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## WORK IT YOURSELF: “Creative” labour in the platform society

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## Abstract

The relation between labour, creativity and the platformization of capitalism is the thematic axis of this discussion. The aim of this paper was to discuss the relationship between “creative” work and platform society by analyzing initial research results through an online exploratory questionnaire conducted in the first half of 2019 with workers from the Brazilian creative industry. Also resulting from reflections arising from the thesis I develop about the communicative dimension of “creative” labour, this analysis deals with the platformization of creative labour, understanding from a critical perspective how the notions of creativity and work are associated with neoliberal subjectivity, flexibility, precariousness and the purpose/mission logic of work in today’s platform society.

### Keywords

Labour; Creative Labour; Platform society.

## Introduction

The imaginary about the relationship between work and technology consists into a very polarized relation: either we are heading towards the irreversible collapse of professions, occupations and human relations; or we are following the glorious yellow brick path towards progress, embraced by technological advancement, led towards the contemporary amusement park, full of leisure time, creative and stimulating work, as well as new anxieties and concerns. In Raymond Williams (2011) reflection, technology is not neutral, not a developmental per se. It requires possible uses, appropriations and negotiations at part of the subjects who relate to it, and may in itself be an enhanced or even atrophied technology depending on the situation in which it finds itself. Technology is not a neutral environment devoid of any kind of prejudice and privilege maintenance, and, because it is not neutral, it can be appropriate and reappropriated depending on skills, also reproducing certain types of inequalities (racial, economic and gender), as Judy Wajcman (2012) already pointed out when analyzing the relationship between feminism and technology.

The current case of platforms - and their societal organization - refers to several complex relationships, including the relationship of humanity with work, with communication and with platforms. With that, we can see that the movement is not a obsolescence of the old technology towards the novelty, but a adaptation and coexistence, with the appearance of other resources that are linked to conventional models. The platforms, in turn, also do not operate at neutral values, structuring life in society through the permanent feeding of neoliberal logic with the commercialization of data generated by producers/users (Van Dijck et al, 2018). A current scenario that relates technology, communication and work present in many analyzes is that of the platform society (Van Dijck et al, 2018) and its relationship with capitalism on a global scale. For Van Dijck (2018), what happens is precisely the platformization of society, since these spaces combine online infrastructure with social structures, transforming data into goods through algorithmic processing, hiding social and economic issues implicit in such a relationship - among which is the issue of work.

The platform society and its relationship with capitalism is also inserted in economic logics located in digital culture, such as the questionable economy of sharing (Slee, 2017), the demand economy or the economy of the gig jobs (gig economy) configured by technological platforms and digital, markets for algorithms and data generation through the uses of the internet. In the context of the platform society, communication becomes, in addition to a need, an important input for work, developed mainly through the use of the internet and through the platforms of large global companies. The predominance of the use of platforms and the internet for different sectors of human labor feeds some premises of predominance of the immateriality of work, the construction of the knowledge society, free time, creativity and communication. Decades earlier, it was even agreed to defend the end of labour thesis (in Brazil, as a main example of counterpoint to this thesis, can we bring the research and results of the labour's sociologist Ricardo Antunes, mainly in his book *Adeus ao Trabalho?*, 1995). The absolute predominance of free time, creative labour, the concept of innovation as substantial progress in the production of societies, technology as an ally of bosses (substitutes for the boss) and collaborators (substitutes for workers) in the exploration of relative surplus value (greater production in less working time).

Digital and communication technologies assist us in this solitary endeavor of merit and success. It is our smartphones and notebooks that can help us connect and communicate in order to operationalize our work (and jobs) in the space of the internet and the platform society. A number of platforms, applications, devices mediated by the digital environment and connected to the internet develop a range of relations (of production, circulation and consumption, including) that affects socially and culturally our work activity. Current contract and work modalities are filled in by increasingly flexible, informal and precarious categories. Even professions of intellectual prestige and with strong symbolic and cultural power are enmeshed by flexible and precarious ways of working. The economy on a global scale and the

financial capital of large companies (of which digital platforms are part) demand, as stated by Antunes (2018), “perpetual availability for work, facilitated by the expansion of online work and 'applications', which make big global corporations that run the financial and business world are invisible” (p. 34). The proletarianization of different service sectors is a wave that already covers our head.

The work transversed by platforms and internet culture is related to the spheres of production and consumption, producing hybrid subjects, as defined by Van Dijck (2018): producers/users. The data and information of each user/producer/consumer is in the possession of the large companies that direct most of the content that is produced and shared on the web. Known by the acronym GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft), also known as the Big Five, the five giants correspond to the enormous oligopoly of information and communication in times of digital ambience. Since human work is not displaced from its digital space – and, a good part of its procedures are in this environment -, could it be said that GAFAM is, on a global scale, the new world boss? The monopoly of superplatforms (Van Dijck et al, 2018) reorganizes what we understand about work, consumption and none the less communication, mixing their routines and making their logics invisible.

