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Rethinking the Concepts of Subsumption, Surplus Value and Audience Labour in Digital Capitalism

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Rethinking the Concepts of Subsumption, Surplus Value and Audience Labour in Digital Capitalism

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I. Introduction

One of the many effects of the 2008 economic crisis was the revival of the Neo-Marxist analysis on the overall political economy in the academic sector[1]. So, certain groups of researchers and professors in the international arena started to analyze with a critical eye but linked to the Marxist Labour Theory of Value, the most recent changes in the working world. These studies had already been undertaken by the Italian autonomist school, which nowadays remains more alive than ever and immersed in frank and healthy debate with these new research groups.

The backbone of these analyses is the internet communication space, which has acted as one of the major bases of the current productive -force growth on a global level. (After the sectorial crisis of ".com" companies and the subsequent global financial crisis).

This network space-related growth centers on the information industry, both physical and immaterial: hardware, software, semiconductors, antennas for the internet infrastructure itself, advertising, publishing houses, and broadcasting. The information industry has become one of the main areas of investment by transnational capital along with the still majority FIRE sector (finance, insurance, and real estate), almost competing with assets in the mobility sector (transport infrastructure, oil, gas, and vehicles)[2].

These new researchers, together with the Italian autonomists, face a labour reality that significantly differs from the industrial age in its different phases. They are assuming an interesting challenge to update Marx's Surplus Value Theory. The aim of this article is precisely to publicize, at least partially, this ongoing debate and make an analysis thereof.

II. The Evolution of the Concept of Subsumption

a) Introduction

During the 1973 economic crisis, the Fordist phase of the industrial monopolistic capitalism (sponsored after World War II) came to a crisis. This historical stage was characterized by state intervention in the dominant nation-state economy to regulate consumers' real demand. In practice, it meant a high degree of well-paid factory jobs to ensure the realization of surplus value in the merchandise put on the market by trading companies, the big monopolies of production.

In economic jargon, this post-crisis period began to be called *post-Fordism*, though it was unclear since it was a transition what would it be the new production paradigm. This transition is what some authors called the descending phase of the long wave (Mandel, 1983) or the last transition to the empire (Negri & Hardt, 2002). However, it will be only at the end of the Gulf War (February 1991), in the context of the disintegration of the Soviet Union (March 1990 to December 1991), that this new productive pattern begins to be delineated; thus it goes beyond the implemented Toyota Production System [3] which is still valid.

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[1] Between 2008 and 2014, articles on Marx or Marxism in indexed journals of social sciences almost tripled in comparison to the previous decade (Fuchs & Fisher, 2015, 6).

[2] To review this percentage data, see the article by Christian Fuchs (2016) *Digital Labor and Imperialism*: 4 and 5. Available at: monthlyreview.org/2016/01/01/digital-labor-and-imperialism/

[3] Production line system invented by the Japanese engineer Taiichi Ohno. It is based on *the just-in-time* principle that seeks to make only what is needed and at the right time, reducing the offer of goods, contrary to what happened in the Fordist period. This led to the price increase of merchandise and the dismissal of a high percentage of labour, passing structural temporality at the service of market

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This paradigm would gradually sympathize with the knowledge industry after a period of innovations in the fields of transport, language, and communication. These innovations made possible the development of the internet as a source of production and dissemination of information, content, and services. This based -on the -speed –of- communication revolution has been the basis for the current productivity growth of contemporary capitalism by provoking another turn of events in the reduction of the socially necessary labour time (value) for goods production.

This form of subordination is broader than that of the industrial era, thus it is extended to the entire consumer and knowledge society. It is subsumption that indirectly exploits the individual, even in his spare time, blurring the *Fordist borders* of labour time and leisure time. Life is commercialized by converting any use-value into exchange value.

b) Formal subsumption

It is known that the labour process as a creator of use values, designed to meet direct population needs, has been common to all modes of production. At the beginning of capitalism, this labour process began to be mystified (fetishized), and Marx called it subsumption of the labour process by capital. A concept of Latin origin which means both subordination and inclusion.

