



ABSTRACTS

Work, Play & Boredom

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Who is Yum-Yum? Handling Resistance through Ludic Technologies in the Frame of a Cartoon State (keynote)

Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen (Copenhagen Business School)

The paper presents an analysis of the campaign “Healthy through play”, organized by the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries. “Healthy through play” is minded particularly at vulnerable families and their willingness, knowledge, and capacity to live a healthy lifestyle with respect to both food and exercise. In general terms, the campaign exists as one among a larger number of campaigns that have been launched over the course of the past decade, directed at citizens and their administration of their own lives. This applies not only to the health sector but also the labor market, transportation, education, etc. The starting point for this paper is the fact that this is a campaign ultimately concerned with the self-creation of citizens. Central to the paper, in turn, is the way in which the campaign links its content to play. Why is the concept of play so central to the campaign? What do play and campaign share in common? What do health and play share in common?

What's in a Game? The Co-Evolution of Poker and Capitalism

Ole Bjerg (Copenhagen Business School)

When we look at a piece of art, read a piece of literature, watch a film, or listen to a piece of music, it is commonplace to think of these as cultural expressions of the society and historical context in which they are created. Art, literature, film and music are readily recognized as mediums of the *Zeitgeist*. Poker and other gambling games are rarely thought of in the same fashion. At best, they are considered to be meaningless entertainment, at worst self-destructive vices. The idea of my current work is to treat poker as a cultural expression in line with art, literature, film, etc. It relies on the assumption that the sudden popularity of poker signifies a rich cultural resonance of the game. When so many people find poker interesting, it is because the game has an eminent capacity to capture a set of existential conditions of life in contemporary society and offer these to the players in a form that allows them to explore, challenge, and play with these conditions.

The subject of this particular paper is the history of poker. We shall be exploring how different structural variations of the game have evolved and how different types of poker have been dominant at different periods in history. There are three main forms of poker: Draw, Stud and Hold'Em. In this chapter, it shall be demonstrated how the three forms emerge and become the most popular form of poker at three different periods in history. Furthermore, we shall be identifying structural homologies between the historical development of poker and key elements in the manifestation of capitalism at different times in history. In short, the objective of this paper is to trace back in history poker as a parodic simulation of capitalism.

‘Follow the Leader’: Management, Roleplay, and the Rise of Investor Capitalism

Shaun Bertram (University of London)

Although ‘play at work’ has increasingly come to the fore as a topic of scholarly interest, inquiry has tended to centre upon the ‘play’ of employees as opposed to that of managers. Addressing this oversight, I focus in this paper upon managerial ‘roleplay’, which – emerging from the early 1980s onward – has proliferated within the sphere of Anglo-American popular management. Situating my analysis against a backdrop transition from managerial to investor capitalism, I propose that such roleplay initially served as a means through which ‘rational’ managers were encouraged to ‘try on’ the persona of ‘charismatic leader’ increasingly demanded of them. With time, however, such roleplay has become increasingly ‘routinised’ – to borrow a term from organisational theorist Max Weber – as charismatic roleplay is transformed from personal experience to depersonalised, inherently transferable technique. This latter tendency is particularly apparent, I argue, in the contemporary popular literature on managerial ‘storytelling’.

Boring Wonders and Wonderful Boredom (keynote)

René ten Bos (Radboud University)

Wonder and boredom appear in the work of Heidegger as two out of many *Stimmungen*. The word 'Stimmung' is usually translated as 'attunement'. The way the world discloses itself to us is very much determined by this attunement. As such, it determines our ethos, our dwelling in the world. More precisely, they are the 'presupposition' and 'medium' of thought and action. In this sense, attunement touches us into the heart of who we are as Dasein.

At face value, wonder and boredom seem to be entirely opposite kinds of attunement. However, the very fact that the world of organizations seems to despise both wonder and boredom should alert us to the fact that they may have something in common. So, what we will try to investigate therefore is the secret link between wonder and boredom. In order to do that, we will start by describing attunement. Then we will first explore the theme of wonder and then we carry on with boredom. In the finale of the lecture, we will relate this discussion to the world of organizations. The disquieting suggestion will be made that organization distorts attunement as such.

But how disquieting is this really? Is this not the same old story about alienation and exploitation cloaked in Heideggerean mumbo-jumbo? We will emphatically claim it is not.

In Praise of Boredom

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Following Russell's *In Praise of Idleness* (1935), Lafargue's *The Right to be Lazy* (2002 [1883]), and Foucault's concept of the dressage functions of labour (1977), we have argued that the contemporary organisation of paid work is characterised by the increasing intensification of increasingly pointless activity as part of the carceral function of the work organisation (Carter and Jackson 2005, Jackson and Carter 1998, 2007). However, in advocating an increasing detachment, both physically and spiritually, from work, we fly in the face of contemporary management, both in theory and in practice, and, as argued by Deleuze and Guattari (1984), of the latent but potent desire of workers to collude in their own oppression. In this collusion, the workers facilitate their greater incorporation into the managerial fantasy of 'engineering' the perfect worker and the prospect of achieving the holy grail of a congruency of organisational (sic) and worker goals. As regards the intensification of labour, the appropriation by management of what should properly be the prerogative of the individual worker, (broadly speaking, his/her psychological, emotional and spiritual life) – and thus further facilitating enslavement – is an accelerating feature of 'modern management'.

The progression of the work organisation towards the total institution makes the spaces for resistance correspondingly smaller. However, the incarceration of the corporal worker in physical, or, more recently, cyber, space has limitations in achieving the 'hearts and minds' acceptance of the corporate vision. Workers may 'attend' but that doesn't equate with motivation to work. How necessary, therefore, to engage strategies and techniques with which to corral the *emotional* presence of the worker. Since the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution (see e.g. Marglin 1980), managers have attempted to make work attractive beyond merely its wage benefit. The current vogue for creative play is merely the latest manifestation of this urge. Once something recognisably external and antithetical to the work obligation, play (tellingly, workers used to call a day where the factory was closed through lack of work 'playing a day'), is, ideally, to become synonymous with work. If this level of incorporation is to be challenged, what will serve as an anti-dote?

