devising a means of mass production for it. Another is to develop new products in the Research and Development (R&D) department of a company where the creative work is carried out by employees. Alternatively, the labour might be acquired from a freelancer, an independent entrepreneur or smaller company (either voluntarily, through a subcontract, or involuntarily, through predatory acquisition). In yet another scenario, the research may be carried out in a university, subsidised from public or charitable funds and then handed over to a private company for exploitation. In each of these situations, the relationship of the creator of the work to the company producing the final product will be different, as will his or her relationship to the intellectual property in the creation. These specific conditions of ownership, control and management will, directly or indirectly, influence the power relations between the parties and shape the working life of the creative worker in terms of income and autonomy.

Related to the function of developing new products is that of *customising, improving or adapting them for different purposes or different markets*. Once again, we have a wide range of possible relationships between these creative workers and capital, which may be governed by a range of different employment contracts, licensing agreements or contracts for the supply of services. This category may be expanded to include a variety of activities involving ephemeral *design and styling*

(e. g. of clothing or household goods).

Linked to the function of adapting and customising products is that of *providing content* for various forms of media. Many such activities have their origins in traditional forms of art and entertainment and the workers who produce them cover a vast range of occupations: writers, musicians, visual artists, film producers and technicians, graphic designers, translators, web-site designers and many more, with solitary and introspective activities at one extreme and highly technical ones, requiring intensively interactive team-working at the other. These are, perhaps, the workers most people think of when the term "creative" is used. However their activities are increasingly embedded in the global value chains of large companies or reliant on such companies for distribution or patronage and, although their relationships with these companies are perhaps even more varied than those described so far, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish these workers clearly from other categories in the same value chain.

Overlapping with these content-generating activities is another set of activities connected with *providing information to the public, education and training*. Again, these are increasingly hard to isolate. As education and training become commodified, for example, there is a continuum between face-to-face teaching in real time, engaging in various distance-learning activities and providing content for course materials delivered electronically. Similarly, the provision of government information, usage instruction for appliances or customer service information by companies is increasingly likely to be delivered online or via a call centre, with new divisions of labour between specialist authors at one extreme and deskilled workers providing information from standard scripts at the other. In the past, it might have seemed logical to make a clear distinction between commercial information provision and the provision of information to citizens by the state (and regard the latter as part of the function of governance), but the commodification of public services and the growth in outsourcing them to the private sector or consigning them to the voluntary sector has rendered such a distinction increasingly anachronistic. Nevertheless, it remains the case that a considerable amount of creative labour is invested in the *legitimation and reproduction of the power of the state*, as well as the *reproduction of the workforce*, so creative work should not be regarded as solely concerned with the development and circulation of commodities for the market. Here too we find a variety of different relationships both to the intellectual property that is produced and to the employer, including the bureaucratic relationships of civil servants with the governments that employ them, more contingent employment relationships, including self-employment, and commercial contracts between companies, with the workers' output being regarded sometimes as a public good, sometimes as a product in its own right and sometimes as a form of advertising.

My final category of creative work is even harder to delineate from other categories of labour, only in this case the blurred boundary is with management and technical functions. This is the creative labour that goes into *inventing new systems and processes, or adapting old ones for new purposes*. Very often, these systems and processes involve the labour processes of other workers. Without this particular form of creativity, the current global division of labour could not exist. Christened "living think work" by Hales (1980), this is the labour that analyses the labour processes of others, works out how to standardise them, automate them, outsource them, manage them and recruit and train the workers. Its practitioners may be systems designers or managers but they are increasingly likely to be working in large project-based teams that include technicians, trainers, human resources managers, managers who liaise with customers and suppliers and representatives of the local state, logistics experts, lawyers and a host of other specialists. Their "soft" and "knowledge-based" skills are not just used to develop new systems and refine and trouble-shoot older ones; they are also essential for the management of these systems once they are up and running, including "knowledge management".

This schematic overview demonstrates that creative work is involved in a range of different activities that are crucial to the development of capitalism. However it warns us against any assumption that the relationship between a worker's creativity and capital takes a single standard form. Rather, creative labour should be conceived as something extremely heterogeneous which is, moreover, undergoing rapid and dynamic change. This overview also demonstrates the impossibility of distinguishing "creative work" in any definitive way from other forms of work that can be loosely described as "knowledge work". Nevertheless, it can, perhaps, be said to have some distinguishing features which are worth investigating further. I now address these.

What is Distinctive about Creative Work?

As already noted, it is impossible to draw an absolute line between "creative" work and other forms of knowledge work in any structural analysis that looks at its relation to capital. Nevertheless, if we change the focus to the agency of creative workers and the ways in which their occupational identities have been socially and historically shaped, it becomes possible to identify some features, which, while neither unique to these creative workers nor universally prevalent amongst them, could be said to characterise them in certain distinctive ways. They are of interest here because they may be hypothesised to shape these workers' attitudes to their work and their relationships with employers and clients.

One of these features is a high commitment to the work itself. Applying one's mind to solving a new problem, as opposed to repeating a known activity, is of the essence of creative work, a process that Karl Marx, in the *Grundrisse* described in these terms:

> this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity — and [that,] further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits — hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour. (Marx, 1973: 611)

Even if, much of the time, creative workers are engaged in mundane or repetitive work that does not require such original mental effort, insofar as this sort of problem-solving is involved, there is a sense in which this work contains elements of "really free labour" which is experienced as unalienated — a form of personal fulfilment (see Sayers, 2003). This constitutes a source of genuine satisfaction, creating an additional motive to work that cannot be subsumed into the simple economic motive of earning a living. The worker does not only care about the monetary reward but also about the work's content (or intellectual property) which, even after it has been sold, may still be experienced as in some sense "owned" — something of which it is possible to be proud. This attachment to the work may express itself in the form of a commitment to service users (for instance in education), audiences (for instance in performing arts) or customers (for instance in product design). It may also be linked with concerns about the worker's own personal reputation. In any bargaining process with employers or clients, trade-offs may be made between financial reward and other factors, such as public acknowledgement, a prestigious client or a greater degree of artistic freedom. This makes for a form of negotiation that is complicated in comparison with other employment relationships, and may be disadvantageous to the worker financially, especially in a situation where there is an oversupply of creative labour.

This strong identification with the product of the labour can leave workers with an illusion of continuing ownership, even when their intellectual property rights and control have been handed over. Being faced with the reality of this loss may then be painful. The experience of expropriation may come as a recurring shock, closer to the surface of consciousness than in other forms of work where

alienation is taken for granted. To the extent that it is genuinely innovative, creative work could be said to be permanently poised at the moment of alienation, and the creative worker at the centre of a drama of contradiction: the work, as it comes into being, both belongs to and is torn away from its begetter. Part of this belonging is the risk of failure: no innovation can be known before it comes into being (if it did, it would not be an innovation), so each time there is a risk that it will not work, or will be found ugly or otherwise unacceptable. Because in that moment of creativity the worker has not yet separated from his/her creation, this is experienced as a personal failure. The potential for rejection lurks always in the background of the creation-expropriation drama. This is most obviously acute in forms of creative work that are overtly affective and demand self-exposure (e. g. the performing arts, fiction-writing or film direction).

The identification of creative workers with their output was illustrated in the WORKS project by several fashion designers, such as those interviewed by Muchnik (2007). One said "For me, fashion is a continuation of myself". Two other designers were even more graphic: "When you're a designer, it gets you in the guts" and "It's a job you have to love because we spill our guts out" (quoted in Valenduc et al., 2007: 36).

But performers and designers are not the only creative workers who make themselves vulnerable in carrying out their work, as is evidenced in the ubiquity of statements like "you're only as good as your last project" or "I put my reputation on the line".

The personal identification of the innovative worker with his or her innovative idea also gives rise to another contradiction: between the individual and the collective interest; between competition and collaboration. If your ideas and knowledge are all you have to sell in the labour market, then they constitute a form of personal intellectual capital which, for reasons of self-interest, should not be parted with freely, but should be guarded and kept for future sale wherever possible. Offering these to the employer or sharing them with colleagues, with little guarantee of reward, can seem like a form of generosity verging on career suicide. However few forms of creative work can be carried out in isolation. Most involve team-work and, for the team to be successful, there is an equally strong self-interested imperative to share knowledge. A general willingness to share enables both learning and teaching; it also improves the overall standard of the project as a whole, thus enhancing everyone's chances of further work. Another important motivation for creative workers is a craving for recognition. Ideas may be shared, even with competitors, for the reward of appreciation or admiration.

Another associated feature of many types of creative work is that it has a "meaning" in the form of some sort of ideological content or potential for social impact, positive or negative. Creative workers therefore have ethical choices to make about how their work is carried out. Sometimes this is linked to a formal responsibility, for instance in rules of professional conduct or in codes of practice. In other cases, it is up to individual workers to make a personal judgement about where to draw the line between meeting the demands of the employer or client on the one hand and standing by their own values on the other. Where creative workers feel themselves to have responsibility without power, taking an ethical stand may entail considerable courage and sacrifice. Failure to do so may result in being haunted by guilt.

We can conclude that, although creative workers form part of a continuum with other workers whose work, albeit knowledge-based, would not normally be regarded as creative, their experiences exhibit in a particular acute form a range of contradictions which, in more routine occupations, lie further below the surface. To the extent that they are actively engaged with a quest for meaning in their work, feel personally attached to it, seek aesthetic or moral rewards from it and invest their powers of mental focus on addressing the challenges it poses to them, they are unable to engage in the

simple form of economic transaction that forms the basis of a labour market — "how much will you pay for my bodily time and effort?" — without additional qualification and trade-off. This would seem to be a marketplace in which capital holds most of the bargaining power. However creative workers also hold some strong cards: they are not — as are many other workers — interchangeable with anyone else with equal bodily strength, endurance and agility; they have something capital desperately needs in order to develop further — new and original ideas. But, in a rapidly-changing economy, these ideas have a short shelf-life, and, with employers able to tap into an expanding global creative workforce, the competition is fierce. It is therefore not easy to predict how creative workers will fare in the next phase of capital restructuring. To set the context, the next section summarises current trends in the restructuring of knowledge-based work.

Current Trends in the Restructuring of Knowledge-Based Work

The WORKS project carried out its research in a range of different industries, in contrasting national settings, and interviewed large numbers of workers in occupational groups ranging from fork-lift truck drivers to senior scientists in cutting-edge R&D laboratories. Nevertheless, despite numerous national, sectoral and occupational differences, it uncovered some strong common trends linked to value chain restructuring.

One of the most noticeable of these is a general trend of work *intensification*.

> ... not only a lengthening of working hours, but also as a saturation of time, a speeding up of pace and rhythm, tighter deadlines, higher pressure, and sometimes a "colonisation" of the other spheres of the individual's life. (Krings et al., 2009: 37)

In some cases, this is experienced as continuous round-the-clock pressure. In other cases, intensification takes the form of expecting workers to add new tasks to their existing core activities, a concept they refer to as "skill intensification", as opposed to a simple upskilling.

> First, the new competences required from occupational groups involved in restructuring are not necessarily related to the core of their profession, but rather seem to concern "side" skills such as social skills, problem solving skills and resource management skills. Hence, these new competences come on top of the existing professional requirements and may even push aside the further development of the core professional skills. Second, "upskilling" is often related to a considerable work intensification and an enlargement of the skills that the employees need: ... to understand and combine very different types of knowledge and the required speed to process and apply a lot of information in a short time. (Ramioul and De Vroom, 2009: 85)

Work intensification is particularly noticeable in project-based work. In R&D[1], for instance, there has been a sharp increase in orientation towards markets, with "pure" research increasingly being ousted by research that can be readily brought to market (Valenduc et al., 2007: 54), exposing workers to direct pressures from the market, experienced as tight deadlines. In general, the regulation of work has increasingly shifted from one based on working time to one based on "work done" (Krings et al., 2009: 30).

Linked to this intensification of work is a general *speed-up* of its pace. Sometimes this is the result of a general drive to improve efficiency or competitiveness but often it is a response to market

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[1] For the "occupational case studies" on R&D in the IT industry, four case studies were carried out, in Norway, Austria, Germany and France, each involving 7 – 10 interviews. These complemented "organisational case studies" of value chain restructuring in the industry.

pressure. In the fashion industry, for instance, "the most conspicuous feature is the overall acceleration of business activities and workflows. Across the industry, the traditional pattern of seasonal collections has dissolved, and collections are continuously modified and updated ... retailers and distributors demand increasingly rapid responses" (Flecker et al., 2008: 24).

This is exacerbated by the global division of labour in the industry. The longer it takes for finished products to be transported (for instance, by boat, from Asia) the less time is available for creative work. As Krings et al. put it: "the consequence of this development is a dramatic reduction of the time required for production and of the time available for inspiration, creation and innovation." (2009: 30)

> According to the interviewees①, time pressure leads to an impoverishment of creativity for designers. Moreover, checking and improving stages of design are shorter and shorter, and sometimes simply removed, leading to more stress ... It can also lead to dissatisfaction related to a loss of control over the results of their own work, particularly because the results of their work play a crucial role in their self-fulfilment and are essential for the expression of their own subjectivity. (Valenduc et al., 2007: 41)

A third striking transversal trend is that of *standardisation*. In R&D, for instance, there is:

> a growing formalisation and standardisation of the tasks in view of facilitating communication along the value chain. However, this does not mean that tasks are necessarily becoming simpler. The use of project management tools and more documentation of the work are examples of such formalisation that originally applied to market-related and commissioned research projects but are then increasingly transferred to all the work of the unit. (Ramioul and De Vroom, 2009: 45)

For software development professionals:

> Standardisation transforms pieces of tacit knowledge into codified knowledge ... [It] also concerns the relationships with customers and is linked to the quality criteria laid down in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) ... Many interviewees perceive standardisation as a threat to their own expertise. Expertise becomes easily transferred or shared, and specialists become more interchangeable. (Valenduc et al., 2007: 86)

The fashion designers we interviewed also complained of the ways in which trends towards standardisation were reducing their scope for creativity. In some cases this was linked to the increasing requirement to use image processing software packages and to make use of standardised component modules. One German described how the modular construction system they were forced to use meant that pockets always had to be the same standard shape, "and that's something that we designers do very, very reluctantly". A French designer spoke of the work becoming "industrial" and losing its creativity (quoted in Valenduc et al., 2007: 38).

Standardisation is a prerequisite for outsourcing and relocation but, once it has taken place, it can also make it easier for further outsourcing and relocation to take place in a recursive process that can be described as a "snowball effect" (Ramioul and Huws, 2009). However managers often underestimate the amount of tacit knowledge that is required to enable supposedly standardised systems to operate smoothly. In order to get the job done, workers have to bring into play creativity, skills and knowledge for which they are not credited or rewarded. This sometimes results in an unseen slippage of tasks from "knowledge workers" to others, further down the chain.

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① For the "occupational case studies" of fashion designers, interviews were carried out in France, Germany and Portugal with 22 designers in nine firms, of whom 17 were women and five men, aged between 27 and 53.

Increased demands on documentation and standardised procedure render knowledge explicit but get in the way of actual, situated problem-solving and longer-term creative vision as they cut into the time and discretion workers have available for both aspects of innovation ... Standardisation and new demands on tacit knowledge are interrelated, and put on workers (and their ad hoc functional flexibility and tacit skills) an additional demand in both innovative business functions and the less-than-knowledge-intensive areas. Especially there, in the face of Taylorist standardisation, the remaining and increased demands on knowledge tend to be invisible and underrated, specifically when newly imposed routines get in the way of competent work performance. (Flecker et al., 2009: 94)

Intensification, speed-up and standardisation of work are three of the most universal trends accompanying global value chain restructuring. There are many other trends that affect knowledge-intensive work some of which are more specific to particular industries or occupational groups. These include: an increasing requirement to work in response to customer demands, whether these are embodied in contracts or more *ad hoc*, and to absorb the impact of customer dissatisfaction; an increasing requirement to be available round-the-clock, to communicate with workers or clients in other time-zones and to use global languages (especially English); a need to exercise communications and emotional skills on top of their "core" expertise; an increased likelihood of having to work to targets or performance indicators; the introduction of new forms of monitoring and control; pooling of specialist knowledge into broader databases, leading to the development of two-tier structures with a small number of specialists and a larger number of increasingly interchangeable generic workers; bundling of services into standardised marketable products; externalisation of labour to service users, for instance via self-service websites; and a general casualisation of employment relationships with a "just-in-time" approach to staffing that puts the entire workforce under continual stress[1].

Control and Autonomy in Creative Work

As already noted, in contemporary capitalism, there is no single standard form of relationship between creative workers and those who pay for their work. They may be paid a salary, a fee, a commission, a royalty or a lump sum for what they produce. They may be employees, independent entrepreneurs, freelancers, partners, franchisers or day labourers. Just as there are multiple forms of contractual relationship, there are multiple forms of control. And, to make things even more complicated, these forms of control are not necessarily single or stable; several may co-exist alongside each other, and one may transmute into another. Global value chain restructuring often involves changing patterns of overall governance and, within these, shifting power relationships between different units along the chain. The impact of the changing relationships of control between these units is experienced on particular sites as a change in the style of management and the degree of coercion exerted by managers over the local workforce (Huws et al., 2009).

As Damarin has observed, "there is no clear consensus on how control operates or what autonomy looks like in post-industrial settings" (2010: 1). Empirical observation throws up a number of different distinctive types, each of which, however, is modified by a number of contextual factors including national culture and tradition, gender relations and factors specific to a particular firm or sector.

One of these types is *personal* control exercised through relationships and obligations between known individuals. This could be a paternalistic form of control exercised through family relationships,

[1]   There is no space to do more than list these here. Readers who are interested in finding out more can find a number of relevant articles in *Work Organisation*, *Labour and Globalisation*, which can be accessed online at: http://analytica.metapress.com.

for instance in the setting of a family firm, or it could be a more individual form of patronage like that of an aristocrat for a favourite artist. It might be thought that such forms of control are increasingly anachronistic, edged out on the one hand by equal opportunities recruitment and promotion policies and on the other by the impersonal nature of the standardised procedures adopted by global companies for quality-control purposes as well as by public bodies for bureaucratic reasons. Caricatured in the Hollywood "casting couch" stereotype, this form of control has been associated for many years with the entertainment industries. The increasing precariousness of labour markets in these and other "creative" industries means that it still thrives, encouraged by such practices as the provision of work experience through unpaid internships to keen young creative hopefuls. This form of control is bolstered by gift relationships, the mutual exchange of "favours" and a complicity in ignoring the formal terms of contracts. It can not only lead subordinated creative workers into situations that are highly exploitative but can also make it impossible to seek recourse if the relationship breaks down. It may also be associated with forms of sexual predation or harassment. The forms of resistance to this type of control that are open to workers are individual and informal: outmanoeuvring the boss, using personal charm or manipulation, using gossip networks to shame and blame, or simply walking away.

A second type of control is *bureaucratic*. This form is exercised through formal and explicit rules, often negotiated with trade unions. It has traditionally been the dominant form not only in the public sector but also in other large organisations, such as banks. It is associated with hierarchical structures and strict rules of entry, with many of the characteristics of an "internal labour market" (Doeringer and Piore, 1971). Here the forms of resistance open to workers include subverting the rules, operating them obstructively or obeying them only minimally (as in the form of trade union action known as "working to rule") or formally challenging them in order to negotiate improvements that are in workers' interests (for instance by reducing agreed working hours, increasing rewards, lengthening rest breaks etc.).

A third type is the sort of *Tayloristic* control anatomised by Braverman (1974). In essence, this involves a system of management (and sometimes also of payment) by results. Targets, or quotas may be set individually or for a whole team. In the latter case, simple instrumental rationality is not the only motive to work: workers' solidarity with team-mates is leveraged as an additional form of motivation. Control may be exerted overtly by a line manager. Or, more insidiously, as Burawoy (1979) observed, it may be internalised and become a form of self-exploitation by complicit workers. In an era when targets may be set by external agents (for instance the client company for outsourced services) or embedded in quality standards or the design of software systems, when much work can be monitored electronically, and when teams are provisional and geographically distributed, Tayloristic systems of control may be hard to pin down, with a high degree of internalisation of control by workers and with the source of power often invisible. The most effective form of resistance to Taylorism takes place prior to its introduction, and involves resistance to standardisation, demands for more varied work, job rotation or the introduction of various forms of job enrichment or "human-centred design" (Cooley, 1982). These have rarely been achieved outside Scandinavia. Once it has been introduced, apart from out-and-out sabotage, forms of resistance to Tayloristic management include conscious collective efforts by groups of workers to slow down the pace of work in order to gain some time and reduce stress (Beynon, 1975), negotiations over the type and level of targets or performance indicators, and the use of health and safety regulations to try to ensure that stress and speed-up do not reach inhuman levels. Many of these are difficult for creative workers to adopt, because they imply an attitude that inhibits creativity. An interesting case here is that of the Californian employees of the video game company Electronic Arts, who (despite the fact that their work involved producing the audio and video content for the company's games) had to prove that their work was *not* "creative" in

order to win a class action suit against their employer to gain a reduction in working hours (Schumacher, 2006).

A fourth type is control by the *market*. Unless what they have to offer is exceptionally sought-after, self-employed workers and independent producers have little choice but to offer what their customers want, at the price they are prepared to pay, in the face of competition which, in many industries, is increasingly global. Whilst there may be some scope for individual negotiation in some circumstances, the main form of resistance here lies in the creation of professional associations, guilds or trade unions in which suppliers combine with each other in order to try to set out basic ground rules and avoid undercutting each other in a race to the bottom in which everyone loses. Actors, writers and photographers are examples of groups that have achieved this, to some extent. However in any such grouping there is always a tension between competition and collaboration; between the urge to become a star no matter what the cost, and the compensations of solidarity. Insofar as it is successful, this kind of resistance strategy can lead to another form of control, exercised through the membership of the association, which might be called *peer* or *professional* control. In some cases, self-regulating professional bodies, such as those that represent lawyers and doctors, have succeeded in institutionalising such forms of control with sufficient success to enable them to become embedded in national or even international regulations. With forceful sanctions, including the right to exclude transgressing members from practicing their professions, many such organisations exert considerable power. Even these, however, are currently under threat of modification, if not erosion, from the commodification of knowledge (Huws, 2008; Leys, 2003).

Damarin (2010: 8) argues that within particular industries (her own case study concerned web designers) other, more diffused forms of control exist, which she refers to as "socio-technical networks consisting of relationships to persons, technologies, conventions, and typifications". This conception has some features in common with the concept of "communities of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Rather than seeing this as a separate form of control, I prefer to regard it as a striking and insightful characterisation of the complexity of control patterns in creative work in which elements of several of the various forms of control discussed above (and others I have not mentioned) may be brought together in particular configurations in specific regional, cultural and industrial contexts.

The management of creative workers is widely recognised as a challenge for capital. A recent *Economist* article put it like this:

> Managing creativity involves a series of difficult balancing acts: giving people the freedom to come up with new ideas but making sure that they operate within an overall structure, creating a powerful corporate culture but making sure that it is not too stifling. (Economist, June 17, 2010)

In practice, this may often mean the coexistence of more than one form of control, involving both sticks and carrots. But, as we have noted, each form of control evokes a different form of resistance. A defensive response that is appropriate to one form of management aggression may be futile or even counter-productive if it is adopted in relation to another. For instance in a situation where workers are obliged to work excessively long hours, invoking an official regulation that limits the working week (an appropriate response in a situation of bureaucratic control) will have little effect if workers are paid only if they meet certain targets (a Tayloristic form of control) or if they believe that they will bring disgrace on their family firm if they leave a job unfinished (a personal form of control) or if they know that their reputation depends on completing it on time (a market form of control).

When several forms of control exist alongside each other, the contradictory pressures on workers seem to be so great that they are often disempowered from adopting any effective form of resistance.

Instead, they may only be able to respond by becoming physically or mentally ill, letting their families take the strain (or abstaining from any form of adult family life altogether — see Steinko, 2006), burning out, dropping out, striking a pose of cynical anomie, indulging in isolated acts of "letting off steam" or sabotage or adopting a ruthless "devil take the hindmost" attitude that may involve trampling on the interests of fellow workers. Developing new forms of collective organisation and resistance is, of course, an alternative option but one that we found rather little evidence for in the WORKS research (but see Mosco and McKercher, 2010, for more positive evidence).

Case study research throws up many examples of such contradictions. For instance, as we have already noted, the standardisation and fragmentation, or "modularisation" (Huws, 2007) of tasks and processes which is a requisite for outsourcing or relocating them requires Tayloristic forms of management. However in order for these fragmented labour processes to be managed seamlessly over time and space and across cultural divides new "soft" skills are also required which require commitment and motivation and cannot be managed Tayloristically.

In discussing the WORKS results, Ramioul and De Vroom (2009: 41) speak of the "prisoner's dilemma" of knowledge sharing in software production. On the one hand, companies mid-way down the chain want to outsource as many activities as possible to cheaper locations in order to keep their costs down and remain competitive. On the other, they are well aware that their supplier companies, further down, want to "move up the chain" to get higher value contracts. Two companies may thus become clamped together in a relationship that is simultaneously strongly mutually dependent and intensely competitive (if company A passes on too much knowledge to company B it may find itself outbid and bypassed altogether when the contract comes up for renewal). Similar dilemmas can arise when individuals are thrust temporarily together in a team: on this project, they need each other's trust and collaboration; on the next, they may be locked in deadly competition.

D'Cruz and Noronha (2009) describe a case in an Indian call centre where the very tight targets are set by client organisations in Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Local management, whilst exerting such strict control that the authors regard it as "depersonalised bullying", nevertheless manage to escape the consequences of this, at least in the form of any direct resistance by the workforce. By blaming the external clients, appealing to their workers' loyalty to the national back office processing (BPO) industry and inculcating an idea of themselves as "professionals", these managers have succeeded in demonising trade unions, deflecting direct hostility to themselves and persuading the workforce to internalise many of the control mechanisms that push them to reach their targets. The build-up of pressure, however, is so extreme that the workers have to resort to occasional acts of sabotage as a way of "letting off steam".

Another case study illustrates the contradictions that arise when restructuring substitutes one type of management for another. Bramming, Sørensen and Hasle (2009) studied the reorganisation of the Danish tax system, whereby a number of specialised professional tax experts, who had previously been employed by different national and local government department under civil-service-type forms of management, were transformed into a large centralised pool of more or less generic tax advisors giving information to the public by telephone and email in a call-centre organisational model. Although softened by the context, which was one of active collaboration between the trade union and the management to ensure a transition that did not do too much violence to their professional norms, this was essentially a substitution of a Tayloristic form of management for a bureaucratic one. Collectively, these workers, who typically had a long-term loyalty to their employers, had built up a large body of knowledge (sometimes in part tacit) over many years. Pooling this knowledge in shared databases and introducing Tayloristic forms of control appeared to be quite successful in the short term. However it raised big questions about how the knowledge could be updated in the future. With all their working

time spent either in meetings or on the phone to customers, staff did not have a chance to update their knowledge; and the higher staff turnover and flexible work practices associated with the new form of organisation meant that new recruits were likely to be much less knowledgeable than the workers they replaced. Short-term gains for the organisation could lead to serious problems in the future.

Such examples could be multiplied. I hope I have presented enough evidence to demonstrate that the interaction between different management drives for control does not only create near-paralysing contradictions for creative workers, but also creates contradictions for management itself.

Conclusions

We can conclude that, for capital, there is a contradiction between, on the one hand, the need for a continuous (but dispensable) supply of new ideas and talent in order to fuel its accumulation process and, on the other, the need to control these processes tightly in order to maximise efficiency and profit and to appropriate the intellectual property so that companies are able to trade freely in the resulting commodities. On the side of labour, there is the urge by individual workers to do something meaningful in life, to make a mark on the world, to be recognised and appreciated and respected, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need for a subsistence income, the ability to plan ahead and some spare time to spend with loved ones. This is often expressed as a contradiction between a drive for autonomy and a search for security. These contradictions are played out against each other in a complex dance in which different forms of managerial control give rise to (or bypass) different forms of resistance by workers. New twists in the organisation of global value chains are constantly confronting workers with new shocks and surprises, even — or perhaps especially — those who have in the past regarded themselves as skilled and specialist enough to have a strong bargaining position. Meanwhile, unexpected new ideas from labour could pose new risks to management. (Who, for instance, 20 years ago, could have predicted the ways in which Indian software engineers are able to use the Internet to inform themselves of global rates of pay for the work they are doing and use this to their advantage in the global labour market?)

With multiple forms of employment relationship and multiple types of relationship to intellectual property there is no single, simple way to characterise the relationship between creative labour and capital. This very heterogeneity, and the many contradictions it gives rise to, could, however constitute as much of a strength as a weakness — to either side. Perhaps it is time for creative workers to invest some of their creativity in finding ways to exploit these contradictions.

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16. Holding Down Half the Sky: Female Knowledge Workers and Flexible Employment in China's Publishing Conglomerates<superscript>①</superscript>

Jin Cao   Graham Murdock

Drawing on surveys and in-depth interviews with educated women working in the contemporary Chinese publishing industry, this paper details the deterioration in their living and working conditions produced by the combination of conglomeration within the industry and the erosion of the state supported welfare system. It pays particular attention to the role of flexible employment practices and revised organizational hierarchies in reshaping their work to fit the contemporary market for cultural production. These innovations it is argued, have created more precarious working conditions, devalued their labour, and left them less protected and more exploited.

Female Knowledge Worker, The Reform of Publishing Conglomerationlization, Flexible Employment System

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In his famous declaration of the Communist Party's commitment to gender equality, Mao Zedong drew on the old saying that "Women hold up half the sky", a phrase that China Central Television (CCTV) borrowed for its popular talk show on women's issues. As the compere Zhang Yue recalls from her childhood however, the reality was somewhat different. She vividly remembers her mother getting "home from work when it was already dark. Then she had to prepare everything for the evening meal, meals for us the next day, she had to cook, clean, sew". Observing this relentless domestic routine convinced her that, whatever the official rhetoric, in practice "equality meant a double burden" (The International Herald Tribune, 2012). At the same time, the work unit (danwei) system, though operating as a pervasive apparatus of official monitoring, did provide access to a range of basic welfare resources together with networks of social support.

In 2011, as part of a more general reorganization, CCTV cancelled "Half the Sky". Its demise can be read as a metaphor for a more general process of retreat from a commitment to equality underwritten by the state and its replacement with an emphasis on the increased individual opportunities offered by market based enterprise. This shift is one of the central ideological motifs underpinning the movement from the state management of economic activity to the Neo-Liberal celebration of market dynamics. This is a global movement. Leading western capitalist economies have witnessed the eclipse of Keynesian polices. Many emerging economies have seen increasing disenchantment with the idea of the developmental state. But arguably, China's movement from a socialist welfare state to a market economy thoroughly re-inserted back into an international capitalist system has been the most far reaching in its impacts. To fully grasp this process, and its consequences for women, however, we need to locate it within the wider context of the structural transformation now taking place in the organization of capitalism.

Cognitive Capitalism, Knowledge Industries and Creative Production

Since Daniel Bell sketched out the contours of the "post-industrial" society then becoming visible in the advanced capitalist economies in the early 1970s (Bell 1973), commentators have expended considerable energy on trying to find a term to characterize the new capitalism. This has proved surprisingly difficult. There is no disagreement about the decline of classical industrial capitalism, constructed around the mass manufacture of tangible, material commodities. What is at issue is how to define what is replacing it. A general consensus is however emerging around two features; the growing importance of knowledge as a core resource for accumulation and the central role of digital information and communications technologies in organizing and coordinating production. The new centrality of knowledge has been vigorously, and effectively, promoted by models of the "Information Age" (Webster 2006) and reinforced in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's influential argument that we are currently witnessing a shift in emphasis from material to "immaterial" production in which "images, information, knowledge, affect, codes, and social relationships" are coming to play a pivotal role "in the capitalist valorization process" both as marketable goods and services in their own right as central inputs into other commodities, through the emphasis on styling in design for example (Hardt and Negri 2009: 132). At the same time, Manuel Castells (2000) has underlined the centraility of digital networks in organizing new forms of production, an argument pursued from within a more radical framework in Dan Schiller's analysis of "Digital Capitalism" (1999). All of these characterisations capture some key dimensions of change but arguably the most useful conception for our present purposes is "Cognitive Capitalism" which places particular emphasis on knowledge, and the knowledge industries, as a generator of value (Boutang 2012).

Definitions of the "knowledge industries" cover three distinct sectors, high technology manufacturing, knowledge-intensive services (ranging from financial dealing and real estate to

education, and all those industries that originate, process, circulate and store information) (Walby 2011: 13). This last category includes both data processing and all the enterprises classified as "cultural and creative industries", including publishing, which is our particular focus here. Here again however, definitions are both elastic and contested. A number of researchers and policy makers have promoted the term "creative industries" as a way of rebranding and repositioning sectors that were previously described as "cultural industries" (Gill and Pratt 2008: 2). This rhetorical intervention has two main aims. Firstly, it sheds the critical connotations carried over from Max Horheimer and Theodore Adorno's Marxist analysis of the "culture industry" they observed in exile in the United States in the 1940s, which they presented as a massive commercial machine for closing down expressive diversity and political dissent (2002). Secondly, by nominating "creativity" as the primary source of the impetus to innovation that fuels accumulation in the new capitalism, it repositions cultural workers as models of the new "entrepreneurial selfhood" (Ross 2008: 32). They are no longer the hired hands laboring on the production lines operated by the major media companies, portrayed by Horkheimer and Adorno. They are actors in the new theatres of creativity, continually alert to new spaces and opportunities, writing their own life scripts. This representation of "creatives" has become the apple of the policymaker's eye around the world, including in China (Keane 2013). It views the new "flexibility" of capitalist production in a relentlessly positive light, as generating multiple new opportunities. The accumulating empirical evidence however, points to the other direction, towards new sources of exploitation and oppression.

Disciplining Labour: Flexibility and Precarity

The long term shift to an information-based economy coincided with, and was accelerated by, the gathering crisis of accumulation in the advanced capitalist economies in the early 1970s. The introduction of flexible production was one way of managing this crisis. Neo-liberalism's celebration of market dynamics and disciplines offered an ideological rationale. The global adoption of this world view provided an extended arena of action.

The new flexibility operated along three main dimensions: spatialities, temporalities, and contractualities (Walby 2011: 3). Increasing global integration allowed companies to "outsource work to lower-wage countries, and opened up new labour pools through immigration" (Kalleberg 2009: 2). Within countries, emerging digital networks offered opportunities to outsource tasks to workers based at home, a strategy that had the added benefit of transferring some of the fixed costs of production (heat, light, work space, machinery) from the employer to the employee. At a temporal level, there was an increase in part-time working and an end to expectations of a life long career trajectory with clear promotional steps. But arguably, the most far reaching changes have been at the contractual level with temporary positions replacing permanent posts and a greater reliance on freelance and self-employed workers employed on time limited projects. In the United States, the leading capitalist economy, the number of stable full-time jobs declined rapidly in the wake of the economic crisis of the early 1970s and "contingency" workers, employed on limited term contracts that could be terminated at short notice if business conditions worsened, came to constitute 25% of the working population (Webster 2006: 81). Although the forms that flexibility has taken have varied across capitalist countries (see Castells 2000) their general impact on labour relations and life conditions has been intensified in many places by two other key planks in neo-liberal polices: the concerted attack on the collective bargaining power of traditional trade unionism and progressive cuts to the publicly funded welfare provision that had previously provided a social safety net. As a consequence, the responsibility for dealing with social risks has shifted "from employers and governments onto individual workers", throwing people back on their own resources, both in work and outside (ITUC 2011: 11). These

intersecting shifts have combined to render the situation of many workers more precarious. As Guy Standing has argued, "The era of flexibility is also an era of more generalized insecurity and precariousness, in which many more [workers] have been pushed into precarious forms of labour" (Standing 1999: 583).

"Precariousness (in relation to work) refers to all forms of insecure, contingent, flexible work-from illegalized, casualized and temporary employment, to homeworking, piece work and freelancing" (Gill and Pratt 2008: 3). To belong to the "precariat" is to be condemned to "living bit-and-pieces lives, in and out of short-term jobs, without a narrative of occupational development ...[to have] no control over time and no economic security" (Standing 2011: 1 – 2). As commentators have pointed out, a certain sector of the labour force, often a substantial sector, has always been in this position under capitalism. What is new is that the last two decades or so "have seen a steady march of contingency into the lower and middle levels of the professional and high-wage service industries" which were previously marked by stable employment and career progression (Ross 2008: 34). These industries include the knowledge industries where a growing weight of "ethnographic evidence on knowledge and creative industry workplaces" demonstrates "that job gratification comes at a heavy sacrificial cost" of long hours, poor pay, self-exploitation, dispensability, the increasing erosion of the boundaries between work and home, labour and leisure, paid for time and voluntary additional effort (Ross 2088: 34). Coupled with "profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about 'keeping up' in rapidly changing fields" (Gill and Pratt 2008: 14). These impacts are felt particularly acutely by women.

Gendered Experience: Feminisation and Inequality

One increasingly common way of characterizing the emerging work patterns generated by the new capitalism is to describe them as becoming more "feminized". This is another term that has acquired multiple uses however. It can refer to the growing proportion of women entering the labour force as the service industries have expanded (Morini 2007: 41), to the tendency for more women to be employed in jobs traditionally done by men, and to the rise in the number of jobs demanding qualities traditionally seen as "feminine"; empathy, fluency in personal expression, the ability to build and maintain diverse social networks, the capacity to juggle multiple tasks and demands.

At first sight this last definition might suggest that women would enjoy greater opportunities across a range of occupational sectors, including the knowledge industries, where their increasing access to higher education and their domination of humanities disciplines has boosted their command of the forms of cultural capital these sectors have traditionally required and valued. In fact, as Ursula Huws has pointed out, despite all the efforts put into developing legislation designed to ensure equality, "the gender division of labour ... shows an amazing ability to adapt, survive and re-emerge in new forms" (Huws 2012: 1). A recent study of a small new media and marketing company in the north of England offers an instructive example of these mechanisms of exclusion in action. The research "often uncovered ways in which women were expected by their male colleagues, to adopt traditionalized female roles" by for example diffusing "tense situations with clients by employing, as one manager, described it, their 'bright, sparkling and chirpy voices'" (Banks and Milestone 2011: 81). At the same time, managerial roles were monopolized by men on the grounds that familial responsibilities made it impossible for female employees to fit into the accepted pattern of long working hours. And, as Lisa McLaughlin and Helen Johnson's (2007) research with knowledge workers in Singapore and Malaysia has demonstrated, employers are more than ready to capitalize of women's domestic responsibilities to ensure compliance in the workplace and deprive them of opportunities to master and deploy the latest advances in high technology.

The relations between work and home are pivotal, since as Huws has argued, if we want to understand "the extraordinary persistence of gendered divisions of labour" we need to start with the "problematic interface between the household and the labour market" (Huws 2012: 2). This is likely to be a particular problem in cultures which maintain a strong division of labour within the family, and where women are expected to follow the example of Zhang Yue's mother and assume the major or sole responsibility for household chores and child care.

Recent research confirms the continuing impact of this expectation in Chinese companies. Although women accounted for the majority (55%) of entry level professionals, they made up only 21% of mid to senior executives and only 9% of the members of executive committees (McKinsey 2012: 4). When asked what they thought were the biggest barriers to gender diversity within senior management, the most frequently given reason (by 40% of respondents) was the "double burden syndrome" of women having to balance work and domestic responsibilities. The next two most often mentioned reasons, women's difficulties in meeting the demands of an "anytime, anywhere" performance model (29%) and lack of public child care polices (26%) followed on directly from this. Nor does this situation look likely to change significantly in the immediate or near future. When asked how important gender equality was in their strategic agenda, almost three quarters (73%) of the Chinese companies asked, said it was not one of their top ten priorities (op. cit. : 6).

This evidence strongly suggests that despite the pervasive rhetoric of "reform" and "modernisation" the new Chinese capitalism is lowering rather than supporting "half the sky". To investigate how this process is working itself out in one of the key knowledge industries, this paper presents the results of research with women working in two major publishing companies in Shanghai. As we will see, our respondents found themselves to be simultaneously both less secure and more exploited as a result of recent changes. But before we explore their experiences in detail it is necessary to locate them within the wider pattern of structural and organizational changes that have transformed the publishing sector.

Corporate Consolidation: Conglomeration and Commodification

Much recent discussion surrounding the knowledge industries, particularly the promotional rhetoric associated with the idea of "creative industries", has tended to emphasize the central role of small and medium sized enterprises as sources of innovation together with the increasing value of the unpaid labour of consumers and users in modifying existing products and co-producing new ones. These accounts are underpinned by a central assertion that control over cultural production is moving from the closed vertical hierarchies commanded by major companies to horizontal and open networks. This view conveniently forgets to mention that alongside the expansion of digital networks the last two decades have seen an unprecedented consolidation of cultural control in the hands of a steadily declining number of mega corporations. All of these companies are conglomerates with interests across the full range of major media sectors gathered together under a single corporate umbrella in a concerted search for economies of scale and increased global competitiveness, and a desire to capitalize on media convergence and maximize the synergies and links between their different divisions (Fitzgerald 2012: xv). Publishing is integral to this process. As John Thompson points out in his comprehensive analysis of the situation in the major western economies, conglomeration is one of the major transformative processes currently restructuring the industry (Thompson: 2010). Independent publishers are being incorporated into larger combines and major houses are striking alliances with former competitors. The merger, in October 2012, between the premier English paperback firm, Penguin Books, and the leading European based publisher, Random House, is the latest, and arguably the most significant, exemplar of this trend. Not only will the combined enterprise be the largest publisher in the English

language market, its co-owners, Pearson and Bertelsmann, are both themselves major media conglomerates. Pearson is the leading force in educational publishing and owns the world's leading financial newspaper, *The Financial Times*. Bertelsmann is a major player in commercial broadcasting in Europe, owns one of the world's leading music companies, and has a very successful portfolio of popular magazines and newspapers.

It is in the context of this concerted consolidation of corporate power that we need to see the increasing emphasis on "flexibility". As Celia and John Stanworth's (1997) research in the United Kingdom demonstrates, faced with intensified competition, publishers have moved to protect profits by reducing costs. And since labour costs are a major contributor to overall costs, workers in the industry have been in the front line of restructuring. Stanworth's study reveals a major movement in patterns of employment, away from secure, tenured, positions located "in-house", to a reliance on self-employed "freelance" editorial staff working from home. This "outsourcing" strategy delivers two major economic benefits to the employer. It allows them to move from fixed salaries to piecework rates, paying only for tasks completed and it transfers all the social costs of production (state insurance, pensions, holiday pay, maternity leave) from the company to the individual employee. From the worker's point of view however, the company's gains are experienced overwhelmingly as losses. They are subjected to the stress caused by the uncertainties introduced into their calculations of future income. These calculations become more salient faced with cuts in public expenditure on social and welfare provision and the need to buy services, such as health care and nursery schooling, that were previously funded collectively, on the open market. The secure status attached to their former identity as valued professional employees is replaced by the socially ambiguous identity of precarious worker. And, since they are no longer working within an organizational structure with clearly demarcated promotion paths, their opportunities to progress in their careers are blocked and they find themselves subsisting by repeatedly undertaking the same, limited, range of tasks.

Stanworth's evidence reveals a clear pattern in which the extension of corporate reach, through strategies of conglomeration, is accompanied by a consolidation of executive power at the top of corporations, and the pursuit of strategies, led by flexible employment practices, designed to boosting the relative share of surpluses allocated to profits as against wages. The result is the progressive proletarianisation of professional knowledge workers. As their study also shows, the majority of the editors (75%) caught up in the process were women and the great majority of those (82%) had higher educational qualifications. Over a quarter (27%) had a master's degree. We are talking then about the proletarianisation of an educated, female, elite. But how far is this process reproduced in the Chinese publishing industry and what forms is it taking?

Conglomeration in Chinese Publishing

"Several years before China's entry into the World Trade Organisation ... The party-state took the initiative to absorb the perceived forces of globalization by organizing domestic media conglomerates, which were made 'bigger and stronger' to pre-empt the anticipated foreign competition" (Lee, He and Huang 2006: 584 - 585). The first of these conglomerates, based around the country's most successful party newspaper, the *Guangzhou Daily*, was launched in January 1996. These new enterprises served the interests of both media managers and party authorities. They gave managers a bigger playing field on which to pursue their commercial and political ambitions while offering "Party and government authorities a means to enhance press control [and] strengthen party organs " (Zhao 2000: 16). Whether the drive to conglomeration has been effective in its stated aim of enhancing the international competitiveness of the leading Chinese media enterprises is arguable but there is general agreement that it has helped to consolidate the state's administrative and ideological

control (Lee et al. 2006: 28 - 29). Since books and magazines were not seen as such central channels of party communication and public opinion formation as newspapers and broadcasting the publishing industry was less immediately central to this political push. It was also less strategic economically since compared to other sectors it was not a major center of profit generation. At the same time, publishing conglomerates were expected to be profitable and as we shall see, the new cost and administrative structures introduced to pursue this goal, coupled with the introduction of flexible employment, has had the effect of consolidating political control. The new systems were also underpinned by a widespread view that publishing was both inefficient and lagging behind.

The new employment system of old policies for old staff and new policies for new staff predates conglomeration. It was first implemented in 1986 and applied to all fields by 1995. During this transition period publishing houses began to be run in entrepreneurial ways but also retained the flexibility of deploying their established identities as cultural institutions. Systems for evaluating editors' performance were designed and gradually implemented but because the market reforms in housing and health care had not yet been introduced, their status as employees of cultural institutions still guaranteed them the stable incomes and access to welfare benefits that delivered a secure and reasonable standard of living. The commodification of welfare began in the 1990s. A whole range of services that used to be guaranteed and provided by the state including, apartment allocation, medical clinics, health insurance, educational provision, and canteens, were marketised through a series of systematic reforms so that employees were required to pay individuals for services previously provided on a collective basis. This progressive removal of welfare support coincided with the move towards conglomeration in publishing, launched by the Press and Publication Administration in 1998. As a consequence, editors lost their identity as professional cultural practitioners and intellectuals and became employees of commercial enterprises subject to the requirements of managers in pursuit of profit maximization. For almost all new entrants to the industry this meant intensified work loads, permanent insecurity of employment, and low pay relative to the rising costs of living.

The study reported here was conducted in two publishing groups, both based in Shanghai; [1] the city's largest publishing conglomerate, the Shanghai Century Publishing Group and the major educational publisher in the city.

Century, launched in February 1999, was the first publishing conglomerate authorized in China by the Central Propaganda Department and Press and Publication Administration. In November 2005, it became a joint stock company and in 2011 it merged with another major Shanghai publishing group, the Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing Group. It now owns or controls more than forty businesses including twenty-nine book publishing houses, seventy-two journals, eight newspapers, together with interests in audio-visual and digital publishing, a website, and an auction house. The second research site, is attached to the Shanghai Education Commission and publishes magazines, newspapers and materials aimed at students and teachers in the city's elementary and secondary schools. They include: Juvenile Daily, Shanghai Junior School Student Newspaper, Talent and Career, Shanghai Kids, Contemporary Education Review. Teach and Learn Computers, and Shanghai Education. Although its range of operations is less extensive than Century's its internal administrative structure and employment

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[1]　For example, statistics in 2009 showed that the number of professional employees (those who had junior/medium/advanced titles, excluding Party administrators and sales persons) in Shanghai's publishing houses was 2043, among which 1032 were female. The proportion of young editors is growing. The number of journalism practitioners was 4983, among which 2363 were women; the number of magazine practitioners was 4941, among which 2371 were women. (Statistics comes from the surveys in May, 2009, provided by Shanghai Press and Publication Bureau.)

practices conform to the conglomerate model, making it a conglomerate in everything but name.

The working conditions of the women employed in these two conglomerates have been reshaped in fundamental ways by two major organizational shifts; the transfer of operating costs from the state to the company, and the restructuring of administrative power.

Before the reforms, individual publishing houses could recoup their administrative costs from the Press and Publication Bureau operated by the state government. Once their enterprise was absorbed into a conglomerate however, they were called up to contribute to the administrative and headquarters costs of the new combine, which was itself required to be self-supporting and profit generating. Administrative costs have increased. There are the costs of maintaining a new head office plus the costs entailed in liaising with the previously separate companies now incorporated into the new system as branches or affiliates. The need to cover the salaries paid to the new strata of administrators at section and department level and the senior administrators promoted to bureau or vice-bureau level placed a new emphasis on the profits generated by the editorial staff responsible for producing the informational and cultural commodities the conglomerate sells. But they do not have control over the costs of production or distribution. Editors generate and edit texts, they do control the costs of plating and printing. This is the preserve of the Director of the publishing section, one of the most prestigious positions in a publishing house, and internal regulations often dissuade editors from paying close attention to this economically sensitive area, especially to the possible personal or relational connections between the Director and the companies commissioned to do the work. At the other end of the production chain, sale-or-return deals with book sellers allow shops to return any unsold stock to the publisher. These administrative arrangements have combined to place profit maximization at the heart of corporate strategy and to install it as the primary criterion for evaluating editors' performance and determining their rewards.

For the employers "point of view, linking editors" pay to "performance", defined primarily in terms of their ability to generate profits, coupled with the introduction of flexible employment around limited term contracts, is necessary adaptations to the new market conditions. For editors however, these practices have multiple negative consequences. They generate high and permanent levels of economic insecurity. They introduce new forms of discrimination. And they erode editors' professional commitment to quality and diversity as they see the relentless pursuit of profits depressing overall publishing standards and any surplus ISBN numbers allocated to the publishing house being sold to the highest bidder.

The impact of these changes in employment conditions has been exacerbated by two general shifts generated by the process of economic reform; the erosion of the state welfare system and the rise of a consumerist ethos that encourages people to measure their success, and to signal it to others, through the purchases they make in the marketplace.

Retrieving Women's Lived Experience

The last three decades have seen a rapid growth of research on the restructuring of the Chinese economy following successive waves of reform together with increasing attention to the recomposition of the class structure and the emergence of new patterns of inequality (See Lee 1999; Shen 2006). Much of the work on the new industrial formation has focused on institutional change. Rather less has addressed changes in the labour process in any detail. Research on class has tended to foreground the experience of industrial workers and rural migrants, or to focus on the new elites, and to pay relatively scant attention to the changes in the working lives of professional women and knowledge workers. As Zhang (2000) has argued, while increasing rates of female participation in higher education since the 1980s have given more women the opportunity to enter knowledge based occupations, the adoption of

market driven models of enterprise and the introduction of flexible labour has made their conditions of work more insecure, stressful, and reduced their professional status and career opportunities.

The reform of the publishing industry has attracted a considerable amount of debate and research (see eg Cao and Han 2008) but most of this work has focused on structural changes such as questions of ownership, patterns of competition, digital publishing, and changes in the role of government. Much less attention has been paid to the experience of workers living with and through these changes. The study reported here sets out addressing this gap through a detailed study of the lived experience of women working as editors in the two publishing houses selected as research sites. Information was collected from participants in two ways.

Firstly, a sample of 50 editors in each of the two publishing houses was asked to complete a questionnaire survey in May 2009. The first author's previous experience in publishing and extensive continuing contacts in the industry resulted in a 100% response rate. The respondents from Century were well educated, with the majority (56%) having a bachelor or associate qualification and 44% having master degree. They were also predominantly young, with 70% being under 40. The general educational level of editors working in the educational publishing house was higher with 90% having a bachelor or associate degree (though only 10% has a masters degree) but the age distribution was flatter, with a third (32%) under 40. The replies to the questionnaire offer a way into exploring how changes in the organization of publishing are reordering the life chances, expectations, and everyday experiences of educated women, many of them in the early stages of their working lives, in one major sites of professional cultural practice.

To gain a more detailed picture of the linkages between biography and history, structural change and lived experience, however, it is necessary to go beyond questionnaire data and collect detailed first hand accounts. The survey was therefore complemented with in-depth interviews with twenty female editors. We were particularly interested in the contrasted experiences of "established" employees who had worked in the industry before conglomeration and "newcomers" who had joined after the reforms were in process. And also in the possible variations in perspectives of employees differently situated in the administrative hierarchy. Five interviewees were directors in editorial departments (a medium level administrative position). Five were senior editors who had worked for the same publishing house since they graduated from college in the 1980s. Ten were editors who had entered the publishing industry after 2000 once the conglomerate reforms were in process, directly on finishing their masters degrees.

In the sections that follow we drawn on both the interviews and the questionnaires to detail the new dynamics of exploitation that have emerged in the publishing industry since conglomeration, paying particular attention to four key issues; inequality; discrimination; intensification of work; and blocked career mobility.

Inequalities: Perpetuating Privilege

Although conglomerates are products of the market economy, within the social and political context of contemporary China they function to reproduce existing patterns of privilege. Because the process has been largely "fostered by administrative fiat" (Zhao 2000: 585), those with political power have often been the first to gain from reforms. The publishing industry is no exception. A large number of senior administrators used to be bureau-level cadres in publishing houses. Once they shed their former professional identities as cadres of cultural institutions and became managers or presidents of commercial conglomerates they could lay claim to salaries commensurate with those paid to managers in other economic sectors together with appropriate packages of fringe benefits such as reimbursable health insurance. As a result, the market system is in many situations, not only perpetuating old inequalities in redistribution, it is developing and maturing them (Bian and Luo 1996:

739 – 758). To maintain their own position and privileges managers need to redirect the flow of corporate income, even more concertedly, away from their employees and since they control the assets of the conglomerates they run, and determine their strategies and priorities, they have the power to decide how employment contracts will be organized and how workers' pay will be determined. Not all employees are equal however. There is a clear division between "established" staff and "newcomers".

Almost all employees joining the publishing industry since 2000, have been put on short-term contracts of between one and three years, with no guarantee of continued employment after these terms expire. Almost two thirds (62%) of those working for Century are on annual contracts and 8% are one or two year arrangements. The situation in the educational publishing house is more diverse with 30% of employees being on one to three year contracts. In both publishing houses however, 30% of survey respondents were employed under the "old" policies in operation before the reforms. This status delivers substantial benefits. Not only did retaining their classification as employees of public institutions enable them to benefit from the welfare services provided by local government, when they reached retiring age they could apply to continue in employment under the same conditions. In contrast, "newcomers" employed under the new policies faced the permanent insecurity generated by flexible employment. Whereas "established" employees were entitled to financial benefits from either the state or the local municipality, providing both a measure of continuity and a basic safety net, the income of "newcomers" depended entirely on the level of profits generated by the conglomerate and the decisions made about their allocation and was therefore subject to continuous insecurity.

In addition to this formalised division in conditions of employment, a number of our interviewees believed that they were subject to an informal system of discrimination, under which "established " workers who could claim the status of public employees were paid more than "newcomers" with the same qualifications.

Alongside the material and identity divisions between old and new staff, both publishing conglomerates we studied separated editorial staff into planning editors, who commissioned work, and text editors who prepared submitted text for printing and publication. Almost a third (22.5%) of survey respondents from Century were planning editors, 37.5% were text editors, and 40% acted as both. In the educational publishing house 28% were on the planning side, 26% were text editors, 16% did both, and 30% did other jobs. Although the planning editors were paid more they reported higher levels of work related stress. Over a third (35.2%) of those at Century felt that they were facing increasingly intensified competition for titles that would sell well and almost a quarter (24.1%) said that lack of adequate personnel resources was preventing them from finding enough viable manuscripts. Editors at the educational publishing house were operating under the more stable market conditions provided by their privileged access to the school system, but this did not necessarily guarantee job satisfaction. Almost a quarter (23.2%) complained that it was difficult to get suitable writers and personnel and just over a fifth (21.7%) believed that the material they produced was mediocre.

What emerges from the surveys and interviews is a persistent pattern of inequalities in access to rewards, often based on positions and privileges carried over from the pre-conglomeration era, coupled with increasing levels of stress and dissatisfaction among editorial staff and a widespread perception of unequal treatment.

Discriminations: Personalising Pay

Much of this sense of injustice centered on the levels of pay agreed for editorial staff and the way these payments were calculated.

By the end of 2007 Century's profits had increased 12.7% on the year before and the turnover from books was 111.90% of its annual plan (Annual Report 2008) However, as our respondents

pointed out, editorial salaries had not increased by anywhere near these levels. Far from enjoying what they considered a fair share of the profits which they felt they were largely responsible for generating, they saw the lion's share of the gains being directed elsewhere. In interview, four senior editors claimed that their salaries had not been raised in eight years. Further, there was an almost unanimous perception among our survey respondents (shared by 97.6%), that they were paid less than comparable workers in other major centres: Beijing and Nanjing. Their sense of being discriminated against was reinforced by the way that bonus payments were allocated.

The system of annual performance reviews determines bonuses according to the profits employees are perceived to have generated. But as we noted earlier, the returns from publications are affected by a range of factors, such as the costs of printing and marketing, over which the editorial staff have no control. Yet, as they frequently complained, if a book fails to sell its lack of success tended to be blamed on their poor choices and lack of business acumen and used as a pretext for reducing their bonuses. In contrast, to the predominantly female labour force of the editorial divisions, the publishing section is staffed mainly by men. Not only are their bonuses substantial and seldom denied but they enjoy expenses paid trips to sell the books the editorial staff produce. Not surprisingly, there is a palpable sense of being unfairly exploited. This sense was reinforced by a widespread perception that the published criteria for calculating bonuses were subject to subversion by informal agreements and personalization. This lack of consistency and transparency, and the resulting sense of discrimination, was the major issue that emerged from our research.

According to the regulations, editorial bonuses are calculated on the basis of net profits: gross profits minus annual costs and a 15% contribution to administrative fees. But from the survey returns and interviews it was clear that a number of female editors believed that in practice covert practices by administrators played a major role. A third (33.3%) argued that the process was not transparent. Almost a quarter (23.8%) claimed that their bonuses were linked to their qualifications rather than the profits they generated. There were widespread suspicions that decisions were made on personal rather than procedural grounds, with editors who enjoyed good relations with their administrators not needing to worry about how well they worked while those with less positive relations might find themselves receiving an adverse decision. There were rumors that this was the reason that two interview participants, both well known in the industry for editing best-sellers, had not received their due bonuses. There were anxieties too over the criteria that were not included. Over a quarter of survey respondents (28.6%) complained that the calculations took no account of the extra effort of working on high quality and distinctive academic projects as against routine generic productions. The feeling that quantity was given priority over quality was particularly prevalent in the educational publishing house where 22.9% expressed this opinion. These complaints were underpinned by a more general perception that rather than solving the inefficiencies it was brought in to address, conglomeration had generated a series of new problems.

Just over half of our respondents (51.1%) claimed that the conglomerate was not operating in accordance with regulations. 29.8% of editors working for the conglomerate and 29.2% of those at the educational publisher believed that the reforms had failed to reorganize resources efficiently and 25% thought that they had not established a properly regulated system governed by market disciplines. A further 16.7% complained that the organization was top heavy with too many administrators and too few front line staff. Overall, almost two thirds (63.3%) of survey participants though that conglomeration and its associated reforms represented the commercialization of administrative orders rather than a fully operational market system. Behind the corporate facade they saw the levers of power being pulled by the same people as before, but now under pressure to deliver maximum profits, a pressure that they handed on down the line to the editorial staff while ensuring that their own

positions and privileges were protected. Many of our respondents experienced this as a triple loss: of economic security, of social status, and of an animating vocation. Most of the participants in the study had seen their position as editors changing from being cultural employees of public institutions to becoming workers in commercial enterprises. They were obliged to sign flexible (one to three year) contracts that placed them in an insecure and precarious position within the labour market, eroded their status as producers of cultural materials, and foregrounded their role as generators of corporate profits, and devalued their commitment to publishing material with a social and cultural value. Nor did the pressures generated by these shifts stop when they left the workplace. On the contrary, they permeated and shaped their life outside.

Intensification: Work/Life Imbalances

The majority of our respondents were married, 74% in the conglomerate and 82% in the educational publishing house, and a substantial minority, 38% in both research sites, had at least one child. More than 90% continued to assume primary responsibility for housework and over half were unwilling or unable to hire part-time help in order to reduce household expenditure. At the same time, they were expected to bring work home. This was a necessity rather than a choice since in an effort to cut production costs and shorten production schedules employers were either hiring fewer proofreaders or cutting the in-house proofreading section altogether. As a consequence, almost all (94.9%) of survey respondents from the publishing conglomerate undertook unpaid overtime at home, 41.9% for an average of 6 hours a week, 19.4% for between 11 and 20 hours, and a further 19.4% for more than 21 hours. This pattern was less prevalent at the educational publisher since editors had fewer books to edit and the magazines they were responsible for had fixed production cycles. Even so two thirds (66%) said they brought work home.

These figures suggest that our respondents are prototypical representatives of the emerging "socialised worker" "bringing into being a new epoch in which [the workplace] is increasingly disseminated out into *society as a whole*" (Gill and Pratt 2008: 6) [italics in the original]. For many of the female editors in this study, working in the "social factory" imposes a double burden. They are expected to be good wives and mothers and accept responsibility for nurturing their husbands and children while, at the same time, being compelled to meet the expectations of their employers. As a consequence, the dictates of production and reproduction are welded together in a particularly powerful combination that determines the organization of daily activities and subjects them to stringent time disciplines. As Catherine McKercher (2008) has noted, the increasing blurring of the boundary between the workplace and household has rendered the idea of home as a refuge and site of leisure and recuperation increasingly obsolete. Women are more than ever "on call", expected to respond to the demands of others with little or no time to themselves.

Given their domestic responsibilities, female editors cannot easily forego opportunities to increase their income, and since their ability to demonstrate efficiency plays a major role in assessing their performance they are under continual pressure to complete tasks in the shortest possible time. To meet his expectation they must bring work home. In the process, they may start to actively adopt market dictates and internalize the emphasis on efficiency promoted by the commercial ideology that underpins the contemporary publishing industry.

This market ideology finds its other major point of entry into their everyday lives through the promotion of consumerism, the presentation of consumption as the primary sphere of personal expression and self-realization and the most effective way of communicating your tastes, achievements, and aspirations to others. As Ursula Huws has argued however, the logic of domestic consumption creates work for women rather than liberating them from it (Huws 2003). While there is no doubt that

the application of electrification and natural gas to domestic appliances such as cookers and refrigerators has reduced or abolished a range of time consuming chores, such as washing by hand and cleaning out wood or coal fires, it has also created new forms of work. These new machines impose their own time and motion regimes and expectations of performance which may actually increase the amount of time spent on domestic tasks. Added to which, domestic labour, whatever form it takes, remains a form of unpaid work for women. It is regarded as a gift, given out of love and regard, but it is organized through a thoroughly commodified system. This double immersion in the capitalist market, at work and at home, has been reinforced by the marketization of welfare provision.

Editors joining the publishing industry between the 1950s and 1998, before the move towards conglomeration, had secure full-time jobs and access to welfare benefits, in key areas such as health and housing, guaranteed by a socialist system. The reforms have dealt a double blow to their economic situation. On the one hand, as we noted earlier, in pursuit of their primary goals of protecting market share and maximizing profits by cutting costs, the new conglomerates have driven down editors pay by ending job security and agreed payments and introducing "flexibility" into the calculation of both salaries and bonuses. By linking renumeration to performance, as measured by profit generation, the risks attached to production have been transferred from the corporation to the editors. At the same time, the marketization of the welfare system requires them to pay the market price for goods and services that were previously heavily subsidized. This shift from collective provision to personal purchase has particularly far reaching consequences in the area of housing, which for most households is the largest commitment they will make. This problem is exacerbated in the case of Shanghai since as a major business hub and primary destination for inward migration the city's housing market is subject to rapid inflation and property bubbles.

The great majority of the female editors in the publishing conglomerate who participated in the survey received neither welfare-oriented housing distribution (83.3%) nor housing subsidy (81.8%) forcing them onto the open market. Over a third (36.2%) could not afford to buy into the market for privatized apartments. Almost two thirds (63.8%) had managed to enter the market but the majority (53.5%) had had to take out a loan to do so and repayments represented a substantial portion of their monthly income. Although almost two thirds (64%) of the editors in educational publishing conglomerate received housing subsidy the great majority (88%) remained outside the old welfare-oriented housing system and almost a half (46%) reported that they experienced pressure from the need to keep up with loan repayments.

According the Rules and Regulations issued by the educational publishing house, newly employed editors were eligible to receive a monthly salary of 2,500 rmb providing they completed their assigned tasks giving them an income of 30,000 rmb (although this figure might also include a catering allowance and some bonus payments). More established employees were paid more, but overall a large segment of survey respondents gave their annual earnings as between 30,000 and 50,000 rmb. Buying an apartment could take a substantial amount of this sum in loan repayments. Less than a third (29.4%) reported paying less than 2000 rmb a month, and 41.2% said they were payed between 2,000 and 3,000 rmb, a figure that put an apartment beyond the reach of lower paid workers and imposed a heavy burden even on those towards the top end of the salary scale. Not surprisingly, given these sums, the majority of respondents said they needed a substantial increase in their monthly pay, to between 80,000 and 100,000 rmb, to maintain a decent standard of living.

In addition to the costs incurred in entering the housing market, purchasing an apartment locks workers even more securely into the consumer system since the spaces apartments provide become not simply sites for personal and family activity but theatrical stages on which to demonstrate social distinction through the objects and gadgets on display to visitors. The idea that branded commodities

offer a language without words which everyone speaks and which communicates powerful and unambiguous messages about who one is and how one wishes to be seen is one of the central assertions of consumerist ideology. Under this regime domestic space becomes an extension of promotional culture.

This commodification of everyday life, coupled with the pressures of having to retain a job and an income, has major consequences for life choices and personal relationships. In interview, several planning editors admitted that they hesitated to have a child in order not to lose their job, and some married editors reported that they found it increasingly difficult to balance work demands and family obligations since business trips and social networking significantly eroded the time they were able to spend caring for and playing with their children.

Decisions to hold off having a child are part of a wider pattern on blocked mobility which operates most forcefully in the restrictions imposed on the career paths of many of our respondents.

Immobility: Blocked Careers

Despite suspicions reported by our participants, that publishing conglomerates were more reluctant to hire female editors because they assumed that they would eventually want to have a child and take maternity leave, reducing the continuity and efficiency of production, editing remains an overwhelmingly feminized occupation. But one subjected to steadily intensified competition.

The roll-out of conglomeration has coincided with accelerating inward migration to Shanghai. The great majority of our respondents (80%) who had entered the industry since the start of the reform process in 1998 were new arrivals to the city without a permanently registered household. Until the rules changed in 2006, these incomers were willing to tolerate low wages and poor promotion prospects in return for the chance to obtain permanent resident status.

Intensified competition for jobs combines with flexible employment conditions scaling down editors' ambitions. Their priority is to keep their job and maintain their income. They progressively abandon their cultural ambitions, seeing little chance of getting projects that deal with areas and issues that are no immediately saleable off the ground in a context where decisions are driven by commercial calculation. They withdraw from engagement with social issues and become politically indifferent and depoliticized with little interest in changing the present situation, either inside the workplace or outside. These tendencies are particularly marked among older editors who have internalized the rules of the corporate game and employed this knowledge to maintain the good relations with management that delivers useful resources. This progressive privatization of consciousness is reinforced by the relative weaknesses of collective bargaining structures. Lee's (1999) study of state owned enterprises revealed a clear pattern in which the primacy given to production and economic efficiency had given managers priority over both the chair of the labour union and the Party secretary and where the resources available to union negotiators were in the front line of cuts if the enterprise encountered financial difficulties. A similar situation obtains in the publishing industry. Both the labour union and women's professional organisations, led by the Shanghai Women's Editorial Association, have been effectively depowered in the process of reform and are no longer powerful enough to struggle for significant changes to the rights and benefits of editorial staff. They are reduced to a mediating role. The conglomerate's management might ask the chair of the labour union or the director of the women workers' organization to reconcile conflicts or repair hurt feelings but they are unable to bargain effectively for changes to unfair practices. Not surprisingly, participants in the study placed little faith in these agencies' ability to defend or advance their rights. Almost two thirds (62%) of editors working for the educational publishing house and over half (57. 7%) of those working for the conglomerate had never received help from them.

When asked why they did not leave the industry and look for alternative employment, the editors we interviewed unanimously replied "What else can I do?" Given a labour market that is already almost saturated, with a continual stream of new migrants adding to the pressure on positions, they see their opportunities to move to another job reduced to zero. Nor, as we have seen, are there many chances to progress within the internal structures created by their present employers. The results of this present study strongly suggest that flexibility, which its advocates celebrate as a way of freeing up labour and making it more mobile, has exactly the opposite effect, confining workers to positions of permanent immobility. While employers have the "flexibility" to select employees from a continuously topped up pool of professional labour, the pressures produced by short term contracts and performance reviews relegate editorial workers to a life of permanent insecurity and precarity in which holding on to a position, however poorly paid, becomes the overriding priority. Under a socialist planned economy occupational mobility is blocked by the state directed allocation of labor to particular units (Lin and Bian 2002). Market economies promise to fee labor up and support maximum mobility, both between positions and within organisations, as workers sell their skills to secure advancement. For the female editors in this study this was an empty promise. The new regime of flexibility had fixed them in position as securely as the old system.

Conclusion: The Making of a Professionalized Proletariat

All the available evidence confirms that China's market led modernization has generated steadily increasing inequalities in income distribution (see eg Riskin, Renwei and Shi 2001; Davis and Wang 2009). The Gini coefficient, which measures disparities in household income on a continuum ranging for 0 for perfect equality to 1 for perfect inequality, is the most widely used index of this process. The larger the figure the more unequal the society. In 1984, at the beginning of the reform process, the China's Gini coefficient was 0.277 towards the more egalitarian end of the scale. By 2012 it had risen to 0.474 (World Bank 2013). In this paper we have chosen to follow this general process through into the everyday lives of a group that has been relatively neglected in the available research literature on changing employment and reward structures: educated women working in the publishing industry. As Catherine McKercher and Vincent Mosco (2007) have argued however, to fully understand the transformation in their situation we need to locate their working and domestic lives within a network of cross cutting modalities of power in which class and gender intersect to produce and reproduce a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing structure of domination.

The female editors who participated in this study were caught in a contradictory movement. On the one hand, the changes introduced by modernization should have presented them with greater opportunities. The partial relaxation of tight political control generated by marketization has opened space both for the promotion of a wider diversity of production within the cultural industries and for the development of professional ideologies that allow for more autonomy in the definition of occupational practices and values (Luo et al 2004: 291). The cultural sectors have been reclassified as pillar industries and nominated as central planks in the effort to shift the economy from a reliance on routine assembly to a base in innovation; from "made in china" to "created in china". Expanded access to higher education for women has enabled them to acquire the cultural capital that allows them to compete effectively for professional jobs within the cultural industries. At the same time, the restructuring of these industries as market oriented enterprises has created a new source of domination and cultural closure. Economic imperatives may have displaced traditional political control but, as we have argued, in the case of the female editors we studies, the logic of profit maximization imposes its own constraints and exclusions. As a consequence, the possibilities for developing professional skills, improving editorial diversity and quality, and promoting the free movement of labour, promised by the

proponents of marketization, have been comprehensively undermined, firstly by attempts to minimize risks by concentrating on products with a proven track record of success in the market place, and secondly by the drive to reduce labour costs by imposing flexible work contracts and payment by results. This new mode of exploitation operates to proletarianise the professional practice of the female editors who participated in this study. Under the old socialist system they had life-time employment, access to a range of collectively provided welfare benefits, and professional status as members of a cultural institution. Under the new system their lives are marked by chronic insecurity, intensified work demands, low pay and uncertain additional payments, blocked mobility, the need to purchase key resources and services on the open market, and a worsening work-life balance.

This negative consequences of this shift in their class position is compounded by the persistence of patriarchal gender relations in both the workplace and the domestic sphere. While the great majority of editorial staff are women almost all the senior managers and directors of publishing in the two research sites are men. Many of these new executives were formerly party cadres who have made the transition to captains of enterprise carrying old habits of unchallenged authority with them. They see their primary task as ensuring that corporate goals and targets are met. Workers are no longer comrades engaged in a shared endeavor. They are moveable and dispensable units of labour. At the same time, as we have seen, meeting targets means that editors frequently have to take work home while continuing to take primary responsibility for maintaining the household- shopping, cooking cleaning- and attending to the emotional needs of their husbands and children. They are required to play a range of roles in the course of their daily lives. They are low paid workers whose income is essential to maintaining the household's standard of living and they are wives, housekeepers, and child minders (see Eisenstein 1998). But in all these roles their wishes and desires generally take second place to the requirements and demands of the men in their lives whether managers, husbands or partners.