According to Marx (1982, 2010, 2013) explicit in the Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63, and in chapters VI (unpublished), and XIV of Capital Volume: The period of formal subsumption of labour lasts from the beginnings of mercantile capitalism, at the end of the 16th century, to the end of the 18th century. Two centuries of transition where the labour process becomes in an instrument of the valorization process[4] That is a creation of surplus-value. The free and urban artisan workshop turned out to be the development center of this phenomenon. All surplus value as an expression of unpaid surplus labour was generated by the officer's workshop who then, started acting as a waged worker, maintaining yet the knowledge and the previous skills as well as a certain degree of control over the tools, but under the direction of the little capitalist.

From the technological point of view, the labour process was effected exactly as before but subordinated to the capitalist, not to the corporate master. The capitalists, still small, were the same masters who sometimes also had to work to supply all the needs. The difference between the labour formally subsumed by the capital and the former mode of production was manifested in the volume of capital invested by the individual capitalist.

The replacement of slavery, servitude, vassalage, and the patriarchal forms by the new worker-officer's subordination to capital, just modified the form of exploitation, not the content. It became freer, formally voluntary, purely economic (Marx, 1983, 2010, 2013). While slaves, for example, received a minimum wage regardless of their labour, the new worker had no guarantee of it. Besides, he was forced to work and compete with his fellow workers to be hired in exchange for all his strength and expertise to avoid starving to death along with his family.

A similar thing happened when the peasant servant and the corporate officer were released, and became free and waged workers. In all cases, despite the social subjugation suffered in return for their freedom of movement and contract that allowed them to choose a workplace, their certainty of having their basic needs fully supplied was lost.

c) Real subsumption

Along with the transition from formal to real subsumption, which had as a rupturist milestone the First Industrial Revolution, the process of exploitation and extraction of surplus value went from the extension of the working day to the intensification of the labour process. Marx calls this surplus-value *relative* to distinguish it from *absolute*. This revolution was a consequence of the application of science and technology to speed up production and provoked the incorporation of a machine to exponentially increase the productive forces. Simultaneously, this large-scale production tended to conquer all the industrial branches that had not been seized and in which still existed formal subsumption on a small scale or even independent artisan work (Marx, 2010, 2013).

In real subsumption, the individual worker, who completely made a product in the workshop, now becomes a mere link of a group that works in cooperation (through a division of labour) to generate goods that contain surplus value as an expression of all unpaid surplus labour. This transition from formal to real subsumption passed through three phases: From the simple cooperation system of the pre-capitalist artisan workshop, at the end of the 18th century, to the manufacture of Adam Smith's age, where workers still used their tools. So, subsumption continued to be semi-formal. In the mid of the 19th century, this manufacturing turns into a large factory and workers lost all their autonomy in the labour process, getting to be a mere appendage and servant of a machine, adapting to its pace and acting without thinking (Marx, 1982, 2007, 2010, 2013).

Now the form of extraction of surplus value began to be defined by the intensity of the machine

fluctuations. This system is still valid and is integrated into the new paradigm of cognitive capitalism.

[4] Marx (2013) Capital, Chapter VI (unpublished): 15. This chapter was excluded by Marx in the publication of Capital Volume I in 1867 and was not published until 1933 in the Soviet Union. The original name is *Results of the Direct Production Process*.

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pace imposed on the worker. A pace intended to shorten the working time socially required for goods production and the reproduction of the labour force. Thus, increasing the rate of surplus-value (relative) by prolonging the unpaid working time, which is the capitalist's ultimate goal. The timer becomes central to measure labour, which turns into a more abstract activity, that is, devoid of any creativity.

Usurped, externalized, and personified is the labourer's knowledge by the machine. So, the relation between constant and fixed capital or dead labour (the machine) and variable capital or living labour (the labourer) changes concerning formal subsumption. The labourer is deprofessionalized and deprived of his old craftsman's knowledge and skill, which remain personified and coagulated of the machine.