For this article, I search for an excerpt about the work in the platform society from questions related to the work done in sectors of the creative industry – the work named creative<sup>1</sup>. Social understanding and governmental concern with creative sectors for the economy began in the late 1980's, early 1990's, as contextualized by Leonardo De Marchi (2013). According to the author, the promotion of cultural policies with a focus on the creative economy is based on the English experience of the Labor Party between the 1990's and 2000. Through reformist sectors led by Tony Blair, significant changes were achieved in British policies for culture and communication with the replacement of the term cultural industries by creative industries in the Party's official documents, promising revolutions in the approach of the New Labour discourse, with a focus on culture through political development and economic (De Marchi, 2013).

The first global understanding about creative industry happened in 2008 through a study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), with analyzes of the creative industry and economy on an international scale. In the same year, Brazil also presented a study located in the country regarding the characteristics, data and information located in the Brazilian creative industry. The study was carried out in the same year by the Federação das Indústrias do Rio de Janeiro [Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro] (FIRJAN) for the first time, maintaining itself with some regularity and updating and acquiring the name of Mapping of the Creative Industry in Brazil since then.

The latest version of Mapping (2019) until the writing of this text was in its sixth edition, referring to the period from 2015 (year of the last publication) to 2017 (also covering the previous biennium from 2013 to 2015). The mapping is carried out every two years and, at the research criterion, defines the creative industry/creative economy from 13 sectors grouped in four areas: 1) Consumption (Design, Architecture, Fashion and Advertising), 2) Media (Editorial and Audiovisual), 3) Culture (Heritage and Arts, Music, Performing Arts and Cultural Expressions) and 4) Technology (R&D, Biotechnology and ICT).

The Mapping carried out by FIRJAN points out some professional categories, as well as salaries and market for performance. In a recent disclosure by the Federation, there are notes for a professional profile that includes qualities such as digital and innovative. Also according to the Federation, 24 thousand vacancies with a digital and innovative profile were opened in ten professions located in the creative economy, which would represent, in the institution's words, “the transformations of the new economy, characterized by new business models, consumption habits and work relationships” (FIRJAN, 2019). The data released by the Federation state that, in Brazil, there are 245 thousand establishments and 837

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<sup>1</sup> The option for using quotation marks in the term “creative” work is due to a critical understanding about creative adjective in relation to work. Throughout the text, I bring theoretical considerations that brings the spectacular dialectic of work (Antunes, 2018) in its cyclical relationship between creation and alienation and problematize the adjectives of creativity, innovation and fun present in the works carried out under the umbrella of creative industry.

thousand professionals in the so-called creative labor market.

However, the survey conducted and released by Mapping only considers data obtained through the formal labor market in the country, provided until 2017 by the Ministry of Labor (also extinguished by the current Brazilian government in January 2019). The informality and precariousness of labor contracts in the creative sector is a reality experienced by workers who have taken up the industry. It is possible that jobs and income generation are higher, deeply linking the creative market to the Brazilian informal market. It is interesting to note that terms like new, novelty and innovation appear quite frequently in business speech, mainly as basic requirements for job openings. In addition to the innovative profile, the digital profile is now also a required competence among creatives (a term used in the industry to refer to workers in the creative industry). In this article, along with the theoretical considerations on the platform of the so-called creative work, I also bring the initial results of an exploratory research carried out in 2019 and which collaborated in the survey of the first clues to the thesis<sup>2</sup> that I develop about the communicational dimension of the so-called creative work.

## Boss-platform, platformization-worker

The knowledge about relation between work and platform is permeated by communication and carries with it some signs, such as the notion of creativity and immaterial and creative work. The expansion of the notion of creativity (including as a sector that, paradoxically, is associated with the idea of industry – the creative industry) as an input is at the center of the producer/user relationship. The work receives the nickname of creative - disregarding its spectacular dialectic (Antunes, 2009; 2018) - and a whole range of workers - including communicators - it engenders some myths about autonomy, freedom, creativity and fun for work. For Muniz Sodré (2014), the traditional means of communication are transformed into an industrial complex and the individualistic subject is no longer that alone in front of the world, but alone with the world within itself as an effect of communication technologies. The role of communication in a society of platform capitalism can be thought, in confluence with the premise of Sodré (2014), through the communicational field whereupon the same is equivalent to a general mode of organization, the main “organizational form” of the different symbolic models and perceptions of time, space and sociability. The continuity (with financial and technological domain) of the commodification of the order, but not a brand new mode of economic production (Sodré, 2014).

One of the most salient aspects of the presence of communication in platform work is the use of the media as means of production, a premise already raised by Raymond Williams (2011). Williams rejected technological determinists and thought of culture as a social productive system with the media as means of cultural and communicative production, socio-technical relations of cultural production (Antunes; Gomes, 2019). Fuchs (2015) summarizes that work, for Marx, is the creation of goods and services that satisfy human and social needs, while labor is a relation of strangeness and alienation from the work that leads class society. Therefore, communication as a human need is linked to the notion of work incorporated into the relationships of alienation and commodification (Fuchs, 2015). Accordingly, we can think that observable communicative work is not just about the cultural goods in circulation (and production) in the media, but the body of work itself, the working subject behind the production and circulation of such goods in face of financialized capitalisms logics in the global market – whose central nervous system today engenders in the platform society.

