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# *(Bio)Power to the People? Harnessing Potential in the Creative and Cultural Workplace*

Nicole S. Cohen

Although no longer new, accounts of the workplaces of creative and cultural work<sup>1</sup> in the so-called information age are exhilarating. Take, for example, animation firm Pixar, where workers have access to volleyball and badminton courts, an Olympic-size swimming pool, and yoga classes.<sup>2</sup> Pixar's sprawling office complex contains coffee shops with patios for socializing and large, open spaces for workers to interact while moving around, many of whom do so on scooters and skateboards (Purkayastha, 2006, pp. 6, 11). New media firms are equipped with ping-pong tables and video game rooms, stock their kitchens with junk food, and host regularly scheduled outings and parties (Ross, 2003, p. 73). Facebook offers workers daily catered meals, on-site dry cleaning and laundry, and a subsidized gym membership (Facebook.com, 2008). At some video game companies, not only is play fundamental to the working day, but it extends outside the office to on-site soccer fields and snowboarding trips (Dyer-Witthford & de Peuter, 2006). This workplace culture runs deeper than amenities that provide entertainment and promote fitness to stimulate creativity. Andrew Ross (2003), for example, documents web company Razorfish's in-office efforts targeted specifically at workers' emotions: employees received a "tool kit for fun" containing supplies for creating collages on office walls, and workers were encouraged to have "breakout dance sessions," and turn on their radios simultaneously to participate in an "international groove in" with Razorfish offices around the world (p. 104).

On the surface, these workplaces appear liberating and fun, a marker of the flexibility and a non-hierarchical management style glamourized in creative, cultural, and informational workplaces. Google, perhaps the most well-known example of the workplace-as-playground, has been described as "a photogenic playground of lava lamps, volleyball courts, swimming pools, free and good restaurants, [and] massage rooms" (Economist, 2007). But although Google can be viewed as a paragon of the creative workplace in the so-called information age, it can also be understood as a harbinger of some of the downsides. According to a recent report in *The Economist* (2007):

One former executive, now suing Google over her treatment, says that the firm's personnel department is "collapsing" and that "absolute chaos" reigns. When she was hired, nobody knew when or where she was supposed to work, and the



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balloons that all Nooglers [“new Googlers”] get delivered to their desks ended up God knows where. She started receiving detailed e-mails “enforcing” Google’s outward informality by reminding her that high heels and jewelry were inappropriate. Before the corporate ski trip, it was explained that “if you wear fur, they will kill you.” (§ 23)

The article continues, noting that workers with families can be frustrated by the pressure to work seven days a week, and that the pre-planned environment of “chaos” and attempts to cultivate “untrammelled creativity” can have the effect of creating a “dystopia.” With these contradictions at play, how can we understand the dynamics of the creative workplace? If, on the one hand, cultural workers face precarious, intermittent project-based and freelance work with low pay and limited benefits (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008), how can we understand the “freedoms” afforded to those who remain in the office and on salary?

This paper offers Michel Foucault’s notion of biopolitics as one entry point into understanding the creative and cultural workplace in contemporary capitalist economies. A conception of biopolitics as the maintenance and regulation of life itself (Foucault, 1978) can account for the tactics deployed in creative and cultural workplaces. As we shall see, biopolitical strategies are designed to harness the potentiality of labour power in order to channel it into production for capital accumulation. A Foucauldian notion of harnessing and governance of labour power provides insight into the control mechanisms of the seemingly liberating creative and cultural workplace. An interlinked understanding of biopolitics, immaterial labour, and the social factory can decode firms’ empowerment strategies, which are designed to bring life into work and, simultaneously, work into life. This area of inquiry remains important as cultural labour becomes an increasing focus of economic policy for Western capitalist states (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008).

### **Biopolitics and Immaterial Labour: Putting Subjectivity to Work**

Foucault’s (1978) conception of biopolitics theorizes a shift from the juridical right of the sovereign to take life (power over death) to the ordering or maintenance of life (p. 135). Biopolitics can be understood as power that “exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulation” (p. 137), such that “biological existence [becomes] reflected in political existence” (p. 142). For Foucault, biopolitics is an essential force in the emergence of modern states, expressed in the concern of states for the management of populations through institutions of public health, sexuality

and reproduction, medicine and anatomy, and hygiene. Concomitant with a new understanding that people are not merely juridical subjects but living beings, biopolitical strategies emerged that could “invest life through and through” (p. 139).