Nor does this double domination look likely to decline significantly in the near future, for two reasons. Firstly, since 2007, the Press and Publication Bureau has been encouraging private capital to invest in the publishing industry in an effort to broaden and diversify the sector's funding resources. The entry of investors looking for positive returns will further strengthen the shifts already installed by conglomeration. It is not difficult to imagine that editors' workloads will become even heavier and more intensified while maintaining the employers flexibility to let workers go at the end of the limited term contracts and to continue linking payment to profit outcomes. Secondly, China has responded to shrinking consumer markets in Europe and North America caused by the continuing economic crisis by moving to stimulate domestic demand. This extension of the consumer system will reinforce the pressure on women to move from maintaining living standards to developing life styles based around commodity choices that are presented as signals of their tastes and aspirations. Making this transition will tie female knowledge workers even more securely to poor conditions of work on the condition that they generate an income, while revaluing consumption as a site of precisely those capacities for personal choice and expression that the pressure to maximise profits has removed from the workplace.

Surveying the results of this present research, we are drawn inevitably to the conclusion that far from delivering expanded opportunities and enhanced professional status and mobility, the re-composition of class relations produced by conglomeration and marketization has intersected with the persistence of patriarchy to create new forms of domination rooted in a permanent state of insecurity. How generalizeable these dynamics are to other cultural and service industries is a question that merits sustained further research. But for the majority of the female knowledge workers who participated in the present study there is no doubt that the social cost of China's market driven modernization has been to hold down "half the sky".

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17. Network Labour and Non-elite Knowledge Workers in China

Jack Linchuan Qiu

This paper offers a preliminary analysis of Chinese non-elite knowledge workers, their use of information technologies as tools of employment as well as worker organisation, and the emergent process of network labour formation. It opens by presenting a conceptual framework for understanding non-elite knowledge workers, their social contexts, types, and the interrelationships among these types, paying special attention to new types of digital work (call centres, SMS authoring, and online game gold farming), their process of emergence and patterns of spatial distribution. It then sketches out the main linkages between grassroots workers' groups in mainland China and labour organisations outside showing that, even though bottom-up transnational labour organisation is still quite limited at the present stage, informal networking through new digital tools is full of potential. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for a new informational politics.

Introduction

Knowledge work in China is an understudied topic deserving more attention from both academic scholars and social movement analysts. Too often China is seen as only the "workshop of the world" in the material sense, and Chinese workers as only obedient "cheap labour" under capitalist exploitation. The goal of this article is to transcend such simplistic stereotypes by offering more realistic accounts of what is actually going on.

Before delving into descriptive accounts, it is important to define a few key terms to enable us to understand the Chinese reality. These include "knowledge workers" (*zhishi gongren*), "network labour" (*wangluo laogong*), "information have-less" (*xinxi zhongxia jieceng*) and "grey-collar" (*huiling*). Their interrelationships are roughly visualised in Figure 1. While this figure presents an overall picture, the emphasis of this paper is on the lower part of the labour hierarchy at stake, i.e., non-elite knowledge workers.

In Chinese labour discussions, "knowledge workers" (*zhishi gongren*) usually refers to educated employees who are equipped with a certain level of specialised information or a particular set of technical skills. They are embedded in a vertical system that includes, on the one hand, high-end knowledge workers who receive a higher salary and more social prestige, such as teachers and engineers, and, on the other hand, non-elite knowledge workers, such as skilled and semi-skilled factory workers, the nature of whose work has more to do with the manipulation of data and information. A major category of non-elite knowledge workers is made up of so-called "grey-collar"

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(*huiling*) workers. These are low-ranking employees in the IT manufacturing industry, whose level of skilled labour, education, salary, and social status falls between white-collar knowledge workers and blue-collar physical labourers. The term "grey-collar" was first coined in the export-oriented factory zones of South China, where workers in this rank often wear grey uniforms (Wang, Xu & Huang, 2004).

Figure 1   Key terms and their interrelationship
Source: Qiu. 2010

Conceptually speaking, by "network labour" I understand a materialising pillar of the network society, parallel to the emergence of the network enterprise and the network state, globally and regionally. [①] In the case of China, the extensive influence of transnational Chinese business networks (Cartier, 2001 & Hamilton, 2006) and the resurgence of the Chinese "civilization-state" above and beyond the traditional notion of the nation-state (Jaques, 2009) both mark societal transformation in a networked era. However, this transformation is impossible, incomplete, and would be unsustainable, without the rise of network labour, whose members come from both the high-end and the non-elite categories of Chinese knowledge workers. The solidarity of this emergent network labour — within China and beyond — is a crucial aspect of the new class-making process that is under way, as indicated by the tidal wave of labour movements in the Honda factories in Guangdong in May-June 2010 (Barboza & Tabuchi, 2010; Barboza & Bradsher, 2010; Tabuchi & Bradsher, 2010).

I propose the idea of network labour based on abundant evidence on China's "information have-less", i.e., people who are between the information "haves" and the "have-nots" (Cartier, Castells, & Qiu, 2005) These are people, such as migrant workers, laid-off workers, retirees and students from working-class backgrounds, who have nonetheless begun to adopt low-end information and communication technologies (ICTs), which can be termed "working-class ICTs" since the turn of the new century. Not all members of the information have-less belong to network labour. The emergence of the former merely provides a necessary but insufficient condition, a techno-social basis, for the rise of the latter. At stake is a pivotal process of class formation that produces a new working class. Concomitant to it are competing forces of class domination, alienation, and the molecularisation of society at large. [②] The class formation process is very prominent temporally and spatially in the production and obliteration of working-class jobs, technologies, and communities. However, politically and culturally speaking, it has only just begun, under the predominance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and local-state authorities, in each case captured to a great extent by the logic of global capitalism. [③] As a result, whether network labour will evolve into an independent force in Chinese network society is still contingent upon the internal solidarity of this emerging new working

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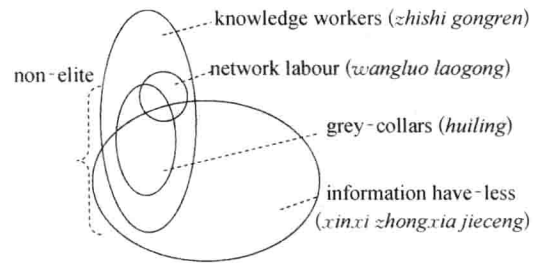
[①] The principal work on network society, including systematic discussions on network enterprise and network state, is Manuel Castells's (1996; 1997; 1998) information age trilogy. My recent book (Qiu, 2009), extends some of Castells's labour-related themes into the context of China's recent industrialisation, especially its IT industries, where the trend toward network labour is identified and proposed.

[②] This is, in a broad sense, quite parallel to what Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002) call the "individualisation of society", although for Chinese workers — either state-owned-enterprise (SOE) workers or those in the newly-created private sector — the trend is much more brutally imposed from the top down. See Kwan Lee (2006); Hanser (2008) & Hurst (2009).

[③] For more systematic discussion of this uneven development, see Qiu (2009)

class as well as its external networking with labour organisations around the world. In both internal and external organisation, China's non-elite knowledge workers hold central, strategic importance for the rise of network labour overall.

Mapping the Frontiers of Knowledge Work in China

Non-elite knowledge workers in China are low-ranking labourers in the country's burgeoning "knowledge economy", whose internal organisation and international connection depend mostly on informal channels of communication. This section provides an overview of these workers in electronic manufacture and IT services and content sectors, their types and subtypes, and their very different temporal and spatial patterns, which are fundamental to the techno-social basis of labour organisation domestically and internationally.

Before we start this overview, it is however important to recognise the expansive scope of knowledge work beyond electronic manufacture and IT industries *per se*. For one thing, the sales of electronics (e.g., computers), IT services (e.g., mobile phone repair) and content (e.g., ring tone or MP3 music) often involve long work hours by low-income microentrepreneurs and employees, especially when they target working-class consumers. Many of these salespeople are laid-off workers, migrants, and/or moonlighters who are underemployed in working-class neighborhoods, yet they also serve other workers and their own communities using particular IT knowledge. Meanwhile, mass media, advertising, marketing, PR, these prototypical sectors of what Lazzarato terms "immaterial labour" (Lazzarato, quoted in Virno & Hardt, 1996: 132 – 146) also exist in China, and they have turned to a reliance on soaring numbers of contract workers in recent years as well, breaking away from the traditional pattern of lifetime employment. Even workers in more traditional industries, such as construction, transportation, and toy factories, may engage in knowledge work, in order not only to meet the demand of their employers during work hours but also to fulfill their own dreams of literary creation in poetry, novel-writing, and blogging, using information and communications technologies when they are off work (Yang, 2007).

In the following, we shall not go into these expansive terrains of broadly-defined knowledge work, due to space limits. We shall only focus on non-elite knowledge workers in electronic manufacture and IT services and content sectors because they speak more directly to the subject of network labour. These are workers who provide the most essential labour inputs for China's burgeoning IT industry. Their work is highly contingent upon digital information and communication technologies and upon globally-networked arrangements for investment, management, and markets. They are at the technological and global frontiers of knowledge work, so to speak.

First, arguably the most prominent type of knowledge workers in contemporary China is "grey-collar" (*huiling*) workers, i.e., low-ranked knowledge workers in the IT manufacturing industry, who often wear grey uniforms. Apart from their apparel, their defining difference has more to do with the nature of their work. While the labour provided by blue-collar workers is centred on the physical movement of the objects they work on, and of their bodies and/or body parts, grey-collar workers usually manipulate information via computers, be it software, quality control or retooling of automatic or semi-automatic machinery. The value of grey-collar labour is mostly realised through information processing, mentally or digitally, following the order of flexible capitalism. In this production process, the utilisation of physical labour is secondary and minimal. Being computerised, grey-collar work is, however, much more repetitive, replaceable, and "programmable", compared with white-collar tasks (Wang, Xu & Huang, 2004).

As I have argued elsewhere, the formation of grey-collar programmable labour is one of the keys to China's recent economic boom, especially in the consumer electronics sector, as Chinese

factories outcompete not only American and European but also Japanese manufacturers in the global market. ① China now produces more than half of the world's personal computers and mobile phones. The labour process in manufacturing these electronic products depends heavily on the grey collars, whose subjugation contributes not only to China's competitive edge in the global market but also to the swelling wealth of western brands such as Apple, Nokia, HP and Sony.

Globally speaking, Chinese grey-collar knowledge workers in the manufacturing sector② are quite similar to the Indian engineers providing software solutions to western companies through the labour system known as "global body shopping" (Xiang, 2007). The differences are that the Indian software engineers are more transnational, going from Hyderabad to Sydney to the US or UK, whereas the Chinese grey-collars have less spatial mobility, being concentrated in China's coastal regions, especially the Pearl River Delta of South China, the Yangtze River Delta of East China, and the Beijing-Tianjin region of North China. Despite these spatial differences, both Chinese and Indian knowledge workers are essential to the functioning of global IT industry in the opening decades of the twenty-first century. The former provides labour for hardware manufacture; the latter, software services. Both are entailed by, and precipitate, the evaporation of mid-level, semi-skilled, and "middle-class" jobs in the US, Europe, Japan, and the Asian "tiger" economies such as South Korea and Taiwan.

The emergence of non-elite knowledge workers in China is, of course, much more than the geographical and structural replacing of lower-end informational labour. Facilitated by new digital media, especially working-class ICTs, it also takes on new forms of production, sometimes generating entire new industrial sectors that could not have been envisaged a decade or two ago.

One such new sector of knowledge work is call centres. While internationally call centres in India, Brazil, the Philippines, and Kenya are among the best known examples of global outsourcing (Huws, 2009), little attention has been paid to Chinese developments in this area. Yet, according to CTI Forum, the main online discussion platform for call centre operators in China, the country had 396,000 work positions by the end of 2008, when the total market value of this service industry reached 38.6 billion yuan or 5.7 billion US dollars (CTI Forum, 2009). A mostly female workforce has emerged in different parts of China to serve the markets of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, through a regionalised pattern of offshore outsourcing. Call centres targeting the Taiwanese market are most commonly found in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) of Guangdong and Fujian, where Mandarin-speaking inter-provincial migrant workers cluster (Mandarin being the official language in Taiwan) and it is not too difficult to hire people speaking the southern Fujian dialect (Minnanhua, i.e., Taiwanese).. Call centres for Hong Kong, such as those owned by ePro Telecom, have sprung up in Cantonese-speaking cities like Guangzhou, where most employees are Cantonese migrants or laid-off workers from within Guangdong Province. ③

The largest of their kind are call centres for the Japanese market, which are concentrated in northeast China (i.e., Manchuria). This region was under Japanese rule between 1931 and 1945, when nearly a million settlers were relocated from Japan to this region and Japanese was used as the official language. The region's spatial proximity to Japan means that it has close ties to Japanese traders, investors and entrepreneurs, who tend to cluster in major cities like Dalian, which also have a large pool of female labour, including both young migrants and laid-off former state-owned-enterprise

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① See for example the case of BYD, China's largest manufacturer of mobile phone batteries, in Zeng & Williamson, 2007.
② There are also many of them in IT services, as will be discussed below. But manufacture is singled out here due to China's prominence as the world's leading electronic manufacturer.
③ Interviews with call centre workers in Guangdong, 2002 – 2007.

(SOE) workers. The nature of their work, as in call centres elsewhere, has to do with online booking and reservation, post-sales services, technical support, telemarketing, and various phone chat-line services. Some of these have not only informational but also emotional dimensions, i. e., affective and emotional labour, (Hochschild, 1983; Fortunati, 1995; Hardt & Negri, 2004) that reinforces the gendered pattern of workforce composition and work processes. This is not too different from call centres serving China's burgeoning domestic markets of e-commerce, customer services, and even the covert phone-sex business under the label of "voice-information stations" (*shengxuntai*).

"SMS author" (*duanxin xieshou*) represents another new type of knowledge work. "*Duanxin*" means SMS, "*xieshou*" means literally "write-hands", indicating the lesser status of this job done by working-class "hands" (i. e., not brains, although the work is done using computers). From 2000 to 2008, the annual total volume of SMS traffic in China increased from 1. 4 billion to 699. 7 billion (*Guojia xinxi zhongxin*, 2001 - 2009) The SMS texts are not all user-generated. To attract more users and let them text more, mobile-phone companies also send out their own SMS content, such as greeting messages during festivals, and encourage users to subscribe to such content as sports or entertainment news. These content services constitute an essential part of the so-called "value-added" telecom services that include other components such as MMS (multimedia message service) and the downloading of ring tones. Although operators' delivery of digital content, including SMS, is largely automated, the production of such content — like holiday greetings or jobs that read "special" and are therefore worthy of being passed around (to generate more revenue for mobile operators) — has to depend on human labour.

The formal occupation of "SMS author" emerged in around 2002, when China Mobile operators in Guangzhou began to hire contract workers specialising in writing SMS messages. Internet portals like Sina. com and Sohu. com soon entered the business, taking advantage of their leading positions as Internet content providers. The most successful one at the time was Netease. com, whose CEO, William Ding, became the richest man in China, according to the Forbes annual survey of 2003, thanks, to a great extent, to the rapidly expanding mobile content businesses centred on SMS (Yin, 2003). The level of pay for SMS authors is, however, generally low although it fluctuates drastically according to market demands that wax and wane throughout the year. The Chinese Lunar New Year, for example, is usually a period of exceptionally high demand, when huge numbers of greeting messages are circulated. During this period, SMS authors with proven talents can earn up to 10,000 yuan (about $1,242) per week, although this won't happen during other periods of the year or among authors who are less capable of writing really popular messages. The internal differentiation within this grey-collar trade and its market-oriented "flexibility" are therefore very dramatic, placing serious constraints upon labour organisation among SMS authors (Xu, 2009: 18).

Since 2005, the trade of SMS authors has expanded to include other types of *xieshou* for Internet content providers of all kinds. From commercial marketing campaigns and online literature forums to travel and fashion blogs, and even to academic papers, all can be ordered from and produced by these "network authors" (*wangluo xieshou*). A key place of exchange among these network authors is China Xieshou United (*Zhongguo Xieshou Lianmeng*, http://www. xieol. com), which is mostly used for placing and receiving orders. As of January 11, 2010, its virtual community had 11,283 members spread throughout the country and its main forum had accumulated 122,581 posts. According to its online survey, based on a self-selected sample, 85. 6% of the members are part-time authors. Only 16. 8% of all respondent members do their writing during the day time; most people report doing it at night "occasionally" (36%), "often" (33.3%), or "always" (14%). In other words, among this new type of grey-collar network authors, at least half carry out their content-generating knowledge work as a moonlighting activity.

Besides the services provided by call centres and content produced by SMS and network authors, at some new frontiers of grey-collar knowledge work the boundary between services and content provision is fundamentally blurred. This is most evident in the case of Chinese "gold farmers", also known as "*Wangyou dailian*" in Chinese, who provide labour for the online-game industry (playing online games to acquire virtual currency which is then sold to players). According to Heeks, who provided one of the first systematic examinations of the phenomenon globally and in China, "gold farming means the real-world sale of virtual goods and services produced in online games. For example, many online games have a virtual economy and an in-game currency. Gold farmers can play in-game to make some currency. They then sell that for real money" (Heeks, 2008).

The nature of gold farmers' work has to do both with content (because the virtual products they accumulate and sell, like avatars, weapons, or the virtual gold coins that led to the label "gold farmers", are nothing but digital in-game content) and with services (because ultimately gold farmers help purchasers save time when playing the online games, allowing them, for example, to have, for example, a powerful avatar without going through the tedious work of playing as beginners).

Confirming its grey-collar status, Heeks maintains that gold farming is a good example of "liminal ICT work", i.e. "work associated with information and communication technologies that is around or just below the threshold of what is deemed socially-acceptable and/or legally-permitted" (Heeks, 2008). By one estimate, in 2008 there were about 400,000 gold farmers worldwide, of whom 80%‒85% worked in China. They performed 12‒hour shifts, 7 days a week, providing skilled or semi-skilled labour using broadband-connected computers, earning about US $145 on average each month, supporting a global market worth about US $500 million (Heeks, 2008: 64).

According to Chan (2006); Chew & Fung (2007) and my own interviews with gold farm operators in Guangdong, the business began in 2003 and it was deeply embedded geographically in the initial years of 2003‒2006. Most gold farms were in the more developed coastal regions, especially the Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta, due to the spatial and cultural proximity to key markets such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, following the pan-East-Asian regional popularity of the Korean game "Lineage" (*Tiantang*), which marked a particularly important turning point for gold farming in China (Chan, 2006). These Chinese coastal regions also tend to attract English speakers, Taiwanese entrepreneurs for example, who can connect virtual products exporters in China with buyers in the USA and UK. Aided by rapid broadband buildup that resulted from massive public investment in the country's telecoms infrastructure, gold farming soon became an industrialised sector that has spread from coastal to inland China since 2006.

With this spread, conditions of work and pay have both deteriorated for gold farmers, who in the beginning were mostly tech-savvy urbanites who made decent earnings but now mainly consist of much cheaper labour, especially young migrants and laid-off workers. Meanwhile, gold farm operators and wholesalers of gold-farm products/services also began to shift their attention from overseas to domestic buyers (the latter known as "Renminbi players") because of the increasing value of the Chinese currency and China's swelling upper-class online-game-player population. These shifts were accompanied by more frequent reports on worker uprisings that took place in inland cities such as Urumqi, Xinjiang, where heavily exploited apprentice-workers, who happened to be students from a local vocational middle school, staged a major strike in October 2007[1](China Youth Daily, 2007). Sit-in demonstrations involving avatars have also been reported, when gold farmers and other players gathered online in a virtual square to protest against unfair in-game rules set by the gaming company

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[1] "*Shixi riye 'kandashu', jiazhang zhiyi*" ("Interns 'Cutting Trees' All Day, Parents Raise Questions").

(Cao, Zhang & Wang, 2007).

Whether they are low-end skilled and semi-skilled jobs in the manufacturing or IT sectors, providing services (e. g. , call centres), content (e. g. , SMS authors) or both (e. g. , gold farms), all these varieties of grey-collar knowledge work open up a new frontier for "digital capitalism" (Schiller, 2000) in China and globally. At present, these are predominantly extensions of past modes of exploitation, characterised by the extraction and accumulation of surplus value and top-down, despotic control over labour processes. However, not all of these are "Chinese sweatshops", an erroneous oversimplification from commercial media that fails to capture the varying conditions of work, both spatially and temporally. Nor are the grey-collar workers always passive and obedient. While exploitation and oppression has taken new networked forms, using digital technologies to exert control over work processes from manufacture to service and content sectors, networked resistance has also begun to emerge from the bottom up, also using digital tools.

Collective Action and Limited International Networking

In a larger regional and global context, what, then, is the status quo for crossborder linkages between knowledge workers within and outside China? The official ACFTU (All-China Federation of Trade Unions) plays a very limited role, if at all. Other channels for formal cross-border connection have been largely blocked by a cumbersome registration system for NGOs and NPOs (non-profit organisations), including labour NGOs, and the increasingly stringent policies covering the receipt of funds from overseas by labour organisations, especially the new rules implemented since April 2010 (Richburg, 2010). Consequently, informal networking through digital technologies such as websites, and especially, QQ[1] networks, have become the most common method of information exchange, coordination, and collective action, drawing from traditional modes of networking often based on geographical proximity. Between the formal (e. g. , ACFTU) and the informal (e. g. , *Tongxianghui* or hometown-fellows association), there are innumerable nodes of connection including not only key NGOs and NPOs but also crucial bridge organisations in Hong Kong, such as the *China Labour Bulletin*, which are among the most prominent nodes in the international dimension of such networked labour formations.

These new formations in China do not, of course, constitute a coherent labour movement. They are rather a spectrum of emerging trends ranging from the officially sanctioned to the more or less clandestine, whose goals and activities may or may not be consistent with each other. Despite the preliminary phase of development, the collective orientation of actors both within and outside the official system has been clear since the transition of leadership to Hu Jingtao and Wen Jiabao in 2003. That is, people are increasingly becoming discontented with the labour-capital relationship in the country, especially with the institutionalised discrimination against rural-to-urban migrant workers. The eruptions in the Honda and Foxconn factories in May-June 2010 served as recent examples of this[2] (Barboza, 2010). These incidents of collective labour action — more self-organised in the case of Honda and with more official involvement in the case of Foxconn — mark a new beginning for labour movements in the country. They have special implications for low-end knowledge workers in that they set in motion a more favorable social and media environment that tolerates labour actions and also in that working-class ICTs have been frequently used in grassroots labour organisation and workers'

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① QQ is a leading Chinese online social network.

② See Barboza & Tabuchi, 2010 and Barboza & Bradsher, 2010 for further information about the Honda strike. The Foxconn case involves more than a dozen young migrant workers committing suicides due to despair and mistreatment in the Foxconn electronics factories. See also Barboza (2010).

cultural expressions (Barboza & Bradsher, 2010).

However, institutional constraints remain in China, where CCP cadres at all levels view independent labour organising with deep suspicion. In addition to the cumbersome registration system for labour NGOs/NPOs and barriers to them receiving funding from overseas (Hong Kong included), there are many other obstacles that impede the daily operations of labour organisations that are not officially under the auspices of the Chinese authorities. As a result, formal networking with overseas organisations is in general suppressed except for the limited collaboration between the ACFTU and the ILO, whose goal rarely goes beyond collective negotiation in terms of wages and work benefits.

Meanwhile, informal and semi-formal networks for global solidarity among knowledge workers are far from fully grown. There is still much room for development, while many of those that have achieved some success at the present stage also tend to conceal themselves from media and public attention as part of their survival strategy. Although I have been working with labour activists, informal associations, and semi-formal worker networks in various parts of China since 2006, playing the role of a volunteer participant most of the time, this endeavour has been small-scale, serendipitous, and far from systematic. Even with the help of other scholarly publications and media accounts, the following discussions can only partially reflect, and most probably underestimate, the level of cross-border labour activity among knowledge workers in China and beyond.

The strongest of the formal (state-sanctioned) ties between China and the international labour movement is the linkage between the ACFTU and the ILO. The PRC formally joined the ILO in 1983. Since then, the ACFTU has organised various activities with the ILO such as conferences, training workshops, and micro-credit loan projects. However, given the actual functioning of the ACFTU as a government bureaucracy more than anything else (Chan, 2001), none of these constitute substantive efforts to strengthen international labour solidarity at the grassroots level. None of them target knowledge workers, either, including the grey collars.

As discussed earlier, Chinese network labour at the frontiers of digital capitalism tend to be concentrated spatially in China's coastal regions, such as the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta, where the largest number of foreign companies is also to be found, especially in IT manufacturing, services, and content sectors. However, these regions are also among the worst places in China for the enforcement of labour laws and for the exercise of workers' basic rights to join or form their own unions[1](Yu, 2008). All too often the "trade unions" are blatantly "yellow", while in other workplaces, notably foreign-owned companies and factories, unions are non-existent (China Labour Bulletin, 2009; Wang, 2006).

The worst situation, in terms of labour organising, is in the emerging sectors discussed in the previous section: call centre employees, SMS or network authors and online game gold farmers. To most of these, the idea of trade unions for grey-collar knowledge workers would sound outlandish because they have never heard of such a thing; even the official ACFTU doesn't see the necessity to organise them collectively, and, because their jobs are indeed mostly transient, consisting of short-term employment created in response to rapid market changes and the constant industrial restructuring of each of these new sectors. Another reason is that, although they may work together online, on the phone or in virtual worlds, physically they may work and live in very different places.

When formal channels are blocked, less formal ones spring up based on the aforementioned

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[1] This does not mean that no local union in coastal China plays an active role in facilitating labour movements. In some cases such as in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, local unions can be indeed more supportive of workers' collective bargaining (not the more radical industrial action though). However, such cases as Yiwu constiute exceptions rather than the rule (Yu, 2008).

regionalised patterns of employment and spatial labour mobility. These are diverse, varying between different types of knowledge work. Skilled workers making computer chips in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province of East China, tend to come primarily from the nearby provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Anhui, as well as other places within Jiangsu. Call centres in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province of South China, often hire migrants from nearby Hunan, Guangxi, Hubei, and Jiangxi as well.[①] This regionally networked pattern of population mobility has a major influence not only on work and employment but also on the labour solidarity patterns, which are, however, nothing new.

Even before the founding of the PRC in 1949, such a pattern of self-organisation centred on *tongxianghui* had been well documented (Honig, 1992). Dialects, cultural and religious customs and extended family lineages have all contributed to informal "translocal" labour networking, to job-seeking and settling down, and to general sociability patterns, for hundreds of years. When a migrant worker faces unbearable ill-treatment, s/he often turns first to her/his hometown-fellow association as well, although in China today, self-organised labour *tongxianghui* cannot be registered with the authorities and do not have legal standing. Therefore, while this pattern of informal labour networking based on territorial connections is not a contemporary development, nor is it strictly Chinese, this mode of solidarity building has been decisively amplified by the institutional blockages, and it has been further enhanced by the wide applicability of working-class ICTs, especially inexpensive mobile phones and Internet cafés (Qiu, 2008).[②] This is particularly so for knowledge workers who are familiar with digital communication tools.

The most important tool of this kind for informal cross-border solidarity building is QQ, the most popular working-class networking service via mobile phones and arguably on the Internet as well. QQ began in the late 1990s as a copycat of ICQ, the most successful instant messaging (IM) service of the time. But, since 2000, Tencent, the company which owns QQ, has added a wide variety of services to its core IM service such as blogging, video sharing, gaming, and news. Around 2001 – 2002, ordinary workers in the service industries and factory zones of coastal China started to adopt QQ in huge numbers. At this time, I learned from dozens of interviews that the main use was entertainment and, to a lesser extent, job-seeking. By 2006 – 2007, millions of workers, including the bulk of the newly-formed knowledge workers, had become regular QQ users, and these included labour activists both from within and outside mainland China, especially Hong Kong.

While IM (mostly between two individuals), blogging, and file sharing are all useful tools for cross-border labour organising, the centrepiece for QQ-based labour organising is QQ Cluster (*QQ qun*) for semi-formal or informal labour NGOs and NPOs. Some of these are semi-formal because they are registered with the Chinese authorities as "commercial companies" (*shangye gongsi*) because of the institutional blocks on NGO registration. Others are strictly informal underground networks. QQ Cluster provides a virtual community for members of these labour organisations, including, very importantly, former members who have moved to other cities in the context of high population mobility. A QQ Cluster usually has no more than 100 members. One has to be invited to join after meeting the group leaders face-to-face. A search of QQ Clusters on January 16, 2010 yielded the result shown in Table 1.

The search was done in both simplified characters for mainland Chinese users and traditional characters for those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. Several notable trends can be identified.

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① Field work and interviews in Zhuhai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, 2006 – 2007.
② Surveys of young migrant workers in south China have shown that, from 2002 to 2006, the penetration rate of mobile phones has increased from 58.2% to 83.5%, while the percentage of young migrant workers who have used the Internet — mostly through Internet cafés — has increased from 49.5% to 76.7% (Qiu, 2008).

For the more generic terms, *laogong* (labour), *laodongzhe* (labourer), and *gongyun* (labour movement), most of the clusters are in simplified characters whereas a small number also exist in traditional characters. No QQ cluster contains the term *zhishi gongren* (knowledge workers) in simplified or traditional characters, although *huiling* (grey-collar) is embedded in the self-descriptions of 35 of them. *Gonghui* (union) has the largest number of clusters, but many of these are local branches of ACFTU rather than grassroots labour movement groups.

However, there is not a single cluster that can be found using the search term *bagong* (strike) in simplified characters, whereas there are 17 such groups in traditional characters, suggesting that for the more conflict-sensitive areas of discussion censorship is exercised, to a much more significant degree among the mainland Chinese groups as compared with those outside China. This does not mean that labour activists do not discuss industrial actions in simplified characters. They just need to use camouflage language to escape the radar. Meanwhile, most labour activists today are aware that their discussions in QQ clusters may attract attention from Tencent's content surveillance team, who may in turn report to the authorities if they find "subversive" content in QQ conversations among a large group of people. It is however deemed much safer if the QQ conversations are carried out between two activists only. [①]

Table 1   QQ Clusters by labour-related themes

Search keywords	Number of Clusters
Laogong (labour), in simplified characters	313
Laogong, in traditional characters	16
Zhishi gongren (knowledge worker), in simplified and traditional characters	0
Huiling (grey-collars) in simplified characters	35
Laodongzhe (labourer), in simplified characters	389
Laodongzhe, in traditional characters	5
Gongyun (labour movement), in simplified characters	102
Gongyun, in traditional characters	1
Gonghui (union), in simplified characters	37,514
Gonghui, in traditional characters	1,570
Bagong (strike), in simplified characters	0
Bagong, in traditional characters	17

Source: Qiu, 2010

For more than eighteen months I have been a member of two QQ clusters, both created for a semi-formal NGO in south China. As of January 2010, there are 98 members in one cluster and 45 in the other. There are overlaps of membership between the two, myself included. The larger group includes most of the organisation's current volunteers who participate regularly in the NGO's activities such as helping with recruitment, holding training sessions on labour contract law, visiting work-injury victims, producing pamphlets, and organising a variety of cultural events to serve workers in the neighborhood. The smaller group includes more "senior" members, especially those who have left the NGO to work in other parts of the country as labour movement activists. While the majority of the

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① Personal interviews, August 2009.

cluster members are workers and activists in mainland China, there are three participants in each
network who are based in Hong Kong but maintain close ties with the other members through QQ.

As I wrote the last paragraph, discussion in these two QQ clusters focused on an uprising in a
factory in Suzhou, east China, especially an open letter by a labour-rights lawyer in Shanghai
concerning this case. The mass media in mainland China ignored this incident. Related discussions in
publicly-accessible forums have been deleted due to Internet censorship. However, using QQ Cluster,
reports about the event including photos and videos showing massive confrontation between workers
and the police are shared efficiently and, more importantly for labour NGOs, free of charge, when
they communicate with partners outside China. I was asked to find out more about the factory in
Suzhou (as there is no Internet censorship in Hong Kong). I found and shared the information with
both groups: it is a Taiwanese-owned company making electronics, especially computer monitors.

This is only a random example of the kind of QQ Cluster activities that are constantly ongoing.
Besides information sharing, there are also calls for petitions, donations, help for events coordination,
and advice in collective bargaining. It is a high-trust network because most of the members meet face-
to-face regularly and only the most active ones remain in the clusters after they move away. I have used
this to organise a reading group without placing phone calls to other members of the NGO. When I
arrived there, everything was ready. After the events, I also used this platform to share photos with
other participants. It was all free of charge and centrally archived in the cluster's webpage.

Other than QQ, international connections for Chinese knowledge workers also rely on traditional-
style website-based communication, which is usually less interactive but with broader reach. Examples
of the most prominent websites of this type inside mainland China include *Laogongkaiwu* (World by
Labour, http://www. lgkw. net/index. asp), *Wuyouzhixiang* (Utopia, www. wyzxsx. com/), and
Zuo'an (Left Bank, http://www. eduww. com/). These are, in many ways, very different sites,
targeting audiences in multiple spheres of labour research, literature, and social movement discussion.
Most of their content has to do with the history and present state of Chinese labour, political economy,
and social problems. However, each site also includes a considerable amount of introductory material
about the international labour movement. The purpose is mostly informative, telling readers about
what is going on outside China, rather than arousing group discussions or collective actions to build
solidarity across national boundaries. [1]

Finally, China Labour Bulletin (CLB)[2] is perhaps the most crucial bridge with an online, multi-
media presence. Unlike the three websites discussed above, CLB is based in Hong Kong, founded and
directed by Han Dongfang, after he was forced into exile as a result of organising the Beijing
Autonomous Workers' Federation in 1989. A former railway worker, Han now podcasts his
programme, "Workers' Voices", three times a week, through the CLB website, which was originally a
programme for Radio Free Asia. There is a wealth of news archive, research reports, blogs, podcasts,
and multimedia content on this website, in both Chinese and English, thanks to its bilingual team of
contributors that include Chinese activists in exile, western researchers and writers, and local Hong
Kong academics. It also uses Twitter (account name: chinalabour) and Facebook (group name: China
Labour Bulletin), attracting hundreds of subscribers as of January 2010.

It is important to note that the CLB, like Twitter and Facebook, cannot be directly accessed in
mainland China due to the country's Internet filtering and website blocking system known as the
"Great Firewall" (Barmé & Ye, 1997). However, many labour activists, including several I have

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[1] This pattern reflects the pressure of Internet censorship more than anything else. If the websites are more
     action-oriented, the chances are that they will be quickly shutdown or blocked by the authorities.
[2] For further information, see: http://www. clb. org. hk/en/.

talked to, have learned to "scale the wall (*fanqiang*)" using proxy servers or virtual private networks, in order to visit websites such as the CLB. The institutional constraint imposed by Chinese authorities therefore has an additional impact on cross-border labour solidarity building, although the constraint is by no means absolute.

On its "links" page, CLB lists more than 30 websites, of which about half are international organisations, such as Amnesty International and the International Trade Union Confederation. Many of the remaining half are general websites and current affairs blogs either about China (e. g. *Daiwei. org*) or about the labour movement globally (e. g. *LabourStart. org*). There are links to official Chinese agencies such as ACFTU as well. However, only two of these links are devoted to building more cross-border connections between China and the outside world, namely *ChinaLaborWatch. org* and China Labor News Translation (*Clntranslations. org*). This suggest that, even outside mainland China, where there is little institutional constraint imposed by the CCP, the website-based network nodes are still underdeveloped, at least compared to the QQ networks.

Concluding Remarks

This paper is only a preliminary attempt to connect the conceptual and empirical dots about Chinese non-elite knowledge workers, their use of ICT as tools of employment as well as worker organisation, and the emergent process of network labour formation in China today. My goal is to lay down a stepping stone for more systematic research in the future. What then, are the main characteristics of China's non-elite knowledge workers and its emerging network labour?

I first provided a conceptual framework linking key concepts in the Chinese context — knowledge workers, network labour, the information have-less, and grey-collars — while discussing their interrelationships. An overview of non-elite knowledge work in contemporary China was then provided, particularly focusing on jobs in electronic manufacture, IT services, and content sectors. Special attention was paid to new types of digital work (call centres, SMS authors, and online game gold farming) and their process of emergence and patterns of spatial distribution within the country and in relation to other key markets of the Asian Pacific region and worldwide.

Then, based on limited data and personal observations, I sketched out the main linkages between grassroots worker groups in mainland China and labour organisations outside. It was shown that, due to various institutional constraints against formal labour organising on the ground, transnational and domestic worker networking has relied largely on small-scale, informal modes of communication and organisation, using especially working-class ICTs such as QQ clusters. There are indeed multiple cross-border linkages and the most prominent are labour websites and organisations in Hong Kong, whose centrality to international labour solidarity building has surpassed the official ties between ACFTU and ILO. Even so, for Chinese non-elite knowledge workers, transnational labour organisation is still quite limited when it comes to supporting collective action from the bottom up.

As can be seen in major labour actions during May and June 2010 in the Honda and Foxconn factories of south China, informal networking through new digital tools, especially QQ, provides an important ground for network labour formation beyond national boundaries. It is full of potential not just because it is so popular among Chinese workers, especially knowledge workers, but also because it draws on traditional patterns of translocal networking. Despite the shadow of the Great Firewall, grassroots connections among non-elite knowledge workers, including those based on *tongxianghui*, NGOs, and NPOs, are the most likely avenues to lead towards a new informational politics, where network labour can be cultivated for progressive social change on the techno-social basis of the information have-less.

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18. Hollywood Unions and the Fight for Work[①]

Catherine McKercher

Workers' organizations across the communication and cultural industries are looking for ways to respond to an escalating and troubling challenge: how to keep their work (or their jobs) at home. In the relentless search for higher profits and lower costs, their employers are moving work to lower-cost locales — which often are nonunionized and rich with government subsidies and incentives — within North America and abroad.

Moving work to places with lower labor costs is not a new phenomenon, but two recent developments have accelerated the problem. One is the growth of transnational or global corporations, especially in the communication and information sector. This has blurred the lines between previously separate industries and the national borders within which those industries operate. A second, and related, development is the use of new communication technologies that blur the lines between previously separate forms of work and, in the process, contribute to the deskilling of workers. Taken together, these developments make it all the easier to "outsource" or "offshore" communication and information work, including creative work.

Scholars studying the outsourcing of work in these areas have tended to focus on the movement of information technology jobs, ranging from high-tech software development to work in the call center industry, from the United States to places like China and India (see, e.g., Brophy, 2006; Huws, 2003; Kapur, 2007; Mosco, 2005). Studies of outsourcing film production have analyzed the new global division of labor in the animation industry, where the conception of the work remains in Hollywood but the execution is carried out in the developing world (see, e.g., Day, 2007; Sussman & Lent, 1998; Wasko, 2004). What can organized labor do about the problem? Can unions or other workers' organizations fight it? If so, how?

In this chapter I examine how the unions that represent mainly creative labor in Hollywood have fought against their own version of "offshoring": the phenomenon known as "runaway production." Though the term has several nuances, at its simplest level it refers to the idea of filming American stories, intended for an American audience, in another country. The chapter focuses on the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), a union of 120,000 actors that has been a key player in the struggle. SAG has fought runaway production on a number of fronts. It has drawn on a range of discursive strategies, casting the problem as an economic, cultural, and patriotic issue, as well as a matter of traditional workplace jurisdiction. And it has employed a number of tactics, including: commissioning studies that

allowed the unions to define the issue, lobbying for state and federal legislation, launching publicity campaigns, and attempting to extend SAG jurisdiction beyond U.S. borders.

This chapter shows that many of these efforts have paid off. But these successes depend, to an enormous extent, on SAG's ability to build or work in coalitions — with other unions, of course, but with employers and civic groups as well. Achieving solidarity is not easy, and there have been missed opportunities along the way. The most significant is the Guild's failure to merge with the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), a move that would have increased labor power in the film, television, and commercial business. I conclude that this failure may have implications as the fight to rein in runaway production moves into its next phase.

Claiming Ownership of the Issue

Though runaway production is often seen as a phenomenon of the late 20th century, the practice of filming "Hollywood" movies in other locales has been a matter of concern to the Los Angeles-based film unions since shortly after the end of the Second World War. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG), founded in 1933 as a centralized organization representing film actors working for the powerful and paternalistic Hollywood film studios, found itself swept up in a tide of changes in the entertainment industry during the early postwar years. The 1948 antitrust decision known as the "Paramount decision" forced studios to give up their control over theater distribution, and this led to a major restructuring in Hollywood. The number of independent producers rose from 40 in 1945 to 165 by 1957, and then to 1,500 by 1966. The proportion of films made by the seven major studios that once dominated Hollywood dropped from 80% in 1949 to 35% in 1958 (Prindle, 1998, pp. 69 - 72). Meanwhile, the arrival of television threatened the cinema business and launched SAG on a jurisdictional fight with the American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA), resolved in 1950 by giving AFRA jurisdiction over live programming and SAG jurisdiction over filmed work. AFRA renamed itself AFTRA in 1952 in recognition of its expanded jurisdiction.

In an attempt to follow the work being filmed outside Hollywood, SAG began opening branches across the United States. Founding member Kenneth Thomson told the 1953 SAG annual convention:

> Although it did not set out to do so of its own volition, the Screen Actors Guild has now of necessity become a nation-wide organization, with branches and membership not only in Hollywood and New York — but also in Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Boston. (SAG, n.d.)

Indeed, by the 1980s, less than half of SAG's membership resided in its founding Hollywood branch (Prindle, 1998, p.124). But while the union could expand within the United States, it became increasingly frustrated as it watched producers leave the country in search of cheaper locations to film their work.

According to Prindle (1998), by the end of the 1960s, about half of so-called American films were being shot in other countries, using American stars but local actors in supporting parts (p.92).

> Repeatedly during the decade, [G]uild leaders harangued the industry about its exporting of jobs, lobbied Congress to pass tax legislation offering incentives to filmmakers to stay in America and made contract concessions to encourage domestic production. These efforts had no visible effect. (Prindle, p.92)

By the 1980s and 1990s, the anger over foreign production had become more focused. The problem, as SAG and other unions saw it, was not runaway production in general, but runaway production in Canada. Canada had been developing its own film and television industry during these

years with the aid of government support, ranging from tax incentives to subsidies. Filming in Canada offered a lot of attractions to production companies. Though foreign, Canada was not exotic; its landscape, cities, and citizens looked American. Add to this a cheap Canadian dollar and the availability of tax incentives, and it was inevitable that the number of productions filmed in Canada would begin to rise.

SAG and the Directors Guild of America (DGA) took command of the issue in 1999, commissioning a major study of runaway production from the influential Monitor Company, a respected global management consulting firm. The study sought to quantify the extent of the problem and assess its economic impact. The fact that the study was done by a third party — neither by the unions nor by the film producers — gave it a degree of credibility it otherwise would not have had. It could not be dismissed as union propaganda or a compilation of anecdotal material; rather, it was a serious examination of an issue by people with independent expertise. This study would define the issue; It would clarify exactly what constituted a runaway production, and it would show who was benefiting from the phenomenon, as well as who was being hurt.

The Monitor study characterized runaway productions as films or programs intended for initial release or broadcast in the United States, but filmed in another country. It determined that there were two types of runaway productions: (1) creative productions, which depart for creative considerations or because the story takes place in a setting that cannot be duplicated in Hollywood; and (2) economic runaways, which depart to achieve lower production costs (Monitor Company, 1999, p. 2). It was this second group that posed the problem. And the problem was huge — big enough to affect not only Hollywood, but also the overall U. S. economy. The study estimated that economic runaway film and television production cost the U. S. economy a total of US $10.3 billion in 1998 alone, up from US $2 billion in 1990. This figure included the loss of direct production spending, lost tax revenues, and multiplier effects that inevitably occur with significant job loss. The study found that the vast majority of those runaways, 81%, went to Canada, with Australia and the United Kingdom running a distant second. The labor impact of economic runaways was, according to the study, "profound": the loss of more than 20,000 full-time-equivalent jobs in 1998, 11,000 of them usually filled by SAG members, 600 normally filled by DGA members, and the rest by so-called "below-the-line" craft and technical workers (Monitor Company, pp. 2 – 4). The study identified several causes of the problem. It noted that Canadian and Australian film crews and infrastructure had improved in recent years, to the point where there was no significant difference between the quality of productions filmed in those countries and in Hollywood. At the same time, the value of the Canadian, Australian, and U. K. currencies had declined. Federal and provincial tax credits were readily available, especially in Canada. All in all, filming in Canada could cut production costs by 25% or more.

The report provoked significant reaction. Magder and Burston (2001) note that Canadian players from both industry and government took issue with the financial analysis (p. 216). The Directors Guild of Canada (DGC), for example, claimed that the Monitor report exaggerated the amount of money coming to Canada by a factor of three or four. Magder and Burston describe the report as a "dishearteningly simplistic and one-dimensional intervention in a much needed debate on the globalization and digitization of film and televisual production" (p. 226). They argue that the "blame Canada" frame had little analytical purchase.

Perhaps. It was, however, politically effective. By commissioning and issuing the report, the two unions had claimed owner-ship of the issue. They had become what Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, and Roberts (1978) would call the "primary definers" not just of the economic problem, but of the stories and debate it would generate as well. Everyone else — the federal, provincial, and state governments in Canada and the United States, producers in both countries, labor unions in Canada,

and so forth — would be put in the position of commenting on or reacting to the study. Again, to use terms from Hall et al. , these groups became the secondary definers. They might take issue with the study's numbers or how they had been tallied, but the notion that runaway production was an economic problem quickly became the dominant interpretation, and it set the terms of reference for further debate on the matter. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Canadian producers conceded privately that the report had become the "bible" on the issue (Vlessing, 2004).

Proposing Action

With runaway production defined as an economic problem, SAG and the DGA began to concentrate on a solution. The way to counter foreign incentives that drew production out of the United States, they concluded, was for the United States to offer its own incentives to keep it at home. But the guilds knew it would take more than a couple of unions to successfully make the case for domestic incentives to support an industry as large as the film business. It would require the assemblage of a broad coalition representing every aspect of Hollywood. The result was the Runaway Production Alliance, composed of 19 organizations, each with a stake in the issue. Spear-headed by the DGA, it included labor unions (SAG, AFTRA, the Teamsters, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees [IATSE], the Writers Guild, etc.); professional or trade organizations (the Producers Guild of America, the Association of Independent Commercial Producers, the Hollywood Post Alliance, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the Caucus for Television Producers, Writers and Directors); marketers, distributors, and promoters (the Independent Film and Television Alliance, the Motion Picture Association of America); organizations representing talent agents and musicians; and the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the group that runs the Emmy Awards (AFTRA, 2004).

Pamm Fair, the deputy national executive director of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), says forming alliances across the industry to lobby Congress on specific issues is a good idea:

> It's very effective to use the worker face and the employer face together. It just works. We also have different political lines. Unions have one way, the studios often have another, and that creates good will on both sides of the aisle when we do that together. (P. Fair, personal communication [interview], February 3, 2006)

The idea that media conglomerates need subsidies and tax relief was, however, a tough sell — even for some members of the coalition. An IATSE activist told *The Nation*, "It's really just about countering Canadian subsidies with our own subsidies and offering even more corporate welfare to the media giants" (Cooper, 2000). But the compelling point was the idea that a relatively small investment by government would keep money and jobs in the United States; this includes jobs not only of the highly paid Hollywood stars and directors, but also of the thousands of white-, pink-, and blue-collar working people who contribute to the production of feature films and television programs.

After close to 5 years of lobbying, Congress passed a tax write-off for U. S.-made film and television productions. It appeared in the American Jobs Creation Act, a broad package of tax measures affecting a number of sectors and industries that was signed into law in 2004. Michael Apted, president of the Directors Guild of America (DGA), commented:

> With the new incentives provided in today's legislation, uniquely American stories can now be more easily shot in the American towns, cities, and rural areas where they are set — protecting one of our most valuable national resources — our creativity. (DGA, 2004)

Three years later, the details of how to calculate the production incentive were still being worked

out (SAG, 2007). But regardless of the specific details of the legislation, the alliance's key victory was that it managed to get onto the public agenda the idea that the U. S. film industry needed support. This, in turn, has helped in similar campaigns at the state and local level. In early 2006 Pamm Fair of SAG said:"We have legislation now in 22 states that provides incentives for film makers to work in any given state. They range from waiving sales tax for goods and services to very lucrative rebates" (P. Fair, personal communication [interview], February 3, 2006). Some states, such as Illinois or Florida, have established special funds. Others waive hotel taxes for movie productions. Louisiana and New Mexico have among the most generous incentives in the country. Some cities have their own incentives, including San Francisco, which approved a rebate package in 2006 (Tan, 2006).

Tied to the campaign for incentives is the idea that film and television are essential components of American culture, not just the U. S. economy. Led by SAG, the Hollywood unions have combined an appeal to prevent runaway production on economic grounds with an appeal to protect American culture on patriotic grounds, a mix that has resonated particularly well in the years since the September 11, 2001, attacks. This is not the first time the unions have equated foreign production with anti-Americanism. In 1959, when the Hollywood American Federation of Labor's Film Council called on Congress for full-scale investigation of runaway production, it charged:"In most instances 'runaway' pictures made by American producers in foreign countries give employment to known Communists and thus give aid and comfort to the Communist conspiracy against the free world" (SAG, n. d.). The message this time is somewhat less crude, but no less hostile to foreign film production. It is based on the idea that American stories should be told in America, by Americans. "We've used some public relations in identifying films that are very American stories — *Cold Mountain* was one of them — where we say, 'You may have thought this was an amazing American production but it was done in Romania,'" says Pamm Fair of SAG (P. Fair, personal communication[interview], February 3, 2006). The Film and Television Action Committee (FTAC), an association led by below-the-line unions that also includes SAG and some civic and professional organizations and is dedicated to fighting runaway production, launched an e-mail and Internet campaign against the 2003 film. An article posted on its Web site urged a boycott of the movie, noting, "You can send a message that these economic losses and artistic choices compromised in the name of saving money are not acceptable to Americans" (quoted in Horn, 2004). FTAC also called for a boycott of the USA Network's film *Rudy*, the story of New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, because it was filmed in Toronto. The group's statement charged, "This is about patriotism. This is about one of America's darkest hours, "9 · 11". This is about the American Spirit. How could anyone think it was ethically or morally right to film this story in another country?" (quoted in Elmer & Gasher, 2005, p.3)

SAG has urged high-profile members to refuse either to take part in runaway productions or to speak out against them. At the 2004 SAG Awards, for example, actor Tim Robbins implored "the power in this room" to stem the tide of runaway production and to "bring back some of those productions into the United States of America" (Brodesser, 2004).

Criticizing foreign production will only take the union so far: Some producers are going to choose foreign locales anyway. In 2002 SAG decided to extend its jurisdiction beyond the U. S. border by making its membership Rule One global. The rule, which SAG sees as a founding principle of the union, states: "No member shall work as a performer or make an agreement to work as a performer for any producer who has not executed a basic minimum agreement with the Guild which is in full force and effect" (SAG, 2003, p.33). Until then, the rule applied only to productions filmed in the United States, not to those made abroad. From May 2002 on, it would. The Canadian Film and Television Producers Association (CFTPA) denounced the extension. According to a Vancouver law firm active in the film industry, the association had good reason to do so:

The imposition of a SAG agreement on U. S. actors working in Canada can mean a significant increase in pension and welfare payments (especially on a series) and in the residuals that are paid to actors. Further, the producer employing the American actor may be required to become a signatory to the SAG agreement and to offer other performers similar arrangements. (Roberts & Stahl, 2002)

The association also suggested that the move would undermine the Canadian performers union, ACTRA (CFTPA, 2002). ACTRA responded almost immediately with a statement denying this suggestion, clarifying ACTRA's position on dual unionism, and noting that the Canadian union is proud of its "long-standing positive and mutually supportive relationship" with SAG (Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists [ACTRA], 2002). Before imposing the change, SAG had consulted with performers' unions in Canada and Australia. In addition, it had lined up the support of key Hollywood unions, including AFTRA and the writers and directors unions, which all issued statements supporting the move. A SAG news release issued on the second anniversary of the Global Rule One campaign claimed it had been a major success. It said the union had secured 69 foreign theatrical motion pictures in 2002, 120 projects in 2003, and 60 in early 2004. Guild member earnings on foreign productions covered by SAG contracts topped US $120 million, and an additional US $6 million from foreign productions went into the union's pension and health funds (SAG, 2004). Fair says that one of the positive consequences of Global Rule One has been to demonstrate to film workers in other countries the advantages of a SAG contract. This can help raise the bar for other workers and their unions (P. Fair, personal communication [interview], February 3, 2006).

Coalition, But Not Convergence

It is clear that the Hollywood unions' successes in the fight against runaway production have had much to do with their ability to form and sustain coalitions, mainly with other unions; The groundbreaking study of the problem was a cooperative effort between SAG and the DGA; the Runaway Production Alliance included a cross-section of the industry; and SAG's move to extend Rule One drew on support from U. S. , Canadian, and Australian unions.

But while the coalition approach has been effective, coalitions are inherently unstable. In recent years, a number of unions in the communication sector have pursued more permanent arrangements to increase labor power, or present a united front to capital. One approach is to pursue mergers with other unions, strategically designed to restructure organized labor along the same lines as the corporations that employ their members. Convergent unions like the Communications Workers of America (CWA) or the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) bring together workers in what were once independent industries — newspapers, telecommunications, sound recording, broadcasting — but now are part of cross-media conglomerates. These unions also recognize that it is not just the boundaries between employers that have become blurred; the boundaries between what were once distinct forms of work have also been blurred through the spread of digital technology. Labor convergence, therefore, is seen as an appropriate response to technological and corporate convergence (Bahr, 1998; McKercher, 2002; Swift, 2003). There is considerable research on the value of merger or convergence among trade unions, including the communication and information industries (Batstone, 1984; Katz, 1997; Stone, 2004).

One of SAG's strongest allies in building and maintaining coalitions is AFTRA, which represents 70,000 performers; sound recording artists; radio and television journalists; performers in soap operas, talk shows, reality shows, and game shows; and film, television, and commercial actors. When they were founded in the 1930s, SAG and AFTRA represented distinctly different workers, in distinctly different industries, on opposite coasts of the United States. Since then, a series of

technological innovations have eroded the jurisdictional and geographical lines that separated the two unions. Approximately 44,000 actors hold memberships in both unions, which means 40% of SAG members belong to AFTRA and 60% of AFTRA members belong to SAG. AFTRA is planning to move its headquarters to Los Angeles, finally following the migration of the television industry from East to West Coast. These unions have also had to cope with massive corporate concentration and cross-media consolidation, developments that have tipped the balance of power in labor relations sharply toward the management side.

The two unions have talked about merging for decades, and in 1981 they agreed to jointly bargain on their major contracts. That agreement was meant to be the first step in a merger, but the unity effort fell by the wayside when an internal battle erupted at SAG between progressive and conservative factions of the union, prompted by the election of Edward Asner as SAG president. In 1998, the leadership of two unions agreed to merge into a brand-new union and sent the plan to the members for ratification. Under both unions' constitutions, ratification required the approval of 60% of voters. Two-thirds of AFTRA's voters approved it. A majority of SAG voters turned it down.

Five years later, the two unions tried again, this time negotiating an affiliation that would bring together the two unions and set up quasi-independent branches for actors, musicians, and broadcasters. In presenting the plan to members, *AFTRA Magazine* emphasized that technological change added urgency to the need to unite. "The emergence of digital production has rapidly escalated the jurisdictional conflict. This serves to: 1. Drive down terms and conditions for performers. 2. Divert resources from critical union initiatives" ("AFTRA and SAG boards," 2003, p. 5). But if new technology was a compelling factor, so was industry consolidation: *AFTRA Magazine* noted that the number of major employers had declined from 26 in 1985 to 6.5 of them in the television and motion picture industry; 8 studios controlled 88% of all domestic theatrical production and distribution; 5 record companies controlled 84% of the recording industry; cable revenues increased from US $5 billion in 1990 to US $35 billion in 2002, and the cable market was controlled by 5 companies; 2 cable system owners, AT&T and Time Warner, accounted for 40% of all cable households; 2 companies owned more than 1,400 radio stations and one, Clear Channel, was composed of what used to be 70 separate companies. "While AFTRA and SAG have been *thinking* about consolidating, our employers have actually done it. The industry *already* has consolidated [italics in original]" (p. 4).

This time, 75.8% of AFTRA members supported the merger. At SAG, the deal fell short by a hair: 57.8% voted in favor of merging, just shy of the required 60% margin (Kiefer, 2003). In both merger campaigns, the SAG opposition rallied enough actors who wanted the purity of an actors union to turn down the creation of a union that would include a broader range of performers. In other words, given the choice between a craft union and a convergent union, they chose the narrower path. The antimerger members were a minority at SAG. But the group was sizeable enough to win the day.

Since then, the two unions have continued to jointly negotiate on major contracts. They are also working together on the AFL-CIO's industry coordinating committee, created in the fall of 2005 and covering 10 unions in the arts, entertainment, media, and telecommunication industries. The council's goal, according to the AFL-CIO (2005), is to build more power for workers in these industries in the face of rapid media consolidation and massive technological shifts.

Nonetheless, the failure to merge has had consequences. One of the most significant is that both unions have had to devote resources to competing with each other over new digital technologies. A host of new devices and media have arrived since the last merger vote: podcasts, satellite radio, iPods with video screens, interactive blogs, cell phones that can be used to download video and music, and so forth. These devices have all but obliterated the already eroding lines between various types of performance, and pose a serious challenge to jurisdictional divisions. In January 2006 AFTRA

president John Connolly set out his union's stance on digital technology, recording a podcast to do so: "This message . . . [is] an acknowledgement of AFTRA's readiness and resolve to organize the digital markets of the 21st century — proof positive that AFTRA is the future in media" (AFTRA, 2006). Because SAG also claims that its contracts cover digital production, this means the two unions are now competing for digital work. Both are aware that interunion competition tends to benefit the employers rather than the workers. As Matt Kimbrough, AFTRA national recording secretary, puts it, "The only way a union competes with another union for a job is to offer the producers a better deal. That's a hard truth and it's not good for the members" (M. Kimbrough, personal communication [interview], February 6, 2006). But when two unions both want the same work, competition is inevitable. There have been other signs of a chill in relations between the two unions. For example, in March 2007 SAG leaders sat down with executives of the Writers Guild of America to map out strategy for the next round of film and television contract talks. For years, AFTRA has been a key partner in those negotiations, but no one from AFTRA attended the meeting. *The Hollywood Reporter* quoted a well-placed industry source as suggesting AFTRA's absence underscored a growing rift between the two unions (DiOrio. 2007). SAG's new national executive director, Doug Allen, told *The Hollywood Reporter* in early 2007 that his union needs to sort out its "really important" relationship with AFTRA, adding, "But I will tell you, with that issue — as well as with a number of other priority issues — there are two things that I'm going to use as considerations in judging how I feel about things: Does it make sense, and is it good for members of the Screen Actors Guild?" ("Doug Allen, SAG," 2007)

Meanwhile, AFTRA has been rethinking its position on runaway production. Kimbrough says AFTRA is not sure that continuing the fight for film-incentive legislation at the same level it has in the past is worth the time, money, and effort. "We've spent a considerable amount of energy and capital in support of these bills," he explains, "and that has gravitated to the benefit largely of the Screen Actors Guild. There has not been a terrific amount of growth in AFTRA work as a result of these bills." While AFTRA considers backing away, SAG is heading in the opposite direction, toward a legal challenge of Canadian subsidies. Its board voted in late 2005 to support the FTAC's plan for an investigation of the subsidies, contributing US $10,000 for a report on the issue (McNary, 2005). It reiterated that support a year later with a promise of a US $50,000 payment to the law firm putting together the initial filing of a complaint with the U. S. Trade Representative's office (SAG, 2006). FTAC, a single-issue coalition of mainly below-the-line workers, has argued that filing a complaint with the U. S. Trade Representative's office alleging that Canadian film production subsidies violate trade agreements is the best way to combat runaway production. This would, however, be a lengthy and costly venture with, as Magder and Burston (2001) suggest, relatively little chance of success (pp. 223 – 224). AFTRA has no interest in the trade case. "Politically we have voted it down every time it comes up in our boardroom. We regard it as counterproductive," says Kimbrough (M. Kimbrough, personal communication [interview], February 6, 2006). In October 2007 the Bush administration turned down the FTAC request to file the complaint.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how SAG and other Hollywood unions have identified and then taken action to fight the phenomenon known as "runaway production." SAG has commissioned reports, lobbied for legislation, launched publicity campaigns, experimented with expanded jurisdiction, and worked on what ultimately would be an unsuccessful complaint to the U. S. Trade Representative's office. In all of these measures, it has worked with other organizations, mainly trade unions representing both above-the-line creative workers and below-the-line craft and technical workers.

Some of these efforts have had an effect. Perhaps the most significant is that the film industry

coalitions have managed to put the issue on the political agenda at the national and state levels. Currently, the U.S. federal government and more than 20 states have film incentive legislation or tax rebates of some sort. Whether they are strong enough on their own to keep production in the United States is difficult to say. Ironically, their appearance coincides with the rise in the value of the Canadian dollar, a development that in its own right makes Canada less attractive as a production site. At the same time, other countries, such as Romania, are happy to offer themselves to Hollywood as low-cost production sites. The decision to apply SAG's Rule One globally has put more money into SAG's coffers and attempted to assert the union's jurisdiction more broadly. And the appeals to patriotism and the threats to boycott productions filmed abroad may be having a psychological effect. Pamm Fair of SAG says that when producers of films, movies of the weekend, and even independent production do their budget these days — "and we've seen some of them" — they compare costs for Canada and two or three other places in the United States, such as New Mexico, Louisiana, Los Angeles, or New York. "If the gap is narrow enough they'll do it in the U.S.," she says (P. Fair, personal communication [interview], February 3, 2006).

Though they have been effective, informal coalitions only work as long as they meet the self-interest of the individual members. And as a rule, their focus tends to be narrow, driven by a single issue — or a small collection of related issues — on which the various members may agree. Ron Morgan, president of AFTRA's Los Angeles Local, says focusing too narrowly on runaway production misses the larger issue confronting Hollywood unions. "The real runaway production issue, to me, is not that the work is going to Canada, but that it's going non-union. That's runaway production as far as I'm concerned" (R. Morgan, personal communication, [interview], February 6, 2006). If Morgan is right, the solution to the problem of the increase in nonunion work is to capture — or in some cases, recapture — the work. And in that effort, a convergent union — positioned to work in all media and represent all creative workers, not just actors — would likely stand more chance of success than two competing unions. SAG had an opportunity to join with AFTRA and create a larger union that simultaneously would be more united and more diverse. By rejecting AFTRA — twice — SGA has lost an opportunity to solidify its relationship with its closest ally. This will have consequences, in Hollywood and beyond. [①]

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[①] In 2012, SAG and AFTRA finally merged. Support for the merger grew after disastrous contract negotiations in 2008 and 2009. Instead of bargaining together, the unions negotiated with employers separately, which allowed the studios to play one union off against the other. In 2009, SAG elected a new president, Ken Howard, on a pro-merger platform. It took about two years to negotiate the merger agreement. The membership of both unions ratified it by majorities of over 80 per cent. The fight against runaway production continues.

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19. Immaterial Labor, Precarity, and Recomposition

Enda Brophy   Greig de Peuter

Net-worker, *flex-timer*, *permatemp*, *crowdsourcing*, *precariat*. These and a host of other terms entering our vocabulary register a set of transformations underway in the rhythms of work and the forms of labor. This lexicon is the product of an epochal recomposition of capital and labor, the contours of which became apparent in the 1960s and have sharpened since then. Celebratory and skeptical perspectives have long competed to explain these changes and their political significance.

The dominant celebratory tradition coalesced around the discursive figure of the "knowledge worker" (Bell 1973, Drucker 1954, Machlup 1962). Written against the backdrop of the Cold War, Daniel Bell's "end of ideology" thesis famously foresaw a decline of class-based struggle, with capitalism ultimately emerging victor. The knowledge worker, a character for whom Bell and important management theorists held an enduring fascination, was often the protagonist of this narrative. This was a new kind of laborer, who bore few similarities to his[1] unruly progenitor, the industrial worker. Working with his head not his hands, the knowledge worker reportedly enjoyed a workplace where hierarchy was being flattened, participatory processes incorporated, and labor conflict gradually eliminated. This vision won over many supporters through the restructuring of capital initiated in the 1970s, and it reappeared, reinvigorated, in the 1990s, fanning the embers of the New Economy.

Transformations of informational work, workers, and workplaces received a deeply critical response from writers in the political economy of communication tradition (Mattelart 1979; Menzies 1996; Mosco 1983; Smythe 1981). Without denying the extent of the changes occurring in the world of labor, these political economists illustrated that their effects on workers were hardly as rosy as those rendered in the dominant discourse on the knowledge worker and his technological habitat, the "information society." While their theoretical influences and political commitments may differ, many of the researchers addressing the situation of contemporary communicative labor (McKercher and Mosco 2006) share at least one aim: counteracting narratives of so-called "friction-free capitalism" (Gates 1995) that ignore the continuation of labor conflict, drudgery, and exploitation.

In a similar spirit, this chapter introduces and briefly surveys another area of labor theory and activism that provides a counter-narrative to celebratory theories of the knowledge worker. Informed by Italian autonomist Marxism and contemporary European social movements, this chapter discusses a set of theoretical writings and a field of political action associated with the concepts of immaterial labor

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① As Ursula Huws has pointed out (2003, 156 – 158), the literature of the time spoke of the knowledge worker as almost exclusively male. As we suggest further on in this chapter, this was only one of the tradition's oversights.

and precarity. Broadly, immaterial labor designates work involving knowledge, affect, and symbols, while precarity identifies the unstable employment conditions in which countless immaterial laborers find themselves today. We argue that discussions of the concept of precarity are opening a space of constructive criticism of certain shortcomings of the immaterial labor idea. These discussions are in turn entangled with an emergent current of anti-precarity activism that is proving a promising laboratory for recomposing labor politics, specifically by raising issues of subjectivity, difference, and organization that help us confront forms of labor, life, and struggle in ascendancy at the start of the 21st century.

Materializing Immaterial Labor

The concept of immaterial labor derives from the tradition of Italian autonomist Marxism. This tradition has been historically oriented toward the creation of new forms of collective organization, direct action, and non-capitalist sociality, a project grounded in inquiry into the ever-changing "composition" of labor (Dyer-Witheford 1999; Dyer-Witheford forthcoming; Wright 2002). Foregrounding the ongoing struggle of labor and capital, compositional analysis sets out from the assumption that labor is continually decomposed by capital's attacks, yet labor emerges recomposed in a form that poses new, and potentially escalated, threats to capital's rule. For autonomists, the deskilled industrial "mass worker" of the Taylorist factory, for example, was a figure who, due to his militancy, had to be decomposed by capital; this decomposition in turn set the stage for the restructuring of capital according to a post-Fordist model (Negri 1988). The expression, forms, and prospects of collective organization are constituted within this dynamic, ongoing, mutual recomposition of labor and capital.

Since the mid-1990s many autonomist theorists have proposed that immaterial labor is a key manifestation of the emerging composition of labor under post-Fordism. This argument reached its widest audience through Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's companion books, *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004). Hardt and Negri (2000, 290) define immaterial labor as "labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication." The immaterial labor concept is born of a recognition of the increasing centrality of knowledge, creativity, emotion, and social cooperation to capital accumulation (Lazzarato 1996). But these theorists are not reciting the familiar ode to the knowledge worker associated with post-industrial management theorists such as Peter Drucker.

For starters, autonomists link the increasing economic significance of intellectual, informational, and semiotic production to labor's exploitation, specifically as this exploitation extends beyond the walls of the traditional workplace (Fortunati 1995). Knowledge, language, images, and emotion, these theorists argue, have been "put to work" with unprecedented intensiveness globally, though most widely in advanced post-Fordist sectors and regions (Lazzarato 1996, 146). The immaterial labor concept therefore registers the centrality of communication to value-creation today, a process that is increasingly diffuse: immaterial labor not only refers to the labor of the call center worker as she manages affect via a headset during poorly paid work time at a cubicle; it also speaks of the unremunerated work of the person called when responding to, say, a consumer research survey.

However, the extraction of value from immaterial labor, much like that occurring at the zenith of Fordism in the automobile factories of Turin or Detroit, is not a friction-free matter. Call center workers organize. Videogame workers sabotage. Film workers agitate. What contrasts this autonomist perspective to celebratory theorizations of the knowledge worker is not only the former's assertion that this work is not always all it is cracked up to be, but also the insistence that the capacities and desires of immaterial laborers sporadically conflict with, and regularly spin out of, capital's sphere of control

(Dyer-Witheford 1999). More than a descriptive term, then, the concept of immaterial labor asks us to look for moments of conflict, to explore those instances at which the immaterial worker becomes resistant and unmanageable, to find moments of political recomposition.

The concept of immaterial labor is not without its problems. Indeed, some of the term's earliest theorists have acknowledged its limits (Hardt and Negri 2000, 30), and a number of voices internal to the autonomist tradition have raised incisive criticisms (Caffentzis 1997, 2005; Dyer-Witheford 2005, Wright 2005). Despite its focus on conflict, one of the primary worries critics of it have is that the concept risks grafting the idealism of the post-industrial managerial literature onto an allegedly radical reading of post-Fordist labor (Dyer-Witheford 2005). Underscoring this concern, Vassilis Tsianos and Dimitris Papadopoulos (2006) ask provocatively: "Who's afraid of immaterial workers today?" Tsianos and Papadopoulos caution against the reduction of immaterial labor to a "sociological description" of the features of immaterial production which focuses predominantly on the creative, communicative dimensions of such work. Instead, they argue that attention ought to be refocused on the "embodied experience" of immaterial labor, zeroing in on the tension between the machinations of value creation and the flesh of living labor, exploited and resistant, under post-Fordism. These various concerns can perhaps all be traced to the disembodied terminology, i. e., *im*material labor. On this Alisa Del Re (2005, 54) makes an important clarification: "production is certainly immaterial, but ... this cannot come into reality independently of bodies."

Bringing narratives of both friction-free capitalism and idealized immaterial labor down from the heavenly bodies to their earthly counterparts might be understood as a task of materializing immaterial labor. One path for pursuing this is opening in the current of theory and practice centering on precarity.

Precarity: Immaterial Labor on Shaky Ground

Precariousness is one of the key material axes along which immaterial labor is organized, and thus one that defines its composition. We can define precarity broadly as the financial and existential insecurity arising from the flexibilization of labor. At the start of the new millennium the concept of precarity was taken up by a growing number of activists, researchers, and theorists in Europe, where it is closely linked to debates on immaterial labor. Evolving through a series of face-to-face encounters, online journals, e-mail lists, and demonstrations, the term precarity is a collectively created conceptual tool, the practical purpose of which is to aid in naming, understanding, and ultimately transforming the conditions of labor under post-Fordism.

Discussions of labor precarity often begin by way of a contrast to classic Fordist employment conditions: the same job for life, a stable identity rooted in one's permanent employment, a predictable schedule, a relatively stable income, the performance of repetitive manual labor, and access to "welfare" supports during periods of unemployment (Foti 2004). The slow, uneven, and partial departure from such arrangements has been explained from an autonomist perspective emphasizing the role played by resistance in the post-Fordist restructuring of capital. These narratives highlight that the employers' quest for relaxed employment laws, off-shore production locales, and decentralized production networks was in part a response to the pressure imposed on their profits by labor's escalating wage struggle (Negri 1988, 210 – 211); that the expansion of part-time employment was in part a response to the refusals by young people of the generation of 1968 to capitulate to the sort of work routines endured by their parents (Mitropolous 2005, 88); and that the corporate embrace of flexibility as both an ideology and a production model was in part a response to disenchantment with the rigidities of post-war mass society (Holmes 2003).

Empirical research confirms the spread of precarious employment in contemporary advanced

capitalist societies (Vosko 2000). Part-time work, temporary contracts, self-employment, the absence of union representation, and at the most abrasive edge of precarity, informal work by undocumented migrants, are among the employment conditions endured by a collective subject of production that some activist-theorists have dubbed "the precariat" (*republicart* 2005). While immaterial labor is not the only group to whom precarious employment is increasingly familiar, the line of theorizing on which we are concentrating here has tended to focus on this sector of the precariat, inquiring into the situation of call-center workers (Kolinko 2002) and chain-store workers (www. ecn. org/chainworkers/), among others.