Therefore, there is a transfer of knowledge from living to dead labour. Capital now seems to tend towards self-valorization, increasing the mystification of value by not depending on former officers' skills. During the 20th century, this material production - based real subsumption reaches its peak with the Taylorist and Fordist systems, which completely separated the conception tasks from the execution ones. The former led to the 1929 crisis, and the latter led to the New Deal of the second postwar as a strategy to stabilize the system (through the promotion of effective demand from the states), and to mitigate the class struggle, that the Bolshevik revolution encouraged throughout the industrialized world.

d) The current total subsumption

In the 70s, 80s, and 90s, the Italian neo-Marxist autonomists such as Negri, Virno, Lazzarato, Marazzi, and others, began to develop Marx's (2007) concept of General Intellect as the new productive labourforce. A concept based on social knowledge but stood out a difference. While Marx related it to fixed capital, that is, scientific and technical knowledge coagulated in machines; the autonomists relate it to living labour, that is, the knowledge workers, who produce immaterial goods, related to the linguistic aspects (relational, communicative), and independent of capital as such. Hence, its relative autonomy concerning capital, a fact that did not occur during the Fordist real subsumption. (Negri & Lazzarato, 2001).

This post-real subsumption transition, which continues to this day, has been defined by some authors as subsumption of the general intellect (Vercellone, 2007) to emphasize the subordination of knowledge to capital; subsumption of life (Fumagalli, 2015) to give a more holistic connotation to subordinated labour, and not exclusively circumscribe it to knowledge; or subsumption of society to capital (Negri, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2011) to expand the concept of social subject (the social worker, multitude) in said inclusion and subordination.

Maybe a more logical term in respect of the sequence proposed by Marx (2010), we affirm, be that of total subsumption. A concept that would indicate that subsumption has been extended to the personal scope, erasing the boundaries between labour and recreation. Besides, this subordination implies a combination of formal and real subsumption. Formal subsumption because knowledge is an independent skill of capital. Knowledge resides in the human brain, then it (knowledge) is marketed and integrated in a similar way to that carried out with the artisan officers at the beginning of capitalism. Hence, the potentiality of the current labour autonomy to capital that the autonomists defend.

This development of the general intellect as acquired social knowledge is explained by Vercellone (2007) as a consequence of welfare state policies on education and indirect salary, because they permitted to grant enough free time to a part of the population to be trained in multiple linguistic and relational skills, making them *productive* in themselves. In other words, variable capital as living labour becomes at the same time fixed capital (the brain), independent but linked to and almost merged with the new communication technologies.

This new formal subsumption that appropriates these use values (cognitive and relational abilities) to convert them into exchange values is accompanied by real subsumption in a combined way since industrial material work does not disappear but is reduced and transformed in the advanced countries (Toyota system) to move the Fordist system to other more profitable regions for capital.

This new dynamic technologies-related total subsumption of life requires specific governance to control citizens. Fumagalli (2015) points out that these instruments are individual debt and precarious employment. These would be the two main disciplinary tools of the current control society to regulate the psychology of individuals more effectively than the old factory's hierarchical command structure. It is an indirect control that generates self-repression, competitiveness at the highest level, and guilt feelings (Fumagalli, 2015). We would add the control of personal information through social media and search engines such as Google that acts as the Orwellian Big Brother who sees and records everything.

Now, this total subsumption that not only subordinates labour but the entire society, as said by Negri (2001, 2002, 2004, 2011), does not have to imply the disappearance of the law of value-labour as the autonomists suggest in general[5]. In this sense and accordance with Jakob Rigi (2015), although the law of value is partially undermined in advanced countries by the difficulty of quantifying the surplus value generated

[5] See the proposals of Fumagalli (2015) or Negri (n.d.) regarding the theories of value-life or value-affect respectively.

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by the society involved in the activities of knowledge production as well as by the reduction of socially necessary working time; the law of value, in reality, expands globally as it extends to other regions of the planet such as China where the real Fordist subsumption keeps standing. The interdependent role of some economies with others is difficult to understand if, from the standpoint of the functioning of the value chain, the global perspective is lost.

III. Audience Labour in Digital Media

a) Introduction

After briefly reviewing the history of subsumption of labour in the capital, better placed we are to reflect on surplus-value in contemporary capitalism's digital sector. If we consider valid the assertions of the Italian autonomist school, without going into distinguishing nuances, the current subsumption would be defined by a combination of formal and real subsumption, having as its basis the exploitation, not of the factory physical labour (transferred to the periphery), but of human knowledge that functions as a direct productive force (general intellect) merged with the new technologies.