While Foucault formulates this conceptualization to explain practices of modern states and their concern with populations, he also acknowledges the importance of biopolitics for the development of capitalism, which “would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (p. 141). He also argues that capitalism requires more than just the insertion of bodies into production processes; it requires the maintenance of labour power, or what feminists have conceptualized as social reproduction: the daily and intergenerational work of raising and caring for workers and preparing them to labour through a network of institutions that include the family and the state (Vosko, 2006, p. 459), and, as I argue, the workplace. As Foucault (1978) writes, capitalism “had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern” (p. 141). This requires a positive or empowered strategy of governance concerned with biopolitical production. In workplaces, particularly those in cultural industries, biopolitics can serve a function of social reproduction through the “empowerment” of workers, which does not, contradictorily, free them from being governed, as the power of labour must be re-channeled into production (Dyer-Witheford, 1999, p. 66).

In the so-called knowledge economy – the rise of which has been attributed to technological developments and the increased prevalence of what has been described as “immaterial labour” (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Lazzarato, 1996) – the deployment of biopolitical tactics in creative and cultural workplaces is notable. These workplaces are touted as being more “humane,” marked by less rigid hierarchies, flexible modes of production, and a “fun” and stimulating work environment run on “openness, cooperation, and self-management” (Ross, 2003, p. 9). As we shall see, production involving immaterial labour requires an investment of workers’ subjectivities and intellect in new and intensified ways (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 135).

Although important challenges to the conceptualization and application of immaterial labour have been noted,<sup>3</sup> as a description of work processes and dynamics, the term can provide insight into the contours of the creative and cultural workplace. Immaterial labour is defined as that which “produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or

communication” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 290), or “the labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity,” which refers to “defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashion, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 133). Maurizio Lazzarato argues that immaterial labour, once “the privileged domain of the bourgeoisie and its children,” is now increasingly part of what is understood as “mass intellectuality,” and this shift has required changes in the “composition, management and regulation” of the workforce (p. 133).<sup>4</sup>

This change in management and regulation can be partially attributed to the fact that workers engaged in immaterial labour use their intellect and creativity in order to work. New production models increasingly require workers to employ subjectivities. Lazzarato (1996) describes how more than ever before, paid work must be invested with life, brokered not just through social reproduction in the home, but through biopolitics in the workplace. He continues, describing labour as “living labour,” and defines work as “the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation” (p. 135). Through an acknowledgement of life, workers are expected to be active subjects rather than subjected to command (Lazzarato, 1996). They are expected to draw on their relationships, life experiences, and time spent out of work to produce, and to incorporate personal tastes, cultural capital, and social networks into their work (McRobbie, 2002). Once severed from production lines and situated within workers’ subjective experiences, work can be taken home from the office at night or brought into other social spaces.

Resistance by both workers and management to direct supervision in creative and cultural firms has resulted in horizontal management structures designed to foster worker autonomy (Ross, 2000). The implications of this will be discussed later in the paper. For now, it is enough to note that this restructuring of management accommodates the emergence of the neoliberal workplace, where the worker is responsible for her own self-discipline and motivation, where the “foreman” becomes a “facilitator” of workers’ self-direction (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 136).

For autonomist Marxist thinkers, the process of disciplining workers is not driven by capital, but rather is the result of capital reacting to workers’ agency and resistance (Dyer-Witheford, 1999, p. 66; Lazzarato, 2002). Indeed, for Foucault, biopolitics reacted to resistance: “...resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the other forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the keyword, in this dynamic” (as cited in Lazzarato, 2002, ¶ 15). At the same time as capital has been forced to recognize “the autonomy and freedom of labour as the only possible form of cooperation in

production,” firms retain control over the power generated by restructuring the workplace. As Lazzarato argues, “Today's management thinking takes workers’ subjectivity into consideration only in order to codify it in line with the requirements of production” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 136).

To understand why biopolitical strategies are deployed in the workplace, an understanding of capital’s need to channel the potential of workers’ productivity, or to keep the “potentialities of work” alive (Terranova, 2004, p. 83), is required. This can be accounted for by the notion of labour power as a peculiar commodity under capitalism.

