Paradoxical Empowerment: Immaterial Labor Translated in a Web of Affective Connections

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This perspective explores the production of user-generated content by contrasting two analyses that are convergent in some respects, divergent in others. In our first line of analysis we use the work of Negri (1996) and Moulier-Boutang (2007) on “cognitive capitalism” to extend some elements explored by Fuchs (2010; 2012) and Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) on labor and value. This approach foregrounds the adaptability of capitalism and suggests that workers are endowed with “an inventive subjective power” that simultaneously influences and reproduces the mode of production. Our second line of analysis explores the later work of André Gorz (1997; 2003), who invites us to imagine a society in which social relationships would no longer be determined by the laws of the market, a postmarket utopia. This approach points to the importance of collective organization and relational value production of user-generated content and suggests recentering the debate not around individuals and their labor, but on the web of affective connections between them.

Keywords: cognitive capitalism, collective organization, digital disidence, empowerment, immaterial labor, user-generated content

Capitalism is in a perpetual state of transformation; until now, it has managed to adapt and to overcome the numerous crises it has faced. The challenge facing any critical perspective on this economic and social system is to be able to adapt its conceptual apparatus sufficiently in order to grasp the successive mutations of capitalism without renouncing its emancipatory aspiration. Recent articles by Christian Fuchs (2010; 2012) and Adam Arvidsson and Elanor Colleoni (2012) have taken up the challenge to better understand value creation and distribution in informational capitalism in general, and in online user-generated content production in particular. Implicitly or explicitly, they ask: To what extent can a Marxist labor theory of value explain value creation in social media? What adaptations or additional concepts, if any, might enrich our understanding of what is going on, and what might be the political consequences of adding new conceptual tools to the Marxist “toolbox” (Arvidsson and Colleoni 2012, 147)? Our perspective seeks to explore the same questions of value creation and distribution in informational capitalism by proposing two lines of analysis that we have found useful: paradoxical empowerment (Proulx et al. 2011), and André Gorz’s later work on the “immaterial” economy. These two paths lead us in somewhat different directions, and suggest divergent political orientations and strategies. Throughout our perspective, we draw parallels with the texts of Fuchs and Arvidsson and Colleoni and comment on them.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AS VECTORS OF TRANSFORMATION OF THE MODE OF PRODUCTION

Information technologies can be defined as “general-purpose technologies” in that they give rise to applications
and services in all sectors of the economy (primary, secondary, tertiary). The convergence between computing and telecommunications industries that began in the 1970s is a spectacular illustration of their exceptional potential for technological and economic hybridization in the social organization of production (Breton and Proulx 2012). Starting with Machlup’s (1962) pioneering quantitative economic analyses, followed by those of Porat (1977), to measure the emergence of a new industrial sector (“informational” and “cognitive”), information technologies have been viewed by many as an important catalyst in the transformation of contemporary capitalism.

Information technologies have been credited with significantly transforming economic value creation in a capitalist information economy. In short, and at the risk of grossly oversimplifying, in industrial capitalist economies, the primary source of value creation was the physical force of workers that was harnessed and amplified by industrial systems employing machinery and Tayloristic processes. In contrast, in the contemporary post-Fordist economy of informational or cognitive capitalism, the creation of value is intimately associated with the “immaterial.” Here the means of production are no longer external to workers, but are directly related to their creative capabilities:

The thesis that we have entered a new era called cognitive capitalism originates in the idea that a type of accumulation tends to occupy a central place in social dynamics: the accumulation of knowledge and creativity. Knowledge and information constitute the primary source of productivity. This orientation replaces that which prevailed during the period of industrial capitalism when investments in machinery and the organization of work were primary. But the firm is not alone in producing, managing or exploiting knowledge. This process is by definition collective. Thus, in a system based on a decentralized, privatized economy, the question of appropriation of knowledge is central. For cognitive capitalism, the central challenge is to control and capture the effects of a new type of accumulation relying essentially on knowledge and a certain type of creativity. (Paulré 2009, 15–16, our translation)