The relationship between capitalism and platforms and work results in a phenomenon that Antonio Casilli and Julian Posada (2018) call the platformization of work and society. We experienced, therefore, with the advent of the platform society (Van Dijck et al, 2018) and its alliance with global capitalism to

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<sup>2</sup> My thesis is part of the Graduate Program in Communications at the Federal University of Santa Maria (Poscom/UFSM) since 2017 and is supervised by Dr Liliane Dutra Brignol.

expand the levels of exploitation and intensify the pace of work, unlike the theses that foreshadowed its end or overcoming. Grohmann (2019) points out that platformization is a more conducive term than “uberization” of work, given the dependency relationship that workers/consumers acquire in relation to digital platforms, “with its algorithmic, data-based and financialized logic - amid changes which involve intensifying the flexibilization of labor relations and contracts and the imperative of an entrepreneurial rationality” (Grohmann, 2019, p.112).

The success of these services has led the platforms to establish themselves today as an “organizational and technological paradigm” (Grohmann, 2018, p. 3) for companies in general, private, public, technological, cultural. However, even though the platforms are organized based on digital technology, Casilli & Posada (2018) argue that, in reality, they emerge more as a response to long-term social and economic developments, especially in the relationship of people with the market and companies as traditional methods of organizing human production. Slee (2017) indicates that one of the most cruel consequences of platform capitalism is the lack, absence or drastic reduction in corporate and social responsibility of large companies in relation to society. Bosses who are not bosses, editors who are not editors, work that is not work. The non-being of platforms makes them irresponsible in the face of the consequences of their acts, the ethical conduct of the professions, the burden of managing and gestating workers. As Slee (2017) points out, the discourse is still that the digital giants are nothing more than intermediaries between the interests of the self-employed worker and the consumer, both imbued with an infinitely greater power in the discursive plane than in actual reality. It is the logic of the platform company (Slee, 2017).

The emergence of this type of company provided the basis for the connection between producers and consumers through service offering platforms, establishing the empire of the most profitable platform companies today. Such companies do not need to hold assets and properties with stocks, warehouses and all the costly facilities that integrated the might of large modern industries, lowering their costs to zero while retaining exorbitant power and profits primarily through the work done by users, content producers and consumers/producers (Slee, 2017).

Slee (2017) is attentive to the pessimism that arises after hope in the culture of Sharing Economy, largely as a result of the accumulation of fortunes in very few hands of companies that control the use, production, distribution and consumption on internet. Among the consequences of such a phenomenon, Slee (2017) identifies the corrosion of the sense of community, unbridled consumerism and the precariousness of work (the title of his book - *What's Yours Is Mine: Against The Sharing Economy* -, for example, received, in Brazil, the name of *Uberização: a nova onda do trabalho precarizado* [Uberization: the new wave of precarious work] precisely because Uber is one of the main platform companies today and the precarious work of drivers around the world a one of the relations - not to say, in a simplified way, a consequence - of the company's implantation in many countries).

However, even though the culture of sharing and community values have been overcome by capitalism in the platform society, it is still from this discourse that large companies use themselves to play with the values of collectivity and work – strongly fueled by also the discourse of collaboration. The production of value in platform companies, as indicated by Casilli & Posada (2018), exposes that the network structure of the platforms is what allows them to appropriate the work and activity of consumers/workers in different parts per transaction instead to extract this value from production over subordination relationships (as traditional companies do). Thus, on the one hand, platforms monetize interactions between users and producers, capturing value through participation (Casilli & Posada, 2018). This fundraising can be considered as participation and co-creation, making users work, characterizing digital labour (Fuchs, 2019; Casilli & Posada, 2018). However, this same digital labour is not limited to free collaboration and participation (such as building software, producing videos for Internet channels, etc.), also including user activities that make profitable information available to technology giants in their



reduced transactions to one click (Casilli & Posada, 2018). In addition to collaborating and capturing user data, work also manifests itself across platforms through networks connecting the producer and the consumer (always intermediated by the interests and vigilance of the large companies that provide such services through applications, websites, software, etc.). This dual logic is very characteristic of the so-called creative work and is thus demonstrated in the responses to the questionnaire on the use of platforms (social networks) and the circulation and production of work in the digital space of the internet. In this relationship, the boss ends up becoming the algorithms produced by companies as a way to monitor and conduct consumption and the work in a relational way - and, in many cases, a precariously way.

Specifically, about precarization of work, it is important to avoid reductionism: it is not directly the emergence of new technologies and systems (in internet, digital etc.) that results in a precarious job. In many cases, in fact, scientific and technological advances (consequently also communicational) collaborate for the development of new professions in an unemployment area, enhance many activities, facilitate joint actions and in different spaces. However, as it is not a simplified dual relation, in addition to the identified progress, technologies and platforms information capitalism have also resulted in precarious contracts, increased informality and a widespread offer of poorly or nothing paid jobs, as attends Slee (2017). Capitalist accumulation in a few companies also demonstrates the difficulty we have (and will have) to redistribute wealth as a result of human labor. As Slee himself (2017) points out, from his experience working in the technology industry, new (and old) technologies “may play an important role in building a better future, but they do not provide a shortcut to solving social problems or a complexes old sources of social conflict” (Slee, 2017, p. 33).