### **Harnessing Potential, Investing in Emotions**

Paolo Virno (2004) grounds an understanding of biopolitics in Karl Marx’s theory of labour power, or the potential capacities of a worker to produce (as distinguished from labour, which is the activity of work). Isolating the concept of labour power is theoretically important, as it exposes the productive potential contained in workers’ bodies and minds<sup>5</sup> that capital must harness. For Virno, potential “signifies that which is not current, that which is not present” yet remains an important commodity for capital (p. 82). Labour power is a peculiar commodity under capitalism because it is not produced expressly for sale on the market; rather it is embodied by a person’s living being (Marx, 2000, p. 489). As Marx explains, “the use value which the worker has to offer the capitalist ... is not materialized in a product, does not exist apart from him at all, thus exists not really, but only in potentiality, as his capacity” (as cited in Virno, 2003). This, argues Virno (2004), is the crux of understanding the significance of biopolitics for capitalism: “The living body of the worker is the substratum of that labour-power which, in itself, has no independent existence. ‘Life,’ pure and simple *bios*, acquires a specific importance in as much as it is the tabernacle of *dynamis*, of mere potential” (p. 82). Indeed, for Foucault (1978), recognition of life itself involved recognition of potential: “what was demanded and what served as an objective was life, understood as the basic needs, man’s concrete essence, the realization of his potential, a plentitude of the possible” (p. 145).

This embodiment of potential, this importance of life itself, sheds light on the biopolitics that mark the workplaces of many who labour in creative and cultural industries. At its base level, biopower is deployed in companies through services such as massages, on-site doctors, and ergonomic experts to keep workers healthy and productive and to prevent “burnout” in industries known for long overtime hours (Purkayastha, 2006, pp. 6, 12).

In workplaces concerned with the production of information, symbols, and ideas, biopower is deployed through the cultivation of affect and communication, creativity, and ability to generate ideas. Although it has been submitted to industrial logic, creativity is still understood by many employers as something that strikes in unpredictable moments of inspiration. Thus, rather than leaving workers to sit around waiting to become inspired, employers must facilitate this inspiration in the workplace. For example, at Pixar, employees are encouraged to decorate their offices in highly personalized styles: “instead of bland cubicles, animators worked in decorated open-fronted mini-cottages ... one such mini-cottage was in the shape of a castle and housed a native of Scotland” (Purkayastha, 2006, p. 11). A general feeling of youthfulness and play is created through dress code (casual, which can sometimes mean walking around the office barefoot), bringing pets into the office (an invitation, it should be noted, that is not extended to children), the notorious presence of a foosball table, the unconventional hours employees are “allowed” to work, the relaxation of formal hierarchies, and the encouragement of performance as a form of expression (Purkayastha, 2006, p. 5; Ross, 2003, pp. 13, 73). To channel the potential of labour power into the production of media, entertainment, and cultural commodities, the office becomes a place for extended work and play, which become indistinguishable. Some companies fund workers’ development and training, including both professional and personal development. For example, workers are provided with opportunities to learn how to juggle or to belly-dance (Ross, 2003, p. 10; Purkayastha, 2006, p. 12).

Other strategies range from providing space to have conversations on breaks (where most talk centres on work and work-related activities), to creating a “Morale Team” tasked with putting plants on people’s desks, lifting workers’ spirits after layoffs, and generally attempting to “fix how you feel” (Ross, 2003, p. 92). Employers have put effort into creating work environments that are simulating, creative, and fun. As Ross (2003) notes, “the permissive workplace was designed both physically and philosophically to chase off the blues” (p. 10).

Virno argues that post-Fordist modes of production have allowed the reality of labour power to be fully realized. That is to say, current forms of flexible employment relationships designed to produce immaterial commodities drawn from knowledge and affect have begun to truly harness the potential of labour power in ways that were not previously possible (Virno, 2004, p. 81). Life itself is brought into the workplace and conversely, work is brought into the life sphere, in a blurring of boundaries that can be understood through a conception of the social factory.

## **The Social Factory: Strategies of Control**

The autonomist Marxist concept of the social factory is summed up by Lazzarato (1996): “In a sense, life becomes inseparable from work” (p. 138). The concept accounts for the extension (but not total relocation) of work under post-Fordist arrangements into society at large, as well as capital’s “informational restructuring,” under which affect, intellect, and knowledge are put to work in the form of social labour power for capital (Dyer-Witheford, 1999, pp. 79–80).