If, as Paulré suggests, the locus of value has shifted to the intangible, and the firm can no longer completely control the key resources of knowledge and information, new forms of knowledge production and appropriation that are not directed by the firm alone may be possible. Some types of accumulation may take place outside of conventional corporate forms, or even generate new ones. For instance, Brabham (2013, 1) optimistically defines crowdsourcing as “a story of cooperation, aggregation, teamwork, consensus, and creativity. It is a new arrangement for doing work.” In Brabham’s view, crowdsourcing is a promising business model that deliberately aligns creative bottom-up processes with top-down organizational objectives. Typically, the firm will set objectives and provide infrastructure, such as a collaborative platform, but a variety of individuals with varying expertise will determine the production process. Crowdsourcing thus depends on a division of control. While this model generates value for the firm, the firm is not in control of the production process. Value is also derived by the participants, both individually and collectively.

PARADOXICAL EMPOWERMENT IN AN ERA OF COGNITIVE CAPITALISM

Both Fuchs (2010; 2012) and Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) rely on the intellectual tradition of informational or cognitive capitalism, stemming from Negri and developed also by Moulier-Boutang (2007) to discuss labor and value on the Internet. This position supposes a relative adaptation of capitalism and suggests that workers are endowed with “an inventive subjective power” that has the potential to shape the mode of production at the same time that it helps reproduce it. The authors discuss online content creation as a form of labor, but disagree as to how to describe the value that is produced. Using a labor theory of value, Fuchs (2010) argues that when knowledge is appropriated by capital, “the producers of knowledge become just like traditional industrial labor an exploited class that can, with reference to Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004), be termed the multitude” (Fuchs 2010, 187). For Fuchs, then, the multitude is an extended notion of class. He views online user-generated content production as a situation of exploitation since, following Wright (1997), “those who control the productive resources appropriate the fruits of labor of the exploited” (Fuchs 2010, 185). For Fuchs, time plays a crucial role in social media and the amount of time spent online is directly correlated to value through the commodification of data and its sale to advertisers. “The more time a user spends online, the more data is available about him/her that can potentially be sold and the more advertisement can be presented to him/her” (Fuchs 2012, 639). Arvidsson and Colleoni do not deny the importance of time, but suggest that a labor theory of value “does not offer an adequate understanding of value creation in social media practices” (2012, 139). Instead, they propose a less direct relationship in which intangible factors like reputation, brand, and conventions mediate the relationship. Their central concept is that of affect, operationalized and measured on social media platforms along three dimensions: number (such as the number of “likes” on a Facebook page), intensity, and influence or social centrality. As Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) note, these three dimensions match those identified by Gabriel Tarde in the early
20th century as underpinning the strength of affective communsions in mass mediated public communication.

Is it possible to reconcile these apparently contradictory positions? We suggest that some of the apparent incompatibility between the two views arises because they are putting the emphasis on different aspects of the same (problematic) situation: value translated as labor time and realized through direct commodity exchange, or value mediated by intangible factors such as brand, reputation which rely on affect. Using a somewhat different vocabulary, we propose the idea of a “paradoxical empowerment” (Proulx et al. 2011). We argue that the act of creation and freedom that defines the produser (Bruns, 2008)—freely producing, remixing and distributing content on the Web—is also an act of subjection and submission to the economic system upon which the Internet is based. Intentionally or not, produsers supply personal information to companies controlling Web 2.0 platforms, thereby helping to perpetuate the economic system. Although it may be invisible to them, their activities are framed by the architecture and the protocols of the platforms they use, and by the code (Aigrain 2005). Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012, 137) nicely describe this exercise of “exploitation without compulsion.” At the same time, however, users’ activities online open up possibilities for the “liberation of subjectivities” that results in practices of cultural expression and knowledge creation in a logic of social emancipation. Individuals participating in collective content production may experience empowerment as they enact a power to act. User-generated content production and the production of the self online are paradoxical insofar as they are simultaneously (potentially) alienating and (potentially) emancipatory.

