How To: Create Value
The Work and Economic and Social Value Creation of YouTube Crafting Channels

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Abstract

This master's thesis examines the digital work performed on video-sharing platform YouTube. This study aims to analyse the business model of Web 2.0 social media platforms, by using the methodologies of interface affordances, Marxist labour theory, and perspectives on participatory culture, along with interpretations of the economic and social value production of the users (i.e. viewers and video makers). Through a case study of three channels within the crafting community, focusing on "how-to" tutorials, the affordances of the user interface are analysed to show how the users perform cognitive, communicative, and co-operate work. This study concludes that users perform activities in each of the categories, which type of work is performed is to some degree manipulated by the affordances of the platform and the state of the community where the work is performed. The workers have relative autonomy in creating social use-values. However, in their work, the users accumulate capital through the mining of their data, creating an economic surplus-value from which they are estranged. In monetising the work of the platform, YouTube also transforms their free time into productive time, which a theme problematised and discussed in this study.

Keywords
YouTube, social media, work, labour, digital work, digital labour, cognitive work, communicative work, co-operate work, economic value, social value, participation culture, monetisation, commodification, Marxism, crafting, tutorials

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

In 2006, TIME magazine's person of the year was a rather unorthodox choice. You. "Yes, You. You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world.", the cover reads, complete with a reflective surface in the shape of a computer screen. "You" are the ruler of the new internet. The year before, Tim O´Reilly, founder of publishing house O`Reilly Media, coined the term Web 2.0 to describe a set of trends that would greatly affect the daily use of the internet. This new web would be characterised by:

> [...] radical centralization, radical trust, participation instead of publishing, users as contributors, rich user experience, the long tail, the web as platform, control of one's own data, remixing data, collective intelligence, attitudes, better software by more users, play [and] undetermined user behaviour (Fuchs, 2014, p. 32).

The supporters of Web 2.0 argued that this new web was essentially different from the old one, a whole new ethos of the internet, where the essential idea is that the online sites and platforms who become powerful, are those who embrace the network of potential collaborators with new ideas and content (Gauntlett, 2011). Many of the most powerful platforms are the social media sites, van Dijck (2013) defines social media as internet applications that use the technological and ideological foundations of Web 2.0, to allow and encourage creation and sharing of user generated content, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Ironically, it was in the years after "You" was chosen the person of the year that the web, and social media in particular, became big business and corporate platforms saw the market potentials of user created content. The communal and user driven platforms was bought by bigger enterprises, keeping the rhetoric of the free user driven web, but at the same time capitalizing on the users. The peer-production that was praised by Web 2.0 supporters came with a valuable by-product: the user data (van Dijck, 2013). Behavioural and profiling data all over the web is analysed every day, split up into market groups, and then used by the platforms or is sold to companies or other third parties, to create individual personalized advertising on the same social media sites (Wasko & Erickson, 2009).

This business model has come to be criticised by some scholars. Grounded in theories of critical Marxism, they argue that the mining of the user data is a type of labour that the users do not get paid for, and is unacknowledged, creating a debate around free digital labour (Terranova, 2000). Several scholars criticise social media corporate owners for exploiting users by accumulating monetary gain from their free work (e.g. Terranova, 2000, 2013; Fuchs, 2014a. 2014b; Andrejevic, 2002, 2009, 2011, 2013). This results in an emergence of a class and power division, that alienates the users from the product of their work.

Yet, there are other academics who claim that the critical approach kills the creativity and the joys of amateur production that generate positive social value and capital, in favour of the users (Gauntlett, 2011). Several studies of the meaning-making and social value creation of social media, use Henry Jenkins' term *participatory culture*, in

describing how different groups use the production and distribution of new media solutions in their collective interests (Jenkins, et.al., 2013). The concept of *participatory culture* focuses on recognising users' activities as a mode of participation prompted by social media. Furthermore, social media participation has advanced the notion of grassroot production, which involves the formation of joint meaning. This entails that more amateur creators can take on cultural production projects on equal terms. What the critical Marxists think of as exploitation, is what Jenkins et al. (2013) describe as "[...] conflicting expectations of what constitutes fair participation" (p. 49). Furthermore, they argue that user-generated content is more complex than the free labour debate demonstrates, and does not necessarily befit the traditional and historical understanding of labour and exploitation. Thus, using these perceptions might not yield suitable explanations (Burgess & Green, 2009).

YouTube is an example of a social media platform which embodies Web 2.0's overarching advantages and problematic tendencies. It is currently one of the most popular social media sites, dominating the domain of online video publishing and distribution. According to Burgess and Green (2009): […] YouTube illustrates the increasingly complex relations among producers and consumers in the creation of meaning, value, and agency (p. 14). Their viewpoint represents some of the reflections I wish to delve into in this thesis. However, in addition to the aspects of meaning, value, and agency, I would also like to add the notion of user monetisation.
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This master's dissertation will explore the digital work and value creation of YouTube users, both video makers and viewers, by examining the inherent affordances of YouTube's interface. Accordingly, an ideological stance has already been taken in this respect. The material is a case study of three different amateur channels within the crafting community. One channel is devoted to origami, another to knitting, and is the last, to wood turning. They are all majorly focused on so-called "how to"-videos, that is, pedagogic, step-by-step tutorials on how to start and complete different crafting projects. The intention of the thesis is to better understand the tensions between the social and economic value creation, and thereby shed a light on the Web 2.0 business model of social media.

1.1. Background

YouTube is the largest video-sharing platform on the internet, used by at least 758 million people around the world every month (Liikanen & Salovaara, 2015). It has over 2 billion video views per day and 24 hours of new content is uploaded every minute (Lindgren, 2012). Yet, it still keeps on growing rapidly. Today YouTube is the second most visited website on the internet (Arthurs, et.al., 2018), making it a truly powerful player in the fight for internet users' attention and time.

In a true Silicon Valley rags-to-riches story, Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim, three former PayPal employees, started YouTube in a garage, back in June 2005. Two year later, in October 2006, the site was sold to Google for 1.65 billion dollars (Snickars and Vonderau, 2009). Before the sale, the site did not have advertisements, a deliberate

decision made by the owners and creators of YouTube, wanting the platform to be entirely user driven. But in order to make the site profitable, Google changed the policy, allowing advertisements to be shown on both the YouTube home page and the pages of individual videos. Google also introduced the use of their own algorithms to YouTube, ranking a material's relevance based on popularity, and a measure of the users' interactions with the video (Wasko & Erickson, 2009).

The most widespread model for monetising Web 2.0 sites consists of providing a free service financed by audience on the part of advertisers (Farchy, 2009). Google is one of the biggest corporations when it comes to treating digital communication as capital, and the processes of that digital communication as processes of capital accumulation. Google's business idea is to offer online advertising space, and at the same time, to track the activities of users, personalising the contents of future advertisements (Nixon, 2016). Google also has the advantage of owning several digital services, and through those sites, platform and applications survey the actions and activities of the user, and thereby extract value. This means the data collected on one of those sites can then show up on other sites on your browser (van Dijck, 2013). For example, after I have watched woodturning videos for this study, online hardware stores seemed very interested in selling me working gloves on my Facebook page.

Yet, it is important to note that YouTube primarily makes money of *traffic*. This concept entails that revenue increases base on the number of website use, video viewing, and advertisement display (McDonald, 2009). In a similar vein, Farchy (2009) explains that: "[i]n this economy of audience and traffic, the most important thing is not the information, the content itself, which has become a "commodity", but the control of visitor traffic" (p. 367). The content of videos, or their existence for that matter, is not what is monetised, but rather the traffic data, namely the clicks on the interface that is analysed and sold.

As Nixon (2016) states, Google surveys the users of their apps and services, gathering user information from this surveillance. YouTube, and Google, collects information via:

- Information the user gives: for example, personal information that is disclosed freely in the creation of a Google account, like name, address, phone number and credit card details[1].

- Information from the use of services: Google collects data on the services the user utilises and from how they are utilised. For instance, information is collected when you watch a video, click a website link, or view or interact with advertisements and other content. The data includes, for example, device information, IP-address, internet log information, telephone log information and cookies[2].

This data is then used to analyse and improve Google services, and this data can be shared between all of Google's services. However, not all data is commodified. As a case in point, YouTube

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[1] YouTube, Privacy Policy https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-GB&gl=uk [20180515]
[2] YouTube, Privacy Policy https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-GB&gl=uk [20180515]

> "[…] may share non-personally identifiable information publicly and with [their] partners – like publishers, advertisers or connected sites. For example, [they] may share information publicly to show trends about the general use of [their] services"[3].

Non-personally identifiable information is defined by YouTube's policies as: "[…] information that is recorded so that it no longer reflects or references an individually identifiable user[4]", and it is this information that McDonald (2009) and Farchy (2009) speaks of, that becomes the commodity of YouTube. Since the commodity is based on data created by the users, their activities can be described as free labour as they create monetary gain for the Google corporation (Terranova, 2000, 2010; Fuchs, 2014a, 2014b).

van Dijck (2013) categorises YouTube as an User Generated Content platform (UGC). Unlike Social Network Sites (e.g. Facebook), UGC platforms do not focus on interpersonal contacts and network building. Instead, the UGC platform primarily supports user creativity, cultural activity, and the sharing of both amateur and professional content: in contrast to Social Network Sites (SNS), like Facebook, who focuses on interpersonal contacts and network building. UGC:s instead supports user creativity, cultural activity and the sharing of both amateur and professional content. "[...] YouTube is not actually in the video business - its business, rather, is the provision of a convenient and usable platform for online video *sharing:* users (some of them premium content partners) supply the content [...]" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 4), this means that YouTube does not create any material of their own, the platform simply curates content uploaded by users.

YouTube allows members to create their personal profile in the form of *a channel,* where you can upload your own videos, as well as share others. Viewers can subscribe to the channel and get updates when a new video is uploaded. When users post content on YouTube, they keep the ownership of the material, but a license is transferred to YouTube, giving the site permission to share and use the video content in the way they see fit[5]. The sharing aspect, coupled with several social networking features, like a comment section that encourages interaction, show that even though YouTube is built on the creative endeavours of its users, it also has the intention of creating interpersonal, social communication and contact (Lindgren, 2012).

At the beginning of YouTube's reign, the platform only consisted of content produced by amateurs, publishing videos with low production value about their lives. Today however, YouTube is a mishmash of amateurs, professionals and professional amateurs. Many corporations have their own channels, known as branded channels, using the platform to market themselves. In 2007, YouTube introduced its first revenue, sharing deals with users with the most watched videos, claiming their content is of equal value to that of professional materials on the site, making them sort of professional amateurs, or professional YouTubers (Wasko & Erickson, 2009).

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[3] You Tube, Privacy Policy https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-GB&gl=uk [20180515]
[4] YouTube, Privacy, Key terms https://policies.google.com/privacy/key-terms?hl=en-GB&gl=uk#toc-terms-info [20180515]
[5] YouTube, Terms of Service §7.2 https://www.youtube.com/t/terms?hl=sv&gl=GB [20180515]

Nowadays, in an attempt to boost higher quality amateur content (van Dijck, 2013), YouTube invites every channel that have over 1000 subscribers and 4000 viewing hours per year, to be a part of the YouTube's Partnership Program (YPP). Thereby the video maker earns monetary compensation in exchange for allowing commercials or embedded ads in the videos[6]. It is impossible to know how much each YouTuber makes, as it not made public and at certain point of popularity the video makers are offered an individual deal to become a "premium content partner", which splits a part of the advertising revenue with YouTube (van Dijck, 2013). However, according to Forbes magazine, 1000 views on the video site will earn a creator, without a premium content deal, somewhere between 25 cents and 4 dollars[7].

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[6] YouTube, YouTube Partnership Program https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/72851?hl=sv [2018-04-26]

[7] McIntyre, Hugh. Forbes Magazine 2017-09-18 https://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2017/09/18/how-much-money-does-3-billion-youtube-views-bring-in/#4a167944aece [2018-04-26]

1.2. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Van Dijck and Nieborg (2009) note that many of the corporate practices of Web 2.0 business models blur the line between non-market, public, collective production and private, commercial modes of production, which "cleverly combine capital-intensive, profit-oriented industrial production with labour-intensive, non-profit-oriented peer production" (p. 856). In this process, labour and leisure become muddled. Discussing the activities of social media users in terms of work, instead of random activities disconnected from capitalist practises of labour division, highlights the power relations between user and platform, and at the same time problematizes how leisure time becomes monetised and turned into productive time, and labour.

The purpose of this case study is to critically examine the activities of YouTube users as processes of digital work. This is effectuated to the examination of three YouTube channels within the crafting community. Focusing on the user interface of these channels, I will study the use of the offered affordances and divide them into the categories of cognitive work, communicative work, and cooperative work. I will then analyse how these processes of work relate to economic and social value creation, and examine the dynamics between them, which will lead to a further understanding of the power relations on YouTube, and other Web 2.0-model based platforms and a discussion of the relation between leisure and labour.

My research questions are:

> • What kind of digital work does YouTube users perform, and through which activities?

> • What kind of values, economic and social, do YouTube users produce and through which activities?

> • How does the different kinds of work relate to the values produced by the YouTube users?

1.3. Significance to Library and Information Science

Toffler (1981, in Hutchby, 2001b) marks the invention of the computer as the "third wave" of Western culture, after agriculture and industrialisation, and deduces that it will have a profound social and cultural effects as the previous two to human society and culture. In this "third wave" information has become more important, also as a commodity.

There are new, more efficient ways of creating and sharing information, but we cannot forget that these are still embedded in hegemonic, capitalist structures of power. On a more abstract, ideological level, these structures make a relevant case to analyse the benefits and beneficiaries of information creation and spreading, in the form of user created content through social media, and to use critical theory to understand the power division of those benefits. This has consequences for all social media users, including those who represent public institutions. Today, practically every government association and publicly funded organisation have one, or several, social media accounts. The actions of these institutions, as well as the people who interact with them, play a part in creating behavioural and profiling data.

Today, there are a lot of discussions in academia about how to handle the new information landscape, especially in terms of information literacy and competence amongst the public and information professionals. Still, relatively little focus has been put on the dynamics of power and ideological implications of our information seeking and sharing online. Nonetheless, in their report *Algoritmer i samhället* ("Algorithms in society"), Jutta Haider and Olof Sundin (2016) discusses how Google and the commercial, quantitative, logics of the algorithms, challenges the civic mission of public institutions, such as libraries and the educational sector. As information professionals, we need to be able to find, examine, evaluate, and disseminate information, but it is also critical that we understand and reflect upon the infrastructure through which that information is produced and distributed.