Given the limited opportunities for workers to opt out of the managerial 'regime of truth', we propose the therapeutic benefits of boredom at work. We champion Russell's argument, that work should be seen as just 'a necessary means to a livelihood' and that, for workers, 'it is from their leisure hours that they [should] derive whatever happiness they may enjoy' (1935:21). Rather than trying to make work appealing to the senses and to last as long as can be borne, it should bore workers to the extent that they demand as little as possible of it. How much better to do four hours per day of tedious but useful toil, than to do eight hours of pleasurable but significantly useless work? Of course, much work contains much that is already boring – what is required is to reject the managerial verity that boredom is both remediable and a dysfunctional response on the part of the worker (in a 'properly managed' organisation), which thus places the responsibility for feeling bored onto the worker and characterises it as a shameful lack of commitment to corporate values. Boredom, when functioning correctly, really should generate the desire to escape from work to something more pleasurable, rather than the obligation to re-educate one's priorities. Indeed, contra Benjamin, we define boredom at work as knowing precisely what we are waiting for: finishing-time! Management theory has a woeful lack of concepts with which to cope with tomorrow's world. The lead given by *Manifestos for the Business School of Tomorrow* (Jones and O'Doherty 2005) requires an expansion of concepts relevant to management and organisation, and we will argue that one such is Boredom.

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Organization of Work and Play

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Today's discourse is based upon communication, networking, virtual world and being connected as a reply to the old fashioned way of organization and management (Thorne, 2005). Now we live in a post-bureaucratic age (Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994) and living in such a 'connected' age it is expected from us to share and share more in the virtual world with the help of social networking web sites.¹ Recently, at least for 5 years, there is a reality of social network web sites bringing people together in the virtual world (Boyd & Elison, 2007). Their main motive, as a simplified expression, is to give people the possibility to share nearly everything that a person experiences during a day. However, the nature of such social network web sites offers more than just sharing experiences. Considering such networking web sites as the examples of organizations of play and work, this study aims to understand its multidimensionality and to figure out what lies beneath such a play and work motive.

Whilst these network sites may be thought as arenas for play and joy in the form of sharing moments, they also have multidimensional aspects regarding organization of play and work. First of all, the motive behind these networking is bringing people together with the idea of sharing moments in an entertaining platform. "Likewise, social networks among individuals who may not be related can be validated and maintained by agreement on objectives, social values, or even by choice of entertainment, such as a group of people who meet for tailgating parties at when their professional football team plays home games" (Clemons, 2007: 268). The entertainment idea is also seen in the games implanted to the networking sites. These games are also tools for connecting people and networking. Secondly, these network sites are good opportunities for work in two senses; at one side network settled by a person can be used to reach new employee opportunities for new work alternatives via his/her friends or there are already such web sites aiming to be partners for business/work. In such job oriented networking sites there is also implicit commoditization of relationships where you are expected to use relationships to make businesses.² Or even in a company you can be connected with your colleague on the networking web site helping you exchange information. At the other side, these applications based on networking web sites have huge potential for profits as they also have the opportunity to make microtargeting advertisements (Cote and Pybus, 2007). A simple idea or a product can be easily adapted to games or to the networking site that it is seen easily and accessed by many people. Accordingly, networking sites and brands are intertwined for a common aim. Thirdly, such an organization of play and work has another disputable position as it is expected that each person in the system provides personal information that would lead to surveillance and control (Foucault, 1977). Even though there are privacy restrictions controlled by the member of the network, in general, with photos uploaded, with groups followed, with contacts settled and with status declarations it is very easy to trace and gain knowledge about the member's lifestyle, political perspective and personal characteristics (Boyd, 2008; Fuch, 2009; Raynes-Goldie, 2009). All these would mean a great power exercise potential over the person. Thus, organization of play and work on networking sites would turn into power and politics game. And finally, such an organization of play and work can be a field for resistance and political arena over internet (Conway et al., 2003; Klein, 2000; Tormey, 2004). You may create causes and attract people to such

¹ For instance Facebook defines itself as "Giving people the power to share and make the world more open and connected." (Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/facebook?ref=pf>).

² The slogan of LinkedIn is "relationships matter".

causes. However, as long as you have your information in the system it is very likely you can be traced. Though, such a situation does not lessen the potential of internet and networking web sites for resistance and politics (Grieco & Bhopal, 2005; Lucio & Walker, 2005). Even, considering the same example above, you can look for coalitions for resistance at the same organization via such networking sites. All these aspects may be thought as the multidimensionality of social networking sites where you can play, work, be observed and resist.

Each dimension has its advantages and disadvantages but the main point in this study will be based on understanding how such a communication, networking, sharing or relationship discourse can have multiple consequences in the name of play and work.

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Playbour, Farming and Leisure

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This paper looks at labour within video game worlds such as Second Life and Ultima II, particularly around practices know as "farming" and "grinding", whereby workers in so-called "virtual sweat shops" manufacture in-game objects for sale on Ebay and other markets, both on and off screen. Of particular interest will be the activities of such "playbourers" - or "farmers" and "grinders" as they are also known- in their leisure time, and why this free time is generally taken up in playing at other video games, or even in the same games in which they produce saleable items. At a further remove, this paper will also address various moments in the history of thinking the play/work divide in an attempt to get at why the notion of "playbour" currently makes sense, and what it might mean to human subjects engaged in wage earning in game settings.

Infantilising Work: Play, Humour and Sexuality in 'Fun' Organisations

Carolyn Hunter (Loughborough University)

Management texts are increasingly proposing that the integration of 'fun' into organisations has a wide range of benefits, centred on breaking down boundaries in organisations to facilitate participation and responsiveness (Barsoux 1996). More over there has been a suggestion that play more generally benefits society and organisations through the playful creativity expressed (Kane 2004). However this distinction between 'work' and 'play' is perhaps less fixed than may be presumed by Kane. Adorno (1991) discussed within 'Free Time' that leisure was created within capitalism in relation to expended labour power, where the two are 'shackled' together in opposition maintaining a productive workforce. Adorno notes that often the supposed 'free' leisure time takes on properties of work, being organised into productive 'pseudo-activities' in our non-work time. Likewise Huizinga (1949) notes that play is not unstructured, but is ordered, bounded within rules acting as a temporary interlude from normality, within particular limits of time and space. In this case, play is not a 'free' expression of self, but an illusion of freedom and expression within the 'abstract' space of capitalism (Lefebvre 1991). Organisations appear to be incorporating discourses of play and fun into their corporate culture, although research into the experience of working in a fun corporation is only recently emerging (Warren and Fineman 2007; Fleming 2005, Fleming 2006).