The significance of the precariat and the immaterial labor it performs in aid of capital accumulation today, remarks labor organizer Alex Foti (2005), derives from the fact that it generates, sorts, and manages much of the "raw material on which the system functions: information." Precarious workers also produce images and affect. For Foti (2004), they are "peripheral in terms of rights" and wages, but they are "central in terms of the financial web of the creative value produced." We need only think of the contract programmers who write code for the world's hegemonic word-processing software, the part-time employees servicing the counters of the spectacular economy, or the sessionally appointed academics teaching in colleges and universities.

One of the things that is "new" about labor precarity, say members of the Spanish feminist collective Precarias a la deriva (2004, 158), is not its existence as such, but rather the degree to which it has been "generalized": post-Fordism democratizes exploitation. As Félix Guattari and Antonio Negri (1990, 76) intuited in the 1980s, a "fear of the hell of the absence of guarantees" was beginning to express itself across various class positions. Hence Precarias a la deriva speaks of the tendency towards "precarization." Precarization is a process in and through which heterogeneous sectors of labor are articulated, albeit implicated in dramatically different manners, along lines of age, class, gender, and "race," as well as sector and place. Consider this sequence: a high-ranking media executive, subject to quarterly performance evaluations, commits excessive hours to his job, and is able to do so because an "illegal" nanny is caring for his daughter; the same executive outsources a fractal part of an informational task to a self-employed communications consultant who enjoys low-cost digital equipment for her home office, because the price of such commodities is subsidized by hyper-exploited assembly workers in the *maquiladoras* and by debt-saddled, part-time, student-cashiers with substandard wages, benefits, and security. Precarious employment, as Leah Vosko (2003, 2) puts it, is a "continuum".

Although the differences across diverse social subjects of precarity cannot be downplayed, there are nonetheless qualities in the realms of "socialization" and "emotional tonalities" in this brave new laboring world that arguably are increasingly widespread (Virno 2004, 105 – 106).

Being precarious means one's relationship to time is marked by uncertainty, from the part-time on-call retail clerk whose non-work time is haunted by the prospect of being called in to do a shift, to the self-employed copywriter perpetually juggling contracts, rarely declining a contract for fear of a future lull in the flow of income. So-called flexible schedules precarize the time of life in a paradoxical sense of exposure to "both a lack and an excess of 'work'" (Iles 2005, 136): a lack in the obvious sense of too little money; an excess in the dual sense of a mental preoccupation with work ("When will it arrive?" "How will I best prepare myself to take on more of it?") and a contortionist approach to the planning of one's time. Subsumption of the time of life by work underscores that labor precarity is also social precarity: "The yo-yo hours and days typical of flexible employment also disrupt the conditions and environment of sociality and the possibility of constructing sociality itself." (Tari and Vanni 2005)

An extreme edge of precarity is work without pay. On this point the exchanges on precarity link to feminist-autonomists who, in the 1970s, argued that time spent on the endless domestic activity of caring for male wage-earners and raising children amounted to unpaid labor in that such off-the-clock

duties are an invisible condition of value extraction in the factory (Dalla Costa and James 1972, Fortunati 1995). This intervention extended a view of productivity as a force over-spilling the factory walls, emanating from and captured across the manifold spaces of everyday life. Continuing in this vein, Tiziana Terranova (2004) writes of the economic significance to the digital media industries of an expanding sphere of immaterial labor activities she calls "free labor," like the eliciting of feedback from software users that is now integral to software development, a dynamic that has us eventually buying back the fruits of our "free" time in commodity form.

Precarization is, therefore, not necessarily imposed from above on a docile body. Instead, it entails the management of "life from its interior" by active subjects (Tari and Vanni 2005), or, a certain mode of "care of the self," an ensemble of techniques and practices through which one relates to or sets to work on oneself (Foucault 1988). In an age of precarity entrepreneurship in particular becomes an increasingly widespread form of care of the self and of the treatment of others. Angela McRobbie (2002, 98, 109) speaks to this in the context of a discussion of the growth of "permanently transitional" employment among young cultural workers. She notes that the social networks on which entrepreneurial audacity is deployed are significant resources, but these "are not simply there, on tap. They have to be worked at." The entrepreneurial ethos further compels each to be "responsible . . . for managing [our] own human capital to maximal effect" (Fraser 2003, 168). Ultimately, this pattern of self-constitution under post-Fordism entails a tendency towards what Brian Holmes (2003, 139) theorizes as "the flexible personality," linked in turn to a general intensification of "opportunism" in social life (Virno 2004).

The democratic-sounding discourses surrounding precarity are particularly insidious. The most obvious example here is the term "flexibility," which packs a positive connotative punch. Just as the unpaid work of software users can be proposed as participatory, flexibility has come to invoke senses of mobility, nomadism, and the freeing up of rigidity. But linked as it is to discourses of self-reliance, one dark side of flexibility is its perfect fit, ideologically and practically, with the dismantling of the practices of solidarity associated with trade unionism, not to mention the welfare state itself. As for those who would celebrate the erosion of the lifelong permanent job "as a new liberation in the sense that you don't have a fixed identity," Slavoj Zizek replies: "This is a typical postmodern ideological operation, where the horror of never being certain whether you have a job or not is sold as the new freedom" (Zizek and Daly 2005, 147 - 148).

Several writers have pointed to how precarity induces fear in those subjected to it. Pierre Bourdieu (1998, 85) referred to the precarization of employment as a "mode of domination of a new kind, based on the creation of a generalized and permanent state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission, into the acceptance of exploitation." Others, closer to the autonomist critique, suggest that precarity is an affective cornerstone of how the work society perpetuates itself: "The widespread feeling of insecurity deriving from these transformations is the main weapon used by patriarchal capitalism to reduce to silence the political indignation of work" (hagen's blog, *This Tuesday*, comments posted September 27, 2004). Even if one is not directly precarious "awareness of it never goes away" (Guattari and Negri, 1990).

But fear does not fully exhaust dissent. Nor is a watchful eye for "opportunity" an inherently negative trait.

Precarity-based Activism

Labor flexibilization leaves some progressives pessimistic about the possibilities of a collective labor politics. Generalized job insecurity, according to Bourdieu (1998, 82), is potentially devastating in that it makes "the whole future uncertain," thereby corroding "the basic belief and hope in the future

that one needs in order to rebel." McRobbie (2000, 112) wonders whether "[b]eing freelance or self-employed ... negate[s] the idea of the politics of work." Without doubt the rise of precarity as a tendency under post-Fordism means established labor movements are faced with a disaggregation of both the spaces of work and types of worker to which they are accustomed. Diminishing rates of unionization across the G-8 economies might be taken as confirmation that labor organizing has been dealt a deathblow. But focusing on labor's defeats since the 1970s risks obscuring the new forms of conflict and of subjectivity emerging amidst the slow, uneven, but steady recomposition of 21st century labor. As immaterial labor morphs into flex-work and existential uncertainty is generalized, a new generation of activists is exploring how to struggle within and against precarity. This sphere of political action is one in which the skill-sets of immaterial labor are applied in self-organized research projects, counter-networks, alternative media, non-branded iconography, and protest planning.

Much of the radical theory and practice we have been surveying in this chapter is evolving from autonomously organized research initiatives. Exercises in what Marx called "workers' inquiry" (Wright 2002, 32 – 62), or what autonomists know as "co-research" (Borio et al. 2007), such investigations are conducted to generate knowledge regarding precarious forms of work and those subjected to it (Brancaccio et al. 2005). For example, Precarias a la deriva (2004, 157) is described by its members as an "initiative between research and activism." It began with what they term a "picket-survey," which involved communicating directly with women participating in a general strike in Spain. This strike was found to be problematic for reasons that included the unions' failure to take up "domestic work and care, almost entirely done by women in the 'non-productive' sphere," and "precarious, flexible, invisible or undervalued work." In a similar vein, members of the Kolinko activist collective (2002) began by taking jobs in call centers "in order to meet people who work there," and to gauge the kinds of composition and struggle occurring within them. Such inquiries have helped open up analyses of emergent forms of work to perspectives and experiences marginalized by the traditionally male and union-centric field of labor activism.

Like these inquiries, precarity-based protests have been initiated as an exercise in making visible forms of labor that have been rendered invisible by dominant forms of capitalist production and political representation. The transient nature of much of precarious work and the networked organization of immaterial labor have forced organizers to view the "metropolitan territory we navigate every day" (Precarias a la deriva 2004, 159) as the space within which to achieve visibility for these workers. The most successful example here is the EuroMayDay Parade, where for the past few years precarity has served as a banner under which tens of thousands have mobilized. With its 2006 edition spanning 19 European cities from Amsterdam to Seville, EuroMayDay visibly announces the arrival of a new subject of production, its new forms of struggle, and new social demands. EuroMayDay was conceived in 2001 as an updating of the May Day parades that have been a part of the labor movement since 1886. Parade organizers locate its roots in a desire "to bring the spirit of Seattle-Genoa to postindustrial workplaces and supermarkets and escalate the fight against precarity," and its goal as one of asserting "new labor and welfare rights for an increasingly disadvantaged generation" (Chainworkers and Radiohacktive, 2005). The event's evolution into a continental demonstration in just a few years testifies to its resonance: by 2004, 100,000 participated in the parades on the streets of Barcelona and Milan, with numbers growing since then (Foti 2005).

An essential component of precarity-based activism has been its emphasis on developing forms of representation and organization adequate to the conditions of precarious employment. Disenchanted by the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of certain unions, the precariat has favored organizing in affinity-based networks and sector-specific agencies. In terms of constituencies, the EuroMayDay event has built on affinities between often-disparate communities, including migrants without

documentation, queer groups, independent media activists, social centers set up by squatters, rank-and-file labor unions, and countless other collectives. None of these struggles is placed on a pedestal above the others — an anti-vanguardist ethic that has done much to diversify the movement. Groups such as Chainworkers in Italy, the French Intermittents du Spectacle (of the French film and television industry), and the Young Researchers' Federation of Spain (graduate students and young academics) are all enacting forms of organization that are outside of the traditional union framework.

In terms of organization, one of the most important effects of the way these movements and collectives have come into contact is the steady construction of a network spanning Europe and spilling beyond its borders. Events such as the European Social Forum and the EuroMayDay coordinating meetings have provided venues for the extension of this network. Away from these events the conceptual code of precarity (its articulation, the circulation of research, and the organization of further events) is spliced together across e-mail lists and within local workshops. Not surprisingly, it is from this nascent network of labor activism that we see signs of, and hear proposals for, the self-organization of precarious immaterial labor. [1] Illustrative of this is Foti's (2005) proposal to "build social self-representation through metropolitan activism by federating autonomist collectives and local unions around the social organization of the precariat."

An important aspect of the emerging movements against precarity is their relationship to the established labor movement. As we have suggested, many precarity-based collectives are born from the exclusion from traditional unionism and its Fordist-inspired patterns of struggle and collective bargaining. These sentiments are echoed in various forms by organizers across the breadth of precarity-based activism, and have sometimes resulted (as in the case of the EuroMayDay marches) in a purposeful exclusion of larger trade unions from formal participation in the committees that organize events.

At the same time, the established labor movement has been forced in many cases to respond to mobilizations surrounding precarious employment, not to mention its diminishing base. In Spain, France, and Italy the term precarity has steadily become a standard part of the vocabulary of both the major trade unions and center-left parties. The fastest-growing unions in America, such as the Service Employees International Union, have been the ones organizing amongst some of the most precarious occupations and sectors. Precarious workers are therefore entering into varying articulations with both the established labor movement and rank-and-file unions, with intriguing examples of such combinations emerging from the ranks of immaterial labor. To offer just two examples, Microsoft "permatemps" in Redmond, Washington, have organized WashTech, their "open-source" union, through the Communications Workers of America (Brophy 2006, Rodino-Colocino 2006), and in Italy rank-and-file unions such as the Cobas are in the thick of struggles surrounding call center workers on temporary contracts. It is therefore unwise to make hard and fast distinctions between the established labor movement and grassroots forms of activism, since these can overlap at the level of rank-and-file organizing.

There are a number of proposals emerging from within these movements for ways of moving beyond precarity. Some suggest that existing "workers' rights" do not provide sufficient protection for the precarious laborer and that remuneration schemes no longer accurately reflect work schedules (Lazzarato 2003). But these activists do not see a return to the Fordist job-for-life model and regular full-time hours as a necessarily desirable solution to the problem of precarity. Instead there have been

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[1] This network has been given virtual expression in the form of a "European precarity map": http://www. precarity-map. net.

calls for "flexicurity," a new form of social security appropriate to an age of labor flexiblization (Foti 2005). For example, the film and television workers in the Intermittents du spectacle express a need for "continuous income for discontinuous forms of work" (Lazzarato 2003). In other words, if capitalism is increasingly structurally dependent upon intermittent work, capital must accept that to sustain its labor source it must pay for its off-work time. These kinds of demands dovetail with calls for a "basic income" that predate, but continue to inspire, at least some of the elements of precarity-based activism (Fumagalli 2006). If the trend towards precarity accelerates, some form of basic income may actually be capitalism's only available response to what could be an escalating labor crisis. Yet according to some, the demands for new forms of legislation like the basic income risk foreclosing emergent forms of self-organization and of representation that are able to build upon radical desires within these movements to exit "the capitalist organization of work altogether" (Iles 2005, 136).

Conclusion: Taking Precautions with Precarity

The discussion and activism surrounding the precarious conditions of immaterial labor confirm that not all recognize themselves in the celebratory image of the knowledge worker. But while it is powerful, the concept of precarity nonetheless comes with its own problems. Several concerns about the concept have been raised. One is that discussions of it give the mistaken impression that the condition is novel (Mitropoulos 2005, 91). There are two points to make here. The first is that labor precarity is as old as capitalism itself (Böhm and Fernandez 2005). Working people are always precarious under capitalism, in that most individuals depend for subsistence on the sale of their capacity to labor — a sale that is never guaranteed. Closely related are concerns about how Fordism is represented in these debates. The employment stability associated with Fordism cannot be treated as a norm. Fordism was, on the contrary, an exceptional moment in the history of capitalism (Mitropoulos 2005, 91). This exception speaks to the power of labor, which had sufficiently threatened capital during the 1930s to force it to make unprecedented concessions during the post-war period. Yet such deal-making carried its own heavy cost. In return for stability, big labor ceded autonomy in the workplace, and, at least in the United States, agreed to tame its most radical elements.

Holding Fordism up as an egalitarian ideal also uncritically recapitulates the latter's patriarchal character: the apparently stable income of the male wage-earner frequently rested upon the unpaid domestic labor of women. A related criticism is that the image of the secure Fordist worker never was a universal subject, but, rather, "[a] comparably privileged worker who was nonetheless elevated to the exemplary protagonist of class struggle" (Mitropoulos 2005, 91). Indeed there can be little doubt that precarity is today becoming recognized as an issue in part because a generation of young white men of the offices, universities, and factories are not inheriting the Fordist security they assumed would be their lot (2005, 91).

Another concern is that the term precarity groups together types and experiences of work that are radically dissimilar. Precarias a la deriva (2005) therefore warns that "any project which aspires to produce something shared" must acknowledge the forms of stratification among the precarious. This in turn has impacts on the ethics of organization. As Angela Mitropoulos (2005, 91, 92) writes: "How does the fast food 'chainworker,' who is compelled to be affective, compliant, and routinised not assume such a role in relation to a software 'brainworker,' whose habitual forms of exploitation oblige opinion, innovation and self-management? ... To what extent do the performance imperatives of artistic-cultural exploitation (visibility, recognition, authorship) foreclose the option of clandestinity which remains an imperative for the survival of many undocumented migrants and workers in the informal economy?" In short, there are dangers in positing a unified subject of precarity, and, in turn, in assuming a one-size-fits-all set of organizational strategies and tactics.

The existence of these debates, and the struggles fueling them, point to a discernible recomposition of labor, one in which immaterial labor and precarity are becoming key concepts. This recomposition, dispelling the mythology of the friction-free, knowledge-worker discourse, brings with it a series of ethical and organizational questions. Attending to lived experience and difference are just two ways in which the exchanges we have touched on here can inform the never-ending process of gauging composition, and through grounded inquiry, extend a critical theory and political practice of the contemporary multitude of knowledge workers.

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20. Looking for Labor in Feminist Media Studies

Lisa McLaughlin

Within critical media studies, one promising and overdue development is an expansion in the number of insightful studies focusing on communication and cultural industries. The best of this research has served the worthwhile purpose of mitigating the institutional divide and divisiveness between cultural studies and political economy, one of the more unfortunate scholarly legacies of the 1990s. Writing in the twilight of that decade, I registered my regret that Western feminist media scholars in particular were amassed on the cultural studies side of this divide, persistently overlooking the insights of political economy and missing an opportunity to illuminate issues of gender and areas of women's lives that cannot be fully understood without viewing them through both cultural and political economic lenses (McLaughlin 1999). Now, nearly ten years on, feminist media scholarship is more attentive to communication and culture as material practices and to the conditions of textual production, and some feminist scholars have offered revelatory analyses of the ways in which texts, audiences, and industries are enmeshed with one another (see, e.g., Meehan and Byars 2000; Levine 2005). Similar to the general field of media studies, however, feminist media studies offer few sustained, concentrated analyses of the role of labor in the production of cultural commodities or the cultures and social experiences of persons who are variously labeled with designations including *knowledge worker*, *information worker*, and *creative worker*.

Information, information industries, information and communication technologies (ICT), and the workers who make and use the latter are central to the globalizing economy. Women are preferred laborers in numerous ICT sectors. They tend to predominate in service sectors involving routinized, low-skilled labor and limited technical training. Men are far more likely to have better paying, higher skilled jobs such as those in software development or programming. Within the fast-growing and increasingly feminized retail and financial services industries, women generally are employed in lower status occupations where work is often temporary and poorly remunerated. Even more women work in the informal economy or in low-wage telework, call center work, and electronics assembly, sectors in which sexist, racist, and ethnocentric structures of oppression stimulate and aggravate poor working conditions. As the majority of women populate the lower ranks of ICT occupations, others are targeted for tertiary education in technology fields as governments seek to locate themselves strategically within the global knowledge economy by meeting corporations' demands for more high-skilled workers; one

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outcome of such attempts to mainstream women into skilled ICT occupations is a gendering of the "brain drain," with university-educated women emigrating in large numbers from lesser economically developed countries to member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Because women are central as workers in the information economy, it is especially perplexing that, despite some important exceptions, women's labor routinely is neglected by feminist media scholars.[①] Few feminists would dispute the importance of this area of research. Yet empirical studies of women, work, and the information economy are more likely to be generated by prolific "gender experts" writing reports for the OECD and United Nations specialized agencies including the International Labor Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and the International Telecommunication Union. Such reports are limited by their propensity to measure progress through macro-economic indicators of development and deterministic support for the accessto-technology-as-empowerment thesis. In mainstream gender and development policies and practices, the panacea for overcoming women's subordination is to increase women's individual skills and capacities through training programs, "unleash" their "entrepreneurial energies," and mainstream them into corporate-led public-private partnership initiatives. Contributions to the academic journal *Gender, Technology and Development*, most of which are authored by scholars from the Global South, demonstrate the potential for feminist analyses to counter bureaucratic approaches and conclusions with theoretically and empirically grounded scholarship that clarifies the complexities of women's social experiences in working with ICTs through research not entirely driven by numerical data.

I offer the above remarks in my capacity as an academic researcher with questions about gender, labor, and ICT for development and with a focus on gender and ICT training initiatives arising from public-private "strategic" partnerships forged among a variety of intergovernmental, state, and nonstate actors. I take much of my inspiration from Willis's (2004) acknowledgment that studies in the sociology of labor in the twenty-first century should be oriented to new high-technology jobs, the programs designed to train workers to fill them, the high rate of women in the technology labor force, and the changing definition of identities as relations evolving around commodities and electronic culture compete with those defined by local cultures. I question how these circumstances are experienced and understood by women learning to labor in the Asia Pacific region.[②] This research follows from the imperative to query how women are targeted as workers by dominant ICT-for-development schemes as well as how preparation for ICT work becomes entangled with other areas of their lives.

There are other reasons to advocate for more feminist media scholarship that addresses women's labor; for example, feminist approaches to labor in communication and culture may offer a necessary counterbalance within a media studies context where the scales may tip otherwise toward overly

① The good news is that, although proportionally low in comparison to other sites for feminist media analysis, studies of women and information work often represent outstanding scholarship. Note, however, that many of the authors of this work have primary associations with traditional disciplines and fields, not with media studies, but with sociology, anthropology, organizational studies, and international relations. See for example Hossfeld (2001), Matthews (2003), Ng and Mitter (2005), Wajcman (2004), Webster (1996), and Youngs (2000). Michéle Martin's (1991) *Hello Central* was a pioneering effort within feminist media studies. During the past two years, Sarikakis and Shade (2007), McKercher and Mosco (2007), and Mosco and McKercher (2008) have given prominence to feminist scholarship on the laboring of communication [disclosure: the author of this article has chapters published in both of the cited 2007 collections].
② Inspired by Willis's research, my current research project is titled "Women Learning to Labor in Cyberjaya, Malaysia."

sanguine commentary on entrepreneurial laborers and the creative class or worries about the dire state of unpaid "fan labor" and woes about the corporate exploitation of "grassroots" producers of usergenerated content. More broadly, feminist interrogations of women's work have the effective purpose of establishing that the experience of labor varies not only by class but also by virtue of one's location along dimensions that include gender, "race," ethnicity, nation, sexuality, ability, and generation.

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21. Working Knowledge: Why Labour Matters for Information Studies[①]

Vincent Mosco

This paper responds to the theme of the 2009 CAIS conference, "Borders, Bridges, and Byways,"
in four ways.[②] First, it takes up issues on the border of labour and language by examining the
importance of viewing information as mutually constituted out of these two components. Second, it
addresses the boundary between workers and users by explaining the need to incorporate workers more
directly into information studies research. Third, it aims to integrate information labour with
communication and cultural work. Finally, it points to the importance of bridging the divide that
separates informational labour in rich countries from labour in poorer regions of the world. In doing so,
the paper intends to shed light on why information studies scholars and practitioners need to spend more
time on the study of labour.

There are important conceptual grounds for information studies to pay more attention to labour. Information can be defined as mutually constituted out of language and labour. That is, information is not just the arrangement of symbols into a understandable form. It is also the result of work, specifically the intellective labour that conceives of the form that a particular arrangement of symbols should take and then carries out the operations that formally construct their meaning. The phrase "mutual constitution" is used to assert that neither language nor labour has priority in the constitution of information and to indicate that language and labour work on one another to create information. It is important to emphasize this conceptual move because, particularly since the development of computers and the Internet, the focus has been on the linguistic side of the definition: language, discourse, meaning, content, and the technological means of producing, distributing, and consuming information. Hence, a "labouring of information" is required to shift the definition's centre of gravity.

This shift does not require a radical rupture in theorizing information because there is a subterranean stream of thought, a heterodox challenge to the dominant view of information as discourse, that for nearly three hundred years has occupied social, if not informational, philosophy.

Major figures include Henri Saint-Simon (1952), who, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, explored the expansion of practical knowledge that the new empirical sciences were yielding and the new class of technicians who were shaping it. In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx (1973) produced a vision of the General Intellect that documented how the expansion of knowledge worldwide, along with the rise of capitalism and of the working class, would propel social transformation. Later, the political economist Thorstein Veblen (1934) documented the enormous impact of professions such as engineering and economics for the expansion of wealth and for the growth of a "leisure class" of mainly information workers. In the last half of the twentieth century, Daniel Bell (1973) documented the acceleration of informational and cultural labour that would create economic growth and cultural disjunctions that would challenge the capacity for political management. Alongside Bell, John Kenneth Galbraith (1985) spent part of his career as an economist and social critic examining the informational techno-structure whose concentrated power and bureaucratic operation severely challenged the capacity for democracy and freedom. Finally, Harry Braverman (1974) renewed the spirit of labour studies by examining the new working class of clerical, informational, and marketing labour that, in the 1960s, was transforming not only the nature of work but also of wage-labour in general with important political consequences.

There are other works that fill this subterranean stream. It is hard to leave out C. Wright Mills (1959), who trained his sharp-eyed "sociological imagination" on the growth of a white-collar workforce. But the most important point to keep in mind here is that their work, though read, constituted a heterodox vision for information studies. It suggested, sometimes forcefully, sometimes gently, that dominant models of information needed to take into account labour and the workers whose jobs were increasingly made up of the production, distribution, and exchange of information.

My research on labour starts by uncovering that history and applies it to the contemporary information world. In this respect, it joins a contemporary stream of thought led by the work of Ursula Huws (2003), whose research on the growth of a gendered "cybertariat" brought attention to the factory-like qualities of the contemporary digital workplace. This also includes Andrew Ross (2009) on the rise of informational "permatemps," the regimented hourly workers in today's knowledge-creation centres; Dan Schiller (2000) on digital capitalism; Nick Dyer-Witherford (1999), whose conception of "cyber-Marx" updated class struggle for a world of computers; Michael Denning (1996), who writes on the "labouring of culture"; and those international scholars such as Carol Upadyha (2009) and Jack Linchuan Qiu (2009), whose work illuminates how knowledge works in the networked worlds of India and China.

It is important for information scholars to travel down this subterranean stream but not just for the intellectual satisfaction of uncovering the labouring of the field's history. This has important practical significance as well, particularly in this time of economic upheaval. If the dot com and banking bubbles taught us anything, it is that the key question facing us today is not. What will be the next new thing? — as in smart-phone, social networking software, or some other version of the digital sublime. Rather, it is more likely. Will information or knowledge workers of the world unite?

In an era characterized by declining trade union penetration, increasing corporate concentration, and the rise of global conglomerates that feed into — and are fed by — the spread of new communication and information technology, knowledge workers have begun to explore new ways to increase labour's power. This is especially the case in the information technology and knowledge sectors, which provide the equipment that makes globalization possible, and the production and distribution of the ideas that make it work (Mosco and McKercher 2008). One approach is to pursue trade union mergers, designed strategically to restructure labour unions along much the same lines as the corporations that employ their members. There is considerable research on the value of merger or

convergence among trade unions, including in the communication and information industries (Batstone 1984; Katz 1997; Stone 2004). Convergent unions such as the Communications Workers of America (CWA) or the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) bring together workers in what were once independent industries — newspapers, telecommunications, sound recording, broadcasting — but are now part of cross-media conglomerates. These unions also recognize that it is not just the boundaries between employers that have become blurred; the boundaries between what were once distinct forms of work have also been obscured through the spread of digital technology. Labour convergence, therefore, is seen as an appropriate response to technological and corporate convergence (Bahr 1998; McKercher 2002; Swift 2003). A second approach is to create non-traditional worker organizations, which draw into the labour movement people who cannot or will not join a traditional trade union. Such groups provide a range of services and support for workers, their families, and their communities but do not engage in collective bargaining. In North America, they are particularly prominent in the information arena (Kline, Dyer-Witheford, and de Peuter 2003; Stone 2004; van Jaarsveld 2004).

It is understandably difficult to take seriously these suggestions that we should focus on labour resistance, especially in North America, because these are not the best of times for organized labour. In 2007, 12.1% of wage and salary workers in the United States were represented by trade unions. The good news, from the unions' perspective, was that this figure was up 0.1% from the year before. The increase was the first in the United States in a quarter-century, and it occurred despite continuing declines in manufacturing jobs (Greenhouse 2008). But however you look at it, an increase of 0.1% is a very slight change. And it followed several years of steady decline, from 12.9% in 2003 to 12.7% in 2004, 12.5% in 2005, and 12.0% in 2006. In 1983, the first year for which comparable data are available, the rate was 20.1% (US Bureau of Labour Statistics 2007; 2008). The situation is somewhat better in Canada, where 29.7% of workers were union members in 2007. But in Canada, too, this figure is significantly lower than the 1981 rate of 38%. Canadian trade union membership dropped steadily between 1989 and 1998, but has stabilized at about 30% since then (Statistics Canada 2005; 2007). In both countries there is a significant gap between union membership rates in the private sector, which formed the backbone of the AFL-CIO and its Canadian counterparts for much of the twentieth century, and the public sector. In 2007, the private-sector union membership rate stood at 7.5% in the United States and at 17% in Canada. The public-sector rate, by contrast, was 35.9% in the United States and 71.7% in Canada (Statistics Canada 2007; US Bureau of Labour Statistics 2008).

Admittedly, we need to place these numbers in their historical context because union density rates were at these low levels in the 1920s, only to bounce up to highs in the 1930s that were maintained into the early 1950s. As late as 1932, an eminent American labour economist, speaking to a meeting of the American Economics Association, reflected on the American Federation of Labour's loss of 40% of its members and pronounced that technological change made it nearly impossible for the union movement to regain its earlier strength (Clawson 2003). Furthermore, although union density is declining, the absolute number of union members is growing, with an overall expansion of the work force in both the United States and Canada. While it is the case that the United States and Canada have more unionized workers than ever before, density rates continue to decline and there is general agreement among scholars and trade unionists themselves that workers in the knowledge economy face serious problems. Two strategies stand out for doing something to rectify the problem: trade union convergence and social movement-based labour organizations. Established trade unions in the United States and Canada have adopted a merger strategy to better mobilize and concentrate resources. This has been the case especially in the knowledge and communication sectors. In order to understand this strategy, as it

applies to the knowledge and media sectors, it is useful to consider the concept of convergence.

Convergence is an important concept to describe central developments taking place across the media, telecommunications, and information sectors of the communications industry. Generally speaking, it refers to the integration of technologies, arenas, and institutions in these industries, and more specifically to the integration of the devices that these industries use and to the information they process, distribute, and exchange over and through these devices (McKercher 2002; Mosco and McKercher 2008). By integrating computers and telecommunications, the Internet is now an iconic example of technological convergence. This form of convergence is linked to, and partly responsible for, the convergence of once separate industries into a common arena providing electronic information and communication services. Differences in the social relations of technology, including corporate and regulatory arrangements negotiated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that divided up the media into fields of mutually exclusive dominance, once erected thick walls between print media, electronic media, telecommunications, and information services, and between labour processes and trade union structures in those industries. Now, owing largely to the power of private communication companies and the weakening enthusiasm of governments to support public service communication, the walls are breaking down, eliminating many of the distinctive features that divided these separate industries and creating one large electronic information and communication services arena.

Convergence has enabled the interconnection of technologies to create new systems of hardware and new levels of service, such as wireless networking in Wi-Fi systems. Hardware convergence has been greatly advanced with the development of a common digital language that does not distinguish among audio, video, or data transmission, reducing all communication to one language that provides a manifold increase in the quantity and quality of electronic communication. Digitization has the technological advantage of providing enormous gains in transmission speed and flexibility over earlier forms of electronic communication, which were largely reliant on analogue techniques. But digitization takes place in the context of, and greatly expands, the process of commodification, or the transformation of what amounts to a resource into a marketable product or service. On the one hand, the expansion of the commodity form provides the context for who leads the process of digitization and for how it is applied. On the other hand, digitization is used to expand the commodification of information and entertainment, specifically to enlarge markets for communication products, deepen the commodification of labour involved in the production, distribution, and exchange of communication, and expand markets in the audiences that receive and make use of electronic communication (Mosco 2009).

Companies are taking advantage of technological convergence by creating corporate or institutional convergence. This movement is embodied in the scope of merger and acquisition that is most prominent within the knowledge and media industry, though not limited to this sector (McChesney 2007; Schiller 2007). Convergence is bringing together communication firms that want to take advantage of opportunities to integrate products and services, to cross-promote and cross-market in previously separate spheres such as entertainment and news, and to cross-produce content for a range of media. Corporate convergence does not, in and of itself, guarantee success. In the short run, it seldom produces the synergies that companies anticipate, such as integrating the cultures of the print newsroom and the broadcasting station. It also sometimes results in content that cannot attract audiences. These facts help to explain the difficulties experienced by convergent media firms such as AT&T, Bell Canada Enterprises, and AOL Time Warner. Indeed, according to Karnitschnig (2006) Time Warner executives no longer talk about "synergies" but about "adjacencies." Moreover, digitization itself is not a flawless process and technical problems do slow its development. Another stumbling block in the process of technological and institutional convergence is the state of government

regulation. Technological and institutional convergence have raised fundamental problems for regulatory policies that were established for discrete industries based on discrete technologies. But these may be short-term problems, which can result in cyclical declines over the course of a secular trend, rather than evidence that convergence has failed. As Google has demonstrated across a wide range of information fields, large units enable businesses to better control their environments, limiting competitive pressures even as they benefit by developing internal market competition among divisions.

Convergence is not just a technological, political, and organizational process. It is also a myth or a story about how computer communication is revolutionizing technology, politics, and society. As such it is part of a sublime vision that, in its strongest form, envisions the technology creating the conditions for the end of history, the end of geography, and the end of politics (Mosco 2004). Convergence is therefore more than just a term to describe an ostensible change in technology and organization. It is part of a utopian discourse that aims to lead us from the coarse materiality of, in Nicholas Negroponte's terms, "the world of atoms," so that we can "learn to be digital" (1996). This affirmative vision is used to rationalize deepening social inequalities, tightening surveillance practices, especially in the workplace, and the growing control of a handful of companies over the production and distribution of communication and information. To say that convergence is a myth is not to imply that it is false. Rather, myths take a basic empirical reality and enlarge it by attributing transformative social and cultural consequences that are not justified by empirical evidence. Convergence, as both a political and cultural process, creates considerable pessimism among those who support public service communication, diversity in the form and content of knowledge, information, and entertainment, and universal and equitable access to media (Artz and Kamalipour 2003). But the growth of trade union convergence is creating some grounds for optimism.

In the United States, a range of media unions — the International Typographical Workers Union (ITU), the Newspaper Guild, and the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET) — have joined the Communications Workers of America. The model of a convergent union (or, as the CWA likes to call itself, "a trade union for the information age"), the CWA represents workers employed in telecommunications, broadcasting, cable TV, newspaper and wire service journalism, publishing, electronics and general manufacturing, as well as airline customer service, government service, health care, education, and other fields. Among the major employers of CWA members are AT&T, Verizon, the NBC and ABC television networks, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and major newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. In Canada, CEP has pursued a similar pattern. It has merged with many of the Canadian units from the ITU, Canadian units from the Newspaper Guild, and Canadian NABET. Its members work in pulp and paper mills, telephone companies, newspapers, radio, and television. They are also employed as graphic artists, hotel workers, computer programmers, truck drivers, and nurses. Furthermore, the Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU), which historically represented telephone workers in British Columbia, was able to extend its jurisdiction over telecommunications workers in other parts of the country because Canada's labour regulatory body determined that technological and industry convergence was best represented by one converged union.

To a degree, the unions see these actions as defensive, or as ways of protecting their members. But, significantly, they also see labour convergence as an attempt to take advantage of synergies brought about by growing convergence in the nature of their work (Bahr 1998). Since these unions represent workers who are increasingly involved in producing for a converging electronic information services arena, they see improved opportu nities for organizing and bargaining. In essence, converging technologies and converging companies have led workers to come together across the knowledge industry (Mosco and McKercher 2008).

This strategy has not always been successful. For example, one of the keys to mobilizing against the increasingly integrated video and film industries, encompassing mainly television and Hollywood, is to merge unions representing both sectors, just as companies such as Disney and Fox have used their merged power to control their respective workers. For example, without a unified workforce, these companies can dictate the terms of contracts on how revenues from multiple uses of the same television program or film are to be divided. Specifically, trade union convergence in this sector would mean bringing together the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Screen Actors Guild. But attempts to accomplish this have failed, most recently in 1999 and 2003, in very close votes (Mosco and McKercher 2008). In Canada, attempts to build closer ties among its major telecommunications unions have also not been particularly successful. Setting up the National Association of Communication Unions created formal federation links between the CEP and the Telecommunications Workers Union. But perhaps because the latter has a history of radicalism (it once took over the telephone exchanges of Vancouver during a strike action in 1981) and because the TWU has eschewed the convergent union idea, the two unions have not worked closely together (Mosco and McKercher 2008).

Convergence also creates cross-border challenges, as workers at the CBC experienced when, to facilitate bargaining, CBC management convinced the Canadian government to order its unions to merge. Prior to this time, CBC journalists had been members of the CWA (which won the right of representation when it merged with the Newspaper Guild) and its technicians were part of the CEP. This meant that some employees of Canada's national broadcaster were members of an American union while others were members of a Canadian union. In the ensuing vote, members decided to join the larger CWA, making all the employees at Canada's national public broadcaster part of an American union. Nevertheless, this form of cross-border convergence has proven to be very useful, contributing significantly to the surprising success of CBC workers against a management that locked them out in August 2005. This case demonstrated the ability of different types of knowledge workers, in this case journalists and technicians, to work together and maintain solidarity with the help of a strong union, even though that union is based in another country. Unions such as the CWA have demonstrated that convergence can sometimes "bite back" at the very companies that support it (Mosco and McKercher 2008).

In 2005, the union convergence issue heated up in the United States when, in the wake of the big Republican victory in the 2004 general election and continued decline in union density rates, one of the major unions in the AFL-CIO threatened to pull out unless the federation permitted significant new mergers and other organizational changes. Specifically, the fastest-growing major union in the United States, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), demanded that the federation consolidate several of its member unions and shift funding from its own research and political activity to grass roots organizing. Holding out the threat of withdrawal, the SEIU was backed by the powerful Teamsters Union. The AFL-CIO proposed a compromise but was not successful, and several unions left the federation to form their own "Change to Win Coalition" comprising 5.4 million members committed to steppedup union organizing. Partly in response to this major defection, the AFL-CIO set up an industry coordinating committee made up of 10 unions covering the arts, entertainment, media, and telecommunications industries. The committee's goal is to build labour power in the industries that have been rocked by corporate concentration and technological change. Convergence, therefore, may also take place in response to the failure of an organization to maintain its membership. Moreover, after feeling the effects of divisions in the house of labour, Change to Win and the AFL-CIO began unity talks in 2009 and have been joined in this effort by the National Education Association — the primary teachers union in the United States. The result is a National Labour Coordinating Committee, which

hopes to reunify the warring factions.

It is uncertain just how far the urge to merge or the convergence movement will take trade unions in the communication, knowledge, and cultural industries. Will it bring back the idea of One Big Union, once popular a century ago with the Knights of Labour and Industrial Workers of the World? Can it expand democracy and citizen engagement by empowering a segment of society that has declined over the past three decades? Is it a genuine new start for labour or a last gasp? It is too early to answer these questions. But it is useful to consider different perspectives on the significance of this development.

On the one hand, labour union convergence increases the centralization of power and of bureaucracy, thereby making it less likely that union leadership can maintain close contact with the rank-and-file membership. Indeed the evidence from outside North America is not encouraging. For example, in the 1990s the Australian labour movement halved the number of its unions, but this did not stop the erosion of union density. Does trade union convergence mean sacrificing union democracy for various forms of cartel unionism?

On the other hand, convergence does give unions greater clout in collective bargaining, thereby diminishing the power that has been concentrated in big companies over the past three decades. To support this view, one can point to the CWA's success in organizing wireless telecommunication workers and in defending technical and on-air staff at the CBC. Moreover, mergers allow unions to be more involved in social and political activities. For example, Swift (2003) cites Canada's CEP as a case in point of a converged communication union that has been more deeply involved in major policy issues since it expanded across the converged information industries, including the struggle to limit media concentration in Canada, as well as in the fight against lifting restrictions on foreign ownership of Canadian media. The CEP has been in the forefront of lobbying to maintain public telecommunications in the province of Saskatchewan and public electrical power in Ontario. Moreover, one of the advantages of a converged union is its ability to rise above the narrow interests of some of its members. So, for instance, even though the CEP represents energy workers, it is fully behind the Kyoto Accords to limit the expansion of greenhouse gasses. Furthermore, it was able to stand up for its paper workers against a powerful wood products company because convergence permitted the CEP to draw from the strike funds of its energy and communication industry members. It also has the resources to create a Quebec Solidarity Fund that permitted it to invest in declining Quebec paper mills and keep them from closing. Furthermore, the CEP has been extensively involved in the anti-globalization movement and in supporting unionization in Mexico and throughout Latin America with the help of the CEP Humanity Fund. Additionally, research conducted by Kiss and Mosco (2005) on what unions are doing about surveillance in the workplace has demonstrated that knowledge worker unions, especially convergent unions such as the CEP, provide the best protection for workers in their collective agreements. Finally, convergence allows unions to work cooperatively as never before, as in the AFL – CIO's industry coordinating committee, which brings together labour organizations in the arts, entertainment, media, and telecommunications industries to build labour power in industries that have been shaken by corporate concentration and technological change.

Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear whether converged unions are genuinely bringing together different kinds of workers in the knowledge, information, and communication sectors, such as newsworkers and telephone operators, or merely becoming federations of what are, in effect, dissimilar employees.

A second response to the crisis in organized labour is the formation of worker associations or worker movements that provide benefits to workers without formally negotiating collective agreements. These have been especially visible in the high-tech sector where union organizing has been

especially difficult. Worker associations are particularly prominent among part-time permanent workers, who are difficult to organize by traditional unions because they typically work for an employment agency, not the high-tech company itself. Such is the case in California's Silicon Valley, where fully 40% of workers are employed in non-standard ways, and in Microsoft's territory in the Pacific Northwest, which gave rise to the term *permatemp* or permanent temporary worker, so named because they work full time but on hourly contracts that contain practically no benefits or overtime pay. Among the goals of these associations are portable benefits for a highly mobile workforce, lifelong training, job placement, assistance to individual workers, dissemination of information to workers, and health care plans for workers who are not eligible for employer-paid benefits.

Two types of such associations feature significantly in the knowledge sector: those that represent technology-intensive workers and those that primarily produce content, including cultural workers. Perhaps the leading example and model of the former is WashTech, an offshoot of the CWA in the Seattle high-tech industry formed by disgruntled Microsoft permatemps who were successful in a legal action against the company for salary and benefits denied them because they were placed in the temporary worker category (Rodino-Colocino 2007). One of the biggest difficulties workers face in the high-tech industry is that many of them do not formally work for the high-tech company itself but for companies such as Manpower, which provide high-tech firms with workers. Nevertheless, what helped forge WashTech was Microsoft's use of its political power to create the permatemps category, thereby denying a large group of otherwise full-time employees the salary and benefits that would go to recognized full-time workers. The lawsuit and the assistance of the CWA helped to galvanize a sufficient number of Microsoft workers to form WashTech.

WashTech includes programmers, editors, Web designers, systems analysts, proofers, testers, and engineers who aim to win higher pay, health benefits, vacation, access to retirement plans, discounted stock options, and workplace training. In addition to taking successful legal action against Microsoft, WashTech members have used their technical skills to unearth a secret Microsoft database on employee performance and distribute it to members. WashTech also found contract documents dating back to 2001 cementing deals to outsource high-end software architecture to Indian firms that the company hoped to keep secret. WashTech has been successful at Microsoft, helped by its association with research advocacy groups such at the Center for a Changing Workforce and its online site Techsunite.Org, which provides information and online organizing for high-tech workers. But it has at best enjoyed mixed success in expanding to other knowledge sector workers. It failed to organize disgruntled workers at the online bookseller Amazon. com but did succeed in organizing workers at Cingular wireless. Today WashTech is involved especially in fighting the outsourcing of tech jobs to places such as India and China and has convinced some state legislators to stop outsourcing government tech work.

Alliance @ IBM was also formed by the CWA and, like WashTech, fought to win benefits that were initially denied to workers in the loosely defined temporary category from its employer, in this case, IBM. The company has been notorious for concerns about toxic chemicals in the workplace, and Alliance has been particularly active in fighting occupational safety and health cases before the courts. It has also won some formal representation for workers at both Manpower and IBM.

It is unusual to think of engineers and the labour movement in the same sentence but the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) has made it necessary for the management at Boeing to do so because in 2000 the Society led the largest white-collar strike in US history against the giant manufacturer. Indeed what makes the SPEEA particularly interesting to those who believe that knowledge work offers the potential for new forms of organizing is that much of their success was achieved by the use of email and the Web. For example, the union managed to collect home email

addresses while building a communications network for their strike against Boeing in 2000. In perhaps the most effective use of its database, SPEEA was able to generate a picket line of 500 people in six hours by email alone, to disrupt an unannounced meeting of the Boeing board of directors in a local hotel. There are other noteworthy high-tech worker association organizing efforts as well. Systems Administrators Guilds have been set up in the United States (and in the United Kingdom and Australia as well) to organize computer workers and intervene in policy debates.

Worker associations are also increasingly prominent among content or cultural producers. The Freelancers Union, a national non-profit organization, grew out of the group Working Today, which was founded in 1995 to provide benefits to people working in the New York City electronics district known as Silicon Alley. Membership is free of charge and open to all freelancers, consultants, independent contractors, temps, parttimers, and the self-employed, but members pay fees for the services they choose. Today, the group is able to offer group health insurance for members and their families in 30 states. By 2006, 13,000 of its members had purchased health care insurance and the union had grown to 37,000 members with annual revenues of $38 million and $4 million in funds for advocacy (*Economist* 2006). By the end of 2007 the union passed the 40,000 member mark and received national attention when freelancers walked off the job at the music video channel MTV after its parent, the media giant Viacom, approved a cut in benefits. Assisted by the Freelancers Union, picketing workers won a restoration of benefits and called attention to the plight of so-called permalancers who, like the permatemps at Microsoft, perform nearly full-time work for part-time wages and minimal benefits (Stelter 2007). The Graphic Artists Guild — representing people who work in illustration, graphic design, photography, cartooning, Web design, multimedia, and other forms of design — combines elements of a professional association with trade unionism. It offers workshops that improve members' skills. But it also runs a legal defence fund and acts as an advocate for artists, particularly on the issues surrounding copyright. The National Writers Union, which participated in the early meetings that founded WashTech, gives members advice on freelance contracts and on asserting or protecting copyright. It also runs a job hotline and a campaign to get employers to hire a union writer.

In Canada, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union has organized a freelance writers' local, working in cooperation with a professional association, the Professional Writers Association of Canada. In December 2006, the fledging unit announced it would urge freelancers to "just say no" to a new freelance contract being handed out to writers at Sun Media, a subsidiary of the Quebecor newspaper chain. It has also tried to fight for higher freelance rates, protection of intellectual property, and better benefits for freelancers. By early 2007, it had roughly 350 members and had launched recruiting drives in Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa, London, ON, Edmonton, Calgary, and Montreal (CFU 2007). In 2008 it produced a job board, used by the union as a "hiring hall" for freelancers, and a survey of writers to find out who really pays what for freelance work.

Finally, building on the freelance writers' movement and demonstrating that practically every form of new media, from the telegraph to the Internet, has given rise to labour agitation, in August 2007 an annual convention of bloggers hosted a panel on "A Union for Bloggers: It's Time to Organize." The panel featured speakers who are members of a national coalition to develop a labour organization for bloggers. Organizers hope a labour group will not only showcase the growing professionalism of Web-based writers, but also the importance of their roles in candidates' campaigns. Blogging has become increasingly popular in the United States, where roughly 8% of Internet users have created their own blogs or online journals. A union or worker association might help bloggers receive health insurance, carry out collective bargaining, and set professional standards. "It would raise the professionalism," said Leslie Robinson, a writer at Colorado Confidential.com. "Maybe we

could get more jobs, bona fide jobs" (Heher 2007). It is difficult to say whether these social movement worker organizations will be able to sustain their ability to help communication workers in the long run. Their success will depend on the ability of technology and content workers to join in a convergence across a major barrier in the communication industry. It will also depend on their ability to build bridges across international divides.

Even those labour organizations that achieved a measure of national or even, as in the case of the CWA, bi-national convergence, are limited in what they can accomplish because they lack a strong international scope. For example, when the worker association WashTech, which has received strong CWA support, successfully defended information technology workers, Microsoft fought back by outsourcing the work to India and elsewhere (Brophy 2006). Examples like this make it imperative to broaden the study of labour convergence to include the international arena. In doing so, it responds to calls in the scholarly literature to rethink international labour federations in light of a changing global political economy (Jakobsen 2002). But it is important to do so with research that is grounded in the complexities of a changing international division of labour that is not easily reducible to simple conclusions. Consider the issue of outsourcing labour. Trade union organizations invariably consider it negatively while most businesses conclude that it is an unalloyed gain for economic growth. Basing policy, including the strategies of international labour organizations, on these simple responses is dangerous because outsourcing is complicated. A large share of outsourcing in the knowledge and communication sectors is contained within the developed world where, for example, Canada has become Hollywood North and Ireland continues to benefit from its skilled workforce and wage premium. Moreover, although India is a major source of low-wage knowledge labour, its major companies such as ICICI, Tata, Infosys, and Wipro are leading in the outsourcing industry. Their movement into key markets in the developed world suggests that place still matters and that culture continues to count. Finally, resistance is growing from labour organizations, and that is one reason why the expansion of convergent unions and worker associations in the knowledge and communication sectors is particularly important (Mosco and McKercher 2008; see also Elmer and Gasher 2005). Research that assesses the strategies and prospects of international labour organizations needs to be grounded in a recognition that the dynamics of the international division of labour, particularly in the knowledge and communication sectors, is complex and not easily reduced to singularities, however attractive as political slogans or mythic symbols.

Specifically, sensitive to these complexities, we need research that examines the state of international labour organizations in the communication and information sectors and the relationships among them, and assesses the extent to which they enable workers to meet the challenges of informational capitalism. This research needs to be situated in a political economy perspective that concentrates on power relationships at the institutional level and at the point of production, and addresses the extent and effectiveness of labour convergence at the international level.

Specifically Catherine McKercher and I are producing a global map of labour convergence by describing four primary types of international labour organization. These include international federations that remain rooted in one of the major forms of communication and information, global federations of unions that span the communication and information industries, government or public federations that represent the interests of workers, and worker associations that may be rooted in one nation but are testing new forms of organizing and partnering with unions and federations outside the nation. We are interested in identifying the major organizations in each category, describing their successes and failures, and the relationships among them. In essence, it is intended to produce an assessment of the state of global labour convergence and the prospects for building international solidarity among workers and their organizations. This provides the groundwork for detailed case

studies that examine organizations facing a range of convergence related challenges, including the challenge of making use of converging technologies to meet the needs of workers and their labour organizations.

Our first case deals with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), an example of convergence that continues to focus on one sector of the media industry. The IFJ is the world's largest journalism organization, representing 500,000 journalism professionals who comprise its 161 member unions from 117 countries. One of the arguments made in defence of union convergence is the ability to take on broad policy issues that smaller unions cannot afford to address. We are investigating the extent to which the IFJ succeeds on four of the issues to which it gives prominence: media concentration, women's rights in the media, authors' rights to control their work, and institutional attacks on press freedom. The IFJ also claims to bring together journalists from both rich and poor nations. This practice is particularly important because companies such as Reuters have begun to outsource journalism work from wealthy nations like the United Kingdom to low-wage nations like India. Has convergence enabled the IFJ to address this practice? Finally, as technological and corporate convergence challenges traditional definitions of journalism and as some of its member unions, such as the CEP in Canada, enlist workers across both the content and technical segments of the knowledge industries, can the IFJ continue to succeed by focusing on one media sector?

Our second case considers the Union Network International (UNI), a global federation that spans all sectors of the converging electronic services arena. Unlike the IFJ, UNI fully embraces convergence. Calling itself "a new international for a new millennium," it was founded in 2000 and by 2008 brought together 15.5 million workers from 900 unions in 140 countries. It primarily spans the newly converged electronic information and communication sectors including workers in the postal, media, entertainment, telecommunications, and culture sectors. A driving force behind its creation was the growth of companies that span these sectors by taking advantage of converging electronic technologies. Although it is new, UNI has been in the forefront of global labour issues such as outsourcing and prominent in applying pressure to global companies and international organizations like the World Trade Organization. It has made full use of information technology in its political activity, notably when it organized the first global strike in the networking program Second Life to support workers in Italy locked in a labour battle with IBM. It has also pioneered the use of global framework agreements with multinational corporations to protect basic labour standards worldwide and has produced the first global charter of rights for call centre workers (Mosco and McKercher 2008). How effective is the strategy of creating a labour network of networks that is not confined to one sector? How successful has it been in bridging major divides in the knowledge sector such as those separating technical from content producers, and news workers from entertainment and other cultural workers? Finally, we are exploring how UNI has fared in one of its major goals, building connections between First and Third World workers on the vital issue of outsourcing knowledge work.

Next, we examine the International Labour Organization (ILO) to consider how labour convergence works in a UN agency. The ILO differs from both the IFJ and UNI in that it is an arm of the United Nations and was chartered in 1919 to promote justice and human rights for workers. Formally, it produces conventions and recommendations that establish minimum standards for labour rights including freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labour, and equality of opportunity and treatment. It also provides technical assistance to workers and labour organizations. This case enables us to consider the state of an international public institution charged with protecting workers and their unions. How does convergence affect the ILO's operation? Specifically, how has it dealt with the shift from industrial work, the main form of labour throughout most of its history, to the increasingly important category of knowledge and communication work, as

well as with the differing regional balances of those two forms of labour? We are also assessing the extent to which the ILO has or has not been a force in building networks between First and Third World information workers, between those occupying different positions on outsourcing and the changing international division of knowledge work.

Our final case takes up two labour federations in India: the New Trade Union Initiative, which brings together 300 trade unions representing over 500,000 Indian workers, and the Union for IT Enabled Services (UNITES), which organizes workers across the information and communication technology sectors including completing successful contract drives with a major outsourcing firm as well as an international call centre located in Hyderabad. We are concentrating on these organizations because they represent new efforts to transcend traditional political party-oriented trade unionism in India, because each responds in different ways to convergence in the knowledge and communications sectors (NTUI is broad-based while UNITES focuses on information technology), and because each has relationships with the organizations in the first three case studies, particularly in attempts to build global labour networks to meet the challenge of outsourced communication and knowledge labour. Our project is examining this new burst of trade union activity in India and is assessing how it is facing the challenges of convergence. Specifically, how effectively are these new organizations mobilizing knowledge and communication workers in India and how successful are they in building ties to labour federations based in the developed world?

In conclusion, let's bring the discussion back home to our world of higher education where university and college professors long ago recognized that technology, education, and professional status did not lift them out of the realm of workers. Many responded by organizing trade unions that follow the craft model. This has provided a privileged status, and academics are arguably the new aristocracy of labour. But it has separated teachers in higher education from the process of labour convergence. As a result, they cannot enjoy the benefits of joining workers across the knowledge arena and the opportunity to extend to other knowledge workers the principles that university faculty have fought with some success to maintain: full-time, secure jobs, with tenure and good pensions. Instead of setting the standard for knowledge workers worldwide, university faculty have hoarded their privileged status. But commercialization with new technologies continues to nip at the heels of academic labour and threatens to shred that status. Perhaps it is time for university faculty to reconsider their relative isolation. Indeed, the future of higher education is likely to depend less on the next new thing and more on whether knowledge workers of the world, including professors, will unite.

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第四章

Gender

22. Empire and Sweatshop Girlhoods: The Two Faces of the Global Culture Industry[①]

Leslie Regan Shade   Nikki Porter

"This is not an attack against Mary-Kate and Ashley; it's an appeal," said Charlie Kernaghan, the director of the National Labor Committee. "We don't have to kid ourselves. They have power, enormous power."[②]

As part of the eighth annual Holiday Season of Conscience Candle Light March to End Childhood and Sweatshop Abuses, sponsored by the National Labor Committee (NLC) and the New York University (NYU) chapter of United Students Against Sweatshops, focus centered on the famous American entertainment-lifestyle product moguls Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, then new freshmen at NYU. The Olsen's privately held Dualstar Entertainment Group (DEG), whose 2002 revenues were estimated to be US $1 billion, was targeted by NYU students and the NLC because, they alleged, female Bangladeshi workers who made the Olsen clothing line for Wal-Mart were not paid maternity leave mandated by Bangladeshi law. While the NLC was able to get other garment companies to sign a no-sweatshop pledge, the Olsens were immune to various entreaties, including students attempting to contact Ashley Olsen "via notes in some of her classes" (Pilon 2004). Kernaghan calculated that a Bangladeshi woman would have to work 109 years to earn the equivalent amount of NYU tuition, exclusive of housing and a meal plan. "This is the great gap in the world today ... [The Olsens] have that power, that visibility. There is so much good they could do for the world" (Pilon 2004).

While the Olsens vigorously denied receipt of the petition from the NLC, they quickly issued a press release right before the march, stating that all Dualstar vendors "are required to comply with the most rigorous health and safety standards in the retail industry" (Silverman 2004) and pledging that "to the best of our abilities, we will guarantee that any woman sewing our garments in Bangladesh will be afforded her legal maternity leave of at least three months with full pay" (Susman 2004). This news and their subsequent statement appeared in several online entertainment magazines, thus averting negative publicity for the young stars who, since turning eighteen six months before and assuming control of their entertainment-lifestyle empire, had become the subject of much media adulation.

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②   Mary Pilon, "Labor Groups to Picket Olsens." *Washington Square News*, December 9, 2004. http://media. www. nyunews. com/media/storage/paper869/news/2004/12/09/UndefinedSection/Labor. Groups. To. Picket.Olsens-2388681.shtml (accessed 30 April 2007).

This poignantly stark disjuncture between the lives and livelihoods of women workers in Bangladeshi — who earn between 8 and 18 cents an hour (or between US $189. 28 and $436. 80 a year) — and the Olsen twins, whose 2004 gross sales were $1. 4 billion, with retail revenues at $21 million (Forbes 2004), and who earned the distinction of being ranked number eleven on *Forbes* magazine's 2007 list of the twenty richest women in entertainment,[①] with a net worth of $10 million, is the focus of this chapter.

It takes up Teresa Ebert's argument to embrace materialist feminist cultural critiques, understood as "politics as the practice aimed at 'equal' access for all to social, cultural, and economic resources and also as an end to the exploitative exercise of power … [the achievement] of economic equality through social struggle" (1992 - 1993, 18), and the recognition of gendered divisions of labor in the "global reconfiguration of patriarchal capitalism" (42); and the later challenge from Toby Miller (2004), who urges cultural studies scholars to turn away from a preoccupation with consumption toward a consideration of labor, and how this new international division of labor "links productivity, exploitation and social control" (62). Thus, rather than look just at the consumption practices — the cultural formations of the Mary-Kate and Ashley empire, and the subjectivities engendered by their myriad products on young girls — Miller urges us to look at the life of these commodities and the various subjectivities complicit in the international cultural division of labor.

In the burgeoning girls studies movement in media and cultural studies, feminist analyses have not typically adapted a political-economic perspective in scrutinizing the creation of tween and teen girl content, although there have been some notable exceptions (Record 2001; Kearney 2006). This chapter thus applies a feminist political-economic analysis to the phenomenon of Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, arguably one of the most financially successful teen enterprises ever, whose television, film, and video ventures have expanded to include a range of products, including clothing, magazines, books, cosmetics, accessories, and home decorating items, some of which are sold exclusively at the megastore Wal-Mart. This analysis also aims to contribute to childhood studies, where recent scholarship has examined global youth media and consumption (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 2003; Langer 2004; Maira and Soep 2004; Cook 2005; Lemish 2007), and to international communication, which rarely interrogates global youth culture, with the exception of analyses of coproduction and glocalization (Grixti 2006; Moran 2006).

The chapter first describes the rise of the Olsen twins' stardom and maps out their media holdings, which are managed through their Dualstar Entertainment Group, created in 1993 to manage the Olsen brand and now rapidly expanding transnationally. It then shifts from the first-world fanciful fortunes of the Olsens to focus on the stark realities of the many women and child laborers in developing countries who produce the very material goods that make it possible for the Olsens to be feted as fashionista billionaires by fans, the business press, and high-powered fashion magazines.

The MK&A Empire

"If we buy something we think is too much, of course we have buyer's remorse," says Ashley (Tauber and Dagotino 2004, 112).

Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen debuted as baby actors in the U. S. television sitcom *Full House* in 1986, starring as Michelle Tanner, youngest daughter of a San Francisco widower played by Bob Saget. The popular series, which ran from 1987 to 1995, is still in syndication. In 1993, Dualstar

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① For the *Forbes* List of Top 20, see www. forbes. com/digitalentertainment/2007/01/17/richestwomen-entertainmsnt-tech-media-ca_lg_richwomen07_0118womenstars_lander. html (accessed 26 January 2007).

Entertainment Group was established by their then-manager Robert Thorne, and over the next six years the Olsens were the stars of books, videos, and music videos. In 2001, when the twins were fifteen, they launched a teen clothing line with Wal-Mart and were lauded by the *Hollywood Reporter* as "the most powerful young women in Hollywood." Entertainment magazines were abuzz in the spring of 2004, when Mary-Kate and Ashley turned eighteen and assumed control of Dualstar. That year *Fortune* magazine estimated the twins' wealth at $137 million each. Although the private company does not disclose revenues, *Forbes* magazine estimated the twins' 2004 gross sales at $1.4 billion, with their retail revenues at $21 million (Forbes 2004).

Since assuming control of Dualstar, the twins have taken a vested interest in their company, tracking "business in weekly telephone conference calls, examining product design shipped via e-mail, and in less-frequent face-to-face meetings with executives" (Hopkins 2005, 2B). The MK&A brand is available outside the U.S. in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Japan. Mary-Kate described their future plans in a 2006 *Women's Wear Daily* interview as developing a high-end fashion brand by investing in a different company or bringing in an outside designer; transforming their thirty-person enterprise, with offices in Culver City, New York, and London, into a boutique brand management firm supervising emerging labels and talent in both the fashion and entertainment world; generating ideas for a so-called incubator, a separate division formed in Dualstar to research and test new brands in fashion, home, and beauty; and taking a more active role in the film production division by producing and purchasing properties, meeting with directors, and making movies for brands managed by Dualstar (Heyman 2006).

A brief overview of their professional trajectory reveals their dizzying and indubitable success in creating teen-oriented cross-ownership media and synergistic entertainment and lifestyle products (see the chapter appendix below). As Mary-Kate boasted, "The difference between us and other celebrity brands is that we've been making movies, TV series, videos, CDs, fashion dolls, and books since we were infants. So there is something fun and age-appropriate for kids to have at every stage. We are able to grow creatively, do projects that are geared towards our peers and not have to worry about all the 'marketing' issues for the younger fan. The product is already there. It is really a unique situation" (Checking In 2004).

Alongside their miscellaneous forays into branded consumer products, the twins, as they left adolescence to young adulthood, have become the focus of intense media scrutiny, from their questionable fashion tastes to their alleged eating disorders. As they entered NYU, they were featured in the *New York Times* for their "ashcan" attire, a combination of funk, bohemian, and grandma all wrapped in one; they were seen "dashing around Greenwich Village wearing floppy hats, huge sunglasses, dust-catcher skirts and street-sweeping cable-knit cardigans ... the twins are trendsetters for the latest hipster look. They are influencing the same generation of girls and young women who fell for them as wholesome child stars, buying their Mattel dolls, and who later, as tweens, spent $750 million a year on denims and pastel tops from the mary-kateandashley line at Wal-Mart." While at a quick glance it might appear that the "bobo" (bohemian bourgeois) style eschews ostentatious displays of wealth, an analysis of the actual accoutrements reveals high-end designer labels and vintage specialties. Said stylist Karen Berenson, "The Olsens are the real thing, fashion role models for a generation entering adulthood" (La Ferla 2005).

The Olsens' eclectic and very personal style is far removed from the wholesomeness of their brand products available at Wal-Mart. Their "bobo-ness," said to be the inspiration for designer John Galliano's fall 2005 collection, also provoked *Jane* magazine to call them "smaller, female versions of Andy Warhol." Their celebrity and wealth has allowed them to drop out of NYU and conduct internships with New York fashion designer Zac Posen and *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Fair*
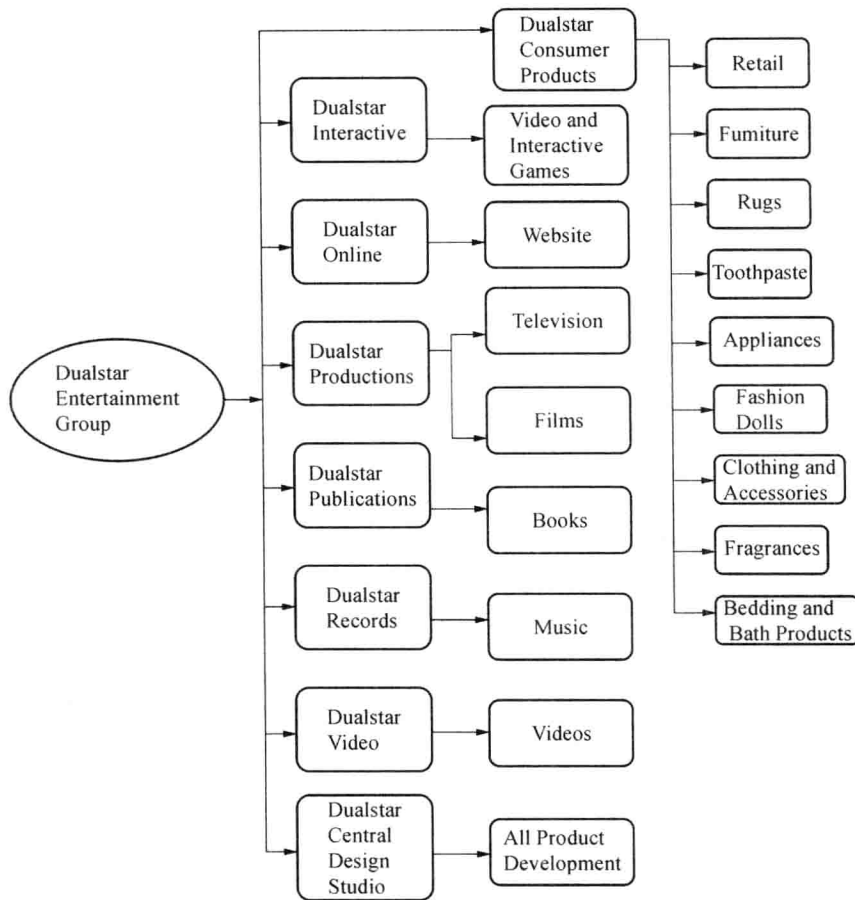
Figure 16. 1　Map of Ownings, Dualstar Entertainment Group
［Created by the authors］

photographer Annie Leibovitz, while being endlessly photographed and gossiped about on myriad fan websites. Their revolving wardrobe, boyfriends, charity events, parties, shopping expeditions, and Hollywood events are ruthlessly dissected and gushed over by fans. Not always appearing together, they have separately graced the pages of *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Nylon*, and *W*.

One of their latest forays is in promoting the Sprouse brothers, teen blond actors who star on a Disney Channel television show and are now creating computer wallpaper, buddy icons, iron-on transfers of their logo, video podcasts, DVDs, books, and a quarterly magazine (Bahney 2006).

In their sixteenth birthday *Hollywood Reporter* issue, where full-page ads from corporate liaisons congratulated the twins on their industry success (these included AOL Time Warner, the Beanstalk Group, Fox Family, Bear Stearns, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Toys "R" Us, Warner Home Video, and Borders), an article on their merchandising arrangements with over 114 manufacturers and distributors was featured. According to the article, the twins design most of the various products in-house, ensuring "that every Olsen-related object on the market has passed muster in the quality-control department" (Spalding 2001). Two years later, the Olsens became poster girls for corporate greed, with the scandal over the sweatshop labor practices of the Bangladeshi women who manufacture their exclusive Wal-Mart clothing line.

Globalization Gone Awry: The Other Side of the Empire

In 2004 the National Labor Committee[1] issued a call for action in support of the rights of women Bangladeshi garment workers. According to the NLC, an estimated 90 percent of the more than 3,780 export garment factories denied women their legal right to a three-month maternity leave with full pay. Some companies pressured their women workers to quit, others made them quit and then come back as new employees, and only a few of the companies paid them benefits. Citing Disney, Kohl's, and Wal-Mart as the corporate culprits, the NLC urged them to sign the following pledge: "that any woman in Bangladesh sewing their garments will be guaranteed her legal right to maternity leave with benefits." While some of these companies professed to sign the pledge and uphold local labor laws, others, as investigated by the NLC and the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity, continue to deny both women and child laborers their rights as workers and citizens.

As Suzanne Bergeron highlights in her overview of feminist political economic perspectives on globalization, focus has been attuned to "the conflictual interactions among multinational corporations, households, the nation-state, and women" (2001, 990), from studies in the 1980s on emergent international divisions of labor with heightened economic globalization and the resultant "feminization of labor" and the myth of women's "nimble fingers" (see McLaughlin in this volume) to later studies focusing on the politics of structural adjustment policies wrought by the Bretton Woods institutions. Challenging the gendered assumptions of the public-private divide (see Youngs in this volume) and addressing the tensions between the role of the nation-state and transnational governance in the labor market has been an ongoing struggle.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty has argued that studies of developing country women and international divisions of labor "must draw upon the histories of colonialism and race, race and capitalism, gender and patriarchy, and sexual and familial affiliations" (1997, 28). For Valentine Moghadam (1999) economic globalization is characterized by the creation of jobs for women in export-processing free-trade zones and the outsourcing of factory work to corporately owned factories. While such jobs do allow women to gain a level of economic and personal autonomy apart from traditional and patriarchal structures, these jobs are low-paid and precarious, thus ironically (or not) contributing to the feminization of poverty. This female proletarianization is especially acute in the textile and garment industries:

> The global economy is maintained by gendered labor, with definitions of skill, allocation of resources, occupational distribution and modes of remuneration shaped by asymmetrical gender relations and by gender ideologies defining the roles and rights of men and women and of the relative value of their labor. (379)

Assessing shifts in transnational labor flow, Patricia Fernández-Kelly (2007) outlines how globalization and trends toward economic integration have shifted from the relocation of low-skilled jobs to Mexico, the Caribbean, and Asia in the 1970s to the movement of professional jobs from the U.S. to India, as in the case of the computer industry. However, as she emphasizes, it is the low-skilled workers who have experienced a continual decline in their wages and quality of life.

For Mary Beth Mills (2005), the global iconography of the female thirdworld worker is one that is

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[1] The National Labor Committee was founded in 1980 by three U.S. labor presidents in order to organize and boost national labor organizations in light of then-president Ronald Reagan's wave of anti-unionism, and to lend solidarity to international labor movements, such as the assassination in Central America of union organizers and the rise of Mexican *maquiladoras*. See Ross 2004, p. 34, and the NLC at www.nlcnet.org.

nimble-fingered and dexterous, patient, obedient, and respectful, and hardworking amidst the brutal boredom and fast-paced fastidiousness of the global assembly line. While it is generally assumed that these women are too compliant and thus resistant to labor organizing, her study of labor activism in Thailand reveals how important it is to consider the politics of place, wherein "structural constraints, and contested identities within women's labor struggles require close attention to participants' own gender and placebased politics" (140).

Dong-Sook Gills (2002), considering the feminization of labor in Asia, echoes Moghadam (1999) in her characterization of the attendant proletarianization of labor, with a key feature of the political economy workers drawn from rural household economies distinct from capitalist production. Aligned with low wages is the "flexibility" of the work — flexible in terms of its contingent, casualized, part-time, and nonunionized status (see also Wright 2006).

Apparently Corrupt: Sweating in the Global Garment Industry

The history of the early garment industry and its association with women and immigrant succession labor in the U. S. and France has been copiously documented by Nancy Green (1996). In the late twentieth century, because of the relatively low cost of entry, the use of female labor, and neoliberal free-trade policies, the apparel industry was able to seamlessly move from urban centers such as Los Angeles and New York City to farther and more remote regions of the world, from Mexican *maquiladoras* to the Caribbean and Asia. Jane Collins (2003) and Andrew Ross (2004) both recount how, for many first-world citizens, the global garment industry in many ways characterizes negative aspects of economic globalization, with news reports and exposés on sweatshop corruption, child labor, and factory fires fueling renewed and heightened urgency for global justice. This is especially the case for postsecondary students, who have rallied for an end to sweatshop labor, including the manufacture of their collegiate gear by sweatshop-free companies (Featherstone and USAS 2002).