Extending Marx’s analysis in the Grundrisse (1857–1858), which anticipated the central role of knowledge as a productive force in the development of capitalism, Negri (2010) describes the paradoxical empowerment of the worker’s autonomous subjectivity:

Creating value today means networking subjectivities and collectives, diverting and appropriating what they do with their collective production. Modern capitalism needs subjectivities; it depends on them. It is thus tied to that which, paradoxically, undermines it: because resisting and affirming intrinsic human liberty also means celebrating the power of subjective invention, its unique multiplicity, its capability to harness differences to produce something shared. (291, our translation)

In short, a capitalist information economy depends on individuals and their freedom to act. At the same time, however, the same individuals without whom the system could not function are also free to do other things, including to resist the system and to invent alternatives. The system thus contains within itself the seeds of its potential downfall.

BEYOND INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTIVITIES AND SELF-PRODUCTION: THE COLLECTIVE DIMENSION

On the Internet, in particular, networked productive processes are increasingly the main source of wealth creation. What is more, as a collective process, value creation is difficult to atomize and attribute to specific individuals, since creating value in this way draws on communicative and social skills and relations. User-generated content production on online platforms appears as an exemplary illustration of the tensions between production by a collectivity and its expropriation by Capital. Fuchs (2010, 188) writes:

According to Hardt and Negri (2004, 150), relationships, communication, and knowledge are goods that are produced in common, but appropriated by capital for economic ends. Hence, exploitation today is “the expropriation of the common.” Exploitation today is also the exploitation of human creative capacities.

Fuchs puts the accent on the exploitation of the multitude. Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012, 137) cite Andrejevic (2004), who argues that data aggregation makes exploitation invisible to regular users. In fact, in order to use social media sites, users must accommodate themselves to the protocols, the system architecture, and the features that are available to them in that environment. At a deeper level than that of the interface, design decisions, computer code, and algorithms all strongly constrain the collective use of social media sites and the recovery of content collectively produced on them (Andrejevic 200; Galloway 2004; Gillespie 2010). What is more, Arvidsson and Colleoni situate social media platforms in a systemic perspective and highlight the central role of finance in the appropriation and distribution of value.

There is also an energetic potential in the collectivity that we would like to emphasize here, however. Following Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004), we suggest that, in a perspective of collective paradoxical empowerment, the multitude is possessed by Kairos, which provides it with a potentiality to seize at the right moment. Giroux (2007) suggests that the story of the battle between Empire and multitude can be read as a therapeutic gesture within a “shamanistic complex” in the sense of Levi-Strauss (1974). It is the story itself that provides the medicine. Negri, as shamanic healer and postmodern prophet, leads us to imagine that the multitude will be victorious. Like Oriental military strategists who turn weakness into strength, the power to act of the multitude finds its strength in its ability to turn Capital’s organizational strengths against itself. Negri (2001) employs a conceptual character (Deleuze and Guattari 2005), Kairos, to enact his story. The idea of Kairos relates to the power of movement of the multitude, the essential energy of all life. Grasped at the opportune moment, it has the ability
to transform (without violence) the oppressive force of Capital into the liberating strength of the Common and the multitude: “The passage will be a catharsis, in which the Empire, like an empty shell, gives way to the simple revelation of the multitude to itself” (Giroux 2007, 96, our translation).

**IMMATERIAL WORK: COLLECTIVE, LIVING KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZED BY CAPITAL**

Our second line of analysis explores the later work of Andrés Gorz (1997; 2003), who, based on a reading of the conditions of human work, describes the possibilities generated by the mobilization of immaterial labor by Capital. His earlier work was oriented toward the idea of the liberation of human subjectivities in and through work, whereas his later work focused on finding meaning outside of work in a “society of freed time” (société du temps libéré). Like Negri and Hardt, Gorz emphasizes the importance of organization in collectives, in which value is produced collectively and relationally. Our reading of Gorz leads us to examine the production of user-generated content not as a primarily economic phenomenon. It suggests recentering the debate not around individuals and their labor, but toward a web of affective connections between them, and a detailed examination of the roles affect and sociality play in generating value. Gorz’s more radical approach invites us to imagine a society in which social relationships would no longer be determined by the laws of the market, and where workers’ creative expression and “production of self” would allow for a new, postmarket utopia.