This paper will draw on research conducted within the creative industries on the adoption of 'fun' corporate cultures. In this instance, this refers to organisations which strategically adopt a self-proclaimed 'fun' corporate culture, proposing work should be playful, pleasurable and as a result intrinsically rewarding. These firms communicate this 'Have Fun' message through the discourses of the organisations, the look and feel (or the aesthetic) of the organisations and the behaviours encouraged through an embodiment of 'fun' identities. It will consider three case studies: an advertising department of a Marketing Firm, a pre-teen magazine department of a large media organisation and an IT training company. While differences occurred within the demographic make-up of the firms (in particular the Magazine department was almost exclusively female while the other two were approximately a 50-50 gender split), employees in all three firms experienced their fun culture through positioning themselves as 'fun' people. This was often accomplished through the expression of humour. The research originally was designed to investigate the use of humour as an everyday enactment of these fun cultures. Combined with a 'Just be yourself' attitude (Fleming and Sturdy 2009), the humour often reflected a strong sense of who the employees perceived themselves to be. As a result, the humour was formed around the embodiment of the organisational discourses as 'fun' people.

In all three cases the organisations reflected a youthful 'playground' materiality. This could reflect an infantilization of the workforce and of society more generally, through the encouragement of acting like children in the way we consume (Barber 2007). Barber notes (2007: 82) "Infantilization aims at inducing puerility in adults and preserving what is childish in children trying to grow up, even as children are 'empowered' to consume." This occurs on three archetypical dualisms: a preference for what is easy over hard, what is simple over complex and what is achieved quickly over slow. As a result he notes tendencies for privileging Impulse over Deliberation, Feeling over Reason, Play over Work, Pleasure over Happiness, The Timeless Present over Temporality, the Physical Sexuality over Erotic Love and Individualism over Community (Barber 2007). In the case of these three organisations, we see a preference for these forms of 'fun' which is impulsive, emotional and easy, which provides a form of 'relief' to the monotony of work. Through infantilisation, we see a preference for what is On this basis

the paper will address how these organisations attempted to create discourses of fun which were mapped onto the materiality of the organisation and onto the identities of the employees.

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Busy Idleness: How Knowledge Workers Go to Work

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Boredom is often intuitively associated with inactivity and idleness. In this paper we aim to unearth the history of boredom instead as a specific kind of activity constituting the negative space of productive action. Under the heading 'busy idleness' we trace the identification and condemnation of this negativity back to the early Middle Ages and the concept of *acedia*, and forward into Kierkegaard and Heidegger's analysis of boredom. This should give a conceptual apparatus with which to analyse a double case: First Hank Moody, the protagonist of *Californication*, and how he is both distracted from work and brought back to it, struggling with his over busy idleness. We link this analysis to the modern knowledge worker by interviewing a writing consultant at a Danish university, who works with various technologies with which knowledge workers can get out of busy idleness and into a deeper state of boredom in their monastic writing, and hence become, as it were, more productive.

Children's Play and Organization

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The idea of play and its various modalities, erotic play and flirtation, children's play, sport and gaming, dramatic roles and performances, toys and creativity are now increasingly a part of organisational life. There has been a recent shift from hierarchical, rationally organised management structures, to more flexibilised styles and more creative and playful organisational forms. Increasingly, since the 'cultural turn' in management literature, new configurations of work and 'non-work' are being identified and promulgated by organisational theorists, that point to interesting and creative ways of synthesising the Apollonian (rational) and Dionysian (transgressive) moments in organisational life. For instance, Costea et al (2005) argue that the increase in new mixtures of work/ play interaction is evident of the 'Dionysian Turn' which has occurred since the 1980's in the way work is framed and managed. While we don't necessarily agree that management is now 'Dionysian', it is clear that recent literature has attempted to read management and organisational culture through a variety of metaphors, through popular culture, through sexuality, myth, pushing the field beyond the narrow constraints of artificial divisions between work and play, public and private, reason and emotion.

In this paper, we argue that play, and in particular, child's play is a valuable resource through which we can represent and imagine contemporary organisational forms and relationships, and facilitate a critical imaginary enabling us to envision a variety of organisational alternatives through which we can assess and reflect on our own management practices and organisational contexts. In Goffman's dramaturgical paradigm, organisations are seen to comprise of the institutionalized performances of actors engaged in dramatic roles. From this point of view, children's play can be seen as anticipatory socialization, as purely a dress rehearsal for the more important business of participation in 'adult' forms of socialization, such as mere practice for formal organisational life. A contrasting understanding of play is captured by the Derridian concepts of *différance* and *supplementarity*, which emphasise that meaning is always deferred and always 'in play'. Derrida's point – though it is always obfuscated – is that originary truth is a conceit and that at the core there is no more than 'freeplay' that itself undermines the very idea of a core (since it rests on and creates a semiotic system where meaning is always moving) (Derrida, 1972). Derrida sought to demonstrate his notion of *différance* through a close and playful analysis of 'foundational' texts, showing that what appeared to be originary is unstable, ambivalent or untenable, and his insight suggests that all apparent organisation is both founded on play and can be subverted by play.

As well as reminding us about the inherently sociable dimension of play, children's play is important because children have the capacity for forms of play which involve the creation of something new; for 'free' rather than the rigidly pre-scripted, 'directed' play that often defines the cross-marketed, Hollywood- influenced 'commoditoys' of the contemporary toy industry (Langer, cited in Ferguson, 2006: 7). In contrast, children from birth have the "gift of mimesis," according to Benjamin, which "is the natural heritage of mankind in its early stages and which continues to function nowadays only in children" (1933: 691). Mimesis encourages children to imagine themselves not simply as other people, but also as objects, and through play they are capable of transcending the often narrow, prescriptive roles imposed by the culture industry's tendency to produce toys for sale which are tie-ins with other objects. Free play has the potential to disrupt the narrow circle of desire for accumulation's sake which is inherent in commodity fetishism, and through free play children invest toys with new meanings, often unintended by the creator (1933: 690). To Benjamin, the cognitive potential of mimetic play is

potentially liberating because it can potentially resist the capitalist commodification of culture and raise us above the dreamscape of consumer fetishism, a process which, in Ferguson's words 'resembles and rehearses the communal festive ethos of carnival' (2006:8). Through mimesis, fantasy and reality converge, and out of that meeting something new emerges (1928: 115). Play is always liberating to Benjamin, and as adults we are still drawn to play and fantasy, despite, or perhaps because of a 'desire to make light of an unbearable life' (ibid).