The entire range of data generated by users (and workers) on the internet is turning into a the new oil, as defined by Chandler and Fuchs (2019), since the data generated (and commercialized) by humanity develops the 21st century at the same proportion that oil transformed the economy and societies in the 20th century. “Such popular discourses claim that big data allows new ways to generate knowledge that will lead to innovative and creative possibilities” (Chandler & Fuchs, 2019). However, despite the gold mine instilled in the generation and commercialization of data, it is essential to pay attention to the fact that big data is not a natural resource. As Grohmann (2019) points out, despite being financially true, the comparison of data to oil hides that those would not be natural products and, therefore, would require construction and appropriation. The data is inculcated in the capitalist mode of production through documentation, filtering and extraction and, along the same lines as the algorithms, gain a sense of scientific paradigm and become supposedly neutral and unquestionable objects (Grohmann, 2019). The great danger is the naturalization and neutralization of the data, because, thus, hide different differences and inequalities - including colonial ones - between the production and consumption of platform work (Casilli, 2018).

The era of financialization and globalization of capital, as defined Ricardo Antunes (2018), is organizing a new international division of labor with clear tendencies towards informality (and precarization) and intellectuality through the use of information and communication technologies, in addition to digital devices for work. In *O privilégio da servidão* [The privilege of serfdom], the sociologist claims that the elimination of work by machinery is a lure, since the moment is, in reality, an expansion of the new proletariat of the digital age:

(...) whose work, more or less intermittent, more or less constant, has gained new impetus with ICTs, which connect, by cell phones, the most different types of work. So, instead the end of work in the digital age, we are experiencing the exponential growth of the new service proletariat, a global variant of what can be called digital slavery. In the 21st century (Antunes, 2018, p. 30).

Fuchs (2015) indicates that both the internet as the globalization are means and systems inserted in capitalism, resulting in labor relations that appear to be new, however, they hide being fundamental

class relations, such as an international division of digital labour which involves salaried work, unpaid work, industrial work, work that produces informational content together with other forms of digital (or non-digital) work. As Tom Slee (2017) argues, the internet is not a big break as some enthusiasts and optimists hope, since models of business and shares are swallowed up by commercial giants (now also digital) as the same with the traditional monopoly markets. After all, "it's not about building an alternative to the corporate-driven market economy. It is about expanding the free market to new areas of our lives" (Slee, 2017, p. 48). Internet production surrounds work - in its different modalities - that produces value directly or indirectly (in the case of data generation on big platforms).

The trends of this international division of labor are articulated through symbiosis processes, mixing productive and unproductive, material and immaterial labour, developing new ways of generating more value, under the command of a hegemony of international financial capital (Antunes, 2018). The digital consumerism of our age contributes to the symbiosis in the imaginary about work with the comprehension about the immateriality of production as the most prevalent force. Huws (2011) will pay attention to the "myth of the immaterial economy" nowadays, in a context of demand economy and digital platforms of labor agency, result of financial capitalism and of enthusiastic tides with digital technologies. The idea that work today comes down to intellectual and immaterial force is, for Huws (2011), a deception that hides the presence of materiality in social and work relations. Huws (2011) argues that there is in capitalism an ability to generate new goods that appear "something magical, as if they were being obtained from the air" (2011, p. 31). The work done in digital environments in the context of platforms is one of the sectors in which work is made invisible through the illusion produced by goods. The international form division of labor suffers direct actions from technologies incorporated into work, such as personal (and professional) computers and cell phones, as well as access to the internet and the digital space.

Huws (2014) identifies that production, distribution and consumption are gradually dissolving in the society of immaterial capitalism, forcing some jobs to cease to be paid, as well fostering new jobs and economic activities feeded in spheres of life until then traditionally seen from outside the market: "Most workers engage in several different types of work, paid and unpaid, simultaneously and throughout the course of their lives, transposing these simple categories" (Huws, 2014, p. 17). Creativity, in turn, becoming, in this logic, an input and a condition: it is necessary that creativity is almost an immaterial product of the work so-called creative and, at the same time, represents a condition that allows the worker to remain in the labour market and not to becoming obsolete. However, despite the discourses of creativity and self-realization, "content generation has not been immune to tensions and conflicts over property, production control and labor standards" (Casilli, 2018, p. 19). s

## "My job is where I'm with internet"

At the end of 2018 and the first semester of 2019 I made a first foray into the study's field which I develop my doctoral research (started in March 2017). Through the systematization of an exploratory research, I prepared interviews and an online questionnaire directed to workers identified with the creative industry, questioning productive routines and provoking reflections of the informants themselves regarding creative work. The questionnaire obtained 40 respondents (for 31 multiple choice and discursive questions) divided into three sections (identification, routine and reflections). In the end, to assist me in the development of the research, the exploratory questionnaire had the following profile of respondents: average of age 26/29 years, high education (postgraduate and graduate), monthly income between 1 to 3 minimum wages and predominance of multiple sources of monthly income, 52.5% women and 47.5% men, 85% white, 10% brown and 5% black (the most unequal percentage of profile). The sectors of the creative industry that most appeared among respondents were the Consumer sectors (50%), followed by



the Media sector (35%) and the Culture sector (32%)<sup>3</sup>. To think about the relationship between the notion of creative work and the platform society, I bring some initial results to be discussed: from the relationship between work and platform society until the constitution of the subjectivity of the workers inserted in this context.