In his later writings on questions of the transformation of work and working time, Gorz analyzed the proposals of theorists of informational cognitivism (Gorz, 2007; Gollain, 2010). In two works in particular, _Misères du présent, richesse du possible_ (1997) and _L’immatériel_ (2003), Gorz proposes a contrasting reading of the transformations of the capitalist system of value and accumulation. Initially influenced by phenomenology and existentialism, Gorz’s intellectual trajectory later centered around a post-Marxist critique of capitalist division of labor. He observes that successive waves of industrial automation have led to a significant reduction of the role of human labor in productive commercial enterprises. Unlike members of management, who see in this situation an opportunity for increasing productivity by using the time freed to provide workers ongoing training in things that would benefit the firm, Gorz suggests that the productivity gains made possible by capitalism could be used to enhance individual and social life, rather than intensifying ruthless economic competition and social division. He argues for what he calls a politics of time, suggesting that, not only could the labor-saving potential of new technologies be used to progressively reduce working hours, but also that the time thus “freed” could open a substantial space for autonomous creativity and enable workers to fully develop their potential as human subjects, particularly their “enjoyment capacity” (capacité de jouissance) et “leisure aptitude” (l’aptitude au loisir). It is in this context that Gorz proposed the installation of a “citizenship income,” a sort of minimum guaranteed income independent of the quantity of work that the person contributes to economic and social production.

The key to this other societal model is immaterial work. As developed by Gorz (2003), this conceptual category has a double interpretation. Firstly, it refers to what is produced in the information economy. As outlined in our introduction, the centrality of information and data emerges in parallel with structural transformations that signal a transition—begun in the 1980s and not yet complete—to a new phase of postindustrial production. This aspect underlies the financialization of Internet-based industries, and the commodification of user-generated content. While we agree that this is an essential aspect of any discussion of value, we don’t have space in this perspective to develop on the points so well argued by Fuchs and Arvidsson and Colleoni, other than to draw a parallel with Negri’s (1999) “becoming abstract of value.”

For Gorz, immaterial work also supposes the capitalist harnessing of the workers’ “production of self” (2003, 65–68). Individuals produce their identities and subjectivities as living beings, in their work environments but also outside of them; they use their creative energies, their ability to think independently, to communicate with others, to coordinate their activities with those of their colleagues and friends. In short, in the new cognitive economy, the prime sources of value creation are the cognitive, affective, and immaterial aspects of human work. The “new spirit of capitalism” (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999) requires that workers be inventive, creative, and imaginative, and that they know how to communicate and cooperate with collaborators, be able to function effectively within a group, to be able to collect, analyze, and synthesize sets of complex data. This is related to Negri’s (1999) “becoming complex of labor.”

Post-Fordist workers—who typically operate in networks—are called upon to contribute their vernacular knowledge and to invest every aspect of their being in their work; their subjective engagement (production of self) can thus be captured and appropriated by Capital.

Gorz came to the conclusion that the living knowledge that human subjects collectively exhibit in the organization of work constitutes a type of networked intelligence that is the driving force behind contemporary capitalism.
Communication and cooperation between operators are integral to the establishment of value. Gorz (2003, 15–16) cites Veltz (2001):

> Performance depends on systemic aspects and relations between individuals. It is not the sum of the work of individuals that counts, but the quality and relevance of communications established in the production system . . . . The idea of time is no longer a valid measure of value. What counts is the quality of coordination. (our translation)