The question is how this new social relation (general intellect/capital) produces in some cases surplus-value, rent or speculative gains for the corporations of the information industry, and digital communication.

b) The concept of audience labour

The key concept some researchers bring to the table to understand the phenomenon of total subsumption that is expressed more clearly in the dominant countries is that of *audience labour*. This idea was introduced by Dallas Smythe (1977) in his famous article *Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism*. In this work, Smythe criticizes the culturalist vision of Western Marxism[6] concerning the information and communication industry, treating it exclusively as part of the ideological superstructure.

Smythe (1977) focuses on advertising as big media's fundamental instrument to induce *the audience* to consume the advertised products and completing and ensuring the production cycle. So, turning the users into merchandise that is sold to advertising companies. A commodity whose use-value lies in the ability to "pay attention" to ads. Said companies buy that ability from the mass media owners using the offer of television programs as a bait.

However, Graham Murdock (1978)[7] will respond to Smythe asserting that despite the Canadian researcher's article's wisdom "Smythe's preoccupation with the relations between communications and advertising leads him to underplay the independent role of media content in reproducing dominant ideologies" (p: 5). Murdock will ironically call this deficit "Smythe's blindspot" to use the same metaphor employed by this in his article's title.

This controversy that stimulated the development of a political economy of communication has been revived in recent years regarding the digital industry on the internet and social media as the new means of mass communication and information. To dig into this discussion, we will focus on three recent articles by Brice Nixon, Christian Fuchs, and Eran Fisher[8].

c) The debate

Brice Nixon (2015) states that audience labour ought to be reconceptualized to theoretically raise the bar that Smythe had left. For Nixon, the fundamental relation in the political economy of communication is not between advertisers and audience, but between the media owners and the audience. Nixon tries an analogy between the labour process described by Marx (1867-2010) in Capital Volume I with the labour process related to the cultural industry in general. He compares the media owners' role with the landowners to establish similarities and differences. He points out that a cultural industry's owner grants the right to use the cultural content he owns, in exchange for a payment in the form of rent. A rent that comes directly from the workers' wages or a part of the surplus-value appropriated by another capitalist, for instance, an advertiser. Advertisers pay a tax to the media's owner (to promote their products to the audience), which is what allows the audience to freely access cultural content.

Nixon asserts the latter is the most common way to exploit the audience that acts as a productive worker for capital because its cultural consumption activities generate a value for the media capitalist either through the direct sale of a cultural commodity or for the tax he receives from the advertiser. However, it could be inferred that the capitalist of communication behaves like a landowner by exploiting the audience's labour (his perception and decoding abilities) without paying a salary to the user for the *working* time he invests in the cultural consumption that increases media's capital. It is like an abstract work made more or less passively (perception and decoding) through the use of natural *work* tools the individual possesses, like sight and hearing. These natural means, together with the artificial ones defined by the current technological devices,

[6] Diverse authors who are distinct from Soviet Marxism and who generally focused on superstructural issues related to ideological reproduction, leaving economic issues aside in a sort of rejection of Soviet orthodox economism.

[7] *Blindspots About Western Marxism: A Reply to Dallas Smythe*.

[8] Brice Nixon is a professor at the Communications Department of the University of La Verne, USA. Christian Fuchs is director of the Communication and Media Research Institute and professor at Westminster University, London. Eran Fischer is a professor at the Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication of the Open University, Israel.

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would act as digital capital's working instruments, whose object is the production of culture in the broad sense of the term.

Now, the production and characteristics of this generated surplus-value are difficult to get, measure, and define, because they are completely mystified. Nixon (2015) states that "that extraction of interest from advertisers is a process of indirect exploitation of audience labour by communicative capital since the surplus-value is taken from the advertiser rather than the audience labourer" (P: 111).

Although Nixon does not say where this surplus value that is transferred from advertisers to the media owner comes from, we agree with his analysis. That unanswered question makes difficult to grasp the functioning of audience labour as productive labour in itself, namely, as a direct generator of surplus value in the strict sense of the term.