The ubiquity of apparel factories is also a product of the fashion industry, as designer duds are translated into cheaper knock-offs, and as the fashion season escalates into multiple miniseasons. Large retailers with vertical holdings now make their own private-label clothing lines, which are sent off for manufacturing at the cheapest locales, evading local unionized factories with more humane working conditions, including environmental standards. The gendering of labor accelerates faster production processes and propels more corporate profit, even as it leads to a contemporary proletarianization of women akin to the Industrial Revolution's exploitation of women and children. As Ross (2004) comments, "The worst manifestations of the global sweatshops are all the more tragic when adolescents in poor countries are toiling to meet the style demands of their age peers in the North who are fortunate enough to have disposable income" (25).

Ahmed (2004) traces the current garment factories in Bangladesh to post-1975, when a wave of liberalization, privatization, creation of export-processing zones, and the reduction of trade barriers occurred. After a short span of eight years, by 1991 Bangladesh emerged as the eighth largest garment exporter to the U. S., and many in Bangladesh hail the industry as the "liberator for women" (35). Middle-class (but cash poor) rural women were recruited to work in the new garment factories, with male owners promising their families and their fathers that the women would live in segregated and protected compounds. Thus was produced an uncomfortable paradox between what women garment workers in Bangladesh have gained (new employment opportunities necessary for family income) versus their lack of worker and financial autonomy and their resultant exploitation. By 2006, Bangladesh was the third largest exporter to the U. S., behind Mexico and China. Current production figures forecast that Bangladesh will surpass Mexico by March 2007. In 2005, 785 million garments were shipped from Bangladesh to the U. S, with a wholesale value of US $2. 4 billion. One billion

garments are scheduled to ship to the U.S. in 2006, amounting to "over three garments for every man, woman, and child in America," according to the NLC (2006), made by a labor force composed of 80 percent young women aged sixteen to twenty-five.

Four years after the NLC chastised and received pledges from corporations that they would guarantee Bangladeshi women their guaranteed maternity leave, the NLC issued a scathing report on child labor in a Harvest Rich plant in Bangladesh. They alleged that Wal-Mart, Hanes, Puma, and J. C. Penney were employing and abusing an estimated two hundred to three hundred children, aged eleven years of age or even younger. This report, issued after the NLC's infamous exposure of celebrity Kathy Lee Gifford's Wal-Mart clothing line made by Honduran child labor brought to public furor this human rights issue a decade ago, was even more condemnatory. Citing children's accounts of beatings, slaps, and harsh and long working hours, the NLC report urged U.S. companies to issue wage and educational stipends for the children, the hiring of their older siblings and parents, and a wage increase to at least thirty-six cents an hour in order that they might "live with a modicum of decency." This, despite Bangladeshi law prohibiting child workers under the age of fourteen, and their mandated eight-hour-day, six-day-week, and voluntary overtime labor laws. "We have protected the corporate label. Now it is time to protect the sixteen-year-old girl in Bangladesh who made the garment," the NLC urged (NLC 2006).

Liza Featherstone's book *Selling Women Short* (2004) is a fascinating and disturbing chronicle of *Dukes v. Wal-Mart*, a class-action suit launched in 2004 by women Wal-Mart workers that is currently winding its way through the U.S. courts. In telling the employees' stories, Featherstone discusses the broader societal impact of the retail giant, which is the largest private employer in the U.S.: how its success is derived by offering poor, raced, and working-class people (its primary consumer base) the lowest prices around, while hiring workers at minimum wage (many of whom need a second job to survive) and discriminating against women, particularly women of color. ①

Dukes refers to Betty Dukes, a fifty-four-year-old African American Wal-Mart employee who became the lead plaintiff in the largest ever class-action suit in the U.S. *Dukes* represents 1.6 million women — past and present employees of Wal-Mart — who allege that Wal-Mart discriminates against women in pay, promotion, and job assignments, all in violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This act protects workers form discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, and sex.

The National Organization of Women (NOW) named Wal-Mart one of its "merchants of shame" in its Women Friendly Worker Campaign. "Wal-Mart women workers deserve equality," the campaign material reads:

> Wal-Mart pays its women employees an average of $5,200 *per year less* than it pays men. Women are *denied promotions* to higher-paying jobs. Men hold 85% of store manager positions and ⅔ of all management jobs, even though ⅔ of its "associates" are women. This is no way for the country's largest private employer to behave. Wal-Mart earned more than $9 billion in net profits — after taxes — in 2004. ②

Wal-Mart is savvy in catering to the female consumer, whether through entreaties of "Always Low

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① The anti–Wal-Mart literature is voluminous; selected books and films include Bill Quinn, *How Wal-Mart Is Destroying America (and the World) and What You Can Do about It* (Berkeley: Ten-Speed Press, 2000); Charles Fishman, *The Wal-Mart Effect* (New York: Penguin, 2006); *Wal-Mart: The Face of Twenty-First-Century Capitalism*, ed. Nelson Lichtenstein (New York: The New Press, 2005); and Robert Greenwald's film *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, 2005.

② See NOW's Wal-Mart Campaign at www.now.org/issues/wfw/wal-mart.html (accessed 2 February 2007).

Prices!" or by creating in-house clothing lines for the tween or the plus-size woman. Says Featherstone on Wal-Mart's exclusive relationship with Mary-Kate and Ashley: "Tapping into the popularity of these bland teens, described by Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott as 'fashion magnets,' demonstrates that Wal-Mart brilliantly understands not only overworked middle-aged women, but also their daughters who, after all, do plenty of shopping" (2004, 215). Recognizing that the plus-size market is the fastest-growing category, Wal-Mart carries teen brands, including Mary-Kate and Ashley, in their Girlswear Plus lines. But as Featherstone ruefully remarks, Wal-Mart is merely tapping into its largest consumer base — low-income women ("those living on incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty line"), who, regardless of race or ethnicity, "are about 50 percent more likely to be obese than women of higher economic status" (217).

Role Models?

> If Mary-Kate and Ashley continue to stand up for other young women their same age who are sewing their garments all across the developing world, this could have a profound impact, highlighting the problem of sweatshop abuses, while working concretely to improve conditions and wages. (Charles Kernaghan, NLC 2004)

Is it naïve of Charles Kernaghan to suggest that the Olsens could be role models for socially responsible consumption and labor practices amidst the current North American glut of celebrity culture? Obsession over Mary-Kate's $1,700 wool wrap dress from designer Marc Jacobs, the twins' return to their natural honey-blond hair color after escapades with platinum blonde and dark brown, Ashley Olsen's dubious distinction of making it as number two on PETA's worstdressed list for her fur-wearing ways, or speculations on the height of their shoes, have all been fodder for the tabloids in just the past few months.

Profitable tabloids specializing in celebrity gossip and gratuitous titillation are an unfortunate mainstay of our current media system. Whether the twins will jump on the latest vogue for celebrity philanthropic ventures and start advocating for the gender rights of their sisters — who can barely eek out a living wage sewing the MK&A line of latest fashion trends that are then sold by a megacorporation that is infamous for exploiting its women workers — remains a vague and unlikely possibility. There are some exceptions to such everyday exploitation — Eraydin and Erendil (1999) provide the example of Istanbul apparel workers, composed of second-generation rural female migrant workers who, because of positive bargaining and wage increases, see themselves as active agents in the labor market.

Yes, there are pioneering and brave organizations such as the NLC that expose injustices and promote the labor rights of women and children working in the export garment industry. Transnational resistance to global capitalist structures that reinvent, overlap, and reimagine feminist communities at the local, national, and global levels (Bergeron 2001) are also incredibly encouraging and vital. The Clean Clothes Campaign is one such example; their Made by Women campaign of 2005 highlights the activism, resilience, and liveliness of women working in northern and southern countries to ensure gender equality and social justice for all women.

But it is difficult for these stories to get reported in the mainstream media. The NLC has been somewhat successful in gaining mainstream media attention, but this media notoriety has come about because of their exposure of American celebrity complicity in using offshore sweatshops that exploit the children and women who manufacture their branded clothing lines. Mainstream media typically do not report the everyday economic realities of men and women struggling to survive in southern countries or the environmental and social challenges they face. Disasters — whether natural or man-made, such as factory fires — usually are covered, thus allowing Westerners a glimpse into the deplorable and

inhumane working conditions of the child laborers that manufacture the clothing, toys, and other consumer goods that they voraciously consume. Meanwhile, we are bound to hear more about the fashion histrionics, the boyfriend breakups, and the newest licensed products of the MK&A empire. This is a different kind of power than that envisioned by Charles Kernaghan — a power that starkly reminds us how slanted economic globalization can be for the lives and livelihoods of many women.

Appendix: Mary-Kate and Ashley Timeline

1986

(June) Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen are born on Friday the thirteenth.

1987, 1 year old

Full House, their first series, premieres. Each girl earns $24,000 per episode.

1990, 4 years old

MK and A each earn $25,000 per episode.

1992, 6 years old

Brother for Sale, the twins' first album, is released. It sells 325,000 copies. Their first TV movie, *To Grandmother's House We Go*, premieres and makes it onto Nielsen's Top 10.

1993, 7 years old

The Dualstar Entertainment Group is established. The twins release *Our First Video*, their first direct-to-video production. It tops Billboard video charts and sells 35 million copies. They sign a new deal with ABC for *Full House* and television movies worth $5 million each. The girls are worth $10 million.

1994, 8 years old

BMG signs MK and A for thirty-two album and video projects over the following three years. The deal is worth $5 million to $7 million.

1995, 9 years old

The twins' first feature film, *It Takes Two*, is released. The girls take is $1.6 million for acting; the movie makes $19 million at the box office and $75 million in home video sales. WarnerVision buys MK and A video distribution rights from BMG.

1996, 10 years old

WarnerVision is absorbed by Warner Home Video. The twins' books are introduced.

1997, 11 years old

Lightyear Entertainment (sister company of Warner Home Video) picks up the MK and A music line from BMG. The music videos sell over 500,000 copies. Book sales hit $25 million; and video and CD sales hit $80 million. The girls make $3 million from *Full House* syndication and over $6 million from video royalties.

1998, 12 years old

The girls are worth $17 million. They sign a seven-figure pay-or-play deal with ABC. Their second series, *Two of a Kind*, premieres. Their video, *Our Lips Are Sealed*, sells more copies than the video release of *Erin Brockovich* and the first season of *The Sopranos*.

1999, 13 years old

MK and A's first Christmas album is released.

2001, 15 years old

Teen clothing, bedding, and bath line is launched at Wal-Mart in the United States, bringing in an estimated $300 million for Wal-Mart. Home video soundtracks are released. *Mary-Kate and Ashley in Action* cartoon is broadcast on ABC's Saturday morning lineup. *Mary-Kate and Ashley Magazine* is launched with focus on "fashion, boys, and beauty." Publisher goes under after three issues and the

magazine folds. *So Little Time* premieres. Mary-Kate earns a daytime Emmy nomination. *The Hollywood Reporter* produces a special issue on MK and A, naming them "the most powerful young women in Hollywood."

2002, 16 years old

The "mary-kateandashley" brand is launched in the UK at ASDA stores. The brand brings in an estimated $500 million to $600 million for Wal-Mart. Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's official online fan club is launched.

2003, 17 years old

The first global video fashion show is filmed at a Wal-Mart in Toronto, then broadcast simultaneously at Wal-Marts across Canada in March and at Wal-Marts across the United States in April. The girls' first set of fragrances is launched at Wal-Mart: "Mary-Kate and Ashley One" and "Mary-Kate and Ashley." It is estimated that the brand brings in over $1 billion for Wal-Mart, that the girls are each worth $80 million to $150 million, and that Dualstar is worth over $1 billion. GlaxoSmithKline introduces MK and A Aquafresh toothpaste in Bubble Cool flavor.

2004, 18 years old

A line of rugs is introduced. Close to twenty dolls have been created, seventeen albums are released, there are nearly thirty mostly direct-to-video titles, fourteen feature-length films have been made for television and direct-to-video, and there are one hundred book titles in print. MK and A become copresidents of Dualstar on their eighteenth birthday. The feature film *New York Minute* is released and receives lukewarm reviews. They host the season finale of *Saturday Night Live* and are slimed on Nickleodeon's Kid's Choice Awards. Their website, www. mary-kateandashley. com, is relaunched. MK and A get a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Warner Home Video agrees to distribute Olsen titles for another ten years, earning them an advance "in the millions."

2005, 19 years old

Robert Thorne leaves Dualstar; the girls reportedly buy him out. Diane Reichenberger becomes the new CEO. A line of furniture is launched, available in twenty-five stores in Canada and fifty stores in the United States. A second set of fragrances is launched: "Mary-Kate and Ashley Coast to Coast L.A." and "Mary-Kate and Ashley Coast to Coast New York," sold at Kohl's, Claire's, CVS, and Walgreens in the United States. Apparel counts for approximately 80 percent of Dualstar's business. Dualstar Entertainment Group announces a deal with boy twins Cole and Dylan Sprouse for boy-twins-themed clothing, sporting goods, video games, CDs, and DVDs. There are plans to launch in Australia.

2006, 20 years old

Dualstar inks deal with Simon Spotlight, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing for the Sprouse brothers books. The first books in the series are expected in summer 2007. Dualstar launches a partnership with "teen expert and author" Jessica Weiner, who will write an advice column for mary-kateandashley. com. Plans are made to widen distribution of beauty products beyond Wal-Mart through retailer Claire's. They are set to launch ecommerce on mary-kateandashley. com. Dualstar partners with Airborne Entertainment Inc. (a subsidiary of CYBIRD Co., Ltd.) to create branded mobile products for both mary-kateandashley and Sprouse Bros. (ring tones, wallpapers, ringback tones, and mobile games). Airborne will create the content. MK and A star in Badgley Mischka advertising campaign, the first time they represent a brand other than their own.

Sources: Andreoli 2004; Ault 2004; Bittar 2003; Dualstar press releases; E'Innocenzio 2002; Lefevre 2001; Marr 2004.

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23. Engendering Change? Gender Advocacy in Open Source

Christina Dunbar-Hester   Gabriella Coleman

The numbers of women in the field of computer science are dismal and even worse in the arena of free and open source software (FLOSS[1]); a widely-cited study showed that only 1.5% of FLOSS practitioners were women (as compared with 28% in proprietary software).[2] As scholars of the ethics and politics of computing, we are committed to generating data and providing theoretical insight into the formal barriers, subtle and implicit biases, and missed opportunities that keep women from fully participating in technological production. Open source culture itself may present unique barriers to equal participation: "While open source software development promises a fairer, more democratic model of software production often compared to a gift economy, it also is far more male dominated than other forms of software production" (Nafus 2012: 669). However, our focus in this essay is not on these disparities but on efforts to promote "diversity" emanating from these technical communities themselves. In spite (or because) of the very real discrepancies in participation, advocates and activists within FLOSS have been shining a spotlight on these issues, raising awareness and creating initiatives to address gender balance (and to a lesser extent, address other aspects of "diversity" within FLOSS), with increasing fervor since around 2008.

Complexity in the Record: Debian Women[3]

Debian, the largest free software project in the world, is a primary example. Debian Women, its women-centered initiative, was founded in 2004. According to anthropologist Dawn Nafus, community response to Debian Women was at best tepid and at worst met with suspicion and controversy. She quotes a blog post where one person commented, "I think the whole idea of 'Debian Women' is flawed. All it does is give/reiterate to people the idea that women are somehow different to men when it comes to computers and should be treated differently." (2012: 673)

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[1] Alternately referred to as free software, Free/Libre software, and open source software production (with each label carrying different emphases), for shorthand these forms of practices are here referred to as FLOSS.

[2] Ghosh, R. A.; Glott, R.; Krieger, B.; Robles, G. 2002. "Free/Libre and Open Source Software: Survey and Study. Part IV: Survey of Developers." Maastricht: International Institute of Infonomics/Merit. Though these statistics are a decade old, there is little reason to believe the situation has improved dramatically since this study.

[3] Nafus and colleagues conducted quantitative and qualitative research though this piece focuses on qualitative. Newer numbers than the FLOSSPOLS study are needed and we look forward to seeing an update to the earlier report ("Free/Libre and Open Source Software: Policy Support", FLOSSPOLS Deliverable D 17 Gender: Policy Recommendations, UCAM University of Cambridge, authors Nafus, Leach, Krieger, 2006).

Yet this blog post overstates the case about FLOSS community ambivalence towards initiatives for women. If one includes the people involved in the chartering of Debian Women, the picture starts to look different, very quickly. The idea for the project was hatched at the annual Debian conference in 2004 held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Spearheaded by the efforts of Erinn Clark, the few women attending used the time and energy afforded by an in-person meeting to initiate and organize the Debian Women Project, a Web site portal and IRC mailing list to encourage female participation by visibly demonstrating the presence of women in the largely male project. During the course of the conference, Erinn Clark gave a presentation "Women in Debian" to a packed room of mostly male developers, the great majority who responded with excitement and support (one of the authors of this piece, Gabriella Coleman, was in attendance at the conference and talk).

Indeed, following the conference, one female Debian developer, Amaya Rodrigo, posted a *bug report* calling for a Debian Women's mailing list, explaining the rationale in the following way:

> From: Amaya Rodrigo Sastre
> To: Debian Bug Tracking System <submit@bugs.debian.org>
> Subject: Please create debian-women mailing list
> Date: Tue, 01 Jun 2004 22: 12: 30 + 020
> Package: lists.debian.orgSeverity: normal

> Out of a Debconf4 workshop the need has arisen for a mailing list oriented to debating and coordinating the different ways to get a larger female userbase. Thanks for your time 😃. [1]

We find it politically significant that Rodrigo turned to a *technical* platform to diagnose a "social" problem; this belies Nafus' repeated claim that FLOSS developers hold technology to be orthogonal to the social (p. 674; *passim*). Contrary to what one would predict using this optic, which assumes such incursion of gender into the technical domain would be met with skepticism by the mostly male developer cohort, comments left on the bug report were, in fact, overwhelming supportive. Two examples are:

> i support the idea. about time IMO. oh, and i would have upped the severity [of the bug report] a bit i think 😊. s/

> I wholeheartedly second this idea — having the women of Debian work on corrupting my wife and turn her into as devoted of a Debian nut as I am is a project definitely worthy of its own mailing list! [2]

Gender Advocacy in FLOSS is Ongoing

Moving beyond the historical example of Debian Women reveals other contours of women's participation in FLOSS. Empirical study indicates that while some FLOSS communities include features like extreme sexism, these features cannot be assumed in all communities to the same degree. FLOSS projects are not monolithic, nor are FLOSS project responses to gender imbalance all identical. For example, if Debian Women was careful not to exclude men, Ruby and Python groups "for women and their friends" have glossed this slightly differently. They paint men as potential allies, but men are unwelcome in certain settings such as programming workshops unless accompanied by women; they may be invited as "guests" but they are to take a back seat. "Women", the primary constituency for

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[1]　Debian Bug report logs, http://bugs.debian.org/cgi-bin/bugreport.cgi? bug = 252171, June 2004.
[2]　Debian Bug report logs, http://bugs.debian.org/cgi-bin/bugreport.cgi? bug = 252171, June 2004.

these are workshops, are explicitly defined as woman-identified, including trans- and queer women. ①

Thus the notion that gender ought to be "irrelevant" is far from being a universal refrain. Indeed, there is a wealth of advocacy and activism *within* FLOSS communities to address "diversity", especially gender. LinuxChix was formed over a decade ago, and Debian Women was founded eight years ago. A raft of newer initiatives including RailsBridge in the Ruby community and PyLadies and PyStar in Python have since formed. Much of the scholarly research on FLOSS has to date failed to address the emergence of these initiatives, and substantial exploration of the perspectives and experiences of women developers is also lacking.

Yet there is a growing sense within some projects that gender and diversity are worthy topics for discussion and that blatantly sexist comments are not to be tolerated. This is not to say that no one in FLOSS communities argues, that gender is "artificial" and therefore ought to be "irrelevant". ② Indeed, a good way to set off an argument in some contexts is to raise the issue of gender; a typical instance was the kerfuffle over a reference Richard Stallman made to "Emacs virgins" in a 2009 presentation, which prompted outrage from some quarters about the potential for this remark to alienate women, and responses from others arguing that singling out women as deserving protection from this sort of harm, i.e. potential verbal offense, was itself sexist. ③

But notably, in the fracas over Stallman's comment, male practitioners were among those attempting to police this behavior and establish that such remarks were inappropriate. And by no means do all comments raising gender as a topic for consideration set off heated discussion. Both of these facts indicate that some practitioners — both men and women — do not question that showing support for women in tech fields should be a goal of FLOSS practitioners. ④

It is also the case that some women are distressed by being singled out to repeatedly comment on their gender, feeling that this is tiresome and unnecessary because gender should be irrelevant. Yet at the same time, others feel something rather more elaborate, wishing to acknowledge the issue of participation by women but being ambivalent (or simply fatigued) about being spokespeople for or ambassadors of their gender. Furthermore, while women may experience ambivalence regarding their visibility, some have concluded that this is a fair price to pay to change the constitution and practices of the groups in which they participate: in the words of one hackerspace participant, "Emma Jane Hogbin's Unicorn Law⑤ states that 'If you are a woman in Open Source, you will eventually give a talk about being a woman in Open Source.' Yeah, well. The thought here is having more women in visible roles in the workplace and the culture normalizes their presence and provides role models. So go ahead and volunteer for committees and panels."⑥

Taking stock of the responses and criticism, it might be interesting to rethink the ways in which gender is or is not "off topic" in FLOSS, taking an historical view. The initial rise and subsequent explosion of initiatives around 2008 – 2010 indicates a fascinating turning point in the history of large FLOSS projects, when these issues went from off topic to on topic. While there is often a notable

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①   Boston Python User Group, http://meetup.bostonpython.com/events/42610202/, December 2011.

②   Nafus 2012.

③   See post and comments at http://opensourcetogo.blogspot.com/2009/07/emailing-richardstallman.html, accessed 4/1/12.

④   See also "The tech world needs a 'white ribbon' project: Support for women in tech-related fields needs to be made visible", http://peak5390.wordpress.com/2012/03/23/the-tech-worldneeds-a-white-ribbon-project/, March 2012

⑤   See http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Unicorn_Law.

⑥   "11 To-Do's for Women in Tech," http://www.thehacktory.org/? p=1911, December 2011.

degree of discomfort with socially engineering an environment favorable to less represented groups, most projects have still moved to establish policies and initiatives to diversify their pools of contributors. But pressing questions remain: Why then and not earlier? What changed to allow them to take off? In what ways can these initiatives succeed? How are they limited, especially by forces like marked commitments to individualism and larger structural forces, such as the low number of women in computing?

A future line of inquiry might examine the limits of liberal individualism. While there is no denying that individualism flourishes in rhetoric and practice in FLOSS, there are also a range of practices that are communitarian: mentoring programs, recognition of building on the shoulder of giants, embedding jokes in source code (e. g. "Easter eggs"), and conferences where developers celebrate hacking as they work together. The marked individualism of this world is at times modulated by this communitarian ethos, which exists at the levels of both practice and rhetoric. To understand the success and failures of these initiatives, it might be fruitful to take examine them in light of the interplay between individualism and communitarianism in FLOSS.

Beyond "Women": Theorizing Gender and Technology

Furthermore, a framework incorporating gender troubles that arise beyond the issue of women in FLOSS can provide greater analytical yield. Nafus writes, "This [academic] literature shows how programming cultures sustain certain forms of masculinity which make women concerned about being 'unfeminine' in their connection to technology or 'too feminine' by attracting unwanted male attention" (p. 671). The notion that "the gender problem" in FLOSS centers on a double bind in which women have to be careful not to be "too feminine" while also not wishing to feel "unfeminine" in their pleasures in technology collapses an ultimately more complicated set of issues. One major pitfall of this framing is that it serves to reproduce heteronormativity, in which there is no possibility for women to possess or express anything but femininity. ① Yet in reality, researchers acknowledge multiple femininities and masculinities and the reality of complex dynamics vis-à-vis gender and technology, including commonplace existence of men exhibiting "non-masculine" values such as sharing, humility, and reciprocity in FLOSS. ②

A strict binary understanding gender within the gender-technology relation undercuts the rich complexity of technology as a site for negotiating and constructing gender; empirical evidence suggests that technical practice is a site where some participants experiment with gender crossing and liminality. ③ Moreover, hacker and FLOSS communities contain salient non-binary, queer, and trans contingents. In interviews conducted by Christina Dunbar-Hester in 2011 – 2012, some participants speculated that for hackers, gender, like technology, is just one more domain to question "why things are this way as opposed to that way" and "hack on", i. e. a site to display curiosity and assert "maker" agency. (This is not to suggest that these claims should be taken at face value or that software production is a site where material or bodily conditions have been transcended, merely that some participants conceive of "hacking" across multiple domains, including machines, code, and bodies.) Others suggest software development is an occupation that may appeal to people who do not "pass" or conform to gender norms, willfully or otherwise, because corporeal presence at a workplace may be less strictly required. There is certainly no single or simple explanation for this phenomenon, but its existence — and indeed prominence — should be noted by scholars of the gender-technology relation

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①   Landström 2007: 11 – 12; see also Rommes 2010.
②   Coleman 2012; see also Wajcman 1991.
③   Dunbar-Hester 2008: 215 – 218; Pinch and Trocco 2002: 138; Streeter 2011: 202, f. n. 16.

more generally and hacking and FLOSS in particular.

Conclusion

In sum, in setting the historical record straight and calling for a more expansive theoretical understanding of gender in FLOSS, our motivation here is not to serve as apologists for FLOSS communities. There are many problems to address and redress. The conversations occurring there about gender, sexism, and inclusion/exclusion are urgently needed, and often complicated and difficult. However, neither scholars nor practitioners are well-served by flattening the heterogeneity of conversations within FLOSS communities about gender. In this case, misrepresentations of sociological and historical dynamics are especially worrisome for they overlook the rich range of initiatives that community members — men and women, queer and trans people — are taking to redress gender imbalance. In other words, the problem is *not* primarily that gender is off-topic within FLOSS. Indeed, a lively conversation about gender is flourishing on project mailing lists, on blogs and at conferences; these conversations and interventions are an essential starting point to grapple with the limits and possibilities of strategic efforts to engender change in FLOSS. For our part, we will continue to seek analytical explanations for the irony of FLOSS as a site with multiple and varied gender constructions occurring, now home to a robust debate about diversity and representation, yet which remains in practice strikingly monolithic in its practitioner base.

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24. Feminist Issues and the Global Media System[①]

Margaret Gallagher

> When the Taliban successfully captured Kabul in September 1996, they immediately did two things: they barred women from ... any participation in the public sphere, and they banned television. Control over these two elements — women and the media — lay at the heart of the Taliban regime. It is interesting to note that the state of each is increasingly taken as a key index of the democratization and development of a society.
>
> — Annabelle Sreberny, "Seeing Through the Veil"[②]

Over the past twenty-five years, analytical critique of the interconnections between women, media, and sociopolitical processes has occupied an ever more central place on the international agenda. This has occurred against a background of dramatic transformations brought about by changes in the global media system. Well-documented trends include the emergence of a small number of global conglomerates that dominate transnational media production and flows; the spread of commercialized, consumer-oriented media; the diffusion of Western-inspired program genres and formats; and the spread of promarket media regulatory frameworks (Zhao and Hackett 2005).

From a feminist perspective, the general thrust of the emerging global media system is challenging at various levels. The trends are not conducive to pluralism, to diversity, or to public interest values — which many feminists have argued are among the foundations on which greater equality of representation in media structures and content depend. Moreover, the convergence of media technology and services — a gradual merging of television, radio, print, computers, and the Internet — has blurred the boundaries between definitions of "old" and "new" media, as well as of "mainstream" and "alternative" media. At the same time, the globalization of media distribution systems, formats, and applications calls into question what have traditionally been considered national media and local identities.

These convergences and shifting boundaries make it increasingly problematic to maintain distinctions that have traditionally characterized the study of women and communications internationally — production, content, users, and policies. Having said that, the remainder of this chapter will explore global patterns within some of these broad categories, which continue to be helpful

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① This is an updated and abridged version of a paper entitled "Women, Media and Democratic Society: In Pursuit of Rights and Freedoms," written for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Participation and Access of Women to the Media, organized by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women and held in Beirut, Lebanon, in November 2002. See www. un. org/womenwatch/daw/egm/media2002/reports/BP1Gallagher. PDF.

② Annabelle Sreberny, "Seeing Through the Veil: Regimes of Representation," *Feminist Media Studies* 2, no. 2 (2002): 270–72.

in shedding light on empirical trends and emerging issues around the world. Nevertheless, these separate issues should be understood as belonging to a multilayered conceptualization of the structure and process of gender representation in the media; the political, cultural, and economic formations that support this structure and process; the social relations that produce gendered subjects; and the nature of gendered identity.

Powerful Issues: Media Employment and Decision Making

It is salutary to be reminded that — despite today's theoretical sophistication, and even though the global political and communication environment has changed dramatically — feminist communication analysis still wrestles with issues that are fundamentally similar to those it faced thirty years ago. They revolve around the most basic questions of power, values, access, and exclusion. Indeed, one of the key contributions of feminist scholarship has been to uncover the embedded nature of gender-based judgements and assumptions — assumptions that permeate not just the media but all social, economic, and political institutions. Thus although early diagnoses called for a "critical mass" of women in the media as part of the solution to the problem, it is now clear that "the problem" is both more deeply rooted and more overarching than can be solved by a numerical redistribution.

Women are now an important middle-level cohort of producers, directors, journalists, and reporters in the media of many countries round the world. The only available international comparative study (Gallagher 1995) found that approximately a third of radio and television producers in Southern Africa and in Latin America were women; in Europe the equivalent figure was 37 percent. Of particular significance is the increasing presence of women as newscasters and program presenters in television. The phenomenon is widespread. For example, the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which monitored the news in seventy-six countries, found that 57 percent of television news items were presented by women on the monitoring day. Yet only 29 percent of newspaper stories were reported by women (Gallagher 2006).

The disproportion is intriguing — and not necessarily reassuring. In their study of women in journalism in the U. S. and the UK, Chambers et al. (2004) speak of "women journalists as spectacle," claiming that "in television where spectacle counts — emphasis on the decorative value and even sexualization of women journalists is overt" (1). And indeed global data show that female television reporters and presenters disappear from the screen once they reach age fifty, though up to their midthirties women are in the majority in both of these roles (Gallagher 2006).

This increased presence of women on the screen and in a few other highprofile positions almost certainly contributes to a gulf between perceptions and reality. Women still have very little real decision making power within the media. In 2000 the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) conducted a survey covering 70 percent of its membership in thirty-nine countries. It found that although more than a third of journalists are women, less than 3 percent of senior media executives and decision makers are female (Peters 2001). In the newly emerging media industries, the picture does not look much better. A study of the major telecommunications and e-companies in the U. S. established that only 13 percent of top executives are women (Jamieson 2001).

Why do so few women break through the glass ceiling? The 2000 IFJ survey compared results with those from a similar survey conducted a decade earlier. Ten years after that first study, many issues remain unresolved. Women still lose out in appointments to the top jobs; have less access to training; earn less than their male coworkers; are confronted with job segregation, limited promotion perspectives, and sexual harassment; and continue to face impossible choices between career and family life. But by far the most common obstacle to advancement that women media professionals report is the problem of male attitudes (de Bruin and Ross 2004). In certain countries, the

overwhelmingly male media culture makes it almost impossible for women to feel comfortable and thus to thrive professionally. For instance in Korea, according to Kim (2006), authoritative news-gathering methods, informal communication between (male) journalists, and traditional perceptions of women all come together as exclusion mechanisms that result in the alienation of female journalists.

The implicit "rules of the game" that permeate media organizations are most starkly apparent when it comes to the reporting of war. When British journalist Yvette Ridley was arrested by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, she was vilified in the press for having risked "making her daughter an orphan" (quoted in Magor 2002, 143). As Magor points out, the parallel case of French journalist Michel Peyrard, also a parent, provoked no accusations of irresponsibility toward his family. Men's professional role is accepted as paramount. Women's professional role is conditional and secondary. In the context of war and conflict, deeply inscribed gender distinctions come to the fore in relation to whose voices prevail. Feminist analyses of twenty-first-century wars — particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq — have focused on the manipulation, ridiculing, or exclusion of women's voices in news coverage of these conflicts (for instance, *Feminist Media Studies* 2002; *Feminist Media Studies* 2005; Lemish 2005).

The experience of "otherness" expressed by many female media professionals is widespread. Interviews with journalists in Mumbai, Toronto, Sydney, and Melbourne reveal that in all these cities women encounter discrimination in newsrooms — experiences that "represent a global scenario ... in regards to gendered professional practices" (Mahtani 2005, 309). Not surprisingly, these gendered experiences and practices are rarely recognized as such by men. In her study of British journalists, Margareta Melin-Higgins (2004) found that though most of her male interviewees did not believe that female journalists today face gender-based obstacles, all of the women she interviewed did report such problems. This experience of gender-based discrimination is one of the main reasons why women decide to leave the industry (American Press Institute/Pew 2002, Mahtani 2005, Opoku-Mensah 2004).

There is no easy way of dismantling the obstacles faced by women media professionals. For example, Goga (2001) found that affirmative action policies in the South African media have increased the number of women and people of color, even in higher grades. But because white males continue to be concentrated in top management, inequality persists in the "power relations" at work within media organizations. These are rooted in much deeper structures of privilege and are infinitely more difficult to breach. Moreover, as studies in Canada (Aldridge 2001) and the UK (Antcliff 2005) have shown, changes in the commercial ethos of the media can lead to the reversal of gains. Apparent progress in women's employment in the media is thus contingent and fragile in the context of today's increasingly market-driven media system.

Critical Issues: Content and Portrayal

If women's lack of power within the media industries is an international phenomenon, gender portrayal in the media seems to conform to an equally universal pattern. Wherever one looks, media content reflects a masculine vision of the world and of what is important.

Every five years since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) has provided a one-day snapshot of "who makes the news" in the newspapers, radio, and television of more than seventy countries. The 1995 study found that women were only 17 percent of the world's news subjects — the people who are interviewed or whom the news is about (MediaWatch 1995). Five years later, the figure was 18 percent (Spears and Seydegart 2000). By 2005 the number had risen to 21 percent (Gallagher 2006). Regional differences are slight, ranging from a high of 26 percent in North America to a low of 15 percent in the Middle East. Everywhere, expert opinion is overwhelmingly

male; men are 83 percent of experts and 86 percent of spokespersons. When popular opinion is solicited in news stories, the views of women — 52 percent of the world's population — account for only 34 percent of those interviewed. There is not a single major news topic in which women outnumber men as newsmakers. In stories on politics and government, only 14 percent of news subjects are women. Even in stories that affect women profoundly, such as gender-based violence, it is the male voice (64 percent of news subjects) that prevails.

The results across the three studies (1995 – 2005) are strikingly consistent, and they have been replicated in research carried out over a longer time frame. For instance, a one-month study in twelve Southern African countries in 2002 found that 17 percent of news subjects were women (Gender and Media Baseline Study 2003). The numbers tell only a tiny part of the story. Behind them lies a power structure — social, political, and economic — in which men are predominant. News values intertwine with political priorities to portray a particular view of what is important. Issues that are central in women's lives come low down in the scale of what is regarded as newsworthy, and specific categories of women are practically invisible. The 2005 GMMP found that only 4 percent of news stories deal in any way with issues of gender equality or inequality (Gallagher 2006; Byerly 2002). Older women are virtually absent from media content (Tielen and Groombridge 2000). And if women are underrepresented or misrepresented in media content, this is doubly so for those women who are not members of the dominant national culture (Valdivia 2000; Shields 2003; Media Monitoring Project 1999).

As state-run media cede control to commercial interests, the struggle for change has become more complicated. Contradictions abound. In her study of women in the Indian press, Ammu Joseph concludes that with the trend towards market-driven, consumer-oriented media, "journalists who take strong positions on issues of justice risk derision, if not marginalisation. They are often referred to as crusading, campaigning or 'committed journalists' or even 'Mother Teresa's of the press'" (2000, 285). In the U. S. and the UK, say Chambers, Steiner, Fleming (2004), news organizations' search for increased market share has led to the exploitation of women journalists with a brief to produce materialist and consumerist stories that are devoid of political content. This is the paradox: as more women enter the media profession, proprietors and managements with profit-oriented agendas are exercising greater control on editorial matters, making it difficult for journalists of either sex to swim against the tide.

These contradictions attain heightened political resonance at a time when "corporate globalization is eager to capture new territories *and* religious fundamentalism endeavours to capture the imagination of local and transnational diasporic communities" (Parameswaran 2003, 311, emphasis in original). Nowhere are these political and ideological tensions more clear than in contemporary representations of veiled Muslim women (Macdonald 2006; Jiwani 2005). In the wake of 9/11, images of women in chadors, burqas, and hijabs have provided the Western media — and Western politicians — with a visual spectacle that is apparently both threatening and incomprehensible. The crude political manipulation of these images — to justify wars of "liberation" in both Afghanistan and Iraq — is clear (Stabile and Kumar 2005; Winegar 2005). Equally clear is the lack of analysis of — or indeed interest in — the nature of women's oppression. That countless Afghan women chose to retain the burqa after the overthrow of the Taliban was thus deemed inexplicable by many Western media commentators. One of the most extraordinary reasons advanced — in a widely reported news story about plans to establish a beauty school in Kabul, with help from U. S. cosmetic giant Revlon — was that the burqa helped women to "hide their unfashionable clothing" (BBC News 2002).

The deep-seated sexism evident in contemporary media content, despite the measurable presence of more women working in media organizations, has increasingly preoccupied feminist activists and

researchers internationally. In an important 1994 essay, the late Donna Allen, founder of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, emphasized the need to bridge the gap between women's groups and associations outside and inside the media, if women's experiences and viewpoints were to get a better hearing (Allen 1994). At more or less the same time, groups such as Cotidiano Mujer in Uruguay, the Media Advocacy Group in India (now known as the Centre for Advocacy and Research), Women's Media Watch in Jamaica, and later Gender Links in South Africa, were thinking along the same lines (Gallagher 2001; Byerly and Ross 2006). Such groups believe that without interaction and professional dialogue — between researchers, activists, audiences, advertisers, journalists, radio and television producers — there can be no progress. Inevitably initiatives of this sort are most likely to succeed in a media environment of public responsibility. But the global trend toward rabidly commercial, market-driven media must place a question mark over the future viability of these strategies.

Frontier Issues: the Internet Era

In her essay "Cyberspace: The New Feminist Frontier?" Gillian Youngs argues that the Internet is "actually and potentially revolutionary for women and feminist activism" (2004, 190) because it disrupts both patriarchal as well as national and international boundaries. It is in this sphere above all others that the notion of "globalization from below" — using communication networks to challenge dominant transnational media — seems potentially attainable. However, as Youngs points out, the historically embedded nature of gender inequality — and the specific history of male domination in science and technology — means that the radical potential of new communication technologies is far from guaranteed.

A determining issue is accessibility. Women represent a growing proportion of Internet users in many parts of the world. But truly significant numbers of women are currently online in only a small number of countries beyond the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) group. In most regions, home access to a computer and to the Internet are rare outside the upper income strata. For many women, the Internet is frustrating and inaccessible — often because of technical problems and costs of access, but also due to lack of training and knowledge (AWORC 2001; Morna and Khan 2000). But for those who do have access, the Internet can indeed be a force for change. Examples range from broad-based initiatives to share concerns about women's roles and give "voice to the voiceless" in South Asia (Mitra 2004) to specific, issue-based applications, such as a campaign for women's suffrage in Kuwait (Wheeler 2004).

However, despite the hyperbole that often surrounds them, the new communication technologies are inherently no better than the old ones — print, radio, television, and so on. Just as we have had to deconstruct traditional media beliefs, such as "news is news," so we now have to challenge the idea that "technology is technology" — that it is gender-neutral. In fact, patterns of gender segregation, which are well known in the established media industries, are already being reproduced in the new information and technology sector worldwide. Men are more likely to be found in the high-paying, creative work of software development or Internet start-ups, whereas employees in single-tasked ICT work, such as cashiers or data-entry workers, are predominantly female and lowpaid (ILO 2001). Women are virtually absent from senior decision making and politically influential positions in the sector.

The almost complete absence of women from the production of new media software (and hardware) raises the question of how women's viewpoints, knowledge, and interests can be adequately represented in the new media. One of the reasons given by women to explain their low attendance at telecenters in Africa is language and content that does not "speak to them" (Morna and Khan 2000).

Language in this sense means mode of address rather than proficiency in a foreign language — though the latter is also a major problem. The relative presence of English on the Internet is declining (an estimated decrease from 75 percent of Web pages in 1998 to 45 percent in 2005), but English remains by far the dominant language of Internet content (Funredes 2006). The fundamental issue, however, is lack of relevance. Despite the vast amount of content available on the Web, little can be of use to most women in most parts of the world. A Web search in early 2000 found some 200,000 websites related to women and gender, but only a fraction of these originated in developing countries (Fontaine 2002).

The picture that emerges from many analyses of Internet content is of a masculinist rhetoric and a set of representations that are frequently sexualized and often sexist. Pornography, e-mail harassment, "flaming" (abusive or obscene language), and cyber-stalking are well documented (van Zoonen 2002). Revenue from sex sites is said to be between several hundred million dollars and over two billion dollars annually (Hamelink 2000, 32; see also Sarikakis and Shaukut in this volume). The Internet is heavily implicated in the growth of the global sex industry, including sex tourism and trafficking in women (Hughes 2000). While women and nongovernmental organizations have used the Internet extensively to campaign against all forms of violence against women, the battle is daunting. Illustrative of this is a study of how women in Thailand tried to use a Thai-managed, English-language website to refute widespread Internet stereotypes of "the Thai woman" as either a potential prostitute or a mail-order bride. For the small group of educated, English-speaking women involved, the experience seemed affirming. But their postings were largely ignored by the (Western) male contributors, who continued to "talk directly to other men" in postings that fetishized Thai women as better wives or sexy companions (Enteen 2005, 475).

The Internet era promises even greater corporate concentration in the global distribution of news and information, with the intermingling of digital news networks, converging newsrooms, and advertisers. Given the monolithic nature of these institutions, and the lack of gender sensitivity within them, the struggle to have women's voices heard in the international news agenda is set to move into even more difficult terrain. But the emergence of another tier of information providers — from citizen journalists to Web logs to online communities — presents an independent, if fragile, alternative. Enterprises such as Women's eNews, Women's Feature Service, WINGS, and others (Byerly and Ross 2006) allow women's voices to be heard across national boundaries. The combination of Internet and radio can be especially powerful. For instance, FIRE (Feminist International Radio Endeavour) uses audio, print, and pictures to broadcast women's perspectives on issues and events around the world (Thompson, Gómez, and Todo 2005). These new linkages and new approaches to information provision hold great promise in terms of bringing women in from the margins of media and communication developments.

Foundational Issues: Policies and Their Implementation

The increasingly globalized nature of communication media, and the emergence of a market logic in the international policy arena (Ó Siochrú 2005) introduce new complexity into an already problematic, and potentially divisive, area for media reform activists. Feminists striving for genuine diversity in the media face enormous difficulties in convincing media industry bodies, practitioners, and policy makers that the search for a policy framework within which rights and freedoms can be fairly evaluated has nothing to do with censorship, but everything to do with openness and inclusiveness.

While many media organizations have policies and guidelines to prevent discrimination in employment, most are wary of equivalent provisions for media content. Where they exist, self-

regulatory measures are frequently entrusted to compliance/complaints bodies that lack monitoring capacity. Action is often left to private citizens, who must watch, challenge, and litigate. However, a 2000 survey of Canadian women and men found that only 6 percent had tried to complain when they were offended by something they saw or heard in the media. This suggests that a complaints-based system of regulation will catch only a very small proportion of those who encounter offensive content, and that other channels of public criticism are needed (MediaWatch 2000).

One of the difficulties in mounting successful challenges is that media codes tend to be too general to allow unambiguous interpretation. Another problem is that when codes are specific vis à vis the portrayal of women, this tends to be expressed in moralistic terms that proscribe provocative or obscene imagery. Often these exhortations reflect obsolete interpretations of public taste. Even newly developed codes do not necessarily take account of gender. For instance, although women are frequently portrayed as sex objects in the Thai press, this was ignored in the initial draft of the Thai Press Council's 1998 Code of Ethics. Intense pressure from activists did result in the addition of a new clause stating that news reports must not victimize women or violate their dignity (Siriyusavak 1999). The example illustrates the need for gender specialists to be consulted when policies, codes, and guidelines are discussed and developed. Useful approaches to policy development based on broad consultation and dialogue have been initiated in countries such as Jamaica, Japan, South Korea, and Sri Lanka (Gallagher 2001, 39 - 42).

In this undeniably contentious area, the temptation to cede to a laissez-faire position is compelling. But it is certainly possible to develop frameworks that encourage reflection on the potential conflicts between human rights, freedoms, and responsibilities. Two examples — from Canada and South Africa — illustrate different approaches to the dilemma. Canada has long been acknowledged as having the most detailed codes of conduct on gender portrayal. But intense commercial pressures in Canada's media marketplace have weakened existing implementation mechanisms. An analysis commissioned by Media-Watch (Coulter and Murray 2001) concluded that in this new media environment it is important to address issues of gender equality in the context of human rights. Media regulation, says the report, is essentially a matter of balancing "collective human rights" and "individual freedom of speech" — a balance that could best be achieved in a "co-regulatory model" that would include tripartite coordination of government, industry, and civil society. South Africa's 2003 Code of Conduct for Broadcasters deals explicitly with the tension between "rights" and "freedoms," stating that in disputes:

> rights of free expression will have to be weighed up against many other rights, including the right to equality, dignity, privacy, political campaigning, fair trial, economic activity, workplace democracy, property and *most significantly the rights of children and women*. (ICASA 2003, para. 7, emphasis added)

These developments offer some ways of conceptualizing the pursuit of rights and freedoms and some possible routes toward their reconciliation. But the contradictions remain profound. In Indonesia in early 2006, two almost diametrically opposed matters of public concern provoked widespread protest. One was a proposed law against pornography currently before the Parliament, against which almost all women's rights organizations, together with other civil society groups, campaigned. They were fearful that the passing of the bill — which included measures to regulate women's dress and public behavior — would open the way for greater oppression of women (Mardzoeki and Lane 2006). The second was the launch of the Indonesian edition of *Playboy* (which quickly sold out). Alongside its pictures of partly dressed women, the magazine carried an interview with Pramoedya Ananta Toer,

Indonesia's most famous writer and dissident[①]— thus situating itself in a discourse of freedom of expression (IFEX 2006). These struggles around "freedom of speech" are indicative of the ways in which women's rights are threatened as politicians and media moguls pursue their disparate goals — goals over which women themselves have relatively little control.

Enduring Issues: New Spin, New Politics

Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes . . . Yet the terrorists who helped rule that country now plot and plan in many countries. And they must be stopped. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women. (Laura Bush, radio broadcast, 18 November 2001; quoted in Stabile and Kumar 2005, 765).

In a specific and disturbing way, women have come to occupy a central position in international discourses of geopolitics, media, and society. The appropriation of feminist language to sell products is nothing new (Shields 2003). But use of the rhetoric of women's rights to peddle colonial expansion, while certainly not born in the twenty-first century (Ahmed 1992), has assumed an almost emblematic position in the post-9/11 era. The invocations of women's liberation used by the Bush administration to rationalize its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq ring hollow in the aftermath of the two invasions. Each has left the women of those countries in a parlous situation (Human Rights Watch 2002; Stork and Abrahams 2004).

Large sections of the media were complicit in spinning the discourse of women's oppression that preceded those wars. Yet while the news media subsequently focused much attention on the nondiscovery of weapons of mass destruction — another chimera used to justify the bombing of Iraq — the "monumental lie" of women's liberation has gone unchallenged (Stabile and Kumar 2005, 779). In some respects, this is part of the wider issue of what Chris Paterson calls the systematic "new spin," in which politicians in both the U.S. and the UK now exercise "unprecedented control over international representations of their policies" in the media (2005, 53).

But there is an additional phenomenon at work, in terms of the priority given to particular issues. This is as true of academic analysis as it is of news coverage. Notwithstanding the plethora of scholarly articles and books on the role of the media in reporting on Iraq (e. g., Miller 2003; Tumber and Palmer 2004; Calabrese 2005), it has been left to feminist researchers to highlight the specific symbolic uses and abuses of women as vehicles in the representation of these colonialist policies. Despite the wealth of feminist scholarship in all areas of media and communication studies, these insights are rarely assimilated into "mainstream" theories and analyses (Gallagher 2003). In the field of international communication studies — to which analysis of the social impact of globalization, geopolitical propagandizing, and corporate media expansion is germane — it is especially poignant that feminist work continues to be regarded as parallel, rather than integral, to the canon.

Armand Mattelart (2003) has reminded us that it was a feminist — Flora Tristán — who coined the term "democratic cosmopolitanism" in her 1843 *L'Union ouvrière*, considered a forerunner of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848). Tristán was the first to propose a Socialist International, and she devoted her short life to the promotion of women's and workers' rights and to the doctrine of international solidarity. Notions such as solidarity and internationalism came to seem outdated or utopian in the individualistic climate produced by corporate control of global communications in the late twentieth century. But recent attempts by civil society activists and academics to (re)frame the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) debate in terms of

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① Pramoedya Ananta Toer died on 30 April 2006.

communication rights — though largely a failure, and a spectacular one in relation to women's communication rights — have helped to revitalize these concepts and to mobilize reflection and action around common goals.

Among the many voices today calling for interconnections between media reform movements and social networks, both local and global, feminist voices are again raised. For instance, Chandra Mohanty (2003) calls for a "politics of solidarity" and for "feminism without borders" to address the injustices of global capitalism. Ellen Riordan (2004) pleads for feminist theory to be allowed to inform political-economic analysis, so as to bring new perspectives to the study of media and communication internationally. Carolyn Byerly and Karen Ross (2006) propose a model of women's media action to explore the role of women's media activism both in women's liberation and in social transformation, within and across nations. These and other contemporary voices situate feminist scholarship within a global political economy framework, whose agenda is social change.

It has been a central argument of this chapter that the tendency to ignore women's voices is universally embedded in normative cultural and social practices. The result is an impoverishment of analysis and a weakening of the transformational potential of civil society action. In a world where the forces of globalization have simultaneously repositioned women in new systems of inequality and destabilized geopolitical boundaries, a transnational "politics of solidarity" as proposed by Mohanty is imperative. This, she argues, must be built on "mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships between diverse communities" (2003, 7). This is a feminist politics — one that embraces difference while seeking inclusivity, and one that can strengthen theory and praxis in international communication studies.

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25. Gender, Simulation, and Gaming: Research Review and Redirections[1]

Jennifer Jenson   Suzanne de Castell

This review of gender and gameplay research over the past three decades documents a set of persistent methodological repetitions that have systematically impeded its progress since the inception of this trajectory of research. The first is, in fact, a refusal to consider gender at all: Conflating gender with sex impedes possibilities to identify nonstereotypical engagements by girls and women. Second is the persistent attempt to identify sex-specific "patterns" of play and play preferences "characteristic" of girls and women mainly to support and promote these in the name of "gender equity," whether in women's involvement in the game industry as designers, in the development and marketing of "games for girls," or the access and uses of digital games for education, training, and entertainment. Third, it is found that "gender" is an issue in research studies only long enough to dismiss it as a significant variable, which in turn makes any deeper critical interrogation unproductive.

boys, consumers, design, digital games, femininity, gameplay, gamers, games, games industry, gender, gender stereotypes, girls, identity, masculinity, men, methodology, players, popular culture, progress, sex, technology, women

The difficulty for novelists and playwrights concerned with the promotion and development of a central female character, wrote Henry James in his introduction to *The Portrait of a Lady*, is that they are "typical, none the less, of a class difficult, in the individual case, to make a centre of interest" (p. 48). To imagine giving center stage to a female character, a heroine who, as George Eliot put it, "In these frail vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affection"[2] was at the time for authors, and still clearly is today for designers and developers of digital games, persistently difficult.

In 1981, an article in *Simulation & Gaming* documents, as a pedagogical and curricular bias in contemporary business simulations, the finding that women did not value as much as their male classmates the use of computer-based simulations as an integral part of their course (Chisholm &

Krisnakumar, 1981). The researchers' expressed concern was that, as more women took business courses, games and simulation-based curriculum and pedagogy would need to be "adjusted" in order to accommodate their viewpoints and preferences. If we consider what has been learned from gender and gaming research over the past 20 + years, it is instructive to begin by noting that, details aside, their article could as well have been written today.

We present in this review, accordingly, a "cautionary" (Belloc, 1923/1936) overview of research on gender and simulation/games that points out persistent methodological biases endemic to nearly every inquiry in which "gender" holds prominence of place. These methodological "potholes" on the long road to understanding significant interplay across the fields of gender studies and simulation and gaming research largely explain, we demonstrate, the tiresome and worrying persistence of familiar themes and unremarkable findings from which research in this field has seldom wavered.

Common Research Pitfalls: Gender as Lack and Gender as Superfluity

The first, and arguably the largest and deepest of these research pitfalls is to construe and study *gender as lack*. Naive gender ontologies, in which existence is bifurcated into sexes and sexes into two, necessarily interrogate the "second sex" (de Beauvoir, 1949/1973) in terms of lack (Phipps, 2007). Our review connects gender and gaming studies with prior, more extensive research on gender and technology more generally and undertakes to illustrate how this systematic methodological bias means that nothing much that is new can be learned either about gender or about games and simulations, as through persistently descriptive accounts of girls/women and gaming, familiar gender assumptions and truisms are reaffirmed.

The second research pitfall is *gender as superfluity*. Gender is invoked in such studies merely to dismiss it as an insignificant factor. Much current quantitative research, including reports on the number of women/girls playing video games, tends to fall into this category of research, which, bent on the inevitably reassuring counting and calculating of what is, does not problematize nor deeply interrogate either of its axiomatic terms.

From neither of these methodological orientations has much been able to be learned, either about gender or about simulation/gaming, since neither term is, by virtue of either perspective's methodological precommitments, the point or purpose of the inquiry.

Research that breaks out of these constraints does so first and foremost by recasting the purpose of gender and gaming research: Very different questions and ways of answering them become possible when researchers aim to destabilize and reorganize concepts and practices, rather than describe and reauthorize them.

Greater promise resides, we argue, with alternative and more productive frameworks for gender and gaming inquiry. For example, McDermott and Varenne's (2006) question of *when* is gender asks at what point and in what context is any particular enactment taken up and denominated as "gendered," and actor-network analyses study how agency gets remediated through material conditions and technologies that afford competence, both typically and atypically. The review will conclude with potential "new directions" that might release the category of gender and thereby gender-based game research from the self-imposed stranglehold of repetition, inaction, and "lack" that already constitute what it is we know or think we know. That is, we will suggest that the next 10 years of gender and simulation/game research might invite, indeed, cultivate and demand, "surprise" (Becker, 1998) from our subjects and ourselves.

Normative Positions: Gender and Technologies

It is difficult, if not outright impossible, to shake loose deeply engrained, hegemonic normative

discourses and practices that demarcate, delimit, and predominate everyday gendered subject positions, especially in relation to technologies. While not the explicit purpose of this review, it is necessary to foreground the work we will do here through the lens of this systemic recurrent feature of gender and technology studies more generally, as that had an early and sustained impact on how gender and gameplay was theorized.

Research on gender and technology has, in some sense, stalled in the past decade. The central issue remains untouched: that there is a relative paucity of women who "choose" computer science and engineering programs at the postsecondary level, that indeed these numbers have not increased in the past decade but decreased (Burrelli, 2008; Dean, 2007), and that despite interventionist work, little has changed. In a review of international research on gender and technology over the past 30 years, Jane Abbiss (2008) broadly characterizes that work as being discursively situated in terms of "male norm and female deficit" (p. 2).

For example, researchers have documented consistent differences in computer use by males and females (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 1998, 1999, 2000; Brosnan, 1999; Collis, Kass, & Kieren, 1989; Dugdale, DeKoven, & Ju, 1998; Light, 1997; Lightbody & Durndell, 1996; Littleton & Bannert, 1999; Littleton & Hoyles, 2002; Siann, Macleod, Glissov, & Durndell, 1990; Sutton, 1991; H. Taylor & Mounfield, 1994). While administrators, teachers, parents, students and universitybased researchers alike have stressed the importance of the sciences and information technologies for the educational and vocational futures of all students, neither the number of girls enrolling in these subjects nor the number of women who go on to work in them has noticeably increased (Burrelli, 2008). If there is, in fact, any increase to be noticed, it is in the opposite direction as girls' and women's participation in especially computer science and engineering fields tends to be diminishing (Burrelli, 2008; Kramarae, 2001; Stabiner, 2003).

While it has been argued that technologies are *gendered* (Cockburn, 1992) as a result of the context or culture of their production, they also embody particular assumptions about social relations. Writers such as Bryson and de Castell (1996), Cockburn (1992), and Wajcman (1991) outline ways in which women have *not* been alienated from technologies. Instead, they have sought to challenge what counts as "technology" and have pointed out that often "technologies" are defined so as to exclude the technologies that women use and/or to "forget" women's contributions to technological innovation (e. g. , Ada Lovelace's construction of the "Analytical Engine"). ①

Masculinity can be seen, on this view, to be constructed, at least partially, through assumptions related to technological skills and competence. Technological competence, so seen, has less to do with actual skills and more to do with construction of a gendered identity — that is, women lack technological competence to the extent that they seek to *appropriately perform* femininity; correlatively, men are technologically competent by virtue of their *performance* of masculinity. ② Cockburn (1992), Wajcman (1991), Turkle (1988), and Schofield (1995), to name a few, argued that one of the reasons that many women actively resist participation in masculinized technologies like computers is because it directly "threatens their identities as feminine," and because these technologies

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① Ada Lovelace is considered to be one of the founders of scientific computing.

② This is not to say that relations to technological competence are only about "performing" some predetermined masculine/feminine binary, which would, of course, severely limit the possibilities for challenging or changing gender-technology relations. We do, however, want to call attention to those practices or "performances" of masculinity and/or femininity that are familiar, as Benston (1992) strongly argues, "male use of technology communicates power and control ... The whole realm of technology and the communication around it reinforces ideas of women's powerlessness" (p. 41).

are already categorized as activities that are appropriate for men. Technology cannot, therefore, be assumed to be a value-neutral tool that women and men use indiscriminately or free from social constructions of identity that continually (re)position them through markers like gender, race, nationality, or class. One different approach, then, to reading off the past 30 years of gender and technology research might be to do, as Abbiss (2008) suggests, and see it as *discursively boxed in*: "The inclination to blame females for their lack of involvement in the IT industry and in 'hard' computing courses is itself a reflection of the social structuring of gender and IT" (p. 162). This is no less the case in terms of gender and video games: The powerful association of masculine subjects as gamers and game designers as well as the presumption (through technologies generally) of (male) competence and ability have positioned women and girls unerringly as "less able," "less competent," and as "casual" gameplayers.

The Question of Gender: From Gender and IT to Gender and Video Games

We took the time to briefly overview work on gender and technology in order to show some of the foundational studies that work on gender and video games drew upon and from which it continues to draw. Another reason for this was to begin to show how the three areas we have chosen for organizing research on gender and gameplay over the past 20 years or so (i. e., female lack — of abilities, interest, use; axiomatic constructions of male/female; and new discursive positionings) are already present in and theorized by those doing work broadly on gender and technology. That research represents an invaluable starting point for research on gender and gameplay, providing insights and points of departure that we hope to show might be valuable for new work on gender and gameplay. It should be noted here that much of the focus of the field has been to investigate whether and how women/girls play games, who they play with, what they like to play, and so on.

This has been driven less by scholarly interest than by a perceived development and marketing question on the part of game developers with "how to get more women to buy games" as well as early work that construed play preferences as facts about "what women want" (de Castell & Bryson, 1998). This means, then, that there are few studies to date that focus exclusively on studying and theorizing the male gamer, as this has been the presumed "default" position from which much of the early work was done and later work has followed. Where possible, we will introduce some of the work that is out there on boys/men and gameplay. It should be noted, however, that much of this has been couched within a broader study of women/girls and gameplay.

Constructing the Female Gamer: Use, Attitudes, and Preferences

Work on gender and video game play is relatively scarce before the publication of Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins's (1998) edited collection *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*. Prior to that, most of the research in the area of gender and computer gameplay had been confined to studies that were focused on the technological dimension of games, situating computer games as part of the larger domain of "gender and technology" studies (Abbiss, 2008; Culley, 1993). Cassell and Jenkins's (1998) collection, then, marked off "gender and video games" as a particular realm of study within the more general debates on gender and technology.

It is no accident that the early work on gender and gameplay arose out of an expressed concern for the perceived lack of women and girls in the field of computing (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998). Cassell and Jenkins theorized, and others have since (AAUW, 2000), that perhaps one entry point for girls and women into the world of computing might be generated (as it appeared to have been in anecdotal accounts of their male peers) through the development of skill and interest in playing video games. Crosscut with market-driven interest in increasing "share" and profitability by engaging an as yet

largely "untapped" sector, what this "concern" materially and theoretically produced were accounts of gender and gameplay in terms of attitudes toward and preferences for certain types of games as well as documentation of who was playing games and how often.

In Cassell and Jenkins's collection, the articles were concerned not only with this underrepresentation but also with what they saw as the strong potential of digital gameplay to assist technological familiarity and skill on behalf of the player. Here also was a discussion of "player preferences" (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998), that is, what sorts of games girls "liked" and "did not like" as well as a more nuanced discussion of the gendered nature of play itself (de Castell & Bryson, 1998). Following in the footsteps of the games industry focus on creating appealing titles for girls, girls' preferences in games were unproblematically reported, for example, as being "collaborative" and "exploratory" and shying away from "confrontation" and "violence" (Grodal, 2000).

This black boxing of gender has been a recurring theme in gender and digital game studies since the late 1990s. In 2000, for example, THE SIMS was released and has since, through its expansions and the release of SIMS 2, been the top-selling PC game of all time. The industry, of course, took notice: Girls and women were buying and playing the game in record numbers. THE SIMS, and its franchise, it has since been argued, is successful as a "crossover hit" for a number of reasons:

1. Its design team included women.
2. Its premise is that of an elaborate dollhouse.
3. It provided different and frequent kinds of "interaction" that appealed to a female audience.
4. It was essentially nonviolent.

However, the success of THE SIMS did not lead to more appealing "games for girls," and women continue to be radically underrepresented in the industry (International Game Developer's Association [IGDA], 2005). That said, the success of THE SIMS, in part, renewed an interest in designing games for girls. Sheri Graner Ray's (2004) work *Gender Inclusive Game Design: Expanding the Market* attempts to tackle the question of design of video games for a "nontraditional market" (e. g. , women and girls) through an essentialized and highly stereotyped account of differences and preferences between male and female players and how designers can design more effectively to capture a female audience.

Taking a completely different tack, the academy has begun to move away from universalistic, stereotyped accounts of gender and gameplay. While girls and women certainly are less visible as gamers, that is not to say they are not playing (Bryce & Rutter, 2003; Carr, 2005; Jenson & de Castell, 2005; T. L. Taylor, 2006). They have been and are playing, supported in their play by their male relations (brothers, uncles, fathers, boyfriends, husbands), and have created communities of their own (e.g. , Frag Dolls, Quake Grrls, Riot Grrls, and numerous all-female COUNTERSTRIKE communities). Discourses around "preferences," moreover, have moved from simple binaries (violence/no violence, collaborative/competitive — e. g. , Ray, 2004; Turkle, 1984/2005) to being seen as highly contextual and therefore dependent on social, cultural, and other quotidian factors rather than simply on what a girl might "like" or "dislike" in any enduring or dispositional way (Carr, 2005; Jenson & de Castell, 2005; Krotoski, 2004; Yee, 2008). Gradually, it has begun to be clear that while girls and women *do* play, what and how they play is always negotiable, context dependent, and usually not necessarily in the company of other girls or female players. As Nick Yee (2008) concludes from his ongoing survey-based research on massively multiplayer online games like WORLD OF WARCRAFT:

> The reality is that those men and women who currently play online games are overwhelmingly similar in terms of what they like to do with them. And stereotypical assumptions of gender

motivations are either nonsignificant . . . or are dwarfed by differences in age. (pp. 94 – 95)

Female Gamers: It is Those Who Choose Who Play

The relatively (compared with men and boys) smaller number of women and girls who play games has, as indicated above, led to documentation of their play in an explicitly focused way since the late 1990s. This work has tended to interview female gamers about their play (when, where, with whom) and their thoughts generally on the (presumed) masculinized culture of gameplay (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998; Cunningham, 2000; Ivory & Wilkerson, 2002; Media Analysis Laboratory, 1998; Schott & Horrell, 2000; Yates & Littleton, 2001). In these studies, researchers tend to interview small numbers of girls and women, and it therefore remains the case that it is still relatively difficult to get reliable data on the play practices of women and girls. This is primarily because gender is often accorded statistical status to, analytically, dismiss it. In other words, in quantitative surveys of video game ownership and play, data disaggregated by gender are used to show that women and girls *are* playing games, a finding that then warrants analytical disinterest in further questions of what kinds of games, for how long, and in what relation to their male peers. So this "play or don't play" data, if useful at all, only serve as a kind of "check mark," justifying dismissal of what are quite possibly very different play patterns, preferences, and possibilities.

Two large, often-cited surveys that publish data on video game players in North America are the Kaiser Family Foundation (http://www. kff. org/entmedia/) and the Entertainment Software Association (http://www. theesa. com). According to Kaiser Family Foundation's (2005) large survey (over 2,000 respondents and over 600 sevenday media-use diaries) of media and children, the percentage of those girls surveyed who had a videogame console in their bedroom was 33 (63% of boys reported having a videogame console in their bedroom), while the percentage of girls with handheld videogames was 48 (63% of boys). What these statistics do not do is give a clear picture of what kind of videogame consoles and games respondents self-reported as having access to in their bedrooms (e. g., DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION? HALO 3?). They did, however, ask respondents to indicate approximate time spent playing console and handheld games, concluding that there is a marked gender difference in terms of time spent on video game play:

> Video games are clearly gender-typed. Boys are much more likely than girls to play video games on any given day (63% vs. 40%, respectively), and to spend more than an hour daily with video games (31% vs. 11%). Boys spend almost three times as much time as girls playing video games (1: 12 vs. 0: 25) . . . Similarly, boys spend triple the time that girls spend playing console games (48 minutes vs. 14 minutes), but just double the time for handheld games (24 minutes vs. 11 minutes). (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005, p. 33)

A similar issue arises in the surveys conducted by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). ESA's statistics are general, quantitative, and based on self-reporting of over 1,200 households that were asked about who plays and what they play (ESA, 2008). In their most recent survey of who plays, ESA reports that 40% of gameplayers are female and the average age of players is 35 years, with significantly more women aged 18 years or older reportedly playing games. What they do not do is aggregate *what* people reportedly play by gender or by age. While these statistics might give us a broad idea of the numbers of people who claim to play video games, it still elides divergence in play: There is a big difference between someone who reportedly plays online free puzzle games and someone else who is paying for multiple subscriptions to play multiple characters in persistent world, massively multiplayer online games.

As noted, a less quantitative approach has also been taken in relation to female gamers. In

particular, work by Royse Joon, Undrahbuyan, Hopson, and Consalvo (2007) and Thornham (2008), for example, explicitly documents the contexts of play for adult women gamers, including more nuanced accounts of when they choose not to play. Their work is adding to a growing body of literature (Bryce & Rutter, 2003; T. L. Taylor, 2006) that argues that while women might not occupy central positions in relation to games and gameplay in mainstream popular and/or commercial culture, that does not mean that they are not participating either on the margins or, in rare cases, more centrally. In particular, research of this kind has argued, along lines similar to Liesbet van Zoonen (2002) that, "the decisive moment in the circuit of culture is in the moment of consumption, when technologies are domesticated in everyday lives" (p. 16). We need to know a great deal more than we do now about how, for girls and women, game technologies are "domesticated in everyday lives." More specifically, we must investigate whether the "moments of game consumption," for women and girls, are less domesticated than disruptive, suggesting instances less of domestication and more of a form of "trouble in the house" (aka *gender disorder*).

For many, and certainly in ongoing popular cultural terms, girls and women are nowadays seen to be central consumers of games. For example, in his 2007 keynote address to the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, California, revered game designer Miyamoto (Nintendo; notable titles include MARIO, DONKEY KONG, BRAIN AGE) jokingly presented his wife as a measure of his success in designing new games: The more she liked playing, the further she registered on the "Wife-O-Meter." True success arrives for Miyamoto when he discovers that she has gotten up in the night to cast votes on Nintendo's "Everybody Votes" channel on the new Wii, further joking that "it would have been less surprising to find Donkey Kong ransacking his house" (Sinclair, 2007).

For girls, consumption is more difficult to assess in domestic spaces: It seems that girls tend to have limited access to gameplay technologies and are more often and more intensively parentally regulated when it comes to what they can and cannot play. They often "wait in line" behind male relations when it comes to accessing both time and technology (Jenson & de Castell, 2007; Walkerdine, 2006). Given the difficulties of approaching the study of girls in domestic spaces, studies of their gameplay consumption has been most often located outside the home: at school-based game clubs (Carr, 2007; Jenson & de Castell, 2006, 2007; Kafai, 2008; Pelletier, 2008; Walkerdine, 2006, 2007) and in LAN cafes (Beavis & Charles, 2007). What is common to much of this work is the perceived and documented tension between the male cultures of gameplay, which actively construct and become a site for the production of "contemporary masculinity," (Walkerdine, 2008) and "technologies of a gendered-self" (Royse et al., 2007) that colocate and restructure the masculine/feminine binary to construct female gamers as something other than marginalized players. The tension in much of this work is the difficulty of writing about and indeed coconstructing and reconstructing masculinities and femininities in ways that do not simply reinforce and solidify the very gender stereotypes their participants seem to be pushing against.

Interventionist Work: Challenging Representation in Games

While the possibilities for choosing a female character in a video game have certainly increased, it is still the case that they are highly underrepresented in digital games generally, tending specifically to be more obviously sexualized than male characters (Beasley & Standley, 2002; Dietz, 1998; Dill, Gentile, Richter, & Dill, 2005; Haninger & Thompson, 2004; Ivory, 2006; Provenzo, 1991; Smith, Lachlan, & Tamborini, 2003). Stand out characters like Lara Croft of the TOMB RAIDER series and Samus Eran from the METROID series have been held up as examples of a changing tide in the video games industry toward drawing less passive, more powerful female characters for its still largely male audience to consume and play. While there might be more active roles for female characters, it is still

the case that they are drawn as highly sexualized characters with oversized breasts and lips and very little clothing. Furthermore, when female characters are drawn in lead roles, they are almost exclusively White (Jansz & Martis, 2007).

Some have argued that the video game industry has responded to a call for more and variable female character choices in games. Lara Croft (TOMB RAIDER series) or Sonya (MORTAL KOMBAT) are no longer the only "girls in town" — players can choose from a range of female characters in most role-playing games, in nearly all MMORPGS, and in a range of other titles from MARIO KART to DIGIMON RACING. That said, sports games continue to focus on male teams and players; the one exception being the Wii "Sports" title, which rotates between male and female Nonplayer Characters. Interestingly, much of this work quickly passes over the fact that male characters in games tend to be as hypersexualized as their female counterparts.

Disrupting the Masculine Culture of Games: Female Game Designers

The "first wave" of interest in and research on girls and gaming saw gameplay as a conduit to and support for developing confidence and competence with new technologies. In its "second wave," not merely playing games, but the more complex and demanding challenge of designing them, has been promoted as a way to encourage and support girls in both computer use as well as via some levels and kinds of programming. In Yasmin Kafai's (1995) groundbreaking constructivist research on children as game designers, findings with respect to girls' designs paralleled claims about girls' "preferences," and the same kinds of results appeared in the later work of Walkerdine, Thomas, and Studdert. (1998) Until quite recently, neither these nor similar smaller studies have taken explicitly into account the context in which and the experiential background from which these designs were arrived at. This oversight presupposes by default that, for girls and boys, the video game area represents a "level playing field." We have little reason to suppose and many reasons to doubt that this is in fact the case. Until both theory and research explicitly and actively take prior differences and occurrent contextual factors seriously into account, we cannot expect to find much deviation from gender stereotyping that has thus far dominated theory and research concerning gender and gaming.