1.4. Outline

This first introduction chapter was meant to present and frame the problem, aim and purpose of the study. The next chapter will present the previous research, split into three sections. The first will focus on platform studies, the second on studies regarding the participatory culture on YouTube. The last section reviews previous research on digital labour in general, and the monetisation of YouTube in particular. Reviewing these fields of study will shape an outlook of YouTube as a socio-technical system, built on technical affordances, corporate platform logic, and the social norms of the users.

Chapter 3 details the theoretical framework of the study. The first part, 3.1 Social Constructivism in Technology Studies and the Concept of Affordances, will set the epistemological assumptions of the study, as well as presenting the positions taken regarding technology and its relation to the concept of affordances. This concept will be practically applied in the case study, presented in chapter four. 3.2, Understanding Digital Work and Labour Through Marx, discusses the meaning of the terms work and labour within the framework of Marxist theory, their difference and how they relate to the activities of social media users. Lastly, different Perspectives on the Social Values of Digital Work on YouTube will be presented. In chapter 4, Methodology, the material selection process will be presented and explained, followed by a chapter that outlines the analytical procedures of the empirical study, using the affordances of the user interface. This chapter will also discuss the problematic elements of studying social media in qualitative research, describing ethical considerations, ending with a reflection on the limits to the study.

In chapter 5, The Work of YouTube Users, the result of the mentioned empirical study will be presented under three headings, distinguishing the different kinds of digital work. Every chapter section will present the activities that are linked to the work in question, how, and how it is used by video makers and viewers. Chapter 6 will then link the different kinds of work to the social and economic values produced on the YouTube platform, and describing the relation between value creation and the users. Chapter 7, Discussion, debates the results of chapter five and six in relation to previous research and the ongoing debates of exploitation of social media users. The thesis will conclude with chapter 8, Conclusions, in which I will summarize the results and the answers to the research questions posed in section 1.2. and, lastly, present suggestions for future research.

2. Previous research and literary review

With internet technology and computing becoming a bigger part of everyday life all around the world, the academic interest becomes bigger and expanding to new fields and institutions. In this chapter, the previous research that have inspired the subject of this thesis will be presented. It is worth noting that even if there are several Swedish scholars represented in this essay (Snickars & Vondebrau, Lindgren), and in the fields of study, the researchers' works are not focused on Sweden as a geographic focal point, or on YouTubers that derive from the country. I have also not found any relevant research written in Swedish. Consequently, my study will not be focusing on a Swedish context. The channels of the case study originate from English speaking countries, and the phenomenon of digital work is contemplated upon from an international perspective.

Because of its size and popularity, YouTube has become the site of many studies from a range of academic fields, from media studies and design studies, to education and medical research concerning patients' information seeking behaviour. For this chapter, I have chosen to focus on platform studies, community building through participation, monetisation and previous studies on digital labour. These subject helps form the notion of YouTube as a socio-technical system, constituted of both technical appliances and affordances, user cultures, and corporate logics.

2.1. Platform Studies

Platform studies looks at the complex dynamics in the relation between user and internet pages, between "[…] technical specifics and culture" (Montfort & Bogost, 2009, cited in Helmond, 2015 p. 2). The field focuses on how the software of internet platforms form their users' actions through features and functions, to encourage preconfigured practices. Studies are often defined by one of two approaches to platforms. The first approach is platform politics, which studies how specific platforms negotiate the different, and sometimes conflicting, interest of users, policymakers, clients, and advertisers, see for example Gillespie (2010) and Gerlitz and Helmond (2013). The second approach examines platforms as architectures that suggest specific uses of features and data, represented in this section by Helmond's (2015) article.

In the subfield of platform politics, Gillespie (2010) examines the term "platform" as a term of ideology, with specific aims, using YouTube and Google as a case study. He further explains that companies, build on supplying digital content to audiences, needed to form a discourse regarding their services, to establish a long-term position in the economic and cultural markets. Thus, a vocabulary tailored to their particular products and services was established. Starting with the etymology of the word "platform", Gillespie (2010), finds fifteen different uses in the Oxford English Dictionary. Seeing

four broad categories in the definitions, he states that the emergence of the term to describe digital media intermediates represents none of them, but depends on both its computational, architectural, figurative, and political past, to form meaning today.

YouTube and Google need to maintain positive relationships with users, advertisers, and clients. For each of these groups, the platform is a concept implying opportunity. It fits with the Web 2.0 rhetoric of the democratised, user led internet, producing a platform to store and promote user created content, which works with the historical connotations of the platform term, not least the political meaning. For advertisers, it is an opportunity to connect and gain the attention of targeted audiences, compared to the broader targets of traditional media. The advertisement opportunities of YouTube drawn from the figurative meaning of the word. "Platform" also offers Google and YouTube the advantage of describing themselves as simple intermediaries, free of the responsibilities related to the content in the videos. This limits the company's liability in legal charges, such as copyright infringements, but also decreases the cultural critique against YouTube's lack of obligation to uphold a safe and respectable environment on the website. In simply hosting the content, YouTube can describe themselves as a neutral party "- empowering all by choosing none" (Gillespie, 2010, p. 357).

Gillespie ends the article with the conclusion that discourse does not just spring from the ground; forming it is a process: "[i]t is drawn from the available cultural vocabulary by stakeholders with specific aims, and carefully massaged so as to have particular resonance for particular audiences inside particular discourses" (Gillespie, 2010, p. 359). Lastly, the author sums up the several functions of the platform concept through the following points:

> The idea of the "platform", then, does quadruple duty. It fits neatly with the egalitarian and populist appeal to the ordinary users and grassroots creativity, offering us all "raised, level surface". It positions YouTube as a facilitator that does not pick favourites, with no ulterior motive than to make available this tidal wave of UCG. Yet the idea of the "platform" not only elides the presence of advertisers and commercial media producers, it serves as a key term in seeking those businesses and making plain how YouTube can host their content too. (Gillespie, 2010, p. 358)

Along similar discussions on platform politics, Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) examines Facebook's "social buttons" as a way of observing the platform's ambition to extend its reach into the external web, and also establishing a medium-specific platform critique. Addressing Gillespie's (2010) politics of platforms, the article looks at the data flow between several actors, enabled by Facebook's like button, minimizing the focus on rhetoric as ideology, instead examining technical appliances. Facebook has since its launch had the ambition to make the internet more social, to connect websites with each other. To understand Facebook's economy, the article starts with an examination of the informal web; "the hit and link economy", often called Web 1.0, which had less participation of users, the economy of the web was instead based on page hits. Web 2.0, then, is described as "the social web" or the "like economy", defined by collaborative production of content and the relations between user and web objects, like pictures, videos or status updates. One of the ways to create and form these relations are through social buttons – social bookmarking icons – that allows users to bookmark, like, share, or recommend content, posts or, pages on various social media platforms. In October 2006, Facebook introduced its first social button, the share icon, an easy way of sharing

web content to your contacts. In 2009, it was joined by the like button to replace short, appreciative messages like "Great!" or "Congrats!". These Social Plugins make it possible for webmasters to exchange data with the platform, forming a social graph; representations of the Facebook users' connection to other users and web objects. The social buttons also make it possible for Facebook to exchange preformatted data with the external web and enable data flows to and from the platform.

Consequently, Facebook is making the web more and more interconnected, and de-centralises the web from the webmasters into the hands of the user. Still, Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) raises the problematic aspect that the users are not given access to the data they produce and cannot systematically oversee their link history. However, Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) fail to mention that even if the social web relies less on webmasters and centralised operation, the ownership of the social web is being centralised (van Dijck, 2013), which would be a relevant fact to bring into their analysis. Nevertheless, they make an important observation in noting that Facebook's users produce economic values through their data, but it is the platform which decides which social activities can be performed and which are turned into data, emphasizing the power of the platform.

Helmond (2015) further examines Facebook's development in a more historical context in her article, "The Platformization of the Web: Making web Data Platform Ready". In contrast to earlier publications on social network, the article focuses on apprehending the concept of the platform as the dominant social infrastructure and economic platform on the web. Helmond (2015) chooses not to study the rhetorical sense of the platform, as Gillespie (2010), but instead from a material-technical perspective, giving the article an architectural approach. According to the author, what defines the social media platform is the use of APIs (Application Programming Interfaces). An API is an interface that allows users of one application to interact or respond to data from other applications, sites, or even programs. Helmond (2015) perceives API as the core of the shift from social media network to social media platform, as it makes an interconnected internet possible. She further argues that creating a typology of the programmability of platforms, makes them comparable and gives opportunity to critically examine "[…] what they enable and constrain and what kind of data and functionality is made available for use and for whom" (Helmond, 2015, p. 5). Facebook uses its programmability to reach outside their own platform, and in that process changes the infrastructure of the interconnected websites, that needs to make their code compatible with Facebook. In conclusion, Helmond's (2015) article claims that that platformisation is a dual logic of expansion and the drive to make the rest of the web and app data ready to be incorporated into the platform culture. These three articles have in common the focus on the politics of corporate platforms, analysing how their technical appliances are designed and developed to create bigger user bases.

Contrary to the commercial focus found in previous articles, Weltevrede and Borra (2016) examines peer-produced platform Wikipedia. The authors introduce the "device perspective" as a methodological contribution, and a new approach, to platform studies when they examine the Wikipedia page on global warming. The use of the device perspective on the platform allows not only the study of affordances, but also how they are deployed and interpreted by the users. The concept of affordances will return in the next chapter and be more thoroughly examined. However, in this context, the term refers to the activities which are allowed on a website through the interface. Weltevrede and

Borra (2016) establishes the term "device culture" to describe the affordances of a platform, and the processes, uses, and practises that emerge in negotiation with it. Forming a case study around the evolution of the Wikipedia page on global warming, the authors examines how controversial subjects are handled and negotiated through the affordances and the cultures of using them.

Wikipedia's purpose and architecture are centred on collectiveness, the idea that knowledge is formed through collaborative experience and thought, which can be seen in the affordances of the site. Wikipedia's device culture is constructed around three different aspects. Firstly, the architectural aspect, mainly focused on the content management system, MediaWiki, an application for open editing. The site also offers free linking in the editing, as well as a discussion page and edit history for each article. The second aspect of the device culture are the policies and guidelines set up around knowledge production and conflict resolution. The goal of the knowledge production in an article is to reach consensus, therefore there are three policies at hand to help end conflict amongst contributors: "neutral point of view" (NPOV) which requires "all notable and verifiable points of view" are represented in the article, "verifiability", and "no original research". The last aspect is the continuous negotiating of editing of articles, calling upon the policies of Wikipedia to end conflict. In the editing history of the global warming article, each aspect of the device culture can be seen. As a result of the case study on the global warming article, Weltevrede and Borra (2016) finds that the device perspective was successful in showing the link between the specific platform and social and cultural arrangements, and which practises it enables and incorporates. Further, the article finds that the methodological perspective of using Wikipedia editing history as a historical reference work is efficient in studying key matters of controversy, and the defusing of conflict, as well as the need for platform specific examinations that look to the platform's specific ontology.

As seen in the articles discussed above, platform studies address the need for platform-specific social media analysis, and highlights the focus of both the technical and cultural aspects of that platform for a more correct and comprehensive analysis. Previous research describes platforms almost as separate ecologies, defined by social behaviours and technical appliances. Just like Gillespie (2010), my object of study is YouTube, and I would class it as a study of platform politics. However, the method of the study is closer to Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) and Weltevrede and Borra (2016), using the affordances of the interface to analyse user activities. Sadly, the affordances of YouTube do not allow for the transparent, historical perspective of Weltevrede and Borra's (2016) study. Instead, in my thesis, YouTube's terms of agreement, the technical affordances of the user interface and users' social activities related to them serves to reflect the platform-specific cultures of YouTube.

2.2. Participatory Culture on YouTube

There are several influential academic works that focuses on the social possibilities of Web 2.0 platforms. Most of these works recognise the changing dynamics of the media as the public are given more space in the media landscape. The focus of this study, YouTube, is often featured as a prominent example of possible community building and

amateur production "[…] an ideal place to create, connect, collaborate and circulate novel and personally meaningful media" (Chau, 2010, 65). For example, in his book, *Making is connecting,* David Gauntlett (2011) offers a historical and ideological perspective of crafting as a lifestyle and leisure activity. When discussing the digitalisation of the crafting community, he typifies YouTube as the "archetype of the creative platform" (p. 88). According to Gauntlett (2011), the easiness of both uploading and making videos, and making contact with other users, makes YouTube a platform that fosters a participatory community.

The term *participatory culture,* which in this thesis is used to describe the communal practices of the users on the YouTube platform, was introduced by Jenkins (Jenkins, et.al. 2013). In the book *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture,* Jenkins, et.al. (2013) use the term to theorize around the "spreadability" of popular culture content in social media. "Spreadability" refers to the technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content than others, the economic structures that support or restrict circulation" (Jenkins, et.al., 2013, p. 4). According to Jenkins, et.al. (2013), social media gives audiences the power to spread content that is personally important and meaningful to them, and therefore has the potential to empower media circulation in favour of the grassroot audiences.

Jenkins, et.al. (2013) acknowledge the work the audiences take upon themselves in the process of spreading and creating content, but stresses the varied and complex values generated through these processes. For the authors, the revenue of users' engagement is identity building and self-branding, social values that are not expected to be financially compensated. Instead, the community norms of social media shapes alternative social economies, such as gift economy and moral economy that evade the traditional perception of exploitation. According to Jenkins, et.al (2013), the monetisation and commodification of user-generated content not a form of exploitation, like for example Terranova (2000) claims. Jenkins, et.al. (2013) argues audiences actually use the material of commercial production as raw material in their social production of interaction, which leads to interpretation of the free labour debate as a misconception, that is inaccurate about what users actually *do* on YouTube.

In contrast to the views presented by Jenkins, et.al. (2013), van Dijck (2013), present a rather gloomy look on the participatory qualities of YouTube, and offers a critical perspective on social media outside of the free labour debate. In van Dijck's book, *The Culture of Connectivity,* she offers perspectives on different social media platforms as agents of power. van Dijck (2013) argues that YouTube has lost the attention to the users it had in the earlier, user driven days, adjusting to the corporate logics of Google. In incorporating professional material and branded channels, the author states the platform has moved towards the media industry, especially TV, it was set out to rebel against in its onset.

