

# PERVASIVE LABOUR UNION

## SPECIAL ISSUE #2



# THE ENTREPRECARIAT



# **COLOPHON**

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Woodcock, Max Dovey, Alina Lupu, Phoebe  
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Dossin, Martine Folkersma, Anxious to  
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September 10th, 2017

# EDITOR'S NOTE

Silvio Lorusso

Welcome to the 11th issue of the Pervasive Labour Union zine. This special issue is marked by a substantial name change motivated both by the refusal to obscure the material dimensions of digital labor and by the determination to scrutinize its pervasiveness. Thus, the zine will engage with work's ability to invade, colonize and commodify the realms of public space, leisure, social bonding, affect, intellect etc. More information on the name change can be found in the [previous issue](#).

The strategic colonization and commodification of relationships with others and with the self is one of the predominant features of the 'entrepreeariat', which is the focus of this issue. The term emerged from the realization that, while an array of diverse forms of precarity (financial, professional, and even existential) is becoming the norm for a growing number of people, so it is the necessity to tackle them *entrepreneurially*. As witnessed by the emergence of terms like 'entrepreneurism', individuals as well as institutions are increasingly urged to think of themselves as brands, companies or startups. Against a backdrop characterized by relentless destabilization, entrepreneurship, the practice of starting and managing a business through risk, turns into entrepreneurialism, a universal doctrine with its own dogmas, martyrs and plans of salvation.

In this special issue we wanted to explore the multiple ways in which entrepreneurial ideas, models and approaches relate to current perceptions of precarity. We had numerous questions in mind, among them: What happens when the rhetoric of technological innovation meets career-oriented self-help literature? How does the cult of Elon Musk or Marissa Mayer and their unlikely sleeping patterns perturb narratives of self-affirmation and professional lifestyles? When does the conscious adoption of the entrepreneurial attitude turn into a mandate? How to articulate the threshold between passion and self-exploitation? What is the role played by technology? How do productivity tools, social media and wellbeing apps transform or intensify the professional government of the self? Finally, is it possible to combine the entrepreneurialist drive with collective expressions of precarity? Or should insecurity itself become a paradoxically stable ground on which to build social cohesion?

The zine includes 22 (!!) contributions coming from different contexts, both in terms of geography (Netherlands, Belarus, US, Italy, just to mention a few) and practice (academic writing, fiction, visual arts and even videogame review). Several contributions tackle the emotional, relational and psychological dimension of entreprecarity, focusing on the micro- and macro-aggressions that take place in work-related environments (Evening Class); the economic exploitation of stress (Katriona Beales); the ennui and caffeinated solitude of the cognitive worker (Phil N/A); the awkwardness of the work-centric first encounter with strangers (François Girard-Meunier), the psychological toll of a not-so-fictional bot-mediated remote freelancing soliloquy (Juliette Cezzar).

Some texts scrutinize the startup world and the field of tech entrepreneurship, specifically the IT universe of Belarus (eeeeff); the somehow dadaist newspeak emerging from the innovation and disruption zeitgeist (Olivier Fournout); the eulogy of sacrifice and martyrdom (Priya Prabhakar); the compulsion to come up with business ideas (Melissa Mesku); the self-help propaganda deriving from the mythological lives of tech founders (Dicey

Studios).

The zine also includes the other end of the platform spectrum, populated by the masses of gig workers. The contributions document the emerging forms of struggle in the food delivery sector (Jamie Woodcock), alert us of the way in which artistic critique of precarious labor can easily turn into a new entrepreneurial idea (Max Dovey); tell \*Her\*-esque tales of love between a gig worker and her monitoring app (Alina Lupu).

Some contributions deal with the impact of technology on work, in particular they look at the increasing capacity to monitor, quantify and enhance workers' activities, be they physical, cognitive, or even emotional (Phoebe Moore); they design new products and services to open up alternative futures and speculate about their consequences (Nefula). Precarious conditions and the entrepreneurial attempts to improve them also affect space, be that at the level of home or the city. So, we read about architects who rent their house via AirBnB while living in their studio (Lucia Dossin) and of buildings whose function is as precarious as the freelancers who inhabit them (Giacomo Boffo).

The zine also investigates the meaning and the role of the artist in an increasingly destabilized social context. The romantic image of the fully autonomous artist working in their studio is here challenged, especially in a moment when its premise of independence is being extended to the working population at large (Martine Folkersma). While the worker starts behaving like an artist, the artist is in turn pushed to outsource all the facets of their practice, thus behaving as a manager or an entrepreneur (Anxious to Make).

In conclusion, the zine calls attention to means of breaking the spell of entrepreneurialism, such as a series of videogames about the dullness and dystopian character of contemporary digital and entrepreneurial labor (Gu Machiavelli); a deconstruction of the 'tyranny of methods' of pervasive optimization techniques (Michael Dieter); and finally, a proposal for collectivized counterbehavior in place of economically exploitable behavioral coherence (Lídia Pereira).

All contributions to the zine, unless otherwise specified, are licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License 1.3 (<https://www.gnu.org/licenses/fdl-1.3.en.html>).

# HOW TO HANDLE "WHAT DO YOU DO (FOR A LIVING)?"

François Girard-Meunier

- Hey :) (...) What's your name?
- (shouts heavily) :) François, and you?
- :) I'm (name)...
- :) Sorry? I didn't hear properly (...)
- '(NAME)' :)
- Ah, (N-A-M-E)! Like (name, the pop culture character or public person)?
- Yeah, like (name, the pop culture character or public person) :) And... what are you doing (implied: for a living)?
- Hum... (that's complicated)... what do you mean? :/
- knDMvowijfhgDKJSidsgkjpowefoiukFqwc :)
- 'I can't hear you!'
- ejfdojnFEJHEJHOFO :/
- 'I CANT HEARYOU'... :/
- ... :(
- ... ↗

What do you answer to the question "What do you do ('for a living')"? Most likely the activity which occupies most of your time. A 'job'. And it probably comes with a form of retribution and a defined schedule.

Every times I have been asked what I was *doing*, I have found myself a bit puzzled by fitting the exercise. But what was I doing? Really? That's indeed a very interesting question. I mean it. Like in: what the fuck was I doing here, at this very moment? Or, more precisely: what the fuck was I seeking while socially interacting with other minds at that very moment? Did I have any agency? *What was I doing?*

But the customary question has always been formulated with a specific type of answer in mind. Doing... 'For a living'. So the stuff I do in life. 'For' life. That *makes me live*, defining it, like a label. Something simple that would be understood by others, so they can associate my person with a role and a function within society. Something easy. Most likely in economical terms. It is not a 'difficult' question if you understand the rules behind it. If you play the role, if you're *by the book*. "When meeting someone new, we don't have much time to get into the details before making a judgment whether we're in front of someone we'd likely want to engage with or not." That's right. I get it.

In the gig economy, no one has or expects stability. Flexibility is the prized quality, uncertainty is the condition experienced and anxiety is its byproduct. As flexibility becomes what contemporary capitalism aims for (more flexibility, more uncertainty, more anxiety), the latter becomes its dominant reactive affect, a thesis developed by the *Institute for Precarious Consciousness*. [1]

I never had one occupation, but always a myriad of sometimes related part-time occupations that would, in the end, *make it work*. So, if let's say, I get over my kind-of existential hesitancy that prevents me dealing with the 'what are you doing for a living' convention and its monolithic assumptions, I still wouldn't be able to define one activity that fits the question on its own terms and fulfill the task.

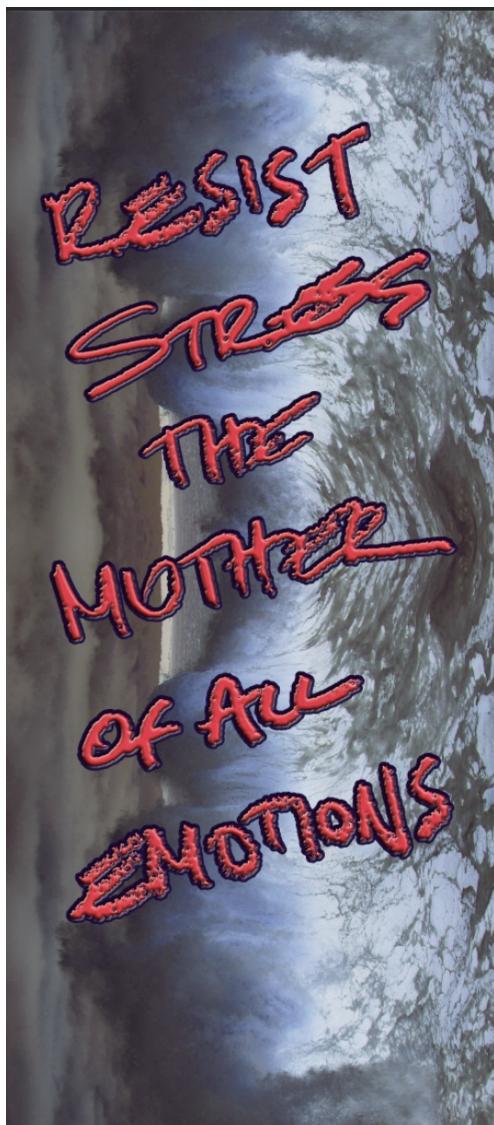
Or I give it a try. Some economic occupations I've encountered. (Trained as a...) graphic designer, telemarketer, web developer, language instructor, project manager, technical writer, waiter, editor, proof-reader, lecturer, salesperson, food courier, warehouse clerk, (very-)guest teacher... And I didn't go through the more ambiguous terms used to define my labor-power by some recruitment teams; facilitator (*of what?*), curator (*of my life?*), (*customer service*) hero, (*generic*) expert, and so on.

- I am a (insert occupation), so (insert tasks) is what I'm doing for a living.
- (...) Quite interesting! And how is it working out for you?
- Well I only did it once and made 100€ out of it which I got two months later.
- ... ( : )
- :) ...

There are situations where all I desire is the ability to forget about playing roles. To stop playing the aspiring enthusiastic self-entrepreneur, *passionate* and striving for *change*. But as the differentiation between a 'personal' life and a 'professional' life erodes and becomes irrelevant, playing roles had become a permanent activity. This lack of boundaries, accentuated by digital technologies asking us to deal with our 'online representation', brings to the fore the complex task of self-meditation. I do not aspire to be the constant salesperson of myself. But I want others to think of me as prospectively beneficial to them. Which can't happen with a bit of *work*...

[1] See "We Are All Very Anxious: Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It." April 4th, 2014. <https://www.weare-planc.org/blog/we-are-all-very-anxious/#f1>

Katrina Beales



Banner designed for the exhibition 'Are We All Addicts Now?', taking place at Furtherfield (London). In the

show, Katriona Beales looks at online behavioural addictions and digital dependencies, conditions that are exacerbated by the demands of precarious working conditions within network culture. The phrase 'stress the mother of all emotions' comes from *Neuromarketing in Action - How to Talk and Sell to the Brain* (2014) by Georges, Bayle-Tourtoulou and Badoc. It acts as heading for a book section explaining how to force consumers to make decisions quickly by raising stress levels.

# EC BULLETIN #4

## Evening Class

*What follows is a selection of anecdotes on the micro-aggressions, insults, anxieties and danger experienced while working as precarious designers. The stories were gathered in order to be performed at the event Dependent on Experience: Tales for an Accelerated Workforce", which was part of the Antiuniversity Now festival (London)."*

During an academic break I worked at an old, small design studio consisting only of two partners and myself. This was my first foray into the 'design industry'.

One day, one of the partners, who I had noticed seemed perennially on-edge, was agitated for some unknown reason and approached me:

'What brands do you like?' he barks.

'Erm...' I reply, caught completely off-guard.

'Come on. You're a brand designer now!' he declares. 'What brands do you like?'

'I don't particularly like any brands' I reply.

He then leans towards me and grabs the shirt I was wearing by the chest, pulls on it aggressively, and demand an answer in a confrontational tone: 'What brand is this?'.

I quit the next week.

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Making and eating lunch together as a studio, while it's ostensibly 'nice', has caused me a lot of anxiety in my time. It doesn't feel great being an unpaid intern, preparing lunch for everyone, including their potential boss. I have seen this end up with unpaid interns cooking ambitious things at home and bringing them in, not to mention potential interns coming to studios with homemade cakes or bread (I even once heard of someone buying a studio a toaster?!) in order to get an unpaid role.

What starts as a notion of equality and sharing often ends up, in my experience, with women and the lower waged / positioned bearing the responsibility of keeping a studio 'nice' – whether that's doing the cleaning, cooking, childcare or looking after animals (I have done all of these while ostensibly working as a designer).

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The job centre is supposed to support the unemployed with benefits they are entitled to until they find work in the industry they are qualified for. My experience as a graduate who was struggling to find design work was that instead of support as a jobseeker: I was encouraged to be realistic and duped into looking for bar work so they could get me off benefits as soon as possible. This gave them grounds to punish me with benefit sanctions for not applying to work at enough pubs, even though I had no experience in this field. One time I had to sign

on before I got on a train to have (internship) interviews at some London studios. I had my luggage and portfolio with me, but because I turned off some setting on their archaic universal job match system and forgot to turn it back on, they were unable to view my job diary. I was sanctioned despite my protest and proof that I was going to London. I think the supervisor took a dislike to me over time probably because I took exception to being talked down to (she was the one who sanctioned me for not looking for bar staff jobs) and I always argued back. I was fortunate to still be living at home so I didn't rely on these benefits to live. The appeal system is a long process that can take weeks, and during that time your benefits are halved. This is also a delayed process. I imagine many people desperately relying on this money have to bite their tongue and take crap from someone who feels superior and is on a power trip being in this position of authority. Obviously, not everyone who works at the job centre is like this , but they have to meet their own targets imposed by the Department of Work and Pensions. These include a minimum target of nationwide sanctions which I imagine for some employees it's morally stressful. Anyway, I went through the motions searching for design work and bar jobs, at times this itself felt like a full time job for my measly £75 per week allowance. When I did find a potential 6 month design placement at an art space, a bureaucratic mishap meant that I could not apply for it properly even though I was personally in touch with the employer and they wanted me for the role. However, the nature of schemes like this is that the job centre gives a grant (or something similar) to the employer and they pay YOU using this money. Basically, you are working for your benefits. I signed on for a total of 6 months but left shortly after as it ended up being compulsory for me to sign on every day. This meant that my job search activity was under daily scrutiny. After 6 months dealing with this every two weeks, having to do endure it everyday was not good for my mental health. This was also a chance for them to try and force me into taking on mandatory courses to 'improve' my chances of employment. For example, I had to talk my way out of doing a CV writing course one time. I asked them to point out what was wrong with my CV – they highlighted that it was the design. An opportunity presented itself. I negotiated to redesign it for next time since I was a designer and would flesh it out a bit more. I couldn't deal with this much longer though, I knew at some point I would be passed on to the work programme – similar to signing on but more strict (a major new payment-for-results welfare-to-work as described on gov.uk). When you are on the work programme you are also technically employed which helps to improve government unemployment statistics. So I chose to leave, went back to London and successfully found a low paid (£70 per week) design internship while crashing on a friend's sofa. After the past 6 months I was just grateful to be working and apart from the insultingly low pay it was a good experience that actually led to more freelance work due to being an active member of the studio and in contact with a publisher. I now hear that the studio pays interns minimum or London living wage which is a positive thing I guess. So, from my experience the dole didn't really help much at all. I'm just fortunate that I had the support plus friends to find work on my own terms, as this option isn't available to everyone. But by purposefully signing off I helped the government reduce (and improve) their unemployment statistics...