Work = Work ≠ Work: In Defence of Play

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In contemporary capitalism, the call for papers posits, 'play' can no longer be seen as an other to work. Instead, it has been swallowed up by current mechanisms and modalities of workplace control: "When employees are urged to reach out to their 'inner child', it becomes clear that the traditional boundary between work and play is in the process of being demolished."

Well, is it? Our paper will be dedicated to a careful interrogation of this claim. Apart from the fact that not-so-playful forms of primitive accumulation are terribly alive and kicking, postulating the collapse of play into work provokes the necessity to look into the notions of both work and play and the paradox that seems to be at work here. For how can work become play (and cease to be work?) or play become work (and cease to be play?)? Departing from this simple question, the aim of our paper is to contextualise, deepen and complexify the critical analysis of contemporary work relations.

For this, we will suggest to take a step back and engage with philosophical concepts of work. Tracing the Hegelian tradition of thinking work as well as its Marxian and Arendtian adaptations, we will discuss how the theorising of work is inherently paradoxical. Working implicates a contradictory relation of causality: it implies performing activities in order to produce outcomes while simultaneously forcing the working subject into constant reiteration. As a German proverb has it: *Arbeit macht Arbeit* ("work effects work"). The process of work is tautological. In Hegelese: The moment a working subject experiences its powers of self-assertion and freedom, it is confronted with its dependency and limits. The means of coping with or doing away with something produces (more of) that which has been coped with or done away with. In Marxian parlour, the emancipatory character of work already entails the foundation of its estrangement.

In the history of thought, the paradoxical dichotomisation of work as purpose and as meaning in itself (and the attempts to 'hide' the paradox by prioritising one side over the other) can be traced up to the current debate on so-called social and artistic critiques of capitalism, to echo Boltanski and Chiapello's distinction in "The New Spirit of Capitalism", now *de rigueur* in critical analysis. Through the paradoxical lens, we will engage with the critique of artistic critique as a forceful line of argument that explains how (what are perceived as) artistic practices and claims are easily subsumed under a capitalist logic. It is here that we situate the diagnosis of play's corruption into capitalist development. The artistic critique's paradoxical move of liberating work through (a different kind of) work becomes yet another twist in the conceptual tale of the paradox of work.

However, going beyond Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis we will try to show that not "all cows can become equally gray in the electric light of demystification" (Rancière, 2004, p. 205). The insolubility of paradox reopens rather than forecloses the question of play and thus the possibilities and capacities of artistic critique. Enlisting Schiller's emancipatory notion of play and its current actualisation in politico-aesthetic thought (Rancière, 2009), we will offer a perhaps counter-intuitive reading of recent writing on organizational aesthetics (Guillet de Monthoux, 2004) as a loophole towards a third form of analysis that does not subordinate one side of the dichotomy to the other. It is through an aesthetic perspective that the paradoxical contradictoriness of work becomes visible and that the potential of play is less easily collapsed into a resigned conceptual diagnosis of full and unavoidable incorporation.

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There is a Game That is Always Opened: The Relation of Work and Play in Professional Poker

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‘The office may close at 6 but there is a game that is always opened.’
– TV commercial for Full Tilt Poker.com

Over the last 5-10 years the world has experienced a virtual boom in the spreading and popularity of poker. The game is played by an estimated 80-100m people generating a daily turnover in the vicinity of \$100m (Macintosh, 2003).

The recent poker boom is conditioned by an eminent capacity in the game to generate cultural resonance in so far as the game emulates key features of contemporary capitalism. The relationship between poker and capitalism has already been explored by several authors with respect to marketing (McDonald, 1950), finance and accounting (Macintosh, 2003). In the article we argue that professional poker is an extreme case of contemporary labour conditions that can illustrate various overall displacements in the work life of contemporary capitalism.

First, work and play are indiscernible for the professional poker players. On the one hand, poker must never become a matter of all work and no play; it continuously has to have the elements of play and fun in order to be motivating and hence economically productive in the short and long run. On the other hand, the game must never be reduced to play because they hereby run the risk of losing themselves and hence the control of the game. In short, the game must not neither be (too) boring nor (too) exciting for the player.

Second, professional poker players work on a market never sleeps. It is possible to play the game almost everywhere and anytime you only need to be connected to the internet. In this sense the employment of being a professional poker player are not defined by the traditional boundaries of work place and time. As a consequence they experience an extreme case of the blurring of boundaries between work and home, e.g., poker players will often be working from home and their work is not defined by the clock.

Third, the consequence of work and play being inclusive terms are that the relation between them is never given as such but always has to be constituted. The management of the relation is always a personal matter. How do I relate work and play? In which sense is poker playing defined as work? This means that the poker players must turn to metaphysics in order to define the nature of labour. It is not something perceivable. It is something they have to create as an object in order to determine its nature.

Fourth, professional poker players are often put in situations where they have to decide when enough is enough, which regards both to wining and loosing. They are their own boss – not only in determining working hours and place – but furthermore in deciding when they should stop playing and call it ‘fair day’s wage’ for ‘a fair day’s work’.

The article is based on interviews with 18 professional poker players in Denmark.

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Playing with Utility? Deal or No Deal?

Simon Lilley (University of Leicester)

Geoff Lightfoot (University of Leicester)

In Deal or No Deal, a spectacular day time televisual experience, we view members of the public choosing between a number of boxes each of which contains one of a definite range of sums, the precise nature of which sum is in which box being unknown. Possessing just one of these boxes as their own and confronting periodic offers to purchase it from an unseen Banker, our plucky participant may apparently be seen to seek to maximize the utility that they can derive from their 'walk of wealth'. Opportunities for thus viewing such a situation of choice under uncertainty have been gleefully grasped by our brethren in the dismal science as a doppelganger to their long lineage of student participant fuelled experiments, with some even venturing guides intended to deliver the most financially beneficial outcome to the competitor faced by Noel's blouse, given understanding of the differing utility functions between Banker and (typical) player (Wolstenholme and Haigh, 2006), and others seeking to show how path dependency and reference dependent choice theories can be seen to make sense of the players' actual and idealized progress through the game (Post et al, 2008).