Specifically about tools and digital technologies for work, most respondents indicated the use of a personal computer/notebook (87.5%), followed by cell phones (82.5%) and internet access in a private space (75%), reinforcing the clues about individualization of creative work and malleability in workspaces (personal cell phones and notebooks, even if they are private, can be easily transported and activated in different places and moments, not being restricted to an immobile physical space). Initially, I believed that the answers would negatively mention issues such as loneliness or loneliest (especially with regard to the modality of the home office), what is was overcome by the responses that showed greater concern with the sharing of space and its negative consequences (noise, dispersion, discomfort). The alienation of the worker passes, since the time that served to the understanding by Marx (2017), for the separation and extreme individualization of the productives process. It is possible that the current creative work, although passing strongly through the relationship which people and shared inspirations, tends to loneliness, to individualized processes, to the retraction, forming small islands of workers in a productive archipelago.

Once again, as Harvey (2017) also points out, systems conceived as forms of liberation and collaboration are transformed - from the capitalist accumulation of digital giants - into models of plunder of qualified (and free) labor from goods produced by workers defining today's cultural industrie. The big data turned into a fetish (Harvey, 2017) of economic, political, social and cultural systems at today. In the creative industries, the internet is a fundamental space for work, especially in sectors that directly create communication, media, digital programming, as well as relating consumption, design and other modalities. It is interesting to highlight two answers to the question "Where – and how – is your work?": One that pointed out "wherever I am (with internet)", indicating the mobility of work, the internet space as a fixed space (it is necessary and a prerequisite for work) at the same time as a mobile space (physically, it can be performed from multiple spaces); and another that replied "rehearsal room, office, street, bed, bar... all of one?", indicating both a certain reflexivity regarding the multiplicity of spaces for work (made possible through the access to the internet and the device/technology of communication) and the blurring of the boundary between work and other sectors of life (the street becomes a work space, the bed becomes a work space, the bar becomes a work space - spaces that previously indicated only transience, rest, leisure). It is practically impossible to find any worker inserted in the creative industries who is not also inserted in the production, distribution and consumption models on the internet - and in the platform society.

An issue which than contrasts the complexity of work in the platform society is the fruit of free work, or, the production of content for the digital giants of our era. Social networks and some platforms that host content today occupy an important space for content creators. In the questionnaire, social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Whatsapp etc.) appeared as the first option when it comes to disseminating, circulating or producing the content of creative professionals. The public/private frontier is also a prominent clue in the following responses: 65% of creatives uses a professional account on a social network, followed by 55% who uses a personal account on the same networks. Brazil has a strong incidence uses of social networks. Here, work is shared, exposed and driven through social networks such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram - even before being defined through other platforms identified by European researchers, or even through service applications. All of one is present, however, social networks are an integral part of Brazilian internet culture, the mix between public and private

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<sup>3</sup> For the characterization of sectors and occupations, I used the Creative Industry Mapping organized by the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro (FIRJAN) for the biennium from 2017 to 2019. In the mapping, the states of the South and Southeast of Brazil are the most representative in quantification of workers formally inserted in the creative industry. For research clipping options, I collected responses from informants located in these regions.

space (personal and professional profiles mixed, for example) is symptomatic. Editing programs and free digital resources also emerged as the main options for creatives, demonstrating the aspect of gratuity and sharing incorporated into the use of the internet. Most used applications are in the scope of editing and sharing messages, as well as the importance of the professional email account. Software packages, in turn, appear in greater numbers in the paid mode, indicating the monopoly that many companies in the sector have in this market.

## “We work for us, not for the company”

Researches about digital labour and platform work – or work's platformization (Casilli & Posada, 2018) – are in vogue in Europe and North America, mainly because the precarious remnants that result from the combination of financial speculation and digital monopolies still they appear somewhat a surprise to European and American citizens. In Brazil and in the Latin America - which Ricardo Antunes (2012) identifies as a labour's continent (o continente do labor) - precarious work is also not new. The indications point out that the global periphery already has different sources of paid work, largely based on informality and conciliation. As Casilli (2018) points out, digital work on platforms turns out to be an opportunity or solution, although there is no equal (mainly on regulatory issues) between digital and platform work in the global South and North. Some colonial differences and inequalities remain in the global geography (such as the absence of bargaining and negotiating power, regulatory structures and good remuneration), despite the work mediated by technologies sounds like “the work of the future” for workers in the South (Casilli, 2018).

