The Internet as Playground and Factory. Trebor Scholz The New School, NYC
DIGITAL LABOR

THE INTERNET AS PLAYGROUND AND FACTORY

EDITED BY TREBOR SCHOLZ

FROM MOBILE PLAYGROUNDS TO SWEATSHOP CITY
Introduction

Today we are arguably in the midst of massive transformations in economy, labor, and life related to digital media. The purpose of this conference is to interrogate these dramatic shifts restructuring leisure, consumption, and production since the mid-century. In the 1950s television began to establish commonalities between suburbanites across the United States. Currently, communities that were previously sustained through national newspapers now started to bond over sitcoms. Increasingly people are leaving behind televisions sets in favor of communing with -- and through-- their computers. They blog, comment, procrastinate, refer, network, tease, tag, detag, remix, and upload.  

http://digitallabor.org
Digital Labor?

Digital Labor: mobile, waged, unwaged, no collar

Exploitation

Technical, social, and legal responses
"The vast majority of human labor, historically and to this day, is wageless—only 7% of India’s workforce, for example, enjoys regular wages and salaries, and that number is on the decrease." Andrew Ross (2012)
childcare, housework or surrogacy
A billion people in advanced economies may have between two billion and six billion spare hours among them, every day.

Y. Benkler (Remix, p178 Lessig)
"The unregulated nature of the emerging global cognitive labor market and evokes the Gastarbeiter (guest worker) program of the economic wonder years of postwar Germany.” Ayhan Aytes (2012)
"Gold farming is a burgeoning ‘grey market’ labor practice in a disliked and semi-illegal industry." Lisa Nakamura (2012)
Play/Labor Playbor
Map of the digital labor landscape

http://www.mindmeister.com/69346890

Trebor Scholz
mobile Digital Labor

no-collared
waged

unwaged

data provision
time/cognitive surplus
emotional
co-innovation
public-spirited
search
"We get all the culture; they get all the revenue."
McKenzie Wark (2012)
"Google would not exist without these 1.05 billion users because its profits are based on ads targeted to user searches, which means that the users’ search process is value-generating." Christian Fuchs (2012)
Facebook Profiles

Favorite music, books, movies, address (home town), phone number, email, jobs, educational history, birth date, sexual orientation, interests, daily schedules, relation to friends, pictures
"Corporations [should] acknowledge that fandom is a form of labor that adds value to mass-produced commodities and is worthy of compensation." Abigail De Kosnik (2012)
“I watched my book reviewing career begin to take shape. I take immense pleasure informing other readers about newcomers or unknown authors who have written superb novels.”

http://harrietklausner.wwwi.com/
The Internet of Things
Join our community of translators and make Facebook available in your language.

Add the Translations Application to translate, review, and vote on translations in your language.

Once the translations for your language are complete and their quality has been verified by the community, your language will be launched for all Facebook users. After your language has been launched, you may also use the Translations application to translate and vote on translations for your Facebook features.

63 languages are currently open for translation by the Facebook community. Soon, we will be supporting translation for these right-to-left languages: Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Urdu, Yiddish and Divehi.

Discussion Board
Displaying 3 of 917 discussion topics
Start New Topic | See All

please add Luxembourgish language
1 post by 1 person. Updated 8 hours ago

Facebook in Arabic – باللغة العربية
81 posts by 66 people. Updated 18 hours ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of Fans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (US)</td>
<td>25,435 fans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Español</td>
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<td>Español (España)</td>
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<td>Português (Portugal)</td>
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About this Application

** (4.0 out of 5)
Based on 598 reviews

Users:
12 friends

Category
Utility

Fans
6 of 25,435 fans

See All
"Individual desires get mined and harvested into industrial demands that are serviced by the most impersonal forms of manpower that modernity has seen. " Andrew Ross (2012)

Fordism on steroids.
We encourage people to do the work by taking advantage of their desire to be entertained. -- ESP GAME “about section”
Welcome to Google Image Labeler, a feature of Google Search that allows you to label images and help improve the quality of Google's image search results.

Your nickname: guest - Change

Start labeling

How does it work?

You'll be randomly paired with a partner who's online and using the feature. Over a two-minute period, you and your partner will:

- View the same set of images.
- Provide as many labels as possible to describe each image you see.
- Receive points when your label matches your partner's label. The number of points will depend on how specific your label is.
- See more images until time runs out.

After time expires, you can explore the images you've seen and the websites where those images were found. And we'll show you the points you've earned throughout the session.