This is no less true for work that has tried to focus directly on the number of women who are involved in the video games industry generally. The industry has been widely criticized for not building games that appeal to girls and women as well as for not hiring and retaining more female employees in key game design positions. A recent survey by Electronic Arts (a leading game design company), for example, found that only 40% of teenage girls play console games (compared with 90% of boys), and most of those leave behind their game playing after a year (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/5271852.stm). In an effort to encourage girls in the design and development of games, there have been a number of intervention-focused research projects carried out in North America to help give girls programming skills. Among them are the Rapunsel project (Flannagan, Howe, & Nissenbaum, 2007), the use of ALICE and STORYTELLING ALICE (open source software that allow users to create 3D games) to learn programming (Kelleher, 2006), and Jill Denner's work with middle school girls and digital game creation (Denner, Werner, Bean, & Tyner, 2005).

In the video game industry, the IGDA (2005) reports in a large-scale survey on demographics of workers at game companies in North America that women represent only 11% of employees, with most of those positions located in Human Resources. While some are reporting that the industry is seeking out "new markets" and as such "more women" (Schiesel, 2007) and, concomitantly that in general companies are not aware of a "gender imbalance" (Edge Staff, 2008), it is still the case that the most blatant stereotypes about women and girls and gameplay are rehearsed in the media. In a story that ran in the *New York Times*, Olaf Wolters, managing director of BIU, the German interactive game

association, an organizer of a gameplay tournament in Germany, is quoted as saying, "In Germany, we're very traditional and it's probably why the girls get the dolls and the boys get the Game Boys. That is why we have to work on the parents, so they bring in the girls" (Carvajal, 2006).

Sex-Aggregated Studies of Violence and Video Game Playing

Studies of violence and video game play intersect tangentially with gender, insofar as they tend to be constructed out of the "media effects" research tradition and, because of their psychological background, tended early on to disaggregate data by sex (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Barlett, Anderson, & Swing, 2009; Bushman, 2001; Eastin, 2006; Funk, 1993; Shibuya, Sakamoto, Ihori, & Yukawa, 2008; Tamborini et al., 2004). Of note in this literature is the historical documentation of "little to no difference" between males and females at least when arguing that violent video game play initiates violent behaviors (much like watching violent TV does). For example, in their meta-analysis of the studies of the effects of violence and video game play, Anderson and Bushman (2001) found no sex-based differences for aggressive behaviors.

Sociocultural Studies of Gameplay in Context

A number of recent studies have focused on girls/women (boys/men) playing games in home, school, and some (public) LAN contexts (Beavis & Charles, 2005, 2007; Carr, 2007; Carr, Buckingham, Burn, & Schott, 2006; Jenson & de Castell, 2008; Walkerdine, 2007). What unites this work is a qualitative approach to documentation of the research, which helps to "uncover" and, more importantly, outline how, where, when, why, and with whom girls and women are playing games. Much of this work argues that context is *critical* to an understanding of gender and gameplay (Dovey & Kennedy, 2006) and that much that has been written on what girls/women "prefer" to play is seriously disrupted by attending closely to the lived practices and daily choices of women/girls as they play games (Carr, 2007; Jenson & de Castell, 2008; Kafai, 2008; Thornham, 2008).

Sociocultural studies of play tend to mobilize an understanding of gender identity as contingent and tenuous, performed differently by subjects working (and playing) in determinate contexts. Seeing digital gaming as a terrain where gender is enacted, indeed "performed," requires attending to the ways players (including both "researchers" and "subjects") engage with technologies that enable and constrain certain forms of experience, [1] and change not only what and how they play but also how they interact with others as they become more competent at a particular game or genre. It also requires moving away from conceptualizations of gender either as insoluble, sexbased difference or as monolithic and largely static categories (Ray, 2004).

Sociocultural studies are pushing back against taken-for-granted presumptions that are attributed to gender. More specific, they challenge commonly held assumptions that, for example:
- girls and women prefer a certain type of game,
- that they eschew violence and competition, and
- that they are not "interested" in playing games as much or as frequently as their male counterparts

Diane Carr (2005), for example, studied a girls game club in an all-girls' school in which she examined the "relationships between taste, content, context and competence, in order to explore the multiple factors that feed into users' choices and contribute to the formation of gaming preferences"

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[1]   This includes, importantly, assuming the control of in-game characters that are often hypersexualized and racialized; see, for example, Kennedy (2002), N. Taylor, Jenson, and de Castell (2007), and Everett (2005).

(p. 466). She concludes, not with a reinscription of gendered gameplay preferences (e. g. , what games the girls in her study most preferred to play), but instead by acknowledging that while it is possible to "map patterns" for play preferences, to do that assumes that they are stable instead of preferences being "an assemblage, made up of past access and positive experiences and subject to situation and context" (p. 479). Finally, and importantly, Carr stresses that,

> What did become apparent was that the girls' increasing gaming competencies enabled them to identify and access the different potential play experiences offered by specific games, and to selectively actualize these potentials according to circumstance and prerogative. This indicates that forms of competency underlie and inform our gaming preferences — whatever our gender. (p. 478)

It might well be, then, that competency has been too often misrecognized as some factual attribute for gender, and the more recent work of Jenson & de Castell (2008) supports this claim.

While there is then, a growing body of work on gender and gameplay that examines play in school-based contexts, there is still very little that documents home play or play in LANS (Beavis & Charles, 2007; Lin, 2008; Schott, 2006; Thornham, 2008) as it relates in particular to group play and gender. Thornham's ethnographic study of groups of households who play games offers the first larger scale study of this kind, and she argues persuasively that:

> Returning video games to the home, and discussing them in terms of their sociocultural and discursive importance or shaping, is therefore a vital and necessary act if the lived cultures or cultural practices of video games are to be understood. This move also offers a more nuanced and socio-political account of gaming which encompasses primarily the consumption, but also production and marketing, elements of gaming. (p. 141)

In the work of Jo Bryce and Jason Rutter (2003, 2005), this "move" has led them to study how the physical spaces of gaming (arcades, living rooms, bedrooms) are materially and discursively positioned in ways that maintain boys as the "natural" users of game technologies.

These studies are further reinforced by a growing body of work that examines gameplay in other cultural contexts (Scandinavia, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea, for example) and at the kinds of differences that are culturally located. T. L. Taylor (2008) writes about new interventionist work being done in Scandinavia to disrupt and challenge the usual kinds of games that are produced by large commercial companies. Holin Lin (2008) studies the regulation and resistance to that regulation of female game players in Taiwan, and Mizuko Ito (2008) looks at the intersection of gender and gameplay within a Japanese "media mix" culture that celebrates a hybrid engagement and play with a usually rigid Japanese social structure. Ito concludes that masculine/feminine binaries are much less rigid on closer inspection, stating that: "Despite the resilience of gender-differentiated social and cultural structure in Japan, the on-the-ground dynamics of media mixing, media engagement and play are evidence of a shifting set of gender dynamics intersecting with gaming cultures" (p. 109).

New Directions? Steering Away From Stereotypes

In a 2008 characterization of gender and video games for an updated edited collection *Beyond Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, Henry Jenkins and Justine Cassells argue that the key issues for gender are focused still on girls play and that they have largely remained unchanged in the intervening 10 years, namely: "(a) the debate about whether girls do and can and should play video games and (b) the concern that women are still vastly underrepresented in the fields that design digital technology" (p. 5). As this review has indicated, of the growing body of research that has documented girls/women playing and (sometimes) making games that has taken shape in the past 10 years, much has continued

to produce positivistic accounts of what women/girls want, what they prefer, and what they like. In some sense, this work has paralleled, as we have shown, the research on gender and technology generally, continuing to focus primarily on the documentation of "choice," "lack of interest," and "differing ability" from their generalized and technologically able male counterparts. Far fewer studies, as noted, examine male players (individually or as a group) and/or the masculine culture of digital game play, commerce, commercialization, and media specifically.

What remains in most of this work is a predominant, indeed, an almost intuitive reflex to crudely attribute "difference" as demarcated by male/female sex binaries. ① This reflex is present in even the most current work on gender and digital game play and presents itself no less persistently in research that sees itself as assiduously attempting *not* to reinvoke gender-/sex-based stereotypes.

Both an operational and a conceptual misunderstanding seem to underpin much of this kind of work: In documenting (largely) qualitative research projects that involve both boys/girls and/or men/ women, research accounts continue to compress gender based differences into sex-based difference necessarily coded as male or female. If, however, this research documented the *range* of possibilities for *gender*-based play (as one example), then the reporting on this research could more usefully include far more nuanced accounts of *feminized male play* or *masculinized female play*. Lacking such finer grained *gender*-based analyses, research reporting still produces the following familiar kind of account:

> We found that male playtesters would figure out how to play the game, and progress from beginning to end whether or not they were particularly interested in it. Female playtesters were slow to learn and unmotivated to progress until the game content and story align better with themes and topics they found interesting. (Heeter & Winn, 2008)

This kind of operational misunderstanding (which is ubiquitous and is not at all unique to Heeter and Winn's, 2008, study) encourages the further persistent conceptual misunderstanding, that somehow all girls/women and all boys/men will have similar approaches under similar conditions. Such deeply structured presumptions of difference between and among girls/women and boys/men has sustained a persistent conceptual stranglehold on identities as singular, immutable, unchangeable forces governing how we learn, how we think, and how we play. One very real implication of these forces has been made manifest in the past two International Digital Games Research Association Conference keynotes (DiGRA 2007, DiGRA 2009) in which all the prominent positions in the conference (keynotes) were given to male researchers, and this is entirely typical of conferences in this field, despite the fact that there are many women who do comparable, arguably more critical, digital games research.

In the future, the very real need for research on gender and gameplay that more carefully reports on, documents, and *troubles* identities of player, producers, and consumers of digital games, especially in relation to gender, cannot be underestimated. In particular, this work would begin from the more nuanced theories of gender and identities that have been developed through postmodern, poststructural, feminist, postfeminist, queer theory, and theories of race and identity and then approach questions around gender and gameplay with a view to reporting on and accounting for those

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① Here we want to distinguish between sex and gender in much the same ways that Gayle Rubin (1975) did so long ago in "The Traffic of Women" in which she argues that we are all a part of a universal sex-gender system. She defines the sex-gender system as "the set of arrangement by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (p. 159). In other words, the sex is a biological marker, gender is socially constructed and *both* categories are used to establish and maintain heteronormative hierarchies.

kinds of difference. While we can appreciate, understand, and indulge Henry James' (1908/1986) lament in *Portrait of a Lady* over a writer's "woman problem" in contriving central role for strong female characters, we ought surely to harden our hearts in the present day: There is really no excuse for the persistence in games studies research of conceptual frameworks that from the start make no room for girls and women such as these nor for seeing the myriad ways James' "portrait" is reimposed, surveilled, and enforced for women and girls in those "decisive moments" of their everyday lives. Computer-supported play and pleasure might allow for them, as it has so successfully done for men and boys, new forms of play and pleasure, new avenues for learning and creativity, and new and highly profitable careers. How can it be intellectually defensible, with the volume and variety of critical deconstructive analyses of both "sex" and "gender" that has in these intervening years come to be so freely available to researchers, that gender-focused research treads relatively acquiescently along its timeworn gamepaths? Our best hope of hardening our hearts to more of the same will come only once we sharpen our wits: It is high time we took seriously and operationalized in our research methodology and practice the fact that not all women need be ladies and not all ladies are "frail vessels."

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26. Malia Obama, Girl Photographer

Mary Celeste Kearney

In addition to the comical fur-lined hat worn by former President George H. Bush, one of the more notable images during President Barack Obama's swearing-in ceremony was that of his oldest daughter, Malia, snapping photographs of the occasion. Apparently, I wasn't alone in noticing the young Ms. Obama's photographic practices. At least one television network and five U. S. periodicals, including *People*, *Wired*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*, have run stories about the girl snapshotter after numerous photojournalists captured her in their lenses, turning this young spectator into the latest spectacle.

But Malia's photography and media attention to it were not restricted to the swearing-in ceremony. On January 17, the 10 - year-old was photographed taking pictures in Philadelphia before she boarded a train to Washington, DC with her family and that of Vice President-elect Biden.

Malia the Photographer at President
Obama's swearing-in ceremony[1]

Malia in Philadelphia before the President-elect's
train leaves for Washington, DC[2]

The following day, Malia was photographed snapping away at the Lincoln Memorial Inauguration Concert.

And the night before Inauguration, she was photographed with her camera in hand at the Kids' Inaugural: We are the Future Concert.

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[1] Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images, URL: http://images.eonline.com/eol_images/Entire_Site/20090120/425.obama.inaugur ation.lc.012009.jpg.

[2] Melina Mara/*The Washington Post*, URL: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/01/17/AR2009011701020.html.

**Malia and Sasha at the Lincoln Memorial
Inauguration Concert①**

**Malia at the Kids' Inaugural:
We are the Future Concert②**

What is the significance of Malia Obama's photographic practices, and why have they garnered so much public attention in the past few weeks? What fascinates us about this particular photographer? Are we simply excited by the possibility that we might see pix taken by a First Daughter on Flickr or Facebook? Or is something else piquing our curiosity? In order to answer these questions, we need to consider the history of girls' photography, the role of media technology in girls' lives today, and the racial landscape of American girlhood and girls' culture.

After Kodak's introduction of its small, portable Brownie camera in 1900, amateur photography became a common pastime for American youth. Boys had long been encouraged to tinker with such mechanical gadgets so as to prepare for future jobs and affirm their masculinity. Yet girls were not excluded from Kodak's appeal and became quick adopters of this new consumer technology. Indeed, because early amateur cameras were relatively cheap (the Brownie retailed for $1.00) and did not require much skill to operate, photography swiftly became one of the primary means by which girls of the early twentieth century documented their lives and expressed themselves creatively, thus challenging the primacy of diarywriting, which requires elementary literacy of its practitioners. By the 1920s, photography had become such a hit with female youth that Kodak began manufacturing Girl Scout cameras, the first media technology created specifically for girls. ③

As apparatuses that confer considerable agency on users while also encouraging their engagement with the outdoors, cameras offered additional bonuses to female youth of this period, which might explain photography's quick ascendance in early twentieth-century girls' culture. Like schooling and

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① Charles Dharapak/AP. URL: http://www.daylife.com/photo/0ctNesb0oF6vB/Sasha_and_Malia_Obama_ Lincoln_Memorial_concert.

② Los Angeles Times photo — photographer not credited. URL: http://www.newsday.com/business/local/ny-etobamakidspg.0.2718266.photogallery.

③ Mary Degenhardt and Judith Kirsch, *Girl Scout Collectors' Guide: A History of Uniforms, Insignias, Publications, and Keepsakes* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2005).

sports, photography enlivened a sense of mastery, control, and autonomy in its young female practitioners. In turn, it legitimized their participation in public life, thereby complicating the sex-segregated roles, practices, and spaces associated with Victorian society, which in turn helped to shift gender norms in a progressive direction.

From Kodak's Brownie to today's EasyShare (Malia's current model of choice), photography continues to be a primary pastime for many female youth the world over. Indeed, judging from the number of girls who own cameras and camera enhanced cell phones, it seems the dominant demographic group to occupy the role of photographer today is comprised of young females between the ages of 10 and 25. With toy manufacturers now creating pink and purple point-and shoots for little girls, such as Mattel's Barbie Smile with Me Camera, that age range is likely to skew even younger in the next few years, thus expanding the number of contemporary girl snapshotters.
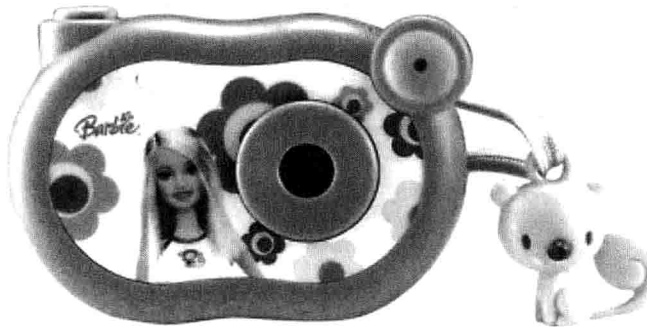
Mattel's Barbie Smile with Me Camera①

If girls' blogs and MySpace pages are any indication, today's female youth take photos of seemingly every person, object, and occasion in their lives, and no wonder: With no film cartridges to load, lenses to adjust, or processing to wait and pay for, digital cameras and cell phones have made photography super easy and efficient. Moreover, with the help of software packages, like Photoshop, female youth who are invested in photographic quality can manipulate their images without ever stepping foot in a dark room. But perhaps the most notable change in girls' photo culture is related to distribution, not production. Girls' snapshots, once carefully preserved in photo albums, can now be swiftly uploaded and circulated online, available for millions of viewers to see.

But contemporary girls' photo culture is not just about taking and sharing images. Available in numerous colors and with a variety of accessories, today's cameras are used by many female youth in much the same way as their cell phones — technologized consumer products that complete the public image of the postmodern "can-do" girl. ②

If, as already suggested, Malia Obama is but one of the millions of young female photographers currently in our midst, then why all the excitement when she's seen using a camera? Yes, she's also a First Daughter, so anything she does, even the most typical of "girly" activities, is bound to garner public attention. (Remember images of Amy Carter walking a gauntlet of photojournalists on her way to school?)

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① Kid Designs, Inc., URL: http://kiddirect.com/products.asp? parent_id = 1013&product_id = 10566&dept_id = 1020.

② Leslie Regan Shade, "Feminizing the Mobile: Gender Scripting of Mobiles in North America," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 21.2 (June 2007), pp. 179 – 189.

Amy Carter on her way to school[1]

Yet the lure of Malia the Photographer does not just result from her relationship with the President of the United States of America, and thus her ability to capture images of one of our most public and powerful figures in his most private and perhaps vulnerable moments. Certainly, those factors pique our interest about this girl photographer. Nonetheless, I believe the primary reason Malia's photographic practices have garnered so much attention is their juxtaposition with a young, female African American body. Most individuals in the U. S. are simply not used to seeing a black girl in a position of such agency. Stereotyped as crack whores and teen moms on welfare, black girls are more commonly constructed in the media as victims than heroes, "at-risk" rather than "can do."[2] Thus, it seems Malia is attracting attention not just because she's a girl who takes pictures or because she is a First Daughter who takes pictures, but because she's a black First Daughter who takes pictures.

While most Americans have grown used to the concept of "girl power" and the idea of female youth interacting with cameras, PCs, and musical instruments, African American girls have not regularly been in our cultural limelight since the girl groups helped to revive Tin Pan Alley in the early 1960s. Despite some notable exceptions in sports and music, the vast majority of female youth who have received attention for their cultural agency has been white. This is not to say that girls of color have been absent from the field of cultural production. Plenty of African as well as Asian, Latin, and Arab American female youth have been engaged in media-making practices in the past few decades. Indeed, hiphop culture would not have developed as it did if not for the Latina and African American girl DJs, MCs, break dancers, and graffiti artists who helped to create that scene in the 1970s.[3] Yet,

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[1]   AP/photographer not credited. URL: http://www.cleveland.com/nation/index.ssf/2008/07/what_kind_of_
       life_awaits_next.html.

[2]   Anita Harris, "The 'Can-Do' Girl versus the 'At-Risk' Girl." *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First
       Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 13 - 36.

[3]   Nancy Guevara, "Women Writin' Rappin' Breakin'." *The Year Left 2: An American Socialist Yearbook*, eds.
       Mike Davis, Manning Marable, Fred Pfeil, and Michael Sprinker (Stonybrook: Verso: 1987), pp. 160 - 175.

these are not the girl performers and artists that have attracted and held media attention. Given the overwhelming whiteness of contemporary American girls' media culture — from dolls to magazines to musicians to fictional characters — is it any wonder that the girl performer most noted for her interactions with our black First Daughters is Miley Cyrus?

Malia Obama's snapshotting has captured the public's attention and thus encouraged a barrage of photographs of her in response. In addition to acknowledging contemporary girls' technological agency, one of the most significant consequences of these images is that our whitewashed notions of girls, girlhood, and girls' culture are beginning to disintegrate. With numerous cameras ready to capture her every move over the next four years, Malia is helping to alter the dominant image of American girlhood through her place in front of as well as behind the lens. Let's hope she asks for an SLR for her birthday in addition to those Jonas Brothers' concert tickets.

第五章

Social Media

27. Can an Algorithm Be Wrong?

Tarleton Gillespie

THROUGHOUT the Occupy Wall Street protests, participants and supporters used Twitter (among other tools) to coordinate, debate, and publicize their efforts. But amidst the enthusiasm a concern surfaced: even as the protests were gaining strength and media coverage, and talk of the movement on Twitter was surging, the term was not "Trending." A simple list of ten terms provided by Twitter on their homepage, Twitter Trends digests the 250 million tweets sent every day and indexes the most vigorously discussed terms at that moment, either globally or for a user's chosen country or city. Yet, even in the cities where protests were happening, including New York, when tweets using the term "occupywallstreet" seem to spike, the term did not Trend. Some suggested that Twitter was deliberately dropping the term from its list, and in doing so, preventing it from reaching a wider audience.

The charge of censorship is a revealing one. It suggests, first, that many are deeply invested in the Twitter network as a political tool, and that some worry that Twitter's interests might be aligned with the financial and political status quo they hope to challenge. But it reveals something else about the importance and the opacity of the algorithm that drives the identification of Trends. To suggest that the best or only explanation of occupywallstreet's absence is that Twitter "censored" it implies that Trends is otherwise an accurate barometer of the public discussion. For some, this glitch could only mean deliberate human intervention into what should be a smoothly-running machine. The workings of these algorithms are political, an important terrain upon which political battles about visibility are being fought (Grimmelmann 2009). Much like taking over the privately owned Zuccotti Park in Manhattan in order to stage a public protest, more and more of our online public discourse is taking place on private communication platforms like Twitter. These providers offer complex algorithms to manage, curate, and organize these massive networks. But there is no tension between what we understand these algorithms to be, what we need them to be, and what they in fact are. We do not have a sufficient vocabulary for assessing the intervention of these algorithms. We're not adept at appreciating what it takes to design a tool like Trends — one that appears to effortlessly identify what's going on, yet also makes distinct and motivated choices. We don't have a language for the unexpected associations algorithms make, beyond the intention (or even comprehension) of their designers (Ananny 2011). Most importantly, we have not fully recognized how these algorithms attempt to produce representations of the wants or concerns of the public, and as such, run into the classic problem of political representation: who claims to know the mind of the public, and how do they claim to know it?

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THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT TWITTER TRENDS and occupywallstreet may be，by itself，a tempest in a teacup. But even on its face，censorship was a difficult charge to dismiss. Of course，some may have made or repeated this charge as a casual observation，as a gesture of belonging，as an expression of frustration about their political movement not being heard，or as a deep-seated anxiety about the nefarious intentions of corporations. But for those who leveled this critique with more care and conviction，the first question was，what exactly does Twitter measure when it identifies these Trending terms?

Twitter has repeatedly stated that their Trends algorithm is not a simple measure of volume（i. e. the most used terms），though the minimalist presentation of the list may suggest otherwise to some users. Some of the comments charging censorship，whether of occupywallstreet or Justin Bieber，suggest that this list is often taken as a straightforward and unproblematic measure of popularity. Though a few critics went to great lengths to reverse engineer the Trends results，to uncover the criteria that enliven them（Lotan 2011），mos And users certainly vary in their comprehension of what Trends measures and how，and may not always incorporate that understanding into their everyday use of Twitter.

Until 2010，Twitter had not provided much，or any，explanation of its algorithm. What Trends represented was offered as self-evident. When similar charges of censorship were raised around wikileaks，Twitter responded on their blog，[1] and there laid out some general criteria.（These criteria were corroborated and further explained by a Twitter engineer，in the comment thread of one of the more widely-read critiques.[2]）

Twitter explains that Trends is designed to identify topics that are enjoying a surge，not just rising above the normal chatter，but doing so in a particular way. Part of the evaluation includes：Is the use of the term spiking，i. e. accelerating rapidly，or is its growth more gradual? Are the users densely interconnected into a single cluster，or does the term span multiple clusters? Are the tweets unique content，or mostly retweets of the same post? Is this the first time the term has Trended?（If not，the threshold to Trend again is higher.）So this list，though automatically calculated in real time，is also the result of the carefulimplementation of Twitter's judgments as to what should count as a "trend."

Of course，these are just the publicized descriptions of what Trends looks for，and they do not offer a definitive（or satisfying）answer to critics. Trends measures something both more precise and more obscure. There are likely more — and more specific — criteria than those described in the blog，and these criteria undoubtedly change over time. For instance，one substantial revision occurred in May 2010 when Twitter announced it was removing Justin Bieber from the Trending Topics list.[3] Further，their explanation does not say enough：for instance，how something like "clusters" are defined and measured remains opaque.

Twitter may not be able to say much more about how Trends works. Revealing the "secret sauce" of their algorithm in greater detail risks helping those who would game the system. Everyone from spammers to marketers to activists to 4chan tricksters to narcissists might want to optimize their tweets and hashtags so as to Trend. This opacity makes the Trends results，and their criteria，deeply and fundamentally open to interpretation and suspicion.

The Trends algorithm and the data it evaluates are also the property of Twitter. Sites like Trendistic[4] can use the Twitter API and the corpus of public tweets to conduct more exhaustive analyses

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[1]　http：//blog. twitter. com/2010/12/to-trend-or-not-to-trend. html.

[2]　http：//studentactivism. net/2010/12/05/wikileaks-twitter-3/#comment-11619.

[3]　http：//mashable. com/2010/05/14/twitter-improves-trending-topic-algorithm-bye-bye-bieber/.

[4]　http：//trendistic. indextank. com/.

of the volume and velocity of term). But they cannot access private tweets, and they cannot know or take into account what counts as a cluster of users. Despite what Twitter is willing to make known, any effort to discover the Trends criteria can only amount to sophisticated guesswork.

Trends is also part and parcel of Twitter's financial aspirations as a for-profit business. Whether or not Trends is an accurate or a deeply flawed measure of vital topics of discussion, it is also a means to entice and retain users. This does not necessarily mean that it must squelch volatile topics like occupywallstreet. Twitter has trumpeted its role in the democratic uprisings of recent years, pitching itself as a vital tool for political foment. If Trends is meant to highlight terms that will support Twitter's self-proclaimed relevance, occupywallstreet seems to fit the bill. But this political vitality must be balanced against the interests of other users, of advertisers, of regulators (Gillespie, 2010). Most of all, it is not as if these competing interests can be simply weighed and settled. This same algorithm must serve the desires of its users, all the while drawing new ones. The degree to which it can do all that is the most pressing criteria for Twitter.

As such, Trends is both an index of what is said and an advertisement to read further. Trends promises to bring new readers to a topic; this accounts for much of why the Occupy activists care if and when it appears. The act of measuring the phenomena, then, also changes it: Trends is both feedback and feedback loop, because something that does Trend may be discussed further.

Trends provides an algorithmic gloss of our aggregate social data practices that can always be read/misread as censorship. If occupywallstreet is not Trending, that could mean any of the following: (a) it is being deliberately censored (b) it is actually less popular than one might think (c) it is very popular but consistently so, not a spike (d) it is popular and spiking, but not in a way the algorithm is designed to measure (e) it is popular and spiking, but not as much as some pop culture phenomena that has crowded it off the list (f) it is popular and important, but not as popular as the pop culture phenomena that have been strategically gamed onto the list (g) it has not Trended because it has not Trended, thereby not enjoying the amplification Trends itself offers However, we are unable to know for certain. Not only are the criteria opaque and the archive proprietary, we also have no benchmark against which to compare the results. Trends measures activity on Twitter, and it is only implicitly indicative of broader public concerns.

TWITTER TRENDS IS JUST ONE OF MANY information practices that claim to know or represent the will of the people: public opinion polls, census surveys, man-on-the-street interviews, voting mechanisms. Each employs a specific technique to assess public opinion or activity, in order to make the public will legible. With Trends, Twitter is making a claim: that surging terms, measured in a specific way, are indicative of topics of the most interest and import. But this claim is, for Twitter, caught between competing desires: reporting back what Twitter users care about most, versus drawing new users into new conversations. Users too are caught between competing desires: wanting to know something accurate about the public beyond them, and wanting to be rendered visible as a part of that public. With both of these tensions at work, the politics of the artifact, i. e. the workings of the Trends algorithm, become just one piece of a greater puzzle: the politics of representation.

What's different here is that Trends promises a mathematical and an exhaustive analysis of what is being talked about, while presenting it as automatically generated and self-evident facts about the discussion. It claims to know the public through an algorithmic assessment of their complete traces, which is different than the professional judgment of a newspaper editor, the zeitgeist insight of the fashion trendspotter, or the statistical approximations of a census taker. Further, these indices are rendered in an instant and built immediately back into the service itself.

Twitter Trends is only one such tool. Search engines, while promising to provide a logical set of results in response to a query, are in fact algorithms designed to take a range of criteria into account so

as to serve up results that satisfy not just the user, but the aims of the provider, their understanding of relevance or newsworthiness or public import, and the particular demands of their business model (Granka 2010). When users of Apple's Siri iPhone tool begin to speculate that its cool, measured voice is withholding information about abortion clinics, or worse, sending users towards alternatives preferred by conservatives, they are in fact questioning the algorithmic product of the various search mechanisms that Siri consults. [①]

Beyond search, we are surrounded by algorithmic tools that offer to help us navigate online platforms and social networks, based not on what we want, but on what all of their users do. When Facebook, YouTube, or Digg offer to mathematically and in real time report what is "most popular" or "liked" or "most viewed" or "best selling" or "most commented" or "highest rated," they are curating a list whose legitimacy is built on the promise that it has not been curated, that it is the product of aggregate user activity itself. When Amazon recommends a book based on matching your purchases to those of its other customers, or Demand Media commissions news based on aggregate search queries (Anderson 2011), their accuracy and relevance depends on the promise of an algorithmic calculation paired with the massive, even exhaustive, corpus of the traces we all leave.

We might, then, pursue the question of the algorithm's politics further. The Trends algorithm does have criteria built in: criteria that help produce the particular Trends results we see, criteria that are more complex and opaque than some users take them to be, criteria that could have produced the absence of the term occupywallstreet that critics noted. But further, the criteria that animate the Trends algorithm also presume a shape and character to the public they intend to measure, and in doing so, help to construct publics in that image.

A term that has trended before has a higher threshold before it can trend again. The implication is that the algorithm prefers novelty in public discourse over phenomena with a longer shelf-life. This is a longstanding critique of broadcast journalism, reappearing in social media. Perhaps we could again make the case that this choice fosters a public more attuned to the "new" than to the discussion of persistent problems, to viral memes more than to slow-building political movements. Trends also measures the velocity of a term, but within Twitter's network; it does not compare this surge of interest with matching attention on Facebook, say, or on the blogosphere, or in traditional news coverage. So this public is understood to be platform specific, though we know that users participate in and manage overlapping networks of information and people. With a different commitment to understanding public discourse, one might design an algorithm that gives greater recognition to a topic surging across multiple platforms than one that only surges inside a single network. When Twitter restricts its attention to Twitter, though it is plain why they might want to do so, they put their finger on the scale of a debate about how political discourse does and should function online.

But here's a harder problem: Twitter takes into account whether a term is circulating within a pre-existing cluster of users (users who are already interconnected, following each other, regionally co-located, etc), or spans clusters. Trends presumes that topics are more important if they exceed clusters. The choice of how to know a trend matters. Twitter could have designed Trends to weigh heavily a term that does not span clusters of users but instead powerfully ignites a single cluster of users. This kind of "Trend" might spotlight issues and concerns discussed intensely by a small but engaged community. It certainly would have regarded occupywallstreet more highly. Putting such terms in front of all Twitter users via the Trends list would intervene not by showing users what lots of people are talking about, but about what some are talking about hotly together. It might add issues to

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① http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/11/29/10-things-the-iphone-siri-will-help-you-get-instead-of-an-abortion/.

the public docket rather than rehearsing them. Choosing instead to value terms that span clusters is a choice, and a political one — more Habermas (1989) than Mouffe (2000) in its implicit theory of political dialogue, for example.

These algorithms produce not barometric readings but hieroglyphs. At once so clear and so opaque, they beg to be read as reliable measures of the public mind, as signs of "us. " But the shape of the "us" on offer is by no means transparent. Social media tools like Twitter may be adept at mapping networks of people, if only because they provide the substrate within which these networks form and interact. Even if they cannot as easily capture the human networks that extend beyond their own services, the certainly can claim to have scrutinized the part that is rendered on and by their system. However, though they aspire to with algorithmic tools like Trends, they may not be as adept at identifying or forging the publics that emerge from those networks.

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28. Critical Media Studies 2.0: An Interactive Upgrade

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When it comes to the revolutionary promise of participatory media, the challenge faced by the proponents and practitioners of a Critical Media Studies *2.0 is not to assert (in all too familiar rhetoric) that, "everything has changed," but rather to explain why, even in the face of dramatic technological transformation, power relations remain largely unaltered. This essay explores some of the ways in which the social context has shifted to absorb and deflect the critical potential of interactive media and traces the outlines of a critical project for Media Studies in the digital era. In particular, it argues that the automatic equation of interactivity with political critique and democratic empowerment represents an outdated way of thinking about the social role of information and communication technologies. Interactivity isn't automatically political — it needs to be* made *political if it is to live up to its promised potential. Consequently, critical Media Studies needs to develop new practices of sense making, an updated theory of exploitation, and a political economy for the digital era.*

As a starting point, the essay poses the following question: what are we to make of the fact that the advent of "bottom-up" media production amidst celebratory claims about the democratizing power of interactivity have coincided, arguably, with increasing economic and political *inequality*. It is a question admittedly posed from a situated perspective: in the United States, Web 2.0 came of age in the era of George W. Bush, a regime tellingly installed not by the voters, but by judicial fiat. It was a regime of increased government opacity, the seizure of executive power, and tightknit crony capitalism. The concentration of ownership of resources and the increasing disparity between the wealthy few and the rest of the population in the United States reached the point that economist Paul Krugman (2002) described as a return to the "Gilded Age" of the turn of the last century. Thus, when it comes to the revolutionary promise of participatory media, the challenge faced by the proponents and practitioners of a *Critical* Media Studies 2.0 is not to assert (in all too familiar rhetoric) that, "everything has changed," but rather to explain why, even in the face of dramatic technological transformation, social relations remain largely unaltered.

To put it bluntly, critical Media Studies is not interested in media for their own sake, but for society's sake. To note the fascinating changes in media technology and practices without situating them within the broader context of a society working to incorporate them into existing social relations

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is to lose sight of the ball. If the advent of Media Studies 2.0 is to mean anything beyond the dismissal of the need for critical theory and the melding of industry with the academy — of market research with critique — it must reflect more carefully on the legacy of Media Studies 1.0. Why were scholars so critical of top-down, one-way, centralized media industries — why so focused on issues of critical media literacy and ideology critique? The concern was not directed solely toward a particular set of media structures (top-down, one-way, etc.) so much as it was with the way in which these structures helped reproduce power and social relations.

Claims that interactivity is inherently political or empowering, or that changes in social relations necessarily follow from the fact that audiences have become more active participants, are not cutting edge, avant-garde claims; instead they are relics of an outdated binary: old-school ways of thinking tricked up to look hip, savvy, and contemporary. We should pause for a moment of critical reflection when Rupert Murdoch, a baron of the "old media" insists that "it's the people who are taking control" as he buys the latest, trendy, social networking website (Spencer Reiss 2006).

The brave new world of digital media require us to think beyond such outdated oppositions to imagine the possibility that interactive participation may be worse than politically inert. To make an automatic association between interactive participation and democratic empowerment is intellectually complacent in the worst sense: by clinging to an outmoded set of associations it bypasses the conceptual work that might help imagine ways in which media practices could live up to the promise of democratic empowerment. A critical Media Studies 2.0, then, must focus on change, but not in the limited sense of elaborating upon the dramatic transformations in media technologies and their uses. Like other forms of critical theory, where it encounters celebratory claims of rupture and transformation, it seeks to unearth historical continuities — and in so doing to consider precisely those changes that may have occurred to make such continuity possible. Herein lies the challenge: to develop critical approaches that are suited to the contemporary media environment, rather than to assume that because media have transformed, social relations have too. The following sections attempt to outline ways in which society has adjusted to incorporate digital media in ways that preserve power relations. The goal is to suggest some elements of a critical approach to digital media and in so doing to upgrade critical theory in ways that make sense of the fact that the media revolution has not facilitated a social one, while remaining committed to the possibility that it might.

Latour's Lament

One of the oft-repeated mantras of a pre-critical version of Media Studies 2.0 is the assertion that interactivity, one of the important capabilities of digital, interactive media, is by definition empowering. As Coleman (2003) puts it, "Interactivity is political: it shifts control towards the receivers of messages and makes all representations of reality vulnerable to public challenge and disbelief" (2003: 35). An interesting equation is at work in this formulation: that fostering "disbelief" or "challenge" amounts to a shift in control. It is an equation that may not take into account the way in which strategies of savvy debunkery might reinforce, rather than threaten, relations of power and control. Nevertheless, variants of this claim replicate themselves across a range of discourses, from the popular to the academic, and must be understood as forming a keystone of media ideology 2.0. The media themselves have been getting in on the act, as evidenced by *Time* magazine's person of the year celebrating "you" — that is, all of us — as people of the year, thanks to the empowering force of interactive media: "It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes" (Grossman 2006).

Such sentiments follow the path paved by the celebratory claims of media theorists that, "Far

from the telescreen dystopias, new media technology hails a rebirth of democratic life" (Bryan 1998: 5). New media guru Howard Rheingold is slightly more circumspect, noting that whether the Internet comes to serve as an online Agora or a virtual panopticon will depend on who controls it and for what purposes. Still his outlook remains, on the whole, more optimistic than pessimistic when he asserts that, "The political significance of computer mediated communication lies in its capacity to challenge the existing political hierarchy's monopoly on powerful communications media, and perhaps thus revitalize citizen-based democracy" (Rheingold 1993: 14).

The constellation of themes in these claims take for granted a particular modality of power: one in which control is exerted in a top-down way that must be protected from feedback — from the ability to question or respond. It is a monolithic, industrial-era model of power, which is why Celia Pearce, in her book on interactivity, insists that its promise, "is one of intellectual, creative and social empowerment. It is anti-industrial" (Pearce 1997: 183). The formulation recalls the techniques that critics deployed against ideology in the industrial era: attempts to denaturalize and deconstruct, to reveal the forms of power that permeated claims to truth and knowledge: to talk back to power. It is in this context that the promise of interactivity emerges not just as a political one, but as potentially subversive and empowering: a tool of demystification perhaps unwittingly crafted by a modern-day Prometheus of the information revolution and duly handed over to the populace at large. Interactivity is political, according to this account, because the hermeneutics of suspicion serve as a tool for empowerment when strategies for control operate in the mode of naturalized certainty and truth.

What if, however, the modality of control can itself shift, in ways that incorporate the very forms of critique that once sought to challenge it by undermining and deconstructing it? Such is the possibility raised by Bruno Latour (2004) in his lament on the fate of critique, "Threats might have changed so much that we might still be directing all our arsenal east or west while the enemy has now moved to a very different place" (Latour 2004: 230). This new "place", Latour suggests, is one in which the forms of challenge, suspicion, and deconstruction that once posed a threat now help to fuel strategies of control. What if, in other words, that which was once challenged by the deconstructive arsenal now feeds upon it? As an example, Latour cites an account of the strategy adopted by U. S. Republicans to fend off environmental regulation:

> Most scientists believe that [global] warming is caused largely by manmade pollutants that require strict regulation. Mr. Luntz [a Republican strategist] seems to acknowledge as much when he says that "the scientific debate is closing against us." His advice, however, is to emphasize that the evidence is not complete. "Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled," he writes, "their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the *lack of scientific certainty* a primary issue."
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> (Latour 2004: 226; emphasis in the original)

The goal is to maintain the status quo not by shutting down critique, but embracing it.

This strategy of what might be called the postmodern right is not limited to scientific controversies, like global warming, but comes into play whenever dominant narratives are politically inconvenient. The Bush administration and its various supporters have proven particularly adept at what Latour terms, "instant revisionism ... adding even more smoke to the smoke" (Latour 2004: 228). Consider, for example, the 2004 campaign, in which the so-called "Swift Vote Veterans for Truth" were enlisted to sow confusion in the midst of what had been a straightforward narrative about the two candidates' service records in the Vietnam era: one "child of privilege" received a coveted domestic posting, which he left early; the other volunteered for combat, saw action, and was cited for valour in combat. The "Swift Boat Veterans" campaign, which comprised a book and several TV ads,

did not so much provide a credible counter-narrative as obscure the original one with a series of charges and accusations that tied the media up in knots. Combined with the ongoing campaign by the right to discredit the media for its ostensible liberal bias, the goal was to demonstrate the impossibility of getting at the truth, leaving it up to voters to, instead, choose the narrative that best fit their prejudices, preconceptions and predispositions. By multiplying the narratives — and in particular, narratives that cast uncertainty on one another, the campaign sought to highlight the absence of any "objective" standard for arbitrating between them.

As political commentator Josh Marshall (2003) has observed, the attempt to deconstruct dominant narratives goes hand in hand with the, "incentive to delegitimize the experts" — a process facilitated by the cacophony of punditry that passes for expert commentary in the cable news world. The signature move is the conflation of the insight that all knowledge is characterized by bias, with the assertion that such knowledge is wholly reducible to bias. As Marshall (2003) puts it, "at the heart of the revisionist mindset is the belief that ... [i]deology isn't just the prism through which we see the world, or a pervasive tilt in the way a person understands a given set of facts. Ideology is really all there is." Perhaps the definitive statement of this approach was provided by journalist Ron Suskind's (2004) encounter with a Bush aide who mocked journalists for living in what he disparaged as a "reality-based community," in which people, "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality ... That's not the way the world really works anymore ... We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality."

The strategic goal here is not the top-down, assertion of a naturalized discourse that needs to be exempted from interrogation, but the attempt to deconstruct certainty, and "talk back" to the experts. The automatic deconstructive gesture — the attempt to productively destabilize discourses and highlight their constructed and biased character — finds itself co-opted for regressive ends. Critique is turned back upon itself. Latour is here imagining the possibility of a shift in context that would require new critical tools and approaches: "It does not seem to me that we have been as quick, in academia, to prepare ourselves for new threats, new dangers, new tasks, new targets. Are we not like those mechanical toys that endlessly make the same gesture when everything else has changed around them?" (Latour 2004: 225). As deconstructive debunkery becomes automatic, mechanical and taken for granted, it can no longer be unthinkingly equated with progressive politics, or a subversive challenge to power. It may have become, in certain contexts, a ruse of the very forms of power against which it once set itself.

It is not hard to discern that the strategy of disseminating uncertainty relies on shifts in the media environment — on the proliferation of information outlets, the fragmentation of audiences, the way in which interactivity renders "representations of reality vulnerable to public challenge and disbelief" (Coleman 2003: 35). The goal is not to call for an impossible return or retreat to the days when "the most trusted man in America" could tell viewers on a nightly basis, "That's the way it is." Rather it is to come to terms with the recognition that in the current conjuncture, there is no clear-cut political opposition between strategies of naturalization and techniques of reflexive deconstruction: both can serve regressive ends and be deployed as strategies for manipulation, obfuscation, and the reproduction of power relations. The challenge is to trace the relationship between critique and knowledge, to discern how an unreflective critique turns on itself, and how to extricate it from this impasse.

The smokescreen approach to political manipulation has a long and storied history, but, as Latour's analysis implies, it has come into its own in an era in which an unthinking "savvy" scepticism aligns itself with the emerging interactive ethos. Yes, the interactive capability of the Internet makes it possible to talk back, to question, to circulate counter-narratives, and consequently to counter dominant narratives. In an era in which the reproduction of social relations relied solely on the

unquestioned reproduction of such narratives, we might well describe the deployment of interactivity as politically subversive, perhaps even politically empowering. However, when the exercise of certain forms of political power relies on mobilization and co-optation of such critical strategies, the political potential of such forms of interactivity is at best ambivalent. Nor, as Latour's example suggests, is the reflexive debunking of expertise necessarily progressive in an era in which political power reproduces itself at least in part by reducing all forms of expertise to ideology — leaving those in power free to select the version that fits their agenda. This is a form of politics practiced across the mainstream political spectrum, from Hillary Cinton's well publicized dismissal of the experts' criticism of her proposed gas tax holiday ("I'm not going to put my lot in with economists") to Bush's famous reliance on gut instinct over evidence, to Rush Limbaugh's certainty that global warming is a hoax cooked up by liberals who hate big business.

This popularization of a variant of what might be described as unreflective postmodern debunkery exhibits a certain affinity with the technologies and practices that enable it. Sherry Turkle (1997) noted, relatively early on in the Internet era, the affinity between new media practices and a ready recognition of the constructed character of representation: "technology is bringing a set of ideas associated with postmodernism — in this case, ideas about the instability of meanings and the lack of universal and knowable truths — into everyday life" (Turkle 1997: 18). She suggests that the participatory character of the Internet, and in particular the forms of online socializing it fostered, were responsible. As users shifted from consuming mediated images to creating them, they gained a self-conscious, practice-based awareness about the constructed character of media representations. This type of awareness might be described as "post-deferential" (see, for example, Coleman 2003) insofar as it is associated with an unwillingness to take dominant media representations at face value. It is hard to imagine that Walter Cronkite's famous sign off could function in any other than an ironic register (along the line of Fox's "Fair and Balanced" motto) in a post-deferential era.

Taken to its limit the post-deferential attitude results in the impasse that Slavoj Zizek (1999) has described in terms of the decline of symbolic efficiency. As he puts it, symbolic efficiency relies upon, "the distance (between 'things' and 'words') which opens up the space for ... symbolic engagement" (Zizek 1996: 196). That is to say it is the paradoxical space of the symbolic that acknowledges the possibility that things might be otherwise than how they "directly" seem. This distance, Zizek suggests, has an important role to play at the level of social and political institutions in which:

> ... the symbolic mask-mandate matters more than the direct reality of the individual who wears this mask and/or assumes this mandate. This function involves the structure of fetishistic disavowal: "I know very well that things are the way I see them [that this person is a corrupt weakling], but none the less I treat him with respect, since he wears the insignia of a judge, so that when he speaks it is the Law itself which speaks through him".

(Zizek 1999: 323)

The post-deferential attitude short-circuits this logic, brushing aside the symbolic mandate in order to get directly at the "corrupt weakling" behind the black robe. As in the case of virtual reality, it allows for no space between the code and what it defines.

It is not hard to trace connections between the forms of post-deferentialism described by Turkle and Zizek, and the way in which the constructed character of representation comes to the fore in an environment of information glut. The proliferation of content takes several forms including the recycling of content, the multiplication of alternative narratives, and the reflexive documentation of the story behind the story, or the show about the making of the show. None of these tendencies is original or unique to the Internet or the digital era — the difference is more one of quantity than of

kind — and yet the combination is unique and worth considering. Nor does the assertion of the correlation between post-deferentialism and digital media necessarily imply causality: there are many different ways to use digital networks, and the uses at issue are the result of the current social, economic, and cultural conjuncture.

To the extent that it serves as an enormous content archive, the Internet, ephemeral as it may be in some ways, allows users to step outside the flow of more perishable media like radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines. Last week's news is still available online, along with rebuttals, qualifications, alternative perspectives, and so on. It is telling that the dominant metaphors for the Internet tend to be spatial ones ("cyberspace", "websurfing", "hyperlinking", etc.), whereas those for other media are often more temporally oriented (the linear "flow" of TV or radio programming, the fleeting character of yesterday's news, and so on). It is the broad sweep of this information landscape that helps make any particular point isolated from it purely partial or perspectival, arbitrarily closed off from an ever-more complex context, from myriad alternative narratives and perspectives. It is a perfect medium for an era of media reflexivity — one in which the populace is increasingly savvy about the constructed nature of representation.

Against this background, the task of critical Media Studies 2.0 is twofold: to consider the ways in which the deployment of networked digital media contribute to and reinforce the contemporary exercise of power, and to imagine how it might be otherwise. A clearer understanding of the former process helps provide some outlines for the latter — for developing forms of critique that keep pace with the social shifts that have accompanied transformations in media technology and practice. However, the developments of new strategies for the reproduction of power relations do not necessarily mean that the old ones have died out. Thus, the goal is to highlight emergent tendencies and logics that call for updated critical strategies.

Interactivity as Feedback

In the interactive era, it is perhaps time to turn Foucault (1978) on his head: the obverse of the assertion that where there is power there is also always resistance should become a watchword of critical Media Studies 2.0: where there is resistance there are always new and realigned strategies for control. We might go so far as to propose an interactive repressive hypothesis: whenever we are told that interactivity is a way to express ourselves, to rebel against control, to subvert power, we need to be wary of power's ruse: the incitation to provide information about ourselves, to participate in our self-classification, to complete the cybernetic loop.

The commercial sector, for example, takes a decidedly two-faced approach to its portrayal of interactivity: one face nodding back toward the ways in which interactivity challenges top-down media models, and one smiling at the prospect of even greater forms of information management and manipulation. The result has been the twinning of narratives about interactivity: one version for public consumption and another for the trade-literature. The former pays lip service to the emerging power of what is portrayed as the almost tyrannically demanding interactive consumer (dubbed the new "king"), the latter portrays interactivity as an opportunity for enhanced control, hyper-targeting of advertising, and the monitoring based rationalization of the marketing process.

Thanks to the advent of interactivity, marketers envision a world in which it becomes increasingly possible to subject the public to a series of controlled experiments to determine how best to influence them. Consider the example of the video game industry, which is helping to pioneer interactive advertising by custom-targeting ads to players based on detailed monitoring of their game play combined with demographic information. The goal is not just to serve up relevant ads, but also to use the interactive, immersive character of game play as a means for thwarting critical reflection. As one

recent study of in-game advertising puts it, neatly highlighting the marketing perspective, "when participants are immersed in the narrative, they are distracted from the advertisement and therefore do not think critically about it" (Glass 2007).

The point here, intriguingly, is the exact reverse of the notion that active engagement (rather than "passive" viewing) fosters critical engagement. Frenetic interactivity, on this account, helps to mask the forms of control that it works to reproduce: the very incitation to interact doubles as a technique for managing audiences and channelling their activities. Turned to the ends of marketing, interactivity is embraced not for the ways in which it fosters challenges to dominant messages and critical scepticism, but for the ways in which it forestalls them. As Glass (2007) puts it, "The video game should take the player's guard down when it comes to advertisements."

Whether or not interactivity truly functions in this way, and in what contexts, remains an open question — but it is suggestive that the marketing industry is thinking in this direction. For those trying to keep up with the ever-accelerating pace of the always-on, constant contact information age, the notion that hyper-interactivity might thwart or interfere with critical reflection is perhaps not a particularly outlandish one. A forward leaning, engaged posture of constant reaction and incessant interruption — that of the gamer as opposed, perhaps, to the more "passive" viewer, is not necessarily conducive to stepping back to reflect on the big picture. What if it should turn out that we actually had more time to critically reflect on the forms of manipulation to which we were subjected in the mass media era, when we weren't subject to the constant injunction to interact, respond, click the next link, and download the newest application? What if interactive media serve, in part, as means of short-circuiting the very forms of reflection that increasingly undermined the authority of "one-way," "top-down" media technologies?

These questions aren't meant to imply a nostalgia for the mass media, but to suggest that the opposition between critical interactivity and passive consumption may have been bypassed because it was, from the start, misleading. Perhaps an important antidote to the Kool-Aid ladled out by the gurus of interactivity is some meaningful engagement with the possibility that, as Jarrett (2008) puts it in her polemically titled essay, "Interactivity is Evil", interactive audiences may find themselves confronting, "their own absence of agency and freedom in the free expression of the generative capacity offered to them." This is more than just the nightmare fantasy of an old-media curmudgeon who can't put down *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer and Adorno 1993) — it is the goal of marketers who imagine that interactivity might serve as a strategy for deferring critical reflection.

The economic uptake of interactivity, as critical Media Studies 2.0 reminds us, is integrally tied to the attempt to more effectively influence consumers. The move from subscription based services to "free" advertising-supported services provided by the likes of Google, Facebook, and MySpace is predicated on the shared business model of swapping convenience, access, and information for willing or unknowing submission to increasingly detailed forms of monitoring. These are the terms of a new form of productive exchange: Google will provide me with free e-mail if I let them data-mine my messages, Facebook will help me keep in touch with friends, if I let them use the information I post and my online behaviour to learn about me and eventually target market to me.

It is not insignificant that the seemingly "naturally" emerging model for digital media is becoming increasingly reliant on advertising. Even subscription-based services like mobile telephony and pay TV are becoming more reliant on ad-based forms of revenue generation. In this regard, a critical approach supplements William Merrin's (2008) compelling and thought-provoking account of Media Studies 2.0 with the observation that an important element of "top-down" media content remains relatively constant: that of advertising. The somewhat disturbing corollary is that various forms of branding and attempts to influence consumer behaviour remain perhaps the dominant remaining form of the "social"

in the pre-media-2.0 sense invoked by Merrin (2008): "a top-down phenomenon and nationally shared bond". Even as our students go about constructing their own participatory, "bottom up" version of the social, crafted through ego-casting, social networking, photo-sharing, and so on, much of the infrastructure they use will be supported by, and thus permeated by, shared forms of advertising. This commercial structure, in other words, provides both the economic glue that holds the new version of the social together and the one common denominator, content-wise.

The economic uses of interactivity should remind us that the man credited with coining the term that provided the prefix for the digital revolution — cybernetics — was engaged in theorizing the process of feedback-based control. Cybernetic theory bears directly on the emerging model of feedback based influence: websites that target advertising to us based on the content of our messages; TV that sorts and targets viewers based on their patterns of consumption, and so on. Taking a cue from Wiener's work, we might rethink cyberspace, in its commercial form, as, "directed space", "steered space", or even "governed" space. Wiener anticipated the possibility that a cybernetic model might be deployed not just as a technique for mechanical guidance, but as one of social control. He described strategies of scientific management — the precursor of the emerging surveillance-based rationalization of marketing — as an early form of programming, and made an explicit connection between cybernetics and marketing:

> A certain precise mixture of religion, pornography, and pseudo-science will sell an illustrated newspaper ... To determine these, we have our machinery of fan-ratings, straw votes, opinion samplings and other psychological investigations with the common man as their object ... Luckily for us, these merchants of lies, these exploiters of gullibility have not yet arrived at such a pitch of perfection as to have things all their own way.
>
> (Wiener 1948: 185)

A critical approach keeps this "not yet" in mind, as a reminder of the work that needs to be done to distinguish the potential of empowerment from practices of asymmetric information access, and the control and manipulation with which they are associated.

The Petabyte Promise

Where marketers go, politicians aren't far behind. The model of monitoring-based micro-targeting is being imported into the political realm by companies like Catalist, which, according to one news account, is, "documenting the political activity of every American 18 years and older: where they registered to vote, how strongly they identify with a given party, what issues cause them to sign petitions or make donations" (Graff 2008). As in the case of commercial marketing, the goal is to influence behaviour by exacerbating the information imbalance. The era of database politics envisions a world in which it is the voters who become transparent to the political campaigns bent on manipulating them with customized and selective marketing appeals. This is not to discount the increasing scrutiny to which politicians are subjected in the era of political blogging and the always-on news cycle, but rather to point out the increase of information on both sides. Yes, the public has more information available to it than ever before, but, thanks to the monitoring capability of interactivity combined with technologies for data storage and sorting, marketers, politicians and the state have access to unprecedented amounts of information about the public. How this plays out in terms of power relations may well have to do with who has the capability to make sense of the information available to them.

One of the potential political ironies of the digital era is that at the very moment when the tools are becoming available to help foster a truly informed electorate, the recourse to information and

deliberation as tools for understanding is called into question. The stance of reflexive debunkery described by Latour and defined by Zizek as the decline of "symbolic efficiency" — goes mainstream at the very moment when media developments provide unprecedented public access to information and discussion. This is why the stakes are so high in the attempt to challenge the form of demobilizing savviness fostered by figures like Luntz and Limbaugh who, in essence, urge the public: "Don't worry about the facts, don't bother educating yourself, we all know that there is enough evidence to support any viewpoint you like — so just stick with the prejudices and disinformation you've got." To the extent that access to information might be empowering, maintaining power relations means mobilizing strategies to undermine the efficacy of this access and the forms of knowledge it might help to foster. One of the crucial tasks of critical Media Studies 2.0 is to counter these strategies.

If access to information is one target, conventional forms of knowledge has become another. In a much-hyped issue of *Wired* magazine, info-trend guru Chris Anderson recently argued that the advent of data warehousing at an unprecedented level, "offers a whole new way of understanding the world" which renders theory obsolete: "Out with every theory of human behavior, from linguistics to sociology. Forget taxonomy, ontology, and psychology. Who knows why people do what they do? The point is they do it, and we can track and measure it with unprecedented fidelity" (Anderson 2008).

This new form of understanding neatly complements the demise of symbolic efficiency — it relies on closing the gap between sign and referent by remaining agnostic about causality and meaning. Since, as Anderson (2008) puts it, "[c]orrelation supersedes causation" in the petabyte age, "No semantic or causal analysis is required." Nothing to debunk — just patterns generated by the process of what Ian Ayres (2007) calls "super crunching" breathtakingly large amounts of data. The goal here is to bypass the tricky realm of meaning by generating patterns that predict without explaining anything. If a search algorithm kicks out the information that someone who drives a Mercury is more likely to vote Republican or to respond to a particular type of advertising appeal, the question of why is displaced by the apparent predictive power of correlation. The perfection of prediction without understanding represents the apotheosis of a certain type of instrumental pragmatism — a tool that need not reflect on the ends to which it is applied.

The enthusiasm for the power of "super crunching" in the petabyte era is of a piece with a contemporary constellation of savvy attempts to bypass the debunked level of discourse and get "things" to speak for themselves. Consider, for example, the emerging science of neuromarketing (which measures consumer response by tapping directly into their brains), or social science attempts to measure unconscious biases, and the resuscitation of lie-detector and voice-stress technology in popular entertainment to get to the "truth" behind the facade. The impulse here is what Zizek (1996) describes as a psychotic response to the demise of symbolic efficiency: "psychosis involves the external distance the subject maintains towards the symbolic order ... *and* the collapsing of the Symbolic into the Real (a psychotic treats 'words as things'; in his universe, words fall into things and/or things themselves start to speak)" (Zizek 1996: 196, emphasis in the original). As Anderson (2008) puts it in his essay on "The End of Theory": "With enough data, the numbers speak for themselves".

The catch, of course, is that this new form of understanding is limited to those with access to giant databanks and tremendous processing power. If practical knowledge in the petabyte era means making sense out of incomprehensibly large datasets, it is a form of knowledge destined to be monopolized by the few. Once again, at the moment when information becomes increasingly available to the public, the very mode of understanding shifts (if we are to believe Anderson) in ways that render it inaccessible to the populace. This is not to suggest that Anderson is necessarily correct — the forms of knowledge he is describing are instrumental: how to market more effectively; monitor epidemics; calculate actuarial tables; and predict voting patterns. However, it is important to point out that in the

information age, empowerment may not be flowing uni-directionally to the public at large: new forms of power and control come into play at the very moment that old forms, predicated on a lack of interactivity, are shaken to their foundations.

Matter Matters

It is against this background of server farms and data mines — not the smokestacks and coal mines of the industrial revolution — that claims of the waning importance of matter loom large as one of the signature ideologies of the digital era. In the preamble to their "Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age," for example, futurists Esther Dyson, George Gilder, and Alvin Toffler (1996), proclaim that "The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter" (Dyson et al. 1996: 295). The implication of course, is that resource ownership (at least in the case of strictly "material" assets) no longer matters. This is why *Time* magazine can tell us that we, the public, are gaining control even as concentration of the ownership of material media assets continues apace — and why Murdoch can proclaim power to the people when he purchases the tools of their alleged empowerment. One of the duties of critical Media Studies is to explain why the matter/immaterial distinction is a misleading one, and why indeed, matter still matters — along with ownership and control over the resources that we use to interact with one another, to distribute the fruits of our own productive activity, and to access information.

What we are seeing taking place in the digital realm resembles, in certain important respects, a digital-era enclosure movement (Boyle 2003). The goal of enclosure is to capture productive resources in order to set the terms of access to them. Thus, where agriculture is the dominant mode of production, enclosure means establishing property rights over land and setting the terms of access for agricultural workers. If information becomes an increasingly important source of value, then "enclosure" refers to attempts to establish property rights over it and the resources involved in its production. Thus, for example James Boyle describes the recent surge in intellectual property rights as a second from of enclosure: "once again things that were formerly thought of as either common property or uncommodifiable are being covered with new, or newly extended, property rights" (Boyle 2003: 37). Attempts to establish ownership over elements of the human genome, the chemical formulas for traditional medicines or hybrid crop strains, and so on, might be understood, in these terms, as strategies for privatizing the commons.

Much the same might be said about the assertion of ownership claims over information captured by interactive applications, including details of click-stream activity, patterns of social networking and Internet search behaviour, style of video game play, and so on. This information, generated by users, is becoming very valuable, as evidenced by the recent valuation of Facebook at close to $15 billion (Associated Press 2007). It seems fair to conclude that much of that value was based on the company's information assets, as opposed to its hardware. In the digital economy, interactivity is productive since user-generated information is at the heart of strategies for mass customization. Capturing the value of user-generated activity, in this context, entails enclosing the means of its production: that is to say, the networks and databases upon which such activity relies. Ownership of the infrastructure for online communication, shopping, socializing, and information access allows companies like Google, Amazon. com, Facebook and so on, to set the terms of access whereby users surrender control over personal information. These companies have the capital to build the new generation of digital information mills: the giant, power hungry server farms cropping up in regions where energy is (relatively) cheap and plentiful like after-images of the industrial era: factories populated not by people, but by their data doubles. The production of this data is farmed out to the populace piecemeal: members of the public construct the data mine as they go about their increasingly monitored lives,

trailing information as they go. With every Gmail missive, every post to Facebook, every online purchase, members of the networked public add content to the rapidly growing, privately owned and operated, storehouses of information that will provide the basis for the new forms of marketing, political campaigning, population tracking, and "understanding" described by Anderson.

Conclusions: Exploitation 2. 0

A critical approach to Media Studies 2. 0 will need to take account of some of the crucial social shifts that work to contain the potential of interactivity by turning it to the ends of rationalizing the marketing process. In particular, it needs to mobilize a practice of collective sense-making to respond to the commercial and instrumental ordering of information in both the political and economic spheres. If there is a form of expertise that such an approach might cultivate, it would be an expertise in sense making: in developing strategies for crafting knowledge out of the welter of information available online, and countering the demobilizing short-circuit of deliberation by the postmodern right. If the goal of monitoring-based customization is to disaggregate members of the public in order to develop strategies for more effectively influencing their behaviour, one of the goals of critical Media Studies is to develop shared forms of knowledge that help make sense of the information landscape for purposes other than marketing and prediction. If super crunching in the data mine can predict how voters will respond to marketing appeals in given conditions, the goal of critical Media Studies lies elsewhere — in shifting these conditions so that public feedback serves to shape social and political objectives, rather than contributing to the rationalization of public relations campaigns.

The predictable response to these distinctions is a very "retro" equation of the market with democracy: the assertion that true democratisation is merely a matter of the perfection of techniques for the collection of feedback via the development of more intensive and extensive forms of market monitoring. The thrust of such an equation is to suggest that we need no longer worry about a (surpassed) split between public relations and public participation: the two have become one and the same. In its most blunt formulation the claim here is that the rationalization of marketing is the same as public empowerment — interactive participation is inherently democratic. When we are told that the novelty of the digital media environment is its ability to deliver on a well-worn and debunked promise ("this time, it will really come true: markets will be truly democratic"), and that because the technology is different, we shouldn't raise "outdated" concerns, we should remain wary. Perhaps the most important time to worry about the workings of power is when we're told that it is no longer a concern because we're all empowered by the advent of interactive media technologies.

The goal of critique is not to downplay the potential of interactivity, nor the socially significant uses to which it is being put, and the various pleasures and forms of fulfilment and creativity it fosters; rather it is to maintain a commitment to realizing the politically empowering *potential* of interactive media, rather than deferring it with the assertion that it has already been realized. A further goal of critique is to discern amidst the chaotic multiplication of media forms, and modes of consumption/ production, some shared logics, including that of the emerging model of interactive advertising. Perhaps this is in part what Zizek means when he refers to the logic of capital as, "that of a Real" (2006: 196): At the point when its structuring role has become ubiquitous it disappears, drops off the very map whose multiform contours it shapes. Underlying these and holding them together, is the shared interactive commercial logic this article has outlined. It is a form of targeting and customization that relies on increasingly ubiquitous forms of media access combined with comprehensive monitoring, the assembly of large, privately controlled databases, and the application of new strategies for information management — for understanding the patterns that emerge from incomprehensibly large datasets. It is not a logic of democratization, but rather of asymmetrical information collection, the

capture of productive forms of interactivity, the enclosure of information, the debunking of collective "knowledge," and the formation of new forms of "understanding" limited to those who control the data.

Countering this logic requires the development of critical approaches appropriate to an era of information glut. To the extent that the exercise of power in the current conjuncture relies not on scarcity but on the proliferation of narratives, critique needs to think beyond a strategy of what Latour describes as an automatic, mechanical deconstruction. Critical scholarship as well as progressive politics needs to develop approaches for making collective sense out of new information landscape with its proliferation of narratives, and for arbitrating between them. Perhaps this need helps explain the popularity in some circles (and the visceral critique in others) of theoretical approaches like those of Slavoj Zizek and Alain Badiou that attempt to develop a post-naïve *and* "post"-decontructivist conception of truth. As its more sophisticated practitioners have noted, the moment when a stance of critical debunkery turns reflexive is the moment at which it is forced to come to terms with its inescapable entwinement with notions of truth, which it can neither ignore nor leave behind.

Related to the development of techniques for making sense out of the glut is the need to develop an updated critique of exploitation. The Marxist conception was useful and productive in that it highlighted the logic of the unfree "free" choice.

The choice to sell one's labour power at the prevailing rate was nominally a free one, but, insofar as it internalized the forms of violence and alienation that structured the terms of the choice itself, it remained coercive. To the extent that the celebration of interactivity equates the capitalist "free" market with democracy, it is worth recalling this formulation and perhaps extending it. The users of interactive media freely agree to turn over control of information about themselves to Google, Facebook, and the like, but they do so on terms structured by those who own and control the means of interaction, communication, and community building, and will continue to do so as long as the commercial model remains the dominant one. The fact that important forms of communication, social networking, and information provision will be largely commercially supported has become taken for granted — a de facto concession to the ideology of "the overthrow of matter" (Dyson et al. 1996).

The extent of the naturalization of this economic model is evidenced by the fact that it sounds odd these days to even suggest the possibility of non-commercial alternatives to the privatized networks that form the infrastructure for our commercial-drenched e-mails, our advertisement-laden social networks, and indeed, the entire ad-supported infoscape. Even though it sounds curmudgeonly retro to focus on questions of ownership and labour, digital media provide a wealth of examples for alternative models, from publicly funded networks, to open-source code development, and shareware. Real interactivity means participation in shaping the structures that regulate our social lives — not just in increasing the range of choices available within the horizon of those structures and the social relations they help reproduce. The task of critical Media Studies is to differentiate this form of interactivity from what Zizek describes as "pseudo-activity, the urge to 'be active', to 'participate', to mask the nothingness of what goes on" (Zizek 2008: 183). Such a distinction is crucial to the project of making interactivity live up to its promise, rather than settling for the claim that it already has.

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29. Privacy as a Luxury Commodity[①]

Zizi Papacharissi

In contemporary democracies, privacy is recognized as a basic human right — the "right to be let alone," as defined by the landmark Warren and Brandeis (1890) *Harvard Law Review* article. It is rumored that Warren was inspired to write this article following intrusive news coverage of society parties his wife had thrown. These culminated with the press taking and publishing photographs from his daughters' private wedding party. At the time, Warren and Brandeis saw it necessary to assert the right to privacy, or, in their words, "the right to an inviolate personality" given the prevalence of media platforms that could so easily render a *private* event, *public*. In modern societies, this distance between public and private dwindles, and contemporary media further blur the lines separating private from public. Social media, in particular, enable individuals to connect with multiple audiences on online social planes that are neither conventionally public, nor entirely private. In the publicly private and privately public era of Facebook, Ms. Warren's guests would have been tagged in Facebook photographs that were publicly available to outside networks and third parties.

The question of privacy in a digital era has resurfaced, following the most recent privacy policy changes implemented by Facebook. The revised, default architecture prompts users to be more public with their information. While it is possible for users to edit these settings, the code that belies the structure of the network makes it easier to share, than to hide information. Digital traces of consumer behavior are thus left on partner and third party sites that users visit, like, or share. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has argued that these changes make it easier for users to share information across the social Web (Sutter, 2010). By contrast, activist groups like the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), claim that Facebook pulled a "privacy bait and switch," getting users to provide personal information under one set of privacy terms, then modifying their privacy policies (Chittal, 2010). After much turmoil, Facebook took some steps to make privacy settings more accessible and manageable for their members (Zuckerberg, 2010). Still, the following chart, constructed by Matt McKeon, a developer with the Visual Communication Lab (http://www. research. ibm. com/visual/) at IBM Research's Center for Social Software (http://www. research. ibm. com/social/), depicts the overall effect of Facebook's gradual changes to its default privacy architecture.

This evolution of privacy guidelines maps a digital path to sociality taken at the expense of privacy. This is not new: Sociality has always required some (voluntary) abandonment of privacy. In order to become social, we must give up some of our private time and space, so as to share it with others. This balance between privacy and sociality has always existed; what is upsetting to many users

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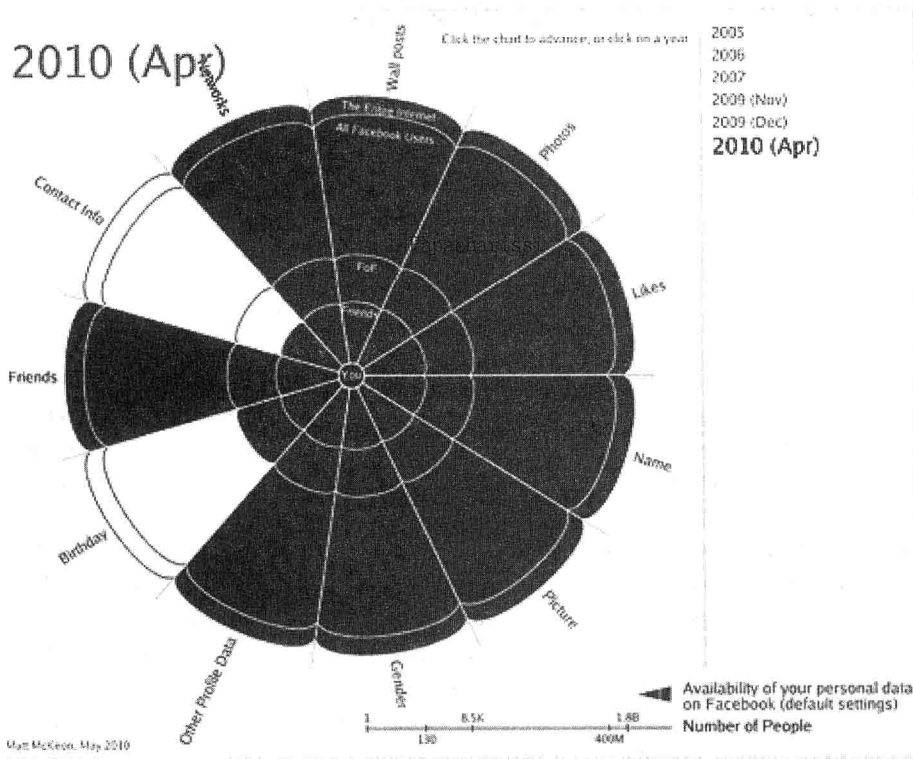
Figure 1 Evolution of privacy on Facebook.

Source   M. McKeon, 2010. "The evolution of privacy on Facebook," at http://www. mattmckeon. com/facebook-privacy/.

is that it now rests upon a social plane that digitally records, archives, and tracks social behaviors by default.