Jhally and Livant[9] (1986) tried to do so arguing that watching television is a form of work that generates surplus value when the audience sees more ads than necessary to cover the costs of the programs broadcasted in the media. Making an analogy with what happens in the traditional factory, the extra time spent seeing ads translates into extra money that ends up in the owner's hands. The more viewers watch ads, the more money the owner will get. The difference between the total value collected in a given time and the cost of programs would be the surplus-value obtained. According to Jhally and Livant (1986) what is exploited to create value is the audience's *perception ability*. Nonetheless, in our opinion, this is very unclear because producing money does not necessarily mean producing value. Rather, we would say that the relation between the advertiser and the audience is productive in a non-strict sense of the term; that is, from the viewpoint of circulation but not of production. Although watching a program, a movie, or reading a book requires energy consumption on the part of the audience, listener or reader, this passive work can not be equated with the cultural worker who creates the program or the writer who writes the book. The difference is qualitative.

That is, to produce value it is necessary to create something third parties may use. In light of this, the proposal of Jhally and Livant (1986) seems to us somewhat exaggerated. It is another matter of what happens on social media where users create content through a type of active work. They consume but also create information[10] as use-value that afterward can be commercialized by themselves, as autonomous subjects, or indirectly through the media owners to sell it to advertisers. Eran Fisher (2015) states that to understand social networks we should think of them both as means of communication and production.

Fisher (2015) mentions Facebook as the social network par excellence. Its users freely create the content in return (although it remains unsaid) for commercializing the information. He explains that "if we see social media sites as a factory and their users as workers, we should ask ourselves what the audience produces. The answer, he adds, is information".(p:120)

Fisher (2015) divides this information into five types: "demographic, personal, communicative, performative, and associational" (p: 120). In short, Fisher points out several aspects presented in the hidden philosophy of Facebook, being perhaps the most important the veiled creation of ideological profiles in a constant and public way in such a way that each user is under pressure to reflect on their own identity about the system's values. In this sense, it can be inferred that Facebook is a large ideological, and fake news factory[11]. It is a Big Brother who watches and records everything, from the slightest feeling of sadness of a user because of a breakup to the plans of anti-establishment groups or any dictatorial government's opponents. That last information is sent to political and security bodies of the global imperial system[12].

From the viewpoint of the economic exploitation of the social media user, Fisher (2015) compares it with the audience's work of traditional means of communication (television). In both cases, the fundamental device that indirectly generates surplus-value is the advertisement. Fisher (2015) states that in the 80s and 90s the media owners could not prolong too much the time given to commercials because they could lead to losing the audience. This *absolute surplus value* had a reasonable limit. About the intensification and efficiency of the exploitation of that limited time, the advertising companies improved their techniques by making increasingly shorter and more striking ads to extract the *relative surplus value* of the audience labour.

However, they have depended on statistical analyses to monitor the audience's wishes. Fisher (2015) holds that "these analyses are imprecise and unreliable by definition" (p: 124) and that social networks allow transcending these limitations. The extension of the exploitation is achieved because the users have permanently connected to the social network thanks to the technology of the mobile devices and the global coverage of the internet signal. Likewise, social networks such as Facebook and its subsidiary Instagram allow to individually know users' changing wishes and aspirations, which is why advertisers have more accurate information to know consumer trends.

[9] *Watching as Working: The Valorization of Audience Consciousness*.
[10] Prosumers.
[11] False news that deliberately create *opinion matrices* favorable to interest groups.
[12] Recently, the transfer of data from 50 million people by Facebook to the company Cambridge Analytica to influence different political campaigns, such as that of President Trump, came to light.

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On the other hand, Fisher maintains that social networks are spaces for unlimited social communication with the promise of emancipation and desalination through socialization. The cure for loneliness and depression. A dialectical relation, exploitation, and desalination, which can also be expressed in another way, control versus democracy and freedom. A fight, in favor of capital, reproduces on the internet the veiled class struggle existing in society.

Other authors such as Christian Fuchs (2015) focus more on this point and try to argue why audience labour is productive in itself and thus why internet users must be given a class status, even appealing to the political left to integrate them sectorally as exploited workers.