In some cases, based on the clues indicated in the exploratory research, guided work through online platforms is more a way out rather than a closed alley. This is because the uses made by the creative professionals of the platforms (mainly those of social networks) were designed as a possibility to commercialize the work, make it financially viable, publicize it and even breaking, in a way, with some spatial barriers (such as this is the case for distant customers/chiefs). The ideology of the Brazilian microentrepreneur is already based on precarious work and the freelance modality is a reality of most creative workers (mainly journalists, advertisers, designers). This situation does not indicate less precariousness, but neither is it as if the work were previously stable and profitable to the point that the use of platforms now represents a lowering of conditions and remuneration. The understanding of free work on internet, in turn, can be thought as well from the collaborative culture and as in the generation of data expropriated by large corporations. It is possible that the creative worker, inserted in this logic, is extremely productive, feeding the platforms and the culture of the internet, while trying to balance costs and remuneration with his services rendered.

Work itself, in the face financialization and globalization of capital, acquires more and more mobility between meanings previously defined as productive/unproductive, material/immaterial in the face of financial, informational and digital capital (Antunes, 2018). But it is not only work that reorganizes itself in the face of a capitalist platform society - it is also the subjectivity of the worker immersed in such logics. As Dardot & Laval (2016) exemplify, the economy, culture, the rules for the judicial and political systems suffered and still suffer the interventions of neoliberal reason (the “new reason of the world”), but, the novelty planted in neoliberal society (fed by the capital crises that come and go cyclically) is the constitution and interference of reason in subjectivation. The mobilities within the subjectivities of workers - which goes from understanding oneself as a piece of gear to understanding oneself as their own boss - are aspects to be carefully considered.

The neoliberal subject, the economic, productive and effective subject (Dardot & Laval, 2016) is an invention of our times engendered in the neoliberal normative logic, a competitive subjectivity (at all levels), individually responsible for the crises and opportunities of employment, which it works

in the business management model and behaves like a micro-company in competition with the other micro-companies by neoliberal subject: the logic of You LTD. The culture of entrepreneurship (or work from the perspective of individual merit) carries with it some of these values. Emphasis is placed on the understanding of self-made, self-employed workers, who are solely responsible for their success (and, consequently, also for their failure). The logic of neoliberal subjectivity draws a professional who, in addition to multitasking, is also “boss-of-himself and employee-of-himself”, as pointed by Ricardo Antunes (2018). When building his problematization about our tiredness society (a society exhausted by constant productivity itself), Byung-Chul Han (2017) states that the society of the 21st century is no longer that Foucaultian disciplinary society, but the society of performance, formed by subjects of performance and production, “entrepreneurs of themselves” (Han, 2017). Thus, there is an intense feeling of productivity and proactivity among entrepreneurs (and among those who aim to undertake), because “unlimited power is the positive modal verb of the performance society. In place of prohibition, commandment and law, comes in the project, initiative and motivation” (Han, 2017, p. 24).

The era of flexible capitalism, according to Richard Sennett (2009), would be producing an immediatist society, eroded in its moral values, which, by replacing the fixed working hours with informality and flexibility, did not consequently generate autonomy or emancipatory freedom, but, rather, new formats of domination, possibly more diluted and pulverized in personal and professional routines. For the creatives (name given to workers inserted – formally or informally – in the creative industry) who answered the questionnaire, the most prevalent working modalities and bonds were the “autonomous” and “freelancer” categories. One of the respondents stressed about her work: “[It is] without guidance, I need to be autonomous within the agency and 'get by to bring the results'. As they love to say, it is necessary to delivery more than was requested. There they love the talk about we work for ourselves and not for the company”.

The ideology of the self-employed and entrepreneurship affects both workers in this type of employment contract and those who work in companies under contracts (either through formal or precarious contracts); both those who work in private environments (home, coworking etc.) and those who work with teams. The individuality of productivity integrates the neoliberal ideology in the productive system. For informal creative workers (or freelas), the discourse about dividing their work between “what sustains me” and “what I do for love” is quite recurrent, splattering a little bit the ideology of self-employed in line with the maxims “love your job” and “love what you do”. It is common to find a creative freelancer who reports dividing his occupations between remuneration, job satisfaction, personal satisfaction, balancing them all in the performance of their work (a fact that appears in many responses to the questionnaire).

Herein a contradiction to the concept about Marxists alienation and strangeness is inserted when defining, by its own culture, that work/labour is no longer a means to satisfy needs. It is itself a necessity. Brings marks that vie for attention and are attesting: satisfaction, prestige, recognition, success, professional fulfillment. Faced the question “What are your motivations for the work you do?”, the creatives answered as: most focused on the “experience” attribute, indicating both transience (accumulation of experiences, accumulation of positions, career direction based on the accumulation of experiences) and focus on knowledge and development of professional skills. Another demonstration is the second option – “personal development” – which once again highlights the element of purpose, motivation, work not only as a channel for remuneration and economic exchanges, but also as a space for development, individual growth, subject's improvement. The wage and remuneration criterion is tied to the subsistence element - indicating that, despite being a choice, creative work is a way of maintaining life in the capitalist system (which, in parts, is not a mere option). Development of creative skills and professional fulfillment also as predominant criteria are similar to the categories that indicate work as growth, again linked to the idea of motivation, purpose. Very personal desires that demonstrate the centrality of work in our lives (which

represents one of the main aspects in which we need to be successful, as well as in health, marriage, social relationships, among others).