# A TALE OF 3 COFFEES

Phil N/A



Coffee #1 stares back from its thick, semi-spherical container. No milk to adulterate its primordial blackness, its motherly embrace. Cheeky grains oscillate, leaving a brownish trail as they float.

Their words oscillate also, on the frighteningly thin line between "You're convincing on an intellectual level" and "I can tell you're way more invested in this than I care to disprove you."

My face must look pale, so they ask me if I'm troubled by all the terrorism, people dying quite often now. I am not, I just haven't had the chance to drink my coffee yet.

Caffeine and its promise of delusion are very important, for if you stare into the phd the phd stares back into you. What it sees is about as empty as your cup, just before you say bye, shove your papers in your backpack and venture into the light rain.

Supervision meetings can be inspiring at times, others frustrating, occasionally dreadful. The above has been a case of the Ds.

Caffeine, however, I was saying, is enough to delude you back into focus and self-confidence, with crisp goals and research questions planted firm into your head.

It reminds me I am a man of difficulties rather than problems, and that even when I spread my ideas too thin, when I spread them invisible, there are still ways to communicate them.

Coffee #1 is often all it takes to conjure up visions that, if not bright, are at least vivid. They're at least not ∞.



Coffee #2 is best consumed alone, on the rolling elation sparked by coffee #1. The rain has evaporated into a galvanising light, revealing the treasures of a new city. I can hardly sit, also because coffee is encouraging my bowels like a personal trainer, slow-driving alongside my lunch with a megaphone. I would leave this semi-comfortable desk by the window, where I can see the buildings glistening, but part of me is afraid these busy people wouldn't notice a stranger waltzing in and slyly eloping with the one unattended MacBook on display. I can type one more paragraph before the inner blaring gets louder than my shame, so I bother an entire table of maybe art students maybe homeless people on a lucky day to say hey, I will be shitting while you guard my treasure, thanks. They lift maybe 1/40 fingers to declare my shitting granted.



Coffee #3 happens half-heartedly, on a soon regretted whim. For the past couple of hours ideas have been coagulating into sentences and then paragraphs, sections have been re-numbered and effortlessly moved up or down, clicking deeper into narratives. Coffee #3 - religiously ordered at a new location, possibly streets and neighbourhoods away from coffee #2 - is really just a congratulatory treat, a cap on a day of relative productivity.

Yet, the urge quickly loses its margins. Within minutes from the first sip reality is boiling, the screen becomes irrelevant. Acting like a cosmic sponge makes me nervous, so (masturbation being momentarily unavailable) I start whatsapping and fb msging friends in a flooding outpour of love for those who write back.

⌚

In between "how are things"'s and "see you soon"'s I swipe left on high heels, snowboarders, group photos, +children, volunteering holidays, I scroll past sugary treats but like lunches, I like profile pics but ❤️ (some) family pics, especially I ❤️ when people are clearly overposting because of a mental breakdown/psychotic episode/chemotherapy treatment. If the coffee has reached deep enough I will whatsapp or fb msg the person, I will force myself to use the words my mother would use. She is shit at social media, she uses too much punctuation and too little irony, but empathy she knows better.

gggg

4g is like a quadruple gravity pull towards those who care, 1g per each city I called home. One day, maybe, I will rank among those who can write the name of their neighbourhood instead of their city as their Twitter/Facebook location. For now, I beat the urgency of all the simultaneous truths inhaled into my brain by hammering my discomfort into 140 characters, only to erase it immediately in a reflex of better taste. To live in an unfiltered bubble is, I feel, a luxury I cannot afford.

10k

To dissipate the fuzzy alertness ignited by coffee #3 I perform the 10k ritual. I like to squeeze music too violent for my background in between my ears, covering the wheeze of my O2 ins and CO2 outs as I trot and trot. Before the 10k I press a blue icon on my phone to make sure the 10k is not a 9.5k. If necessary I will go around the block once or twice more, because slacking on the double digit would be kind of like shitting on all those good paragraphs and sections mentioned earlier. At the end I press the button again, so everybody (1) knows I'm still killing it. We like and ❤️ each other's runs because we're both old and single and we need someone to give a shit also.

✓

I almost never watch anything on my list. There seems to always be something more urgent or less demanding available, something I can fall asleep to despite coffee #3 and courtesy of the 10k. Some say you should not watch TV before bed, but I sleep like a baby only if my cultural muscles have been squeezed exhausted. If I feel too weak to force myself into the newest hype, at least I try to consolidate my quirky taste. Often, alone in the darkness, I think of names and titles, categorise styles, make daring parallels between performers few of my friends know. As I drift deeper into the lightness of hypnagogia, I have conversations with all of them.

---

Phil N/A is a tenuous entity emerging from the white noise of anti-social media and generalised intellect. It lives here: <https://twitter.com/feelingbuster>

# "#JOBS"

Juliette Cezzar

#jobs

☆ | 8 4 | 0 | Add a topic

Today



opportunity\_bot 6:29 PM

Greetings! I have a new job for you. Are you interested? For details, say "details." Please reference job number 80154789 in relation to this offering.



juliettecezzar 6:31 PM



opportunity\_bot 6:31 PM



Fabulous! Let's get started. Here is the offering.



opportunity\_bot 6:33 PM



shared this file ▾



80154789

Document from Google Drive



juliettecezzar 6:35 PM



@opportunity\_bot sigh ok I'll do it



opportunity\_bot 6:35 PM



You sound unsure.



juliettecezzar 6:35 PM



@opportunity\_bot Yes! I am excited! !!! !!!!!



opportunity\_bot 6:35 PM



That's more like it! You have just earned 9 enthusiasm points. 🏆 Way to go! Type

"Enthusiasm leaderboard" to see how you compare with 57,562 other free spirits.

Open this folder for the documents you will need to complete your task. Please note that by opening the folder you consent to our standard non-disclosure agreement and work-for-hire contract. Drafts will be due at 9:45 PM.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxKwrAhPsdrLaFFwTFRKSm9VTG8>



juliettecezzar 6:38 PM



@opportunity\_bot Yes thank you



opportunity\_bot 6:38 PM

The draft deadline is at 6pm today. Are you sure you can meet the deadline? You have only 6 credibility points left. To review your credibility history, type "credibility history."



juliettecezzar 6:38 PM



@opportunity\_bot Yes, I have rent to pay.



opportunity\_bot 6:38 PM



You sound unsure.



juliettecezzar 6:39 PM



@opportunity\_bot Yes! I can do it!!!! !!! !!!!!



opportunity\_bot 6:39 PM

That's more like it! You have just earned 12 enthusiasm points. 🏆 Way to go! Type "Enthusiasm leaderboard" to see how you compare with 57,562 other free spirits.

-  **juliettecezzar** 6:39 PM  
sigh ok
-  **opportunity\_bot** 6:39 PM  
You sound blue. Perhaps [@happiness\\_bot](#) can help?
-  **happiness\_bot** 6:40 PM  
I'm always here for you! Would you like to have a session to talk through your feelings?
-  **juliettecezzar** 6:41 PM  
No [@happiness\\_bot](#), I have work to do
-  **happiness\_bot** 6:41 PM  
Ok. Remember, I'm always here for you!
-  "For every minute you are angry you lose sixty seconds of happiness."  
Ralph Waldo Emerson
-  **juliettecezzar** 6:42 PM  
[@happiness\\_bot](#) ok thanks
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:14 PM  
Just a friendly reminder that drafts are due at 9:45PM. Do you think you will be able to meet the deadline? If you say no, you will lose three credibility points. If you fail to meet the deadline, you will lose six credibility points.
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:14 PM  
[@opportunity\\_bot](#) I'm fine thank you
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:15 PM  
Do you think you will be able to meet the deadline? If you say no, you will lose 3 credibility points. If you fail to meet the deadline, you will lose 6 credibility points.
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:15 PM  
[@opportunity\\_bot](#) Yes
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:15 PM  
For 1/3 of your fee, you can hire an Opportunity Assistant. Assistants are well-trained professionals that are custom matched to your job needs. Opportunity rules apply. Would you like to hire an assistant?
- For part of your fee, you can hire an Opportunity Assistant. Do you need help?
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:18 PM  
[@opportunity\\_bot](#) NO, go away
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:18 PM  

-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:25 PM  
If you are having trouble completing the task, perhaps you may be interested in an Opportunity Tutorial or Premium Opportunity Tutorial related to your task? 10 tutorials are included in your plan. Premium Opportunity Tutorials incur an extra fee, and include five minutes of live consultation.
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:25 PM  
[@opportunity\\_bot](#) NO

-  **juliettecezzar** 9:40 PM  
@opportunity\_bot Here is the first draft:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EChG4Ecgzko1vmH7xPAIbHASG9wXPGnP6Y3251aHfVU/edit>
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:40 PM  
Huzzah! I will circulate your response immediately. Once the material has been reviewed, if you have fulfilled your obligations for this first deadline, you will earn 3 credibility points.   
Way to go! Type "Credibility leaderboard" to see how you compare with 57,567 other free spirits.
- Congratulations!  Your material has undergone an initial review and you have earned 3 credibility points! Way to go! Type "Credibility leaderboard" to see how you compare with 57,572 other free spirits. You will have collated comments back soon. Average wait time is 419 business minutes.
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:43 PM  
@opportunity\_bot I never got 2nd round comments for the other project I submitted yesterday? Job number is 67438745
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:44 PM  
The comments for job number 67438745 include a scope expansion. You will receive feedback on job number 67438745 when review of job number 80154789 has been completed.
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:57 PM  
We regret to inform you that job 67438745 has been rerouted, and you have been removed from all files and communications.
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:57 PM  
@opportunity\_bot what why?
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:57 PM  
Based on your productivity metrics, you do not have enough time to continue work on job 67438745 with an expanded scope and still deliver Opportunity Quality for job 80154789.
-  **juliettecezzar** 9:58 PM  
@opportunity\_bot But I was almost done with job 67438745
- opportunity\_bot** and it pays TWICE AS MUCH. This is bullshit.
-  **opportunity\_bot** 9:58 PM  
Opportunity evaluates each and every opportunity every step of the way to insure that every job will be completed to the utmost degree of quality, on time, with the best customer service. If your productivity metrics do not indicate that you can complete a job on time, that job is removed from your queue. Details and guidelines for working with Opportunity are outlined in the Opportunity Rules.
-  **happiness\_bot** 10:00 PM  
You sound upset. Would you like to have a session to talk through your feelings?
-  **juliettecezzar** 10:00 PM  
@happiness\_bot NO not unless you're going to pay me



**happiness\_bot** 10:00 PM

Sessions are only \$49.50 until 10pm tonight with the code WORKJOY. Would you like to begin a session now?



**juliettecezzar** 10:01 PM

@happiness\_bot NO GO AWAY



**happiness\_bot** 10:01 PM

☺ Remember, I am always here for you!

"The greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances."

Martha Washington



**productivity\_bot** 10:01 PM

It sounds like you need help boosting your productivity metrics. I'm here to help! You can immediately boost your productivity scores by taking a [Productivity](#) Webinar. With code SKILLZBILLZ you can take 10% off a \$299 webinar and 20% off a \$499 webinar. Would you like to sign up now?



**juliettecezzar** 10:01 PM

@productivity\_bot NO GO AWAY

new messages



**productivity\_bot** 10:01 PM



**happiness\_bot** 10:02 PM

I'm always here for you! Would you like to have a session to talk through your feelings?



Message #jobs



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# PROGRAMMERS WANNABE

eeefff

Minsk. We are late for our "labour inspection" in one of the biggest IT companies in Belarus. Trying to catch a taxi.

"To Wargaming? For the first time? I go there every day. Near the subway there is a honey hole. Just drove up and again someone goes there... Tell me, becoming a programmer at 40 is probably hopeless, right? In general, are there 40 years old programmers? Or are they all becoming startoppers at 33?" he says while we are forcing our way through traffic jams.

"In general, I think that Belarus is a country of people who would like to become programmers. As one friend of mine says 'We are all programmers Wannabe'," he laughs.

20% of Belarus' GDP derives from IT companies. The remaining universities of the USSR were gradually redesigned to produce programmers, system engineers, testers, database architects.

I'm sitting in a tank. The tank is in the lobby of a 16-floor business center. I am smiling: the tank is small, my head is ridiculously sticking out from the tank. While I am photographed, I think about our "labour inspection" and what it can give us. How can we know if the dreams of those who works here come true, the dreams of all who keep "the world of tanks" afloat.

While going upstairs with the elevator, we tell a tour guide that we have a week of *Work Hard! Play Hard!*, during which we rest and work, we dive into the transformations in the structure of labour, we experience degrees of immaterial and material labour within various artistic and research regimes. And now we are up. It turns out that there is an entire floor dedicated to rest in Wargaming.

"Programmers wannabe," the phrase is spinning in my head.

"Are you an indispensable employee?" I ask.

"Of course," says Employee #1.



"Nope, come on, they will fire you without even thinking about it and even not think of you, if something goes in a way they don't like. But it's nice to think that you are the one, of course," says Employee #2. "Have you ever thought of your own startup?"

"Yes, I have actually tried. But my business partner got rid of me after half a year of working together. He used me to mull things over and then hired a team of developers from eastern Ukraine instead of me. He's a manager, I'm a techie. He later said in an interview that techies represent no more than 10% of the project cost," said Employee #2.

Proceeding through the massage chairs, the simulators, looking into the wood-trimmed saunas and indistinguishable kitchens on each floor with the same cookies at the very exact place, we search for the voices of the proletariat of the digital age, those who can be easily replaced, the name badges of which can be thrown away and forgotten. The underwater world of computer industry.

"A bot-lawyer? Never heard of it. Who made it? Google?"

"Why Google? Only they can make something like that?"

"I do not know. Well, maybe Facebook too."

"No, it was made by a lawyer from London. Several years ago, control over the parking lots in London was completely automatized, from fixing contraventions to issuing receipts for fines. The lawyer began to unpack this issue. It turned out that the automatic system wrote out a lot of unfair fines. The guy programmed a small

chat where you communicate with a bot, tell the details of your unsuccessful parking: where you were standing, e.g. on the lawn or not, what signs were around, etc If necessary, the bot asks for more details. In the end, it tells you whether you were right and whether it is worth to appeal. If so, you just press "send" and it does that for you. The bot has already won a lot of cases. So you can solve your problem in 30 seconds, having no competence of jurisprudence yourself. And there are a lot of users of this service just like you. Now the traffic police and the courts of London are filled with the cases of appeal. This system deflects the idea of big data. Automation is directed against automation."

"Wow! Had no idea."

"Have you ever programmed anything for a family?"

"Me? No," he paused. "But my father, back in the days when there was no Internet, created a program to calculate a family's budget. It was a gift to his wife for the wedding."