Fuchs (2015) states that some academics say that users of social networks like Facebook cannot be defined as productive workers because they do not earn a wage for their activity. He points out that this argument is not new and was also directed against Dallas Smythe. To counteract it, Fuchs mentions the concept of the collective worker propounded by Marx (1867-2010) at the beginning of Chapter 16 of Capital Volume I (absolute and relative surplus-value) but does not provide sufficient explanation of the analogy. Orthodox authors claim that surplus value in capitalism is generated only in places where workers are compelled to work longer than they need to produce the equivalent of their salary. Perhaps, for this reason, says Lebowitz (1986 in Fuchs 2015), doubt has been raised concerning accepting the concept of audience labour as exploitative work that generates surplus value.

Here the debate gets more interesting. Fuchs (2015) states that Marx defines wages as "a certain amount of money paid for a certain amount of labour" (p: 29). Nevertheless, he argues that patriarchy, feudalism, and slavery have not disappeared as social relations of production and that they are included in the capitalist mode of production where the wage relation is hegemonic but not exclusive. The orthodox view excludes non-salaried labour, such as the labour of a housewife or a househusband, as if they were not exploitative for not being salaried, as well as being considered irrelevant to the class struggle. Fuchs is right in this, but it does not make much sense, in our view, to equate the labour of housekeepers with the activities of the social network's user.

Fuchs (2015) holds that every capitalist's dream is to make people work but paying them the minimum or nothing if possible because this means obtaining the maximum level of profits. But Fuchs's chief argument for audience labour as productive work lies in the interpretation of Capital Volume II (1885, 2010), relating to the circulation process. Fuchs (2015) equates the audience labour with the transport labour described by Marx: "The productive capital invested in this industry thus adds value to the products transported" (p: 30), both by the transfer of the merchandise from one place to another and by the value of the labour done by the transport workers.

For Fuchs (2015) commercial or advertising companies transport the promise of the ideology of use-values to consumers. This publicity involves informational production and communication transport work. They do not transport physical merchandise, but the promise of its possibility of use shortly. Consequently, "the creation of the symbolic ideology of the merchandise is an activity that creates value" (p: 29).

The problem we see here is perhaps that Fuchs is confusing the labour done by transporters in the field of circulation, thus this adds value to the final product, with the audience labour as such. We ask ourselves: Who creates this "symbolic value of the merchandise"? The user watching ads (audience labour) or the advertising sector workers who work for capital? Here is another question that neither Nixon nor Fisher nor Fuchs is asked, but it answers itself.

IV. Conclusion

To our mind, the role played by the advertising company, whether independent or dependent on the large productive corporation, is similar to the transport companies alluded by Marx, and not to the audience labour as these authors to some degree claim. Audience labour is limited to receiving, perceiving, and decoding the promise of the asset and then, buying it in the market to ensuring the realization of surplus-value contained in the product offered by the productive corporation, be it material or immaterial. Of course, the advertising company generates value in itself, and on the other hand, increases the value of the end product. The question is that if this end product is not sold, surplus value cannot be realized, nor part thereof be allocated to the advertising investment because the sector's industry would be senseless. If we ignore this perspective, separating the aspects that link circulation to production, it will be difficult to understand the process as a whole.

In this respect, we perceive a tendency in some of these authors of the political economy of digital communication, audience labour or social media, to overestimate what orthodox Marxists underestimated by neglecting the content of circulation and reproduction of capital in the world market (Capital Volume II and III). Having made this warning, we consider that in a non-strict sense of the term, these authors are right by defining the activities of users on the internet and social networks as productive activities for capital that invests in said branches.

However, we do not find relevant to call the user of the networks or the media "audience labourer", and equating them with goods transport workers. The communicative capital earns a living through the taxes

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paid by advertising companies that, in turn, utilize users' data to motivate them ideologically and subliminally to buy goods and services produced by the big global monopolies.

Moreover, when the communicative capital directly charges users an amount of money for selling a cultural product, payment from workers' salary, then it is selling immaterial and cultural merchandise produced by the very cultural workers who, by the way, create the product's value and surplus value. That way the media owner does not behave like a rentier landowner, living on the advertisers' tax for giving them the use of the space, but as a *productive* capitalist who does exploit the salaried cultural workers to create merchandise that is sold to consumers (the audience).