Also, focusing on the commercialisation of YouTube, Burgess (2015) contemplates on Gillespie's (2010) platform paradigm in an attempt to describe the technical transformation of social media in the Web 2.0 era, with YouTube as an example. Acknowledging two major aspects of the paradigm, the convergence of UGC and social networking, and the evolution of these platforms to become more diffuse as they reach for broader audiences, the author notes how the affordances of these platforms become

more generic and neutral to a larger group of people, to invite a bigger possible user base. These works problematise the users place on the YouTube platform, outside the narrative of exploitation that is frequent in the digital labour debate. Instead they argue that the users, and the social values of their participation, are being neglected by the market logic of the platforms.

However, in earlier work Burgess (2009) have a more positive outlook, in her book, simply titled *YouTube,* co-authored by Green, the authors try to treat YouTube as an object of research in relations to wider transformations in culture, society, and economy. According to Burgess and Green (2009), the purposes and meanings of YouTube can be seen as a cultural system that is collectively created by users. Through their activities and interactions, they form a "[…] network of creative practice" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 61).

Jenkins, et.al (2013), as well as Gauntlett (2011), will be featured in the theoretical framework regarding the social values of digital work. Except for these broader, more extensive works, I have also found two relevant articles on the specific participatory culture of YouTube. In his case study, *YouTube as a participatory culture,* Chau (2010) applies Jenkins' et.al. (2013) term to the activities of young people (15-19 years old) on YouTube. Noting the popularity and diversity of uses related to the platform amongst young people, Chau (2010) stresses the need for the study, connecting those uses to what he considers the five characteristics of participatory culture. The first of the five, Chau (2010) identifies as relatively low barriers of both artistic expression and civic engagement. Most visitors only watch videos, a low-intensity engagement which is measured in view counts, foregrounding that even such types of engagement increase the popularity of those videos. Simultaneously, the stipulations to publish such material are few. Uploading is both easy and acceptance for lo-fi quality content, make amateur production easier. Closely related is the second characteristic, strong support for creating and sharing projects. Chau (2010) states that "[b]y making content sharing easy and part of the communal discourse, platforms such as YouTube prioritize the members' sense of belonging and identification with the community and, in return, loyalty to the platform" (2010, p. 69).

The third characteristic, informal mentorship, addresses the focus of this study: how-to videos, which offers informal, unregulated knowledge transfer (Chau, 2010). The fourth is, according to Chau (2010), a belief among users that their contributions matter. YouTube popularity is based on the viewers reactions, in form of view count, thumbs up and amount of comments. When teens are asked why they posted comments, they often used it as a feedback system to support the uploader of the video. Chau's (2010) understanding of YouTube fame as entirely based on popularity is a truth with modification, as one can buy higher search rank in the form of sponsored videos (Farchy, 2009). The fifth and last characteristic is the sense of social connection YouTube offers. Beyond the networking affordances of the platform, Chau (2010) also acknowledges their innovative uses, such as shared accounts. Since YouTube offers limited options to make collaborative videos and tweaking of already existing material, some YouTubers got joint accounts and started collaborative channels by sharing account information. Such innovative use challenges the supposed norms created by the platform affordances. In conclusion, Chau (2010) finds that the implications of participatory culture invite and

motivate young producers of culture, giving them a sociotechnical platform on which to express themselves.

Lastly, Lindgren's (2012) article ""It took me about half an hour, but I did it!" Media circuits and affinity spaces around how-to videos on YouTube", examines the comment section of how-to videos on YouTube as discursive spaces. To Lindgren, the comment section is space of duality, between discourses of affinity (e.g. peer-support, the passing of knowledge) and disruption (e.g. hate comments or spam). The purpose of the article is to examine to which extent the concepts of affinity and disruption are discursively represented. The first step of the study aims to characterize the sentiments of YouTube comments. Lindgren (2012) chooses the six most prominently tagged genres; *How-to, Blogs*, *Travel, News, Entertainment* and *Gaming,* finding the most commented video from each category. The results find user-generated videos gain a higher degree of positive affirmation while professionally produced videos (from traditional media outlets) have more neutral and negative comments.

In the final steps of his study, the author examines the discursive formation of 10 000 comments on how-to videos since it was the genre with the most positive comments (Lindgren. 2012). The result shows four thematic clusters in the comments. The first cluster, centres around questions to the video maker, and "finding" and "knowing" things, learning and trying the tutorials. The second is about do-it-yourself (DIY) culture, the third and fourth focuses on exchange of knowledge and help to the video maker, like constructive criticisms. Lindgren (2012) finds that even if the comments are not marked by long-term commitments they still provide a discourse formed around "[…] interactivity, thankfulness, encouragement and support" (Lindgren, 2012, p.167).

In summary, these works, that in some way describe the participatory culture on YouTube, identify that the community is built around the creativity and production of other users. Using van Dijck's (2013) terminology, UGC-platforms are more centred around *creating* than SNS's like Facebook, which allows users to form long-lasting social connections. YouTube users can follow each other's channels, but it is not portrayed as a friendship like mutual followings on Facebook. YouTube users form social bonds by showing encouragement and support, (Gauntlett, 2011, Lindgren, 2012, Chau, 2010) which underlines the need for affordances that offer opportunities to show appreciation and converse over shared interests, or creating affordances that introduces interaction into previously perceived individual activities.

2.3. Digital Labour and the Monetisation of YouTube

Since digital labour can be defined as every labour that is "[…] required for the existence, usage and application of digital media […]" (Fuchs, 2014a, p. 4), there are, and have been, many different aspects of digital labour research. From the slave labour of third world countries (Fuchs, 2014b), to unpaid online journalism (Terranova, 2000) and labour within online gaming communities (Postigo, 2016, Nakamura, 2013). As digital work is a relatively new form of productivity, the discussions on the subject is often abstract, and aimed at forming a discourse on what social media work entails, produces, and implicates, in a broader societal economy.

In his book *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, Fuchs (2014b) addresses these fundamental questions, describing different case studies from a wide range of situations within the collective digital workforce through the economic theories of Karl Marx. For instance, the slave labour that occurs every day in the mining of information and communication technology (ICT) related material to build components of our electronic devices. The book also discusses, among others labour division as more digital work, like software building and call centre work, is being outsourced to countries in Asia and Africa. Fuchs (2014b) reaches the conclusion that even if the "new web" discourse was filled with rhetoric of the freedom of the internet user, the internet and the technologies it is dependent on are still controlled within the capitalist system.

The theoretical categories of work used in the empirical study is taken from another work by Fuchs', in his and Sebastian Sevignani's 2013 article, "What is Digital Labour? What is Digital Work? What's their Difference? And why do these Questions Matter for Understanding Social Media*?*", they are applied to the activities of Facebook users in a thorough review of Marxist labour theory, related to both information work and social media. The authors reach the conclusion that in the threefold work process (a concept we will return to in the next chapter) of digital work, the worker is alienated from both his work, the means of it, and the actual product, creating a class division on corporate social media platforms.

As much research still focus on the evolving fundamental discourse, connecting digital work to theoretical schools of thought, the case studies of digital work are relatively few. But, in the anthology *Digital Labour: The Internet as Factory and Playground*, editor Trebor Scholz (2013) mixes both theoretical essays and case studies regarding the economic and social implications of new forms of both waged and unwaged labour, such as online fandom (De Kosnik, 2013), and blogging (Dean, 2013), showing how the digital activities are changing the division, accumulation, distribution, and circulation of capital on the shifting labour market of the internet.

The case studies of digital work are few, the studies focused on social media are fewer, and studies on specifically YouTube are fewer still, emphasizing the need for studies such as this one. However, in the article "The socio-technical architecture of digital labour: converting play into YouTube money"*,* Postigo (2016) conducted a comprehensive, participatory study of the digital labour of the community of game commenters of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops.* The study was conducted under a 24-month period, examining community, monetisation and work in a context of platform studies. Postigo (2016) observed that the gaming community is not just performances of skill and expertise, but also "[…] performances of identity, community conflicts and allegiances, community values, economy and creativity" (Postigo, 2016, p. 333). The article explores YouTube as a socio-technical system through its affordances such as comments, tagging, the video ranking system, etcetera.

Giving a brief overview of the digital labour debate, Postigo (2016) expresses the need to discuss UGC-platform beyond a dichotomy of exploitation and participation. His article reaches three conclusions. Firstly, YouTube stars matter. Their engagement and their ability to engage other users are important in ensuring revenue through UGC. Secondly, the architecture of the platform must afford both social rewards and

opportunity for economic revenue, making them "[…] serve dual roles are key" (Postigo, 2016, p. 345). Thirdly, conflict is irrelevant, or even good, as long as users stay on the platform. The affordances allow conflict on YouTube, and the platform is typically not invested in individual video makers or channels (this could be discussed in cases of premium content partners). Lastly, the author points out YouTube's enduring business strategy which is to offer an architecture that encourages profitable user practises via the social and technical affordances of the platform. The case study of this dissertation is close to Postigo's (2016) article in that it centres around YouTube and has similar methodology, the differences are the studied communities, the scope and that I have tried to remain close to the Marxist roots of digital labour theory, more similar to Fuchs' and Sevignani's (2013) article on Facebook.

Nixon (2016) examines YouTube from an audience perspective in his article, "The old media business in the new: "the Googlization of everything" as the capitalization of digital consumption". Nixon (2016) focuses on digital audience labour, here "[…] conceptualized as the use of digital media to consume culture and make meaning" (p. 212). The case study is focused around Google and "Googlization"; the process of the corporation gaining control over more activities and more cultural consumption. Nixon (2010) points out that Google uses the political economy of communication of traditional media to capitalize its users by exploiting the audience. According to Nixon (2016), most Google users are exploited not as producers, but as consumers, *as audiences*. Using terminology developed by Smythe, Jhally and Livant (amongst others) audience labour is the work of "producing consciousness […] by paying attention" (p. 215). Audience is monetized by Google's through offering advertisement space that is consumed passively through giving attention. In case study of YouTube, the author reaches the following conclusion:

> […] Google indirectly exploits the digital audience labour of its YouTube users. By controlling access to the videos through its ownership of the YouTube site, Google can lend part of the space next to the videos to advertisers in return for interest. Through that process, Google extracts surplus-value from advertisers and thereby indirectly exploits the digital audience labour of YouTube users (Nixon, 2016, p. 227).

Analysing the monetisation of social media means looking at both the new dynamic of work on the platforms and the capitalist logics of their owners, forming a political economy of both new and traditional forms of capital accumulation. On the subject of capitalizing YouTube, several texts focused on the platform is to be found in The *YouTube Reader,* edited by Snickars and Vonderau (2009), which examines the platform "[…] [b]y directly confronting YouTube as an industry, an archive and a cultural form […]" (p.18). For this study, the section most used is *Industry*, which discusses the business model of YouTube, monetizing its users. For example, in their chapter, Wasko and Erickson (2009) investigates the political economy of YouTube, by looking into who has the power to make decisions about the media and studying how social media is organized and controlled within the larger political economy. Relating YouTube's history, the authors describe how the platform went from small, obscure, and user driven to a part of Google's expanding set of services, that commenced with the introduction of advertisements and, thereby the monetisation of user data. Wasko and Erickson (2009) discusses the history of payed YouTubers but still declares the

commodification of the user labour as the most worrisome aspect of the evolution of YouTube.

Andrejevic (2009) delves deeper into the concept of digital labour of YouTube users in his chapter "Exploiting YouTube: Contradictions of User-Generated Labour". Andrejevic (2009) examines the evolution and implications of personalised advertising. The business model, according to the author, will lead to following consequences:

> In the brave new world of cybernetic marketing, advertisers will also be able to correlate responses with increasingly detailed and complex patterns of taste and behaviour in order to optimize campaigns – that is to say, in order to increase the likelihood of influencing consumer behaviour and inducing demand. (Andrejevic, 2009, p. 415)

Andrejevic (2009) then continues to examine the users' role in the cybernetic marketing arrangement, using Lazzarato's (1996) term immaterial labour. The study finds, just like Fuchs (2014a; 2014b), that users of social media are exploited as they are given control over their productive activity, but is estranged from the value they create through their data. Andrejevic (2009) makes an excellent point in separating the user created *content* and the user generated *data*, bringing attention to the latter category's construction under the ownership of YouTube.

To summarise, this chapter has focused on elucidating how previous research consider YouTube as a type of socio-technical system. I have found the need for platform specific analysis, studying YouTube on its own conditions, in terms of affordances and through its own platform politics, user cultures and practices. This culture amongst users was then described in part two, highlighting the focus on production, creativity, and encouragement and appreciation in those processes. Finally, the previous research on the work and monetisation of YouTube showed how the affordances of the platform are shaped through corporate logic to produce monetary value.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Social Constructivism in Technology and the Concept of Affordances

To understand the relationship between user and platform, one must reflect upon the relationship between human and technology. In this chapter I will do that, mapping out the epistemological assumptions made about the human-technology relationship in this thesis and introduce the concept of affordances, which will be practically applied in the case study. According to Bijker, et.al. (1987), three meanings can be distinguished in the word technology. The first level is that of physical objects or artefacts, like a bicycle, a coffee maker or a computer program. On the second level, the term can refer to activities or processes, for example welding, melding or programming. The third level of technology is what people know, as well as what they do; the "know how" that makes it possible to design a bicycle or operate a game app on a mobile phone.

Social construction of technology is the notion that each of these levels are shaped, constructed and operated through the norms that form the human cognition. Since the 1980's, researchers within the field has made an effort to move away from the technological determinism that characterised earlier technology studies; from the idea that technique shapes and changes society, and of the inventor as the central explanatory concept of an object, towards an idea of a seamless web of technical, social, economic and political aspects of technological development (Bijker, et.al. 1987). This perception gives agency to technological artefacts (Hutchby, 2001a, 2001b). Winner (in Hutchby, 2001a) claims that technical arrangements should be seen as forms of social order that embodies a systematic social inequality, as they engineer the relationships among the inhabitants of a society, which through time becomes obvious and part of the landscape.

There are two different ways to study the social shaping of technology; either to focus on socio-technical networks, or on the interaction between the social and technical elements. The difference being that the first approach wholly denies that there is meaningful differentiation between social and the technical. The second approach instead embraces the division, but in contrast to technical determinism, argues that the social shapes the technical (Hutchby, 2001a). These strict constructivist stances have been criticised for their tendency of procuring a one-sided view of technological artefacts, limited to discourse. In this framework, the study of the relationship between humans and technology is rendered arbitrary. Kling, (cited in Hutchby, 2001a, p. 34), states that; "physical objects like guns and roses have capabilities which are not arbitrarily derived from the talk about them. It is much harder to kill a platoon of soldiers with a dozen roses than with well-placed high-speed bullets". In simpler terms, there are capabilities of artefacts, that interact with humans or other artefacts in a way that do not change with the discourse.