The Privacy question, in its present form, is an urban problem of modernity. Individuals living in rural communities were preoccupied with privacy, but in ways and for reasons different from ours. In a world where communal practices were emphasized, the desire to be private was frequently associated with something to hide, and gossip was perceived as a means of expressing solidarity (Norris, 2001). Modern and urban life charged individuals with the responsibility of managing their sociality, and their privacy, in unknown and urban territory. Urban environments afford a certain measure of distance (Simmel, 1971), that might suggest autonomy in defining private boundaries, but with autonomy comes responsibility to delineate and protect private boundaries. Yet individuals maintain social relationships in both urban and agrarian settings, and in doing so, they gradually confide private information to attain personal closeness with valued others. An optimal balance between disclosure and privacy can be beneficial for the individual's personal approach to sociality. Problems arise when individual autonomy in making social decisions is challenged.

The balance between privacy and sociality takes on new meaning as Internet-based platforms, like social network sites, afford sociality for privacy, at the expense of personal autonomy. All Web-accessible platforms, offer services, mostly social, in exchange for personal information. This simple step, taken by many, transforms our personal information into currency, and our privacy into a

commodity.

Thus, our right to privacy is traded, in exchange for access to social services. Byte by byte, our personal information is exchanged as currency, to gain digital access to friends. In this manner, personal information is commercialized into the public realm, with little input from the individual in the process. Slowly, privacy defined as the right to be left alone attains the characteristics of a luxury commodity, in that a) it becomes a good inaccessible to most b) it is disproportionately costly to the average individual's ability to acquire and retain it, and c) it becomes associated with social benefits inversely, in that the social cost of not forsaking parts of one's privacy in exchange for information good and services (e-mail account free-of-charge, online social networking) places one at a social disadvantage. Luxury goods not only possess a price point beyond the average person's reach, they also connote social status and advantage.

But what renders privacy a luxury commodity is that obtaining it implies a level of computer literacy that is inaccessible to most, and typically associated with higher income and education levels, and certain ethnic groups, in ways that mirror dominant socio-demographic inequalities (Hargittai, 2008). As a luxury commodity, the right to privacy, afforded to those fortunate enough to be Internet-literate becomes a social stratifier; it divides users into classes of haves and have-nots, thus creating a *privacy* divide. This privacy divide is further enlarged by the high income elasticity of demand that luxury goods possess. Privacy as a luxury commodity possesses similar elasticity; as people become more and more literate, they will be able to afford greater access to privacy. The goal for regulation is to effectively turn privacy into a normal good — a good that everyone may afford, or even better, a public good. A regulatory solution to the privacy divide must address market factors that render privacy a luxury commodity.

The current state of privacy law in the U.S. mirrors that of the general U.S. regulatory mentality, which is biased toward letting the market self-regulate. Unlike most European countries, there are few laws concerning privacy, and they pertain to the government's use of personal information. The most recent and notable of these are the Financial Modernization Act (Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999), and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA, 2000). The former specifies that financial institutions must inform customers about their privacy practices, but provides limited control to consumers regarding the use and distribution of personal data. Recently, President Obama criticized the act as responsible for leading to subsequent deregulation and to the 2007 subprime mortgage financial crisis, and several leading economists articulated similar arguments. Under the Act, individuals are granted some privacy protection but must still proactively make certain that their personal information is not made available to third parties. Children understandably receive greater protection under COPPA, which lays out specific regulations for companies targeting individuals under the age of 13, online. Aside from COPPA, regulatory policy in the U.S. is founded upon the assumption that Web operators disclose, but do not adjust or restrict information gathering and distribution practices. Statements of privacy practices are descriptive and explanatory of privacy practices, but are not inherently protective of privacy. Such privacy practice disclosures tend to be employed more as legal safeguards for companies, and less as guarantees of the safety of personal data (Fernback and Papacharissi, 2007). A regulatory framework must define, protect, and educate about "the right to an inviolate personality" online. Ultimately, because online environments work glocally, educating the public about the "right to be let alone," online, is an important part of crafting a regulatory solution that ensures privacy becomes a public good, for global users.

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30. The Precarious Citizen: Control and Value in the Digital Age

Katharine Sarikakis

In what follows I aim to highlight the issues of value and control in socialisation processes facilitated by the new social media, by interrogating the nexus of leisure and work, surveillance and privacy policy as core factors in the conceptualisation and application of an extended critical approach to citizenship.

The context of online social networking is an exemplary perhaps metaphor for the connection of the corporeal, emotional and intellectual nodes of human beings, in their forming of a company of a notional "we", a community, a society. Body, soul and society, the theme of this conference, each separately but also as an integrated scheme occupy an interesting position in the debates surrounding online social networking. At a first glance it would appear that all three terms may be conspicuous by their absence — virtuality is less concerned with the physical and corporeal. On the other hand, as far as "society" is concerned, there are views that no society or community can be of real substance in online interactions. Nevertheless, body and society as terms may present us with less difficulty to grasp, or accept. Soul is a different matter: we do not "see" or "measure" it; we cannot "observe" it with the scientific tools — we do not know if one exists! For sure, it is philosophy that has most productively dealt with the question of soul and of course religions that talk most confidently about its existence. Religious teachings and practices are bound with codes of morality that must be acted upon to be of value. For soul is understood as the immaterial breath of life of human beings, indeed, as Plato professed the soul is the essence of a living being. Aristotle rejected the duality of body and soul of Platonian or Pythagorian teachings: for Aristotle, the soul is not something separate from the body but rather an actuality of the living body, related to growth and reaching one's own potential. The soul is a set of functions that bring the intellect together with intuitive senses about the place of humanity in the natural world and the cosmos. This actuality of personhood has come to pertain to citizenship debates in the context of globalisation, human mobility and informational and technological connection.

Citizenship is the crossroads of the material and symbolic conditions under which we make sense of and further construct the world. These are the conditions under which individuals, cultures and societies are called to exercise their free will, shape their lives, define their identities, occupy spaces with some sense of belonging and find some space within them to dream. Of course, this does not mean that any of these factors are static — indeed both the conditions, material and symbolic, and the people, as individuals or in communities, are in a constant flux. However it is also neither the case that

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the directions in which these changes take place are completely unpredictable. Rather, the variety of experience and difference are integral parts of the truth; they manifest the points of departure for personal understanding and evaluation of, and response to the world. Citizenship, entailing political as well as economic, cultural and social dimensions, is the vehicle for the expression of those standpoints through the individual's capacity to "exercise" it.

Some of the most crucial elements of citizenship are to be found in work as an activity which not only provides structure in human life, or simply exploits human capacity for profit, but also functions as a mechanism for self-realisation, the making of one's identity, sometimes even offers a sense of purpose. Two other crucial elements are the right to property and that of self-governance. For this discussion, the latter two indicate the level of control over one's own destiny and one's own self, including the choice to work and to maintain and protect one's own integrity and dignity.

The present discussion is concerned with these aspects of citizenship in relation to social media. It situates online social networking within a complex web of work, production, consumption and regulation as determining factors of the quality of lived experience.

Work, but not as We Know It

Work has been inextricably related to citizenship — and leisure, although often not in neatly defined ways: In traditional forms of work - life relationship, the boundaries between work and leisure time for women and disadvantaged social classes, not to mention the racialised subject, have been less clear, with domesticity, child rearing and the private sphere of the home leaving very little space to true leisure. In the Fordist stage of capitalism, however, recognised forms of work, hence excluding the domestic or child-rearing and other care related tasks, and leisure constitute the interconnected elements of accumulation. Work generates capital through production of goods, and leisure continues this task through their consumption of material and symbolic goods. That work is also a crucial element of citizenship as understood and applied in its Western liberal form can quickly be established when we look at the limiting legal framework of rights that can be enjoyed by recognised i. e. documented citizens in nation states: right to work refers to a citizens' status or legality of migration and is an exclusive right.

In late capitalism however, whereby Fordist and Postfordist forms of production are in operation, the work of those under the approval of a national authority depend on those whose labour supports and maintains them, those outside a nation state. In the affluent pockets of the West the promotion of flexible, choice based work facilitated by information technologies — or at least this is what the rhetoric is about — is realised because of a complex set of labour dynamics where individual choice is far from the definitive factor. To facilitate the production of technologies that are used to enhance individual "choice" and "creativity" in the West other mechanisms are involved in the international division of labour: for one, we have the importation of labourers to the silicon valleys of the Global North under questionable legal conditions; or the export of labour to workers without real choices in the Global South. On a macro level, therefore, we have the silent fates of workers and in particular women, whose labour in sweatshops of technological hardware stock the "symbolic analysts" and "knowledge workers" desks.

Let us consider these examples:

A 25-year-old worker in Foxconn Technology Group a company producing Apple's iphone committed suicide when one of the 16 iphone prototypes he was responsible for went missing. The company itself searched Sun's apartment (http://www. nzherald. co. nz/mobile-phones/news/article. cfm? c_id = 261 & objectid = 10586119);

In 2008, in a less tragic story, a female factory worker of the same company forgot to delete a

test-photograph of herself on a mobile phone, which was sold to a customer in Britain. The worker's first reaction was *fear* that she will be sacked.

In 2005, the UK-based Catholic Agency of Overseas Development published a damning report on the conditions of work in the factories of Dell, Hewlett Packard and IBM in Mexico, China and Thailand. Pregnancy, homosexuality, connection to a labour union or bringing labour claims, are some of the reasons for dismissal or non-hire in the factories. Harassment, physical and psychological abuse, humiliation, discrimination and slave-like working conditions and pay are the norm. All this compounding to the pay gap between a worker making hard drives for Dell who was paid $2.50 a day, and the CEO of Dell who earned $13,000 a day.

In the meantime, here in the West, the rhetoric of flexible labour of the symbolic analyst places mothers, young people and the class of the new "creative" worker on the pedestal of choice over where and when and how to work, with the facilitation of communication technologies and software. Gregg (2008), Mosco (2007) and others have discussed both the media representations of this new format of work, and its realities and consequences for workers and markets in the Global North. The new world of the creative industries consists of workers constantly on-the-go, a demand to be continuously contactable, the crushing down of boundaries between work and life or leisure time, the precarity of labourers and insecurity of jobs, the expectation for continuous work on one's life's story as expressed on a CV; deskilling, casualisation, fractured hours, semi-wages and lack of benefits and of proper social welfare provision for dependents or in times of need. These are the web-designers, computer software programmers and analysts, communication interns and others upon which the operation of internet based companies such as Social Networking Sites (SNS) are based and define the context within which the use of the websites takes place.

On a micro-level, I am interested in exploring the actualisation of another kind of work, which is performed by individual users, but which is understood as leisure time. I am referring to the work of millions of individual users in developing, sustaining SNS and turning them into sites for profit-making. There are several levels on which consumers or users' work is utilised to maintain the functioning of a market circuit arranged around the need for human connection, as well as importantly around the exercise of citizenship through expression and participation in the global public digital sphere.

On one level, the proliferation of SNS such as Facebook requires the time, energy and input of a large number of individuals. Consumers utilise the functions offered by technology, adapt their own ways of expression into the prearranged formats of applications and a particular form of interactivity. Reaching out to friends and acquaintances worldwide is a new and exciting way of socialisation and leisure. As media scholarship has candidly recognised consuming leisure is not necessarily a passive activity in that it has engrained competences, skills and attention that require a pre-existing cultural capital as well as the capital to invest in communication technologies that enable this form of socialisation and leisure consumption.

New applications and invitations to support new features are promoted regularly through SNS, which in turn generates consumption at the level of PC/computer equipment and peripheral communications devices such as cameras or mobile phones. If the demographics offered by Facebook are accurate, 250 million people around the world are classed as active users, 40% of which reside in the USA, while 2/3 of all users are women (over 63%). This equals an immense source of personal, creative, mental, emotional, leisure work that takes place, and is in many ways typical of the "creative" economy (Greggs 2008); whereby the creative worker, in this case one where work is not even named as such, not only provides valuable flexible patterns of input in a production line of symbolic or abstract produce but it also maintains the trading of physical produce. In the knowledge economies of the West, information is the raw material.

For SNS accumulation of information is pursued through registration of users; market surveys receive feedback through fans' responses to interestingly presented games or applications. The proliferation of the consumption of ads is achieved via an increased watchers/users base; further utilisation of applications and input of personal information adheres to the monitoring of the self and of the moment and context as well as the personal, one's own appreciation of the context. Consequently, a second order feedback is generated to collected information and the cycle starts again. In the meantime, the user has invited their friends to sign up. The next cycle of content generation grows at an exponential rate, whereby production and consumption are blurred, completing each other (Harvey 1990).

The drive to produce what is to be consumed is embedded in the architecture of the "code", that is as Lessig argues, the software and hardware that make cyberspace what it is. This code is also what "regulates" cyberspace (Lessig 2006). The code, I add, brings the idea of separation between work/leisure under question. Andrejevic (2002) has argued that not only watching, i. e. consuming leisure, but also being watched, therefore being monitored in consuming leisure, constitutes not wasteful, but profit generating labour. This is due to making available the *bodies* of consumers in homes and private spaces — as is the case with those in shopping malls or superstores- sourcing from human beings their *physical presence* and *mental focus*. To that I want to add two things: not only the acts of watching and being watched are forms of profit generating labour, but also the very act of socialisation which does not, at first glance, appear to "consume" anything. Second, the seemingly intangible, yet resourceful "soul" of the labourer is brought into the labouring process, perhaps more intensely and comprehensively than in any other process of labour, production or even consumption. As per Aristotle's definition, the soul, our intellect coming together with intuitive functions to help us understand our place in the world, is perhaps becoming a driving force in the generation of endless, authentic or spontaneous content for the wheels of SNS to keep moving. Actual, round-the-clock, cross-border, manual, intellectual and emotional labour feeds the code, producing millions of pages, generating an unprecedented amount of personal and social data, which would have been otherwise untappable with the methods and means of market research. Content around this data is perhaps not yet a commodity directly profitable, although this is not necessarily true for the immediate future. Its immediate sell-and-buy, supply-and-demand capacity is organised momentarily around more familiar forms of commerce, such as advertisements and applications, as add-ons on the sites. Notably, as the Facebook blog itself declares "*we have a small community that provides powerful advice and learnings around product development and marketing*" (http://blog.facebook.com/under the name of Shaykat, a fb intern).

Moreover, there is another dimension to the content, that of a self-generating matrix for the constant *updating* on one's and also group's status. This sort of content conveys information on thoughts, moods, location, plans, habits and life experiences. It also demonstrates gaps in knowledge or informational needs. It generates responses to deeply personal and private aspects of the soul, from seemingly banal music preferences to political views and religion or everyday routines. It is of course important to note that the "seemingly banal" or mandane is that which creates demographics: banal information is that which involves patterns, such as sets of habits, routines, repetition of routes, choices, tastes and all the potential commercial activity and market interaction that goes with that. The generation of endless data, alongside with personalia in digital forms such as photos, videos or poems and "thoughts" feed the machinery of production, rearticulation and updating of records, marketing, consumption. Facebook based or hosted companies prepare tailor made ads with the photos of ourselves and our friends on items and services of interest to you: the personification of the consumer, much like amazon's message "welcome Katharine, we have suggestions for you" attains a

new meaning: we, ourselves, not only produce what we consume in the most literal sense of the word, not only we consume the technologies that will allow further consumption, not only do we avail ourselves in body and mind to the world of advertising, we *even produce the ads* that sell us products while addressing us with our first names.

Privacy, but not as We Know It

This labour however has a further re/generative purpose and next to that of social labour in maintaining the, a, community in some shape and form hence sustaining the base on which further, i.e. future, consumers can be groomed, products can be tailored, market models can be developed. Opening up one's social circle to a computerised system of data retention and monitoring multiplies the system's effectiveness of reach in unprecedented grades. By creating communities or joining existing ones, we translate our friends' contact and personal data into a machine readable format, kept and managed by companies that are effectively unaccountable as to the use of this data. Invitations to friends to join, result in the retention of their data even if individuals decide not to accept this invitation to join facebook. By affiliation — whether sustained or failed — one's personal data become property of third parties. The privacy policies of SNS are at best user-unfriendly, at worst abusive in their power to log information without the explicit consent of the user, as in some cases they leave no possibility to retrieve or claim back information already volunteered. A new enterprise in the making under the auspices of Facebook is now seeking to introduce those declared as "singles" to each other through various friends' networks. Advertisements are created on the combination of the availability of stored data, aggregated and personalised demographics, while the system of advertising and marketing is based on the specific architecture of privacy policies: not just settings, as individually controlled, but in terms of privacy policy's very code.

> Monitoring to produce searchable data will become the default architecture for public space, as standard as street lights. (Lessig 2006: 208)

To some, the very idea of search is an offense to dignity (Lessig 2006: 211), the same way physical search by the police or the worker's apartment by his own employers is an intrusion of private space and the effective cancelation of one essential part of citizenship, the power to have *control over one's own*, such as private personal data.

Individual protection of privacy is incompatible with this market model. There is a paradox here: at the same time States enhance surveillance techniques and scopes under the rubric of terror or security and global alliances demand retention of private data for commerce "security", individuals are left with little say over what happens to their data. Moreover, even more paradoxically perhaps, consumers volunteer large chunks of personal information in exchange for convenience and market "offers". Some allowances are also made by well intended citizens in the name of security and law and order. However, few guarantees are offered to the entrapped or well intended citizen as to what remains of their privacy: once information is passed on to companies, personal data usage is effectively uncontrollable by the citizen. Submission of power takes place through submission of personal information (and its subsequent appropriation of) submission of labour generating consumer time.

There is a regularisation process of a new form of a regime of accumulation, whereby this new production mode is powered through the very code of cyberspace, that is the architecture of software and hardware that prompts specific forms of interaction with others. At the same time it obscures the process through which this market interaction takes place. The space of virtual connection is at odds with the consequences of materiality — though only deceptively. In reality, locality of consumption disguises the globality of transactions under uneven and complex conditions. Overall, as a "code", the

regulation regime on privacy and surveillance is directly linked to the activities of corporate actors, as they interact with the state and their most powerful constellation of states globally and through the withdrawal of the state in enforcing privacy protection. In recent months, the European Commission stated its intention to issue an infringement procedure against the UK government over the case of Phorm. Phorm is an American based company previously involved in ad-and spyware that developed a programme which intercepts internet trafficking on individual users' IPs' analyses the text of websites visited and proceeds with what we call behavioural targeting, with adverts depending on the mood, tastes and interests as derived from personal use. Just days before the beginning of the investigation on Internet privacy by UK MPs and peers of the All Party Parliamentary Communications Group, the main signed up UK ISPs — BT, TalkTalk, and Virgin Media — decided to not proceed with Phorm, due to public outcry and the intervention of the European Commission. The collaboration between ISPs, Phorm and online advertisers, as well as websites, is expected to generate millions in the countries where this will be applied, already counting 15. According to the BBC, documents released under the Freedom of Information Act show frequent dialogue between Phorm and the Home Office which was interested in the technology. The Home Office is quoted in asking Phorm for its opinion of its legal position in relation to the technology and the reaction of its clients. BT and Phorm had run secret tests in 2006 and 2007 (BBC 2008).

Previously an assault against the normative justification of the protection of human rights by UK government in December 2005, on the grounds of anti-terrorism in a speech given to the European Parliament was empowered by the approval of the retention of telecommunication data on an EU level. Here one of the most powerful groups, the Creative and Media Business Alliance (CMBA), which includes EMI, SonyBMG and TimeWarner, has lobbied the EU to extend data retention to investigate all crimes, not just for crimes such as terrorism (Wearden & Gomm 2005). The concern here is closer to perceived lost profits and a need to control the telecommunications market, but the alliance between state and TNCs leaves citizens' private spaces open to intrusion, control and surveillance. The individual "disappears. . . into a probability" and the "range of types of threats to freedom of speech is expanding" in the modern informational State (Braman 2006).

In the immediate future, control may not occur as an isolated case on the grounds of a "crisis" ("war on terror" or financial crisis) but of a broadly normalised redefinition of the relationship between State and individual, and the market. On the one hand and on a global level, the State withdraws control over transnational media while *regularising* the sector's *public* activity. Examples include light-touch regulation on production processes, transnational trafficking of private data for e-commerce, international trading allowances (Mosco & McKercher 2007, Sarikakis 2008, Chakravartty & Sarikakis 2006, Braman 2004, Artz & Kamalipour 2003). On the other hand, it focuses on *private* behaviour and individual wrongdoings, such as through copyright policies, privacy, censorship, and leisure (Lyon 2005, Zittrain 2005, Cameron & Palan 2004, Sarikakis 2004, Sidak 2004, Bonetti 2003). Lawrence Lessig's description of the potentiality of "normalisation"of the population which is being monitored echoes concerns raised by civil rights groups, journalists and ordinary citizens. The argument here is one of the loss of real choice, autonomy and equality.

> The observing will affect the observed. The system watches what you do; it fits you into a pattern; the pattern is then fed back to you in the form of options set by the pattern; the options reinforce the pattern; the cycle begins again. (Lessig 2006: 220)

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31. Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content

José van Dijck

It's a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It's about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people's network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.

— *Time Magazine*, 16 December 2006

When *Time* designated "you" as Person of the Year 2006, the editors paid tribute to the millions of anonymous web users who dedicate their creative energy to a booming web culture. The cover story heralded the many volunteers filling so-called user-generated content (UGC) platforms. After decades of vilifying the passive coach potato, the press now venerates the active participant in digital culture. But just who is this participant? Who is the "you" in YouTube and what kind of agency can we attribute to this new class of media users? Are users indeed, as *Time* wants us to believe, the "many wresting power from the few" — a collective power that will "change the way the world changes"?

Traditionally, media scholars have theorized the agency of media recipients in close connection to the type of medium. Whereas the study of film yielded various concepts of spectatorship, television prompted a conceptualization of audience both as viewers and consumers. With the emergence of Web 2.0 applications, most prominently UGC platforms, the qualification of "user" gradually enters the common parlance of media theorists (Livingstone, 2004). Users are generally referred to as active internet contributors, who put in a "certain amount of creative effort" which is "created outside of professional routines and platforms".[1] Since the 1980s, the term "prosumer" has been deployed by various academics to denote how users' agency hovers between the bipolar categories of producer versus consumer, and of professional versus consumer. New hybrid terms such as "produser" and "co-creator" have meanwhile entered academic parlance to accentuate users' increased production prowess (Bruns, 2007). As this article will argue, user agency is a lot more complex than these bipolar terms suggest; we need to account for the multifarious roles of users in a media environment where the boundaries

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[1] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), based in Paris, issued a report titled *Participative Web: User-generated Content* (12 April 2007). The report was compiled by the OECD Committee for Information, Computer and Communications Policy. Citation on page 4. URL: http://www.oecd.org/home/0,3305,en_2649_201185_1_1_1_1_1,00.html.

between commerce, content and information are currently being redrawn.

To illustrate the complexity of user agency, the recent development of YouTube serves as a case of inquiry. Started as a video-sharing site in 2005 and run by three students from a Silicon Valley garage, the financially flailing but hugely popular site was bought up by Google in October of 2006 for the unprecedented sum of $1.6 billion. Obviously, Google's acquisition was not about bringing innovative technology into the home, as its own GoogleVideo was already running on superior software; it was about bringing in communities of users. In less than a year, YouTube became an (independent) subsidiary of a commercial firm whose core interest is not in content per se, but in the vertical integration of search engines with content, social networking and advertising.

YouTube's case perfectly illustrates the need for a more comprehensive approach to user agency, including perspectives from cultural theory, economics and labour relations. User agency is cast by cultural theorists as participatory engagement, in contrast to the passive recipients of earlier stages of media culture. Economists and business managers phrase user agency in the rhetoric of production rather than consumption. And in terms of labour relations, users are appraised in their new roles as amateurs and volunteers vis-á-vis those in the professional leagues. If we want to understand how socio-economic and technological transformations affect the current shake-up in power relationships between media companies, advertisers and users, it is important to develop a multifarious concept of user agency. Users like "you", as I will argue, have a rather limited potential to "wrest power from the few", let alone to "change the way the world changes".

The Cultural Perspective: Recipients Versus Participants

With the emergence of Web 2.0 applications, cultural theorist Henry Jenkins (2006) sees a definite paradigm shift in the way media content is produced and circulated: "Audiences, empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture" (2006: 24). The result is a participatory culture which increasingly demands room for ordinary citizens to wield media technologies — technologies that were once the privilege of capital-intensive industries — to express themselves and distribute those creations as they seem fit. When "old media" still reigned, media recipients had little direct power to shape media content and faced enormous barriers to enter the marketplace, whereas "the new digital environment expands the scope and reach of consumer activities" (2006: 215). Jenkins, like other media theorists, applauds the technological opportunities seized by grassroots movements and individuals to express their creativity and provide a diverse palette of voices (Deuze, 2007). And even if the explosion of information on the internet tends to result in "monitorial citizens" (Schudson, 1998), Jenkins is convinced that networked technologies offer users sufficient leverage to renegotiate their relationships with media companies.

There are several assumptions implied in the notion of participatory culture that I want to relativize in this section. First, the concept of user is often bolstered by a deceptive opposition between the passive recipient, couched in the rhetoric of "old media", and the active participant cast ideally as someone who is well-versed in the skills of "new" media. Second, participation refers to citizens and community activists as well as to people who deploy their skills and talents towards a common cause. Yet can terms such as "communities" and "(cultural) citizenship" be unequivocally transferred to internet communities? And third, now that citizens have become creators and arbiters of media content, what role do platform providers play in steering the agency of users and communities? Let me elaborate on each of these points.

The implied opposition between passive recipients defined by old media (e.g. television) and active participants inhabiting digital environments, particularly UGC sites, is a historical fallacy.

Scholars from the humanities have long emphasized the intrinsic engagement of the viewer with the medium (McLuhan, 1964) either stressing the "multi-accentuality of the sign" (Volosinov, 1973) or noting the role of subject positions in the text's ideological effect (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978). Television audiences were never solely defined in terms of passive spectatorship, but there is a long tradition in media history to point at the recipient's active engagement with Hollywood-prefab content (Ang, 1991; Moores, 1990). As Jenkins (1992) rightly points out, recipients of cultural content — whether fiction, music, film or television — have always engaged in activities, such as bands playing cover versions of songs or fan clubs stimulating the recreation of content. Over the past 15 years, viewers have increasingly acted as participants in game shows, quizzes, talk shows and make-over programmes. Particularly the surge of reality television has boosted the participation of "ordinary people" in broadcast productions (Teurlings, 2001). In addition, the popularity of personal and communal media (home movies, home videos, community television) has profoundly affected television culture, particularly since the 1980s. ① What is different in the digital era is that users have better access to networked media, enabling them to "talk back" in the same multimodal language that frames cultural products formerly made exclusively in studios. This is partly due to the availability of cheap and easy-to-use digital technologies, which certainly should stimulate audiovisual production of audiovisual production, but a more important driver is the many internet channels, particularly UGC sites, that allow for do-it-yourself distribution.

However, it's a great leap to presume that the availability of digital networked technologies turns everyone into active participants. As a *Guardian* technology reporter observes, an emerging rule of thumb suggests that "if you get a group of 100 people online then one will create content, 10 will 'interact' with it (commenting or offering improvements) and the other 89 will just view it" (Arthur, 2006). If it is true that there are relatively few active creators of content, what do we mean when we talk about participation? It may be crucial to distinguish different levels of participation in order to get a more nuanced idea of what participation entails. A recent American survey categorizes user's behaviour according to six levels on a participation ladder. ② Of all online users of UGC sites, 13 percent are "active creators" — people actually producing and uploading content such as webblogs, videos or photos. Just under 19 percent qualify as "critics", which means they provide ratings or evaluations. Furthermore, 15 percent of all users are "collectors", a term referring to those who save URLs on a social bookmarking service which can be shared with other users; another 19 percent count as "joiners" — people who join social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook, without necessarily contributing content. The majority of users consist of "passive spectators" (33%) and "inactives" (52%); while the former category perform activities such as reading blogs or watching

① In fact, so-called personal media products have increasingly become part of televized everyday life, as illustrated by immensely popular formats such as *America's Funniest Home Videos*. For more information on the development of home movies and videos, see Moran (2002) and van Dijck (2007).

② A recent Social Technographics Survey, executed by Forrester Research Inc. (a private survey company), interviewed close to 10,000 American users and was conducted by Charlene Li in December of 2006. The Forrester report, *Mapping Participation in Activities Forms the Foundation of a Social Strategy* (19 April 2007), can be accessed for a charge at: www. forrester. com/go? docid = 42057. The statistics in this list do not add up to 100 percent because users can be active in various roles, and, for instance, if they are "joiners" they do not necessarily contribute content.

peer-generated video, the latter category does not engage in any of these activities. ① Looking at these numbers, it becomes readily apparent that "participation" does not equal "active contribution" to UGC sites; participation is thus a relative term when over 80 percent of all users are in fact passive recipients of content (OECD, 2007).

On a different level, digital participants are ascribed a heightened level of engagement with society, enhancing cultural citizenship. The attribution of citizenship to media users is nothing new. There is a long tradition in scholarship theorizing television audiences as citizens, both in relation to commercial media as well in the context of public television (Dahlgren, 1995; Hartley, 1999) Besides treating television as an audiovisual text, media theorists have always taken into account the socio-cultural experience of interacting with television (for an overview, see Dahlberg, 2007). Building individual and group identity is an integrated element of the self in a democratic culture. Citizenship has to do with belonging and participating in a public sphere inundated with media; at the same time, as sociologist Thompson (1995: 215) already observed, individuals are increasingly dependent "on a range of social institutions and systems to provide them the means — both material and symbolic — for the construction of their life-projects". This double-bind of media dependency was evident long before the emergence of digital networked media. Media use was and still is strongly defined by evolving group identities, as individual viewers tie in their personal taste and lifestyles with shared "mediated" experiences.

Scholars theorizing the current trend of participatory culture emphasize users' strong preference to share knowledge and culture in communities. Sharing has indeed become the default mode of UGC interfaces like YouTube and MySpace. Yet the term "community", in relation to these sites, appears to cover a range of different meanings. On the face of it, "community" strongly connotes the inclination of users to belong to a (real-life) group and be involved in a common cause. YouTube's owners promote their site as the home of many such communities; as we can read on the site's Terms of Use: "Remember that this is your community! Each and every user of YouTube makes the site what it is, so don't be afraid to dig in and get involved. " Indeed, some YouTubers periodically hold public gatherings to celebrate the video-sharing community, but these real-life happenings remain exceptions. More likely, the term "community" relates to groups with a communal preference in music, movies or books (a so-called "taste community"); building taste is an activity that necessarily ties in individuals with social groups (Hennion, 2007). There are plenty of such groups sharing their cultural experiences with anonymous users on YouTube, such as anime-fans or heavy metal adepts. We also find the word "community" applying to people who happen to buy the same brand of toy cars or follow the same diet; "brand communities" is the hybrid name to tout consumer products offered as cultural resources (Arvidsson, 2005). "Communities", in relation to media, thus refers to a large range of user groups, some of which resemble grassroots movements, but the overwhelming majority coincide with consumer groups or entertainment platforms.

A more profound problem with ascribing participatory involvement and community engagement to users per se, is its neglect of the substantial role a site's interface plays in manoeuvring individual users

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① If we look at YouTube, which in the summer of 2006 covered almost 60 percent of the video-sharing market, these numbers are about right: on 100 million downloads there are 65,000 uploads each day, bringing the active – passive ratio on YouTube to just under 0. 5 percent of all users. The Forrester survey in December 2006 (Li, 2007: 12) sets the number of "active users" on YouTube at 25 percent. The difference between these statistics, besides a time gap of six months in measuring, lies in the fact that "active creators", according to the Forrester survey, do not necessarily contribute content to YouTube; they may have created content elsewhere (e. g. blogs).

and communities. YouTube users are steered towards a particular video by means of coded mechanisms which heavily rely on promotion and ranking tactics, such as the measuring of downloads and the promotion of popular favourites. The site's users indeed serve as providers and arbiters of content — both unwittingly by means of download counts and consciously by rating and commenting on videos — but rankings and ratings are processed with the help of algorithms, the technical details of which remain undisclosed. YouTube singles out "most viewed" videos; it also lists "most discussed" videos and has rankings for "Top favourites" and "Top rated" — familiar categories deployed by most commercial radio stations. Obviously, rankings and ratings are vulnerable to manipulation, both by users and by the site's owners.

In the emergent participatory culture, "participation" is thus an ambiguous concept. The presumption that new networked technologies lead to enhanced involvement of recipients as well as to active cultural citizenship is rather generalizing. The historical continuity between participation of ordinary citizens in "old media" like television and participation of users in networked UGC sites defies any definition grounded in binary oppositions. Instead, user agency comprises different levels of participation, varying from "creators" to "spectators" and "inactives". The same can be said with regard to the notion of "communities", a term that applies to very different modes of user involvement. When looking at user-generated content, we also need to take account of a site's coded abilities to steer and direct users. User agency, in other words, encompasses a range of different *uses* and *agents*, and it is extremely relevant to develop a more nuanced model for understanding its cultural complexity.

The Economics Perspective: Users between Producers and Consumers

Participatory culture finds its economic equivalent in the notion of "prosumption" or "wikinomics", a theory in which user agency is increasingly defined in terms of production and less in terms of consumption (Leadbeater, 2007; Tapscott and Williams, 2006). According to media analysts and business gurus, new digital platforms are giving rise to a profound paradigm shift in the way companies approach their customers and go about business relations:

> You can participate in the economy as an equal, co-creating value with your peers and favourite companies to meet your very personal needs, to engage in fulfilling communities, to change the world, or just to have fun! Prosumption comes full circle. (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 150)

In marketing and business discourse, hybrid terms such as "co-creation" and "produsage" are rapidly replacing the terms "consumption" and "customization" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Of course, notions such as prosumer have permeated theories of media production ever since "experience" became the magic word to tout customer engagement (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Toffler, 1981). But with the full implementation of Web 2.0 technologies, and particularly with the emergence of many UGC sites, business interest has apparently shifted away from consuming activities and gravitated towards producing activities, giving users more power over content because they add business value.

This new status of the people-formerly-known-as-consumers prompts further critical assessment of user agency. How valid is the claim that all users become "co-creators" or "produsers" of content? And where does this leave the consumer? Hybrid concepts appear to disregard users as objects of targeted advertising. But in casting new user agency, it is indispensable to look at the role of advertisers as well as new media platforms in the renegotiation of power relationships.

The presumed opposition between production and consumption in relation to media is misleading because American media function on the triangular basis of producers, consumers and advertisers. American media have always been driven largely by market forces — forces that control production

and distribution of audiovisual content through reaching audiences and profitable markets (Ettema and Whitney, 1994). In these markets, consumers have been targeted as masses, groups and individuals, and they have exerted power over cultural content via their power as consumers (e. g. buying or boycotting products, giving input to consumer panels, etc.). The relation between specific people watching specific content constitutes the basis of targeted advertising; information vital to marketers derives from the connection between content, disposable income and consuming behaviour. With the emergence of every new medium, advertisers and media companies have adjusted their strategies to reach the viewer-as-consumer — from mass audiences targeted by broadcasting in the 1950s to niche audiences reached by narrowcast channels in the 1990s (Smith-Shomade, 2004). The potential for niche marketing has been further enhanced in the internet era; advanced digital technologies facilitate the tracking of individual social behaviour. The already close relationship between content producers, advertisers and consumers has become even more intimate.

As argued in the previous section, only a small percentage of users actually create content whereas the large majority consists of spectators or passive viewers; yet *all* categories of users actually qualify as potential consumers. The social demographics of UGC platform visitors bespeak an average user who is highly educated, well connected and well paid, with an average house-hold income of almost twice the median income of American families (Li, 2007: 6). In other words, all UCG users — whether active creators or passive spectators — form an attractive demographic to advertisers. Not surprisingly, the marketing people employed by "old media" hail the emergence of these new platforms, while the legal people curse them because of frequent copyright infringement by users. At this moment in history, Hollywood producers hesitate whether to see YouTube-Google as a friend or foe: either they go after them and use their historic prowess to impose their old (content-protection) rules on this newcomer, or they side with them in creating new business and marketing models to create buzz for conventional broadcast products.

However the face-off turns out, it is crucial to understand the new role of users as both *content providers* and *data providers*. Besides uploading content, users also willingly and unknowingly provide important information about their profile and behaviour to site owners and metadata aggregators. Before users can actually contribute uploads or comments to a site, they usually have to register with their name, email address and sometimes add more personal details such as gender, age, nationality or income. Their subsequent media behaviour can be minutely traced by means of databots. More importantly, all users of UGC sites unwittingly provide information because IP addresses — the majority of which can be connected to a user's name and address — can be mined and used without limit by platform owners. Permission to use metadata towards specific purposes are commonly regulated by a site's service agreements (Terms of Use), which users are required to sign. Metadata can be mined for various purposes, from targeted advertising to interface optimization, but the bottom line is that users have no power over data distribution.

YouTube's practices are a case in point. When the site first started, YouTube's business model was quite simple: banner ads were placed next to video uploads to cover the costs of operating the video-sharing site. The site never turned a profit before its takeover by Google. YouTube's Terms of Use still require that subscribers "use YouTube for purely personal purposes and not for any commercial purpose", ruling out potentially commercial activities in relation to uploads. Yet a first sign towards the accommodation of advertisers came in January 2007, when YouTube's CEO Chad Hurley announced the introduction of short commercial clips; in the ensuing months, the site has added a large number of entertainment channels with paid commercial content. More importantly, the site's owners have a licence to exploit any data they gather from their users. Although YouTube's Terms of Use state that they do not sell email addresses or other personally identifiable information to commercial or

marketing messages without consent, at the same time they track both personal information and digital behaviour:

> We may record information about your usage, such as when you use YouTube, the channels, groups, and favorites you subscribe to, the contacts you communicate with, and the frequency and size of data transfers, as well as information you display or click on in YouTube (including UI elements, settings, and other information). If you are logged in, we may associate that information with your account. We may use clear GIFs (a. k. a. "Web Beacons") in HTML-based emails sent to our users to track which emails are opened by recipients. (http://youtube.com/t/terms)

Seemingly unimportant technical information, such as anonymous usage data, cookies, IP addresses, browser type, clickstream data, etc. are said to be deployed to "improve the quality and design of the site", but this limitation seems rather dubious in the face of YouTube's takeover which effectively transferred the right to access all user information to its new owner.

Since Google took over YouTube, the role of users as data providers has increased notably. In principle, YouTube is still an "independent" subsidiary of Google Inc. and the new owners vowed in a press statement to respect YouTube's distinct identity, but it would be naïve to think that YouTube's policies will be unaffected by the takeover. Gradually, YouTube's features are taking the shape of Google's own GoogleVideo — a site that casts users as targeted consumers as well as content providers. If we look at the Terms of Use regulating GoogleVideo's UGC traffic, they differ from YouTube's:

> You are directing and authorizing Google to, and granting Google a royalty-free, non-exclusive right and license to, host, cache, route, transmit, store, copy, modify, distribute, perform, display, reformat, excerpt, facilitate the sale or rental of copies of, analyze, and create algorithms based on the Authorized Content in order to (i) host the Authorized Content on Google's servers; (ii) *index the* Authorized Content; (iii) display, perform and distribute the *Authorized Content*, in whole or in part, in the territory(ies) designated in the Metadata Form, *in connection with Google products and services now existing or hereafter developed, including without limitation for syndication on third party sites*. (https:// upload. video. google. com/video_terms. html, emphases added)

Google's conditions for use shift the power over users' information to the site's owners. The metadata Google harvests from UGC traffic and click-streams is much more valuable to advertisers than the content users provide to these sites. Metadata are not merely a by-product of user-generated content: they are a prime resource for profiling real people with real interests. The phrase "in connection with Google products and services" spoofs the spectre of a platform interlocking advertising, content and data. Google already operates the hugely profitable AdSense, a subsidiary coupling advertising to search engine results, and recently acquired online advertising firm DoubleClick — a deal currently under scrutiny by federal anti-trust legislators who will also investigate privacy and competition issues. The vertical integration of Google, combining a near-monopoly search engine with information aggregation sites, advertising companies and UGC platforms renders the question of "googlization" rather pertinent (Batelle, 2005; Caufield, 2005; Vaidyanathan, 2007). Google's strategy is obviously in the interest of business, but what does it teach us about user agency?

Notwithstanding neologisms touting the user as a "produser" and "co-creator", the user's role as a data provider is infinitely more important than his role as a content provider. Even if some users receive part of the monetary gains made from their self-made content, the real value added by users — generating metadata on the social behaviour of a profitable consumer segment — remains highly invisible and unaccounted for. The triangular relationship between media producers, advertisers and consumers has become ever more intimate. On the one hand users assert their creative agency by

demanding a greater role in content production; on the other hand they lose their grip on their agency as consumers as a result of technological algorithms tracking their behaviour and refining their profile. User agency thus comprises content production, consuming behaviour and data generation; any theory highlighting only the first of these functions effectively downplays the tremendous influence of new media companies in directing users' agency.

Labour Relations: Amateurs Versus Professionals

A third approach to user agency draws attention to UGC in terms of labour relations; according to the official OECD definition (see note 2), users contribute creative efforts "outside of professional routines and practices". Terms such as "hobbyists", "amateurs", "unpaid labourers" and "volunteers" often applied to internet contributors, contrast with the words "professionals", "stars", "paid experts" and "employees" commonly attributed to people producing traditional television content. But as the market for user-generated content further commercializes and is incorporated by new media conglomerates, the sliding scales of voluntarism are inversely proportional to the sliding scales of professionalism, resulting in new mixed models of labour. In order to understand the changes in user agency, it is important to scrutinize "human resources" management of UGC sites such as YouTube. What characterizes the type of effort users put into creating and rating online content if this is not regularly paid labour? Why devote much time and energy to creating content and what to expect in return? The changes YouTube made in its policies towards users are typical of the current trend towards integrating amateur efforts into a capital-and technology-intensive media system.

Since the beginning of the web, thousands of volunteers, hobbyists and idealists have enabled the development of what some observers have described as a "gift economy for information exchange" (Barbrook, 2002). The worldwide web, after all, was envisioned as a new frontier space where grassroots initiatives, communal spirit and "free" amateur culture had a chance to blossom. Labour critics and neo-Marxist scholars noticed early on how the glamorization of the digital domain was a convenient pretense for the mobilization of "immaterial labour" — befitting the familiar logic of capitalist exploitation (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Terranova, 2000). Enterprises like America Online (AOL) boomed on the efforts of thousands of volunteers who developed their skills in the service of companies. In the 1990s, AOL employed thousands of what they called "remote staffers" who monitored electronic bulletin boards, hosted chat-rooms and enforced Terms of Service agreements. These unpaid remote staffers were referred to as "online families" and communities, and AOL even created a sort of kinship system based on mentor-mentee relationships. As Postigo (2003) relates in his detailed study, volunteers were less driven by a spirit of community, as they were stimulated by the novelty of working with new technologies; they needed computer experience to be employable in the emerging tech-economy. When, in 1999, AOL wanted to exert more power over their volunteer remote staffers, they implemented a mixed system of paid and volunteer staff, igniting a huge controversy among its loyal base. AOL remote staffers filed a class-action lawsuit to require retroactive acknowledgement of their work as labour; the case was settled and AOL completely abandoned the system in 2003.

The AOL case is emblematic of the current transformation in labour relations with regard to the commercialization of UGC sites; sites like YouTube are facing the double-bind of courting their volunteer content providers while making a profit on them as targeted consumers. When the popularity of video-sharing sites began to soar in early 2006, the debate on user motivation, status and rewards quickly intensified. The question of what drives users to contribute time and labour to an exploding number of UGC sites is crucial if we want to understand the volatile relationship between media companies and their worker-client base. According to the aforementioned Forrester survey (Li, 2007:

11 - 12), users can be segmented according to one of three primary motivations: entertainment, career and family. Entertainment-driven users are much more likely to participate in UGC activities, closely followed by career-driven users. Users are attracted to these sites because of their novelty; as soon as the entertainment value starts to wear off, they will seek a new platform or change habits. The decision of YouTube to mix amateur content with prefab entertainment content is thus meant to boost the site's perpetual entertainment value. Career-driven users can be characterized as aspiring professionals, both in the technical-creative sphere and in the artistic-entertainment sphere.

Many contributors to UGC sites are enthusiasts who make home videos for a small circle of family and friends — the third most important driver for producing content. Apparently, many amateurs take pride in developing their skills and dream of turning their hobby into a profession. Tinkering with media technologies has been the department of hobbyists since the time of radio hams, and digital labour has acquired the image of being creative play (Douglas, 1999; Gillespie, 2006). Labour volunteered to UGC sites is thus not conceived of as work, but as fun or play. This "work as play" ethos also reigns in many workplaces of the digital creative industries; the workforce of designers, software developers and hardware engineers are attracted to places with an "anti-corporate culture" where young people are ready to work unusual hours for sometimes very little money; it is not unusual in this sector to be paid in stock options of companies that have yet to emerge (de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 2005). Google is well known for its unconventional labour contracts and its "geek culture" that pays bonuses for creative input and provides spare time for employees to spend on non-assigned projects. In a sense, the emergence of UGC sites stipulates a variable scale of labour relations, where many contractual forms can be pinpointed somewhere between the two poles of volunteerism and professionalism.

Striking the balance between the commitment of volunteers and the directing power of paid staffers is a difficult issue, especially now that many UGC sites are transforming from commons-like structures towards commercially driven platforms. Even if content is said to be "user generated" that does not mean that users have full control over what is produced and how it gets displayed. UCG sites are governed by technological and social protocols (Galloway, 2004). Technological protocols are, for instance, the rating and ranking systems explained in the previous section; social protocols govern how uploads are filtered by the site's staffers, by experts or by peer-users (or a combination thereof), before or after posting. Of course, quality of content and abuse of rating and evaluation systems are a constant source of worry to the site's owners, as the opportunity for manipulation is very real. Most start-up UGC sites depended completely on volunteer users for their operational activities. In the case of YouTube, users themselves policed the site for profane, racist and explicit sexual content, and the moderation of content was entirely peer-based. Since the takeover by Google, the commercial stakes are rising and YouTube's paid staffers are taking over an increasing portion of the site's moderating tasks. For one thing, YouTube is forced to exert sharper control over its uploaded content, especially with regard to copyright violation, now that lawsuits are pending. More control over operational matters is inevitable if the site wants to turn a profit; whether users will still form the loyal volunteer base they once did remains to be seen.

When UGC sites' popularity really started to explode, in early 2006, media analysts and industry watchers noticed rapidly changing mores in the treatment of volunteers generating content (Siklos, 2006). Yahoo and Metacafe organized contests, promising rewards of several thousand dollars for the most popular uploads. YouTube originally did not pay any of its volunteers who acted as content providers or who kept the system of peer-reviewing and quality monitoring afloat. Since its takeover by Google, YouTube has been quickly remodelling its reward system, for instance by introducing paid uploads so contributors can opt to charge viewers to see their content. GoogleVideo already has such

system, where revenues are split between the site owners and the maker of content. ① Labour relations thus shift from a user-controlled platform, run largely by communities of users mediated by social and technological protocols, to a company-steered brokerage system, where platform owners play the role of mediator between aspiring professionals and potential audiences. Companies like Google are not looking to turn every amateur into a professional so much as acknowledging the growing appeal of selling home-made material to audiences and media businesses.

In more than one way, YouTube and GoogleVideo are mediating platforms between the masses of aspiring amateurs and the "old" Hollywood media moguls. Video-sharing sites have quickly become the global rodeo for talent scouts: they provide a new link in the upward mobility chain of the commercially driven star-system. Originally, YouTube's intentions were to "democratize the entertainment process" by giving ordinary people the opportunity to perform for potentially large audiences. In interviews, CEO Chad Hurley (quoted in McGrath, 2006) effectively downplayed the influence of YouTube's employees in moderation systems that promote the popularity of certain uploads and thus favour particular claims to fame. By nominating "noteworthy videos" on their homepage and all the strategic "listing" systems mentioned before, YouTube is now definitely a partner in the entertainment brokerage business. The site even imitates the Hollywood star system by establishing yearly YouTube Awards. However, the erosion of YouTube's democratic ideal is not simply the result of unilateral popularity promotion, but also of overtly ambitious users inventing numerous strategies to thwart YouTube's system of popularity measuring and peer-based evaluation. Notorious examples such as LonelyGirl15 and Lamo1234 illustrate the weakness of an open system driven by volunteer users: the "lonely girl" turned out to be the creation of professional film-makers represented by Hollywood's Creative Artists Agency, and Lamo1234 was a 23 – year-old student who downloaded his own recorded guitar solos 10,000 times to boost his view counts. Although YouTube and many other video-sharing sites carefully nurture the concept of amateur home-made content, the actual myth driving this concept is the popular belief in "rags to riches" stories.

The UGC market increasingly relates to the professional Hollywood market as stock options relate to shares and bonds — a trade market in potential talents and hopeful pre-professionals. YouTube's role as an Internet trader in the options market for fame is unthinkable without a merger between old and new media. Ironically, YouTube fame only counts as fame after it is picked up by traditional mass media — television, movies, newspapers and so on. The case of Dutch vocalist and songwriter Esmee Denters typifies the site's function in paving the way to recognized celebrity status. In September 2006, the 18 – year-old high school student posted a video of herself singing on YouTube and then mobilized her friends via Hyves. nl and other social networking sites to view her recording and up her ratings. But Denters' popularity only soared after she appeared on several Dutch television shows. In April 2007, she signed a contract with Justin Timberlake's record company. The growing role of UGC platforms as intermediaries between amateurs and professionals, volunteers and employees, anonymous users and stars, can hardly be conceived apart from "old" media conglomerates' power to select, promote and remunerate artistic content. UGC is firmly locked into the commercial dynamics of the mediascape.

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① GoogleVideo states in its Terms of Use:

Yo may designate a purchase and/or rental price in the Metadata Form that end users must pay in order to download Your Authorized Content. If you do not designate a price for Your Authorized Content, the price will automatically be set at zero. Except as otherwise set forth herein, In the event of any download of Your Authorized Content, by end users, We will pay to You seventy percent (70%) of the gross revenues, if any, recognized by Google and attributable to such video play-back of Your Authorized Content based upon the price you designate. (https://upload. video. google. com/video_terms. html)

The contention that UGC platforms stimulate a democratic culture dominated by creative amateurs and providing free culture (Lessig, 2004) has been countered by vehement criticism. Former entrepreneur Andrew Keen (2007) lashed out at the "cult of the amateur" which, in his view, has destroyed the system of paid content and paid professionals. Before the advent of UGC platforms, companies responsible for content could at least be held accountable for the mistakes they made; but the "wisdom of crowds", according to Keen, causes the demise of the professional system. The overwhelming supply of amateur digital content has created a market in which cultural products are created at no cost and given away for free. Keen is thus convinced that amateurs and professionals, unpaid and paid labourers, cannot cohabit within the same system of cultural production. But, as the example of YouTube shows, the sliding scales of voluntarism and professionalism result in a variety of labour relationships, as well as in a recalibrated system of financial rewards, risks and benefits in an emerging "options" market. Instead of bringing down the reigning professional leagues, UGC actually boosts the power of media moguls, enhancing their system of star ratings and upward mobility.

If anything, Keen's critique shows the fallacy of defining user agency in bipolar terms of labour relations. UGC is neither exclusively produced by amateurs nor by professionals. The development of media content and media technologies has always attracted a mix of workers, due to its appeal as entertainment as well as work. The blending of work and play reverberates in the labour conditions adapted by many internet-based companies and new media industries. It is also manifest in the intermediary function of UGC sites, brokering between aspiring amateurs and commercial content firms. In this emerging combination of job markets and trade markets, it is a myth to expect that amateurs or volunteers will gain more control over the monetization (or moderation) of their immaterial labour. By the same token, it is unlikely that professional markets will give way to a powerful base structure consisting of volunteers with enhanced claims to creative autonomy and financial independence. On the contrary, user agency is defined more than ever by the capital-intensive and technology-driven economies of global, vertically integrated markets.

Conclusion

When *Time* hailed You as the "Person of the Year", the magazine paid tribute to the millions of anonymous, productive contributors to the web — a tribute akin to the badge of honour bestowed upon the unknown soldier. This powerful but contrived metaphor has come to define the concept of user agency as it dissipated into academic and professional discourses. Notions of "participatory culture" tend to accentuate the emancipation of the engaged citizen, who unleashes her need for self-expression and creativity onto the digital spaces created expressly for this purpose. Economists and business managers applaud the rise of "wikinomics", hailing the surge of produsers and co-creators whose contributions add substantial economic value. And notions such as "playful work" and "professional voluntarism" enter the digital industry's parlance of work ethos and employment. Despite lingering images of self-effacing, engaged and productive cybernauts — echoing early internet frontierism — the "You" lauded by *Time* has meanwhile entered the era of commercialized user-generated content, where user activity is heavily mediated by high-tech algorithms and data-mining firms. Exemplifying this transformation is the changing position of YouTube, a UGC site that evolved from a small start-up site driven by user communities into a commercial platform that is now an important node in an evolving ecosystem of media conglomerates dominated by Google.

It is important to include the perspectives from cultural theory, consumer sociology and political economy when trying to understand the essence of new user agency. Although older cultural theories of media use may still prove to be helpful in defining the conceptual boundaries at stake in this discussion, it seems obvious that we need more than singular disciplinary theories to help us understand the

intricate relationships between social and technological agents. Cultural production can no longer be theorized exclusively in terms of industry or social stratification of consumers, as the amplified efficacy of media technologies is closely intertwined with the rise of global media constellations (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Increasingly, we find studies by cultural sociologists who scrutinize user-generated media in close connection to their technological design, but without further reference to their economic or political impact (Lai, 2007). Political economists have addressed issues of governance and power in relation to technologically mediated interaction, but rarely relate these issues to cultural content and actual users (Mansell, 2004). A multidisciplinary approach to user agency should yield a model that accounts for users' multiple roles, while concurrently accounting for technologies and site operators-owners as actors who steer user agency.

David Croteau (2006) rightly observed that we still know very little about the effect of user-generated content on the new media landscape. Conceptually and methodologically, media scholars will need to devise new ways to assess content trends across these new production platforms. In this article, I have argued for the articulation of user agency as a complex concept involving not only his cultural role as a facilitator of civic engagement and participation, but also his economic meaning as a producer, consumer and data provider, as well as the user's volatile position in the labour market. Such a multifaceted concept needs to be met with proposals for multi-levelled methodologies that combine empirical research of users' activities, motivations, status and intentions with contextual analyses charting techno-economic aspects of media use. User agency in the age of digital media can no longer be assessed from one exclusive disciplinary angle as the social, cultural, economic, technological and legal aspects of UGC sites are inextricably intertwined. Theories from cultural theory, empirical sociology, political economy and technology design need to be integrated to yield a nuanced model for assessing user agency. Indeed, composite companies like Google should be met with equally multifaceted models for understanding "users like you".

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32. Web 2.0, Prosumption, and Surveillance

Christian Fuchs

Introduction①

Many observers claim that the Internet in general and the world wide web in particular have been transformed in the past years from a system that is primarily oriented on information provision into a system that is more oriented towards communication, user-generated content, data sharing, and community building (see, for example, Castells 2009; O'Reilly 2005; Tapscott and Williams 2006). The notions of "web 2.0", "social software", and "social network(ing) sites" have emerged in this context. Web platforms such as Wikipedia, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Google, Blogger, Rapidshare, Wordpress, Hi5, Flickr, Photobucket, Orkut, Skyrock, Twitter, YouPorn, PornHub, Youku, Orkut, Redtube, Friendster, Adultfriendfinder, Megavideo, Tagged, Tube8, Mediafire, Megaupload, Mixi, Livejournal, LinkedIn, Netlog, ThePirateBay, Orkut, XVideos, Metacafe, Digg, StudiVZ, etc. are said to be typical for this transformation of the Internet.

The best known definition of "web 2.0" has been given by Tim O'Reilly (2005):

> Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation", and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences.

Blogs, wikis, file sharing platforms, and social networking platforms are some of the techno-social systems that shape users' Internet experiences in contemporary society. Scholars, the media, and parts of the public claim that the Internet has become more social, more participatory, and more democratic (see Fuchs 2010b). These claims might be overdrawn and techno-optimistic ideologies, seeing that e-mail technology was created in the early 1970s and has for a long time since been the most popular and widely used Internet technology, which shows that the Internet was social and communicative right from its outset. Therefore the claims about "web 2.0" should be more modest. Many web 2.0 sites combine older applications such as forums, guest books, e-mail, multimedia, and hypertext in one user-friendly platform, which increases the appeal and ease-of-use and so supports increased usage. Increased bandwidth and cheaper production technologies (such as digital cameras)

now allow easy, fast, and cheap transmission and sharing of audio and video files, and has resulted in increased popularity of user-generated content. The discussion of surveillance in web 2.0 is important because such platforms collect huge amounts of personal data in order to work.

Although there is a hype about web 2.0, there is a certain truth in the claim that the Internet and the world wide web have changed: empirical analysis shows that, on the one hand, information provision is still the most important function of the web, but that, on the other hand, co-operative functions of the web (community building, data sharing, collaborative information production) have become more important (Fuchs 2010b). The notion of web 2.0 might therefore be used for characterizing these changes, though at the same time there are important continuities in the development of the web (Fuchs 2010b; Fuchs, Hofkirchner, Schafranek, Raffl, Sandoval and Bichler 2010).

This paper tries to give an answer to the question: how do web 2.0 corporations make profit? To do so, I discuss foundations of the political economy of web 2.0. In particular, the role of prosumption and surveillance will be outlined. First, I discuss the example of Google Buzz (section 2). Then, I introduce some foundations of critical political economy (section 3), which are related to the notions of surveillance and prosumption (section 4). Finally, some conclusions are drawn (section 5).

This paper is based on a political economy approach. Political economy focuses on the analysis of the inner constitution and dynamics of the economic system. It is *political* economy because it sees political interests at work in the modern economy. In critical political economy, these interests are conceived as contradictory class interests. Critique of political economy aims to show the limitations, contradictions, and problems of the capitalist economy; it questions the legitimacy and logic of academic approaches that conceive capitalist phenomena (such as the commodity, exchange value, profit, money, capital, the division of labour, etc) as universal and not as historically contingent and changeable, and it questions the modes of thinking that postulate the endlessness and reification of existing reality (ideology critique).

Google Buzz: An Example for the Web 2.0 Political Economy of Surveillance

I start with an example that shows the problems of web 2.0 surveillance: Google Buzz. In February 2010, Google introduced a new social networking service called Buzz. Buzz is directly connected to GMail, Google's webmail-platform. Google's introduction of Buzz is an attempt to gain importance in the social networking sites-market that has been dominated by Facebook and Twitter. In February 2010, Facebook was ranked number 2 and Twitter number 12 in the list of the most accessed web platforms, whereas Google's own social networking platform Orkut, which is only very popular in Brazil, was at number 52[①]. Popular social networking platforms attract millions of users, who upload and share personal information that provides data about their consumption preferences. Therefore commercial social networking sites are keen on storing, analyzing, and selling individual and aggregated data about user preferences and user behaviour to advertising clients in order to accumulate capital (Fernback and Papacharissi 2007; Fuchs 2009). Google is itself a main player in the business of online advertising. One can therefore assume that Google considers Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms that attract many users, as competitors, and that as a result of this competitive situation Google has introduced Buzz. In 2009, GMail had approximately 150 million users (Tech 24 Hours 2009), which explains that Google integrated Buzz into GMail in order to start from a solid foundation of potential users.

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① Data source: http://alexa.com, search term "the top 500 sites on the web", accessed February 14, 2010.

Buzz supports the following communicative functions: creating postings that are shared with contacts; sharing of images and videos; commenting on and evaluating others' Buzz posts; forwarding of Twitter messages to a Buzz account; linking and integrating images uploaded to Flickr or Picasa, videos uploaded to YouTube, and posts generated on Blogger; and use of Buzz via mobile phones. Buzz messages can either be presented publicly or only to selected groups of followers. Each user's Buzz profile has a list of followers and users can select which Buzz accounts they want to follow. Buzz mobile phone messages include geo-tags that display the current location of users. Buzz posts of users who are geographically located nearby a user and information about nearby sites, shops, restaurants, etc. can be displayed on mobile phones. Buzz also recommends postings by other users.

In December 2009, Google's CEO Eric Schmidt commented on online privacy: "If you have something that you do not want anyone to know, maybe you should not be doing it in the first place" (YouTube 2009). Google's Privacy Policy states that it is allowed to "process personal information on behalf of and according to the instructions of a third party, such as our advertising partners". It "may share with third parties certain pieces of aggregated, non-personal information, such as the number of users who searched for a particular term, for example, or how many users clicked on a particular advertisement". "Google uses the DoubleClick advertising cookie on AdSense partner sites and certain Google services to help advertisers and publishers serve and manage ads across the web" (Google 2010a). There is only an opt-out from DoubleClick, which means that Google automatically collects information about users on affiliated websites as long as they do not opt out. The privacy policy shows that Google's economic aim is to accumulate profit by commodifying user data. Schmidt's statement is an indication that Google, or at least its most important managers and shareholders, do not value privacy very highly. It implies that he thinks that in the online world, all uploaded information and personal data should be available publicly and should be usable by corporations for economic ends.

When first installing Buzz, the application automatically generated a list of followers for each user based on the most frequent GMail mail contacts. The standard setting was to automatically make this list of followers publicly visible. This design move resulted in heavy criticism of Google in the days following the launch of Buzz. Users and civil rights advocates argued that Buzz threatens the privacy of users and makes contacts available in public that users might want to keep private. Google reacted to public criticism (see Jackson 2010; Huffington Post 2010) and changed some of the standard settings of Buzz on February 13, 2010. Some changes were made to the auto-follow option, so that now a dialogue is displayed that shows which users Buzz suggests as followers (Jackson 2010); however, Buzz still creates this list of suggested followers automatically, which does not make this solution an opt-in version of the follow feature. Google also said that Buzz would no longer automatically connect publicly available Picasa and Google Reader items to the application. Furthermore, an options menu was announced that allows users to hide their contact list from their public Google profiles (Jackson 2010). The problem here again is this was planned as an opt-out solution, not as an opt-in option. From a privacy-enhancing perspective, opt-in solutions are preferable to opt-out solutions because they give users more control over what applications are allowed to do with their data. However, it is clear that opt-in solutions are rather unpopular design options for many Internet corporations because they tend to reduce the number of potential users that are subject to advertising-oriented data surveillance.

At the Google Buzz launch event on February 9, 2010, the presenters were keen to stress the advantages that Buzz poses for users. Bradley Horwitz, Google vice president of product marketing, spoke of Buzz as "a Google approach to sharing" and a tool that will "help you manage your attention better" (YouTube 2010). There was no talk about potential disadvantages. During the question and answer section of the event, the first question that came about was about privacy issues, to which Buzz product manager Todd Jackson answered: "There is a lot of controls [sic] in there for users. [...]

There are ways to control the settings you are revealing to other people" (ibid). Four days later, following public discussion about the surveillance and privacy threats of Buzz, Google sounded much less optimistic. On the Google GMail blog, Jackson wrote: "We've heard your feedback loud and clear, and since we launched Google Buzz four days ago, we've been working around the clock to address the concerns you've raised" (Jackson 2010).

Google's economic strategy is to gather data about users that utilize different Google applications in different everyday situations. The more everyday situations can be supported by Google applications, the more time users will spend online with Google, so that more user data will be available to Google, which allows the company to better analyze usage and consumer behaviour. As a result, more and more precise user data and aggregated data can be sold to advertising clients who, armed with information about potential consumption choices, provide users with personalized advertising that targets them in all of these everyday situations. Felix Stalder and Christine Mayer (2009) have analyzed the data different Google applications collect and conclude that Google conducts surveillance of users as knowledge persons, social persons, and physical persons. The introduction of ever more applications does primarily serve economic ends that are realized by large-scale user surveillance. As more and more people access the Internet from their mobile phones, the number of times and the time-spans users are online, as well as the number of access points and situations in which users are online, increase. Therefore, supplying applications that are attractive for users in all of these circumstances (e. g. waiting for the bus, travelling on a train or aeroplane, going to a restaurant, concert, or movie, visiting friends, or attending a business meeting), promises that users spend more time online with applications supplied by specific companies like Google, which allows these companies to present more advertisements that are more individually targeted to users, which in turn promises more profit for the companies. We can therefore say that there is a strong economic incentive for Google's and other companies' introduction of new Internet- and mobile Internet-applications.

Google Buzz is part of Google's empire of economic surveillance. It gathers information about user behaviour and user interests in order to store, assess, and sell this data to advertising clients. These surveillance practices are legally guaranteed by the Buzz privacy policy, which says for example:

> When you use Google Buzz, we may record information about your use of the product, such as the posts that you like or comment on and the other users who you communicate with. This is to provide you with a better experience on Buzz and other Google services and to improve the quality of Google services. [...] If you use Google Buzz on a mobile device and choose to view "nearby" posts, your location will be collected by Google.
>
> (Google 2010b).

Google uses DoubleClick — a commercial advertising server that collects and networks data about usage behaviour on various websites — to network the data it holds about its users with data about these users' browsing and usage behaviour on other web platforms. DoubleClick has been owned by Google since 2007 and, in addition to collecting and networking data about usage behaviour, sells this data, and helps providing targeted advertising. There is only an opt-out option from this form of networked economic surveillance. Opt-out options are always rather unlikely to be used because in many cases they are hidden inside of long privacy and usage terms and are therefore only really accessible to knowledgeable users. Many Internet corporations avoid opt-in advertising solutions because such mechanisms drastically reduce the potential number of users participating in advertising. The Google privacy policy says in this context:

> Google uses the DoubleClick advertising cookie on AdSense partner sites and certain Google services to help advertisers and publishers serve and manage ads across the web. You can view, edit,

and manage your ads preferences associated with this cookie by accessing the Ads Preferences Manager. In addition, you may choose to opt out of the DoubleClick cookie at any time by using DoubleClick's opt-out cookie.

(Google 2010a).

Google's online product advertising for Buzz says:

> The first thing we all do when we find something interesting is share it. More and more of this kind of sharing takes place online. Google Buzz is a new way to share updates, photos, videos, and more. [...] When you are out in the real world, you usually want to say something about where you are. Buzz makes this easy.

(Google 2010c).

Sharing information with friends and to a certain extent with the public is surely an important feature of everyday communication that allows humans to stay in touch and to make new contacts. But Google only presents potential advantages of Buzz and does not say a single word about potential disadvantages. Do people really want to share vast amounts of private data and location data not only with their friends, but also with Google? Can Google be considered as a friend of all humans, or doesn't it rather accumulate power that can also cause great harm to humans? Do people really always want to tell others where they currently are? Are people really interested in sharing their location data not only with selected friends, but also with Google? It is natural corporate behaviour that Google only presents potential advantages of its applications in its marketing videos, adverts, and events. But by doing so, it creates a one-dimensional picture of online reality that conveys the impression that we live in a world without power structures, in which all humans always benefit from corporate practices. Yet the recent great financial crisis has made clear to many citizens that corporations cannot always be trusted and are prone to act in ways that do not benefit all, but instead only a small group of investors.

Buzz is not the only example of Google-enhanced surveillance. Google has developed Goggles, an image-recognition software that identifies objects that people take pictures of by mapping these objects with Google's image database and then provides information about these objects. If this application were linked to image data about humans, it would allow people to identify and obtain information about humans who they see on the street by taking a picture of them and linking this image to Google in real time. This would allow humans to intrude the privacy of others in public spaces through personal identification and it would additionally allow Google to gather, assess, provide, and potentially sell real time data about the physical location of millions of people.

Why is data surveillance for economic surveillance by Google applications such as Buzz problematic? One could argue that Google provides a free service to users and that in return it should be allowed to access, store, analyze, and use personal data and Internet usage behaviour. But the problem is that the power relations between Google and its users are not symmetrical. In December 2008, Google controlled 57% of the online advertising market (Attributor 2008). A Google monopoly in online advertising poses several threats (for a general account of the threats of information monopolies see Fuchs 2008, 164 – 171):

Ideological power threat: Online advertising presents certain realities as important to users and leaves out those realities that are non-corporate in character or that are produced by actors that do not have enough capital in order to purchase online advertisements. An online advertising monopoly therefore advances one-dimensional views of reality.

Political power threat: In modern society, money is a form of influence on political power. The concentration of online advertising therefore gives Google huge political power.

Control of labour standards and prices: An online advertising monopoly holds the power to set industry-wide labour standards and prices. This can pose disadvantages for workers and consumers.

Economic centralization threat: An economic monopoly controls large market shares and thereby deprives other actors of economic opportunities.

Surveillance threat: Targeted online advertising is based on the collection of vast amounts of personal user data and usage behaviour that is then stored, analyzed, and passed on to advertising customers. Modern societies are stratified, which means that certain groups and individuals compete with others for the control of resources, consider others as their opponents, benefit from certain circumstances at the expense of others, and so forth. As a result, information about personal preferences and individual behaviour can cause harm to individuals if it gets into the hand of their opponents or others who might have an interest in harming them. Large-scale data gathering and surveillance in a society based on the principle of competition poses certain threats to the well-being of all citizens. Therefore, special privacy protection mechanisms are needed. All large collections of data pose the threat of being accessed by individuals who want to harm others. If such collections are owned privately, then access to data might be sold because there is an economic interest in accumulating money. Humans who live in modern societies have an inherent interest in controlling which personal data about them is stored and is available to whom because they are facing systemic threats of being harmed by others. Under our current modern circumstances, large collections of personal information pose the threat of harm to individuals because their foes, opponents, or rivals in private or professional life can potentially gain access to such data. Since "9 · 11", there has been an extension and intensification of state surveillance based on the argument that security from terrorism is more important than privacy. But state surveillance is prone to failure, and the access of state institutions to large online collections about citizens (as for example that enabled by the USA PATRIOT Act) not only poses the possibility of detecting terrorists, but also the threat that a large number of citizens be considered as potential criminals or terrorists without having committed any crimes, as well as the threat that the state obtains a huge amount of information about the private lives of citizens that the latter consider worth protecting (such as political views, voting decisions, sexual preferences and relationships, and friendship statuses).

Overall, the introduction of Google Buzz shows that there is an antagonism between privacy protection and economic surveillance interests on the Internet nowadays that is dominated by commercial interests. It might be time to think more about strengthening alternative Internet platforms and the potentials for constructing an alternative Internet (Atton 2004). For Atton, the model of an alternative Internet is Indymedia, which is "opposed to hierarchical, elite-centred notions of journalism as business" and places "power into the hands of those who are more intimately involved in those stories" so that "activists become journalists" (Atton 2004, 26f). Atton shows that in 2002 after 9/11 there was a distinct shift away from open publishing and direct-action news at Indymedia towards instead the publication of selected mainstream reports and articles by left-wing intellectuals like Noam Chomsky. Atton sees this move positively as an opening up "beyond the faithful" (Atton 2004, 52). Overall, Atton argues for non-corporate Internet platforms that that engage in political criticism of capitalism and Internet platforms that make knowledge available for free (such as filesharing platforms) and thereby decommodify knowledge. He discusses examples that, for him, anticipate an alternative organization of the Internet.

Foundations of the Critical Political Economy Approach

Contemporary surveillance must be understood in the light of changed circumstances, especially

the growing centrality of consumption and the adoption of information technologies

(Lyon 1994, 225).

Capitalism has changed. In Marx's time, consumer surveillance and electronic surveillance were hardly important. Economic surveillance focused on the control of the production process. Nonetheless, the Marxian framework of political economy that describes the cycle of capital accumulation, can be used today for systematically locating forms of economic surveillance in the production and circulation process.