While it is true we can distinguish between some passive audience labour like watching tv, reading a book or listening to the radio (decoding), and some active audience labour like producing information and content in social media, in our opinion they should not be called productive work if there is not a formal or informal wage relation with the invested capital; which is not to say that there is no direct or indirect exploitation.

That is to say, one thing is a freelancer who does piecework in exchange for a salary as total or partial part of his life; another very different is the internet user who works outside of the net (teachers, store clerks, officials, waiters) but uses social media at any time of the day, sharing his private life with friends and acquaintances or even strangers. Although the communication capital exploits these contents for financial gain, there are two very different things (surplus value and gain) that have not been, in our eyes, differentiated by any of these brilliant heterodox authors.

Can these users' activities generate enormous profits to the media capitalist through the use of the information given to the advertisers and also by the stock-market speculation? Without a doubt[13]. Has the digital communicative capital found a way to exploit citizens' free time, commercializing the time and space of private life through society's total subsumption under capital? Equally.

However, thinking that internet users are in general and in the abstract exploited workers, who should (it follows) even receive a salary for their activities, seems somewhat unjustified (the universal basic salary has or should have a very different meaning)[14]. To begin with, no one is forced to use social media and continually produce content for a living. People use them to establish relations, boast of what they do or have out of vanity or social recognition, get in touch with friends or distant relatives or to break the barrier of loneliness to which neoliberal capitalism subjects the population. Multiple uses that mean in any case communicative speed, informative productivity, more opportunities to recreate, to play, and of course to work.

This communicative development is due to the process of incessant technological progress described by Marx (2007-2010) to return to the most competitive capital in the market (the rising trend in the organic composition of capital). A synchronic process in which the class struggle plays a fundamental role (Do not forget it) because capital extracts the worker's surplus-value subjectively. On the one hand, the worker does not let exploitation and on the other, he tries not to be expelled from the work process. That balance between classes cannot remain indefinitely stable in global terms due to the system's cyclical crises. Crises that tend to be stronger and more general due to the growing interrelation of the new international division of labour and the dependence of value on financial capital which implies large waves of expulsions of workers.

We will end by noting that:

1) An effort should be made to analyze what percentage of direct surplus value is created in digital communication companies with the formal and informal exploitation of salaried cultural workers;
2) What percentage corresponds to the indirect surplus value from the payment made by the advertising companies to the media owners according to the audience's perceptual consumption;
3) What percentage is allocated to the mere making of the cultural commodity through the purchase (consumption) made by users via their digital devices and that is deducted from their salary, that is, from the value of the necessary work and not from surplus-value;
4) Finally, what percentage of the total value generated is merely speculative, without support in production.

[13], Instagram was bought for 1.000 million dollars in 2012 and today is valued at 100.000 million with a network of users of 1.000 million. Of the 27.638 million dollars that Mark Zuckerberg earned in 2016, more than 97 percent were achieved through advertising (La Razón, 2017/03/14). That is, these gains have a specific origin that is in the surplus value generated by large production corporations through the exploitation of the working class worldwide. The basis of the growth of the value of the shares of the social network in the stock market is based on the estimated income that will be obtained by the relation between the increase in users and the ads that these users will see and that will be translated into an approximate percentage of purchases.

[14] From the materialist perspective, the sense of a universal basic dividend rests on the idea that social knowledge has been expropriated by capital during the historical process of subsumption and coagulated in technology, so current productivity has a social origin, and thus the working world should be compensated. It is not a humanitarian gift from the welfare state, but a class right that has to do with the current redistribution of surplus value generated by the working class for decades.

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These studies will produce the necessary data to update the law of value in contemporary capitalism, and thereby we will have a further understanding of the system's internal functioning; thus, bringing to light, through defetishisation, all the productive potential of the common that is expropriated by the new forms of exploitation. It is mixed exploitation of digital rentism, piecework, exploitation, and commercialization of the audience's perception abilities, precarious and informal work, slave exploitation in the mineral industry associated with digital technologies, Fordist exploitation in the assembly industries in China and other countries, exploitation of specialized knowledge in the central capitalism's corporations, among others.

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