Considering these critiques, Hutchby (2001a, 2001b) instead suggests the concept of affordances to study human practical engagement with technologies. Originally developed by ecological psychologist James Gibson in 1979, the concept of affordances typically refers to the types of actions an agent can do on a particular material artefact.

For example, a tree branch offers protection to animals exposed to harsh sunshine, if they place themselves in its shade. Since Gibson's (1979) introduction, affordances have been used and adapted into multiple subjects, such as design studies, sociology, as well as media and communications studies (Bucher & Helmond, 2017).

Hutchby (in Bucher & Helmond, 2017), apprehends the concept of affordance in a two-fold manner: (a) a consideration of the ways in which technologies are socially constructed and situated; (b) a contemplation on how technologies are materially constrained and enabled. The latter approach disputes the more radical viewpoints of social constructivist readings. In this manner, affordances are functional and relational, functional in their enabling sense and relational in reference to how the affordances are perceived differently on an individual level. The previously mentioned tree branch can offer shade to one individual, food to another, and protection from predators to a third. A tree branch is a tree branch, it interacts with reality a certain way, but it can be used differently on an individual level, depending on need and opportunity.

In the case of social media studies, Bucher and Helmond (2017) defines affordances as "software-produced visual elements of an interface" (p. 234). They further explain that these elements suggest and prompt certain actions through the types of activities they purvey users (e.g. a like button, a comment section, sharing features, etc.). This study echoes these outlooks by investigating the actions of users in correlation to the visual interface of the YouTube platform.

These affordances are influenced by the ideological forces of the society they are constructed and maintained in. Stanfill (2015) argues that technologies are never neutral. Applied to web interfaces, this means that they are reflecting social logics and non-deterministically reinforcing them. Stanfill (2015) adopts Foucault's conception of productive power, also known as normalization or regulatory power, which concerns how power limits a subject's opportunity to act freely by making specific practices normative or "common sense". He writes: "A site's design makes a normative claim about its purpose and appropriate use that both demonstrates an understanding of users and builds a set of possibilities into the object" (Stanfill, 2015, p. 1060). However, as Stanfill (2015) notes, the affordances of a site are not an omnipotent system and can be perceived in a variety of ways by different people.

3.2. Understanding Digital Work and Labour Through Marx

In the English language, there is a semantic difference between work and labour, which is quite useful when talking about Marxist theory of work. This chapter will examine the two terms, their differences, how they relate to the production of value and what it means in reference to social media user activity.

When defining the term "labour", Marx writes; "[r]eal labour is purposeful activity aimed at the creation of a use value, at the appropriation of natural material in a manner which corresponds to particular needs" (Marx 1861-63, in Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 239). Meaning, it is a basic human engagement to create goods and ideas to satisfy basic human needs and wellbeing, existing in every society. Yet, since then, labour has come

to mean work under capitalist conditions, which stands in a class relationship with capital (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). The appropriation of natural material Marx speaks of, however, have come to mean work. Labour is external and forced, while not-labour or work, is integral to freedom and happiness, a basic human activity. Work produces self-realisation, knowledge, and social relations, essential to human existence. (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, Fuchs 2014a). Fuchs and Sevignani (2013), explains further that:

> Labour is a necessarily alienated form of work, in which humans do not control and own the means of production. It is a historic form of organisation of work in class societies. Work in contrast is a much more general concept common to all societies. It is a process in which humans in social relations make use of technologies in order to transform nature, culture and society in such a way that goods and services are created that satisfy human needs. (p. 240)

The product of work, according to Marx, is use-value. Use-value is simply the usefulness of a thing. Labour produces a value, which is the average labour time it takes to produce it. That, in turn, gives value a quantitative aspect: "[...] Labour which creates use-values and is qualitatively determined is called "work" as opposed to "labour"; labour which creates value and is only measured quantitatively is called "labour", as opposed to "work"" (Marx, 1867, in Fuchs & Sevignani, 2010, p.240).

In capitalist society, workers are compelled to work more hours and produce more value than to satisfy their immediate needs, this excess labour time is consistent with this excess value, also known as surplus-value (Fuchs, 2014a). In class society, labour is organised in a way that surplus value created by the working class is not owned by them, but instead by the dominant class, the capitalists, that exploits the surplus-value (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). In this process, the worker is also exploited as they work for free in the production of surplus-value (Fuchs, 2014a). Exploitation, therefore, in the industrial labour process occurs when the workers are forced to perform various type of labour that benefit other classes at the expense of the working class (Campbell, 2014). The surplus work produces an abundance of value, and of product. The excess product is then turned into commodity, and exchanged for a value recognized as equal, creating an exchange-value. To create exchange-value, use-value needs to be quantified to compare values of different commodities (Fuchs, 2014a).

In *Capital,* (in Fuchs 2014a), Marx (1867) describes the idea of work as threefold distinction between labour power, the object of labour and the instrument of labour, forming a Hegelian dialectical triangle. According to Hegel (1991, in Fuchs 2014a), concepts of reality are formed by the existence of a producing subject who is dependent on an objective environment, that constitutes the regulations, both possibilities and constraints, of human existence. In an interaction between subject and object, the subject can transform the objective environment in cultural, social, economic, political, or natural ways. The interaction forms an idea, a subject-object, and through it a new reality is created.

In the dialectical triangle of the labour process the subject is labour power. Labour power is the purposeful activity of human subjects; the labour capacity of the worker when they produce use-value of any kind. Labour power is then used on a labour object, the material of the labour process that is transformed. The instrument of labour is the thing, or complex of things, needed to perform the transformation of nature, for instance,

different technologies (Fuchs 2014a). The object and instrument of labour are together the *means* of production, the materials of the objective environment. The result of the labour process, the subject-object, is when labour power has been used to create a labour product: "[t]he process is extinguished in the product. The product of the process is a use-value, a piece of natural material adapted to human needs by means of change in its form" (Marx, 1867, in Fuchs, 2014a, p. 29).
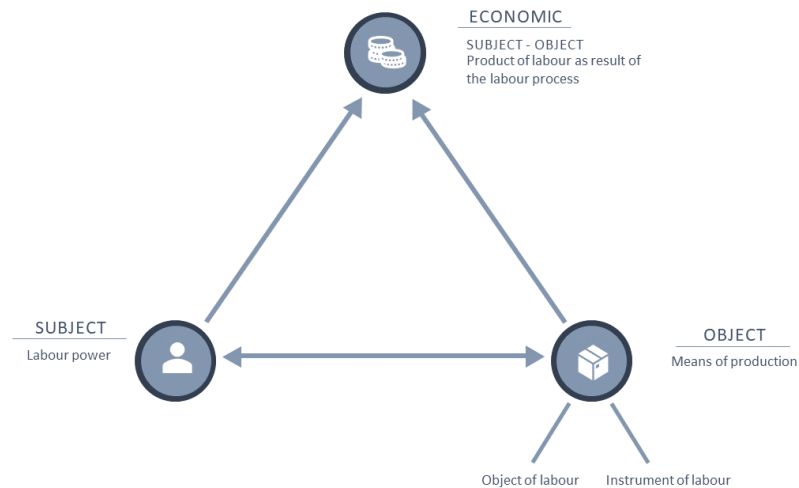

Figure 1: The dialectical triangle of the work process: (Fuchs, 2014b, p. 30)

Under the rule of capitalist forces, the worker is estranged from each of the elements of the work process. This estrangement is called alienation, meaning the worker does not control the labour process or their place in it, neither do they control the means of production since they do not own them, nor the product of the labour, considering they have no say in distribution or exchange value of the product, these are all controlled by the capitalists. Marx (1867) describes this as a threefold alienation process. In capitalist society, the workers role in the labour process is reduced to selling their labour power, their skills and knowledge, which is then exploited by the capitalists who owns the means and instruments of production and thereby control the labour product (Fuchs, 2014a).

In 1857-1858, Marx wrote in *Grundrisse's,* "Fragment on Machines," that capitalist society's technological progress would result in more "self-acting" machines (machines are *fixed capital*, the means of labour), and the role of the worker would be to supervise them. The escalation in productive force would lead to the increased importance of the fixed constant capital of machines, and parallelly, the importance of information work, consisting of technological and social knowledge, would become a force of production in itself (Fuchs, 2014a; Terranova, 2000, 2013). Marx believed that some of this knowledge would be stored inside the machines, and since knowledge was a result of collective production, therefore, the growing significance of information work would form a "general intellect", a networked intelligence (Terranova, 2013):

> The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production* and to what degree, hence, the condition of

> the process of social life itself have come under the control over the general intellect and have been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real life process (Marx, 1858, p. 706)

Inspired by the theories of *Grundrisse*, and the thought of the networked intelligence, Lazzarato (1996) introduced the term immaterial labour, by which he means "labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (p.133). This kind of work refers both the "informational content" of the commodity and the direct processes of creating it, like computer control, but it also "[...] involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work" - in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically public opinion" (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 133). Hardt and Negri (2004) define the term as labour "that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (cited in Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, 256). But, as Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) points out, since the processes of information work and traditional manual work are closely related, they can be controlled through the same tools of alienation in capitalist society.

> If there is a similar structure between work activities, such as transforming nature, thinking communication, and co-operation and if all these activities are related [...] and stem from the basal activity of transforming nature, then it become imaginable that also the activities of thinking (cognition), communication and co-operation produce societal surplus in any form and can be exploited like traditional work can be. (Fuchs and Sevignani, 2013, p.15)

Creating information can be perceived as a process of cognition, communication, and cooperation. Each of these can also be seen as a work process; cognition is the work of the human mind, communication is the work of groups, and the cooperative collective work is that of collective effort of groups (Fuchs and Sevignani, 2013). To distinguish and understand the different work processes, Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) uses an effective garden metaphor: Person A has an interest of reading garden books and builds up a great knowledge on how to create and maintain a good looking and well-kept garden. By reading even more and applying this knowledge to their garden, they perform cognitive work and a use-value in the sense that it keeps the garden neat and organised. Person A then meets Person B. Person B also has an interest in gardening, and a comparable knowledge to Person A, and they start exchanging ideas. This exchange forms an interpretation of the other's knowledge, which forms new meaning.

The result is a created use-value on both parts, as they understand something new about each other, through communicative work. Then, Person A and Person B, with all their shared knowledge, decide to write a book on gardening together. They bring their experiences together, discuss them, and inspire new ideas. The synergy of their experiences forms new meaning, as new methods emerge from their work. The representations of their joint experiences and co-created knowledge come together in the book and creates use-value, not just for the two of them, but others as well (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 253-254).

	Subject	Object of work	Instruments of work	Product of work
Cognition = human brain work	Human being	Experiences	Brain	Thoughts, cognitive patterns, ideas
Communication = human group work	Group of humans	Thoughts	Brain, mouth, ears	Meaning
Co-operation = collaborative group work	Group of humans	Meaning	Brain, mouth, ears, body	Information product with shared and co-created meaning

Table 1. The Processes of information work (reworked from Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p.252)

The threefold process of information work can also be reshaped as digital work in networks such as social media. By objectifying their subjective experiences and knowledge, users of social media create profiles and share personal information and experiences. Users also have the option of establishing contact with other users through affordances presented on the website, such as comment sections, walls, or an opportunity to send private messages. Still, it is only if this contact is acknowledged that it can be described in terms of communicative work. Just like in the garden metaphor, Person A and Person B has to *exchange* experiences or knowledge, as the product of communicative work is new meanings, that can only be established through social relationships. Members of online communities also perform co-operate work by maintaining such personal relationships that shape a feeling of belonging. The joint experience in communities create new meanings and create novel objects in the world through shared experiences (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013).

	Object of work	Instruments of work	Product, use value
Cognitive digital work	Human experiences	Human brains, hands, mouths, ears, speech, internet, platforms	Online information, profiles
Communicative digital work	Human experiences, online information	Human brains, hands, mouths, ears, speech, internet, platforms	New meanings established in social relationships
Cooperative digital work	Human experiences, online information, online social relations	Human brains, hands, mouths, ears, speech, internet, platforms	Artefacts, communities, social systems

Table 2: The information processes as digital work (re-worked from Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 255)

However, if the social media platform uses the monetisation models, described in chapter one, they help create a surplus-value that is withheld from the users. It is important to note that the users are alienated in the production of commodity, the data, not their own content creation. According to Fuchs and Sevignani (2013), users become alienated in the labour process of their social media use. The alienation of users' brains of commercial social media consists of attempts to diffuse ideologies that puts them in a bad light, highlighting arguments of participation culture, namely that all sharing of information betters the world, and the impression that social media is free, both economically and socially so.

Regarding the means of production, alienation of the instruments of labour in commercial social media platforms, is the absence of worker ownership and control, which, at its core, imbue class relationship. The users (i.e. content creators), are "poor" in decision power regarding the platforms (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). The object of labour is human experiences, like how "users give Facebook the right to use data that represent these experiences for accumulating capital" (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 259). The product of labour is the data produced by the users traffic on the site; it is the

commodity that is controlled by the platform. Interestingly enough though, these are not the actual product of the work done by the users. It is instead a by-product produced through surveillance of the social media platforms. The users do not produce user data as an actual use-value, but as a direct surplus-value (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). Andrejevic (2002) calls the surveillance of users of interactive media, "the work of being watched" and claims it as a form of exploitation of the user's self-disclosure, as it is activities that directly contribute to the accumulation of corporate capital. Social media is also the place of a passive kind of labour, Nixon (2016) and Fuchs (2014b) uses Smythe's term "audience labour" to describe the work of *consuming* commercialised culture. On social media sites, this becomes digital audience labour (Nixon, 2016).

Lastly, in consequence of the statements made in this section, I will use the term "digital work" when talking about the activities of YouTube users in chapter 5, describing the result of the empirical study and categorizing them. Subsequently, the analysis in chapter 6 and 7, which examines how these activities of work are turned into labour, they will thus be termed as such.

3.3. Perspectives on the Social Values of Digital Work on YouTube

As stated in the previous chapter, working creates use-value for the worker. Therefore work created through social situations, generate social use-values, or social values which are qualitative to the worker in question (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). These values are either created through the own mind, or in a group of people, resulting in new thoughts and ideas or meaning (Table 1). Here, I will present some perspectives on the social use-values produced through the work performed by users of social media.