This interdependence makes it impossible to measure work in terms of preestablished units, and provokes a “crisis of value” (Gorz 2003, 34) since the common abilities and knowledge activated by immaterial work exist only as they are actualized in practice. Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012, 140) note, “The value of intangible resources is less susceptible to measurement in terms of productivity of time, and depends more on the ability to attract affective investments.” In the context of user-generated content, while users may generate content individually, their activity in the productive regime must be seen in their interconnection with others, in a web of connections that is to some extent organized and managed by the immaterial “content” they produce. For Gorz, “Their cognitive, esthetic or ideal creations have intrinsic value that locates them, by definition, outside the economy, before they become a means of production” (Gollain 2010, 552, our translation). This view of a web of affective connections is far from Arvidsson and Colleoni’s instrumentalized interpretation of affect, in which brand value is determined by affective investments that are objectified and public.

Toward the end of his life, Gorz distanced himself from theorists of cognitive capitalism: Rather than thinking in terms of the transformation of modes of production, he advocated a mass exodus from the employment relationship and from commodity-based social relations, which would open up the possibility of a postmarket utopia that he qualified as such. For him, the eventual accomplishment of such a project had political implications. He saw the first indications of concrete progress toward this alternative model of society in the actions of what he termed “digital dissidents” (Gorz 2003). Gorz looked on the avant-garde experiments of open-source software collectives and other such “high-tech artisans” who refuse the privatization of knowledge as the first real steps toward a concrete postmarket society.

**CONTRASTING ANALYTIC POSITIONS ON INFORMATIONAL CAPITALISM**

Françoise Gollain (2010) contrasts the two analytic positions that we have outlined. Theorists like Negri and Moulier-Boutang adopt a posture supposing a relative adaptation to the cognitive transformations of capitalism, situating workers’ subjectivities as vehicles of an “inventive subjective power” that can transform the mode of production at the same time that they help reproduce it. In this perspective, the anticapitalist subject produces himself as an alternative power, but within the established production system. In contrast, Gorz invites us to exit from capitalism: In his view, the development of cognitive capitalism is evidence of the inability of capitalism to transcend the present crisis. Gorz invites us to imagine a postcapitalist world in which value is not tied to labor, a postmarket utopia that would realize the Marxist ideal of unifying the subject of production and the subject of consumption:

> Concretely, this means that user-producers could in principle deploy their knowledge using new information technologies to self-produce tangible and intangible goods for their common use . . . . Unlike the megatechnologies characteristic of Fordism, [networked information technologies] facilitate the collective and local mastery of means of production and, consequently, consumption choices. Thus, in his last texts, Gorz differentiates himself from theorists of cognitive capitalism with his proposal of a cooperative model of self-production located outside market forces that would initiate a “civilized withdrawl” from productivist capitalist industrialism. (Gollain 2010, 556–57)

This is a political project, not just a question of economic value.

We see the same tensions and resonances between the articles of Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) and Fuchs (2010; 2012). In our view, Arvidsson and Colleoni are anchored squarely in a capitalist paradigm. Their approach and the concepts they propose—brand value, affect—may help us to understand how informational capitalism works on the Internet and on social media in particular, but will not revolutionize the system. In short, our reading is that in proposing that social media platforms may “play an even greater role in determining the redistribution of financial value by supporting a society wide and more democratic reputation economy where the relative ‘worth’ of individuals and companies could be determined in more extended processes of deliberation” (Arvidsson and Colleoni 2012, 147), Arvidsson and Colleoni want to transform and improve, not abolish, capitalism.