Though of course of interest in itself - at least for those with a dry, hard eye - this mode of analysis of the phenomena at hand does tend to miss a little something; that little something that enables the experimental set up to parade in its more garrulous garb as entertaining game show. From this perspective the game is interesting not so much for what participants should or do indeed choose to do, but rather for their accounts of the reasons behind their strategies and choices and the significance they attribute to various boxes through a range of weird and wonderful numerologies. In this sense the game's open appeal mirrors more that of Eliza, the algorithmic analyst that interested readers can be treated by at <http://www-ai.ijs.si/eliza/eliza.html>, than any closed, parsimonious pursuit of the one best way.

This foreshortening of analysis of the game to a focus upon a bald utility is itself foreshadowed by the history of the notion of utility in economic thought. Particularly significant here are the ways in which Bernoulli's insights of the mid-eighteenth century, once consumed by Morgenstern and von Neuman in the mid-twentieth century, are seen to necessitate a subtle re-translation of Bernoulli's work such that his notion of 'moral expectation' becomes that of 'utility', via, in at least its more sophisticated forms, the rendering of 'moral expectation' as nothing more than a complexified 'utility' deprived of its naivety.

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Ethics at Play and at War: Ontologies and Dichotomies

Stephen Linstead (University of York)

We are familiar to the point of tedium with the idea of the Work Ethic. Pat Kane (2004), equally familiar with the way that creative practice blurs the boundaries of work and play, although the latter is trivialized, raised the question of whether first of all, there could be said to be a play ethic, and if so, what potential would it offer for a future society that elevated play to greater parity with work? Kane's explorations were historical, philosophical, scientific and political, but their breadth did not come without depth (see Kane et al [2007] for a discussion of these implications in the pages of *ephemera*). Nevertheless, play remains synonymous with triviality, or worse, lack of sincerity to the point of moral turpitude, a legacy for which we have Kierkegaard to thank. Yet even Kierkegaard's analysis was ironically playful, because for him there was an excitement to being ethical, precisely because matters were in play, because there were no unequivocal rules to follow, and one had to risk that one may be wrong.

We customarily contrast work and play, largely because the ontology of play, and its potential range, is underexplored and poorly understood. In the considerable number of initiatives that seek to add the magical ingredient of "fun" to working lives, which may or may not be formalised in the appointment of Chief Euphoria Officers and Directors of Fun, there is little understanding that the positive outcomes of play might be both immanent and intrinsic – here fun merely oils the wheels of creativity, performativity, efficiency and the sort of docile subjectivity that real play in fact destabilizes. Work is often contrasted with care – it's a tough world dealing with harsh economic realities, after all – but where care can be commodified into customer or client care features that can be valorized and traded, an ambivalent space is created. Similarly, we might contrast an ethics of care with one of war – two spaces that remain largely unbridged unless one is involved with humanitarian efforts to ameliorate the effects of the latter, or rhetorically if one is a former British Prime Minister giving evidence to the Chilcot Inquiry. We know that war and play can be bridged in video games, and even in the minds of some military strategists, but when an incumbent President of the United States, in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, argues that it is necessary for warring nations to have standards and play by the rules, could the boundaries get any more blurred?

In this paper I will explore the implications of two dichotomies: the ethics of work or play, and the ethics of care or war. I will develop a model that attempts to plot oppositions, overlaps, and dynamic tensions between them, and ask whether the only possible reading of these dynamics is a detached, cynical or ironic one.

A General Theory of Capitalist Boredom

Andrea Micocci

The so-called capitalist system is by definition taken to mean an economic and political place characterized by a continuous dynamism of innovations that markets and democratic institutions are supposed to induce in firms, people, institutions and governments alike. This is, however, just a definition. If we look at capitalism, and even more so if we do that from an anti-Hegelian materialistic perspective based on the concrete, we notice that quite the opposite is going on. If in fact capitalism is dialectical, like Marx said, then it lacks the possibility to ever practice perfect competition or accomplish the feat of a revolutionary Schumpeterian innovation: things interact but no ruptures with disappearance (Hegelian dialectical contradiction vs. Kantian real opposition) can take place. Epochal innovations in technical, economic and political terms only came at the time of the industrial revolution, when they gave us that incomplete thing we nowadays imprecisely call capitalism. Perfect competition markets in fact do not exist in our present-day reality, and states intervene heavily even when Neoliberal deregulation is practised: economic and political activities operate therefore as a process of continuous iterations (Micocci, 2002, 2008) in which only secondary changes are pursued, and innovation is just symbolic. As a consequence, inefficient institutions, firms and products cannot be, and therefore are not, completely eliminated; the political system can undergo neither true innovations nor revolutions; indeed, innovations (true novelties in general as well as Schumpeterian entrepreneurial revolutions) in such an environment are simply unthinkable and unrecognizable, for they break the iterative routine of the re-proposition of old items in (relatively) new ways. Mainstream economic theory and orthodox dialectical Marxisms mirror in epistemological terms this dialectical nature of actual capitalist economic relationships, and are therefore forever unable to pursue their respective non-dialectical utopias: free market and communist revolution. We witness therefore, in the “market” as well as in politics and in the cultural fields, the continuous re-proposition of the same old items, that are re-dressed to appear new in form but also to simultaneously look solidly old in content, or they would not be recognized. Capitalism is a boring place that cannot transcend its own boredom: it can only conceal it using the empty rhetoric of continuous innovation. From this descends that the meanings of innovation get narrower and narrower, in technical as well as in economic, political and cultural terms. Boredom is avoided by meticulously concentrating on narrow issues and technicalities, which are hailed as novelties and even revolutions: marketing of products, as well as the impotent, and nonetheless from the formal point of view quasi-revolutionary, rhetoric of left-wing parties, epitomize this very well.

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Fun at Work: Free Software Dreams to Burnout Nightmares in the Ubuntu Labor Process

Jake Peters (University of Southern California)

‘It's about the fun!

The event is not a competition about who fixes the most bugs, but it's about the unique experience of having Free Software enthusiasts in one room, enjoying the feeling of making the world a better place.’