The use-values are reflected in the building and maintaining of community. Just like non-digital communities, online communities evade a definite meaning (Rotman & Preece, 2010). Nonetheless, Rotman and Preece (2010) develops a working definition of online community as:

> […] *a group (or various subgroups) of people, brought together by a shared interest, using a virtual platform, to interact and create user-generated content that is accessible to all community members, while cultivating a communal culture and adhering to specific norms*". (p. 320, original formatting)

Community is created by participation, forming specific resources and repertoire, which in time forms customs, norms and cultures. Further participation in the customs, norms, and culture, strengthens the boundaries of community and group affiliation for the individual members (Rotman & Preece, 2010).

Gauntlett (2011) argues that communities of makers, either of digital or material artefacts, or both, increase connection and engagement with the social and physical reality of the maker. Moreover, he explains that both the process of making and the social connections formed from communities of makers, have positive effects on the individual maker, giving them psychological wellbeing and an undervalued aspect personal happiness. The supporters of Web 2.0 often emphasise the empowering aspects of social media. Social media platforms are often spaces of bottom-up engagement, that

which is interesting and is meaningful to the users gets circulated, and become viral, forming future expectations (Jenkins, et.al., 2013). Platforms such as YouTube, also benefit in the democratization of cultural production, helping amateurs find likeminded individuals with the same interests. It offers amateurs a space to publish their work, and the prospect of gaining new skills through peer-support (Chau, 2010).

According to Burgess and Green (2009), the valorisation of amateur and community media online, is closely related to the DIY culture and ideology. DIY, or the Do-It-Yourself culture, was formed in the 1960's and centres around the idea of personal production of material artefacts, cultural artefacts, and knowledge, as an empowering valorisation of the self (Gauntlett, 2011). Combining both DIY culture through crafting and amateur digital production, Gauntlett (2011) makes an empirical claim, presenting the answers he got when he asked his own crafting friends the reasons for sharing their projects online:

- So others can learn or be entertained
- A desire to share thoughts and creative endeavours
- To chronicle my existence
- To add to the information available on the Web
- To be an active participant in the discussion of things
- To be a media maker and not just a consumer
- Self-promotion/to show off
- To get feedback
- As a way to collaborate
- Contributing to and being part of community of peers and friends
- A sense of being heard (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 100-101)

These reasons, Gauntlett (2011) asserts, boils down to the need for *recognition* and the wish to be noticed for their skills and ideas, within a likeminded community. Jenkins, et.al. (2013) share similar theories. They claim that social media activities form the social values of attention and recognition, both of which are invaluable to the process of identity building[8]. In addition to these two concepts, Hayes, et.al. (2016) highlights the term social support: "Communicative in nature, social support is help, love, or care provided through interpersonal relationships and the interactions these relationships entail" (p. 2). On social media platforms, relational ties are formed by activities, including supportive behaviours, for example sharing or viewing. Alternatively, social bonds are formed by verbal cues, like comments or direct messages (Hayes, et.al., 2016). Chau (2010) clarifies that the participatory culture of social media, and the community it builds, are dependent on the feeling of belonging and a conception of influence. These concepts are, in turn, dependent on technical affordances that allow users to interact with each other and simulate the conception of influence.

The scholars that underlines the social values of social media recognises a power division between user and platform, but approaches the subjects from a less critical point of view, often highlighting the social values as a currency more important to the users than financial compensation (Jenkins, et.al., 2013). In critique of the free labour debate of social media users, Burgess and Green (2009) states that "[…] the more literal

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[8] The need for recognition can quite easy be connected to the term *social capital,* discussed by influential thinkers such as Bourdieu and Putnam (Gauntlett, 2011).

versions of labour-based critiques […]" (p. 62) may not be efficient in understanding the economic transitions of user participation and their production. Fuchs (2014b), on the other hand, says participatory perspectives forget to see beyond the community building aspects of social media. He explains: "Jenkins' definition of the term "participatory culture" ignores aspects of participatory democracy; it ignores questions about the ownership of platforms/companies, collective decision-making, profit, class, and the distribution of material benefits" (Fuchs, 2014b, p. 55).

4. Methodology

4.1. Material selection and Analytical Procedure

The research material of the empirical case study consists of three YouTube channels, that focus on different types of crafting; one channel is dedicated to origami, one to knitting, and the last one to woodturning. Crafting videos serve an interesting contradiction between traditional work and digital work. As Gauntlett (2011) states, crafting has a long history of creating community within marginalized groups of the society, especially amongst women and the lower economic classes. Furthermore, crafting videos demand the double effort of producing the video as well as producing the object the video is centred around, making it an interesting subject in study of work and value, although the content of the videos is not the object of focus in this study.

All three channels are dedicated to tutorials, or so-called 'how-to' videos. This characteristic imbues each channel with a pedagogic structure; a point of interest which echoes some aspects of designated theoretical framework of this study. The channels have between 10 000 and 20 000 subscribers, which make them qualified for YPP, YouTube's Partnership Program. The videos have one advertisement in the video, either a video message or a banner. I have watched 20 videos and their interfaces from each of the channels, 60 in total, starting with the oldest videos and then continued forward chronologically. As the comment section has been examined as a space of performed work, I have also read and analysed the comments of the videos in the study, 4401 of them in total. The material was collected between the end of February to April 2018, via a browser set on incognito mode, that is, a browser adjusted not save or track any web history or cookies. This also entails looking through the comments without being logged in to an account. Both preconditions were undertaken to provide a more objective analysis, devoid of my personal and private YouTube history.

To choose the channels for the empirical study, I first set a few criteria for selection. To not complicate the analysis of economic value, the channels would need to be curated by a single individual, not a corporate organisation, and they would have to be amateurs with other full-time occupations. For the same reason, I also decided on using channels with commercials, but not external sponsors that supports the video maker personally, as to be certain that no other economic motivation to publish their videos occurred, except for the YouTube Partnership Program. As was previously discussed in section 1.1., Background, the line between amateur and professional content is often unclear on YouTube. I have therefore, based my definition of the video makers as amateurs on their own statements in videos, and on the facts that nothing is for sale on the personal blogs referred to by two of the video makers. The channels were practically found by typing in the YouTube search field, using the search-phrase "how to", and then the kind of crafting (e.g. "how to knit"), setting the result page to show channels instead of individual videos, and then choosing the first one which fit the criteria determined for the objects of the study

To observe the activities that constitutes the digital work of YouTube users, I will use the concept of affordances. As was defined in section 3.1., affordances refer to, the activities which are allowed in human-material relations. In the context of social media, affordances are represented as visual elements on the interface (Helmond & Bucher, 2017). The study is qualitative, but with quantitative aspects to account for the frequency of use for some of the affordances, (e.g. example, views, thumbs up, comments and comment threads). It is also a passive study, meaning I, in the role of researcher or in private, have not had any interaction with the subjects of the study (Eysenbach & Till, 2013).

Since "[a]ffordances can best be observed in the course of agential actions" (Bucher & Helmond, 2017, p. 239), I surveyed the results of the empirical study in a table that account for the affordances in the user interface, and the extent to which they are used. Some of these are the same in every video, like the uploading of the video and the existence of the subscribe button that you are encouraged to click (see Figure 2). Other activities are also present in every video's interface, but has a different content, like the comment section or the amount of views. Lastly, the frequency of some affordances cannot be observed on the site. For example, there is the opportunity to share or link the video to an application outside of YouTube, to other social media or email. After the material was collected, each of the activities was analysed in relation to the characteristics of cognitive, communicative, and co-operate work. Looking at the object, instruments and product of work of the work types, demonstrated in Table 2, the reasons and results of the work performed by both video makers and viewers was examined and categorised.
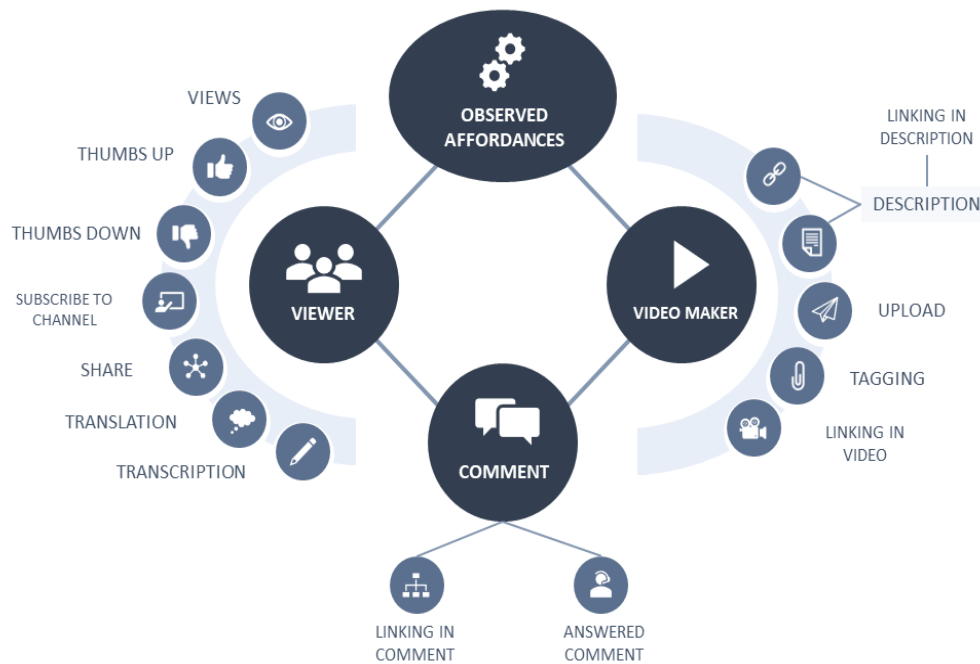

Figure 2: Observed affordances of the YouTube user interface

4.2. Ethical Considerations

Studying YouTube as an object of academic research is a challenge, as the platform's content is never stagnant (Burgess & Green, 2009). This proves to be problematic in the context of big, quantitative studies, but it also poses a problem when it comes to preserving research results in smaller, and/or qualitative studies (Liikanen & Salovaara, 2015). Continuity is a big issue in the study of YouTube. The creator of videos can choose to take down a video at any time, the YouTube administrators can do so if the video is reported by users and disregard any of YouTube's community guidelines, including, but not limited to content of: violence, threats, nudity, spam, or the faulty use of copyrighted material[9]. Commenters can also choose to delete their comments, or entire profiles, which proves to be another challenge for this type of study, as YouTube offers no way of knowing how a comment section has changed before the material was chosen for the study.

While taking these problems into consideration, there also several dilemmas in relation to the research subjects' online privacy. As Eysenbach and Till (2013) states; "[w]hile the internet makes people's interactions uniquely accessible for researchers and erases boundaries of time and distance, such research raises new issues in research ethics, particularly considering informed consent and privacy of research subjects [...]" (p. 105). To meet these new challenges, the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) has developed a series of recommendations for ethical decision-making in internet research[10] (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Studying online activities performed by individuals, even public ones, requires considerations of the consent of the subjects in question (Markham & Buchanan, 2012; Zimmer, 2013). I have not tried to get agreed consent from the YouTube users in the study, a decision motivated by two major causes: Firstly, the material is already made public on one of the biggest websites in the world, and is accessible to all with an internet connection, not in a closed forum. The size and perceived privacy of the forum is often a big rationale in research subjects' willingness to be a part of academic production, the smaller and more closed, the smaller is the willingness to participate (Eysenbach & Till, 2013). According to AoIR, "the greater the vulnerability of the community […] the greater the obligation of the researcher to protect the community" (AoIR, 2012, p. 4), and in this study I consider the vulnerability of the community as little. Secondly, no personal information is a part of the study. No sensitive information, like names, ages, races, sexual orientation or even geographical addresses, are examined or in any way noted in the study. Accordingly, the activities observed are merely the ones users have chosen to publicise themselves, often under aliases.

Still, the privacy of the YouTube users must be respected. Therefore, I have chosen to anonymise them, both video makers and commentators. Given the reasons stated above, I feel it is not unethical to quote the users, but since they have not given personal consent to be a part of the study, it would be an intrusion of their online privacy to use their names or user names, especially if they choose to remove the content they have provided.

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[9] YouTube, Community Guidelines https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/72851?hl=sv [20180514]

[10] These guidelines, along with other works on internet research can be found at http://aoir.org/ [20180520]

Hence, I will not disclose any identities or names linked to the channels. However, the anonymity of the users challenges the intersubjectivity and strength of the study, which is why I have made the effort of preserving the results of the data collection through continued note taking in the table discussed above. I have also taken screen shots of the interfaces of the videos, including the comment section. Again, to protect the personal integrity of the users, this data will not be made public but can be reached through personal request to the author.[11]

4.3. Limits of the Study

There is a lack of historical perspective in the study, as I do not know how cognitive work activities such as views, thumbs up and thumbs down, has evolved since the video's posting and how the communicative work through the comment section has changed, which might give a false perception of the material. I have tried to recognize this problem by underlining that the study is based on the interfaces in the time of the material selection. A project with more time and resources might have been able to see a historical perspective by using applications such as Wayback Machine[12], however it is beyond the capacity of my case study.

YouTube's lack of transparency leads to a rather poignant question in relation to many social media studies: How much can you really know about the inner workings of the corporate platform? One can read the material made public by the platform, and study the interface and its affordances, but as van Dijck (2014) notes: "Algorithmic logic only partly reveals itself in interfaces and other front-end technologies, but 90% of the iceberg is hidden under water, invisible to users" (p. 1449). The site code of YouTube is kept secret, and information on viewer characteristics are only made available to corporations (Miller, 2009). There are problematic aspects to how little insight users have into social media, but the same transparency problems also become acutely prominent in relation to academic research.

Transparency issues could to some degree be lessened by a changed focus of the study, more towards the users' experiences. Interviews could offer a deepened review and analysis of the users' own understanding of their work and value it creates. However, I deem a changed focus would take away from the purpose of the study, which concentrates on the YouTube *platform* as the object of research. Finally, one of the limits of the study is the restricted scope of the case study. Three channels and 60 videos in different crafting activities makes it possible to compare patterns and occurrences between the channels, but one should not generalise the forms and frequencies of digital work found here, but rather see it as a small piece, in a bigger academic puzzle, forming the discourse of users' work in social media studies.

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[11] Requests can be left via email; elna.zenia@gmail.com
[12] The Wayback Machine, http://archive.org/web/ [20180521] is dedicated to building a library of digital artefacts for future use, established by non-profit organisation the Internet Archive.