In the three volumes of *Capital*, Marx (1867; 1885; 1894) analyzes the accumulation process of capital. This process, as described by Marx, is visualized in figure 1. Introducing some important categories that Marx employs can summarize this account.
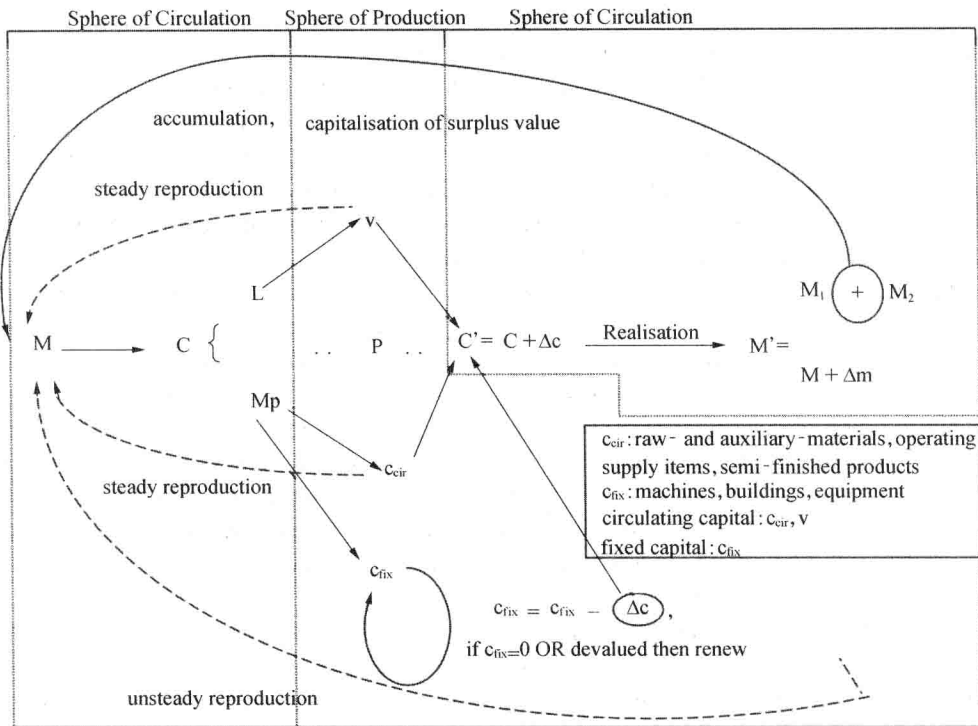

Figure 1   The accumulation/expanded reproduction of capital

Marx's theory is a labour theory of value, which draws its conclusion from the analysis of the total labour time that is needed for the production of goods. It is also a critique of value, which means that the forms that value takes in capitalism, and the practices and ideologies that are based on this form, are questioned. The value of a good is the total time that is needed for its production. The more value a good has, the longer its production takes. At the level of prices, this can be observed by the fact that labour-intensive goods are frequently more expensive than goods with low labour intensity. Marx argues that the cell form of capitalism is the commodity, goods that are exchanged in a certain quantitative relationship with money (x amount of commodity A = y units of money). He says that in societies based on the economic principle of exchange, goods have a use value and an exchange value. The use value is the qualitative aspect of a good; it is a utility that satisfies certain human needs. In exchange-based societies, humans can only get hold of such goods by exchanging other goods (such as money or their labour power) with the needed goods in certain quantitative relationships (x commodity

A = y commodity B). Concrete labour is a category that is used for describing the creation of the use value of a good by humans. Abstract labour is a category employed for signifying the creation of the value of a good, i. e. the objectified labour time needed for its production. Marx sees money as the general equivalent of exchange; it simplifies the exchange of commodities and is therefore a general commodity.

In the accumulation of capital, capitalists buy labour power and means of production (raw materials, technologies, etc.) in order to produce new commodities that are sold with the expectation of making money profit that is partly reinvested. Marx distinguishes two spheres of capital accumulation: the circulation sphere and the sphere of production. In the circulation sphere, capital transforms its value form: first money M is transformed into commodities (from the standpoint of the capitalist as buyer), and the capitalist purchases the commodities' labour power L and means of production Mp. M-C is based on the two purchases M-L and M-Mp. In capitalism, labour power is separated from the means of production, "the mass of the people, the workers, [..] come face to face with the non-workers, the former as non-owners, the latter as the owners, of these means of production" (Marx 1885, 116). This means that due to private property structures workers do not own the means of production, the products they produce, and the profit they generate; capitalists own these resources.

In the sphere of production, a new good is produced: the value of labour power and the value of the means of production are added to the product. Value takes on the form of productive capital P. The value form of labour is variable capital v (which can be observed as wages), and the value form of the means of production is constant capital c (which can be observed as the total price of the means of production/producer goods).

> That part of capital, therefore, which is turned into means of production, i. e. the raw material, the auxiliary material and the instruments of labour, does not undergo any quantitative alteration of value in the process of production. For this reason, I call it the constant part of capital, or more briefly, constant capital. On the other hand, that part of capital which is turned into labour-power does undergo an alteration of value in the process of production. It both reproduces the equivalent of its own value and produces an excess, a surplus-value, which may itself vary, and be more or less according to circumstances. This part of capital is continually being transformed from a constant into a variable magnitude. I therefore call it the variable part of capital, or more briefly, variable capital.
>
> (Marx 1867, 317).

Constant capital consists of two parts: circulating constant capital c_{cir} (the value of the utilized raw materials, auxiliary materials, operating supply items and semi-finished products) and fixed constant capital c_{fix} (the value of the utilized machines, buildings and equipment) (Marx 1885, Chapter 8). c_{cir} and v together form circulating capital; they transfuse their value totally to the product and must be constantly renewed. c_{fix} remains fixed in the production process for many turnovers of capital. The turnover time of capital is the sum of its circulation time and its production time (Marx 1885, 236). Circulation time is the time that capital takes to be transformed from its commodity form into the money form and later from its money form to its commodity form. Production time is the time that capital takes in the sphere of production.

Fixed constant capital decreases its value in each turnover of capital. Its value is decreased by the amount of Δc, which is a flexible value. Fixed constant capital like machinery does not create value and its value is never entirely transfused to capital at once. It is depreciated by wear and tear, non-usage, and moral depreciation (i. e. the emergence of new machinery with increased productivity).

A part of the capital value advanced is fixed in this form, which is determined by the function of

the means of labour in the process. As a means of labour functions and is used up, one part of its value passes over to the product, while another part remains fixed in the means of labour and hence in the production process. The value fixed in this way steadily declines, until the means of labour is worn out and has therefore distributed its value, in a longer or shorter period, over the volume of products that has emerged from a series of continually repeated labour processes.

<div align="right">(Marx 1885, 237f).</div>

In the sphere of production, capital stops its metamorphosis so that capital circulation comes to a halt. A new value V' of the commodity is produced, which contains the value of the necessary constant and variable capital and surplus value Δs of the surplus product. Surplus value is generated by unpaid labour. Capitalists do not pay for the production of surplus, therefore the production of surplus value can be considered as a process of exploitation. The value V' of the new commodity after production is $V' = c + v + s$. The commodity then leaves the sphere of production and again enters the circulation sphere, in which capital conducts its next metamorphosis: by being sold on the market, it is transformed from the commodity form back into the money form. Surplus value is thus realized in the form of money value. The initial money capital M now takes on the form $M' = M + \Delta m$, it has been increased by an increment Δm. Accumulation of capital means that the produced surplus value is (partly) reinvested/capitalized. The end point of one process M' becomes the starting point of a new accumulation process. One part of M', M_1, is reinvested. Accumulation means the aggregation of capital by investment and exploitation through the capital circuit M-C. . P. . C'-M', in which the end product M' becomes a new starting point M. The total process makes up the dynamic character of capital. Capital is money that is permanently increasing due to the exploitation of surplus value.

Commodities are sold at prices that are higher than the investment costs so that money profit is generated. For Marx, one decisive quality of capital accumulation is that profit is an emergent property of production that is produced by labour but owned by the capitalists. Without labour no profit could be made, but workers are forced to enter class relations and to produce profit in order to survive, which enables capital (and thereby the capitalists) to appropriate surplus. The notion of exploited surplus value is the main concept of Marx's theory, by which he intends to show that capitalism is a class society. "The theory of surplus value is in consequence immediately the theory of exploitation" (Negri 1991, 74) and, one can add, the theory of class and, as a consequence, the political demand for a classless society.

Capital is not money, but money that is increased through accumulation, "money which begets money" (Marx 1867, 256). Marx argues that the value of labour power is the average amount of time that is needed for the production of goods that are necessary for survival (necessary labour time), which in capitalism is paid for by workers with their wages. Surplus labour time is all labour time that exceeds necessary labour time, remains unpaid, is appropriated for free by capitalists, and transformed into money profit.

Capital Accumulation, Surveillance, and Prosumption on Web 2.0

In this section, I will argue that the combination of surveillance and prosumption is at the heart of capital accumulation on web 2.0.

Following Ogura's (2006) and Gandy's (1993) argument that a common characteristic of surveillance is the management of population based on capitalism and/or the nation state, we can distinguish between economic and political surveillance as the two major forms of surveillance. Habermas (1981) has stressed that the most powerful structures in modern society are money and power, which relate to the economic and political realms. Individuals in everyday life may have the

ambition to transform society, but in order to bring about change they have to overcome isolation and mobilize resources. Surveillance by nation states and corporations aims at controlling the behaviour of individuals and groups, i. e. the latter are forced to behave or not behave in certain ways because they know that their appearance, movements, location, or ideas are or could be watched by surveillance systems (Fuchs 2008, 267 - 277). In the case of political electronic surveillance, individuals are threatened by the potential exercise of organized violence (through the law) if they are seen by political actors, such as secret services or the police, to behave in certain ways that are undesired. In the case of economic electronic surveillance, individuals are threatened by the violence of the market that wants to force them to buy or produce certain commodities and help reproduce capitalist relations — this is done by gathering and using information on their economic behaviour with the help of electronic systems. In such forms of surveillance violence and heteronomy are the ultima ratio.

My approach is based on the critique of the political economy of media and information. Felicity Brown (2006) calls for a combination of the critical political economy of communication and surveillance studies. "The critical political economy of communication has a particularly important role in analyzing the mutually productive relationship between surveillance practices and the Internet. In particular, the intense monitoring of cyberspace by private corporations seeking information on consumer behaviour is worthy of critique" (Brown 2006, 10).

Marx highlights exploitation as the fundamental aspect of class in another passage where he says that "the driving motive and determining purpose of capitalist production" is "the greatest possible exploitation of labour-power by the capitalist" (Marx 1867, 449). He says that the proletariat is "a machine for the production of surplus-value", and capitalists are "a machine for the transformation of this surplus-value into surplus capital" (Marx 1867, 742). Whereas Marx in his time had to limit the notion of the proletariat to wage labour, it is today possible to conceive the proletariat in a much broader sense as all those who directly or indirectly produce surplus value and are thereby exploited by capital. This includes besides wage labour also houseworkers, the unemployed, the poor, migrants, retirees, students, precarious workers — and also the users of corporate web 2.0 platforms and other Internet sites and applications. Hardt and Negri (2004) use the term multitude for this multidimensional proletariat of the 21st century.

Axel Bruns sees the rise of produsage — the "hybrid user/producer role which inextricably interweaves both forms of participation" (Bruns 2008, 21) — as the central characteristic of web 2.0. Alvin Toffler (1980) had introduced the notion of the prosumer in the early 1980s, which means the "progressive blurring of the line that separates producer from consumer" (Toffler 1980, 267). Toffler describes the age of prosumption as the arrival of a new form of economic and political democracy, self-determined work, labour autonomy, local production, and autonomous self-production. But he overlooks that prosumption is used for outsourcing work to users and consumers, who work without payment. Thereby corporations reduce their investment costs and labour costs, jobs are destroyed, and consumers who work for free are extremely exploited. They produce surplus value that is appropriated and turned into profit by corporations without paying wages. Notwithstanding Toffler's uncritical optimism, his notion of the "prosumer" describes important changes of media structures and practices and can therefore also be adopted for critical studies.

For Marx, the profit rate is the relation of profit to investment costs: $p = s/(c + v)$ = surplus value/(constant capital (= fixed costs) + variable capital (= wages)). If Internet users become productive web 2.0 prosumers then, in terms of Marxian class theory, this means that they become productive labourers who produce surplus value and are exploited by capital because for Marx productive labour generates surplus. Therefore, in cases such as Google, YouTube, MySpace, or Facebook, exploitation of surplus value is not merely limited those who are employed by these

corporations for programming, updating, and maintaining the soft- and hardware, performing marketing activities, and so on, but also extends to the users, and the prosumers that engage in the production of user-generated content. New media corporations do not (or hardly) pay the users for the production of content. One accumulation strategy is to give them free access to services and platforms, let them produce content, and to accumulate a large number of prosumers that are sold as a commodity to third-party advertisers. Not a product is sold to the users, but the users are sold as a commodity to advertisers. The more users a platform has, the higher the advertising rates can be set. The productive labour time that is exploited by capital involves, on the one hand, the labour time of the paid employees and, on the other hand, all of the time that is spent online by the users. For the first type of knowledge labour, new media corporations pay salaries. The second type of knowledge is produced completely for free. There are neither variable nor constant investment costs. The formula for the profit rate needs to be transformed for this accumulation strategy:

$p = s/(c + v1 + v2)$, s ... surplus value, c ... constant capital, v1 ... wages paid to fixed employees, v2 ... wages paid to users

The typical situation is that $v2 \Rightarrow 0$ and that v2 substitutes v1. If the production of content and the time spent online were carried out by paid employees, the variable costs would rise and profits would therefore decrease. This shows that prosumers in a capitalist society can be interpreted as the outsourcing of productive labour to users who work completely for free and help maximizing the rate of exploitation ($e = s/v$, = surplus value/variable capital) so that profits can be raised and new media capital may be accumulated. Again, this situation is one of infinite over-exploitation. Capitalist prosumption is an extreme form of exploitation, in which the prosumers work completely for free.

That surplus value generating labour is an emergent property of capitalist production means that production and accumulation will break down if this labour is withdrawn. It is an essential part of the capitalist production process. That prosumers conduct surplus-generating labour can also be seen by imagining what would happen if they would stop using platforms like YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook: the number of users would drop, advertisers would stop investments because no objects for their advertising messages and therefore no potential customers for their products could be found, the profits of the new media corporations would drop, and they would go bankrupt. If such activities were carried out on a large scale, a new economic crisis would arise. This thought experiment shows that users are essential for generating profit in the new media economy. Furthermore they produce and co-produce parts of the products, and therefore parts of the use value, exchange value, and surplus value that are objectified in these products.

Dallas Smythe (1981/2006) suggests that, in the case of media advertisement models, the audience is sold as a commodity to advertisers: "Because audience power is produced, sold, purchased and consumed, it commands a price and is a commodity. [...] You audience members contribute your unpaid work time and in exchange you receive the program material and the explicit advertisements" (Smythe 1981/2006, 233, 238).

With the rise of user-generated content, free access social networking platforms, and other free access platforms that yield profit by online advertisement — a development subsumed under categories such as web 2.0, social software, and social networking sites — the web seems to come close to accumulation strategies employed by the capital on traditional mass media like TV or radio. The users who google data, upload or watch videos on YouTube, upload or browse personal images on Flickr, or accumulate friends with whom they exchange content or communicate online via social networking platforms like MySpace or Facebook, constitute an audience commodity that is sold to advertisers. The difference between the audience commodity on traditional mass media and on the Internet is that in the latter case the users are also content producers; the users engage in permanent creative activity,

communication, community building, and content-production. That users are more active on the Internet than in the reception of TV or radio content is due to the decentralized structure of the Internet, which allows many-to-many communication. Due to the permanent activity of the recipients and their status as prosumers, we can say that, in the case of the Internet, the audience commodity is a prosumer commodity.

Mark Andrejevic has coined the notion of the digital enclosure (Andrejevic 2007), which means that interactive technologies generate "feedback about the transactions themselves" and that this feedback "becomes the property of private companies" (Andrejevic 2007, 3). Based on Marx and Smythe, we can argue that the contemporary Internet is a specific form of the digital enclosure that is based on the exploitation of prosumption; it is the realization of digital exploitation. Prosumers are digitally enclosed and digitally exploited.

The discussions about exploitation on the Internet are also connected to Italian autonomist Marxist discussions about immaterial labour and the commons. Maurizio Lazzarato introduced the term immaterial labour, by which he means "labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato 1996, 133). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have popularized the term and define immaterial labour as labour "that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 108). For Hardt and Negri, it is the "key characteristic of immaterial labor to produce communication, social relations, and cooperation" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 113). Commonly produced knowledge would be exploited by capital; "The common [...] has become the locus of surplus value. Exploitation is the private appropriation of part or all of the value that has been produced as common" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 114). The Internet is a common information infrastructure. In its essence, it is part of the commons because all humans need to communicate in order to exist and reproduce themselves. But the actual reality of the Internet is that large parts of it are controlled by corporations and "immaterial" online labour is exploited and turned into surplus value in the form of the advertising-based Internet prosumer commodity. An alternative is what Hardt and Negri have termed the commonwealth, a society shaped by common ownership and co-operative production. The notions of commonwealth is also relevant for the Internet; "Freedom of the common is essential for production. As Internet and software practitioners and scholars often point out, access to the common in the network environment — common knowledges, common codes, common communication — is essential for creativity and growth" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 282). It is somewhat problematic to speak of "immaterial labour" because this implies that there are two substances of the world — matter and mind — which cannot explain how the world is adequately grounded, and results in an idealistic and therefore in the end somewhat religious worldview (for a full critique see Fuchs and Zimmermann 2009). It might therefore be better to characterize online labour as (predominantly) knowledge labour. Nonetheless the core of Hardt's and Negri's argument, that social, communicative, and co-operative labour is exploited and transformed into surplus value in exploitation processes, is correct.

Tiziana Terranova (2004), using the autonomist concept of immaterial labour, describes the rise of a class that works for free in the "social fabric" of the internet; "Simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited, free labour on the Net includes the activity of building Web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists, and building virtual spaces" (Terranova 2004, 74). Such activities are an expression of the collective productive capacities of immaterial labour. The concept of free labour has gained particular importance with the rise of web 2.0 in which capital is accumulated by providing free access. Accumulation here is dependent on the number of users and the content they provide. They are not paid for the content, but the more content and the more users join the more profit can be made by advertisements. Hence the users are

exploited — they produce digital content for free in non-wage labour relationships.

Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus (2007) have applied the concept of immaterial labour to web 2.0 activities in social networking platforms such as MySpace. They speak of immaterial labour 2.0, which would be a "more accelerated, intensified, and indeed inscrutable variant" (Coté and Pybus 2007, 89) of immaterial labour. Immaterial labour 2.0 would reflect a subjective turn of labour and be a specific form of the immaterial labour Hardt, Negri and Lazzarato speak of because it would be about "the active and ongoing construction of virtual subjectivities" (Coté and Pybus 2007, 90) and the production of surplus value by activities focuses on affects online and user-generated content. The approach by Coté and Pybus is important because it operates on a much more concrete level (web 2.0) than the one used by Hardt and Negri, but it shares with the latter the problematic implications from using the term "immaterial". The labour that characterizes web 2.0 systems is labour that is oriented on the production of affects, fantasy (cognitive labour) and social relations (communicative, co-operative labour) — it is like all labour material because it is activity that changes the state of real world systems. The difference between it and manual labour is that it doesn't primarily change the physical conditions of things, but instead the emotional and communicative aspects of human relations. It is also material in the sense that in its current forms it is ultimately to a certain extent oriented on the economy, subsumed under capital, and oriented towards producing economic profit. A better term than immaterial labour 2.0 hence is cognitive, communicative, and co-operative labour — informational labour (in contrast to manual labour, see Fuchs 2008 for this distinction).

I agree with Matteo Pasquinelli (2009, 2010) that an analysis and critique of the political economy of Google and other web 2.0 platforms is needed. I do now, however, agree with his form of analyzing the political economy of web 2.0 by employing the Marxian concept of rent. Pasquinelli's ideas are based on the autonomist approach. He argues that Google creates and accumulates value by its page rank algorithm and he says that Google's profit is a form of cognitive rent. Marx (1867) showed that technology never creates value, but is only a tool that is used by living human labour for creating labour. Therefore Pasquinelli advances a technological-deterministic assumption that the page rank algorithm creates value. Marx (1894) argued that rent is exchanged for land.

Marx (1894, Chapter 48) formulated the trinity formula that expresses the three aspects of the value of a commodity: profit (including interest), rent, wages. Profit is attached to capital, rent to land, and wage labour to labour. The three kinds of revenue are connected to the selling of labour power, land, and goods. Rent is obtained by lending land or real estates. It is not the direct result of surplus value production and human labour. No new product is created in the renting process. Rent indirectly stems from surplus value because capitalists take part of the surplus in order to rent houses, but it is created a a secondary process, in which surplus value is used for buying real estates. "First we have the use-value land, which has no value, and the exchange-value rent" (Marx 1894, 956). "Value is labour. So surplus-value cannot be earth" (Marx 1894, 954). Therefore the use of the category of rent to describe Internet practices and their outcomes means to assume that activities on the corporate Internet, such as surfing on Google or creating content on YouTube or Facebook, are not exploitative. The category of cognitive rent is not useful for a critical political economy of the Internet and web 2.0, the notion of the Internet prosumer commodity that is created by exploited knowledge labour is more feasible.

Søren Mørk Petersen (2008) analyzes how exploitation works on web 2.0. "The ease of copying and relocating content online as well as its network structure [...] makes it easy for capitalism to copy and reuse content produced by users into the sphere of a corporate site (reterritorialization)". As a result, "the architecture of participation turns into an architecture of exploitation and enclosure, transforming users into commodities that can be sold on the market". I agree with Peterson that there

is exploitation online, but his paper is missing a clearer outline of the role of advertising as well as a grounding of the analysis in Marxian notions such as class, surplus value, or value.

Autonomist Marxism gives important impulses for theorizing online labour by providing categories such as the commons and pointing out the importance of the categories of exploitation and information labour. Many of the approaches are however too superficial and eclectic and not adequately grounded in the theory and categories of Marxian political economy and class theory (Fuchs 2010a). They are therefore not able to give a full picture of the role of information labour and the Internet in capitalism or end up in one-sided arguments that overestimate the resistance capacities and communist potentials of informational labour and do not see how ideologies can forestall societal change and the realization of potentials and how the Internet is used for reproducing domination (cf. Fuchs and Zimmermann 2009).

The category of the prosumer commodity does not signify a democratization of the media towards a participatory or democratic system but rather the total commodification of human creativity. During much of the time that users spend online, they produce profit for large corporations like Google, News Corp. (which owns MySpace), or Yahoo! (which owns Flickr). Advertisements on the Internet are frequently personalized; this is made possible by surveilling, storing, and assessing user activities with the help of computers and databases. This is another difference from TV and radio, which provide less individualized content and advertisements due to their more centralized structure. But one can also observe a certain shift in the area of traditional mass media, as in the cases of pay per view, tele-votes, talkshows, and call-in TV and radio shows. In the case of the Internet, the commodification of audience participation is easier to achieve than with other mass media.
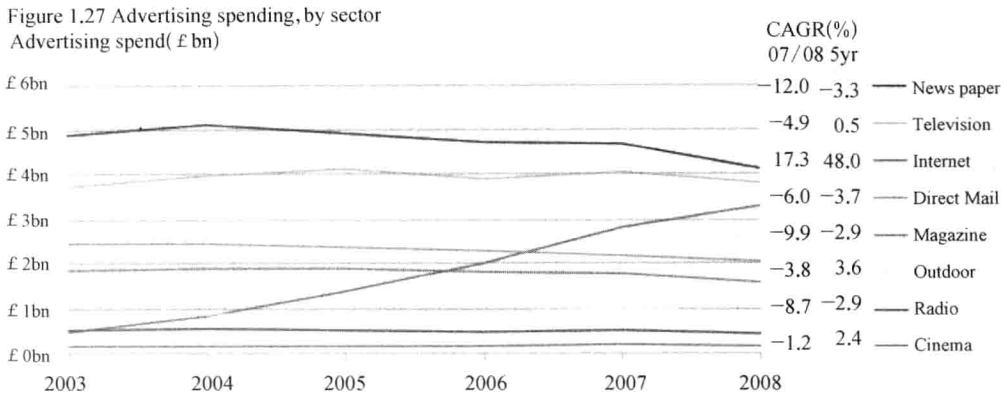
Fignre 1.27 Advertising spending, by sector

The importance of the prosumer commodity and extractive power as principles of contemporary web 2.0 is evidenced by the continuing absolute and relative rise of Internet advertising profits (see figures 2 and 3). In 2008, Internet advertising was the third-largest advertising market in the USA and the UK. Internet advertising profits were only exceeded in these two countries by advertising in newspapers and on TV (IAB Internet Advertising Revenue Report 2008: 14, Ofcom Communications Market Report 2009: 36). Surveillance in corporate web 2.0 is surveillance of prosumers who dynamically and permanently create and share user-generated content, browse profiles and data, interact with others, join and build communities, and co-create information. The corporate web platform operators and their third party advertising clients continuously monitor and record personal
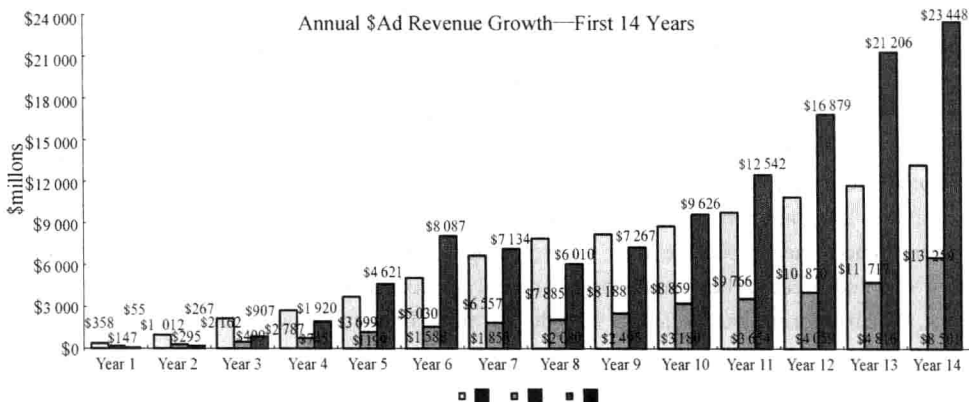
Sources IAB Internet Ad Revenue Report; PricewatethouseCoopers LLP, Universal McCann

Figure 2 The growth of Internet advertising profits in the USA (IAB Internet Advertising Revenue Report 2008)

Figure 1.27 Advertising spending, by sector
Advertising spend(£ bn)

CAGR(%)
07/08 5yr

£ 6bn   −12.0 −3.3 ━━━ News paper

£ 5bn   −4.9 0.5 ──── Television

£ 4bn   17.3 48.0 ━━━ Internet

                                                          −6.0 −3.7 ──── Direct Mail
£ 3bn
                                                          −9.9 −2.9 ━━━ Magazine
£ 2bn
                                                          −3.8 3.6   Outdoor
£ 1bn
                                                          −8.7 −2.9 ━━━ Radio

£ 0bn   −1.2 2.4 ──── Cinema

     2003   2004   2005   2006   2007   2008

Source   Advertising Association statistics published by www. WARC. com

**Figure 3   The growth of Internet advertising profits in the UK (Ofcom Communications
Market Report 2009)**

data and online activities, they store, merge, and analyze collected data. This allows them to create detailed user profiles and know about the personal interests and online behaviours of the users. Web platform operators sell the Internet prosumer as a commodity to advertising clients. Money is exchanged for access to user data that allows economic surveillance of the users. The exchange value of the Internet prosumer commodity is the money value that the operators obtain from their clients, its use value is the multitude of personal data and usage behaviour that is dominated by the commodity and exchange value form. The surveillance of the prosumers' permanently produced use values, i. e. personal data and interactions, by corporations allows targeted advertising that aims at luring the prosumers into consumption and at manipulating their desires and needs in the interest of corporations and the commodities they offer. Internet prosumers are first commodified by corporate platform operators who sell them to advertising clients and this results secondly in an intensified exposure to commodity logic. They are double objects of commodification: they are commodities themselves, and through this commodification their consciousness becomes permanently exposed to commodity logic while they are online in the form of advertisements. Most online time is advertising time. Two examples are Google and Facebook, which are in many countries the most accessed web platforms. Google makes use of users' search histories and many other personal data obtained from Google applications individuals use in order to present tailored advertisements to them. So the search results on Google will not only be ranked information pages, but pages framed and presented by commercial advertising related to the same topic. On Facebook, personal data, interests, interactions with others, information behaviour, and also the interaction with other websites is used for targeted advertising. So while you are using Facebook, it is not just you interacting with others and browsing profiles — all these activities are framed by advertisements presented to you. Such advertisements do not necessarily present consumers' needs because they are calculated, whereas needs are much more complex and spontaneous, and because they are distorted and only reflect marketing decisions and economic power relations. Much information by actors who do not have financial power, but is related to the same topic, is left out.

The Marxian cycle of capital accumulation allows us to distinguish between workplace surveillance, workforce surveillance, and consumer surveillance. On web 2. 0, producers are consumers and consumers producers of information. Therefore, producer surveillance and consumer surveillance merge into web 2. 0 prosumer surveillance. Web 2. 0 surveillance of workplace and

workforce (producer surveillance) is at the same time consumer surveillance and vice versa.

Dataveillance is the "systematic monitoring of people's actions or communications through the application of information technology" (Clarke 1988, 500). Clarke (1994) distinguishes between personal dataveillance that monitors the actions of one or more persons and mass dataveillance, where a group or large population is monitored in order to detect individuals of interest. In web 2.0, the boundaries between these two forms of surveillance become blurred: targeted advertising concerns the large mass of users of commercial web 2.0 platforms because they, by agreeing to the terms of use, agree in most cases to the surveillance of their personal data and their usage behaviour, but this surveillance is fine-tuned in order to detect and store the individual differences and to target each user with a separate mass of advertisings. Web 2.0 surveillance is therefore a form of mass personal dataveillance.

Manuel Castells (2009) characterizes web 2.0 communication as mass self-communication. Web 2.0 "is mass communication because it can potentially reach a global audience, as in the posting of a video on YouTube, a blog with RSS links to a number of web sources, or a message to a massive e-mail list. At the same time, it is self-communication because the production of the message is self-generated, the definition of the potential receiver(s) is self-directed, and the retrieval of specific messages or content from the World Wide Web and electronic networks is self-selected" (Castells 2009, 55). Web 2.0 surveillance is directed at large user groups who help to hegemonically produce and reproduce surveillance by providing user-generated (self-produced) content. We can therefore characterize web 2.0 surveillance as mass self-surveillance.

Privacy statements are the legal mechanisms that guarantee that personalized advertising can be operated on web platforms. Users have hardly any choice not to agree; if they want to interact with others and make use of the technical advantages web 2.0 poses, they have to agree to these terms. Privacy statements are totalitarian mechanisms that are necessarily not democratically controlled by the users, but under the control of corporations. On the Internet, alternatives to commercial platforms are frequently not or hardly available because capital-rich actors can more easily create online platforms than those without, or with only little, capital, and platforms by well-known companies are also rich in symbolic capital so more users are attracted to them. Users can opt not to use a certain platform because they do not like its privacy policy, but this might result in communicative disadvantages, the loss of important private or professional contacts and opportunities, and therefore a deepening of the divide between the online-winners and the offline-losers.

So, for example, Facebook automatically uses targeted advertising. There is no way to opt out.

> Facebook may use information in your profile without identifying you as an individual to third parties. We do this for purposes such as aggregating how many people in a network like a band or movie and personalizing advertisements and promotions so that we can provide you Facebook. We believe this benefits you. You can know more about the world around you and, where there are advertisements, they're more likely to be interesting to you.
> (Facebook Privacy Policy, accessed on November 2, 2008).

> We allow advertisers to select characteristics of users they want to show their advertisements to and we use the information we have collected to serve those advertisements. [...] We may receive information about whether or not you've seen or interacted with certain ads on other sites in order to measure the effectiveness of those ads. [...] Sometimes the advertisers who present ads on Facebook use technological methods to measure the effectiveness of their ads and to personalize advertising content.
> (Facebook Privacy Policy, December 9, 2009).

MySpace also allows targeted personalized advertising that is automatically activated. Users can opt out, but doing so is very difficult. There is no menu setting in the privacy options that allows doing so, only a link in the privacy policy that users have to follow in order to opt out. MySpace states that

> MySpace may use cookies and similar tools to customize the content and advertising you receive based on the Profile Information you have provided. Profile Information you provide in structured profile fields or questions (multiple choice questions like "Marital Status," "Education" and "Children") ("Structured Profile Information"), information you add to open-ended profile fields and questions (essay questions like "About Me," "Interests" and "Movies") ("Non-Structured Profile Information") and other non-PII about you may also be used to customize the online ads you encounter to those we believe are aligned with your interests.
>
> （MySpace Privacy Policy, accessed on November 3, 2008）.

Fernback and Papacharissi (2007, 716) conducted a discourse analysis of four web platform privacy statements and argue that "privacy statements are more often legal safeguards for companies rather than protectors of customer interests". "Each privacy statement initially assures consumers of a commitment to privacy and subsequently dismantles any true protection of consumer data. [...] these privacy statements pose virtually no restriction on businesses to profit excessively from the collection and use of consumer information" (Fernback and Papacharissi 2007, 730). Privacy statements of web site providers that process huge amounts of personal data are a typical expression of low state-controlled data protection standards ("self-regulation") that gives the freedom to companies to specify themselves how they want to treat personal data.

Oscar Gandy stated that "[T]he panoptic sort is a difference machine that sorts individuals into categories and classes on the basis of routine measurements. It is a discriminatory technology that allocates options and opportunities on the basis of those measures and the administrative models that they inform" (Gandy 1993, 15). It is a system of power and disciplinary surveillance that identifies, classifies, and assesses (Gandy 1993, 15). Prosumer commodification on web 2.0 is a form of panoptic sorting (Gandy 1993): it identifies the interests of users by closely surveilling their personal data and usage behaviour, it classifies them into consumer groups, and assesses their interests in comparison to other consumers and in comparison to available advertising that are then targeted at the users.

Foucault characterized surveillance in the following way: "He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault 1977, 200). With the rise of "web 2.0", the Internet has become a universal communication system, which is shaped by privileged data control by corporations that own most of the communication-enabling web platforms and by the state that can gain access to personal data by law. On the Internet, the separation between "objects of information" and "subjects in communication" that Foucault (1977, 200) described for historical forms of surveillance no longer exists. By being subjects of communication on the Internet, users make available personal data to others and continuously communicate over the Internet. These communications are mainly mediated by corporate-owned platforms, therefore the subjects of communication become objects of information for corporations and the state in surveillance processes. Foucault argues that power relations are different from relationships of communication, although they are frequently connected (Foucault 1994, 337). "Power relations are exercised, to an exceedingly important extent, through the production and exchange of signs", "relationships of communication [...] by modifying the field of information between partners, produce effects of power" (Foucault 1994, 338). In web 2.0, corporate and state power is exercised through the gathering, combination, and assessment of personal data that users communicate over the web to others, and the global communication of millions within a heteronomous society produces the interest of certain actors to

exert control over these communications. In web 2.0, power relations and relationships of communication are interlinked. The users are producers of information (produsers, prosumers), but this creative communicative activity enables the controllers of disciplinary power to closely gain insights into the lives, secrets, and consumption preferences of the users.

Online labour is frequently connected to ideas like entertainment, play, and fun — traditionally the realm of leisure beyond wage labour. Contemporary capitalism and contemporary web 2.0 have brought about a blurring of the boundaries between production and consumption and therefore also between leisure time and work time. No clear separation is possible. Leisure, fun, play, and entertainment have become subsumed under capital — there is the exploitation and expropriation of the online commons of communication. Labour and play intersect, they create new forms of exploitation.

The main argument of this paper has been that web 2.0 is largely a commercial, profit-oriented machine that exploits users by commodifying their personal data and usage behaviour (web 2.0 prosumer commodity) and subjects these data to economic surveillance so that capital is accumulated with the help of targeted personalized advertising.

Postmodern surveillance scholars have in my view partly incorrectly interpreted Thomas Mathiesen's (1997, 2004) notion of the synopticon. Haggerty and Ericson interpret Mathiesen's notion of the synopticon as meaning "'bottom-up' forms of observation" (Haggerty and Ericson 2000/2007, 113). Hier (2003/2007, 118) argues that the surveillant assemblage brings about "a partial democratization of surveillance hierarchies". Mathiesen did not suggest that the synopticon brings about democratic surveillance, but that the panopticon and the synopticon are interlinked — "feed on each other" (Mathiesen 1997, 231) — and are structures of domination. For Mathiesen, the synopticon of the mass media "first of all directs and controls or disciplines our consciousness" (Mathiesen 1997, 230). He refers in this context to the critical theorists Enzensberger, Adorno, and Horkheimer and their culture industry theory. Mathiesen says that in the synopticon there is "an extensive system enabling the many to see and contemplate the few", whereas in the panopticon the few "see and supervise the many" (Mathiesen 1997, 219). There is a difference between seeing and supervizing, in Mathiesen's concept the many do not have the power to supervise the few, but the few have the power to supervise the many. The synopticon is a democratic system. Mathiesen does not see an optimistic alternative to Foucault's analysis in existence, but rather "things are much worse than Foucault imagined" (Mathiesen 1997, 231).

My analysis confirms the views of Thomas Mathiesen, who argues that the Internet is an undemocratic synopticon, in which the many observe the few, and that this does not bring about a "democratic system where everyone can participate in interaction" (Mathiesen 2004, 100). Mathieson explains:

> The Internet becomes to a considerable extent a part of the synoptical system, in as much as it is, to a substantial degree, dominated by powerful economic agents — from newspapers and television agencies to owners having economic capital to invest in sales of lucrative merchandise, including pornography. To the same degree, the structure becomes characterised by a one-way flow, from the relatively few in control of economic capital, symbolic capital and technical know-how, to the many who are entertained or who buy the products and are thereby silenced.
>
> (Mathiesen 2004, 100).

He adds, "[A] basic feature of the Internet is, in other words, that it constitutes an interactive one-way medium, not an interactive two-way or multi-way medium. The agenda is set by those with economic, symbolic or technical capital" (Mathiesen 2004, 100f). The Internet is therefore in its corporate form for Mathiesen a "system of silencing".

Oscar Gandy argues that an alternative to opt-out solutions of targeted advertising are opt-in solutions that are based on the informed consent of consumers. When individuals

> wish information or an information-based service, they will seek it out. It is not unreasonable to assume that individuals would be the best judge of when they are the most interested and therefore most receptive to information of a particular kind. Others with information to provide ought to assume that, unless requested, no information is desired. This would be the positive option. Through a variety of means, individuals would provide a positive indication that yes, I want to learn, hear, see more about this subject at this time. Individuals should be free to choose when they are ready to enter the market for information.
>
> (Gandy 1993, 220).

He goes on to argues that "[T]he value in the positive option is its preservation of the individual's right to choose" (Gandy 1993, 221). Culnan and Bies also argue that opt-in is a form of procedural justice and a fair information practice. "Fair information practices are procedures that provide individuals with control over the disclosure and subsequent use of their personal information and govern the interpersonal treatment that consumers receive" (Culnan and Bies 2003, 330). Bellman et al. (2004) conducted a survey (N = 534 responses from 38 countries) that showed that the highest average agreement (6.30, 7 point Likert scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) was achieved for the statement "web sites should not use personal information for any purpose unless it has been authorized by the individuals who provide the information". 79% of US Internet users preferred opt-in solutions in 2000 (Pew Internet & American Life Project Poll, May 2000). 85% said in 2006 that it is very important that they can control who has access to their personal information (Pew Internet & American Life Project Poll, December 2006). These results show that users consider opt-in strongly desirable and opt-out undesirable. Within capitalism, forcing corporations by state laws to implement opt-in mechanisms is certainly desirable, but at the same time it is likely that corporations will not consent to such policies because opt-in is likely to reduce the actual amount of surveilled and commodified user data significantly, which results in a drop of advertising profits. "Historically, members of information intensive industries have tended to be reactive, rather than pro-active, with regard to privacy policy" (Gandy 2003/2007, 296). Therefore capitalist interests are likely to naturally oppose the consumer interest of opt-in. Empirical studies confirm that given self-regulation, only a small portion of companies implements privacy policies that adhere to fair information practices (Federal Trade Commission 2000, Ryker et al. 2002). "Businesses have a great stake in access to individuals' personal information and tend to favor policies that allow self-regulation of privacy practices in engaging with customers" (Starke-Meyerring and Gurak 2007, 301).

Conclusion

In order to circumvent the large-scale surveillance of consumers, producers, and consumer-producers, movements and protests against economic surveillance are necessary. Kojin Karatani (2005) argues that consumption is the only space in capitalism where workers become subjects that can exert pressure by consumption boycotts on capital. I do not think that this is correct because strikes also show the subject position of workers that enables them to boycott production, to cause financial harm to capital, and to exert pressure in order to voice political demands. However, Karatani in my opinion correctly argues that the role of the consumer has been underestimated in Marxist theory and practice. The fact that in the contemporary media landscape media consumers become media producers who work and create surplus value shows the importance of the role of consumers in contemporary capitalism and of "the transcritical moment where workers and consumers intersect" (Karatani 2005,

21). For political strategies this brings up the actuality of an associationist movement that is "a transnational association of consumers/workers" (Karatani 2005, 295) that engages in "the class struggle against capitalism" of "workers qua consumers or consumers qua workers" (Karatani 2005, 294).

I recommend that critical citizens, critical citizens' initiatives, consumer groups, social movement groups, critical scholars, unions, data protection specialists/groups, consumer protection specialists/groups, critical politicians, and critical political parties observe closely the relationship of surveillance and corporations and document instances where corporations and politicians take measures that threaten privacy or increase the surveillance of citizens. Such documentation is most effective if it is easily accessible to the public. The Internet provides means for documenting such behaviour. It can help to watch the watchers and to raise public awareness. In recent years, corporate watch organizations that run online watch platforms have emerged. [1]

There are certainly limits of watchdog organizations and initiatives. They are generally civil society projects because it is unlikely that big corporations or governments support initiatives that tend to criticize corporations and governments with big amounts of money. Therefore such projects are frequently based on precarious, self-exploitative labour, and are confronted with a lack of resources such as money, activists, time, infrastructure, influence, and so forth. If political or economic institutions offer support, then there is a danger that they try to influence the activities of such projects, which can severely damage or limit the autonomy and critical facility of such projects. They seem to be trapped in an antagonism between resource precariousness and loss of autonomy that is caused by the fact that the control of resources is vital for having political influence in contemporary society and that resources in this very society are unequally distributed so that corporations and established political actors have much more power and influence than other actors. Given this situation, it would be a mistake not to try to organize citizens' initiatives, but one should bear in mind that due to the stratified character of capitalism it is more likely that such initiatives to organize will fail and remain unimportant than be successful in achieving their goals.

There are no easy solutions to the problem of civil rights limitations due to electronic surveillance. Opting out of existing advertising options is not a solution to the problem of economic and political surveillance. Even if users do opt out, media corporations will continue to collect and assess certain data on them, to sell the users as audience commodity to advertising clients, and to give personal data to the police. To try to advance critical awareness and to surveil corporate and political surveillers are important political moves for guaranteeing civil rights, but they will ultimately fail if they do not recognize that electronic surveillance is not a technological issue that can be solved by technological means or by different individual behaviours, but only by bringing about changes of society. Therefore the topic of electronic surveillance should be situated in the context of larger societal problems in public discourse.

Another recommendation is to create non-commercial, non-profit social networking platforms on the Internet. It is not impossible to create successful non-profit Internet platforms, as the example of

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[1] Examples for corporate watch organizations are: CorpWatch Reporting (http://www. corpwatch. org), Transnationale Ethical Rating (http://www. transnationale. org), The Corporate Watch Project (http://www. corporatewatch. org), Multinational Monitor (http://www. multinationalmonitor. org), crocodyl: Collaborative research on corporations (http://www. crocodyl. org), Endgame Database of Corporate Fines (http://www. endgame. org/corpfines. html), Corporate Crime Reporter (http://www. corporatecrimereporter. com), Corporate Europe Observatory (http://www. corporateeurope. org), Corporate Critic Database (http://www. corporatecritic. org).

Wikipedia, which is advertising-free, has free access, and is financed by donations, shows. But the difficulty is that social networking platforms have to store large amount of data, especially profile data that contain images, videos, etc., which requires tremendous server capacities. It is certainly easier and probably more efficient to organize such huge data storage endeavours in the form of profit-oriented businesses. But this orientation at the same time brings about the risk of extended and intensified electronic surveillance. I am not saying that non-commercial, non-profit platforms are devoid of this risk, but that there is a reduced likelihood that electronic surveillance for economic reasons will take place on such platforms and an increased likelihood that such platforms will try to protect its users from state surveillance. Within capitalism, it is certainly very difficult to try to organize such non-profit online alternatives because everything that is non-profit and non-commercial tends to be confronted by shortages of resources, which makes sustainable performance difficult. Trying to organize alternatives might be precarious and difficult, and is confronted with a high probability of potential failure. But the same time it might be the only constructive alternative to corporate control and corporate concentration processes in the Internet economy that tend to reinforce processes of economic and political electronic surveillance.

An example for an alternative social networking site is kaioo. It is operated by the Open Networx Initiative, which is a public trust created in 2007. The users of kaioo can discuss and edit the terms of use and privacy terms in a wiki. Kaioo is advertising-free and non-profit. Another example is the social networking project Diaspora. Its development was enabled by donations and spurred by the criticism of the corporate strategies of Facebook. The project's self-understanding is that it is a "privacy aware, personally controlled, do-it-all, open source social network" (Diaspora 2010).

An alternative Internet and alternative Internet platforms could provide the foundation for forms of online communication that are not based on economic surveillance. Slavoj Žižek argues in this context that "the digitalization of our daily lives, in effect, makes possible a Big Brother control in comparison with which the old Communist secret police supervision cannot but look like primitive child's play. Here, therefore, more than ever, one should insist that the proper answer to this threat is not retreat into islands of privacy, but an ever stronger socialization of cyberspace" (Žižek 2001, 256).

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33. Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life[①]

danah boyd

> If you're not on MySpace, you don't exist — Skyler, 18, to her mom[②]

> I'm in the 7th grade. I'm 13. I'm not a cheerleader. I'm not the president of the student body. Or captain of the debate team. I'm not the prettiest girl in my class. I'm not the most popular girl in my class. I'm just a kid. I'm a little shy. And it's really hard in this school to impress people enough to be your friend if you're not any of those things. But I go on these really great vacations with my parents between Christmas and New Year's every year. And I take pictures of places we go. And I write about those places. And I post this on my Xanga. Because I think if kids in school read what I have to say and how I say it, they'll want to be my friend. — Vivien, 13, to Parry Aftab during a "Teen Angels" meeting[③]

During 2005, online social network sites like MySpace and Facebook became common destinations for young people in the United States. Throughout the country, young people were logging in, creating elaborate profiles, publicly articulating their relationships with other participants, and writing extensive comments back and forth. By early 2006, many considered participation on the key social network site, MySpace, essential to being seen as *cool* at school. While not all teens are members of social network sites, these sites developed significant cultural resonance amongst American teens in a short period of time. Although the luster has since faded and teens are not nearly as infatuated with these sites as they once were, they continue to be an important part of teen social life.

The rapid adoption of social network sites by teenagers in the United States and in many other countries around the world raises some important questions. Why do teenagers flock to these sites? What are they expressing on them? How do these sites fit into their lives? What are they learning from their participation? Are these online activities like face-to-face friendships — or are they different, or

complementary? The goal of this chapter is to address these questions, and explore their implications for youth identities. While particular systems may come and go, how youth engage through social network sites today provides long-lasting insights into identity formation, status negotiation, and peer-to-peer sociality.

To address the aforementioned questions, I begin by documenting key features of social network sites and the business decisions that lead to mass adoption, and then seek to situate social network sites in a broader discussion of what I call "networked publics." I then examine how teens are modeling identity through social network profiles so that they can write themselves and their community into being. Building on this, I investigate how this process of articulated expression supports critical peer-based sociality because, by allowing youth to hang out amongst their friends and classmates, social network sites are providing teens with a space to work out identity and status, make sense of cultural cues, and negotiate public life. I argue that social network sites are a type of networked public with four properties that are not typically present in face-to-face public life: persistence, searchability, exact copyability, and invisible audiences. These properties fundamentally alter social dynamics, complicating the ways in which people interact. I conclude by reflecting on the social developments that have prompted youth to seek out networked publics, and considering the changing role that publics have in young people's lives.

Methodology and Demographics

The arguments made in this chapter are based on ethnographic data collected during my two-year study of United States-based youth engagement with MySpace. In employing the term *ethnography*, I am primarily referencing the practices of "participant observation" and "deep hanging out"[1] alongside qualitative interviews. I have moved between online and offline spaces, systematically observing, documenting, and talking to young people about their practices and attitudes.

While the subjects of my interviews and direct observations are primarily urban youth (ranging in age, sex, race, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic class), I have also spent countless hours analyzing the profiles, blogs, and commentary of teenagers throughout the United States. Although I have interviewed older people, the vast majority of people that I have interviewed and observed are of high school age, living with a parent or guardian. There is no good term to reference this group. Not all are actually students (and that role signals identity material that is not accurate). Vague terms like "youth," "young people," and "children" imply a much broader age range. For these reasons, and in reference to the history of the term "teenager" in relation to compulsory high school education[2], I have consciously decided to label the relevant population "teenagers" even though the majority of individuals that I have spoken with are 14 – 18. While strictly speaking, there are non-high school age individuals in this category, the vast majority of them are; I will focus primarily on that group.

In examining the practices of teenagers on social network sites, I focus primarily on MySpace. This will be my primary case study, although my discussion of these sites is applicable more broadly; I will reference other sites as appropriate. I should note that prior to studying teen practices on MySpace, I did a two-year ethnographic study of Friendster, another social network site. While it is unlikely that MySpace will forever be the main destination site for teenagers, I use this site because its mass popularity offers critical insight into participation patterns that do and will exist on other sites.

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① Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
② Hine, Thomas. 1999. *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*. New York: Bard.

Although news media give the impression that all online teens in the United States are on MySpace, this is not the case. For this reason, I want to take a moment to discuss who is not participating. In 2004, PEW found that 87% of teenagers aged 12 – 17 have some level of Internet access.[①] In a study conducted in late 2006, they found that 55% of online teens aged 12 – 17 have created profiles on social network sites with 64% of teens 15 – 17.[②] While these numbers are most likely low[③], it is very clear that not all high school students participate in online communities that require public content creation like social network sites.

Qualitatively, I have found that there are two types of non-participants: disenfranchised teens and conscientious objectors. The former consists of those without Internet access, those whose parents succeed in banning them from participation, and online teens who primarily access the Internet through school and other public venues where social network sites are banned.[④] Conscientious objectors include politically minded teens who wish to protest against Murdoch's News Corp. (the corporate owner of MySpace), obedient teens who have respected or agree with their parents' moral or safety concerns, marginalized teens who feel that social network sites are for the cool kids, and other teens who feel as though they are too cool for these sites. The latter two explanations can be boiled down to one explanation that I heard frequently: *"because it's stupid."* While the various conscientious objectors may deny participating, I have found that many of them actually do have profiles to which they log in occasionally. I have also found numerous cases where the friends of non-participants create profiles for them.[⑤] Furthermore, amongst those conscientious objectors who are genuinely non-participants, I have yet to find one who does not have something to say about the sites, albeit typically something negative. In essence, MySpace is the civil society of teenage culture: whether one is for it or against it, everyone knows the site and has an opinion about it.

Interestingly, I have found that race and social class play little role in terms of access beyond the aforementioned disenfranchised population. Poor urban black teens appear to be just as likely to join the site as white teens from wealthier backgrounds — although what they do on there has much to do with their level of Internet access. Those who only access their accounts in schools use it primarily as an asynchronous communication tool, while those with continuous nighttime access at home spend more time surfing the network, modifying their profile, collecting friends, and talking to strangers. When it comes to social network sites, there appears to be a far greater participatory divide than an access divide.

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① Lenhart, Amanda, Mary Madden, and Paul Hitlin. 2004. "Teens and Parents Survey." *PEW Internet and American Life Project*, October-November.

② Lenhart, Amanda. 2007. "Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview." *PEW Internet and the American Life Project*, January 7.

③ In conducting phone interviews, PEW first speaks with the parent and then the child. It is quite likely that the child's answers are influenced by the presence of their parents. With social network sites, the overwhelming disapproval of most parents suggests that teens are more likely to say "no" if affected by the presence of their parents. Furthermore, this does not account for the number of teens who have had profiles made for them and my qualitative experience has shown that teens who formerly had a profile will often say "no" when asked if they ever created a profile. That said, PEW is unlikely to be off by more than 10%.

④ In a private message, Mary Gray (Indiana University) shared that her research in Kentucky shows that rural teens have no access to MySpace because they access the Internet at schools and libraries, where MySpace is banned.

⑤ There is nothing to confirm that the person being represented is the person behind the profile. Teens are most notorious for maliciously creating fraudulent profiles to bully the represented but it is equally common for teens to create profiles for their friends. Because one's friends are made visible on one's profile, teens complain that their profile is ruined if their best friend does not have a profile that can be listed as a Friend on the site.

Gender appears to influence participation on social network sites. Younger boys are more likely to participate than younger girls (46% vs. 44%) but older girls are far more likely to participate than older boys (70% vs. 57%). Older boys are twice as likely to use the sites to flirt and slightly more likely to use the sites to meet new people than girls of their age. Older girls are far more likely to use these sites to communicate with friends they see in person than younger people or boys of their age. ① While gender differences do exist and should not be ignored, most of what I discuss in this article concerns practices that are common to both boys and girls.

Fundamentally, this chapter is a case study based on ethnographic data. My primary goal is simply to unveil some of the common ways in which teenagers now experience social life online.

The Making of Social Network Sites

Although a handful of sites predated it, Friendster popularized the features that define contemporary social network sites — profiles, public testimonials or comments, and publicly articulated, traversable lists of friends. Launched in 2002 as a newfangled dating site, Friendster quickly became popular amongst mid 20/30 - something urban-dwellers living in the United States. Although some used the site for its intended purpose of meeting potential partners, others engaged in a wide array of activities, ranging from tracking down high school mates to creating fictional profiles for entertainment purposes. ② By the summer of 2003, some San Francisco-based bands realized that they could leverage the site to connect to their fans and promote their gigs. ③ Word spread in the relevant music scenes, although Friendster forbid this practice and began deleting bands' profiles (along with any profile deemed "fake"). When MySpace launched in the fall of 2003, they welcomed bands online, quickly attracting the attention of indie rock musicians from the Silverlake neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Music is cultural glue among youth. As the bands began advertising their presence on MySpace, mid 20/30-something club goers jumped on board in the hopes of gaining access to VIP passes or acquiring valuable (*sub*) *cultural capital*. ④ While fans typically have to be 21 + in the United States to get into the venues where bands play (because of alcohol laws), younger audiences are avid consumers of music and the culture that surrounds it. When young music aficionados learned that their favorite bands had profiles on MySpace, they began checking out the site. Music junkies loved the fact that they could listen to and download music for free while celebrity watchers enjoyed writing to musicians who were happy to respond. A symbiotic relationship between bands and fans quickly emerged on the system as bands wanted to gather fans and fans wanted to be connected to their favorite bands. Given the degree to which youth are active participants in music subcultures, it is not surprising that MySpace attracted young fans.

While the first wave of young participants learned of the site through their interest in music and musicians, they also invited their less musically engaged peers to join the site. Many began participating because of the available social voyeurism and the opportunity to craft a personal representation in an increasingly popular online community. Just like their older counterparts,

① Lenhart, Amanda. 2007. "Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview." *PEW Internet and the American Life Project*, January 7.

② Boyd, Danah. 2007 (in press). "None of this is real." In *Structures of Participation*, edited by Joe Karaganis.

③ Boyd, Danah. 2004. "Friendster and Publicly Articulated Social Networks." *Proceedings of Conference on Human Factors and Computing Systems (CHI 2004)*. Vienna: ACM.

④ Thornton, Sarah. 1996. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

teenagers loved the ability to visualize their social world through the networked collection of profiles. At the same time, younger participants adopted different participation strategies from those of earlier, older participants. While many adults find value in socializing with strangers, teenagers are more focused on socializing with people they knew personally and celebrities that they adore.

By mid‑2005, MySpace was a popular destination for high school students throughout the United States but teenagers from other countries were on a variety of other social network sites. Friendster had lost its grip on 20/30‑something urbanites but it had become popular amongst teenagers in Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Social network sites like Orkut and Hi5, which were initially popular among adults in Brazil and India, began attracting the attention of younger audiences in those countries. Facebook, a United States site for college students, opened its door to high school students in September 2005. In other regions, new social network sites were launched explicitly to attract the attention of teens. Sites like Tagworld, Bebo, Piczo, Faceparty, and Mixi all launched with youth in mind and took off in places like the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. Pre-existing community sites like Black Planet, Asian Avenue, and MiGente implemented social network site features, although this did not help them regain the teens that they had lost to MySpace. In China, an instant messaging service called QQ added social network site features, as did the popular Korean community site Cyworld; both are popular across all age groups in China and South Korea.

Most of the social network sites were brewed by venture-backed startups but there are a few exceptions to this. Cyworld is a property of SK Telecom, the largest mobile phone operator in South Korea. Orkut began as a side project by a Google employee but, shortly before launch, Google decided to attach their name to the site so that it launched as a Google project. Microsoft, Yahoo!, AOL, and Wal-Mart have all created social network sites but none have been particularly successful. In 2005, Fox Interactive Media (a division of Murdoch's News Corporation) purchased MySpace for US $580M. Unfortunately, not much is currently known about the long-term effects of corporate participation in social network sites. While there has been tremendous speculation about what Fox's ownership of MySpace will mean, there have been few changes made since the site was acquired. Of course, broader concerns about consumerism's relationship to agency[1] in online participation are completely applicable to social network sites.

While there are dozens of social network sites, participation tends to follow cultural and linguistic lines. Few sites successfully support groups from different nation-states, although Orkut is popular in both India and Brazil, Cyworld has large audiences in China and South Korea, and MySpace is trying to grow globally. Cyworld has completely separate domains that segregate the Koreans from the Chinese. On Orkut, they share the site but the Indians and Brazilians barely interact with one another. Furthermore, the Indian participants have segmented themselves within the system along caste lines. [2] Even on MySpace where there is a strong American culture, there is an intense division along race and age lines. While cultural forces clearly segment participation, there are many structural similarities across the sites. Fundamentally, social networks sites are a category of community sites that have profiles, friends, and comments.

Profiles, Friends, and Comments

Social network sites are based around *Profiles*, a form of individual (or, less frequently, group)

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[1]　See Willett in this volume

[2]　There is no published documentation of the caste segmentation in Orkut although there is a discussion about the issue on the "I, Me, and Media" blog (http://differentstrokes.blogspot.com/2006/09/caste-communities-on-orkut.html) and I was able to confirm this dynamic with Orkut's product manager.
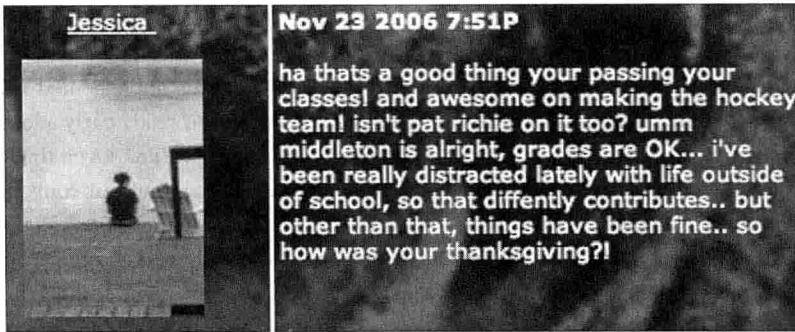
Figure 1   Conversation as MySpace comment

home page, which offers a description of each member. In addition to text, images, and video created by the member, the social network site profile also contains comments from other members, and a public list of the people that one identifies as *Friends* within the network. ① Because the popularized style of these sites emerged out of dating services, the profile often contains material typical of those sites: demographic details (age, sex, location, etc.), tastes (interests, favorite bands, etc.), a photograph, and an open-ended description of who the person would like to meet. Profiles are constructed by filling out forms on the site. While the forms were designed to control the layout of the content, MySpace accidentally left open a technological loophole and their forms accepted (and then rendered) HTML and CSS code. Capitalizing on this loophole, participants can modify the look and feel of their profiles. By copying and pasting code from other websites, teens change their backgrounds, add video and images, change the color of their text, and otherwise turn their profiles into an explosion of animated chaos that resembles a stereotypical teenagers' bedroom. The default profile is publicly accessible to anyone, but most social network sites have privacy features that allow participants to restrict who can see what. For example, MySpace allows participants to make their profiles Friends-only (and sets this as the default for those who indicate they are 14 or 15 years old) while Facebook gives profile-access only to people from the same school by default.

After creating a profile, participants are asked to invite their friends to the site by supplying their email addresses. Alternatively, they can look at others' profiles and add those people to their list of Friends. ② Most social network sites require approval for two people to be linked as Friends. When someone indicates another as a Friend, the recipient receives a message asking for confirmation. If Friendship is confirmed, the two become Friends in the system and their relationship is included in the public display of connections on all profiles. ③ These displays typically involve photos and nicknames that link to their profile. By clicking on these links, visitors can traverse the network by surfing from

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① Defining a category through articulated boundaries is problematic (see: Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press). My effort to do so is to distinguish what is unique to this new style of site from previous types of social software. Although this definition brings some clarity, newer social software is beginning to implement these features into sites that are predominantly about video sharing (YouTube), photo sharing (Flickr), music tastes (Last. FM), etc. The social network sites that I discuss here are first and foremost about the friends network while these newer sites are primarily about media sharing or discovery.

② For legibility, when I am referring to the Friends feature on MySpace, I capitalize the term. When I am referring to people that individuals would normally talk about as their friends, I do not.

③ For a more detailed analysis on the Friending process, see: boyd, danah. 2006. "Friends, Friendsters, and MySpace Top 8: Writing Community Into Being on Social Network Sites." *First Monday* 11(12).

Friend to Friend to Friend.

In addition to the content that members provide to create their own profiles, social network sites typically have a section dedicated to comments by Friends. (On Friendster, this section is called *Testimonials*; on Facebook, it is called *The Wall*.) Because Friendster implemented this feature to encourage people to write testimonials about their friends for strangers to read, early adopters used this feature to write single messages *about* the person represented in the profile. Over time, reciprocity motivated people to write creative testimonials back and forth, creating a form of conversation; [1] this was particularly popular amongst people using Friendster for playful activities. For example, a profile representing table salt wrote long love odes about pepper on the profile representing pepper; pepper reciprocated and this went back and forth for weeks.

As teenagers began joining Friendster, they also used this section to write *to* the profile owner, even though the testimonials were public. When MySpace implemented the same feature and called it *Comments* instead of *Testimonials*, writing to the person became status quo, particularly amongst younger participants. The following comments highlight the difference:

> "*Mark is a man among boys, a razor sharp mind towering over the general sludge.*" (Testimonial on Friendster Profile of Mark, 27)
>
> "*Are we still gonna go paintballing?*" (Comment on MySpace Profile of Corey, 14)

In essence, Corey's friend is writing a purportedly private message to him in a public space for others to view. Corey will reply to the comment in-kind, writing the answer on his friend's profile. By doing this, teens are taking social interactions between friends into the public sphere for others to witness.

Although many sites include other common features[2], the practices that take place through the use of the most prevalent three — profiles, friends and comments — differentiate social network sites from other types of computer-mediated communication. Furthermore, what makes these three practices significant for consideration is that they take place in public: Friends are publicly articulated, profiles are publicly viewed, and comments are publicly visible.

Networked Publics

Defining the term *public* is difficult at best. [3] *As an adjective*, it is commonly used in opposition to *private*. *When referring to locations*, public is used to signal places that are accessible to anyone (or at least anyone belonging to a privileged category like *adults*). *In reference to actions or texts*, public often implies that the audience is unknown and that strangers may bear witness.

As a noun, public refers to a collection of people who may not all know each other but share "a common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding

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[1]   boyd, danah and Jeffrey Heer. 2006. "Profiles as Conversation: Networked Identity Performance on Friendster." In *Proceedings of the Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences* (*HICSS-39*), *Persistent Conversation Track*. Kauai, HI: IEEE Computer Society. January 4 – 7.

[2]   Most social network sites support private messaging so that people can contact other members directly. Some sites support blogging and posting of videos. MySpace and Friendster have a bulletin feature where participants can post messages that all of their Friends can read. Other features that appear on social network sites include: instant messaging, teacher ratings, message boards, groups, and classified ads. Exactly how these features are implemented differs by site.

[3]   For a primer on some of the key debates concerning "public" and "public sphere," see Calhoun, Craig. 1992. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

the collective interest."① In some senses, *public* is quite similar to *audience* as both refer to a group bounded by a shared text, whether that is a worldview or a performance. ② These words often collide conceptually because speaking to the public implies that the public is acting as an audience.

When talking about *the* public, one must ask if there is only *one* public. When United States President Bush addresses the public, he's not conceptualizing the same public as Zimbabwe President Mugabe. Likewise, it is not the same audience that hears both presidents. If, instead, we talk about *a* public, it is possible to recognize that there are different collections of people depending on the particular situation. ③ Talking about *a* public also implies that there must be multiple *publics* separated by social contexts. What then constitutes the boundaries of a given public?

In this article, I move between these many different meanings of public. Social network sites allow publics to gather. At the same time, by serving as a space where speech takes place, they are also publics themselves. The sites themselves also distinguish between public and private, where public means that a profile is visible to anyone and private means that it is Friends-only.

The types of publics that gather on social network sites and the types of publics that such sites support are deeply affected by the mediated nature of interaction. For these reasons it is important to distinguish these sites as *publics*, not simply public, and *networked publics*, not simply publics. While this latter term has been used to reference "a linked set of social, cultural, and technological developments that have accompanied the growing engagement with digitally networked media,"④ I am primarily talking about the spaces and audiences that are bound together through technological networks (i. e. the Internet, mobile networks, etc.). Networked publics are one type of *mediated public*; the network mediates the interactions between members of the public. Media of all stripes have enabled the development of mediated publics.

The reason for differentiating networked publics from mediated and unmediated publics has to do with fundamental architectural differences that affect social interaction. In unmediated environments, the boundaries and audiences of a given public are structurally defined. Access to visual and auditory information is limited by physics; walls and other obstacles further restrain visibility. Thus when I say that I embarrassed myself in public by tripping on the curb, the public that I am referencing includes all of the strangers who visually witnessed my stumble. The audience is restricted to those present in a limited geographical radius at a given moment in time. The public that I conceptualize might also include all of those who might hear of my accident through word-of-mouth; although the likelihood of others sharing the event is dependent on my status in the public and the juiciness of the story. While I might think that the whole world must know, this is not likely to be true. More importantly, in an unmediated world, it is not possible for the whole world actually to witness this incident; in the worst-case scenario, they might all hear of my mishap through word of mouth.

Mediating technologies like television, radio, and newsprint change everything. My fall could have been recorded and televised on the nightly news. This changes the scale of the public. Rather than considering all of the people who *did* witnessed me visually, I must also consider all of the people

① Livingstone, Sonia. 2005. "Introduction" and "On the relation between audiences and publics." *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere* (ed. Sonia Livingstone). Portland: intellect. 9.

② Livingstone, Sonia. 2005. "Introduction" and "On the relation between audiences and publics." *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere* (ed. Sonia Livingstone). Portland: intellect. 9 - 41.

③ Warner, Michael. 1992. "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject." *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Craig Calhoun, ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. pp.377 - 401.

④ Ito, Mizuko. (2007, in press) "Introduction." *Networked Publics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

who *might* witness a reproduction of my fall. The potential audience is affected by the properties of the mediating technologies, namely *persistence*, *replicability*, and *invisible audiences*. Networked publics add an additional feature — *searchability* — while magnifying all of the other properties. While broadcast media take advantage of persistence, it is not as if anyone could go to the television and watch my fall whenever they wish; but if my fall is uploaded to YouTube or MySpace Video, this is possible.

These four properties thus fundamentally separate unmediated publics from networked publics:

1   *Persistence*: Unlike the ephemeral quality of speech in unmediated publics, networked communications are recorded for posterity. This enables asynchronous communication but it also extends the period of existence of any speech act.

2   *Searchability*: Because expressions are recorded and identity is established through text, search and discovery tools help people find like minds. While people cannot currently acquire the geographical coordinates of any person in unmediated spaces, finding one's *digital body* online is just a matter of keystrokes.

3   *Replicability*: Hearsay can be deflected as misinterpretation, but networked public expressions can be copied from one place to another verbatim such that there is no way to distinguish the "original" from the "copy." [1]

4   *Invisible audiences*: While we can visually detect most people who can overhear our speech in unmediated spaces, it is virtually impossible to ascertain all those who might run across our expressions in networked publics. This is further complicated by the other three properties, since our expression may be heard at a different time and place from when and where we originally spoke.

In short, a mediated public (and especially a networked public) *could* consist of all people across all space and all time. Of course, in reality, it probably will not, even when a person desperately wishes to have such attention. Still, the bounding forces of networked publics are less constrained by geography and temporal collocation than unmediated publics. Because people are not accustomed to socializing when they do not know the audience or the context, interactions in networked publics are often peculiar to newcomers who get frustrated when what they intended is not what is interpreted.

These properties affect both the potential audience and the context in which the expression is received. We will address this further in the next section as we consider young people's engagement with social network sites more specifically.

Participation

When I ask teenagers why they joined MySpace, the answer is simple: "*Cuz that's where my friends are.*" Their explanation of what they do on the site is much more vague: "*I don't know... I just hang out.*" Beneath these vague explanations is a clear message: the popularity of MySpace is deeply rooted in how the site supports sociality amongst preexisting friend groups. Teens join MySpace to maintain connections with their friends. [2]

While socializing drives certain kinds of engagement with the site, teens with Internet access at home offer another plausible explanation for the long hours they spend there: "*because I was bored.*"

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[1]   Negroponte, Nicholas. 1996. *Being Digital*. New York: Vintage.

[2]   The power of technology to support *always-on intimate communities* is articulated in Ito, Mizuko, Daisuke Okabe, Misa Matsuda. 2005. *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Just because I'm on the computer at 2:30am, doesn't mean I'm up to no good. Like last night (my mom) comes in and yells at me to go to bed. When I don't, she is all "well what are you doing, show me what you're doing." Of course I was lurking MySpace profiles, cause there is nothing better to do, but that's annoying to explain, she wouldn't understand. — Pam, 17

Teens often turn to sites like MySpace for entertainment; social voyeurism passes time while providing insight into society at large.

In the next three sections, I examine three different aspects of teenage practices on MySpace. First, I discuss the profile construction process in light of how teens are working through impression management and identity issues. I then turn to consider teens' conceptions of public, private, and context. Finally, I discuss changing historical constructions of youth publics, in order to shed light on why so much critical social development is taking place online in sites like MySpace.

Initiation: Profile Creation

Teenagers typically learn about MySpace through their friends — they join because a friend invites them to join. After creating an account, they begin setting up their profile by filling in forms on the site. This generates a generic profile with content like "favorite books" and "about me." Before writing anything of depth, teens tend to look at others' profiles, starting with the friend who invited them. In viewing that profile, they are offered links to their friends' MySpace Friends; and so they can spend countless hours surfing the network, jumping from Friend to Friend.

By looking at others' profiles, teens get a sense of what types of presentations are socially appropriate; others' profiles provide critical cues about what to present on their own profile. While profiles are constructed through a series of generic forms, there is plenty of room for them to manipulate the profiles to express themselves. At a basic level, the choice of photos and the personalized answers to generic questions allow individuals to signal meaningful cues about themselves. While the ability to identify oneself through such textual and visual means is valuable, MySpace profiles also afford another level of personalization.

Figure 2   Example profile with modified background, added multimedia.

Experimenting with the generic forms, a few early adopters discovered that MySpace had failed to close a security hole. While most other sites blocked HTML, CSS, and Javascript in their forms, MySpace did not. Early adopters began exploiting this hole to personalize their pages by adding code to the form fields that changed the background and added multimedia to their pages. There is no simple way to make these modifications; [1] individuals must figure out what CSS or HTML goes in what form. While the site itself does not offer support,

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[1]   While MySpace recognized this hole within hours, they did not close the loophole nor did they begin supporting the practice. They allowed it to exist as an underground copy/paste culture. They have banned specific code that puts the site and participants at risk. For example, they block javascript to make it harder for scammers to prey on members.

numerous other websites (most initially created by teenagers) emerged to provide code and instructions for modifying every aspect of a MySpace page. Individuals choose a desirable layout and then they are instructed to copy and paste the code into the appropriate forms. This code inevitably includes links back to the helper page. ① A copy/paste culture emerged, as teens began trafficking in knowledge of how to *pimp out* ② their profiles. Although most teens' profiles are altered, it is important to not assume technological literacy③— few teens hand-code their pages; most use a helper site or beg friends to do it for them.