– Ubuntu guide to hosting a ‘Bug Jam’ (Canonical 2008)

Ubuntu is the most popular distribution of the GNU/Linux operating system – a self-positioned rival to operating systems such as Microsoft’s Windows or Apple’s MAC OS – that is produced by the collaborative labor of a few hundred paid contributors and tens of thousands of volunteer contributors. Canonical, the for-profit firm that sponsors Ubuntu development, employs developers and provides communication and operational infrastructure to develop and support “the community.” The community contributes volunteered labor to nearly every aspect of producing Ubuntu and are particularly essential to the very time-consuming process of testing and debugging software. For the past three years I have observed and peripherally participated in the Ubuntu community—taking part in bug jams, attending and working at conferences, following on-line meetings, discussions and email lists, visiting Canonical’s offices and Ubuntu contributors home workplaces, and interviewing Ubuntu contributors.

This paper will present research findings and a grounded theory of fun centered on my appreciative ambivalence for the Ubuntu labor process. At moments and in particular places, the use of unpaid, often precarious, labor makes the Ubuntu labor process appear as a nightmare wherein the flexible worker has been high-perfectly exploited: contributors give labor not only to those who would profit by selling support for Ubuntu (primarily Canonical), but also to firms like Google, IBM and others that use Ubuntu. Thus, this process passes risk from firms to the bodies, homes and family units of Ubuntu contributors while filling shareholders' pockets. This risk is often expressed as “burnout,” a euphemism for stress-induced conditions from mental breakdowns to serious digestive problems to fainting and getting bloody noses from fatigue and lack of sleep. Yet, in other places and times, in different social and economic contexts, Ubuntu can also appear as a free software dream, creating new forms of social life and exchange that promise a more just and humanized system of software production and use: value is created and circulated in a system of exchange organized around the reciprocal relationships of gifts, with the oft expressed goal of “making the world better.”

The “fun” of working with Ubuntu sits at the center of my ambivalence. Fun is a means through which labor is organized in a way that makes it “natural” that workers relinquish their labor and its products to some purpose. I argue that this “purpose” is simultaneously the accumulation of capital and the production of a community based in a system of exchange that is non-capitalist; thus, both capital accumulation and its antithesis rely upon centering fun in the experience of working. Studying fun then, is another way of asking the question at the base of a diversity scholarship about work (e.g. Terkel 1974; Hardt and Negri 2009; Florida 2002): that is, how do we recognize, think about and represent those aspects of laboring that qualify (affectively, emotionally, humanly) the abstraction of selling the capacity to labor as labor-time? And, what happens when the qualities of work end up organizing a labor process, such as Ubuntu’s, that is antagonistic to selling labor-time?

In this paper I make a case for using “fun” to understand, analyze and represent the contradictions and nuances of the affective experiences of work. In doing so, I argue that it is essential to ask “why this fun

now?” and to be attune to the places and times of work. In order to clear some ground to follow fun, I will present arguments against thinking of fun as a motivation and against framing fun in a binary of control and autonomy. I present fun as much more than a motivational factor and explore its relation to changing working conditions. This sort of fun makes clear that what easily appears as workers' desire for autonomy is better understood as the development of forms of reciprocal social relations and dependency.

Fun at Work is about a complex ecosystem of software production where systems of exchange rest uneasily upon each other—this paper will explore the boundaries between gift exchange and commodity exchange, map what Lewis Hyde calls the “vectors of wealth” in commodity and gift exchange, and try to understand how capital manages to extract value while workers manage to create something other than capitalist exchange (Hyde 1983). This approach to answering “why this fun now?” can tell us much about the general conditions of work in this moment of capitalism and how we got here. It may also tell us a bit about how to cultivate further the possibilities embedded in holding things in common, already happening in ways that have been under-appreciated: grounding a vision for what a sustainably fun and just way of working would look like in the dreams and nightmares experienced by Ubuntu workers today.

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The Bored Office-Ape

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The image of organization as seen through windows like television or film makes us wonder. When we for instance visually read the BBC sitcom *The Office* we see a world which is on the one hand familiar and on the other hand bizarre. What we mainly see, is a strong display of boredom throughout the actions performed by the various character. It is a form of alienation which is directed through a deep feeling of boredom. We also notice that it is not only present in the actors, but also in the physical surroundings. The episodes start with images of the surrounding architecture after which we move on to the interior of the office building where we are confronted with grayness, Xerox-machines and other appearances of aesthetic muteness.

We see this same image in the world of *Office Space* (2000) from Mike Judge. An image which was probably first decently portrayed in *Playtime* (1967) from Jacques Tati. These images inform us that the office is the ideal space to be bored. Everything in it seems to be very thoroughly designed to facilitate boredom. Concluding this we are instantly made aware of the ideas behind the concept of organization such as results and goals. These teleological thoughts are combined with some form of asceticism which should trigger the organizations learning capabilities or the management of quality. This results in a zone of tension between being bored and being organized. This could suggest, although the images try to convince us otherwise, that boredom should be ruled out of organization. The remark from Walter Benjamin (1999: 105) that 'we are bored when we don't know what we are waiting for', therefore needs further explanation.

For this we use the help of Peter Sloterdijk (2005) who informs us that boredom is the basic condition of homo-sapiens, or as he states: 'the savannah-ape'. Through our so-called evolution boredom evolved into restlessness and stress. This is the condition of the office-ape. His being 'modern' resolves in restlessness and stress which makes us conclude that being modern means being miserable, or to put it differently being organized is being miserable. In the film *Office Space* we see the solution as the protagonist gives in to his boredom and even makes the necessary alterations to his physical office-surroundings. The question therefore is not what we have to do to avoid boredom. The question is how we can give-in to boredom and more precisely how the organization can be transformed into a space of boredom. Physically we are already there, but our behavior in organization still needs adaptation. The office-ape has to be allowed to be bored. This calls for a quite radical change in thinking about organization. The results in *Office Space* speak for themselves. It is therefore a sort of plea for a Heideggerian mode of 'Gelassenheit' in which we indulge in boredom.