5. The Work of YouTube Users

In this chapter, the first research question will be examined and answered, as the activities registered in the case study will be presented and categorized as digital work. Quotes from the comments are written as they were on YouTube, without changing punctuation and grammar, and are referred to as they are organized in the documented material. As the AoIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2012) points out, an online avatar is not always equivalent to a human person, still, I have chosen to treat them as individuals with human cognition.

5.1. Cognitive Work

Cognitive work is the process of objectifying personal experiences into online information. In creating a channel, YouTube video makers share information about themselves and their knowledge and skills, grounded in their experiences in life and society. Chau (2010) explains the YouTube users "[…] gain skills and explore their identity as they navigate the community and participate in its activities" (p. 68). The first activity, which the others rely upon, is of course the uploading of the video. In the process of uploading the video, makers use affordances that help categorize knowledge and experience, mostly by tagging and adding a description of the video. YouTube video makers can choose which search words are tagged to the video, but also sort them under a broader category decided by the YouTube platform. Each of the channels of empirical study tag their videos in the category *How-To & Style*[13]

All the videos, from all three channels, have a similar disposition. It starts with a presentation of the video maker. Next, there is a presentation of the crafting project of the video, a look at, and short discussion of the materials used. Up to this point, the picture has showed the video maker's face as they address the viewers, but in the next step the angle changes to focus on the hands of the video maker. They then show, in great detail, how the crafting project is constructed, including a voice over which pedagogically describes and explains the actions step by step. The video ends with a showing of the finished product, ending comments, a thank you for watching and, lastly, an urging to subscribe and/or click a thumbs-up.

If uploading the video is the most basic sort of work, the most common is watching videos, as there are more views than actual videos. Regarding popularity, the channel with the highest total amount of views is the knitting channel. The most popular individual video, however, belongs to the origami channel with almost 1,5 million views, showing the folding of a rather complicated paper plane. The woodturning channel has most the consistent amount of views, closest to the number of subscribers. For the video makers, the growing number of subscribers to their channels ensures viewings (Postigo, 2016), which gives them bigger personal revenue in the YPP, but also ensures an engaged viewer base with personal interest in the video content.

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[13] For a more extensive look at the tags of YouTube and the popularity of them, see Liikanen & Salovaara (2015) and Jenkins et.al. (2013)

As seen in Lindgren's (2012) model below, cognitive work are activities linked to lower grade of participation. Lindgren (2012) states that simply viewing a video is an act of participatory culture, although low on the participatory scale. Liking and disliking (thumbs-up and down) are not featured in the model. However, I would like to argue that the abovementioned activities should be placed in between viewing the video and leaving a comment, since the action requires viewing video, but clicking a button is less work than phrasing a written comment.

Hayes, et.al (2016) recognises low-grade participation activities as supportive behaviours and therefore a form of meaningful social support. Chau (2010) concurs, stating these sorts of activities are important to the participation culture on YouTube, as they signify engagement to users in the periphery, giving them a sense of belonging because their low-intensity activities matter on the platform. Chau (2010) posits an accurate claim, given that it is the cognitive work of users that help videos get viral. Quantifiable affordances, such as views, thumbs-up, and shares, are favoured by YouTube's algorithms, they reach higher on the result pages, and get more hits and more views. Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) call this phenomenon "the social web" or "like economy", integral to the communal workings and rhetoric of Web 2.0. So, while it is the video makers that categorize the videos by tagging, it is the viewers that organize them, through their cognitive work.
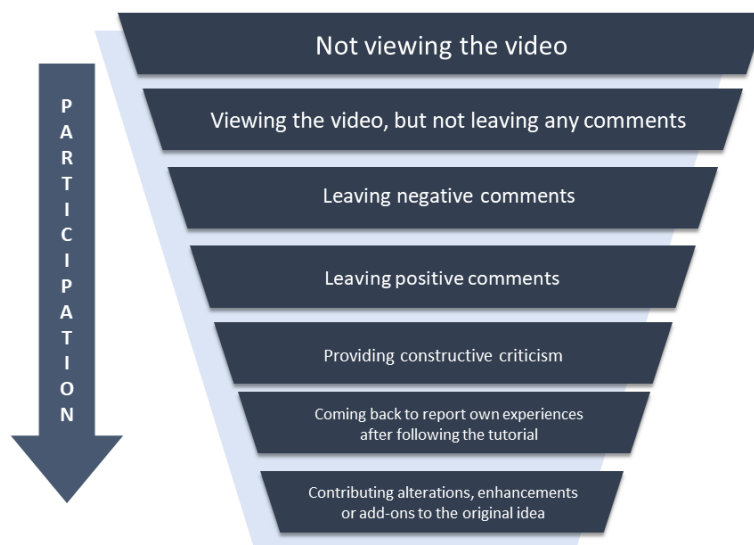

Figure 3: Ideal Levels of Participation of YouTube Viewers (Lindgren, 2012, p. 167)

The activity of leaving a comment is also cognitive work, with a higher participation grade. The majority of the comments on the videos are positive, in the cases of the origami and woodturning channels the comments are often call-out to the video maker's skill of craft. In the knitting channel's case, her style of tutorial. The woodturner has problems with a medical condition that affects his hands, and a lot of comments are get-well wishes and encouragements. The origami channel has the most negative comments and nonsense spam comments, at least visible at the time of the study, other comments might have been reported for rule breaking and removed by the YouTube administration.

As the origami channel has most changing views and fewer comments per video than the other two channels, this could indicate a less formed community interested in origami. The wood turner receives the least negative comments, in the 20 videos and 1220 comments, only three can be considered negative. These are all complaining on the quality of the audio and difficulty hearing the narration over the sound of the power tools. Although, one of the three commenters, adds the constructive suggestion of adding a separate narration track in the editing of the video (channel 3, video 11). To summarise the data from all three channels, the cognitive work of YouTube users, produce online information. In correlation to the algorithmic system of YouTube, this online information organises the platform.

5.2. Communicative Work

Communicative work is work that creates new meaning through human interaction. The affordance associated with interaction on the YouTube user interface is the comment section, therefore it is the object of examination in this section of the chapter. The comment section is the only affordance that allows for equal participation for all users on the YouTube interface. The other affordances are either directed towards video makers or users, not both (see Figure 2). Social platforms such as YouTube are "[…] marked by high levels of engagement in the creations of others, of strong peer support and of the passing along of knowledge from the experienced to the newcomers" (Lindgren, 2012, p.153). Along similar lines, Hayes, et.al. (2016) state that comments are a form of verbal cue of social support.

As established in section 3.2, using Fuchs and Sevignani's (2013) definitions, only leaving a comment on a video is not deemed communicative work, as it does not give relationships any new meaning until it is answered by another YouTube user, either from the video-maker or another viewer. Communicative work "[...] means the mutual symbolic interchange of subjective knowledge that results in meaning-making that is internalized" (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 254). Consequently, even if the comments only thank the video maker for teaching viewers something new, or helping them understand something, it is meaning-making in some sense, as video makers internalize the knowledge of craft skill, pedagogy and video making, but the comment must be recognized by the video maker or another user to constitute communicative work and not cognitive. One could argue that interacting with a video through simply viewing it constitutes communication, however, Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) accentuates the need for the communication to be *mutual,* an interchange recognized by both parties.

In the study of the three channels' comment sections, I have found three different themes in the interactions between video maker and commenters, and between commenters, which does not match entirely with Lindgren's (2012) model. Each of these themes have been given their own heading; offering support and encouragement, exchanging experience and knowledge and offering and accepting critique, under each heading I have picked a few exchanges which illustrate the way YouTube users interact.

5.2.1. Offering Support and Encouragement

Peer support is an important factor in the formation of a community, resulting in attention and recognition. Gaining credit for your work is essential to finding purpose and satisfaction in sharing projects and videos (Gauntlett, 2011). In the material of the study, offering support and encouragement to the video maker is the most common type of comment. The comments aimed at the video maker are often appreciative, complimenting their crafting skill and tutorial style. These are often answered by the video maker, giving the commenter attention in return, and thanking for the support:

> Commenter (C): You're the best origami teacher I have ever seen. You are so cool!
> Video maker (VM): Thanks for your support I appreciate it! (channel 1, video 14)
>
> C: I gave you a thumbs up I really enjoyed it :)
> VM: thank you! that means a lot to me :D (channel 2, video 5)
>
> C: 1000 points from Germany.
>   Really great.
> VM: Thanks [commenter name] (channel 3, video 4)

Encouraging messages are also reciprocated, where the video maker offers support to the commenters. These commenters have often found the tutorial to be difficult or are having trouble with some steps in the crafting process. The video maker then often tries to offer support in a form of a constructive advice or help.

> C: at the min 15.00 i gave up it was to hard
> VM: I made a post on my Google+ page that shows the diagram in a more clear way, that may help you. (channel 1, video 7)
>
> C: This went WAY too fast for me. I paused it multiple times but I couldn't get it..
> VM: Practice makes perfect, don't give up! :) You can get it!
> Also, YouTube gives you the option to change the speed of the video by changing the settings (the gear icon at the bottom right of the video). Hope this helps! (channel 2, video 13)

5.2.2. Exchanging Experiences and Knowledge

Crafting are activities attributable to skill and practice, which makes exchanging experience and knowledge a substantial contribution to the unexperienced members of crafting communities. Also, according to Lindgren (2012), the passing along of knowledge to newcomers, is an essential part of the cultural practices, intrinsic to YouTube tutorials. Several ways of knowledge exchange can be seen in the comment sections of the three channels, and the exchange of experience and knowledge in the material of this study is performed on several levels.

One way of exchanging experiences is answering questions applied to certain tutorials. These exchanges are, logically, often between a video maker and a commenter, for example:

> C: Does it fly?
> VM: Yes, but this is a very picky plane since it is so compact, if it is perfectly symmetrical and well-trimmed, it can fly very well
> (channel 1, video 7)
>
> C: This IS great! But can it work with any number of stitches?
> VM: Yes! This can work with any number of stitches :)
> (channel 2, video 7)
>
> C: What did you spray on the glue?
> VM: hi I sprayed water to stop the wood from drying out and cracking (channel 3, video 3)

The video makers also answer questions, often about the materials used in the video, but also help figure out practical crafting problems. This is most common in the comment section of the knitting channel, as the videos are directed towards beginners. As an example, in the comments of a video showing a certain kind of stitch, a viewer writes the following:

> C: I find myself gaining a ton of extra rows when I'm beginning. I casted on 29, but I was in the upper 30's by the time I was starting my row 3. I don't know where I'm going wrong and I've restarted the scarf so many times, but I love your scarf and really want to get it right! I am using size 9 needles. I've made a lot of scarves, but only with the regular knit stitch, so this is my first scarf I've attempted to make with any sort of pattern. Do you have any ideas where I'm going wrong? Thanks so much!
> VM: hm, it's hard to say what could be causing these extra stitches without seeing how you're knitting. But one thing I would double check on is: make sure when you do the K1B (knit 1 below) you slip the stitch above off the needle at the same time. Hope this helps and solve the problem!
> C: Thanks for the help! I was moving the yarn back around the needle between P1 and K1b stitches instead of between the two. Your comment helped me figure that out. Already made a lot of progress and happy to say it's looking perfect!
> VM: ah, a very common and understandable mistake. I am glad you figured it out! :) happy knitting! (channel 2, video 11)

Except for communicative work between video maker and viewer, the comment sections also become a place for learning for other YouTube users. Below are two examples where other commenters have used their own knowledge and experiences to help makers on some crafting issues. In the second conversation, the video maker is not involved at all, showing communicative work between only commenters, meaning at least part of the viewers not only watch the videos, but review the comments of others as well, strengthening the community.

> Commenter 1 (C1): Thanks [VM] that looks great, I love the homemade beading tool. I'll have a go at making one of those from an old drill bit. Love your work mate.
> Commenter 2: awesome work [VM]
> VM: thanks [C2]
> VM: I saw the beading tool at a demonstration a few years ago its a handy little to have

> C1: After thinking about it I have an old Chinese wood chisel just the thing to make an experimental beading tool
> C2: That's a great idea. Don't be fooled because its Chinese. Their metallurgy is the best, because they have plenty of tungsten in China. They have so much of it, that in the old days their machinery body had it too :) just make sure not to overheat it.. you can use water (not salty) to cool it fast or wd40 (but this may catch fire.. do it outside with lots of caution!)
> C1: Thanks mate that's good info (channel 3, video 13)

The second example illustrates knowledge sharing in an interaction between two commenters without any involvement from the video maker, showing further peer support:

> C1: No matter what video I watch, my knit stich and purl stitch still looks the same LOL There's no ribs, no dips. So my cables doesn't stand out at all and so my cables doesn't look like cables. At all. It looks more like an advanced and improved mess HAHA
> C2: It sounds like you might be forgetting to move your working yarn in the back of your work for the knit stitches and to the front for your purl stitches. I did it so many times and it was so frustrating. It's just a matter of remembering and keeping track of which stitch you are working. Hope that helps.
> (channel 2, video 17)

The help from both video makers and other commenters show what Chau (2010) describes as *informal mentorship*. The knowledge transfer between users is unregulated and shaped in the relation between YouTube users, creating an informal learning situation. The informal mentorship also encompasses the attitudes of the DIY-culture and traditional crafting communities, neglecting expert knowledge and instead learning through a network of peers (Gauntlett, 2011).

5.2.3. Offering and Accepting Constructive Criticism

The last category is centred around possible ways to advance the crafting, technical, or pedagogical skill of the video-maker in the form of constructive criticisms. Most of the negative comments are not constructive, simply stating things like "SO HARD I'M DISLIKING" or "unhelpful :(". However, some users verbalize their critique in more pragmatic ways, suggesting ways to better the experience of the viewers. According to Lindgren (2012), this is the highest form of participation allowed in the commentary section.

> C: Awesome! I'm saving this for when I get my hands on some paper. Please shoot your tutorials with contrasting backgrounds! Grey on grey is a little hard to follow for those of us who have slow connections and hence low-res, choppy video. Thank you for making these!
> VM: Thank you so much for mentioning this, I will absolutely pay more attention to the color contrast in the future! You are welcome. :)
> (channel 1, video 14)

> C: You knit in a way that WASTES a lot of time. Pulling the string over, there is more efficient ways to knit, but I like your scarf.