Building an intricate profile is an initiation rite. In the early days of their infatuation, teens spent innumerable hours tracking down codes, trading tips, and setting up a slick profile. Through this process, they are socialized into MySpace — they learn both technological and social codes. While technological information gives them the wherewithal to craft a profile, the interpretation and evaluation of this performance is dictated by social protocols. MySpace profiles become yet another mechanism by which teens can signal information about their identities and tastes.

Identity Performance

In everyday interactions, the body serves as a critical site of identity performance. In conveying who we are to other people, we use our bodies to project information about ourselves. ④ This is done through movement, clothes, speech, and facial expressions. What we put forward is our best effort at what we want to say about who we are. Yet while we intend to convey one impression, our performance is not always interpreted as we might expect. Through learning to make sense of others' responses to our behavior, we can assess how well we have conveyed what we intended. We can then alter our performance accordingly. This process of performance, interpretation, and adjustment is what Erving Goffman calls *impression management*, ⑤ and is briefly discussed in the introduction to this volume. Impression management is a part of a larger process where people seek to *define a situation* ⑥ through their behavior. People seek to define social situations by using contextual cues from the environment around them. Social norms emerge out of situational definitions, as people learn to read cues from the environment and the people present to understand what is appropriate behavior.

Learning how to manage impressions is a critical social skill that is honed through experience. Over time, we learn how to make meaning out of a situation, others' reactions, and what we are projecting of ourselves. As children, we learn that actions on our part prompt reactions by adults; as we grow older, we learn to interpret these reactions and adjust our behavior. Diverse social environments help people develop these skills because they force individuals to re-evaluate the signals they take for granted.

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① While the original copy/paste sites were created by teenagers, it is not clear who runs the thousands of codes sites currently operating. Most make money off of advertising so it is likely to be a business venture. Scammers looking to exploit participants' willingness to copy/paste anything probably run some as well.

② "Pimp out" is a slang term that basically means "make cool" (by teen standards). Pimped out profiles usually involve heavy modifications to the templates and numerous multimedia components. What looks pimped out to a teen is typically viewed as horrifyingly chaotic to adults. Technologists complain that the design resembles that of early homepages with blink tags and random colors. The best way that I've found to describe what these profiles look like is a highly decorated teenage bedroom wall or locker.

③ Perkel, Daniel. 2006. "Copy and Paste Literacy: Literacy Practices in the Production of a MySpace Profile — An Overview." In *Proceedings of Informal Learning and Digital Media: Constructions, Contexts, Consequences*. Denmark. September 21 – 23.

④ Davis, Fred. 1992. *Fashion, Culture and Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⑤ Goffman, Erving. 1956. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

⑥ Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places*. New York: The Free Press.

The process of learning to read social cues and react accordingly is core to being socialized into a society. While the process itself begins at home for young children, it is critical for young people to engage in broader social settings to develop these skills. Of course, how children are taught about situations and impression management varies greatly by culture, ① but these processes are regularly seen as part of coming of age. While no one is ever a true master of impression management, the teenage years are ripe with experiences to develop these skills.

In mediated environments, bodies are not immediately visible and the skills people need to interpret situations and manage impressions are different. As Jenny Sundén argues, people must learn to *write themselves into being*. ② Doing so makes visible how much we take the body for granted. While text, images, audio, and video all provide valuable means for developing a virtual presence, the act of articulation differs from how we convey meaningful information through our bodies. This process also makes explicit the self-reflexivity that Giddens argues is necessary for identity formation, but the choices individuals make in crafting a digital body highlight the self-monitoring that Foucault so sinisterly notes. ③

In some sense, people have more control online — they are able to carefully choose what information to put forward, thereby eliminating visceral reactions that might have seeped out in everyday communication. At the same time, these digital bodies are fundamentally coarser, making it far easier to misinterpret what someone is expressing. Furthermore, as Amy Bruckman shows, key information about a person's body is often present online, even when that person is trying to act deceptively; for example, people are relatively good at detecting when someone is a man even when they profess to be a woman online. ④ Yet because mediated environments present reveal different signals, the mechanisms of deception differ. ⑤

Writing Identity and Community Into Being

A MySpace profile can be seen as a form of *digital body* where individuals must write themselves into being. Through profiles, teens can express salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret. They construct these profiles for their friends and peers to view. (We will complicate the issue of audience in the next section.) While what they present may or may not resemble their offline identity, their primary audience consists of peers that they know primarily offline — people from school, church, work, sports teams, etc. Because of this direct link between offline and online identities, teens are inclined to present the side of themselves that they believe will be well received by these peers.

The desire to be cool on MySpace is part of the more general desire to be validated by one's peers. Even though teens theoretically have the ability to behave differently online, the social hierarchies that regulate "coolness" offline are also present online. For example, it's cool to have Friends on MySpace but if you have too many Friends, you are seen as a *MySpace whore*. These markers of cool are rooted in the social culture of MySpace. One of the ways that coolness is articulated is through bulletin posts meant to attack those who have status online and offline. One such post is a satirical Top 10 list of

① Briggs, Jean. 1999. *Inuit Morality Play: The Emotional Education of a Three-Year-Old*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
② Sundén, Jenny. 2003. *Material Virtualities*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
③ See David Buckingham's introduction to this volume for a greater discussion of this.
④ Berman, Joshua and Amy Bruckman. 2001. "The Turing Game: Exploring Identity in an Online Environment." *Convergence*, 7(3), pp.83 – 102.
⑤ Donath, Judith. 1999. "Identity and deception in the virtual community." *Communities in Cyberspace* (Marc Smith & Peter Kollock, eds). London: Routledge.

"*How To Be Cool On Myspace*," which includes material like "*Your MySpace name MUST contain symbols and incorrect spelling*" and "*All your blogs have to be about how bad your day was*." While this post is meant to dismiss these common practices, when these posts are spread around, they simultaneously reinforce these norms in the process of mocking them.

Part of what solidifies markers of cool has to do with the underlying Friend network. MySpace Friends are not just people that one knows, but public displays of connections. ① While teens will typically add friends and acquaintances as Friends, they will also add people because it would be socially awkward to say no to them, because they make the individual look cool, or simply because it would be interesting to read their bulletin posts. Because Friends are displayed on an individual's profile, they provide meaningful information about that person; in other words, "*You are who you know*." ② For better or worse, people judge others based on their associations: group identities form around and are reinforced by the collective tastes and attitudes of those who identify with the group. Online, this cue is quite helpful in enabling people to find their bearings.

Figure 3　Example Top 8

The best indicator of an individual's close friends is their Top Friends; these are displayed directly on an individual's profile, while the rest of their Friends require an additional click. Individuals can choose which Friends will be displayed. While the Top Friends feature allows members to quickly get to and show off the profiles of their closest friends, the public nature of this display tends to complicate relationships. In short, the Top Friends feature is considered pure social drama:

> Myspace always seems to cause way too much drama and i am so dang sick of it. im sick of the pain and the hurt and tears and the jealousy and the heartache and the truth and the lies. it just SUCKS! ... im just so sick of the drama and i just cant take it anymore compared to all the love its supposed to make us feel. i get off just feeling worse. i have people complain to me that they are not my number one on my top 8. come on now. grow up. its freaking myspace. — Olivia, 17

The reason that the Top Friends feature wreaks social havoc on teens' lives is because there are social consequences in publicly announcing one's friends, best friends, and *bestest* friends. Feelings are hurt when individuals find that someone that they feel close with does not reciprocate.

> As a kid, you used your birthday party guest list as leverage on the playground. "If you let me play I'll invite you to my birthday party." Then, as you grew up and got your own phone, it was all about someone being on your speed dial. Well today it's the MySpace Top 8. It's the new dangling

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① Donath, Judith and Danah Boyd. 2004. "Public Displays of Connection." *BT Technology Journal*, October 22 (4), pp. 71 - 82.

② Like "guilt by association," this phrase is logically fallible, but people still judge others based on those around them. Shapiro, Irving David. 1996. "Fallacies of Logic: Argumentation Cons." *ETC. : A Review of General Semantics*, Fall 33(3).

carrot for gaining superficial acceptance. Taking someone off your Top 8 is your new passive aggressive power play when someone pisses you off. — Nadine, 16

Yet, for all of the social discomfort, these Friends help provide group structure, further indicating the meaningful identity markers of the individual. In choosing Friends, teens write their community into being; which is precisely why this feature is so loved and despised.

As discussed in the introduction to this volume, identity can be seen as a social process that is fluid and contingent on the situation. [1] On MySpace, an individual's perceived audience frames the situation. While others might be present, the markers of cool are clearly dictated by an individual's friends and peers. What teens are doing here is conceptualizing an *imagined audience*. [2] While this may seem peculiar, it is a practice that is commonplace for people like writers and actors who regularly interact with the public through mediating technologies. Without having cues about who will witness a given expression, an imagined audience provides a necessary way of envisioning who should be present. The size and diversity of this imagined community depends on the individual; some imagine acquiring fans while others imagine a community that is far more intimate. As Stern discusses earlier in this volume, youth's views on audience are quite nuanced. [3] While some value the possibility of a wide audience, actually attracting such audience can introduce complications. At the same time, wanting a large audience does not mean that a large audience will appear; online, everyone is famous to fifteen people. [4]

Regardless of desires, it is impossible to see the actual audience across all space and all time. At the same time, it is necessary to understand the scope of one's audience to properly present oneself. By imagining an audience, regardless of its accuracy, teens are able to navigate the social situation required in crafting a profile. Because of the intricate connection between offline and online social worlds, the audience that teens envision online is connected to their social world offline, or to their hopes about the possible alternatives online. Yet, their audience online may not be who they think it is.

Privacy in Public: Creating *MY* Space

My mom always uses the excuse about the internet being "public" when she defends herself. It's not like I do anything to be ashamed of, but a girl needs her privacy. I do online journals so I can communicate with my friends. Not so my mother could catch up on the latest gossip of my life. — Bly Lauritano-Werner, 17 [5]

For Lauritano-Werner, privacy is not about structural limitations to access; it is about being able to limit access through social conventions. This approach makes sense if you recognize that networked publics make it nearly impossible to have structurally enforced borders. However, this is not to say that teens do not also try to create structural barriers.

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[1] Buckingham, David. 2007. "Introduction" to *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning — Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume* (ed. David Buckingham). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[2] Benedict Anderson coined the term "imagined community" to discuss nationality. In talking about "imagined audiences," I am drawing on his broader point about how communities can be socially constructed and imagined by those who see themselves as members. Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso.

[3] To follow this thread, see Susannah Stern's chapter in this volume

[4] This riff on Andy Warhol's infamous comment has circulated the web; I am not sure where to properly locate its origin.

[5] Lauritano-Werner, Bly. 2006. "Reading My LiveJournal." *Youth Public Radio*. June 28. http://youthradio. org/society/npr060628_onlinejournal.shtml.

Teens often fabricate key identifying information like name, age, and location to protect themselves. While parents groups often encourage this deception to protect teens from strangers, [1] many teens actually engage in this practice to protect themselves from the watchful eye of parents.

Fabricating data does indeed make search more difficult, but the networked nature of MySpace provides alternate paths to finding people. First, few teens actually lie about what school they attend, although some choose not to list a school at all. Second, and more problematically, teens are not going to refuse connections to offline friends even though that makes them more easily locatable. Parents simply need to find one of their child's friends; from there, it is easy to locate their own kid. While teens are trying to make parental access more difficult, their choice to obfuscate key identifying information also makes them invisible to their peers. This is not ideal because teens are going online in order to see and be seen by those who might be able to provide validation.
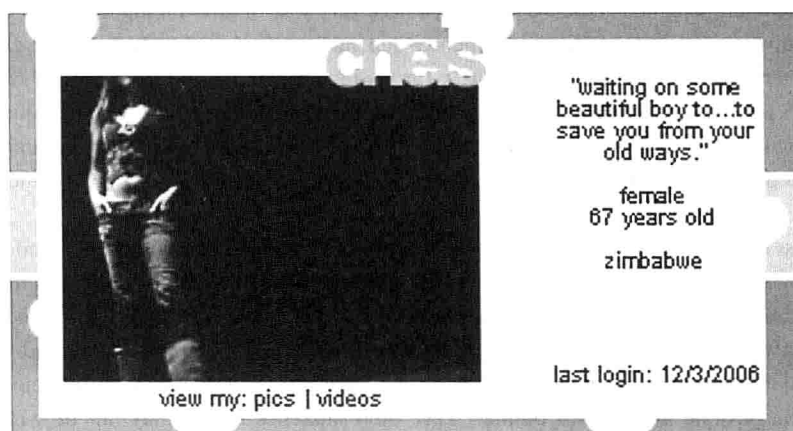

Figure 4   The formal data she provides MySpace says she is 67 and from Zimbabwe; in her self-description, she indicates that she is actually 14 and goes to high school in Texas.

Another common structural tactic involves the privacy settings. By choosing to make their profile *private*, [2] teens are able to select who can see their content. This prevents unwanted parents from lurking, but it also means that peers cannot engage with them without inviting them to be Friends. To handle this, teens are often promiscuous with who they are willing to add as Friends on the site. By connecting to anyone who seems interesting, they gain control over the structure. Yet, this presents different problems because massive Friending introduces a flood of content with no tools to manage it.

Another structural approach intended to confound parents is creating *mirror networks*. When Stacy's mom found her profile, she was outraged. She called the moms of two of Stacy's friends — Anne and Kimberly. All three parents demanded that their kids clean up their profiles and told them to tell their friends the same or else more parents would be called. Steamed by the prudish response of their parents, Stacy, Anne, and Kimberly reluctantly agreed to change their profiles. Then, they each made a second account with fake names and details. Here, they linked to each other's second profile and uploaded the offending material, inviting their friends to do the same. In doing so, they created a

[1]   Farnham, Kevin and Dale Farnham. 2006. *MySpace Safety: 51 Tips for Teens and Parents*. Pomfret, CT: How-To Primers.

[2]   Private profiles in MySpace are visible to Friends only. When strangers visit their page, they are shown the primary photo, name, location, age, and a saying. They must become Friends with that person to see the rest of the content.

network that completely mirrored the network that their parents had seen. Their parents continued to check their G-rated profiles and the girls continued to lead undercover lives.

While deception and lockdown are two common structural solutions, teens often argue that MySpace should be recognized as *my* space, a space for teenagers to be teenagers. Adults typically view this attitude as preposterous because, as they see it, since the technology is public and teens are participating in a public way, they should have every right to view this content. This attitude often frustrates teenagers who argue that just because anyone *can* access the site doesn't mean that everyone *should*.

When teens argue for having *my* space in a networked public, they are trying to resolve the social problems that emerge because the constructions of public and private are different online and off. In unmediated spaces, structural boundaries are assessed to determine who is in the audience and who is not. The decision to goof off during lunch is often made with the assumption that only peers bear witness. In mediated spaces, there are no structures to limit the audience; search collapses all virtual walls.

Most people believe that *security through obscurity* will serve as a functional barrier online. For the most part, this is a reasonable assumption. Unless someone is of particular note or interest, why would anyone search for them? Unfortunately for teens, there are two groups who have a great deal of interest in them: those who hold power over them — parents, teachers, local government officials, etc. — and those who wish to prey on them — marketers and predators. Before News Corporation purchased MySpace, most adults had never heard of the site; afterwards, they flocked there to either to track teenagers that they knew or to market goods (or promises) to any teen who would listen. This shift ruptured both the imagined community and the actual audience they had to face on a regular basis. With a much wider audience present, teens had to face a hard question: what's appropriate?

This problem is not unique to social network sites; it has been present in all forms of mediated publics. Consider Stokely Carmichael's experience with radio and television. ① As an activist in the 1960s, Carmichael regularly addressed segregated black and white audiences about the values and ideals of the burgeoning Black Power movement.

Depending on the color of his audience, he used very different rhetorical styles. As his popularity grew, he started attracting media attention and was invited to speak on TV and radio. This opportunity was also a curse because both black and white listeners would hear his speech. As there was no way to reconcile the two different rhetorical styles he typically used, he had to choose. By maintaining his black roots in front of white listeners, Carmichael permanently alienated white society from the messages of Black Power. Faced with two disjointed contexts simultaneously, there was no way that Carmichael could successfully convey his message to both audiences.

Teenagers face the same dilemma on MySpace. How can they be simultaneously cool to their peers and acceptable to their parents? For the most part, it is not possible. While most adults wish that kids would value what they value, this is rarely true. It is easy to lambaste teens for accepting the cultural norms of the "in" crowd, but social categories② and status negotiation③ are core elements in teen life; this is part of how they learn to work through the cultural practices and legal rules that govern society. The behaviors that are typically rewarded with status in school are often resistant to adult values. On

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① Meyrowitz, Joshua. 1985. *No Sense of Place*. New York: Oxford.

② Eckert, Penelope. 1989. *Jocks & Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School*. New York: Teacher College Press.

③ Murray Milner, Jr. , 2004. *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption*. New York: Routledge.

MySpace, teens are directly faced with peer pressure and the need to conform to what is seen to be cool. Worse, they are faced with it in the most public setting possible — one that is potentially visible to all peers and all adults. The stakes are greater on both sides, but the choice is still there: *cool or lame*?

Unfortunately, the magnified public exposure increases the stakes. Consider a call that I received from an admissions officer at a prestigious college. The admissions committee had planned to admit a young black man from a very poor urban community until they found his MySpace. They were horrified to find that his profile was full of hip-hop imagery, urban ghetto slang, and hints of gang participation. This completely contradicted the essay they had received from him about the problems with gangs in his community, and they were at a loss. Did he lie in his application? Although confidentiality prevented me from examining his case directly, I offered the admissions officer an alternative explanation. Perhaps he needed to acquiesce to the norms of the gangs while living in his neighborhood, in order to survive and make it through high school to apply to college?

Situations like this highlight how context is constructed and maintained through participation, not simply observation. When outsiders search for and locate participants, they are ill prepared to understand the context; instead, they project the context in which they relate to the individual offline onto the individual in this new online space. For teens, this has resulted in expulsions, suspensions, probations, and being grounded. ① In Pennsylvania, a student's parody of his principal was not read as such when the principal found this profile on MySpace; the student was removed from school and lawsuits are still pending. ② Of course, not every misreading results in the punishment of youth. Consider the story of Allen and his daughter Sabrina. Because Sabrina thinks her dad is cool, she invited him to join her on MySpace. Upon logging in, Allen was startled to see that her profile included a quiz entitled "*What kind of drug are you?*", to which she had responded "*cocaine*." Confused and horrified, Allen approached his daughter for an explanation. She laughed and explained, "*it's just one of those quizzes that tells you about your personality... but you can kinda get it to say what you want*." She explained that she didn't want to be represented by marijuana because the kids who smoked pot were lame. She also thought that acid and mushrooms were stupid because she wasn't a hippie. She figured that cocaine made sense because she heard people did work on it and, "*besides Dad, your generation did a lot of coke and you came out OK.*" This was not the explanation that Allen expected.

Teens are not necessarily well-prepared to navigate complex social worlds with invisible audiences, but neither are adults. While Allen was able to talk with his daughter about other possible interpretations of her choice in presentation, he recognized that her profile was not meant for such audiences. How could he teach her how to engage in identity presentation while navigating multiple audiences? While MySpace is public, it is unlike other publics that adults commonly face. This presents a generational divide that is further complicated by adults' mis-readings of youth participation in new media. ③

But Why *There*?

The power that adults hold over youth explains more than just complications in identity

①   Koppelman, Alex. 2006. "MySpace or OurSpace?" *Salon*. June 8. http://www. salon. com/mwt/feature/ 2006/06/08/my_space/.

②   Poulson, Kevin. 2006. "Scenes from the MySpace Backlash." *Wired News*. February 27. http://www. wired. com/news/politics/1.70254 − 0. html.

③   To follow this thread, see Susan Herring's chapter in *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning — Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume* (ed. David Buckingham). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

performance; it is the root of why teenagers are on MySpace in the first place. In the United States, the lives of youth — and particularly high school teenagers — are highly structured. Compulsory high school requires many students to be in class from morning to mid-afternoon; and many are also required to participate in after-school activities, team sports, and work into the evening. It is difficult to measure whether today's high school teens have more or less free time than previous generations, but the increased prevalence of single working parent and dual-working parent households implies that there are either more latchkey kids or more after-school programs watching these kids. ① Given the overwhelming culture of fear and the cultural disdain for latchkey practices, it is likely that teens are spending more time in programs than on their own. Meanwhile, at home in the evenings, many are expected to do homework or spend time with the family. While the home has been considered a *private* sphere where individuals can regulate their own behavior, this is an adult-centric narrative. For many teens, home is a highly regulated space with rules and norms that are strictly controlled by adults.

Regardless of whether teens in the United States have the time to engage in public life, there are huge structural and social barriers to them doing so. First, there is an issue of mobility. While public transit exists in some urban regions, most of the United States lacks adequate transportation options for those who are unable to drive; given the suburbanization of the United States, teens are more likely to live in a region without public transit than one with public transit. There is a minimum age for drivers in every state, although it varies from 16 – 18. A license is only one part of the problem; having access to a car is an entirely separate barrier to mobility. This means that, for many teens, even if they want to go somewhere they are often unable to do so.

American society has a very peculiar relationship to teenagers — and children in general. They are simultaneously idealized and demonized; adults fear them but they also seek to protect them. ② On one hand, there has been a rapid rise in curfew legislation to curb teen violence③ and loitering laws are used to bar teens from hanging out on street corners, in parking lots, or other outdoor meeting places for fear of the trouble they might cause. On the other hand, parents are restricting their youth from hanging out in public spaces for fear of predators, drug dealers, and gangs. Likewise, while adults spend countless hours socializing over alcohol, minors are not only restricted from drinking but also from socializing in many venues where alcohol is served.

Moral entrepreneurs have learned that "invoking fears about children provides a powerful means of commanding public attention and support."④ This ongoing *culture of fear* typically overstates the actual dangers and obfuscates real risks in the process. ⑤ Yet, the end result of this is that youth have very little access to public spaces. The spaces they can hang out in are heavily controlled and/or under surveillance:

> My [guardian] is really strict so if I get to go anywhere, it's a big miracle. So I talk to people on MySpace ... I know she means well, I know she doesn't want me to mess up. But sometimes you need to mess up to figure out that you're doing it wrong. You need mistakes to know where you're going.

① Johnson, Julia Overturf, Robert Kominski, Kristin Smith, and Paul Tillman. 2005. "Changes in the Lives of U. S. Children 1990 – 2000." Working Paper No 78, United States Census Bureau. November.
② Austin, Joe and Michael Nevin Willard. 1998. "Introduction: Angels of History, Demons of Culture." *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (ed. Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard). New York: New York University Press, pp. 1 – 20.
③ Ruefle, William and Kenneth Reynolds. 1995. "Curfew and delinquency in major American cities." *Crime and Delinquency* 41: pp. 347 – 363.
④ Buckingham, David. 2000. *After the Death of Childhood*. Oxford: Polity, p. 11.
⑤ Glassner, Barry. 2000. *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things*. Basic Book.

You need to figure things out for yourself. — Traviesa, 15

Many adults believe that these restrictions are necessary to prevent problematic behaviors or to protect children from the risks of society. Whether or not that view is valid, restrictions on access to public life make it difficult for young people to be socialized into society at large. While social interaction can and does take place in private environments, the challenges of doing so in public life are part of what help youth grow. Making mistakes and testing limits are fundamental parts of this. Yet, there is a pervading attitude that teens must be protected from their mistakes.

At the beginning of this chapter, I explained that I would use the term teenagers to refer to youth of high school age living at home. In doing so, I glossed over how problematic any definition of youth or teenager is. [1] Yet, it is precisely the construction of teenager/youth in opposition to adult that creates the power dynamic upon which most of the challenges stated earlier hinge. The term teenager did not exist a century ago. It was most likely coined in the 1920s or 1930s; and it first appeared in print as a marketing term in 1941. [2] The notion of *young adult* did exist and it primarily referenced young people who were entering the workforce. By about 14, most young people began laboring outside the home; they continued to live with their parents and their income helped the family pay its costs. The workforce was a critical site of socialization into adulthood for young people; very few went to high school or college. This changed in the United States during the Great Depression. With too few jobs and too many adults needing employment, the labor movement joined social reformers who had been urging the government to require high school attendance for young people. While social reformers believed that young people were not mature enough to be entering the workforce, the labor movement was more interested in keeping young adults out of the work force (and off the streets). Together, they were able to convince Congress to pass compulsory education and child labor laws.

While the appropriateness of this move can be debated, its effect was clear: young people were neatly segregated from adults in all aspects of their lives. Through funding structures, schools were encouraged to consolidate into large institutions that could support at least 100 students per year so that schools could support activities and sports that kept youth from mixing with adult laborers in leisure as well as work. The school reform that took place during this era created the iconic American high school imagery that Hollywood popularized around the world during the second half of the 20th century. Idealists viewed high school as a place where youth could mature both intellectually and socially, but age segregation meant that young people were being socialized into a society that did not include adults. While peer socialization is obviously valuable and important, it is fundamentally different from being socialized into adult society by adults themselves; generations emerge and norms rapidly change per generation. By segregating people by age, a true dichotomy between adult and teen emerged.

The development of an age-segregated group also created a target demographic for marketers. Following World War II, organizations and corporations began explicitly targeting teens directly, appealing to the tastes and values generated in teen culture. Spaces like dance halls, roller rinks, bowling alleys, and activity centers began offering times for teens to socialize with other teens. (These spaces, once vibrant in the United States, are virtually extinct now.) Businesses welcomed middle and upper class teens with open arms because of their perceived consumer power. Products began to be designed explicitly for teens. This consumer process similarly reinforced separate youth and adult

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[1] See Buckingham's intro in *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning — Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume* (ed. David Buckingham). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[2] The history in this paragraph is well-documented and cited in: Hine, Thomas. 1999. *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*. New York: Bard.

publics.

By late in the 20th century, shopping malls became the primary "public" space for youth socialization. ① While shopping malls once welcomed teens, teens are primarily seen as a nuisance now. Shopkeepers are wary of teens because of shoplifting and they are often ejected for loitering. While the public spaces built around consumerism have become increasingly hostile to teenagers, they still rabidly market to them. In other words, teens are still a marketable demographic for products, even if there is little interest in providing services for them.

This dynamic, while overly simplified for brevity sake, does not properly convey the differences across different social groups within American society. It is primarily the story of white, middle class, suburban teens. Poor teens and people of color were never given access to these types of spaces in the first place. That said, commercialism has moved on to co-opt the spaces that these groups do traverse. The corporatization and glorification/demonization of hip-hop and "the hood" is one example of this. ② As we move towards a more global market, multinational corporations are expanding on their desire to target niche groups of teens, simultaneously supporting the attitude that teens are both angels and demons.

Collectively, four critical forces③— *society, market, law, and architecture* — have constructed an age-segregated teen culture that is deeply consumerist but lacks meaningful agency. The contradictions run deep — we sell sex to teens but prohibit them from having it; we tell teens to grow up but restrict them from the vices and freedoms of adult society. ④ Teenagers have navigated and challenged this hypocrisy over decades. Changes in society, market, and law have shifted the perception and treatment of youth. What emerged with the Internet was a radical shift in architecture; it decentralized publics.

While the jury is still out on whether or not the Internet is democratizing, online access provides a whole new social realm for youth. Earlier mediated communication devices — landline, pager, mobile — allowed friends to connect with friends even when located in adult-regulated physical spaces. What is unique about the Internet is that it allows teens to participate in unregulated publics while located in adult-regulated physical spaces such as homes and schools. Of course, this is precisely what makes it controversial. Parents are seeking to regulate teens behavior in this new space; and this, in turn, is motivating teens to hide.

> A few of my friends won't even dare to tell their parents about their MySpace cause they know they'll be grounded forever. I know two kids who got banned from it but they secretly got back on. — Ella, 15

Yet, putting aside the question of risk, what teens are doing with this networked public is akin to what they have done in every other type of public they have access to: they hang out, jockey for social status, work through how to present themselves, and take risks that will help them to assess the boundaries of the social world. They do so because they seek access to adult society. Their participation is deeply rooted in their desire to engage publicly, for many of the reasons we have

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① Crawford, Margaret. 1992. "The World in a Shopping Mall." *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (ed. Michael Sorkin). New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 3 – 30.

② Forman, Murray. 2002. *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

③ Lessig, Lawrence. 1999. *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.

④ The contradictions and challenges of youth as a social construct are well articulated in Buckingham, David. 2000. *After the Death of Childhood*. Oxford: Polity.

discussed earlier. By prohibiting teens from engaging in networked publics, we create a *participation divide*,[1] both between adults and teens and between teens who have access and those who do not.

Conclusion

Publics play a crucial role in the development of individuals for, as Nancy Fraser explains, "they are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities."[2] By interacting with unfamiliar others, teenagers are socialized into society. Without publics, there is no coherent society. Publics are where norms are set and reinforced, where common ground is formed. Learning society's rules requires trial and error, validation and admonishment; it is knowledge that teenagers learn through action, not theory. Society's norms and rules only provide the collectively imagined boundaries. Teenagers are also tasked with deciding how they want to fit into the structures that society provides. Their social identity is partially defined by themselves, partially defined by others. Learning through *impression management* is key to developing a social identity. Teenagers must determine where they want to be situated within the social world they see and then attempt to garner the reactions to their performances that match their vision. This is a lifelong process, but one that must be supported at every step.

In today's society, there is a push towards privacy. It is assumed that people are public individuals who deserve the right to privacy rather than the other way around. With an elevated and idealized view of privacy, we often forget the reasons that enslaved peoples desperately wished for access to public life. By allowing us to have a collective experience with people who are both like and unlike us, public life validates the reality that we are experiencing. We are doing our youth a disservice if we believe that we can protect them from the world by limiting their access to public life. They must enter that arena, make mistakes, and learn from them. Our role as adults is not to be their policemen, but to be their guide.

Of course, as Hannah Arendt wrote long before the Internet, "everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity."[3] What has changed with the emergence of new tools for mediating sociality is the scale and persistence of possible publicity. For most people in history, public life was not documented and distributed for the judgment of non-present others. Only aristocrats and celebrities faced that type of public because structural and social forces strongly limited the "widest possible publicity." Not everything could be documented and spreading information was challenging. Only the lives of the rich and famous were deemed important enough to share.

The Internet has irrevocably changed this. Teens today face a public life with unimaginably wide possibly publicity. The fundamental properties of networked publics – persistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audiences — are unfamiliar to the adults that are guiding them through social life. It is not accidental that teens live in a culture infatuated with celebrity[4]— the "reality" presented by reality TV and the highly publicized dramas (such as that between socialites Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie) portray a magnified (and idealized) version of the networked publics that teens are

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① Jenkins, Henry. 2006. "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century." White Paper for MacArthur Foundation.

② Fraser, Nancy. 1992. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Craig Calhoun, ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 125.

③ Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 50.

④ Halpern, Jake. 2007. *Fame Junkies: The Hidden Truths Behind America's Favorite Addiction*. Houghton Mifflin.

experiencing, complete with surveillance and misinterpretation. The experiences that teens are facing in the publics that they encounter appear more similar to the celebrity idea of public life than to the ones their parents face.

It is not as though celebrities or teenagers wish for every conversation to be publicly available to everyone across all time and space, but mediated publics take the simplest public expressions and make them hyperpublic. Few adults could imagine every conversation they have sitting in the park or drinking tea in a café being available for such hyperpublic consumption, yet this is what technology enables. Unfortunately, there is an ethos that if it is possible to access a public expression, one should have the right to do so. Perhaps this is flawed thinking.

While we can talk about changes that are taking place, the long-term implications of being socialized into a culture rooted in networked publics are unknown. Perhaps today's youth will be far better equipped to handle gossip as adults. Perhaps not. What we do know is that today's teens live in a society whose public life is changing rapidly. Teens need access to these publics — both mediated and unmediated — to mature, but their access is regularly restricted. Yet, this technology and networked publics are not going away. As a society, we need to figure out how to educate teens to navigate social structures that are quite unfamiliar to us because they will be faced with these publics as adults, even if we try to limit their access now. Social network sites have complicated our lives because they have made this rapid shift in public life very visible. Perhaps instead of trying to stop them or regulate usage, we should learn from what teens are experiencing? They are learning to navigate networked publics; it is in our better interest to figure out how to help them.

34. Surveillance Impediments: Recognizing Obduracy with the Deployment of Hospital Information Systems[①]

Torin Monahan   Jill A. Fisher

*Although the field of Surveillance Studies privileges detailed accounts of how and when surveillance occurs, it is also important to remain open to instances of aborted or failed surveillance and manifold impediments to surveillance. It is vital for researchers to document and theorize absence in order to better understand and perhaps mitigate the presence of egregious forms of surveillance. To this end, in this paper we discuss some of the many forms of obduracy that confront surveillance-capable information systems in hospitals. We draw upon primary data from three years of field research on the implementation and use of tracking and identification systems in U. S. hospitals to show that many of the control functions of hospital information systems are attenuated by individual resistance but also by a host of **technical, material, financial, and cultural** constraints.*

The field of Surveillance Studies often lures scholars into deterministic readings of new technologies. After all, "the surveillance society" is a powerful concept that reorients the perceptions of scholars to see all information and communication technologies (ICTs) as having the potential, even the valence, for cultivating surveillant practices and structuring surveillant relationships (Lyon 2001; Monahan 2010; Murakami Wood *et al*. 2006). This is a theoretical position that is grounded in fact, in observations of mission creep that can and does occur with the deployment of technological systems. Yet potentialities and probabilities are not the same thing as inevitabilities. And the field may be guilty of being too alarmist or "paranoid" because its scholars, including us, are often committed to discovering surveillance in every domain on which they set their sights (Holm 2009; Lyon 1994). It is also important, however, to remain open to instances of non-surveillance, aborted or failed surveillance, or manifold impediments to surveillance. In a word, it is vital for researchers to document and theorize *absence* in order to better understand and perhaps mitigate the presence of egregious forms of surveillance.

In this paper, we discuss some of the many forms of obduracy that confront surveillance-capable information systems in hospitals. We draw upon primary data from three years of field research on the implementation and use of tracking and identification systems in U. S. hospitals to show that many of

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the control functions of hospital information systems are attenuated by individual resistance but also by a host of organizational and infrastructural constraints. While it is the case that surveillance functions are enabled by hospital information systems, impediments to surveillance are significant and may often be explained more precisely as the result of institutional and infrastructural inertia than of organized or concerted opposition. After providing some background for our study, this paper sketches out some forms of hospital surveillance that we were able to document and then describes and analyzes four areas of obduracy facing such systems: technical, material, financial, and cultural.

Background and Methods

The data presented here are part of a study that investigated social and ethical concerns associated with hospital tracking and identification systems, which are also known as "real-time location systems" (RTLS). Such systems can be used to track hospital inventory, staff, or patients, ostensibly with the aim of managing assets, people, and practices in more efficient and effective ways (Monahan and Fisher 2008; Fisher 2006). For instance, hospital administrators can deploy RTLS to assist with locating medical equipment, such as intravenous pumps or specialized beds, whether for purposes of providing immediate patient care, conducting routine scheduled maintenance, preventing theft or loss, reducing redundant inventory, or calculating fees due for rented equipment. Staff can be tracked to better understand and streamline "workflow," automatically assign individual personnel to individual patients for care provision, ascertain who is closest to a person in need, or discipline those who take too frequent breaks or perform their jobs sub-optimally. Patients can be tagged and monitored to verify their identities before medical procedures, locate them if they get "lost" in a hospital, send alerts to staff if they fall, or allow for "dynamic associations" whereby patients can be billed automatically when they come in contact with any devices, drugs, or personnel. Obviously, most hospitals have procedures in place to perform almost all of these functions without the assistance of RTLS. Nonetheless, a combination of technological imperatives, audit cultures, entrepreneurial vendors, and government incentives is currently driving the adoption of these and other health information technology (HIT) systems in hospitals (Blumenthal and Glaser 2007; Fisher and Monahan 2011; Lohr 2009; Thuemmler *et al*. 2009; Winthereik, van der Ploeg, and Berg 2007).

A disparate array of technologies comprises the field of RTLS. Basically these systems use electronic "tags" that send out signals to "detectors" that are installed in hospital buildings. The tags can communicate via radio-frequency identification (RFID), which is most common, or through ultrasound, infrared, or other signals, across a variety of network protocols. The tags can be affixed to items, embedded in identification cards, or placed on identification armbands, for example. Additionally, most tags being used in hospital contexts are "active" ones that contain a small battery that needs to be replaced periodically. RTLS also typically require infrastructural alterations, such as stringing network cable, installing detectors, adding electrical conduit, and finding room for additional data servers and computer terminals. Finally, software programs are needed to translate the signals received by the detectors into data and provide mechanisms and interfaces for organizing and acting upon those data, preferably in a way that is interoperable with other data-management or patient-care systems.

We conceive of technological systems as being far more than just artifacts, wires, and software. Technologies acquire meaning through social practice in specific organizational contexts; they draw upon and feed the political economy, further situating hospitals within larger macrostructural relations; they are both socially constructed and social shaping, such that they assert agential force

upon the roles and responsibilities of healthcare workers and consumers. [①] Therefore, for the purposes of this project we were especially interested in attending to how people talk about RTLS, what meanings they ascribe to them, and how they do or don't incorporate them into their lives. Moreover, given the clear surveillance overtones of real-time monitoring, particularly of individuals, we were interested in assessing the modes of surveillance engendered by RTLS. Our primary research questions were (1) What effects do real-time location systems have upon organizational roles and relations? and (2) What are the surveillance potentials of real-time location systems? The focus of these questions included documentable practices and policies as well as hospital staff member's perceptions of the changes brought about by RTLS.

The research methods for our project were observation and semi-structured interviews with personnel at hospitals that have implemented or piloted systems to identify or track equipment, staff, and/or patients. The project included 23 U. S. hospitals that were selected based on their use of a qualifying system (as identified through personal contacts, press releases, or media coverage) and their receptivity to participating in the research. One or both authors visited each hospital, were given demonstrations of the systems, and observed the systems in use. In addition, we conducted 80 semi-structured interviews with hospital staff, including physicians, nurses, administrators, information technologists, and biomedical engineers, as well as vendors involved with these systems. Interviewees were recruited from hospital employees who make decisions about or are targeted users of the systems. The identities of hospital sites and personnel were given confidentiality in the study, and all participants provided informed consent. We then analyzed all transcribed interviews and observational notes to identify core themes, such as key concerns associated with these systems. One dominant theme was obstacles to the successful deployment of these systems, and especially to the use of the systems for any overt surveillance purposes.

Surveillance Capabilities and Potentials

Although the primary focus of this paper is on factors contributing to the *absence* of surveillance, it is important to acknowledge the surveillance capabilities and potentials of RTLS and similar systems. Our research did uncover several troubling instances of surveillance and discipline of hospital staff as well as indications of where surveillance applications could flourish, or creep, in the future.

The ability to locate people in space and real time is enticing for individuals operating in the complex and oftentimes chaotic worlds of hospitals. As one resident physician communicated about the system at his hospital:

> Sometimes it's useful for finding where my nurse is. I've noticed there's this system where oh, I can look up where my nurses are. Oh, I can look up where the cart is. So now I'm learning a little bit more about it, like no one really explains all that, but one time I found my attending [physician] sleeping in the pod. It was late at night and he was getting sick or something, and I was like, "Where's my attending?" I looked on there and he was in the pod that was shut down taking a nap because he was so exhausted. So I was like, "Oh, he's over in B-10!" So sometimes it's useful for that.

While locating people can be useful, it is not always benign. RTLS apparently invite discipline if people are not where one thinks they should be or where they say that they are. At industry conferences and in conversations with hospital administrators, we heard of a few instances (at

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[①]　This orientation to technological systems obviously draws upon insights from the field of science and technology studies. See, for example, Berg (1997), Bijker and Law (1992), Bowker and Star (1999), Mesman (2008), Oudshoorn (2007), and Winner (1986).

different hospitals) where individuals were fired because their accounts of where they were differed from the evidence generated by the locational systems. For example, one hospital piloting RTLS did not provide much information about the capabilities of the technology to the orderlies who were asked to wear the sensors. At one point, an administrator monitoring the location of the orderlies on a computer interface saw that two orderlies were standing on the loading dock. The administrator contacted one of the orderlies on his walkie-talkie to inquire about his location, and the orderly gave a false account of his activities. Next, the administrator contacted the second orderly who provided a different bogus report of his whereabouts. The administrator then walked down to the loading dock to "catch" the two orderlies and fired them both on the spot. ①

Hospital administrators have interest in monitoring employees for a range of reasons, so the type of personnel who are monitored varies by hospital. Employees with less status and institutional power tend to be the ones subjected to locational tracking. Physicians are monitored directly too, but less often than other staff and with less serious sanctions for undesirable performance. For instance, some hospitals use RTLS to track how long physicians spend with patients, while other hospitals integrate RTLS with different reporting mechanisms to try to pressure physicians into practicing in more cost-effective ways, especially in departments of emergency medicine. One administrator explained:

> We monitor all the activity of all our docs. We give them reports every month on their acuity, their time to disposition, the number of tests per doctor per diagnosis, their efficiency in terms of what we pay through the department, and that's all recorded. And your abilities, your bonuses, all that information is used as a 360 [-degree] view of you as an emergency physician in the department. But if you're admitting twenty-two percent or twenty-three percent, twenty-four percent, then you're being very conservative [with your patients] and you should be more tight with your admissions because you're actually losing [the hospital] money... The chairman would say, "You know, the last couple months you've been admitting a lot more percentiles. Just try to bring it down a little bit."

These reporting mechanisms can work through a type of public shaming: monthly reports identify physicians' performance scores alongside their names. Physicians tend to be rewarded rather than punished for their performance using a series of incentive-based processes (often financial) rather than disciplinary ones.

For nurses and other hospital staff, at least at present, RTLS — facilitated surveillance manifests indirectly more often than through direct scrutiny. For instance, administrators can use RTLS data to chastise nurses who are perceived as not furthering hospitals' goals of improving patient throughput. Nurses understandably try to control their own workloads, reduce stress, and increase quality of care by pacing the number of patients for whom they are responsible. Specifically, hospitals tend to rely upon nurses to signal when a patient leaves the hospital so that the patient's room — or bed — can be cleaned, thereby freeing up that space for a new patient. A new patient moving into that room means an increase in labor for the nurse(s) assigned to that patient, so nurses might delay reporting the discharge until they are caught up with their work or they are changing shifts. If a patient is assigned an RTLS tag upon admission, however, bed management can be automated: when a patient's RTLS tag leaves the hospital, presumably with the patient, the system assumes that the patient has been discharged and his or her room is now signaled as ready to be cleaned. In response to these automated mechanisms for increasing throughput, sometimes nurses will find ways to circumvent the systems. One

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① A technology vendor recounted this story during a Q & A session following a presentation by the hospital administrator at the 2008 Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) conference in Orlando, FL.

hospital IT worker explained:

> Nurses don't particularly care to discharge a patient and admit another patient anywhere near their shift time, end of shift, so they found some "workarounds": cutting the actual location tag off and throwing it in the trash can cause that location to continue to be there. You know that patient is still showing [on the system as being] in their room when in fact they've left the hospital.

In order to detect this type of nurses' resistance to RTLS, administrators can compare patient discharge times as indicated by the bed-management system *and* the electronic medical record system. One hospital we visited was actively monitoring nurses in this way, and an administrator told us, "If there's a big discrepancy there, then we contact the manager and they go ruffle some feathers."[1]

Employees in hospitals may experience heightened surveillance by means of RTLS, especially surveillance of their performance and behavior, which is in keeping with findings of workplace surveillance in other domains (Ball 2005; Regan 1998; Staples 2000).[2] All in all, though, our research discovered few examples of surveillance, relative to data about other concerns or problems with locational systems in hospitals. The potential for mission creep is certainly there, especially when clear policies are not delineated in advance and stakeholders are not involved in — or even informed of — decisions (Fisher and Monahan 2008). Still, what was far more striking were the many impediments to these systems and their surveillance capabilities.

Technical Constraints

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to surveillance with hospital RTLS is that the systems, by and large, do not work. That is to say, at least at present, they do not work with a sufficient degree of accuracy, consistency, or speed to locate people or objects reliably in the complex organizational spaces of most hospitals. Whereas RFID systems have achieved celebrated success for their efficacy in tracking items on assembly lines or through other linear and tightly controlled distribution channels, such as the systems for delivering pallets of inventory to Wal-Mart stores, hospitals are far too nonlinear, unpredictable, and chaotic for locational systems to achieve similar levels of success in these environments.

With radio-frequency systems in particular, the signals bleed through walls and floors, such that locational readings are usually inaccurate and sometimes grossly so. At just about every hospital site we visited, people had complaints about the lack of room-level accuracy with these systems, but a few hospitals had difficulty achieving *building-level* accuracy, as one hospital IT administrator related:

> Due to the concrete, we had substantial problems especially in that one building, but we noticed even in newer parts of the facility where we didn't have the concrete walls, that locations would jump, not only between floors or between rooms, but sometimes between buildings. We knew there was a piece of equipment tagged sitting in, for instance room 330, yet it would show up across a substantial

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[1] Another way that nurses attract the ire of administrators is by maintaining on hand any equipment that they need frequently. Administrators find this inefficient and disparagingly refer to the practice as "hoarding." By placing location tags on mobile equipment that needs to be shared on hospital floors or between departments, administrators seek to rationalize equipment use, minimize duplicate items, and reduce time spent searching for needed inventory. Elsewhere we have noted how this rationalization process is usually a top-down exercise that attempts to replace an existing social system of equipment sharing with a technical system of administrative control (Fisher and Monahan 2008).

[2] In addition to the categories of "performance" and "behavior," Priscilla Regan (1998) has identified a third category of workplace surveillance, which is "personal characteristics," such as genetic predispositions. Surveillance within this third category was not evident in our research.

breezeway between buildings in surgery, really unexplainable.

Often the systems could identify the location of inventory and people in a way that should be "close enough" for a person to see, should she or he go to that location, except that the ad hoc design of many hospitals interferes. One biomedical engineer explained:

> Nothing's pinpoint [with RTLS], but it gets you within an eyeshot. The only thing is that building design can be a problem, and that's because some of the buildings, the way that they're designed, where [the receiver] may have to plug in will be on an interior wall of a long exterior wall. The unit may be on the other side of that wall, and still being read as where the receiver is. And so, you may go into a room and go, "Well, it's not in here," and then go outside and look on the hallway, and look on the hallway on the other side, but you forget that you've got a 30-foot wall to walk around either side to see if it's on the other side within 7-feet of that.

Ultrasound systems, which utilize sound instead of radio waves, do not have the same kinds of problems of signals bleeding through walls. But hospitals' spaces do not rely solely on walls to separate patients or zones. Emergency departments, for instance, may use curtains that do not stop sound waves, and this can generate inaccuracies too.

The lack of accuracy understandably frustrates users of the systems to the point where they develop a cynical distrust of the information conveyed and often refuse to use the systems. Many staff members who thought that RTLS was good enough to assist them with finding equipment complained that determining an item's location was insufficient: they also needed to know whether the item was being used and — if not — whether it was clean. In some cases, staff could make assumptions that if portable equipment was in a room with a patient then these items were in use — and some locational software even automates those "associations" — yet ultimately someone must go and look to be certain. The systems are just not "smart" enough to reduce that labor. As a technological fix to this problem, some companies include "in use" buttons on the equipment tags. Vendors report, however, that hospital personnel are not compliant with this process and will rarely push the buttons to indicate the status of a machine.

Another problem associated with RTLS tags is that they carry infection risks when patients are tracked using them, particularly if they are reused on different patients. One hospital IT person told us:

> One of the other things we experienced early on, we wanted to tag our emergency department patients and we wanted to be able to do that, but due to the turnover in the emergency department, using a single-use tag was [financially] prohibitive, so we wanted to use a multi-use tag, 2-year battery life. The problem we ran into was you can't submerse them, you can't clean them, you can't sterilize them. So we actually, we ran a few tags through on single patients and sent them to the lab to be analyzed after wiping them down, and found that there were some issues. There were some, you know, some body fluids that get in the cracks.

One somewhat questionable response to this problem of not being able to reuse patient tags is to have a disposable shell but keep the electronic insides intact. It is not entirely clear that the problem of tenacious "body fluids" is eliminated with this solution. Some companies have offered a different technical solution of designing RTLS tags that can withstand the heat of a sterilizing autoclave procedure. Such tags are necessarily more expensive. Users of these autoclavable tags complain that the transmitters in the tags power down during the sterilizing procedure and while cooling, meaning that they are temporarily invisible and thus lost to the system. It is also uncertain how many times a piece of battery-powered electronic equipment, like an RTLS tag, can withstand being autoclaved.

Another significant technical constraint is the need to monitor and replace batteries in "active" tags. While battery monitoring and replacement may seem trivial, when one is talking about potentially tens of thousands of tags with batteries, the labor and cost can be prohibitive. This is especially the case when systems do not reliably alert staff to tags with low batteries, which was a common complaint. With most configurations we saw, battery life for tags was about two to four years, ① depending on how often the tags "ping" the detectors to communicate their unique MAC address and location. If the tag is programmed to ping less often, say every 10 minutes, then the battery life will increase, but "real-time" accuracy will not be achieved — battery life and locational accuracy are a zero-sum game. ②

Finally, there is a general lack of interoperability among hospital information systems, and this can deter adoption of systems like RTLS that may be viewed as non-essential. ③ The lack of interoperability, and even the lack of standardization, can be thought of as being intentional. A hospital technology consultant explained the reasons behind this:

> [With HITs] the really big players have business models that are dependent on them having proprietary advantage ... One of the biggest things we're fighting is this vendor proprietary advantage issue ... And it's just a big battle, and any CIO knows it, they want vendors, they want technologies to interoperate better, but there are technological limitations and just institutional advantages for the vendors not to play nice.

Absent any standards-setting body for hospital IT or any regulation of vendors, technology companies have no incentive to "play nice" and make their systems work with other hospital hardware or software, whether databases, networks, or interfaces. The result may be systems that intensify labor for RTLS users and distract them from their care-related tasks, as one nurse confessed:

> Just the fact that we have a lot of different systems, you know? That's not a benefit... you have to work hard to make the system work for you and then I think the other thing that's frustrating is [that] these systems are supposed to make our care more efficient and right now that's not how we're feeling.

When RTLS are perceived by front-line workers as interfering with health care delivery, which is of course not the case for everyone, then support and adoption will remain low and surveillance functions thereby attenuated. ④

Material Constraints

The success or failure of technologies must always be understood in relation to the contexts within

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① Vendors whom we interviewed claim their tags have a much longer battery life, but hospital sites with those vendors' equipment have different stories to tell.

② This can be the case as well with tags that are programmed to send out signals only when they are moving. If they do not often move, then long battery life and the potential for accuracy can coexist, but if they do move frequently, which is the presumption upon which RTLS is based, then the batteries will deplete rapidly.

③ A related category of technical concerns and constraints with RTLS has to do with potential health risks introduced by the systems. A 2008 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported, for instance, that RFID systems had been shown to induce electromagnetic interference in medical devices, which could cause serious medical complications and endanger patients (van der Togt *et al*. 2008). In reference to that study, informants told us that they had witnessed radio frequency signals interfering with the settings of certain patient ventilators that did not have sufficient shielding against radio waves.

④ Based on our site visits to hospitals, we found a much higher level of satisfaction with and use of RTLS when the systems were utilized for inventory-tracking alone and operated exclusively by "materials management" and/or "biomedical engineering" departments that are not directly involved in patient care.

which they operate. An important contextual dimension of hospitals is the space itself, the unique materialities and histories of buildings, the infrastructures that assert practical orders, and built forms that entrain human emotions, relations, and identities (Andrews and Kitchin 2005; Lindsay 1988; Martin 2000). Hospitals can date back hundreds of years, with countless renovations that become obscured or entirely forgotten over time. Older buildings present special challenges for infrastructure alteration, ranging from electrical insufficiencies, to impermeable firewalls and lead-lined rooms, to dangerous asbestos insulation. These challenges can be amplified by the need to maintain a sterile environment for hospital patients.

Wiring hospitals for RTLS detectors is no easy matter. A few buildings afford additions of this sort with interstitial spaces between floors, where workers can introduce more network wires to the already teeming snakes of cable. Most sites are not so accommodating. Once one does wire and install RTLS detectors, power them, connect them to existing or new servers, and so on, then the RF, ultrasound, or other signals can be inconstant because of different building materials. A technologist at an older hospital related:

> Okay, so you saw that it's a hodgepodge of build-on situations where we started with a building from 1928 and then we built on again in the 70s and we built on again in the 90s and so you've got different building code construction. So that changes the variability in those RFID readers to pick up those, those actual radio waves.

A frequent story we heard was that IT personnel and engineers never suspected that there were so many lead-shielded rooms at their hospital sites until they solved the mystery of why signals (from tags) would inexplicably vanish in certain parts of the hospital:

> If you go into older buildings, there's often some buildings that have lead lining and it's not just where you think they are. Like for example in imaging suites, in the cath labs [catheterization laboratories] come to mind. But there's often other rooms that are lead-lined as well because that's where they usually, if they deliver isotope type of treatments that has to be in a lead-lined room and it took us a little bit to find out where those are because we have two rooms in this hospital that most people didn't know about, so again I had to go back to somebody that has been here since the building opened that remembered, to get us that information because otherwise things [items with RTLS tags] go in there, they're lost.

It is often the case that spaces resist effective RTLS implementation in these unexpected ways, such that they frustrate aspirations to systematically track devices or people.

Building design also shapes individual practices and the flow of bodies through space. Because administrators and technologists do not share the same vantage point of nurses, patient transporters, or other front-line staff, they often make wrong assumptions about how people and things move through hospitals, and this leads to design oversights on their part. The following story from a biomedical engineer offers a telling illustration of how different positionalities create blind spots for engineers implementing RTLS:

> We were wiring the place and you know being an engineer you think you can figure out everything, right? So we kind of looked at the schematics of the building, we laid out about you know, for going to the cath lab we wanted to just do portal activity because that's where a lot of our pacers go. So I thought I covered all the entryways. So I'm like you know this is all the entryways on this. You know, I know the hospital pretty well; I've been here for a while, so I said let me ask one of the transporters. So I'm walking down the pike [and] I see Fred. ① I say, "Hey Fred do you have a

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① Pseudonyms are used in all quotes to preserve the confidentiality of interviewees.

second?" He said, "Sure James." I said, "You know can I show you this plan we're doing?" He looked at it [and] he said to me, "James, very, very smart but that's not the way we go." And I'm like, "Well how do you mean?" He said, "James at night that's not the way I go because I have to quickly send the patient down there, rush back upstairs to take another patient. Let me show you where we go." And he proceeded to take me where, I was like okay, egg all over my face, right? So he walks down to this back alley and that's where they take patients. So we had to kind of quickly go back and rewire for this back alleyway because that's where things would come in and come out without us capturing it.

There is a compulsion to track inventory or people in every conceivable hospital location, but that is more difficult than it seems. RTLS tags frequently fall off, disappear with devices down laundry or trash chutes, move through back hallways and freight elevators, leave through the morgue when patients die, or depart the facility for reasons other than theft, such as patients going outside to smoke or patients being transported to other medical facilities while on tagged stretchers, in tagged wheelchairs, or hooked up to tagged IV stands. Hospitals are fluid, mutable, and porous environments that defy the aspirations of total control that might align better with more sealed and secured spaces.

Financial Constraints

Just as global economic crises have the potential to slow the "surge" of surveillance and security commitments in police and intelligence sectors (Murakami Wood 2009), so too do financial constraints hinder the widespread or full-scale adoption of hospital RTLS. With hospitals, however, pressing economic difficulties are constant at most facilities, and the dual missions of patient care and financial solvency leave little room for expenditures on systems not proven to further one or both of those missions. The costs can be extreme too. The hard-wired components of systems can run $50,000 to $100,000 for each hospital department, and hospitals tend to have many departments, so the cost may be a million dollars or more. Inventory tags containing batteries can run $50 to $70 per tag, potentially for thousands of items, although some tags are significantly less than this. Basic disposable tags for patients are around $9 a piece, which will be a recurring expense for hospitals, some of which see thousands of patients a month. Then, of course, many of the systems do not come with software to run them, or the software is inadequate for the needs of hospitals, so that must be purchased and implemented separately. Additionally, hardware and software require constant maintenance and troubleshooting, even if a site is able to get it up and running satisfactorily and convince staff and others to use it.

With the burden of cost and the questionable efficacy of RTLS, hospital administrators and others can have a difficult time convincing their organizations to purchase these systems. This is especially the case when other needs are perceived as being more pressing or more likely to provide a "return on investment" (ROI). One physician framed it this way: "Maybe it would be nice [to have these systems], but it all has to cost tons of money, you know, and sometimes it's like maybe that money might be better spent on who knows, basic services for people. Or more staff because the nurses are so overloaded." And when it comes to solvency, most hospital administrators believe they can discern quite clearly what investments will be sure bets. An administrator at a large urban hospital reflected:

> The [RTLS] technology is there. The cost, though, is also there. And there are many places that want to have the technology but can't afford to have technology or don't think they can afford it. Or they have a choice: Either we do technology or we build a new wing where we have more capacity. They usually choose the capacity because the capacity brings them more money. Buying new technology does not bring in more money. Buying new technology brings in efficiency, which in your

ROI, return on investment, you hope brings in more finances.

It can be the case that hospitals decide to implement RTLS in a top-down manner, usually under the direction of technology-oriented CEOs or CIOs, who were referred to by our informants as "visionaries."[①] More often, though, hospital departments operate somewhat independently in their pursuit of new technological systems. They can strike up relationships with vendors and petition for the hospital to offer financial support for RTLS, but departments are their own, often atomized, organizational entities that oversee their own budgets and are managed by their own chairpersons or directors. This can introduce difficulties when departments want to advocate for hospital-wide systems. A business director of a large hospital related:

> Our clinical engineering supervisor here tried to make it a mandated thing, every piece of new equipment comes in has a tag on it. We're like, "Great, that's wonderful. We would love to have that. Who's gonna pay for it?" And he's like, "Well, the departments." Well, you can't mandate something that the departments have to pay for [so that system was not implemented].

Hospital administrators can also be judgmental of departments that claim the RTLS are necessary; administrators can see this as a sign that the departments are not being run appropriately. As one proponent for RTLS for inventory tracking explained:

> It was just better to spend [money] on more critical things... [With RTLS] you're spending money to solve a problem that really shouldn't be a problem if you're managing correctly and staff are not losing equipment, and things like that. That's what made it a difficult sell [for us]... It's almost like you're throwing money at a problem that can be managed or should be able to be managed in a different way that shouldn't cost you any money. And so, it's sometimes a difficult sell because what you want to say is, "Instead of spending $50,000 to put in a system for a department, just don't lose your stuff."

Advocates for RTLS are well aware of the difficulties of convincing others to invest in these systems and — aside from technology vendors — are largely sympathetic to the arguments against RTLS in hospitals, as the above quote illustrates. There was a strong sense that these systems might be appealing but ultimately unnecessary or redundant, especially for the tracking of people. One director of an ED at a large urban hospital, for instance, was enthusiastic about new dashboard systems for monitoring patients and their care but did not see how RTLS could improve the efficiency or awareness of his staff:

> When you got patients lining the walls, lining everywhere, yelling and screaming, you know, three of them in this room, I don't need an electronic system to tell me I'm up to my ass in alligators, I mean, I kind of know it!

One of the ways in which vendors convince administrators that the systems will deliver ROI is

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① A common strategy used by RTLS vendors is to offer to "pilot" their system in a hospital or a hospital department either "free of charge" or at a discounted rate. This serves a dual purpose of getting the vendor's foot in the door at a given hospital and cultivating advertising opportunities (i.e., vendors can claim that their systems are being used at well-known and reputable hospitals, and they can identify those hospitals by name in their advertising brochures or sales pitches to other sites). Vendors hope that once some of their hardware and/or software is deployed at a given hospital that that site will turn to the same vendor should they choose to expand the system. This approach can backfire too: one hospital we visited was relocating to an entirely new facility and was planning on working with a *different* RTLS company for the new building because of their frustration with the piloted system and its company.

through the automation of billing. As mentioned above, the idea behind this is that if a patient comes in contact with a hospital technician, device, drug, or so on, a software-based dynamic association can be made whereby that person or that person's insurance company is billed for that service. This was described to us as one of the holy grails of hospital-based RTLS. One administrator explained this approach by invoking a compelling television commercial he had seen:

> I think the best commercial was about IBM when that gruffy looking guy who was stealing all the food and he walks out and he [the clerk] says, "Oh sorry, you forgot your receipt!" That's what I want. All that other stuff, the patient leaves, chink! There's the bill! That'll work!

Unfortunately, at the few sites we visited where such dynamic associations were being made in conjunction with RTLS, the functions simply did not work. Instead, they introduced serious headaches for staff and patients who were unable to alter the billing records to correct mistakes.

As should be apparent by now, the various constraints or complications with the adoption of RTLS in hospitals overlap and reinforce one another. Without proven efficacy or return on investment, most hospitals will have a difficult time justifying the implementation of costly and potentially disruptive systems, particularly in materially and organizationally challenging environments. Moreover, when the systems lend the appearance of surveillance, they are especially prone to encountering resistance on the organizational level, to which we now turn in the next section.

Cultural Constraints

The organizational cultures of hospitals are powerful agents of social regulation. While they may vary significantly from site to site and country to country, they clearly shape professional roles and identities, modes of interaction, status relationships, and philosophies and practices of care (van der Geest and Finkler 2004; Weinberg 2003). The success of new technologies in hospitals depends in large part on their harmonization with existing organizational cultures. If systems are perceived as infringing upon existing territory, intensifying or complicating work, not serving patient care, or negatively altering power relations, they will likely meet with resistance, either overt or covert, or both (Koppel et al. 2008; Timmons 2003). Hospital real-time location systems are no exception to this rule.

A combination of territoriality, competing agendas, and scarce resources explains typical forms of cultural opposition to RTLS. Sometimes different departments in the same hospital have ties to different technology vendors, or even have partnerships or other financial stakes in the success of certain vendors. For instance, some administrators or physicians may "consult" for vendors or sit on the board of directors for technology companies. It would make sense, therefore, that such hospital personnel would oppose systems that they saw as competing with their own personal or financial interests. At other times resistance occurs because of competing goals, such as materials-management departments wanting to track inventory and clinicians wanting to track patients. Information technology or information science departments also have a stake in the systems being considered; we saw instances where IT personnel insisted on systems using existing WiFi networks, so that their initial labor would be minimized, and instances where they demanded that RTLS use different networks altogether, so that RTLS signals would not compromise existing network functionality. In other cases, nursing staff would remove and not replace patient armband tags if these tags impeded administering IV treatments to patients. There was even one example in which the chairperson of an emergency department ordered the removal of RTLS detectors from the department because he felt that they were not aesthetically pleasing.

Much more colorful forms of resistance included selective noncompliance and outright sabotage on the part of hospital employees. Nurses can engage in what administrators refer to as "workarounds" to

circumvent RTLS functions that increase their labor (Koppel *et al.* 2008). Removing tags from equipment is one way that nurses maintain their own inventory (in closets, behind ceiling tiles, or in plain sight) without coming under scrutiny of those running the RTLS system, presuming that managing inventory with RTLS is not the job of nurses. Similarly, as was mentioned earlier, nursing staff and others sometimes remove tags from patients when discharging them, and this confounds automated bed-management systems and reduces nurses' workload. Whether intentional sabotage or not, RTLS detectors are sometimes unplugged and not plugged back in, which skews locational readings even further and provides additional discouragement for people to use the systems. Practices of this sort aggravate vendors to the point where they lose their composure, as the following passage shows:

> Interviewer: I see the "Do not remove" written right across the top there [on a detector]. I mean, to what extent is that really a problem?
>
> Vendor: So, what we've done on the next version is we would actually put a metal strip here and here [on either side of the detector], and when you grab it to pull it out of the socket, it *shocks the crap out of you* so you let go.

While this vendor was not serious about designing a technological fix to harm people if they tampered with the equipment, he recognized that the success of his company depended on demonstrating locational reliability and that the everyday tasks of cleaning staff, repair persons, and others threatened the performance and therefore hospital personnel's perceptions of his company's products.

Intentional sabotage occurs too. For instance, in a group interview with staff at a hospital that had a fully functioning system for inventory tracking, they reminisced about the failed attempt to track security staff at the hospital:

> They wouldn't wear them [the tags]. Didn't like them. They wouldn't wear them. So you have to decide, what are your policies? Is it a condition of employment? Is it something that you're going to get disciplinary action for? Are you going to track me to the bathroom? Yeah. The system that we're using... because it's in limited production, the costs are pretty high. We're somewhere between 40 and 50 dollars a tag. Do I put out that money and then somebody puts it [the tag] in the flower pot? Which is where I'm finding them, up in the ceiling [and] in the flower pot. They didn't want to be tracked. They thought that every move they made was being tracked... The individual officers stopped wearing their tags one by one. No, they wore their tags. They broke them. They put them in water. They did everything to destroy them and kept them on [to disguise the fact that they were being noncompliant].

We also heard of several instances of nurses destroying both inventory-tracking and staff-tracking RTLS tags. With a few exceptions, physicians would use their higher status positions to simply refuse to wear locational tags. Hospital administrators, it should be noted, were simply never asked to wear tags, at least not in any of the hospitals we studied.

When administrators trying to deploy RTLS meet with such forms of resistance, they tend to conclude that it is simply not worth the effort to implement the systems. This holds true especially when the intention is to track people, but it can also be the case when the objective is to track equipment. In one example, RTLS was implemented in part to take automated temperature readings in refrigerators containing temperature-sensitive substances or materials (e. g. , blood, breast milk, body parts, drugs, blankets). We quote at length the following interview passage about the destruction of temperature readers in refrigerators because it communicates the profound sense of frustration that

administrators can feel as a result of technology sabotage, which in turn can bring about a sense of apathy on their part:

> Administrator: We went to turn it [the RFID system] on and hundreds of devices were ripped out already. So people thought we were listening to them, so they unscrewed the little antennas, they were ripping the probes out of the equipment.
>
> Interviewer: So they saw the antennas and presumed it was audio recording?
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> Administrator: Yeah, even though we communicated it, yes, audio, motion tracking... So I think what it probably was, was just a few of the paranoid-type people on each shift that may or may not have been directly involved with that function [of taking temperature readings], just saying, "Oh what's that? Are they listening to you" and then you get somebody talking about a conspiracy theory... So they were like, "You know, they're probably just trying to figure out if they should fire some of us and what we're doing," and, I mean, pretty bad. So we actually, when we go up there, these antennas now are super-glued, screwed in and bolted down... Unless you make it completely invisible and you don't talk about it, staff are going to rip the devices off, even if you put them on the beds. They don't care if they're really never gonna have to look for a bed again or they know when they have to replace the bed, the point is they're attached to the bed and there's some kind of thought process that's saying, "They're gonna know what I'm doing because I'm associated with this bed or this IV pump." It's a complete failure [the RFID system], right, you know? I mean I've sunk $300,000 on it... So that's the snapshot of 5 years of pain.

While not many hospital sites gave us such detailed stories about their "failures," many confessed that they anticipated opposition, particularly to the "Big Brother" associations with staff tracking, and decided not to implement those systems or those components of RTLS. An administrator at one university hospital whose nurses belong to a union explained: "No, we can't tag nurses. We are a union facility. We'd have to get union approval to tag staff, same with our techs and everything. That's just a battle we wouldn't want to try." In this case, the culture of the hospital is shaped by explicit workers' rights and collective bargaining agreements that make getting permission to do surveillance of this sort too arduous. Most other hospitals conclude that staff tracking does not have a sufficient clinical goal to justify the effort — it would just be tracking for tracking's sake:

> [Nurses] didn't want somebody tracking them and they thought when they went to the restroom or when they went on break [they would be tracked]. And what we tried to say [is], "It's only within certain locations and it's only related [to workflow]." ... We at the end of the day said, "It's really not worth fighting [for], cause what would we use this data for?"

In a slightly different register, some administrators equate the need for staff tracking with the admission of some sort of personnel or management problem: "You can get a system, a name-based system that tracks your employees, but you know if you're not having a problem with your employees, why do you need to track them?" Framed in this way, RTLS loses its allure because few hospitals or hospital departments would ever want to admit — at least not publicly — that they have problems managing personnel.

Organizational cultures can significantly impede RTLS in hospitals. Some of the forms of resistance covered in this section could be understood as counter-surveillance practices on the part of hospital staff to the data imperatives and control efforts of hospital administrators. As with resistance to surveillance in other domains, tactical efforts by people occupying lower status positions may be more about challenging issues of power asymmetry than with contesting threats to privacy (Gilliom 2001; Monahan 2006). This would certainly better explain the sabotage of RTLS tags on equipment or

the circumvention of bed-management systems. Because administrators did their best to keep us from front-line users of RTLS systems and because front-line workers were largely suspicious of us as outside researchers, we were unable to document actual saboteurs' rationales for destroying tracking equipment. Similar to the Luddites of 19th century England (Winner 1977), though, hospital employees are certainly not anti-technology: apparently only the systems that are perceived of as threatening or impinging upon the livelihood of nurses or other staff are being dismantled or circumvented. Surveillance-capable systems that introduce dissonances with existing, if ever-mutating, organizational cultures, are often deemed simply not worth the trouble of implementing.

Conclusion

Regardless of domain of study, it is important to document and theorize existing constraints upon and absences of surveillance. Otherwise there is a risk that Surveillance Studies scholars will succumb to — and thereby reify — a type of technological determinism, perhaps imposing this framework upon their data. The Surveillance Studies community is astute at deconstructing myths of technological determinism when police, politicians, media representatives, or technology vendors claim that surveillance and security devices are necessary and inevitable (e. g. , Andrejevic 2007; Samatas 2004; Wilson and Sutton 2004). Drawing upon the sociology of scientific knowledge, we would like to suggest that a kind of methodological "symmetry" and "reflexivity" is in order (Bloor 1991), whereby scholars similarly challenge their own assumptions about the surveillance potentials of new technologies. [1] This is not an attack, not by any means; instead it is more of a confession. In our project on hospital real-time location systems, we were looking for surveillance and convinced that we would find rampant cases of it. There certainly were disturbing instances of surveillance, some with harsh disciplinary actions associated with them, but the totality of our data suggested something perhaps more interesting and inspiring: tenacious obstacles to surveillance.

In this paper we identified four areas of obduracy facing hospital RTLS: *technical*, *material*, *financial*, and *cultural*. The primary technical constraint is that the systems simply do not work as promised, at least not yet, to reliably track equipment or people in hospitals. Hospital buildings themselves resist alteration on the material level: finite space for new systems limits what can be deployed, and the ways in which people move through these complex spaces are not always intuitive. The cost of RTLS also impedes their widespread deployment, especially given their indirect and sometimes tenuous connection to improved patient care or financial gain. Finally, organizational cultures introduce significant hurdles to the successful use of new systems; these constraints can range from interdepartmental competitiveness, to general non-compliance, to outright sabotage. Obviously these four dimensions are intended to serve as a heuristic for categorization and analysis, but they definitely overlap and reinforce one another. In other research settings, it might be more appropriate to use different and/or additional categories.

In conclusion, we affirm that it is imperative to continue to flag the many surveillance potentials of new technological systems, including their propensity for mission creep, automation, or

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[1] Technically speaking, under the Strong Programme of the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK), our mobilization of "symmetry" here is actually a conflation of two SSK tenets: impartiality and symmetry. We are advocating for impartiality with respect to analyses of the success or failure of surveillance-capable systems and symmetry with regard to explanations for why certain systems succeed while others fail. However, we are not suggesting that social science research can be value neutral, which is why taking reflexivity seriously would require attention to one's own politics and interests and to the values and reward structures that govern one's field (Chubin and Restivo 1983; Hess 1997).

convergence with other systems. At the same time, we recognize that there are many reasons for systems to fail, and sometimes there is more rigidity than momentum when it comes to surveillance. Thus, the future may not be as dire as much scholarship in the field implies; we may not be moving toward a "society of control" after all, or at least not as rapidly or inexorably as some fear (e. g., O'Harrow 2005; Parenti 2003). What we have done in this paper is try to call attention to some of the forms of *friction* that surveillance systems may encounter. Generally speaking, resistance to surveillance may find more success if and when it draws upon existing forms of everyday obduracy in specific contexts, be they national, cultural, organizational, or otherwise.

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