The Playing Poet Simon Vinkenoog

Vincent Pieterse (University for Humanistics & de Baak Management Center of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers)

In 1938, the Dutch historian, cultural theorist and professor Johan Huizinga, wrote the book titled *Homo Ludens* or "Man the Player" (alternatively, "Playing Man"). Huizinga used the term "Play Theory" within the book to define the conceptual space in which play occurs, in which he suggested that play is primary to, and is a necessary condition of the generation of culture. Huizinga asserted that play can only be defined in terms of its opposite: serious, ordinary, everyday life (Anchor 1978: 78). By playful he meant not only the game element, but also the qualities of freedom and intrinsic satisfaction (Burke 1971: 40). Huizinga distinguished eight features of play, providing a picture of play as a free space within the culture, a place with its own order, therefore, independent of the interests of the ordinary, everyday life. Play is an activity according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of material utility or necessity (Huizinga 2008: 161). And the man who plays is called the *homo ludens*. In the last chapter of the book, Huizinga gave his observations on contemporary civilization. Huizinga died in 1945, hence his observations date back to the beginning of the Second World War. However, even then, he noticed a tendency towards the breakdown of the distinction between seriousness and play, 'whereby the serious business of life politics, war, economics, and morality - degenerate into pseudo-play, and play loses its indispensable qualities of spontaneity, detachment, artlessness, and joy, and thus its power to act as a culture-creating activity' (Anchor 1978: 83). According to Huizinga, this was problematic. Play had to remain pure, 'it should not be behind a false appearance, to deliberately cultivated certain uses of play, to realize certain ends that are unidentifiable. The real game does exclude all propaganda. It has its own sake' (Huizinga 2008: 244).

According to Anchor, two of the most fruitful critiques of *Homo Ludens* come from Jacques Ehrmann and Eugen Fink. It is Ehrmann who blames Huizinga's failure to recognize the economic function of play, wherein participants give in order to receive, and play is therefore, the ritualization of an economic and political ethos (Anchor 1978: 91). The relationship of play to reality is also the subject of Fink's criticism. According to him, 'if we define play in the usual manner by contrasting it with work, reality, seriousness and authenticity, we falsely juxtapose it' (Fink, in Anchor 1978: 92).

However, it is exactly this juxtaposition that was appealing to the countercultural movements of the 1960s in the Netherlands. The impossibility of an authentic life was seen by these movements as a basic defect of the social system. Authenticity became the "radical act" of revolutionary refusal of the existing society. This refusal was, among others, also shaped by the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys with his design of the utopian city New Babylon, which called for the playful, creative and authentic new man: *homo ludens*. Inspired by Constant and Huizinga, the Dutch poet and performer Simon Vinkenoog (1928-2009) saw a special role for himself, as a protest poet and creative man (Vinkenoog 2009: 80), he saw himself as a *homo ludens*. The *homo ludens*, for Vinkenoog, was an escape from the conventional society, the conformity, inauthenticity and seriousness, freed from the need to work, to a life of creative play. With his influence in the avant-garde groups of the 1950s, and later in many of the socially and artistically radical groups of the 1960s and 1970s, including the Beats, Vinkenoog became 'a sort of guru' (Glassgold 2005: 267) for younger generations in the Netherlands. Vinkenoog's protest represented the artistic critique in the 1960s in the Netherlands (Pieterse 2009), as described by Boltanski and Chiapello in their study *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2007), where they argue that this critique is rooted in a bohemian lifestyle, counterposing the bourgeois society with the freedom of the artist. Boltanski and Chiapello then go on to argue that this artistic critique is specially responsible for

the neo-management discourse and reinvigorated capitalism of the late 20th century (Arnason 2001: 111). Thomas Frank (1997) and Fred Turner (2006) also show that contemporary management theory and the discourse of the network economy make explicit references to the experiences of the counterculture of the 1960s.

Indeed, in recent years we have seen an increasing managerial interest in incorporating play into everyday working life, with a special role for homo ludens. According to Mathieu Weggeman, a Dutch Professor of Organization Science and a management consultant, ‘an organization is not a money machine but a playground for homo ludens’.¹ ‘This group of people who combine in a collective flow the true, the good and the beautiful, not only hold the future’, Weggeman goes on, ‘but also just have a lot of fun’.² It is about the playing man and not about the market, states Weggeman, with a key role for leadership and authenticity. But at the same time he argues that, with the professionals acting as homo ludens, there is an incredibly high productivity, and that ‘a beautiful organization is economically very interesting, you get a high return on your investment in human resources’.³ Such an organization looks like utopia, but at the same time it seems to show signs of Huizinga’s analysis of the breakdown of the distinction between seriousness and play, degenerating into pseudo-play (Huizinga 2008: 244). Or signs of Ehrmann’s proposition, that participants – including managers – give in order to receive. Next to this, Fleming (2005) shows that the dominant emphasis on play or fun in organizations leads to cynicism and alienation, with the symbolic blurring of traditional boundaries between work and play, manifest in the critique of condescension and inauthenticity (Fleming 2005: 295). According to Boltanski and Chiapello, it is this diminishing distinction of boundaries between the time of private life and the time of professional life that creates new risks for forms of management control (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007).

It seems that lack of trust in the justification and intentions of “playing at work” within contemporary organizations is problematic. Fleming argues that, ‘by placing current fun initiatives in a political context, it has been suggested that authentic fun may not only be incongruous with managerial control, but gain its very inspiration from being against authority’ (Fleming 2005: 300), and, he goes on, ‘as more nonwork dimensions are symbolically drawn into the sphere of work, dissent is arguably inevitable because the public sphere is traditionally a space of debate’ (Fleming 2005: 300).

In this paper I will deal with this tension described above. I will delve further into this dialogue by describing Simon Vinkenoog, as a poet criticizing inauthenticity and authorities and as a participant in public debates, not only as a symbolic representation of the homo ludens in the 1960s, but also as a symbolic representation of the homo ludens in modern organizations, and who therefore can be seen as the ideal type. The example of Simon Vinkenoog can be used to understand the meaning of creativity and play within organizations by professionals and their leaders, and carrying out precisely such an exercise will be the motivation of this paper.

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¹ http://www.managementissues.com/organisatiemanagement/management/de_rijnlandse_speeltuun_van_plato._20061013400.html (accessed 5 December 2009).

² Ibid

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Cultural Workers Throw Down Yr Tools the Metropolis is on Strike

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Recent developments in autonomist thought have focused on the city as a site production and resistance, in particular as a locus of struggle precisely because of the becoming-productive of the city: from the social factory to the factory-city, the productive metropolis. To say that the metropolitan space has become productive, in the same way that it has been argued that all of life (social cooperation, communication, affects, creativity) has been made productive, leaves one with the question of how the metropolis has been made productive. What are the technologies of capture that render the metropolis productive? And how is it possible, by identifying the process of extracting value through such mechanisms, is it possible to find ways to contest these processes of value extraction and capitalist valorization?