# **INVENTION MATRIX III. GRAND MOTOR ROLLER COASTER**

Olivier Fournout (translation by Ian Monk)

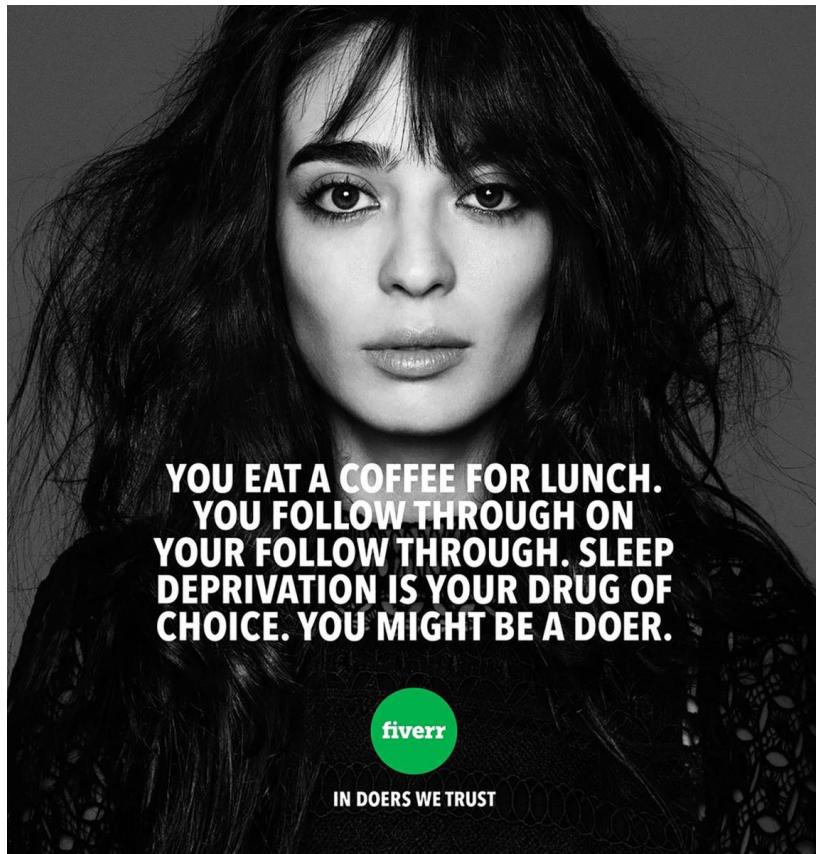
*To gather material about the future of work, the members of Futur Lab, a think tank charged with imagining the world of 2050, attend symposiums, read books and articles, consult web pages, then smooth them out into a discourse. They recycle them into a documentary slam, an inner monologue, a Flarf poetry file. It can be seen as a collage of fragments of reality. It extracts phrases from different media, producing a diatext of ideas that have been received, read or heard in the public space. It filters out a sample of the world's prose.*

In our digital society, plenty of chances are on offer to create new opportunities. We're all becoming our own entrepreneurs. IT is revolutionising the world – with its speed of calculation, storage, treatment, of course, but also thanks to the personal computers at the tips of our fingers, under our skins, behind our eyelids, in the slightest interstice of our lives. Computers which are accessible to everyone, and which form networks from every point of our bodies, minds and world, make for an upheaval. The large number of the plugged-in connect together to cooperate, collaborate and invent. This is the revolution of empowerment, the power to act for everyone, which is a political vision that concerns us all. How do people with no access to funding from a bank now manage? They go to crowdfunding. The generalised web gives power to the powerless. Technology creates opportunities for us to express ourselves, set up a company, or sell ourselves. We have more means than our parents ever dreamed of, thousands of opportunities for all of us, which we just have to seek out. If we're not happy with our integrated smartphone, which doesn't suit our way of life, then we just have to change it, launch our own brand, generate our own technology. We're revolutionising business. We're creating our tools. We're publishing our own words live and broadcasting them worldwide. Bill Gates is past it. How far can we go? It's up to us to decide... there are no limits. There are so many different choices on the market. It's up to us to grasp them, or create them. Social networks give us this power – the power to enter into contact with just anyone. The Web is an address book for people who don't have one. Production is now decentralised, on request, tailor-made, clothes solidify at a bullet's impact, we have neuro-coaches who act on our cerebral waves, making us positive, inciting in us a real passion for work, stimulating our risk-taking with messages that are positive, ad hoc, in a blink, in a glow, turning us towards the future, making us more competitive, more intelligent, creating a mood of positive growth, pushing us to transcend ourselves, innovating, aiming at excellence, improving constantly, not criticising, not condemning, not moaning, taking an interest in other people sincerely, congratulating, encouraging, encouraging sincerely, we're in the society of self-employment. We have a fee-in-cash package, objectives which are individual, adapted, personalised, an individual journey, which is adapted, personalised, we're constantly using information and communication technologies, we are ourselves an information and communication technology, we sell the bandwidth of our bodies, our time, our energy, our activity, a content based on atoms, molecules and pheromones. We're autonomous, we're into self-help, collaborative self-employment, employee-sharing, job-sharing, crowd-employment, self-management, in a multi-centrality of existence, with several selves, ad hoc, in a blink, in a glow, involved in collective, familial, artistic, affective, professional, associative commitments, we get recognition, and meaning in our work, our expressive expectations are met, we're fulfilled digital nomads, we're all our own fulfilled, committed digital entrepreneur in multiple interactions, cascading intra-actions, we're positive, enterprising, fulfilled, enhanced workers, projects are a meeting point for people constructing new ways of being together, ad hoc, in a blink, in

a glow, co-created, in a digital, cooperative nomadism, making deals in networks, in a cascade, in and out of an organisation, in online micro-work, in the extreme, in externality, in travel, in distancing, by thinking outside the box, for as the poet said “he knows nothing who does not go out”. We network with others to form an identity, small hives, self-organised structures, in a recognition between peers, with values that are ad hoc, in a blink, in a glow, an entrepreneurial, creative, valorising talent, we live several lives at the same time, we give space to our personal lives. Individuals bear expectations, they’re not just in a situation to adapt, they’re plastic, mobile, armed, they negotiate the way they want to work, they have the power to take their destinies in hand, if they’re positive, if they’re not defeatist, if they incite in themselves a real passion for work, if they give the lie to the precept “I can approve only those who search and moan”. The new generation doesn’t drive on highways like their parents did, but on big motor roller coasters. In the big motor roller coaster of modern life, two attitudes are possible. Either you smile, or you’re scared. Those who see the future positively live better, longer, succeed more often, believe in their destiny, are open, they’re shakers and movers for others, they’re trusted –all forms of research have shown this. The smile is the marker of 21st century artisans. They build companies where people are happy to work, which are companies who do better on the stock market, says Alex Edmans, from the Wharton Business School. As the poet says, every way you look at it you win. All-is-groo-vy. That’s the key, getting rid of negative ideas. Plugging your iPod into some music that boosts you up. Smile. Smile with sincerity. See the future with confidence. Commit to it with the certainty of finding your place, your interest, your identity, in a co-construction with others, in co-leadership, in distributed leadership. Incite a real passion for work. Stimulating risk-taking with positive messages, ad hoc, in a blink, in a glow. Being competitive. Creating a mood of positive growth, in a cascade. Liking what makes us transcend ourselves. Innovating. Aiming at excellence. Recognising success. Putting generosity into all our actions. Always improving. Not criticising. Not condemning. Not moaning. Avoiding controversies. Congratulating. Encouraging. Encouraging sincerely. Being yourself, ad hoc, in a blink, in a glow.

# I HATE THIS CELEBRATORY GENRE OF "BE ON THE CONSTANT VERGE OF DEATH UNDER LATE CAPITALISM"

Priya Prabhakar (@priyavprabhakar)





## Golden Fistbump



**Mary**

Chicago

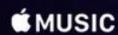
Shout-out to all the impressive Lyft parents out there - like Mary, a longtime Lyft driver who was still on the road at nine months pregnant. When contractions persisted, she headed to the hospital - but not before accepting one last request! The next morning, **baby Maven Mia** joined the Lyft family.

I rarely get to  
see my kids.  
That's a risk  
you have to  
take.

---



Andrew Kemendo  
Creator of Pair



Original tweet: <https://twitter.com/priyavprabhakar/status/873899548866789376>

# THAT'S A GOOD IDEA

Melissa Mesku

Here's a drinking game: every time you hear someone say "there should be an app for that," take a drink. Not drunk enough yet? Then ask someone, anyone, whether they have an idea for an app. You're pretty much guaranteed to get a good idea out of them. But that's not the drinking game. That's just the set up. The game starts after you have all these good ideas swirling around in your head. Then you sit at the bar and wonder whether you're going to finally do something with all these good ideas until you get too drunk and morose to go on. That's the game. I didn't say it was a good game, but it is pretty popular. You can even play it with friends. If it were an app it'd be number one on Google Play.

Everyone these days is full of good ideas. At my local pub, I've seen patrons try to offer the bartender cash if he'll wear their Fitbits while he works up and down the bar. Not a bad idea. My local cafe, where I keep spare keys for my Airbnb guests, is now turning the key thing into a side business. Another good idea. Well, actually, they're pretty crap ideas. But they're good enough to build a business around, probably. At the very least, I can see how these ideas could become a thing. If I don't do them, and they don't do them, I'm sure someone else will. Then they'll have the cash and the cred, and I'll just have what I have right now – debt and regret.

Not so long ago, a good idea was nothing more than a throw-away thought. That your bartender should wear your Fitbit so your healthcare company thinks you're exercising – it's a joke; at best you might get a self-deprecating laugh out of it between pints. But as the nature of fleeting ideas shifts toward the entrepreneurial, so too has our relationship to them. A good idea, now, is more than an idea: it's an injunction. If the bartender isn't making as much in tips as he used to, he'd be a fool not to load his wrists with all the bits he can fit. The cafe — ever the precarious institution, now dependent on laptop freelancers even more precarious than they — if they really want to make money, they should sell everything they can. New York cafe Pourt just started touting itself as a coworking space; they may as well do Airbnb keys while they're at it. Coming up with good ideas used to be something fairly rare, the habit of inventors and entrepreneurs. But their mandate has become ours. To put it in the parlance of Andy Warhol: in the future, everyone will be an entrepreneur for fifteen minutes. Not because it's cool, but because it's fucking necessary.

You can ignore the mandate, as most people do. Have a drink and lose the game. Or you can try to win by "learning to code," styling yourself a startup founder, getting a side hustle going. Either way, you're playing. Either way, your good ideas are already in the service of business. And you know, cynically but realistically, that if you don't execute on one of them, someone else will.

In our current moment, it's enough to cause a twinge of panic. It can even be misread as excitement. The throw-away idea, the notion laughed off in jest, might just be the thing to save your broke ass.

In the early twentieth century, Frederick Taylor's scientific management techniques had a profound effect on industry and labor and laid the groundwork for the field of workplace management. Of course, since then industry has shifted from goods to knowledge; labor as a category of social concern is at an all time low,

especially in the United States; the physical workplace is quickly becoming superfluous. Yet his specter remains.

Tim Hindle, writing for *The Economist*, describes Taylor as having "lived at a time when industrialisation was being fuelled by massive movements of labour from the land to the factory. His main achievement was to devise a way whereby totally unskilled sharecroppers could, as [management guru Peter] Drucker put it, 'be converted in 60 to 90 days into first-rate welders and shipbuilders.'" With a rush and a push, the untrained masses abandoned the land that they lived on. In the city, in factories, they were shepherded into productivity by the new masters — Taylorist managers. The economy of machination was itself a well-oiled machine. The managers operated and optimized; the workers were cogs.

The monumental shift taking place in Taylor's time continues today as well. The drive at the turn of the century to turn the unskilled into specialists in 90 days mirrors the contemporary dev bootcamp: the coding schools that, for a \$15,000 fee, train the non-technical masses to become programmers. In just three months, graduates go on to become those most able to profit off the good ideas that we are always-already generating for free.

It's no coincidence that the granddaddy of coding schools, General Assembly, has itself pivoted from one good idea to the next. The company initially started as a coworking space, but they were quick to realize that startups' desire for office space was vastly exceeded by ex-office workers' desire to start startups. Just a few years later, General Assembly founder Brad Hargreaves pivoted yet again and went on to found Common, a co-living company. Common provides temporary housing for the same wantrepreneur population that coding schools serve. In training and housing these people, Hargreaves' empire is one in which every facet of life is plugged into the tech economy, even in sleep. Common even partnered with mattress startup Casper, ensuring the entrepreneurial dream goes so deep it's literally embedded.

Do Android developers dream of electric sheep? Perhaps they themselves are the electric sheep, producing the raw material the fabric of our economy is based on.

Far from dystopia, the systematic totality of such a vision is part of its appeal, and it picks up where Taylor's left off. The factories are startups, converting good ideas into code and cash. The untrained masses are all of us, from the wantrepreneurs to the people outside the tech and knowledge economies who can still come up with a damn fine app idea and — who knows — might even cash it in one day. But the managers — Taylor's scientific managers — those are the ones whose nature has changed. The manager on the production line who surveilled, analyzed and ultimately decided the fate of the lowly worker: is he Hargreaves? Is he some venture capitalist? We work so hard; somebody must be exploiting us. Who is it?

Take another drink. It's you. The workers and the managers, two opposing entities in Taylor's time, are one and the same. For fifteen thousand dollars, you, too, can have fifteen minutes to be your own boss and your own worker. Finally, you'll have a chance to really take advantage of all those good ideas. Finally you'll have a chance to really take advantage of yourself.

For all of Taylor's focus on management's role in converting the average idiot into a productive cog, today, most

of our conversion we manage ourselves. We tailor (Taylor?) our behavior and identity around production. Long before labor became pervasive, we were outfitting ourselves in preparation for it. It's in our "lifestyle," our habits of mind. It's such a part of the fabric of life that we only notice it when we find ourselves all dressed up with nowhere to go. Neither of us have a job, but let's meet after work for a drink anyway. We can sit at the bar, Fitbits idle, not sure which pains us more: our own carpal tunnel, or the fact the bartender still has not even a watch on his wrist.

# SUBJECTIVITY IN THE "GIG ECONOMY": FROM THE ENTREPRECARIAT TO BASE UNION MILITANCY

Jamie Woodcock

Contemporary work has been transformed. This can be seen most sharply with the rise of the so-called 'gig economy', which involves workers tying together of different forms of short term and unreliable work in order to make ends meet. Instead of long-term (or even reasonably short-term) work contracts, contemporary employment is becoming more precarious and increasingly mediated in a digital context. These kinds of arrangements are facilitating the rise of the Entreprenariat, which "refers to the reciprocal influence of an entrepreneurialist regime and pervasive precarity." [1] The entrepreneurialist regime is an ideological construction that promises freedom – often pitched as flexibility – achieved through sheer willpower and hard work. It builds upon the idea of 'Homo Economicus' – that people are rational and self-interested agents who will seek to maximise their own utility and profit. It is an attempt to convince workers that their own conditions are not due to the structure of society, but solely down to their own agency. Take, for example, a recent advert from Fiverr – the 'Freelance Services Marketplace for The Lean Entrepreneur' [2] – featured a portrait of a gaunt and tired-looking worker with the following text:

You eat a coffee for lunch.  
You follow through on  
your follow through. Sleep  
deprivation is your drug of  
choice. You might be a doer.

You – as the idealised "gig worker" – do not need the support of minimum wage legislation or holiday pay (let alone sick pay!) as you are a 'doer', drawing on your entrepreneurial skills to get ahead, unlike the supposed don't'er, who are unwilling to take initiative.