Tips:

- You may click the "pass" button if you can't think of any more labels for an image. If you and your partner both click "pass," you'll see the next image but receive no points for the passed image.
- You'll receive more points for matches with more descriptive labels. For example, this image can be described by the labels: sky (50 points), bird (60 points), soaring (120 points), or frigate bird (150 points).
A billion people in advanced economies may have between two billion and six billion spare hours among them, every day.

Y. Benkler (Remix, p178 Lessig)
mobile  

Digital Labor

- no-collar
- waged
- unwaged
There are over 2 billion literate, mobile phone subscribers in the developing world, many living on less than $5 a day.

Corporations pay people to accomplish billions of image, audio and text-based tasks.

txteagle enables these tasks to be completed via the mobile phone by people around the globe.

For clients:
txteagle connects corporate clients to the world’s largest knowledge labor market: the 2+ billion literate mobile phone users distributed throughout the developing world.

For users:
txteagle enables mobile phone subscribers around the world to earn small amounts of money or airtime in exchange for work.

For service providers:
txteagle provides its mobile operator partners with a unique value proposition, giving their subscribers the ability to do work and earn money.
"Ross Perlin estimates that corporate America enjoys a $2b annual subsidy from internships alone." Ross

"The internship is an example of the twisted mentality of self-exploitation that has marched on to the killing fields of employment." Andrew Ross
Justin McMurry of Keller, Tex., volunteers up to 20 hours a week in Verizon’s community forums, helping the company’s Internet, TV and phone customers.
Immaterial?
"The evidence from the current rent-extraction boom is that profits from new markets are far from soft." Andrew Ross
Free?
Free-ish services are not free by any standard

Free Comes at a Price

1994
Released for free. In the four years between the beta stage of Navigator 1.0 and the release of Communicator 4.0, Netscape went through 39 beta versions. From Navigator 1.0 to the release of Communicator 4.0, 39 beta versions.
"It’s free, but they sell your information."
"Exploitation occurs when the material welfare of one class is causally dependent upon the material deprivation of another." Mark Andrejevic
Bubble 2.: $104 billion
"You pay to rent everything, and they can deport you any time." McKenzie Wark
The Violence of Participation
commercial, peer, and governmental surveillance
"Hardt and Negri emphasize that ‘those who are against’ Empire’s exploitation and domination ‘must also continually attempt to construct a new body and a new life.’"

Jodi Dean
"The potential usefulness of an exploitation-based critique of online monitoring is that it invites us to reframe questions of individual choice and personal pleasure in terms of social relations." Mark Andrejevic
"In the circuits of communicative capitalism, convenience trumps commitment." Jodi Dean
Dominant, centralized, non-transparent
Intelligence Fusion Centers
What can we do?

• technical
• legal
• social
• literacy/education
Technical

• Promote Data Portability as Competitive Advantage
• profile data, friend lists, location, activity stream
"The potential usefulness of an exploitation-based critique of online monitoring is that it invites us to reframe questions of individual choice and personal pleasure in terms of social relations." Mark Andrejevic (2012)
Do Not Track

Choose what information is collected about your online activities and how it's used.

An effective Do Not Track mechanism will:

- Allow you to limit data collection
- Work on all sites
- Be easy to use
- Have staying power
- Be enforced
"The peer-to-peer movement clearly articulates a new economics, and increasingly a new politics, in ways Facebook and other social networking sites absolutely do not."

Sean Cubitt
Social

• Distributed Labor Force, Unite!

• Hack Social Media Platforms

Jail Break Facebook

• Decentralize
Social

Value/Expropriation Literacy

Networked Peer Production
LEARN ANYTHING WITH YOUR PEERS.

IT'S ONLINE AND TOTALLY FREE.

At P2PU, people work together to learn a particular topic by completing tasks, assessing individual and group work, and providing constructive feedback.
Public Media

Non-profit infra structures

Greed-Free Businesses

Craigslist
“Peer to peer is the ideology of the new cognitive working class.” Michel Bauwens
FACEBOOK
PRIVACY SETTINGS
SHOULD BE EASY
THE OCCUPY UNIVERSITY
Online stock market for trading socially networked creative products.

Trade shares of social web assets from online bookmarking, social networking, photo and video sharing services. IPO your own social web work.

Learn more about the concepts. Read Meta-Markets Journal for the recent news.

Kevin Killian writes autobiographical fiction in Amazon.com’s book review section 1525 reviews (as of January 7th, 2006)

2008, London Marathon: photo shopped user submitted news reporting
The Iraq War Wikihistoriography (a set of 12 bound volumes documenting every change made to the Wikipedia entry for “the Iraq War” over a period of five years)
Legal

How much power do you want to give to major sites on the Internet?

Expand jurisdiction of Federal labor law to new work environments online.
Trebor Scholz
scholzt@newschool.edu
@trebors