In contrast, Fuchs’s position is more radical. He argues that “we need alternatives to capitalism in order to create a humane society” (Fuchs 2012, 643). In suggesting that the system needs radical reform, Fuchs’s position is more closely aligned with that of Gorz, who advocated a mass exodus from the employment relationship and from commodity-based social relations. The human and political considerations that drive Fuchs’s
larger argument are similar, and he even proposes a guaranteed income, although its source would not be the same:

The political demand underlying the argument that nobody is unproductive since each human being is producing and reproducing the commons appropriated by capital is that capital should in return give something back to society in the form of taxes as compensation. These taxes could then be used for introducing and financing a redistributive guaranteed basic income for everyone. (Fuchs 2010, 193)

Both Fuchs and Gorz imagine a “life beyond capitalism,” but they differ in the means to this end. Fuchs argues that a participatory alternative to capitalism can only be achieved by an intensification of class struggles combined with the politics of radical reformism (2012, 642), whereas Gorz’s anarchist political orientation coincides with his strategy of opting out.

IMAGINING AN EXODUS FROM CAPITALISM?
OPEN SOURCE AND DIGITAL DISSIDENCE

Given the preceding reflections, what resonances might this conceptual duo—one finding ways to adapt to transformations in the mode of production and the other calling for a radical “exodus from capitalism”—have for any political critique of information technology? How might a political critique of information technology help us not only to think about the transformations of the capitalist production system but also to imagine an alternative to it?

We suggest starting with an analysis of practices of open source software communities (for in-depth ethnographic descriptions see, e.g., Proulx et al. 2008; Demazière, Horn, and Zune 2007; Lin 2007). Based on principles of collaborative production and use, this phenomenon, and peer-to-peer networking in general, relies on networks (both digital and interpersonal) that are decentralized, less hierarchical and more autonomous (Bauwens 2006). Open-source software developers and contributors dedicate working time and freely supply their know-how, despite being unable to choose, limit, or control who will benefit from their labor (Lerner and Tircode 2002; Lakhani and Wolf 2005). While early work depicted FLOSS communities as a harmonious, cooperative “bazaar” (Raymond 1999) populated primarily by activists, subsequent studies have shed light on the diversity of FLOSS contexts, practices, and participants. For example, Demazière, Horn and Zune’s (2007) in-depth, diachronic analysis of the Spip project, highlights the tensions between control regulation centered on the product and autonomous regulation, which reflects different commitments of participants. Sociological analyses have shown that while software development activity requires both the mobilization of individuals and coordination of the collectivity, social control is less present than in other forms of organization (Demi and Lecoq 2006). Instead, projects are typically highly procedural: There is a sort of self-organization at work as order that is generated and transformed during exchanges between members in collective action (see, e.g., Cardon and Levrel’s [2009] discussion of Wikipedia governance). In short, these largely self-organizing projects follow a “commons”-based governance model (Benkler 2002; Ostrom 1990).

Seen through the prism of cognitive capitalism, FLOSS communities are new spaces for networked creation and cooperation that may represent alternatives to the market and the State. This alternative distribution of control over resources and the means of production is in some respects a concretization of Hardt and Negri’s idea of the multitude. The underlying paradigm is that of adapting to changes in digital industries. The production of value is organized differently and it benefits distributed more widely. In the extreme case (free software), use value is made freely available to those who need it, rather than being sold on the marketplace for its exchange value.

In contrast, Gorz describes open source communities as “dissidents of digital capitalism” (2003, 87–95). He positions this dissidence as a revolutionary act. In this perspective, FLOSS communities are a sort of avant-garde, who are experimenting, here and now, with a “future world rid of capitalism and market forces” (2007, 93). Experiments such as these are more than just utopian imaginations; they represent the first real steps toward a concrete postmarket society. Michel Bauwens, the founder of the Peer-to-Peer Foundation, has qualified peer-to-peer as “the socialism of the 21st century.” In a 2012 article, he asks “can we go beyond interdependence with capitalism” and reflects on preconditions for enabling the extension of a peer-production model beyond user-generated content and exchanges on the Internet. A number of recent experiments combine an open source approach and novel models of capital affection such as community production or crowdfunding. For example, the Wikispeed car was developed by a team of volunteers over a period of 3 months using rapid application development techniques, a modular design approach, and production by local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Of low cost and safety certified, its fuel consumption is currently 69 mpg, making it more efficient than industrially produced automobiles. The distributed, communal open source approach is also the foundation of recent movements such as the Occupy and Indignados movements, and the actions of Anonymous and WikiLeaks. Relying heavily on digital technologies and social media, Occupy Wall Street’s principles of direct democracy, horizontal general assemblies, and
opposition to corporate and State power reflect a socialist–anarchist activist ethos. Although the phenomenon started in the United States, it rapidly expanded worldwide, connecting autonomous localities across the globe in a decentralized manner. Although the physical encampments have been disbanded, general assemblies, direct actions and large demonstrations are ongoing. Working toward a “concrete utopia” is a long-term proposition, but there may be lessons to learn from such groups of “digital dissidents” about an alternative model of society and, ultimately, the end of capitalism.