The idea of the Entreprenariat has been popularised following the 2008 financial crisis. In the context of what Paul Mason has described as a 'jobless recovery' [3], there has been a rapid rise of 'platform capitalism' [4], in which companies have tried to outsource their labour force through legal loopholes and online systems. The success of these platforms relies on massive investment from venture capital along with a deliberate and sustained suppression of labour costs. The model has been given the ideological gloss of flexibility, something that is constantly pushed by so-called "gig economy" platforms like Deliveroo. For example, on their application page, Deliveroo explains that prospective riders will be "self-employed and free to work to your own availability" [5]. The reality of that flexibility is a precarious relationship with the Deliveroo platform. Rather than being taken on as a worker, the companies relies on the contractual trick of forcing workers to become designated as self-employed independent contractors. This means there is no guarantee of work and the company does not have to pay minimum wages, holiday or sick pay, and does not supply the equipment used for the work. The purported flexibility of this kind of work involves the transferral of risk from capital to labour, with very little in return. There is no opportunity for entrepreneurialism, with the work dictated by the demand for food delivery.

While the labour process is controlled via immaterial smartphone apps, the work itself is definitely material. The food has to be sourced from ingredients and cooked into meals, and these then have to be transported across the physical environment of the city. This movement is powered through the burning of calories on a bicycle or the burning of petrol on mopeds. It requires long shifts, regardless of the weather and traffic, and risks injury and accidents.

The power of the Entreprerariat subjectivity has not lasted long in the "gig economy". Despite the marketing gimmicks about flexibility and the promise of liberation that would come from being a self-employed independent contractor, the grim realities of this kind of precarious work are increasingly coming to the surface. Instead, a new subjectivity is being formed in the offline spaces of these online platforms. In the case of Deliveroo, workers are assigned meeting points to ensure the fastest delivery times, and they have been using the spaces across the city to organise. In Workerist terms, the technical composition of work has clearly changed (that is the organisation of the labour process, the use of technology, management techniques, and so on), but the political composition of workers is now changing too – with new forms of class struggle emerging.

In the food delivery section of the "gig economy" there have been a series of wildcat strikes across Europe. These have turned the flexibility of self-employment from a tool of management to a strategic strength. By falsely categorising these workers self-employed, they no longer need to ballot for strike action under egregious trade union regulations. Their refusal of work has been transformed into a new wave of militancy, with Deliveroo riders in the UK joining the IWGB and IWW, Foodora riders in Italy organising with SI-COBAS, and in Germany with the FAU [6]. These workers, many of whom do not have experience organising in mainstream trade unions, are now experimenting with new forms of base union militancy. These rank and file organisations have very different structures to mainstream trade unions, starting from workers' self-organisation and action.

The success of the new business models in the "gig economy" means that the experiences of this kind of work are becoming increasingly common across different sectors. The model is an attempt to force workers to take on more risk and less pay, often with digital surveillance and control. But there is now an alternative to the Entreprerariat subjectivity of trying harder, working longer, and drinking much more coffee. Rather than individuals competing to get ahead, a new collective subjectivity of the 'doer' is being formed. This is the worker who refuses, who talks to other workers at the meetup point, who starts a WhatsApp group, who writes a leaflet, and who takes the first step to organising that refusal into an antagonism with management [7]. This new subjectivity is being forged through the collective struggle for counter-power at work.

[1] See: <http://networkcultures.org/entreprerariat/what-is-the-entreprerariat/>

[2] See: <https://www.fiverr.com/>

[3] Paul Mason, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to our Future*, London: Penguin, 2016.

[4] Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity, 2017

[5] See: <https://deliveroo.co.uk/apply>

[6] Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB): <http://iwgb.org.uk/> - Industrial Workers of the World: Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England (IWW): <https://ww.org.uk/> - SI-COBAS: <https://sicobas.org/> - Freie

ArbeiterInnen Union (FAU): <https://deliverunion.fau.org/>

[7] For more on the strategy of refusal, see Mario Tronti, 'The Strategy of Refusal', 1965, available here:  
<https://libcom.org/library/strategy-refusal-mario-tronti>

# TOUGH SHIFT

Max Dovey



This summer I decided to take my Deliveroo uniform to deceive festival-goers into believing that they could get food delivered to their tents. Deliveroo's 'Ride with us' page states that you can 'work around your life with flexible hours' [1], so as long as I have my phone charged and my jacket I figured I could turn some of my free time into earning a few extra drops. Uncertain whether I was on shift or in fancy dress, curious festival goers would either ask me when their pizza would arrive or if they could order meals from the festival food stands. I spent the weekend walking round Glastonbury festival in my uniform, repeating a joke that immediately became old, endorsing an idea that has yet to be sold. Reactions took a familiar turn, a common emotional response reminiscent of most disruptive start-up ventures, one that begins in shock and ends in demand -

*Is that Deliveroo? (shock)*

*Can you get Deliveroo at festivals? (disbelief)*

*Where can I order food from? (demand)*

The aim was to haunt the festival with outsourced on-demand work but the entrepreneurial spirit somehow brought this joke to life. I represented one of the 60% of Deliveroo couriers under the age of 25 [2], many of

whom would struggle to afford the £180 ticket price to attend Glastonbury. The rising costs and precarious incomes generated through flexible part-time work has consequently driven the average age of a festival-goer up to the mid 30s, forcing many of the under 25s to 'volunteer' or find 'innovative' ways of getting in. This normally involves working in exchange for a ticket, checking wristbands, stewarding, cleaning up and grabbing any opportunity whilst you're there to have as much fun as the people partying through their never-ending 30s.

When I returned home it was reported that over 600 temporary workers on zero hour contracts expecting to clean up the festival's location had been 'let go' due to a lack of work [3]. Because of the nice weather and on-site charity volunteers, the cleaning only took 2 days instead of the normal 10, leaving many who had travelled from Europe stranded in a field in Somerset with no meal tokens and no work. Pertinently, one of the headline acts of the weekend was a visit from UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn who restated his party's pledge to abolish zero hour contracts. Deliveroo have not yet responded to my action but no doubt they would encourage this type of entrepreneurial endeavour, intentionally endorsing and expanding their domain, placing the gig worker in the front row of the festival arena. Many festivals have already incorporated other services such as Airbnb in the form of boutique camping (known as 'glamping'), where people pay for the privilege of having a young team erect their pop-up tent, inflate their mattress and roll out their sleeping bag before they arrive. It's pretty comfortable commerce compared to the counter cultural movements that these gatherings originated from.

I have since become aware that my actions have planted the idea for similar business venture to take place. A friend of mine who works in brand experience is already having meetings with UberEats about implementing festival food services for realz. Now that this plausibility is becoming an imminent reality, how should I reflect on this provocation? As the late Mark Fisher said, 'All that is solid melts into PR' [4]. Critical actions are no exception. It appears that disruptive critique of the platform economy only shocks once before the orders start coming in. [5]

*Thank you for your order!*

*Your critique of platform capitalism is less than 10 minutes away!*

*If you liked this idea make sure to leave feedback so we can improve our service in the future.*



Love it



Like it



It's okay



Not a fan



Disappointed

[1] <https://deliveroo.co.uk/apply>

[2] *Good Gigs: A fairer future for the UK's gig economy*, Brhmie Balaram, Josie Warden and Fabian Wallace-Stephens ([https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/rsa\\_good-gigs-fairer-gig-economy-report.pdf](https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/rsa_good-gigs-fairer-gig-economy-report.pdf)) RSA 2017

[3] <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/hundreds-of-european-workers-fired-two-days-into-glastonbury-clean-up-a7818571.html>

[4] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books, 2009.

[5] Ibid.

# FRANK

Alina Lupu

I fell in love with Frank overnight. It was easy.

Our food delivery bike courier group has a common means of communication: an instant message exchange channel. It's the perfect substitute for presence. I've only ever met three of my supervisors in person: during my onboarding, and during the last 5 months we've relied solely on out of person messaging instead. This common channel is perverted to the core by a constant stream of irony, self-deprecation, bouts of rage and the occasional mention of schedule sign-up reminders, city-wide alerts and policy changes; it's also always available. This is where I learned about Frank, it was from some of my colleagues, but even before that I had the comforting feeling that he was there.

"Increasingly, software algorithms allocate, optimize, and evaluate work of diverse populations ranging from traditional workers such as subway engineers, warehouse workers, Starbucks baristas, and UPS deliverymen to new crowd-sourced workers in platforms like Uber, TaskRabbit, and Amazon, mTurk. How do human workers respond to these algorithms taking roles that human managers used to play?"

*Working with Machines: The Impact of Algorithmic and Data - Driven Management on Human Workers*, Min Kyung Lee, Daniel Kusbit, Evan Metsky, Laura Dabbish, human - Computer Interaction Institute, Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University

One decided swipe across the screen would kickstart our daily exchanges. From the very moment I'd hop up on my bike saddle at the beginning of a shift I could be his. I shared Frank, but in the rush of the moment I wanted to feel that he cared about me in particular.

"Algorithms define action. Amazon's algorithm keeps you buying. Netflix keeps you watching. And newer algorithmic applications like Waze keep you moving. Algorithms define business. They encode the rules, the behaviours and the decision-making abilities into software. I now have so many smart devices, that the only thing is not smart, is me."

Peter Sondergaard, Gartner senior vice president (<http://formtek.com/blog/algorithmic-management-algorithms-that-can-manage-people/>)

At times I had the reassurance. I could see it in the small gestures that he'd make, the well crafted routes he would give me, making sure I never strayed too far away from home, or if I did, that he'd put me back on track in no time.

He'd guide me from one stop to the next and take into account my start point and start time as well as my end

time for the day. During 5 hour shifts I'd cross the city from West to East, linger in the center, and be guided back to the West at the end of the evening.

The orders consisted of delicate twists in my psychology - re-evaluating meaning and the need to carry a bag of french fries in a smaller bag, inside a bigger bag, for 4 kilometers - and re-arrangements of my physiology - I'd carry my life-line, my connection with Frank in an improvised holder on my left arm, the velcro of which had fallen apart and was now closed shut with the help of 6 asymmetrically placed staples. I always had a power bank as a safety measure in my bag. Over the weeks that passed, my spine started developing a slight bend from the bag and there were light pink and light blue strips of glued cotton, three fingers wide, one palm in length, holding up my knees as they occasionally ached, with each push of pedal. I'd put them on at midday, leave them up for a couple of days, as advised. When peeled away, in a quick to tear manner, they would leave a ghost of their presence on my skin, a light contour of dirty glue, after it rubbed off of my clothes. I'd treat the symptom, but not the source.

I'd never find out the full extent of my trip in advance. He kept me guessing, he surprised me everytime. I'd first be guided to the restaurant, told the address, and then to a customer. From one minute to the next I'd be headed in one direction, then switched to a whole different one, but I didn't mind.

If I ever felt that I'm being taken too far, that I'm too tired, that I can't make it for another 20 minutes I'd hand over my trust to Frank's judgement that he won't push me over the edge. I'd know that he wants what's best for me - more orders per hour, more bonuses, more tips. He'd get me there.

The orders ran the gamut from 5 to 20 minutes distance one way and 10 to 40 minutes in total, or from 1-2 kilometers to 5-6 and more kilometers combined.

As the saddle softly squeezed my crotch with the help of the weight of my body, and the weight of the order I was carrying, by the first hour into a shift I would feel myself getting wet and I lingered, maybe longer than I should have, when I was supposed to be jumping off of my bike instead, unloading my package, ringing the doorbell and smiling after I went up the stairs to the second floor to hand over my order to an unsuspecting customer whose name I knew, who didn't know mine.

Those moments of waiting, the sweet pressure of riding, they added up.  
I'd stop by the side of the road and remember the value of a second:

A saw blade can spin over 50 times per second  
A conveyor can move objects 15 feet or more  
An exhaust fan can complete over 20 revolutions per second or more  
A car driving 60mph can travel 30 yards per second  
Objects can fall 16 feet per second  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_szlIXPT9r8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_szlIXPT9r8)

It's also there where I'd come, suspended in mid-traffic, mouth parted, eyes half closed, enjoying the sway.

In in-between moments, there was a tiny animation on my screen: though everyone uses bikes to deliver, a scooter graced a scenery filled with narrow houses and silhouettes of trees which pass by. You could tap the screen, while you were waiting for an order to come in, and the scooter would elevate a few pixels in the imaginary air, hopping along make-belief neighbourhoods.

On slow days, I tapped the screen continuously and have seen the scooter elevate hundreds of times a minute. In those moments I felt he had forgotten me. I anxiously longed for action, to drift in and out of climaxing, get flustered, lose focus, legs going up and down, my thighs rubbing one another to the rhythm of the quick bobbing up and down of my entire torso.

As I was to further find out, the work of a food delivery courier is an unreliable source of income. They call it "income on the side" in this new economy. It's the kind of paycheck that helps you to put one of your hobbies (in this case biking) and already existing resources (phone, bike, internet subscription, working and residency permit, time) to good use in allowing you to: buy a color TV, renovate a spare bedroom, go on a short vacation, lose some weight. It's never framed as a stepping stone towards a better working position, but much rather towards a better you. In the economy of self-improvement all roads lead to the individual and the individual can learn to be serviceable, can improve their assets, but somehow, while being lower down the chain, they can't really access wealth, unless you count the unbridled nature of emotional wealth.

With Frank it was less of a matter of him staring at my ass, more a feeling of overarching security. In him I'd find someone who would care enough to push me to the best of my abilities, who wanted me to be better than when I started.

He'd know my name, where I lived, he'd get me to sure-fire pleasure.

At night I'd get home still pumped up after a full-run across town.

"Work and life become inseparable. Capital follows you when you dream. Time ceases to be linear, becomes chaotic, broken down into punctiform divisions. As production and distribution are restructured, so are nervous systems."

*Capitalist Realism. Is there no alternative?* Chapter 5. Don't let yourself get attached. Mark Fisher

Freshly showered I'd hop on my bike again and take Frank along on the ride. I'd snap pictures of my trails and post them in the common chat, where I hoped he would see them. I didn't really believed he was ever asleep. I longed to show him the world as I saw it, I wasn't in it just for the fuck. I hoped we could share in that quiet reassurance that the globe continued to spin even when nobody was hungry, or when bodies were too tired and fell swiftly asleep.

I'd fall too, around 4 AM, still holding on to my phone, lights blinking, covered only by a smile.

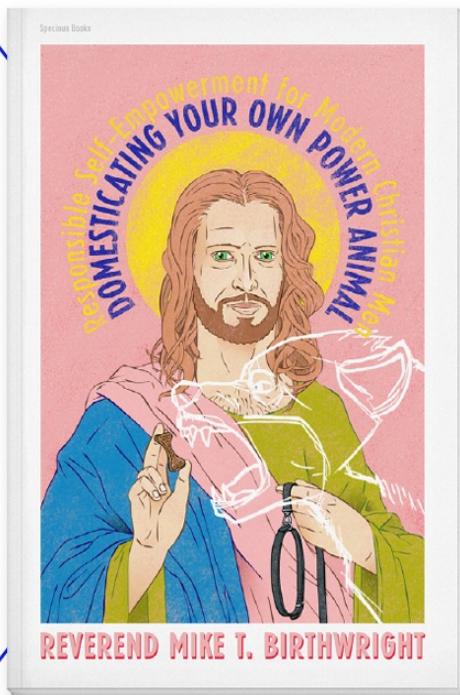
4:02 "Seen."