With this in mind it is time to revisit arguments and conceptualization of the creative city and the creative class (as in the work of Richard Florida), and to view them from a class compositional framework. It is not then that they necessarily describe an empirical reality or condition, the existence of the creative city, but rather as a form of mythological social technology of governance: to bring it into being by declaring its existence. In other words, the question is not whether the creative class exists as such, but rather what effects are created through how it is described and called into being through forms of governance and social action based upon these claims. Planning and shaping the city based around a certain conceptualization of the creative potentiality of labor, or the potentiality of creativity put to work, is not an unprecedented or unique development, but rather is the latest example of capital's attempt to continually valorize itself through recuperating the energies of organizing against it.

What we see is that capitalist production depends on the ability to produce a certain kind of glide, to circulate through networks of social cooperation and communication that are already in existence. The production of value then is not premised upon the activities of a bounded workplace (the labor of production within the factory to create commodities which then circulate), but rather precisely upon the labor of circulation within the rendered productive sociality of the metropolitan space. Through understanding the social technologies of rendering the city as a unified social fabric production it becomes possible to develop further strategies of refusal and resistance that finds avenues for creative sabotage and disruption all through out the city: a metropolitan strike.

Play at Work: Continuation, Intervention and Usurpation

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Sverre Spoelstra (Lund University)

Company football is a nice leisure, with beer from the tap, funny hats and all. But there is more to it than meets the eye, and the growing interest in organizational play, both in popular business discourse and organization studies, confirms this suspicion. As the industrial idea of play being dysfunctional for organizations is largely abandoned now, the existing positions may be parceled into two camps: one is the mainstream camp that sees play as good for business; serious play is serious business. The other camp is critical. It sees play as yet another technology of control, although it may grant play a function as resistance or escape.

Based upon a field study of a design- and communication company in Denmark, where elaborate reports on the company's (rather fictitious) football club is circulated, this paper tries to show the shortcomings of both these ideas. It argues that these apparently opposed positions both observe play from the point of view of work, and this way subsumes play under work. While the first two parts of the paper's tripartite structure confirms the relevance of both perspectives as 'play's continuation of work' and 'play's intervention in work' respectively, its third part demonstrates how play is able to usurp work. Here work becomes observed from the point of view of play, and play takes over unforeseen functions of work and executes them according to its own logic, against, as it were, all managerial intent.

Theorising Recess: The Paradox of Google's '20 Percent Time'

Abe Walker (CUNY)

The rise of digital labor has generated renewed interest within critical management studies in questions of time. Just as the distinction between work and home has long since collapsed, the boundary between work and play is growing increasingly blurry under post-Fordism. Undeniably, the workday is being restructured in new ways that mimic the exigencies of the market. Nowhere is this more obvious than at Google Inc. which consistently ranks near the top of Fortune Magazine's annual "Best Companies to Work For" listing, and has become the darling of the business press in part because of its unique approach to integrating "work" and "play". The centerpiece of the much-touted "Google model" is a provision that allows its engineers to spend 20% of their workday on projects of their own choosing. Colloquially called "20 Percent Time" (formally "Innovative Time Off" or ITO), this approach has won the accolades of management experts and popular media commentators. While the idea of ITO is not new (the electronics and adhesives manufacturer 3M has had a similar program in place for decades), Google's policy is the first to gain such widespread attention.

But unlike Google's famed on-site masseuses and free catered meals, this is no standard employee perk. It's already become abundantly clear that Google has the capacity to re-monetize this "lost" time. A Google vice-president recently claimed that half of new Google "products" emerge from its 20 Percent Time, citing Gmail, the social networking service Orkut, and the "reality browser" Google Goggles. While there is no formal requirement that Googlers (as they are called) spend their 20 Percent Time on marketable projects, the internal company culture encourages the type of work that might eventually pay off (for the company, that is).

According to Google's official narrative, there is a seamless link between its need for innovation and its employees' creative impulses. In promotional materials, the company boasts that the policy offers its engineers the "free[dom] to work on what they're really passionate about". Yet a more cynical observer might describe the dynamic at work as recuperation. In this sense, Innovative Time Off is a cynical response to well-documented "problem" of stolen time, self-reduction, and "skiving" among tech workers. Rather than penalize its tech workers for wasting time on independent pursuits, Google reintegrates and revalorizes its employees' anti-work tendencies.

As Andrew Ross has argued, the "humane workplace" often operates as a cover for the intensification of exploitation. But in a sense, Google's model is far more insidious than that of the early dot-com startup that was the subject of Ross' research 10 years ago. On the one hand, 20 Percent Time represents the formal subsumption of non-work activity ("recreational" programming) by the Googleplex. On the other, 20 Percent Time represents a radical reorganization of the labor process itself (i.e. real subsumption) through the reappropriation of the collective knowledge of the general intellect. As capital strives to revalorize the creativity that would otherwise be lost to leisure, it simultaneously restructures the labor process in response to the refusal of work. Of course, as Carlo Vercellone has noted, real and formal subsumption are not mutually exclusive categories, but here they operate in tandem with striking results.

This fact is compounded by the reality that virtually all of Google's full-time (non-contracted) engineers are salaried employees without set schedules. So the very notion of "paid time off" is far less meaningful than it would be for a waged worker (whose income is solely dependent on the number of hours

worked). In the most pessimistic scenario, 20 Percent Time might simply be a tool for generating absolute surplus value by lengthening the engineers' workday.

Here we see what Gibson Burrell has called "the difference between non-work and work". 20 Percent Time is presented as leisure, but is already imbued with that which is deferred – i.e. work. As Burrell notes, "Whatever is submerged, whatever is deferred, whatever is relegated to the other side of the line, then comes to play a role in constituting that which is left inside." Google engineers are performing leisure which is always-already interpellated by its opposite. Google's model may offer a preview of a capitalist "end-game" in which work – disguised as play – becomes all-consuming.

Finally, I point to some possibilities for avoiding capture. How might Google employees take full advantage of their employer's largesse, and struggle against the becoming-productive of their playtime by pursuing projects that cannot easily be re-monetized (or perhaps even generate negative value)? But the question is not how to reclaim leisure as a "pure" and unfettered space beyond the reach of capital (if this were even possible!) but how to disrupt the cycle of capitalist valorization with the understanding that leisure as such may no longer exist.