> VM: Yep, there are definingly more efficient ways to knit but this is just what works best for me :P I have double jointed fingers which might contribute to why I knit differently >_< (channel 2, video 11)

As we have discussed in the section on cognitive work, the woodturner has only one commenter who offers constructive suggestions. His comment was not answered by the video maker, and none of the ensuing videos use a voice-over, or a narrative track. Yet, it is evident that the other two video makers consider the commenters' views and suggestions. Several of the videos that have gotten complaints has been filmed again with better quality, different angles, or bigger focus on steps that have confused commenters. Several of the videos have also been filmed after themes or projects that have been requested by viewers. Moreover, in the following videos, after the comment on the first channel, the origami paper is indeed a contrasting colour from the background. In these cases, amateur video makers give audiences the ability to affect the evolution of their respective channels, underscoring the commenter as a significant participator.

5.2.4. Summary

As Burgess and Green (2009) states, YouTube is not mainly designed for communication and interaction between users, but the comment sections of the videos featured in this study still shows different kinds of communicative work, creating meaning from support, problem solving, and criticism. Cognitive work creates new information in social media, and communicative work creates social bonds and ties, using the information to create meaning in the interpersonal contact between users through affordances that inspire mutual involvement. In accordance with the previous research on the comment sections on how-to videos, the comments are centred around encouragement and creativity. Lindgren (2012) reaches the conclusion that the platform does not invite to long-term personal engagement, but in several cases the users challenge this notion by continuously commenting and supporting a channel and the video maker associated with it.

5.3. Cooperative Work

The last and most complex category is that of co-operate work, the communal work of groups, explained by Fuchs and Sevignani (2013):

> Co-operative digital work organises human experiences that are given in the form of human thought, online information or joint meanings and existing social systems with the help of online media, human brains, mouths, speech, ears and hands in such a way that new artefacts, communities or social systems are created. A social system is a routinized social relationship that involves behaviour that follows certain rules and exists over a longer time period (p. 255).

YouTube have had big problems with the publishing and illegal spreading of copyrighted material, and every user holds copyright of their own work (Wasko & Erickson, 2009). The platform offers little alternatives to change, remix, or add to already existing videos. Since there are restricted opportunities within the YouTube affordances to co-create videos, there are limited ways to produce new objects as acts of co-operate work. The latest affordance addition to the YouTube user interface is the possibility to transcribe and subtitle the videos. This offers possibilities to bring further understanding and enjoyment of videos across language barriers and to disabled viewers, for instance, people with hearing issues. Neither of the videos in this study has user generated transcriptions or subtitles. These new affordances are positive in the participatory sense, as they extend inclusion, and makes community building easier and more diverse. Since the person who transcribes/translates, adds their own version to the content of the video, they change its meaning, creating a novel object and a co-operate product of work. But, let us not forget that more sharing also gives YouTube new groups and audiences, which means more workers and more surplus-value, so it may not be as altruistic as it seems. To once again quote Postigo (2016), the "dual role" of the affordances to serve as both social rewards and economic revenue is key.

According to Fuchs (2014b) there is no co-operate work on YouTube. In his defence, the subtitling and translation affordances was introduced after the book in which he makes this assessment was published in 2014. Nonetheless, I would like claim that the process of maintaining a digital community, in itself, could also be considered as co-operative work. YouTube as platform is far too big to be considered one community of users, and as Wasko and Erickson (2009) state, online audiences are often fragmented. But, assuming Rotman and Preece's (2010) definition of online community, the members of community are […] brought together by shared interest, *using* a virtual platform […] (p. 320, authors' formatting). The communities of YouTube are smaller, existing parallelly on the platform depending on interest, and interacting with the affordances in certain ways.

Regarding the emotional bonds between YouTube users, Lindgren (2012) writes: "While there may not be evidence in the data for the existence of community in terms of close-knit personal ties among participants, there are certainly indications that this is a virtual space adhering to specific social rules and customs" (p. 164). This study focuses on *channels*, while Lindgren's (2012) study examines individual videos. The different focus and material selection means an alternative approach to continuity, and even if it is hard to categorize "close-knit personal ties", this case study has found several comments that indicate a long-time involvement and interaction between viewer and video maker. For example, recurrent commenters and comments like "I was your 7 subscriber" (channel 1, video 11). A subscription to an amateur crafting channel also implies a continued interest and forming of a lasting relationship.

Further, in a noteworthy series of events, the woodturner presents a tutorial on how to make a box (channel 3, video 8), and declares that the wood used in the video, a piece of olive tree, was sent by one of his viewers in California. The video maker then thanks him. In the comment section of a later video interface (video 10) this exchange can be read:

C: Very nice job [VM Name]. It's been so cold here in crack town that I cant work
in my garage right now. But I hope to get back to turning soon. Were you able to use
that olive wood I sent you or did it get all cracked up.
[C name]
VM: Hi [C name] i made a video at christmas and used it.
have look here
[link to video 8]
have a cracking new year take care [VM name] (channel 3, video 10)

The exchange shows several things regarding both work and YouTube community. First, it constitutes co-operate work, in the sense that the commenter uses his knowledge and work skill in transforming a tree into a piece of wood, which is then transformed further by the Video Maker as he transforms the wood into a box. The video encompassing this entire process establishes the artefact as digital work. The concept of digital work I am referring here echoes Fuchs (2014b) definition of all work that produces digital artefacts. Their joint work produces new objects in a shared process of work, which others can enjoy on the YouTube platform. Second, the exchange shows that these two individuals have little or no contact outside of YouTube, making the platform the hub of their social relationship.

The theory that YouTube communities is formed through a broader crafting interest, not restricted to YouTube is supported by evidence in the comments. These show that the communities go beyond the YouTube platform. One commenter on the knitting channel have shared one of the videos in a Facebook group dedicated to crafting, and a commenter of the wood turning channel report that they shared a video on their personal site. Jawed Karim (in Burgess & Green, 2009) points out that the opportunity to share outside of the site and ability to insert videos into other social media interfaces, such as Facebook, has been one of the biggest reasons for YouTube's success, (Burgess & Green, 2009). The video makers also give credit to several other video makers on the platform by linking to their videos via either the comment's section or in the description of the video. The woodturner also recommends the channel of a younger woodturner (channel 3, video 19), praising his skill and emphasising the necessity of supporting newcomers and younger crafters in the community.

The results of my study of smaller channels with more defined interests than Lindgren's (2012), indicate that the users have the kind of relationships that constitutes the concept of community foregrounded by Rotman and Preece (2010). Just like Lindgren's (2012) study, the users develop specific norms and practices surrounding their crafting and develop a supportive social environment. This is more apparent in relation to the knitting and woodturning channel, who seems to have a more distinct sense of community than the origami channel. As previously mentioned, the origami channel receives the least comments per video, but also the highest share of negative comments, as well as the most changing view count. In contrast, the woodturning channel has a more personal style of interaction, using first names and referring to other woodturning channels, addressing other channel owners in a similar fashion. In the comment section of the woodturner's channel, viewers support the video maker, appreciating and complementing his craftsmanship and skill, as well as expressing their well-wishes with regards to his health condition.

The community of the knitting channel is very much centred around the craft, the comments are less personal but are still very affectionate and praising. Because the

channel is aimed towards beginners, support and encouragement are significant elements of the community, and the channel has the highest frequency of answered comments by the video maker. This indicates a higher degree of informal mentorship, as the users discuss their own experiences and projects, and have a quite advanced conversations regarding tools and materials. These small differences in interaction and use of the channel, imply that there are norms and customs specific to the channels and crafting communities of YouTube. Hence, I would claim the communities formed also qualify as Fuchs' and Sevignanis' (2013) definition of a social system. Consequently, YouTube may not be a community, but there are smaller communities that use the YouTube platform to perform co-operate work by maintaining their communities.

The work produced by the communities results in digital artefacts on the YouTube interface, a historic recollection of their activities through stored data in the form of videos and interaction with these videos through view counts, likes, comments, etcetera. Lazzarato (1996) would call the work of social media users *immaterial,* it is an information product produced through cognitive, social knowledge. According to Lazzarato (1996), immaterial work in late capitalist society has two different aspects:, 1) the informational content and 2) the cultural content. The creation of cultural content is not considered work in an industrial sense but is "defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards" (p. 133). In *Grundrisse*, Marx (1858) states that the worker in an automatic system of machinery would be […] subsumed under the total process of machinery itself, as itself only a link in the system, whose unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual insignificant doings as a mighty organism" (p. 693). Digital work is automatised within a system of machinery, the internet. Marx (1858) also thought the automatisation of the work force would make social knowledge a direct force of production, forming the general intellect. The production of the social knowledge within the machine decides "[t]o what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also the immediate organs of social practice, of real life processes" (Marx, 1858, p. 706). The shared social knowledge and practices stored in the machines, is the work of community, a historic account of the co-operate work of the general intellect, which then continues the formation of meaning for new YouTube users.

Immaterial information products, like the digital artefacts produced in social media work, are unique in several ways, it can be shared without diminishing, consumed without disappearing, and it has the ability to reflect history of social interactions and knowledge sharing (Fuchs, 2014). The information products of the YouTube interface are negotiated by the affordances of the platform and the abilities of the information product creates "[…] behaviour that follow certain rules and exists over a longer time period" (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 255). The work in form of users social practice are not only objectified in the product but is stored in the machine. The social practices of the tutorial channels result in discourse within the crafting communities, showing support, techniques, and discussing materials. As Marx described automatised work, it is not produced by single individuals, but unity of work. According to Virno (2007) a general intellectuality cannot be reduced into fixed capital, it is "the faculty of thought, rather than the works produced by thought" (p. 6). I would argue that it is not, instead, what is stored in the fixed capital of the machine is the objectification of experiences, digital artefacts, the interpretation of these experience forms the general intellect.

6. The Social and Economic Value Creation of YouTube Users' Work

In the preceding chapter, the work of the YouTube users was explored, finding that both viewers and video makers perform several activities of work in each of the categories of cognitive, communicative, and co-operate work. It is apparent from the use of affordances, especially the comment sections of the studied materials, that participants gain social values from their work. The crafting communities of YouTube are filled with supporting, interested people, who find happiness and satisfaction in discussing their interests and learning something new. The work and attention performed by YouTube users is freely given, and even if it does not generate the majority of them any monetary gain, they still create social values e.g. use-value. However, the digital work of the social media users, becomes free and/or estranged labour in the commodification of their data, creating surplus value. This process, its relation to the created social use values, and its implications, will be explored in this chapter.

The essential survival of capitalism is based on accumulating increasing capital. This can be done in two ways: 1) by prolonging the working day, creating an absolute surplus value; or 2) increasing the productivity of labour, producing a relative surplus value (Fuchs, 2014b). According to Jhally (1987), "reorganizing the watching audience in terms of demographics" (Fuchs 2014b, p. 105) is creating a relative surplus value. Jhally's (1987) research was focused on TV, but advertising on social media could be described in a similar way, although the efficiency of advertising is increased when it is personalized, making the relative surplus value bigger.

The idea of making profit on YouTube is built upon the notion of manipulating the capacity for surveillance found in interactive media (Andrejevic, 2011). Andrejevic (2011) offers a historic perspective for the reasoning behind the mining of user data, tracing it back to a liberal, Lockean legacy. Using the same logic as traditional mineral mining, as the commercial entities do the work of building applications for capturing, mining, and analysing data, they can claim control over it, as a product. Contrary to traditional mining, the product is mined from people's activities. In the process of claiming control over the data, these commercial entities estrange the product from the producers, creating a practice of exploitation (Fuchs, 2014b). As YouTube continually collects data from the users through their devices about how they interact with the platform, and the links which appears on it, all the time the user spends on the platform is productive time, as they are permanently surveyed, or as Andrejevic (2002) puts it; "[...] being watched is a form of value-generating labour [...] (p. 231).

To clarify the data collection process, Fuchs (2014b) uses Gandy's concept of *panoptic sorting*, a system of power and surveillance dividing individuals into categories on the basis of routinised measurements in a process of identification, classification, and assessment. Fuchs (2014b) applies the three-step process to the data collected by social media platforms: *identifying* the users' interests through surveillance of their data, containing interactions and behaviours on the platform; *classifying* the user into a consumer group based on the identified data; and *assesses* their interests compared to other users and the available advertisements.

The YouTube users produce social use-values for themselves, however, they produce commodifiable data as a biproduct of their work. The data has no production value, only a direct surplus value, which makes all the work of the YouTube users surplus-labour. The two processes of value creation are intertwined, but the surplus labour, the process of monetisation and commodification is obscured to the users. There is no opposition between creating use-value in the form of social values like recognition and attention, and producing surplus value, but YouTube's monetary gain is not in relation to qualitative values community builds, but the clicks it produces, a strictly quantitative value. As the YouTube privacy policy states, unidentifiable data collected from the users, are shared with commercial partners, amongst them advertisers. The mining of user data requires a quantifiable commodification, panoptic sorting. Marx (1867, in Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013) stated the production of quantifiable value is considered labour as it gives the product a value redundant of its production value, and therefore alienated, unfree.

The most common work of the YouTube users is watching videos, as the view count is far greater than any other affordance use. Chau (2010) calls this periphery participation, and these users are as Nixon (2016) puts it, consumers of content more than they are producers. According to Andrejevic (2011) both digital content production and consumption (i.e. watching videos), become productive, as they produce information commodities. In the labour process of creating surplus value, the viewers' cognitive labour is twice exploited, as they watch videos and have their data collected by YouTube, at the same time they are being exposed to the advertising spaces on the site (Andrejevic, 2011). The social media workers are therefore "[…] double objects of commodification" (Fuchs, 2014, p. 103), they are producers of data and consumers of advertisements.

Jenkins, et.al. (2013) posit a plausible point that not all YouTube users expect financial compensation for their participation on the website, and the video makers' work are not free, as they are in the YPP. However, in Marxist labour theory there is two results of the alienation process that work in tandem in the capitalist system, the first kind of alienation estranges the worker from the monetary values they produce. The second type of alienation estranges the worker from the product of their labour (Andrejevic, 2009). The threefold alienation process of the digital work on YouTube concerns how their traffic data are turned into commodity, not mainly about wage relations. The alienation of the labour power constitutes the ideological denial of the activities of the users as work. Instead, they are exposed to the rhetoric that they are empowered as they control the uploading and spreading of content (Gillespie, 2010).