These are the modalizers of the inserted works in contemporary capitalism endowed with neoliberal reason: the distancing from the social and collective sense in labour (as Marx understood) and the approach to the categories of individual performance, personal fulfillment. However, the central issue is not criticism of the job's jut or even the search for meanings of professional fulfillment and satisfaction (characteristics that, in themselves, are not necessarily distanced from work, since the work itself is also creation/achievement/expression and the way in which the subject expresses himself and positions himself socially). There is a constant internal struggle (in addition to class conflicts) that configures the subject's relationship with his work, the contradiction between self-realization through work and tiredness/exhaustion coming from the same sphere, although with a different relationship, since the work integrates its spectacular dialectic (Antunes, 2018), always dealing with alienation and creation, realization and suffering. One of the interesting elements to bring to the fore when discussing satisfaction and exploration in/of work is the issue of creativity and glamor that surrounds it in the face of the imaginary about the jobs and jobs identified as creative.

Contrary to the automated, repetitive imagery, of suffering and alienation, the emergence of a creative industry would have in its favor the use of human qualities for work, as the act of creation itself, directly transforming productive routines and relationship of many people with the work through flexibility, creativity, innovation, intellect. Near the idea of creativity, the concept of innovation (strongly linked to the scientific, informational and communicational developments of the last decades) is connected to notion of work, as defined by Martinez (2019). Allies of creative work, innovation and entrepreneurship become valid in the grammar of work, distancing it from the notions of exploration, alienation, considered old-fashioned, while new signs are praised: those associated with creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, excluding the material conditions in the world of work (Grohmann, 2015). With such signs in circulation, speeches about the world of work are produced that reiterate meanings of "creative work", "innovative", "with love", which Grohmann (2015) defines as consumption of the adjectived work (Ibidem). This association produces identifications and a communicational context for work, appealing to creativity, uniting work and consumption in the same sphere (Ibidem). The notions of fun, love and vocation make negative meanings attributed to work invisible, what Fuchs (2015) calls "reverse fetishism of merchandise" - the fun hides that work is work, the productive process appears in the same dimension as the merchandise, but its working dimension is erased and hidden.

Occupations in post-industrial capitalism (characterized by new types of employment and occupations, part of than which related to services) bring meanings to their relationships that provide product values to consumers, or, "put another way, the very worker is part of the product being offered to the customer" (Sorj, 2000, p. 30). The creative worker as posterboy for his brand and his work, the narratives that the subject emits from himself on social media platforms (photographs, texts, posts, videos, etc.) that mix personal life with life also indicate a contemporary imagination about the creative worker. If modern work was a definer of the social status of the subject through position and occupation, today it is possible to think that work is still an important mediator of social status, however, mixed with other aspects of contemporary life, designing a subject that is integrated and at the same time multiple. The idea around the purpose of work also appears in the responses indicated, promoting ideals regarding the dissemination of art, encouraging creativity, supporting artists, solutions to problems of communication and creation, such as consequences and attributes that are almost transcendental to work (employment) creative. They represent routine activities, but at the same time they can be considered as humanitarian purposes superior to a simple office. They are also expressed as valuable attributes to workers in addition to the work-wage relationship, representing a kind of daily mission in the craft of creative work.

A reading that brings both work and consumption in a practically direct relationship modifies

business and professional behaviors and cultures, and in many instances hides the negative consequences (such as precarious and flexible rights and remuneration). Vander Casaqui and Viviane Riegel (2009), when analyzing symbolic consumption and creative work at Google, identify that, in the production developed at the company, there are “meanings of creativity, coolness, modernity and youth, it becomes a show that sublimates the competitive and other negative connotations associated with this sphere of human activity” (Casaqui & Riegel, 2009, p. 163). Within this context that is also communicational, the Google worker also becomes a model consumer of the symbolic universe of the brand-company itself, which, by itself, uses the seduction of creativity, thus uniting work and consumption, commodifying the image of the world of work in the creative and technological context (Casaqui & Riegel, 2009). The creative worker is, at the same time, producer and product, part of the image that surrounds him/her becomes a fundamental aspect so that the idea built around the productive process can be effective in demand and consumption. And in this respect, Casaqui and Riegel (2009) bring Appadurai (1999) and Marx (1867; 2017) to rescue the sense of fetishism of the commodity now unfolded in the production fetishism, which is the masking of the productive system, and in fetishism of the consumption, which in turn hides the simulacrum at the consumer lives, affected by the tension of his choices and the erasure of the use of marketing strategies (Appadurai, 1999 apud Casaqui & Riegel, 2009).