As the articles of Fuchs and of Arvidsson and Colleoni and this series of perspectives illustrate, tensions and controversies persist within various approaches to digital labor and informational capitalism. The debate is ongoing.

NOTES

1. Negri (1982) argues that two ways of thinking about empowerment are contained in the work of Spinoza. Spinoza distinguishes between potere (power over) and potentia (strength or force, power to): the first is institutional power and follows a logic of domination; the second refers to the possibility of fulfilling the inherent potential of individuals or groups.

2. In two successive works (2000 and 2004), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe the new political order of globalization and attempt to offer philosophical keys for achieving a truly democratic global society. They describe two entities that confront each other symbolically and politically. On the one hand, Empire is the anonymous aristocracy of capital, a network of hierarchies and divisions, made up of rules, States, and groups of private interests that block the free expression of life. On the other, there is the multitude of individuals, groups, specificities linked together through cooperation and collective intelligence in practical experiments to produce something living. The multitude is composed of a multiplicity of movements and subjects engaged in a process of emancipation and collaboration, seeking alternative means to develop in a context of globalization.

3. For descriptions of both the “becoming abstract of value” and the “becoming complex of labor,” the reader is invited to consult Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012, 139–41).

4. The transition from a Fordist production regime to a kind of informational capitalism has increased the reliance on socialized and networked productive processes, making it more difficult to control and measure wealth production in terms of division of labor or labor time, and changing the relations of appropriation. In short, these new forms of wealth creation are often “intangible” resources and increasingly subject to practices of self-valorization.

5. Gorz cites Combes and Aspe (1998), who call this “total mobilization,” and Moulier-Boutang, who talks about “second degree exploitation.”

6. One of the problematic dimensions of this story of the transformations of contemporary capitalism resides in the relationship to the State that these analytic modes seem to call up. In fact, such perspectives appear to imply that individual freedom can only be guaranteed by rejecting involvement of the State. This is paradoxical when one considers that certain proposals central to the political thinking of Gorz (2007)—within the ultimate goal of a postmarket regime—call for the eventual establishment of a universal basic guaranteed income independent of work, whose management could only be assumed by the State.

7. Defined generally as “a specific form of relational dynamic, is based on the assumed equipotency of its participants, organized through the free cooperation of equals in view of the performance of a common task, for the creation of a common good, with forms of decision-making and autonomy that are widely distributed through the network” (http://p2pfoundation.net/Defining_P2P_as_the_relational_dynamic_of_distributed_networks).

8. Bauwens (2006, 134) notes that “while the distributed, collaborative digital infrastructure of peer-to-peer exchange is instrumentalized by capital, it can not be reduced to this instrumentalisation. As a civil society initiative, it offers an alternative model of social organization. This means of production 1) strengthens the autonomy of civil society; 2) its production mode does not stem from market imperatives nor state or corporate hierarchy; 3) its nonhierarchical mode of governance distinguishes it from both State and corporation; 4) the pooling of intellectual property makes private appropriation impossible and creates a “third social world” (our translation).

9. http://wikispread.org: “We’re a volunteer-based green automobile-prototyping company, with a goal to change the world for the better. We’re a collaborative team of skilled individuals who volunteer time to design and build safe, low-cost, ultra-efficient, road-legal vehicles.”

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