The alienation of the means of labour is the lack of decision making the users' have in relation to the platform, both the technical code that is kept secret (Miller, 2009), and the policies are not under their influence and vague in how, and when, and in what way their data is mined. In the alienation of the users from the means of labour, in this case the YouTube platform, there is also an alienation from control regarding the content they have provided to the platform. Van Dijck (2014), Clark (2014) and De Kosnik (2014) all recognise the users' vulnerability in the relation between the users' participation and the corporate owners. De Kosnik (2014) contemplates the content created by users, and their lack of decision power when the product of their participation is on the line:

What will happen when Tumblr folds? When Google sells off or closes down YouTube? When Instagram, Twitter and Facebook go dark? The fate of all of the text, image and video ever posted to any of these platforms will not ultimately be decided by the millions upon millions of users who made that content but by the corporations that own the platforms. (De Kosnik, 2014, p. 1455)

This means it is YouTube that also has the final power over the existence of use-values produced by the users, as the work of the community is stored in machines via the platform. Even if the video makers have copyright and ownership over their work, the platform controls the circulation. Lastly, the users of YouTube are alienated from the product of their labour as they have no control over the product, or how it is commodified and to whom it is sold, they only know YouTube "may share non-personally identifiable information publicly and with [their] partners"[14]. The alienation of the YouTube users' labour power relies on the perception of the empowering qualities of their content creation, even though the affordances of YouTube are modified to create surplus-value

Gehl (2009) argues there are two significant levels to the Web 2.0 social media platform. There is a surface level, where user perceive themselves as in control, free to produce and spread content and form social bonds. However, there is also the "hidden depths" where the user generated content is transformed into commodity controlled by corporate capital:

Users are allowed much control over the surface of the Web 2.0; they are the ones who fill in the ghostly frames, make connections, remix content, and process digital artefacts. However, all too often in Web 2.0, the depth – the code (both computer and legal) and the material behind the ghostly frames – is controlled by new media capitalists, who deny users the ability to determine how their content is used. (Gehl, 2009, p. 25)

According to Stanfill (2015), the affordances of a website encourages intended uses and discourage others, happening in "[…] the context of factors like consumer capitalism and intellectual property maximalism" (p. 1062). On the YouTube interface, low-level participation is encouraged and more prominent, as it takes very little effort from the user but still contributes more, or as much as higher participatory actions to the data collection of the platform, showing how "the depth", and the code, form the "surface" actions of users.

On the surface, the workers of YouTube have relative autonomy; they are free to produce which content they want, how often they want, interact with other users when they want, and participate when they want. Still, their activities are being influenced by the affordances of the interface, designed by and for corporate logics - as Postigo (2016) points out, the success of YouTubes monetisation relies on the encouragement of profitable user practises. In the user interface of YouTube, the corporate logics of the platform are evident in the favouring of data instead of communication. For example, the default setting of the interface is to move on to another video right after the other, creating traffic. The next video is generated from the "related and recommended" videos that is shown on the right side of the screen. The list is the only affordance, neither the

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[14] YouTube, Privacy Policy https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-GB&gl=uk [20180530]

video makers nor the viewers have any content control over, except for the commercials. These are instead controlled by an algorithm, designed to keep the viewer hopping from one video to another on the platform. This supports Postigo's (2016) conclusion that YouTube's main objective is to have viewers to stay on the platform, but they do not need to support single amateur video makers in that process.

The accumulation of capital on YouTube is dependent on the users' capability to create social value on the platform and offer them affordances to do so. But the affordances also allow the platform to survey the users and obscuring that same process turning their activities into commodity. According to Fuchs (2014b), corporate social media is formed through a double logic of commodification and ideology. To summarize, using Fuchs & Sevignani's (2013) nomenclature, social media platforms such as YouTube, are rich in user data, and rich in the sense that the commodification of this data generates profit when sold. Users are rich in social wealth, but poor in decision making and power over the modelling of the platform and the product they produce, their data, creating an exploitive relation that alienates them from their labour.

7. Discussion

The last chapter described how YouTube's business model regulate the economic and social value creation of the users, and how that model of capital accumulation estranges the worker in the labour process. This chapter will further discuss the estrangement of users and relate it to the previous discussion in the field regarding exploitation and whether social media work is too complex to be described in such terms, as it is freely given, as argued by Burgess and Green (2009) and Jenkins, et.al. (2013).

Olin Wright (in Andrejevic, 2013) define a Marxist understanding of exploitation in three different steps. First, exploitation occurs when one class material welfare is dependent on the deprovision of another class. Second, the exploitation of the deprived class excludes them from productive resources, especially property Third, the first two, dependence and exclusion, appropriates the labour of the exploited (p. 154). The owners of YouTube depend on the users to create content, and through their creativity, the commodity of data is produced, a commodity from which the users are withheld as they work for free and /or are estranged from the product of their work. Again, parallels can be drawn to Gehl's (2009) analysis of the power division between user and owner, and the Marxist definition of exploitation is evident in the logic of the capital accumulation in commercial social media business models.

Still, the exploitive practices of social media are not as materially felt as exploitation in industrial labour processes, and they should not be confused. According to Andrejevic (2011), the concept of exploitation should not be cast aside, as Burgess and Green (2009) and Jenkins, et.al. (2013) argues, but needs to be developed, as the context of productivity is changing. In this context, Campbell (2014) makes a distinction between oppressive sorts of exploitation and abstract forms:

> Oppressive forms of exploitation are readily apparent to the worker and have a direct
> and obvious impact on the material existence of the labourer […] in abstract modes
> of exploitation, the worker may remain unaware of the wealth his or her activities
> generate for a small class of people. (Campbell, 2014, 1097)

Social media users may have trouble identifying the exploitation they are subjected to, partly because they are unaware of the value they are generating, and partly because their activities are socially fulfilling, and are not perceived as labour to the workers themselves. Campbell (2014) notes that the perception of online work is muddled because of its "intrinsic rewards" (p. 1097), such as community building and creative expression. Nonetheless, their work results in the monetary gain of a small class of owners, just like oppressive exploitation in industrial society (Campbell, 2014).

Looking at this reasoning, using the "slave labour" argument, claiming that critics of social media equals the users' work to slave labour to discredit the digital labour debate, like Gauntlett (2011) does, is therefore quite frankly, intellectually condescending to all parties. None of the critical researchers (Andrejevic, 2002, 2009, 2011, 2013; Campbell, 2014; Fuchs; 2014a, 2014b; Terranova, 2000, 2013) are claiming that free social media work is violent in the same way as forced labour. The workers of social media do not break their backs or get sick of toxic inhalation. On the contrary, several Marxist researchers underline the confusion between them as extremely problematic, as it risks

undermining discussions on the oppressive exploitation of the global workforce (Campbell, 2014). The debate is rather about how the users become alienated from their work and the surplus-value it produces and which implications that alienation have for the users and the political economy of commercially owned social media.

Terranova (2000) describes the duality of online free labour: "Free labour is the moment where this knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into productive activities that are pleasurable embraced and at the same time shamelessly exploited" (p. 37). Studying YouTube complicates the arguments of free labour, as the labour of the video makers is not free, as they are in the YPP. However, the point remains, work can be both voluntary and exploited. Terranova (2010, 2013) also emphasizes the several likenesses of unpaid digital work and unpaid house work, underlining that non-employment does not always mean the absence of work. As many feminist scholars have come to prove, maintaining and nourishing relationship is both time consuming and emotionally demanding. As Terranova (2013) states: "Labour is not equivalent to waged labour" (p. 45). The labour of the YouTube users is often a labour of love, but intensive, both timewise and emotionally, as the case study showed.

The labour of the users can be both voluntary and exploited, as well as it can be emotionally satisfying and exploited. According to Andrejevic (2009), the social use values created in the labour process are not rendered useless because of the alienation of the worker:

> The fact of exploitation need not prevent workers from taking pleasure in their craft or in the success of a collaborative effort well done. Nor is it the case that accounts for exploitation necessarily denigrate the activities or the meanings they may have for those who participate in them rather than the social relations that underwrite expropriation and alienation. (Andrejevic, 2009, p.153)

In Marxist theory, there is not an exclusive relationship between exploitation and pleasure. The workers can experience enjoyment in a well-executed labour, but it does not change the division of power in the labour process (Andrejevic, 2009, 2011; Terranova, 2000). Andrejevic (2011) argues that the power in the alienation process of the social media workers is not that of force or violence but of *coercion.* Coercion is already embedded into the capitalist economy and […] in the relations that structure so-called "free" choices" (Andrejevic, 2011, p. 283). Marx meant violent force was not necessary if the workers was not in access to the means of production, as the control of the fixed capital, robs the workers of the alternative to make a living outside the exploitive labour process, coercion can thus be the perceived as the lack of alternative. In the capitalist system, the workers are only in power of their own productive activity; their labour power. Workers are waged because they sell their capacity for labour, which the capitalists can then use how they like for the time they have paid. Alienation is therefore not just the loss of monetary funds, but loss over control over the product (Andrejevic, 2013), and as was established earlier, YouTube users have no control over the product they produce.

If the discussion is focused on the alienation of the users' labour process, instead of just some form of financial compensation, i.e. wage relations, the divide between video maker and viewer, and amateur and professional amateurs, become less important, as exploited when they are both alienated from the labour process. The YouTubers that

make a bigger monetary revenue obviously gain more from their exploitation, giving them economic power, but they also have a lot more to lose, and even though they make their income from the exploitation of other users as viewers, they still have the same lack of control over the means and product of their own labour. The participation culture, on the surface of platforms like YouTube, appears as a creative hub where grassroots are given the opportunity to express themselves. However, the business model reproduces the logics of private ownership and corporate control over resources, where workers are excluded from decision power, and accepts it (Andrejevic, 2013).

In *Capital Volume 3,* Marx (1894) writes that "[…] The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessary and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper" (quoted in Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013, p. 279). Production time in the labour process, according to Marx, is unfree, controlled by capital. Marx foretold the scientific and technical advancements of society would lead to a more efficient industry, leaving more free time for the workers. This prediction has come true, not as Marx envisioned, under communist rule, but under capitalism. This means the free time of the workers need to be monetized as a way for capitalist markets to grow and sustain a rise in the production of capital (Fuchs, 2014b).

The constant surveillance of social media users and capitalization of freely given work turns leisure time and the social values produced through it, indirectly into commodity and makes the time spent on them productive (Andrejevic, 2002). Fuchs (2014b) argues that the surveillance also works as a sort of ideological tool of control, in which the workers subconsciously maximize their own performance and monitor others mutually. Andrejevic (2002) concurs with Fuchs (2014b) assessment, when he writes "[...] online-surveillance contributes to the rationalisation of consumption" (Andrejevic, 2002, p. 232). According to Andrejevic (2002), with Foucault's logic, a bigger surveillance of our leisure time becomes a "self-stimulating incitement to productivity" (p. 232), which in turn, leads to rationalisation of our free time outside of traditional productive time.

In the theoretical framework of this essay, the term work refers to activities central to the very human nature, integral to self-realization, producing knowledge and social relations that are basal to human happiness and existence. In the transformation of matter, Marx (1867) believed, the worker was also transformed and realised their own potential (in Campbell, 2014). Work, and the creation of use-value is essential to a rewarding free time. However, *work* is not *labour*, it is free, under the control of the worker. In the alienation of the worker in the labour process the worker does not only become estranged from the product and the surplus value they create, but from the work itself, making it alien and the commodification of free time therefore undermines the freedom of leisure.

Oppressive forms of exploitation have mistreated and abused workers for centuries, depriving them of property and freedom. Jenkins et.al. (2013) and Burgess and Green (2009) argues social media work is too complex to be described in terms of exploitation. Social media work has changed the site and situation of productivity, yet, exploitation is still an essential practice in the division of labour and profit, where a mass of estranged workers produces the material, monetary, wealth of the few owners of the means of production. Abstract forms of oppression are sinister in a more discreet way than oppressive forms, as they are distanced from materiality, the labourers do not recognize

their activities as work. The workers are not aware of the control their work is subjected to. This control is negotiated through technical appliances and affordances, but also in an ideological discourse that disciplines the workers into higher productivity. Abstract exploitation allows for the muddling between leisure and work, making our free time productive, unfree and under the control of capital. YouTube, and other social media platforms are dependent on the social value creation of the users, and thus the surface must seem to be unregulated and allow affordances that accommodate the needs and wishes of the users to participate and create, but they must also be efficient in surveying the users. In the hidden depth lies not only code and corporate legislations that commodifies the user data which alienates the users, but an abstract form of exploitation undermining the concepts of freely preformed work and leisure.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion to this study, I would like to concur with Postigo's (2016) statement that UCG-platforms, such as YouTube, need to be discussed outside the dichotomy of exploitation and participation. Both concepts are present in social media work which makes the field of study so complex. It has a complex relationship to the very physical, violent exploitation of third world workers. It is complex in the accumulation and division of profit. It has complex implications for what constitutes labour and leisure.

The case study of this master's thesis has shown that users of YouTube perform cognitive, communicative, and co-operate work. The type of work performed, is to some degree, prompted by the affordances of the platform employed in the process, and the state of the community in which the work is enacted. Through their work, YouTube users produce social use-values for themselves, the video makers produce monetary value through the YouTube Partnership Program, and in parallel they produce surplus value as their user data is mined by the platform. YouTube users have relative control over the work process of creating use-value, on what Gehl (2009) calls the surface of Web 2.0, however, control over the use-values lies with YouTube. The process of commodification requires the quantification of the users' activities, making the social use values estranged from its producers. Since the producers of surplus value have no control over the product of their labour, their freely given work is also being alienated, and thereby exploited, in the production and commodification of their user data.

The problems of the free work YouTube users perform can be split into two levels. One, more practical, aspect is the lack of transparency considering the data that is mined from their activities, which alienates the workers not only from the surplus value they produce, but from their own labour process. The second is a more philosophical one, regarding what happens to citizens of capitalist society when leisure, or free time is monetised and made a commodity, alienating them not only from production, but from their work itself. Both levels highlight future challenges for the field of information science, examining how a privatized infrastructure of social media and the internet affect the use of social media, as well as its users.

8.2. Suggestions for Future Research

A suggestion to future research would be to expand the case study, to include more channels and thereby data samples. As seen in the results of this thesis, patterns can be seen within the individual channels and the work performed on them, however, given the limits of the study these results cannot be generalised. A broader, expanded data set could form more reliable patterns in performed work, how it builds and maintains community, and conduct minor studies in work performance depending on gender, age or crafting method. I have found the use of affordances effective in disclosing the work of YouTube users, but an expanded study might gain from including interviews to deepen the understanding of the relation between the user and the values they produce. Beyond the need for more case studies, my work has pointed towards the need to continue a discussion of the power relations on social media owned by corporate giants,

and a further exploration on how Marxist theory can be adapted, developed, and applied to the labour of social media users.

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