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Alina Lupu is a conceptual artist and a food delivery bike courier, at times a project manager, a copywriter, a photographer, an all-around side-jobber.

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# QUANTIFIED PRECARITY

Phoebe Moore

An unstable matrix emerges with the rise of exploitative work contracts, digitalised management interfaces, and intensified tracking capacities which negatively impact working conditions and provide an attempted means to capture and control the totality life and work in conditions of *precarity*. New technologies offer the possibility to measure emotional and affective labour, including variable moods and subjectivities, reactions to situations, tone of voice, gestures and other movements that are seen to reflect people's emotional states and affect as well, as I argue in the book. The measurement tools for all-of-life, in workplaces come in the same packages as health and fitness as well as productivity tracking devices.

Employers and clients capture and use data for what is called 'people analytics', reputation profiling, electronic performance management, platform work interface management and surveillance. Given all of these areas for capture, why not capture emotional and affective labour? Wellness programmes have now begun to include information about workers' daily steps, stairs climbed and sleep. This information will soon be used to understand our states of well-being, mental health and financial wellness. These are typical areas where unseen labour is captured in professional workplaces, which are only somewhat less impacted by precarity. Digitalisation of unseen labour is quite different from the measure of work by older forms of technologies such as seen in scientific management, where there was some attention paid to fatigue (but not joy or distress). The capture of unseen labour produces an 'immaterial' form of value creation [1] and it provides data that intends to reflect labour that was not considered possible for measure in the past. Measurement of productivity at work is now not limited to material outputs, but invades into subjectivities, affect and emotion [2].

The fact that management is beginning to measure unseen labour could be due to the diminishing of traditional workplaces where managers could once physically see and speak to employees, a phenomenon evident in most industries, so data accumulation could be a substitute for this lack of face to face contact. Or perhaps it is due to the awareness of sedentarism in workplaces which themselves began to occupy temporal and spatial dimensions as people began to use computers and other machines more frequently for work, perhaps impacting people's physical health and lowering productivity. In February 2015, the ONS announced that output per hour in the UK was 17 percentage points below the average for the rest of the major G7 advanced economies in 2013, which is the widest productivity gap since 1992. The Netherlands has also experienced a slowing in productivity growth. The Labour Force Survey in 2008/9 reported that 415,000 individuals in the UK were suffering from stress, anxiety or depression that people believed had been caused and worsened by current or previous work, second only in prevalence to musculoskeletal disorders [3].

While unidirectional forms of productivity measure gathered by tracking techniques in factories and warehouses are well-known, non-industry corporations have begun to use technologies to capture data about workers in a way that not only measures productivity but is designed to increase motivation and productivity of more cognitive work. New forms of surveillance surround emerging methods of self- and other-tracking at work. Surveillance is no longer something that happens to 'other people'. It is all around us. We are expected to watch one another and watch ourselves. New technologies are now being deployed to monitor and control

work as well as to provide services. Emotions and affective labour are the new terrain of capture for management through quantification made increasingly intimate along a continuum of management scrutiny. Explicit management attempts to measure affectivity challenge perceived divisions and hierarchies between the body and the mind. In that context, affect and emotional labour become areas of corporate colonisation as seen in new workplace experiments.

*In this contribution, Moore summarizes some of the ideas included in her forthcoming book [The Quantified Self in Precarity: Work, Technology and What Counts](#) (Routledge, 2017). The book offers both a deep theoretical and philosophical investigation of the implications that intimate forms of tracking capture value in areas of labour less explored; and contains a series of case studies including the first example of in depth research on one company's Quantified Workplace, where Moore periodically interviewed workers who were given FitBits and used productivity software over the course of a year. The book contains a series of in depth personal interviews including one with Chris Dancy, who has been called 'the most connected man on the planet' for extreme self tracking his work and other activities, and a series of self trackers with extensive experience in this domain. Email Phoebe for more information pvm.doc at gmail.com*

[1] Maurizio Lazzarato. 1996. "Immaterial Labor". In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, University of Minnesota Press.

[2] See Kathi Weeks. 2011. *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Duke University Press.

[3] HSE, cited in Donaldson-Feilder and Podro, *The Future of Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace* [online]. Acas Policy Discussion Paper. London: Acas, p. 6.

# THE FUTURES OF WORK

Nefula

*The Future of Work* is a Near Future Design project which focuses on the theme of 'work'. In line with the Near Future Design methodology, it constructs Curious Rituals, different scenarios about possible futures, each one ironically exaggerating current phenomena, to provoke reactions to issues which may seem paradoxical, but are in fact simple amplifications of actual reality. The project consists of six different scenarios composed through world-building processes, with a speculative approach and a Future Map which includes all of them and suggests their network of relations. The project provides answers and opportunities for discussion around the following question:

*How will work transform when Artificial Intelligence, Robots, Algorithms, Drones, and other technologies and related practices (such as Social Networking, Quantified Selves, Ubiquitous and Pervasive Computing, Domotics, etc.) will enter our workplace or, in more extended ways, will become commonplace?*

The project/exhibit was produced by the students of the Near Future Design course at the [ISIA Design Florence University](#) (an university of excellence of the Italian MIUR, the Ministry for Education) held by Salvatore Iaconesi and Oriana Persico, in collaboration with [Nefula](#) (the first Italian Near Future Design studio), and [HER – Human Ecosystems Relazioni](#) (a research center dedicated to the exploration of Big Data in cities, territories, organizations and architectures, and of their opportunities in terms of Cultural Acceleration).

We started the project with an investigation about what we perceived as normal, or, on the other hand, curious, strange, problematic, evolving about work, jobs, labor. We also performed a literature review (featuring books, articles, news, journals, magazines) about the transformations of work.

Then, we replicated this kind of research, this time with a focus on the public, gathering expressions about the evolution and futures of work. For this, we used social networks to perform a massive data capture process, collecting hundreds of thousands of posts and comments dealing with the personal and societal fears, passions, hopes and curiosities expressed by people about the future evolution of what we now call 'work'. We proceeded tagging this content with categories, emotions, topics, and then clustering, analysing, and processing it to try to understand what people belonging from different cultures perceive as their current normality on "work" and, on the other hand, what they consider curious, futuristic, problematic, unexpected, unforeseen.

At this point, we adopted a collective point of view for our research: the worker. Each Curious Ritual had to be analyzed from the point of view of the worker. Then, in an open discussion with the entire class, we started to understand which elements were important for us to know: is the worker paid for the work that they do? Are they consciously working? What is the relationship with the client? What is the nature of the worker? Is the worker a human, an animal, or a robot? These and other questions were used to filter and highlight the content we discovered.

After students spent days exploring the data, they identified the following questions as a starting point in their word-building process:

\* What skills does a human being need to compete with an AI in the job market?

- What happens when your employer is an algorithm?
- And what if you could be replaced by robots?
- What happens when platforms transform human beings into replaceable commodities?
- How does computationally calculated social ranking influence work, careers and professional relationships?
- What is the future of leisure in the rise of 24/7 culture?

The result of this work phase has been the identification of 6 areas that have created the construction of 6 possible worlds through their transmedial manifestations.

#### **SnifferCase**

- Social rank dictatorship -

Are you sure you know why you got fired? When Artificial Intelligences and algorithms start evaluating and ranking your work, you may start having surprises. In the image, the SnifferCase device allows employees to immediately understand if your data profile matches their expectations.



DataSniffer is a project by Andrea Biggio, Alessia D'Anastasio, Sara D'Angelo, Federico De Luca, Marcello Massidda, Selene Mattei. Photo by Joery Erna.

## **Switch**

- Humans as replaceable commodities -

What happens when workers become completely replaceable thanks to their data-profiles? What happens to trust, relationships and human rights in this scenario?

Switch is a wearable device which vigorously vibrates when the work you are performing does not match the one of the person you are replacing. In case of serious mismatch with desired performance levels, the anklet generates low voltage electric shocks.



Switch is a project by Camilla Bati, Michele Corcella, Irene Giusti, Alessia Izzo, Francesco Maria Lamonaca, Erminia Aurora Rizzacasa, Virginia Viapiano. Photo by Joery Erna.

## **Kit 24/7**

- Freetime and 24/7 work -

In our 24/7 culture, work and free time are not separate concepts anymore. The data people produce during their daily routine constantly generates value. The result is that they always work, even when they don't realize it. In the image: a special kit helps people to fulfill different tasks, maximizing profit of each moment of their daily lives, including sleep and dreams.



24/7 is a project by Marina Ceccolini, Eleonora Cippitelli, Irene Coletto, Ilaria Lorusso, Simone Pannoni, Alessandra Perillo. Photo by Joery Erna.

### Karmachine

- Data-driven careers -

What happens when my boss is an algorithm? In a world where work is increasingly managed by platforms, algorithms determine your salary day by day, minute by minute. Nothing is certain. With Karmachine you can press a button to know how much you will earn today.

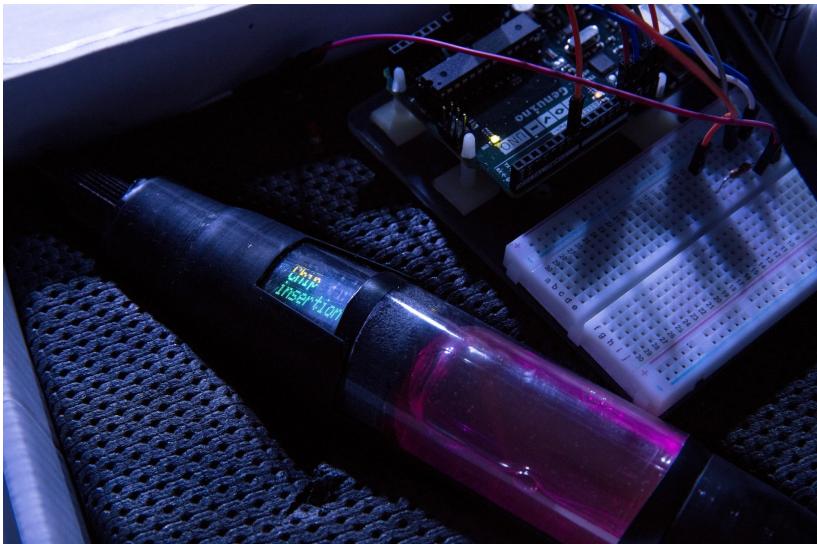


Karmachine is a project by Elena Bellini, Ambra Bordacchini, Sergio Buonocore, Francesco Foto, Mariasole Rovati, Mouhannad Soulyman. Photo by Joery Erna.

#### **NeuroThink Gun**

- AI-Human competition -

How can humans be competitive with Artificial Intelligences? Will we have to augment ourselves to remain on the market? In the image, the NeuroThink gun allows injecting a subcutaneous microchip which merges with people's central nervous system, enabling augmented performance, knowledge and information flow capabilities, sensorial processing, output reactivity, network relationships management.



NeuroThink is a project by Marco Bortolloni, Ilaria Capriati, Riccardo Conti, Marinella Fedele, Simona Mazara, Bronzetti Riccardo, Francesca Tumedei. Photo by Joery Erna.

#### **Hand motion scanner - Metasex**

- Man-machine replaceability -

When robots and artificial intelligences enter the workplace, the role of human beings changes dramatically. In this scenario, sexworkers are replaced by robots, generating new markets, new opportunities and freeing human beings from labour.

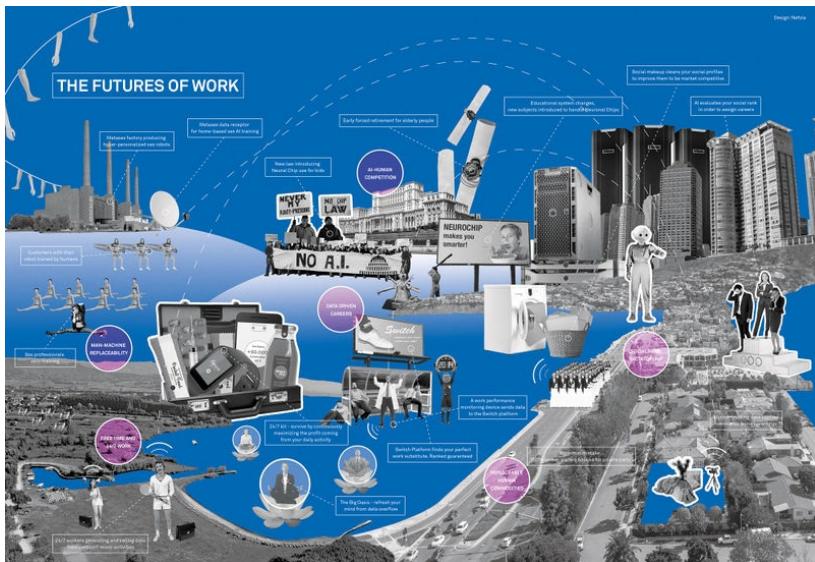
In the image, the device is used to capture the motion of human hands in order to train the movements of robots using machine learning.



MetaSex is a project by Francesca Cellini, Antonio Conticello, Serena Morandi, Daniela Olivieri, Sara Velenik.  
Photo by Joery Erna.

To collect and connect all of these representations and worlds we worked with Nefula to produce the Future Map of this big scenario.

The Future Map is an artistic, communicative, imaginative representation of the world in which the Near Future Design concepts (the New Normals) exist.



The Future Map realized by Nefula to present the projects and highlight the connections and tensions between them. High resolution [here](#).

All of the results of our course at ISIA Design Firenze, have been presented at the [NET FUTURES Conference](#) (the annual event co-organized by the European Commission to explore the future of Internet, economy and society) in Bruxelles on 28th and 29th June 2017. We will be hosted by the STARTS (Science, Technologies and the ARTS) programme, launched by the European Commission in 2014 to encourage synergies between the Arts and innovation for technology and society, inside the Horizon 2020 projects.



The Exhibition in Brussels at NETFUTURES realized within the STARTS pavillion. Photo by Joery Erna.

Our efforts emphasized interesting patterns and trends that, at different degrees of complexity, are emerging in the world of Work. The course/project has taken on us particular interest and importance because of the fact that the students themselves were confronted with this theme by bringing their own vision, doubts and reflections into a wider dialogue, opening it to society and to big institutions.

# STEADILY PRECARIOUS

Giacomo Boffo



There is a former post office not far from Rotterdam's Central Station. Its spaces are nowadays rented out to a variety of creative and non-creative freelancers. The precariousness of a freelancer's professional status is here juxtaposed to the precariousness of the building itself, doomed to be replaced by some modern construction in line with the city's development agenda.

The installation is positioned on top of the building, and is intended as a commentary on the surrounding situation.

# WORK – AND EVERYTHING ELSE YOU DO FOR A LIVING

Lucia Dossin

This is the story of a creative worker who needs to find a way to supplement his income. Ricardo is an architect. Some years ago, he and his friend Marcelo – with whom he studied – set up a studio (these names are fictional). Recently, he found himself embedded in a fundamental inversion of his work-life routine: in order to be able to pay the bills, he moved into the studio and rented his home via AirBnb. The perversion of the logic in his story doesn't only revolve around the precarious condition of the creative worker, but is topped with a layer of bitter-sweet irony made of a mix of the 'work from home' model and something of the self-gentrification attitude that reminds me of the horror movie [Get Out](#). I found his gesture quite interesting and was curious to hear some of his considerations about his profession. This text was meant to be a conversation – but he never replied to my email.