Grohmann's criticism (2015) is based on the understanding that work - from a Marxist perspective - must be understood in its entirety, with no separation between creative or mechanical, mental or manual, physical or mental work, as a way to avoid dividing the social being in their existence through work. Fuchs (2015) attempts to how the “ideology of engagement/sharing” affects digital work and the creative industries, since this ideology erases the social character and the role of work, class, merchandise and exploitation with the discourse of fun, media engagement, digital sharing. One respondent to the questionnaire indicated a certain critical reflection regarding the structure of her work space, defining it as: “A little colorful, wallpaper with cool phrases, [coffee] espresso, that ladaia<sup>4</sup> [bullshit]”. The idea of playbour, advocated by Fuchs (2015), characterizes many professionals and workers inserted in the creative industry in the media and consumption sectors, because what consists of work is presented as leisure (the idea of professionals at Google, from advertising agencies with pool tables and beer, the production and marketing of games and so on). Casaqui and Riegel (2009) identify that creativity also becomes a commodity in itself (which circulates meanings of desire, consumption of creative work, ideal of creative work). Thus, companies that host creative work create for themselves a fetishist aura around the production system as if its “magical, harmonic, suitable for the imagery encouraged by language, which is intended for the persuasion and seduction of the consumer. In this spectrum, the worker becomes a poster boy, a propagator of the corporate spirit, and, by extension, of all his products” (Casaqui & Riegel, 2009, p. 166).

Finally, when asked about the positive aspects of the so-called creative work, the majority of respondents indicated the attribute of flexibility as the most significant. Despite the absence of a determined working time (which generates either extensive daily hours or long periods of under-occupation) and the guaranteed labor rights and fixed remuneration, flexibility appears as one of the central points. From the perspective of the work's sociology and the communication's political economy that we observe in the theoretical aspect, flexibilization and flexibility represent plastic (and insufficient) models of employment and remuneration. However, for respondents, flexibility is a positive feature of creative work. Freedom, independence, autonomy, flexibility are attributes that appear in the aspect related to the time, place, product accomplished. Once again, they indicate a preponderance of aspects related to individuality

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<sup>4</sup> I chose to keep the expression used by the informant in this response. The respondent identifies ladaia (slang for small talk, lie/bullshit, illusion) created around the space (with colored papers, espresso, free food, snooker, drinks, etc.) as a way of transmitting to workers an image of an informal environment, conducive to creativity, stimulating.



(or individualism, depending on the situation) in carrying out the work. Other respondents also point out, again, the question of purpose, mission, the positive side of articulating creativity (art, creation, communication) with other people - even though social relations have appeared as conflicting in many responses. s

## Final considerations

The work said to be creative, read through the exercise of an exploratory questionnaire, can be understood, based on the respondents' contributions, as a work considered important in addition to economic exchanges (although there is a lack of rights, guarantees and low remuneration), representing almost a kind of life purpose, imbued with creativity, which would theoretically differentiate it from mechanical and repetitive jobs. The mission and purpose imbued in the responses of creative professionals identify the individual values of work (although mission may denote service to others) in today's platform's society. The subject-entrepreneur, autonomous, creative and digital - who thinks being collaborating while producing regardless of the expression of his own interest - is the subjectivity of the platformization work.

In practice, creative work presents Fordist industrial symptoms, such as repetition, alienation, relation of exploitation of time and wages, hierarchies, all elements pointed out by the respondents. The working time for the job is, on average, longer and little differentiated from leisure or rest time; the spaces are multiple and mobile (both digital and physical); working from home (home office) is seen almost as a labour rights by many and, in the view of modern and traditional work, it is not even considered work. In addition, there are many symptoms of individualization of production processes and workspaces. Flexibility and autonomy are seen as positive attributes and facilitators of the creative routine. However, the culture of work spaces that simulate fun and informality, as well as the "work for you" and "do it yourself" speeches, are not uncritically read by all creative professionals. For many respondents, the intention of valorizing, recognizing and developing professional and personal skills does not seem devoid of at least some distrust about corporate and capitalist values.

But, how does the platformization of work affects directly creative work? From the reflections generated between the sum of the theoretical articulation and the analysis of the results of the exploratory research that I carried out, it is possible to point out that the main incidences of the platformization of creative work are:

1) The non-being of the platforms that accentuate the figure of the subject-company: the lack of responsibility and deregulation about the work done on the platforms directs meanings of individual merit that are already very present in the face of neoliberal rationality. The "boss who is not a boss", therefore, is not responsible for ensuring rights even if it demands results, and "the employee who is not an employee". The platformized work hides the work's meaning behind in the meanings about fun, love of work and purpose of life.

2) The cloudy frontier in the public and private spheres, the subject-company that, through platforms, never ceases to be. Social networks as platforms for circulation of both the result of work and the subjectivity of the worker, who always starts to play such a role.

3) And the double characteristic that acquires platform work: the product of the creative worker that is produced / circulates on the platforms (and their dependence on the work) and the creative worker himself as a product. In this second aspect, the question of data production is still inserted, since the work called creative performed on the platforms generates merchandise both in the final product and in the data extracted thanks to the free digital labour. These and other questions can be observed in the responses to the questionnaire, as well as in daily life or through what creative workers communicate and express, through other research on work and informality, work and creativity, work and platform's society.



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