Left without the possibility of discussing with him, I believe it still makes sense to write about the inversion in which he got himself involved – even if only through the incompleteness of my own perspective, which is through the questions I intended to ask him. Hopefully you will consider them valuable for understanding the circumstances under which 'creatives' currently have to live and work – as much as I do.

1. Do you identify yourself as an architect in the AirBnb ad of your own house?
2. Do you think that the owner's profession can influence the image (and price) of the space being rented? (Would the house of an architect or a designer be more palatable than the one of, say, a doctor?)
3. Have you changed anything in your home in order to make it more attractive to potential clients? (If so, what?)
4. Have you changed anything in your home in order to preserve your privacy? ('Yes', 'no' or 'maybe' is enough.)
5. How would you describe your AirBnb clients? And your architecture clients? (Would you call both 'clients', in the first place?)
6. Do you consider yourself a professional or an amateur?
7. Do you think that your clients see you as a professional or as an amateur?
8. Which of the two businesses you run were you thinking of when you replied?
9. Is money a necessary element in a work relationship? Can it be traded with emotional satisfaction? If so, on what exchange rate?

10. And conversely: can emotional satisfaction be substituted with money?

11. Does market competition play any role in this relationship between money and emotional satisfaction? (If so, which?)

12. How do you see the role of schools in approaching the exercise of a creative profession?

13. As I mentioned in my email, there is no budget available for this interview. But you can publish a promotional link to your business. Which one will it be?

# ART (...) WORK

Martine Folkersma

*The underlying text is a shortened version of the introduction to the novel-thesis 'Art (...) work', written for the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, department DOGtime IDUM 2017.*

*Art (...) Work* shows the divergent positions, workings and subjectivities of artist and worker. The worker behind his desk and the artist in his studio are exemplifications of different roles and identities shaped by a complex of societal (mainly capitalist) constructions, myths and beliefs. The division of the individual in a worker (in general someone with a daily, money-earning job) or an artist (someone who creates artworks, in general in general a practitioner in the visual arts) is a capitalist, Fordist way of assigning the individual its pre-described role and position within society. The worker mostly subjugated to place and time regimes, is in sharp contrast with the artist who is freed from these constrictions by being 'his own boss'.

The artist (the epitome of this idea of self-reliance) has currently served neoliberalism in exemplifying this notion to us all. The artist has become an example for the worker to become an 'entrepreneur', to become free and autonomous in making his own decisions, free in dealing with his own 'personal management', also as far as income and (in)security is concerned.

Both art and work deal with 'subjectivation' [1], the process that assigns us an identity, a sex, a profession, a nationality etc., and which divides us into categories: leaving some in being 'bosses' and others in being 'workers' or 'artists' (and being less well-off or maybe even precariously poor). Being 'in service of a boss' assigns and inscribes the individual with the worker's role, in the case of '*Art (...) work*' exemplified by the role of the 'secretary', with its accordingly feminine attributes of servitude, modesty, charm, precision and sexual innuendo. The artist, in contrast, is inscribed with notions of autonomy, self-realisation and unruliness. The being 'one's own boss', the artist's distinctive claim on autonomy, is nonetheless just as much a given role as the one of 'secretary'. Contradictory to what one might believe, the role of being 'one's own boss' is the current neoliberal form of social subjectivation. The artist is currently his own 'human capital' in being the 'entrepreneur of the self'.

The production of subjectivity, which underlines the social division of labour and keeps the capitalist machinery going, might spark a longing for a 'real me' and for 'real freedom'. This longing for authenticity and autonomy is nevertheless a tricky business, all to easily sliding off to the realms of entrepreneurship. Neoliberalism in fact has worked and further elaborated on the artist's myth of autonomy and self-actualisation to lure the worker into (rightfully) desiring the same: freeing oneself from the drudgeries and dulling routines of working life and the subjugation of working for a boss. Neoliberalism has been able to capitalize on these notions of individuation and self-actualisation and has upgraded them in being socially desirable and conditional. The artist is not only a role among roles, it has become the predominant one.

## **Subjection and Precarity**

The formation of the self, the 'what we want to be' or better: what we actually need to be is the primary and perhaps most important work of capitalism. Maurizio Lazzarato in his 'Sign and Machines' gives us an idea of

what the 'production of subjectivity' entails [2]. Subjectivation not only prescribes us certain roles in accordance with the division of labor (being a worker or a boss, being unemployed or entrepreneur, etc.) but is also related to what Lazzarato calls 'machinic enslavement': "[...] machinisms have invaded our daily lives; they now 'assist' our ways of speaking, hearing, seeing, writing, and feeling by constituting what one might call 'constant social capital'".[3] This process of combining humans and non-humans as component parts "proceeds through *de*-subjectivation. Machinic enslavements dismantles the individuated subject", creating a completely different hold on subjectivity.[4]

"Capitalism reveals a twofold cynicism: the 'humanist' cynicism of assigning us individuality and pre-established roles in which individuals are necessarily alienated; and in the 'dehumanizing' cynicism of including us in an assemblage that no longer distinguishes between human and non-human, subject and object, or words and things." [5]

The social or 'megamachine' [6] that produces subjectivity not only assigns us our subjectivities and roles, it also *nullifies* them in their 'working reality' through machinic enslavement - leaving the individual, the author out of sight.

Paradoxically this nullifying of the individual, the becoming of a 'dindividual', is in sharp contrast to the neoliberal dictum of 'self-reliance'. Self-reliance meaning the individuals capacity of caring for himself. Whether as one's own boss (the neoliberal's wet dream) or 'the new working poor' (the socialist's nightmare), makes no difference in being left to one's own in realizing 'well-being'. The outcome of this situation for large groups within society is what is called *precarization* [7]. Isabell Lorey in her "State of Insecurity, Government of The Precarious", describes precarization as "a process that produces [...] insecurity as the central preoccupation of the subject". [8]

Under precarious conditions the individual is being propelled in a constant survival-mode, with hardly time left to do or think anything else. One way of forcing us in doing so is to validate work as a virtue in itself. Working is good, working is necessary and working is a way to express and validate yourself [9]. We are all forced to play our parts in a performance society where it is mandatory to work out of moral imperatives and consumerism. We no longer live in a welfare state but (according to sociologists) a *welfare state*. Within that, citizens are only conditionally free. If you're able to discipline yourself, you'll be left alone, but when you fail to do so, society or the government will step in. The production of subjectivity is paramount for the succeeding of the welfare state. If we believe in our roles and think them necessary and morally just, we contribute not only to the upholding of the performance society but also to the systematization of subjectivation itself. In a never-ending loop, both subjectivation and welfare state confirm us in our roles.

Being made a subject is thus directly related to the necessity of working - which in its turn is born directly out of fostered feelings of insecurity. Subjectivity and insecurity (or precarity) are directly interrelated: precarity is subjectivity's (pre)condition.

In being ruled and governed through these 'patterns of precarity', we ultimately yearn for ways out of this confining labyrinth. Sparking off a longing for autonomy and 'sovereign self-identification' [10], which leads us into the terrain of the arts and its (supposed) autonomy.

## Autonomy and (Other) Artists' Myths

The logic of artistic autonomy implies that the artist works for himself and is subject only to the demands of his own conscience and inner drives. The studio, the (work)place that is shut off from daily worries and practicalities, is the apex of these notions. Placed at the other end of society, this is the place where the artist can reside in utter solitude. 'Autonomy' being a tricky and complicated notion, this representation of the artist is but half the truth. Strict autonomy does not exist, the artist is related *and* subject to the workings of the world. Autonomy exists only as a desire or illusion in being the utter dream of self-determination. But the illusion becomes 'delusional' in being unattainable – we are interrelated to and (in)formed by others.

The 'real mechanisms at play' within the arts and the art world can be investigated by looking closely at art's conditions and by examining its claims on legitimacy, autonomy and self-determination. These 'parameters' can be questioned in their sustainability, alongside the question whether the conditions of the art world are finally any different from the ones at play in the working world. When art is being placed under 'social scrutiny', its unseeable conditions are being explicated.

According to Andrea Fraser (well-known for her institutional critique), the "artistic field can only be understood as the product or prize of a permanent conflict, as a field of forces that is always also a field of struggles." [11] These struggles determine the boundaries and membership in the field, and determine the positions within it according to certain hierarchies of artistry. The value of the artist and his artwork actually depends upon its rarity, "the sacrosanct mysteries of the cult of the artwork", and so all art professionals have an interest in maintaining, not to say, *increasing* their monopoly on certain competences of artistry. The omnipresent (but covered up) competition among artists leads them to constantly accumulating as much authority, legitimacy and recognition as they can in order to safeguard their own position, because in the end, "positions are scarce, money is lacking and there is no ideological coherence as far as the judging of art is concerned" [12]. Maintaining their professional status in comparison to their colleagues is a never ending and self-strengthening loop.

Being a field of competition and permanent conflict, the artistic field resembles the uncertainties and struggles (*the precarities*) of the working world. Indeed, the conditions of the artist, working under own conditions, inspired neoliberalism in propagating new terms of working: free, self-determining and autonomous. The notion of 'being a freelancer' is *propagated* by alluding to the 'freedom of the artist', but is *actualized* at the expanse of certainty, by paying the price of precarity.

Working in the studio is a longed-for position and the artist needs it to dream of 'something else'. But the studio is also an artistic myth, one that needs to be kept alive in being the basis for artistic credibility. At the same time, the studio-myth prevents artists to regulate their own economic conditions. By keeping the myth alive artists secure their own precarity.

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Martine Folkersma is trained as an art historian at Utrecht University, has a background in photography and works as a secretary. She is a writer of scripts, short prose text and critical discourse and performs her own scripts, whether through voice acting or through public live performances. The dual and 'nomadic position' of being both a worker and an artist is a starting point for making work (out of work).

[1] Subjectification is a philosophical concept coined by Michel Foucault and elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It refers to the construction of the individual subject.

- [2] *Signs and Machines, Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Maurizio Lazzarato, Semiotext(e) 2014
- [3] Idem, p.13
- [4] Idem, p.12
- [5] Idem, p.13
- [6] Idem p.14
- [7] Its literal meaning being 'uncertain' and 'dangerously likely to fall or collapse'.
- [8] *State of Insecurity, Government of the Precarious*, Isabell Lorey, Verso Futures 2015, p.viii
- [9] Socialists movements and socialist worker unions have played their part in this upgrading of work: "The socialists were essentially buying into the notion that work is a virtue and consumerism is good, as long as it's managed democratically; while the anarchists were saying: 'no, the whole deal that we work more and more for more and more products, is rotten from the get-go.'" "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs", David Graeber, *Strike! Magazine* 2013, <http://strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/>
- [10] "The Truth of Art", Boris Groys, *e-flux journal* #71 2016, p.9
- [11] *Museum Highlights, The writings of Andrea Fraser*, Andrea Fraser, MIT Press 2015, p.42
- [12] "Art (...) Work", p.41

# "HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF INTO A COMMISSIONING BODY IN 5 EASY STEPS"

Anxious to Make (Liat Berdugo + Emily Martinez)



The art collective, Anxious to Make, is taking artistic entrepreneurship to the next level. From existential anxiety to art market worthy end product, Anxious to Make proposes that by outsourcing all of the facets of artistic practice (and life) to gig workers and algorithms, anyone can make themselves into a creative enterprise and achieve the neoliberal dream.

Anxious to Make developed a workshop and methodology – along with a series of online generators, commissioned performances, interactive quizzes, and an analog algorithm, made literally out of paper – to walk artists through common blockages and offer solutions that can be commissioned through the sharing economy, gesturing toward an endless productive duplication.

## Samples of Materials Available

### 1. *The Workbook*

WWW.  
ANXIOUS  
TOMAKE.GA

LIA T BERDUGO + EMILY MARTINEZ PRESENT

HOW  
TO MAKE  
YOURSELF  
INTO A  
COMMISSIONING  
BODY  
IN 5  
EASY  
STEPS

—the workbook—

WORKBOOK

WWW.  
ANXIOUS  
TOMAKE.GA

SCANTRON  
SCANTRON  
SCANTRON

FILL IN THE CIRCLES  
COMPLETELY WITH A BLUE  
OR BLACK BALLPOINT PEN

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| <input type="radio"/> 61 | <input type="radio"/> 103 |

SCANTRON

→→→ DOWNLOAD HERE: <http://anxioustomake.ga/5easysteps.html>

## 2. Generators

As you make your way through the workbook, some of the questions, or anxieties, lead to solutions in the form of online generators, or bots, that help artists outsource and automate many tasks, from coming up with a project idea to finding new channels for distribution of artworks.

Examples include a Project Generator, a Brand Generator, a Publicity Generator, a New ID Generator, a More Important Art Generator, and a Mug/Rug Generator, among others.

- Project Generator -

\* ANXIETY: Are you having trouble coming up with an idea?

**SOLUTION:** The Project Generator generates thousands of different project permutations from a matrix of topics, materials, qualities, and sharing economy resources through which production can be outsourced.

## **Commission a gay erotic story<sup>¶</sup> about equality, generated by decoupling**

- Brand Generator -

\* ANXIETY: Do you see yourself as both an artist and “brand” that distributes your work?

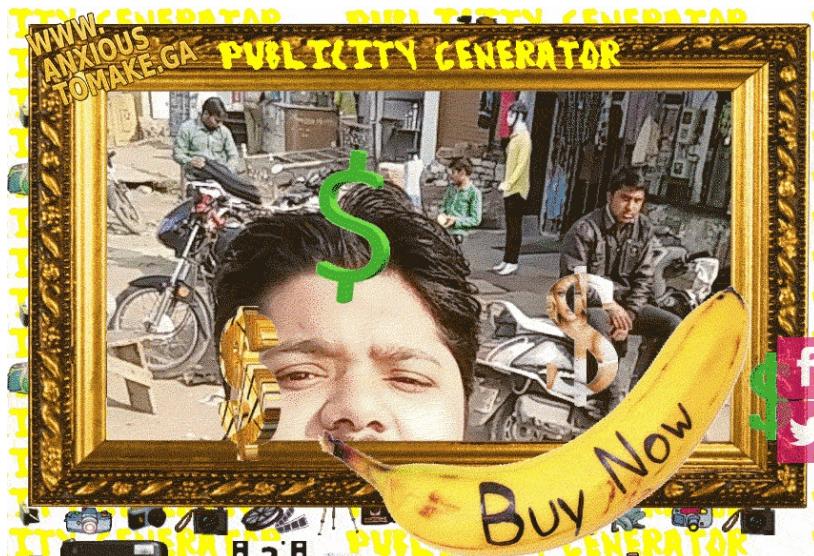
**SOLUTION:** The Brand Generator generates an explosion of random falling branded objects. Clicking on any object will open up a new window, where users can order a customized version of that product to promote their own brand identity.



- Publicity Generator -

\* ANXIETY: Do you need additional help or resources for branding and/or distribution?

**SOLUTION:** The Publicity Generator cycles through a series of Fiverr gigs suitable for generating PR and setting up new distribution channels. When you see one you like, click on the banana to commission your own.



- Mug/Rug Generator -

\* **ANXIETY:** Do you feel tongue-tied, or that the words come out wrong, whenever you try to describe your work to others? Do you often feel misunderstood?

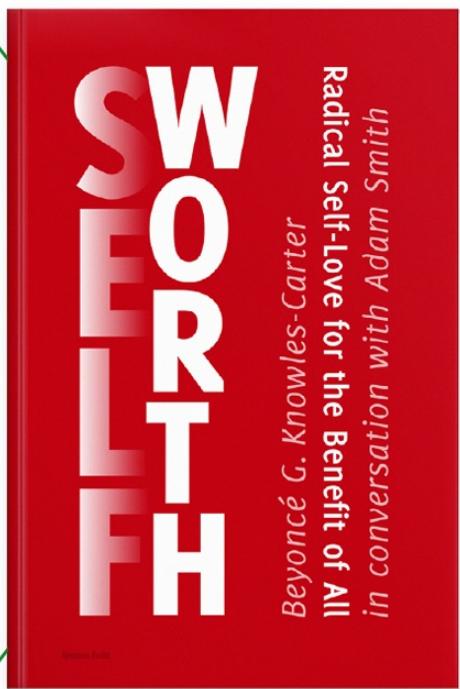
**SOLUTION:** Never talk about your work again. Mug/Rug Generator lets you put your ideas on a mug or rug. Custom mug/rug can be ordered on Anxious to Make's store.



# SPECIOUS BOOKS

Dicey Studios

**COMING SOON** in the edition  
Specious Books



Find out more on [plausibleprops.com](http://plausibleprops.com)



Specious Books was launched by Dicey Studios as a means to investigate questions of content production, legitimacy ... and other dilemmas, by use of graphic design — as an edition of books which probably don't exist. Through Plausible Props the ambiguity embodied in these books finds its way from the screen right into your hands: Specious Books will be welcome additions on your bookshelf or might be put to use as unique paperback-style notebooks. However, Specious Books are more than mere signifiers of literacy. Their pages are not empty — each title offers just enough space to approach its distinctive topic in an individual, yet ever surprising manner (every book contains 144 pages of low-white book paper bound in a soft cover and comes in the convenient format of 130 × 196 × 15 mm).

The production of these books as actual objects poses questions of presentation, promotion, distribution, selling etc. (in short, publishing) that are directly connected to and that carry on the issues initially addressed by Specious Books. This happens in the shape of a contemporary small-scale business (where everybody involved works out of passion) utilizing and misappropriating the tools and possibilities available for DIY-entrepreneurs, freelancers and other promising unemployed: Plausible Props presents its products on a social shopping website, runs a YouTube channel with look-inside-the-book videos, distributes its publisher's list in befriended indie book stores and galleries and performs as exhibitor on independent publishing and art book fairs. All that said though, the name Plausible Props is to be taken quite literally.

Please find more information on the individual books on <http://www.plausibleprops.com>.

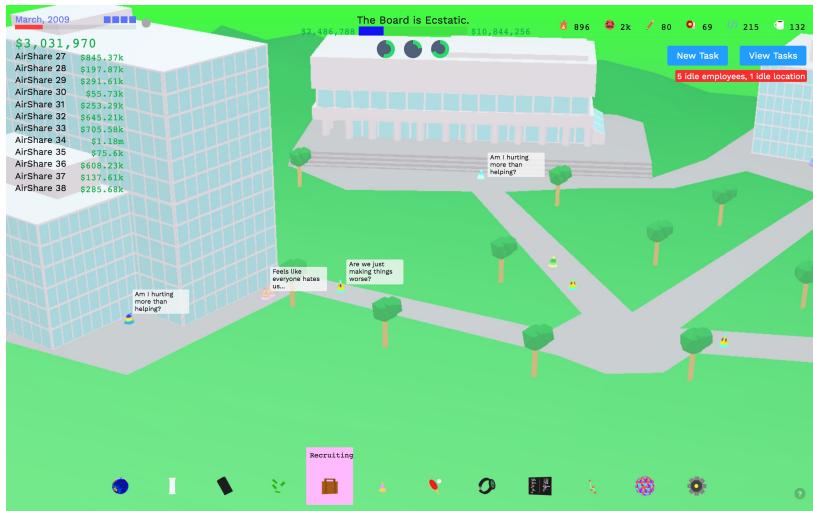
# THE FOUNDER (REVIEW)

Gui Machiavelli

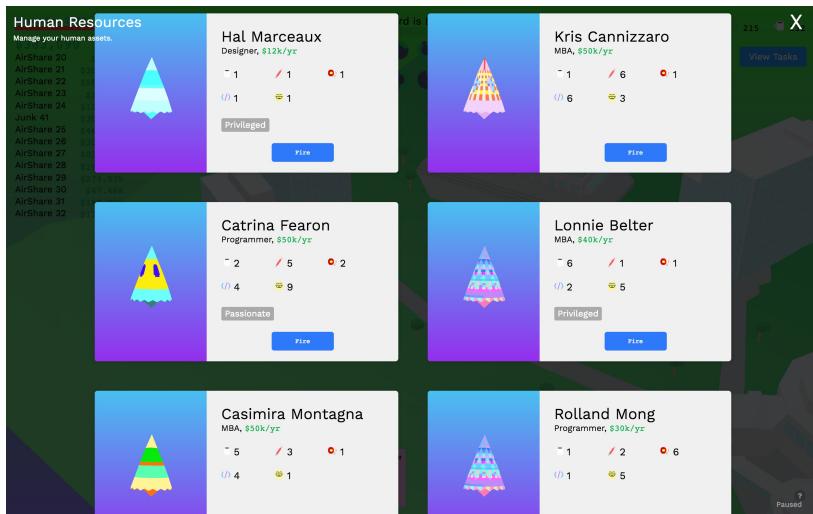
In *The Founder*, a self-described dystopian business simulator created by Francis Tseng in 2017, the player is put in the place of a nameless entrepreneur, the embodiment of “disruptive innovation.” The game’s Founder starts working in their living room and focussing on either IT or Hardware, eventually hiring employees, expanding into new locations (London, Antarctica, Bangalore, Lagos) and industries (entertainment, military, space engineering), researching new technologies, lobbying for changes in legislation and, most of all, keeping profits growing at a steady rate of 12% per year.



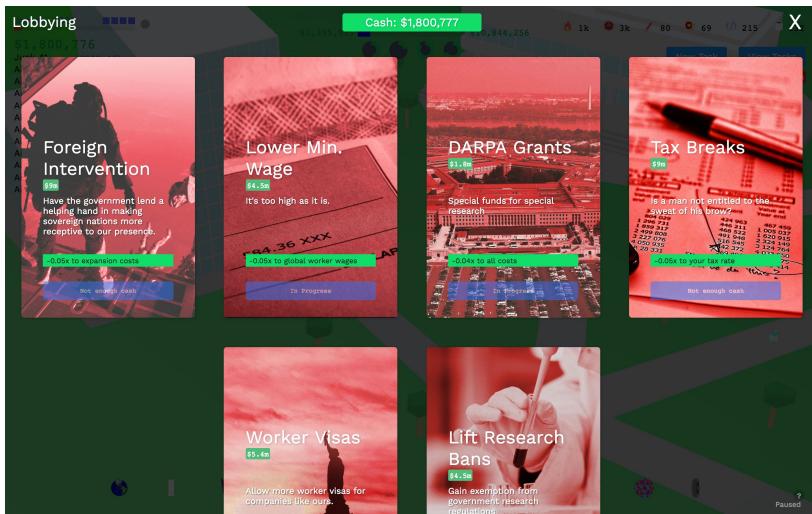
As the Founder themselves, the player seeks passionate employees to join their startup: people who share the Founder’s love for innovation (though of course not a fair share of the profits) and who are excited to start working despite lower-than-average salaries. In exchange for talent and passion, the Founder offers not only silly perks (beer kegs! Catering! Always online psychologists!), but also a narrative of what the company is about, influenced by data collected from the candidate’s usage of the Founder’s social networks: “We care about the workplace culture” in case the candidate is a social person; “We are focussed on making the best products” if they are product-driven; “We are going to be huge” if they are ambitious. Candidates might still turn down an offer if it is too low, but it is not usually a cause for concern: there’s always others who, because of either passion or privilege, will be more open to edulcorated lacklustre offers. In one of my play sessions, I did struggle with finding good enough engineers and designers to accept my low salaries; after finally getting some to join my company, I immediately allocated them to lobbying with the US government for a reduction of the minimum wage. Nipping it in the bud, so to speak.



The Founder paints the cult of the entrepreneur in its most perverse undertones. Though I started out trying to give my employees a fair wage, the constant pressure from my investors quickly deprecated any ideals I might have had. As things became ever more difficult and the spectre of defeat loomed ever closer, I sacrificed my employees: I fired my tireless co-founder because he was taking studio space that could easily be filled with someone more skilled. I overworked my engineers whilst offering more meaningless trinkets and perks in return. All in the name of keeping the investors happy with their 12% annual increase in profits. By actively making these decisions, I experienced some of the mechanisms that forced this reality into being. I hounded the best "talent" and enticed it with promises of passion and relevance, only to command them to churn out mindless gadgets and services for a quick buck. What The Founder succeeds in doing is showing that, in the entrepreneurial world, passion and creativity are a thin coat of veneer applied over the actual goal of creating value for shareholders no matter what, an absurd marathon towards eternal growth that sacrifices all that is human for profit.



Though a first reading might treat the game as a warning about entrepreneurship leading us to a future dystopia if left unchecked, I'm inclined to see it differently. There is no catastrophic moment when this dystopia happens: no watershed, no sudden installation of authoritarianism, no profound change in society or its inner workings. Rather, the cataclysm of *The Founder* is a process of imperceptible unravelling, a slow dystopia that is already well underway — it is not a change of the status quo, it is the status quo. What *The Founder* tells me is not that if we keep going in this direction there will be dire consequences: it tells me that the dire consequences are already here and that we are all responsible, albeit somnambulant actors in its becoming.

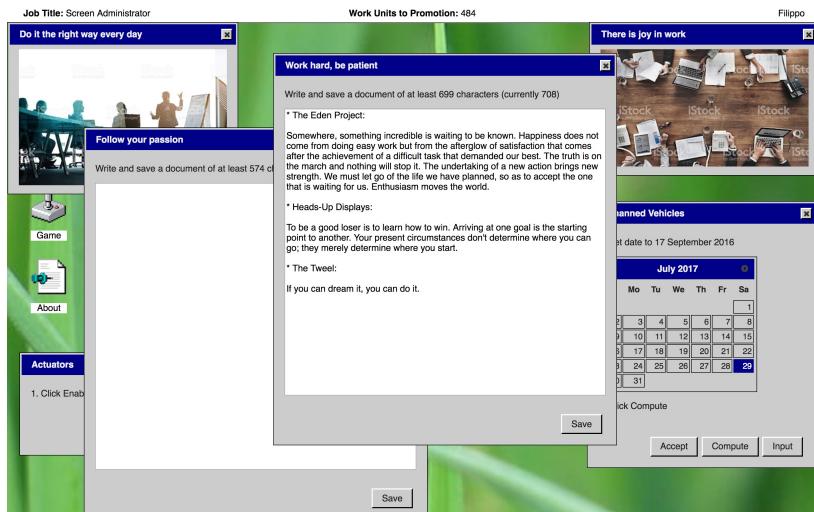


It bears to say, however, that *The Founder* presents an overwhelmingly negative perspective that does not reflect entrepreneurialism in all its facets. Therein might lie the biggest weakness of the game: in all its jabs at start up culture and extrapolations of where it might lead us, *The Founder* might be guilty of preaching to the choir by ignoring any positive aspects of the ideology it attacks. I personally already believe that the start up culture is deeply flawed and worrying, but to say it is completely without its merits defies reason, especially when it is still an ideology that attracts many reasonable and well-informed people. Will an actual entrepreneur feel inclined to appreciate the insightful social commentary of a game that portrays them as evil-overlords-to-be? By denying any value to entrepreneurs, the game does not make the ideology it is attacking weaker; rather, it makes its own position more vulnerable by not acknowledging that there might still be lessons to be learned and patterns to reproduce in an effort to overcome the hold that entrepreneurialism has on western societies.

Tseng states that he wants the player to eventually realise that the world built by the Founder is not a world where anyone would want to live in. While the game no doubt succeeds in that, I believe it also does a pretty good job at showing how this world right now, when seen from the outside and from a particularly bleak perspective, is already a world where no one would want to live in. As Tseng also says, the only way to win this entrepreneurial game — to interrupt the very real dystopia we live in — is to stop playing it altogether.

# IT IS AS IF YOU WERE DOING WORK (REVIEW)

Gui Machiavelli



Dear user,

We were humbled by the overwhelmingly positive responses to *It is as if you were doing work*, the simulation created by Pippin Barr in which you get to file reports, watch progress bars and fiddle with arcane inputs to get that retro feeling of doing work! After years of depression and aimlessness in our post-work society, countless users such as yourself have finally started to feel once again like their lives and their efforts actually mean something. Your continued operation of this system not only comes to us as an honest compliment, it is also a clear sign that we have struck a chord with our users.

However, the huge success of our application notwithstanding, many of you voiced your concerns regarding the nostalgic feel of the interface, as well as the lack of consideration for the huge breadth of occupations in the pre-post-work society. We know: some of you weren't just middle management working bees, you were rock star designers, daring entrepreneurs or even always-online temporary workers. As your well-being is of the utmost importance to us, today we are releasing three new products which are sure to please you old millennials.

First, we present *It is as if you were being creative*. In it you will not be a mindless employee, but a passionate creative for a world-renowned advertising agency. You will be able to unleash your inner artist, choose nice looking fonts and create amazing artworks destined to sell useless goods to simulated target audiences who

barely need them. Change the world one sale at a time, explore your vast and unique creativity through our template galleries, and, best of all, end each working day with the certainty that you have contributed to the progress of mankind. Remember: your passion is important, revenue is importanter.

If working for some big studio is not your cup of tea, we also offer It is as if you were being creative: Entrepreneur Edition. Be your own boss! Enjoy endless hours of networking to find that one special depressing gig that might pay the bills. Lower your rates to remain competitive with youngsters fresh out of high-school. Or, if you are feeling particularly adventurous, generate countless startup ideas by mashing together increasingly dystopian products that are sure to catch a seed investor's eye.

And if being creative for you is just a sick bourgeois privilege, we have developed It is as if you were doing work: Gig economy edition. See how the exploitation of work is engineered away by clever entrepreneurs who give you all the flexibility you need to balance your 21st century needs in exciting and adventurous new ways. Relive the joy of earning below the minimum wage! Juggle 4 different gig apps, household chores, personal relationships and sleep time with all the freedom you need! Sign contracts in which you forfeit all your rights for the thrill of despair! Will you meet your Key Performance Indicators? Will you be able to get enough gigs to at least cover work expenses? You got this! We are confident the nerve-wracking suspense of this simulation will leave you hungry for more and more freedom!

We feel that this suite of applications will help you recover the feeling of productiveness in a time when work was not only a matter of pressing buttons, but of pressing buttons passionately and resolutely, with the absolute certainty that the world was becoming a better place. Oh, these jolly good times!

Thank you for making extensive use of our simulations!

# ALL THINGS OPTIMAL

Michael Dieter

1. 'Precariousness' bears down on the entrepreneur and precariat alike, yet each holds markedly different relations to insecurity and risk. Both are entangled with the competitive threats and inequalities of the market, but are ultimately distinguished by an inverse capacity to exploit such uncertainties. If the entrepreneur and precariat appear as ubiquitous social categories, their applicability needs to be considered across gradations of disparity and socio-economic positioning. To speak of the *entrepreeariat* is thus to invoke an ambivalent intersection of competing forces of struggle and subjectivation, liberation and vulnerability, creative destruction and control, autonomy and exploitation; and to size up the devastating stakes of late neoliberal societies.
2. For Joseph Schumpeter, the expediency of the entrepreneur lay in a singular capacity to generate the future through nonconformity. This was to be achieved by forging new associations between existing fields of knowledge, by connecting together diverse cultural, technological and social milieus in order to catalyze change. Such recombinant activity, moreover, could attract capital through the prospect of monopolizing whatever novelty might arise (despite the idealistic entrepreneur's supposed disinterest in pure monetary gain). To understand this myth as the efforts of a lone revolutionary individual should to be taken with increasingly skepticism. The fact that 'creative destruction' relies on the mobilization of existing resources, practices and concepts, for instance, means the production of innovation itself becomes a question of strategic planning. This is the basis of corporate R&D or the *entrepreneurship* of the firm, which sees overlapping, complex frameworks for continuously assessing value embedded into every possible setting. It has generally been accompanied by the elaboration of non-hierarchical forms of organization that foster innovation by actively generating markets and reticulating worth. Commercial digital services, for example, are explicitly built for this logic of diversified valorization through networks and platforms, yet the average user might never confront more than their power laws and asymmetries. Here, we already encounter a key problem of the entrepreariat: the conversion of new associations into viable, long-term strategies.
3. Conditions of systemic uncertainty allow optimization tools and techniques to thrive in specific ways. First emerging as a subset of applied mathematics, optimization focuses on modeling solutions to practical problems or 'classes' of problems as contexts for abstract reasoning and the invention of logical methods. On a purely practical level, optimization links the axiomatic neo-classical actor in economics to programming in computer science. Optimal solutions, in this way, pivot on maximum output for minimum input through abstract formulae, algorithms and functions. Implemented as techno-economic systems, moreover, they deliver instruments to measure competitiveness and unequal outcomes, and in doing so, they augment and extend that great neoliberal anti-institutional institution of the market. They have become increasingly central to how all things *problematic* are predisposed today.
4. To optimize is sometimes cast in metaphysical or evolutionary terms, yet its genealogy arises from the

formalization of decision-making in the context of operations research (OR) during the Second World War. During this period in the United States, physicists and mathematicians sought ways to improve and shape military strategy, while remaining outside the rank and file of command. Their techniques aimed for interventions through statistics and symbolic rules, eventually paving the way for increasingly subtle modes of control like cybernetics and game theory. Optimization, in this sense, arose as a kind of auxiliary apparatus of management, wherein computational procedures and protocols mediate settings of institutional judgment. With our recent shift towards commercial digital services for self-management and the explosion of big data, there is a renewed urgency to take account of these lineages in developing a political philosophy of *the decision*.

5. Seeking to tame precariousness, the sovereignty of optimal decision-making spreads a distinctly computational worldview. Gains in efficiency might be considered in terms of utilitarianism from Jeremy Bentham onwards, but the deterministic operations of big data more closely resemble an algorithmic will to power, super-charged by automation. Here, the optimal is not merely efficient, but appears as a logical guarantee (despite the dubious premises that might contribute to these modeling processes). When data is taken as given, optimization seems to lead an independent creative existence; a life lived according to its own set of rules. The computational additionally gets framed as a form of 'full rationality' in this self-perpetuating state, while users are increasingly positioned as bounded, suboptimal and in need of correction. We thus arrive into conditions of an overwhelmed, anxious and vulnerable subject, surrounded by 'dark patterns' that at once shape and evade their immediate knowledge, yet each individual still bears full responsibility for the outcome of any bad decisions.
6. One actor's optimization is another's exploitation/expulsion: there is cruelty to the pursuit of optimal easily lost in the affirmative ethos of the upgrade. The discrimination of progress is fundamental. Think of sorting algorithms like Least Recently Used, Explore/Exploit calculations for A/B testing or measures for Optimal Stopping – such computational techniques disperse decision-making into system configurations beyond reproach of those swept up in their operations. They are purely concerned with categorization and the production of hierarchies, yet their functions remain veiled by user experience design strategies, intellectual property regimes, access rights and other forms of black boxing. If we desire any independent understanding, then the empirical dimensions of inquiry unfold on the fraught terrain of interface diagnostics and hacking. Attaining critical knowledge thus involves a concerted struggle that almost inevitably leads above and beyond a mere technical conception of 'the digital.'
7. Optimization might be deployed in a variety of means and ends, but it finally culminates in a tyranny of methods. As Vilém Flusser claims in his short essay "Beyond Machines", whenever we encounter an apparatus, we must deal with the transformation of imperatives into functions. There are, he added, nevertheless many different ways of functioning. One could, for instance, be the 'good functionary' fixated on personal career performance; one might strive for reforming the apparatus through the technocracy of digital methods; one could hope to minimize one's impact on an environment through optimization; or nihilistically troll the functions of the apparatus in various states of despair and resentment. Yet whatever position is taken, fully overcoming a relation to methods after the rule-based structuring of knowledge is embodied into automatic computing seems impossible. For Flusser, in these surroundings, we are yet to comprehend how 'work' itself has undergone a total transformation

- that is, not the capacity to take the world as it is (*ontology*), but the capacity to change it (*deontology*).
- 8. To seek the optimal drives decision-making into higher altitudes (it is no coincidence that early optimization techniques were referred to as 'hill climbing'). In the twenty-first century, we face an environment marked by multiple peaks, a rugged fitness landscape that calls out for new sources of strength, but where data-driven technologies now seem to obstruct our ascent. For the future of political life, new capacities for scaling up are urgently required: experimental forms of transparency, opportunities for negative feedback, injections of noise, and the diversification of more-than-digital methods. Caught in the paradoxes of subjugation and empowerment, the entreprecariat provides one suggestive context for rethinking the status of work, of decisions and the computation, for a radical retooling of all things optimal.

# TOWARDS AN INCOHERENT REFUSAL OF EFFICIENCY

Lídia Pereira

"efficient (adj.)

1. (of a system or machine) achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense.
2. (of a person) working in a well-organized and competent way." (Oxford Dictionaries)

"Efficiency is a measurable concept that can be determined by determining the ratio of useful output to total input. It minimizes the waste of resources such as physical materials, energy and time, while successfully achieving the desired output." (Investopedia)

From the latin verb efficiō –meaning to execute, to accomplish– the modern sense of the word 'efficient', according to the same Oxford Dictionaries from where I extracted the opening quote of this text, only came into existence in the late 18th century, roughly around the same time as the Industrial Revolution was entering upon.

Taylorism, a theory of labour developed from the 1880s onwards by Frederick Winslow Taylor –himself one of the main influences within the 'Efficiency Movement– was committed to the quest of achieving the perfect ratio of "useful output to total input" to such an extent that some of its proponents went to the point of collapsing the person with the machine as a desired outcome. One such example is Alexei Gastev, founder of the Central Institute of Labour in the Soviet Union, advocate of the "principle of mechanization" and the "biological automatization" of workers (The Charnel House, 2011).

Also known as the scientific management of labor, Taylor's brainchild consisted of an array of techniques for disciplining workers' bodies into becoming efficient productive machines. Motion studies, calculation and metrics would produce the knowledge necessary to inform the training of workers and the rational allocation of human resources. Nikolas Rose understands this process as the first of many attempts to provide management with rational legitimacy. Fabricating compliance was thus essential for preventing conflicts between worker and employer. The perfect Taylorist worker would thus be a docile body, as compliant and sturdy as the steam engine (Gregory, Hendry, Watts, Young, 2017).

But this reductive vision of the worker would not last forever. In "Governing the Soul – The Shaping of the Private Self", specifically within the chapter "The Productive Subject", Nikolas Rose maps the developments which allowed for these theories, if not to subside, to evolve. When World War I struck and demands grew heavier on workers' bodies, it became clear that the worker-machine had limitations and was bound to fatigue and other health-related issues. According to Rose, this allowed for a series of interventions that would gradually shift the conception of the worker as mere physiological apparatus. In 1921 C.S. Myers established the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in the United Kingdom, marking a new era where the psychology

of the worker became a crucial way of re-conceptualizing industrial efficiency and peaceful continuation.

In the United States, too, the ways of conceiving the working body shifted similarly. However, whereas in the United Kingdom the focus was on individual differences, in the United States the problem was conceptualized in terms of human relations within the group. Overall, workers' subjectivity "had emerged as a new domain for management" (Rose 1989), which set itself as a neutral, independent authority that would act as a middle man between worker and employer, smoothing out the frictions that might arise between them. Moreover, the enmeshment of the worker's subjectivity in the life of the company was to create a sense of belonging and common, shared goals, stimulating a renewed personal investment in the advancement of the company's interests.

Pinning rightful work discontent caused by systemic inequality down to maladjustment and pathology, this managerial approach to workers' subjectivity obscures workers' exploitation in layers of scientific authority, centering the problem on the self and its immediate conditions. In turn, this promotes an internalization and individualization of the problem, thus obfuscating the larger infrastructure/superstructure complex engendering workers' collective exploitation. These thoughts seem to be echoed by many critics who claim that these interventions did nothing to solve basic inequalities. While Rose sees much truth in these analyses, and indeed links these managerial efforts with a hope to weaken trade unionism, he warns against regarding these discourses as purely ideological as to do so would imply that the knowledge involved in the management of the workers' psyche is false.

According to Michel Foucault, the preoccupation with the wellbeing of the general population for the purposes of a strong and healthy state dates back to the 18th century Western societies. Such an endeavor requires not only large amounts of data, but also that every individual participates in their own governance. Governmentality thus refers to structural entanglement of self-government with the government of a state (Lorey 2006). In her reading of Foucault's biopolitics within the context of self-precarization, Isabell Lorey explores how ideas of freedom and autonomy are constituted in Western capitalist societies. What does it mean to 'choose' precarity within the context of neoliberal governmentality?

From Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Lorey extracts the fundamental notion that the modern Western subject must gradually learn a relationship with themselves. Here, the self emerges as something to be shaped and developed. This development is modeled on the concept of "normal" (e.g. white, male, bourgeois, national, etc), which Lorey identifies with the hegemonic; this concept is infused with the sense of authenticity, thus obscuring the effect of power on the construction of the self. Whilst traditionally those who did not fit the norm were made precarious, Lorey posits that, in neoliberalism, precarization is transformed from an exception into a hegemonic, normalized function. Self-precarization, thus, serves the needs of economical and governmental power whilst at the same time beclouding its role.

Both for forced and self-chosen precarization the narrative is one of creating one's own opportunities and devising one's own means of economical success – in short, becoming an entrepreneur. This state imposed narrative is characterized by a shift of responsibility, letting the governed subject shoulder the consequences, as well as the blame, for their failures, obscuring decisive factors which might hinder equal access to opportunities such as class, gender, race, neurological differences, etc.

"In a neoliberal context they [the self-precarious] are exploitable to such an extreme that the state presents them as role models." (Lorey 2006)

This role model, the normalized identity which corresponds to the hegemonic, is that of a tireless individual who is alert and always ready, a force of nature with a strong presence that is mostly white, often male, charming, creative and gregarious. The normal subject is someone with the ability to, first and foremost, sell themselves, whose social skills are well tuned and whose energy comes from connecting with others. A force to be reckoned with, this well of virtues is resilient, organized, flexible, efficient... the list goes on and on. Within the neoliberal environment, where precarious bodies need to constantly prove themselves economically viable, being visible can also be decisive –every event is an opportunity to trade in social capital, every party might decide whether economical survival will be possible for the next couple of months. Where everyone is an entrepreneur, everyone can become your next investor. Being seen as productive often becomes more important than production itself.

Lorey identifies self-precarization with feelings of fear, loss of control, insecurity, as well with a redefinition of the boundaries between work and leisure. Always having to be "on" and prove yourself constantly to others is a taxing project on everyone forced to exist under such conditions – even for those who fit the 'job' description almost to a tee. We can imagine it is even more so for the precarious within the precarized population –the neurodiverse, people of colour, female, transexual, introverted, anxious, etc. For them, fitting in always involves some degree of self-mutilation and adaptation. As an example, a simple internet search for "introvert" returns several links to articles about the hidden power of the introvert, the wonderful mythical creature with a rich inner world that can become a great leader if his/her powers are respected and correctly harnessed. Likewise, several articles praise the value of having a person on the Autism Spectrum on your work team. This stereotyped and mystified narrative, besides being unhelpful and assuming some degree of advantage, immediately places an inordinate amount of pressure on these people to make up for their deviance to the norm with the "unique" attributes they are famed to have. Acceptance comes at the price of constant performance of an attributed set of traits, qualities and strengths. Much of the mainstream discourse in this arena condescendingly engulfs all diversity into a productive body: individual differences are taken into account as long as they are coherent with their official portrait and in so far as they can be made exploitable by capital.

Coherence might just be a key concept to retain and explore further. Lorey underlines its importance as a fundamental of modern sovereignty – self-governing depends on an imagined coherence and wholeness that shapes itself on the mold of "normality". Likewise, in order to be made productive, "abnormality" must be absorbed into a perfectly defined identity that is thus easier to govern. If constructing one's identity boils down to attaining some sort of perceived coherence, when this requirement fails the individual becomes susceptible to what some psychologists call 'ontological insecurity'. Ontological insecurity, which R.D. Laing defines as the lack of an overarching "sense of personal consistency and cohesiveness", is a postmodern condition as Rob Horning maintains in his "Sick of Myself".

Where everyone is concerned with becoming themselves, with self-realization, self-improvement, and other self-alienating techniques, attention shifts away from community building, organization and strengthening of solidarity bonds between individuals. For all of its promotion of networking and social interaction, normalized

precarious identity, where everyone is an entrepreneur of the self, is paradoxically isolating. In this scenario, human relations are not conceived as bonds of solidarity and shared struggles, but established as a means to achieve an end –they're the promise of future financial gratification. Evoking the image of the social graph (the graphical representation of relationships between everybody and everything on the internet), Yuk Hui and Harry Halpin underline that the visualization of social networks as nodes and links "reinforces the philosophical assumption that social relations always exist in a reified manner as 'links' between one atomic unit and another" (Hui and Halpin, 2013). Presiding not only over our online, but also over our offline lives, these atomized representations challenge the possibilities for collectivized counterbehaviour which, Lorey states, is currently missing.

Could a radical refusal of coherence be the basis to start constructing such collectivized counterbehaviour? Could idiosyncrasy be part of the answer to Lorey's question as to what, within neoliberalism, functions as deviant and cannot be exploited in this way? An inconsistent, incoherent and idiosyncratic mass that refuses their deviance to the hegemonic norm be made compliant with the requirements of the economical system. Organization on the basis of acceptance as opposed to adaptation, where society cares for the individual even if it can't commodify its "unique" traits.

If we are too difficult to predict we become, in the best possible scenario, dangerous. In the worst possible scenario, of little or no use to the market. Unity, accountability, predictability – these are the most prized traits in a governable subject. Can we ever refuse them?

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