Yet the social factory is not only the site of the extension of working hours into leisure time, but a concurrent move of leisure into the workplace, albeit to varying degrees determined by social and geographic location. In the creative and culture industries, leisure is actively encouraged and facilitated by employers as “a way of adding value to an employee’s output” (Ross, 2003, p. 88). Making the workplace seem more like home through initiatives such as casual Fridays and an officially informal environment is a method of transforming the workplace from an alienating space to one that acknowledges workers’ personalities. With communal space (open-concept workstations instead of isolating cubicles), art on the walls, playrooms, and sports facilities, Ross (2000) rightly asks, “who would ever want to go home?” (¶ 3).<sup>6</sup>

By opening offices in urban centres, companies can tap into bohemian and artist culture and mirror the nontraditional lifestyle habits of creative workers in the office. If creative and cultural labourers view work as an extension of their chosen lifestyle, work will be seen in the same way they view art: as sacrificial labour for which they are willing to “work in low-grade office environments, solving creative problems for long and often unsocial hours in return for deferred rewards” (Ross, 2003, p. 10). Ross (2000) defines sacrificial labour as a way to understand the rationalization of creativity in the new workplace to extract value for capital: “artists’ traditions of sacrificial labour are governed by the principle of the cultural discount, by which artists and other arts workers accept non-monetary rewards – the gratification of producing art – as compensation for their work, thereby discounting the cash price of their labour” (¶ 4). The aim of these workplaces is to intercept and capitalize on workers’ “freest thoughts and impulses,” which used to be formed when partaking in activities outside of working hours. As Ross (2003) writes, “in knowledge companies that trade in creative ideas, services and solutions, everything that employees do, think, or say in their waking moments is potential grist for the industrial mill” (p. 19).

The deployment of biopower in the workplace is an important element of building the social factory. Biopolitics works to harness creativity and



capitalize on relationships and affect, managing life in the workplace in order to break down any remaining barriers between work and the rest of life. This is made explicit in management literature, which encourages the forging of emotional bonds between workers and the company that are comparable to workers' relationships with their families and friends outside of work (Ross, 2003, p. 26). This can have varied and often contradictory effects. For example, in the face of a dismantled welfare state, some workplaces can satisfy the needs of social reproduction, such as offering childcare, paid family leave, flex time, and job sharing. Yet Arlie Hoschild notes in her case study of a workplace that offered these options that many women rarely took advantage of them in order to spend more time with their families. They preferred the morale and emotional support they felt they received at work to the undervalued and exhausting work they performed at home: "The company ... had successfully usurped values associated with families, churches, and community life and was forging a new kind of moral capitalism" (as cited in Ross, 2003, p. 97).

Although it may seem appealing to have an employer that is attentive to a worker's emotional needs, Ross (2003) notes the downsides of these practices: not only can emotionally invested workplaces become "trauma zones" during layoffs, which are a regular occurrence in volatile creative industries, but the emotional labour required for service work and maintaining the required personality and affective relationships can have a "deadening effect on an employee's real emotional life after-hours" (p. 32).

Biopolitical strategies can be viewed as a way to make the workplace more humane or to take the "edge" off capitalism, yet they can also be considered a form of discipline and regulation that bring workers' potentiality and resistance in line with the needs of capital, at the same time making exploitation and alienation as we have historically known them much more difficult to recognize. In Foucauldian terms, reigning in workers' potentiality in this way is a form of governmentality. Foucault understood "government" as meaning more than the body that rules the state. He broadly understood government as "conduct, or more precisely, as the conduct of conduct" (Lemke, 2001, p. 2). Government can refer to self-regulation and self-control shaped by discourses and power, exercised from innumerable, multi-directional points. In this instance, it is a case of a worker being activated, or inspired, to govern herself according to the needs of her employer, even though the strategies undertaken in her workplace seem instead to liberate her from the constraints of the office. The self-regulating worker is the worker that does not need to be bullied or overtly pressured to perform, the pressures are more covert – the threat of being on the outside, of losing one's job, of not fitting in, of not being able to perform.

Power, for Foucault, means that people can be empowered, that they can be moved to action: "...power in the sense that Foucault gives to the term could result in an 'empowerment' or 'responsibilization' of subjects, forcing them to 'free' decision making in fields of action" (Lemke, 2001, p. 53). These forms of power relations do not mean that "to determine the conduct of others is intrinsically bad," or that power relations always have the effect of limiting a person's freedoms or choices, yet they can account for why practices of the creative and cultural workplaces are infused with a neoliberal logic of self-sufficiency and entrepreneurial spirit (McRobbie, 2002, p. 516). For Lemke (2001), "neoliberal forms of government feature not only direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also characteristically develop indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them" (p. 12). This description of the neoliberal state can be applied to the neoliberal workplace (especially the post-Fordist creative and cultural workplace), which can use biopolitical tactics disguised as empowerment to activate workers' self-regulation. Creative and cultural workers who regard work as a source of self-actualization and freedom enter into workplaces where they are required to become their own micro-structures, which means self-monitoring and self-regulation to meet production deadlines, generate new ideas and maintain income levels, cultural capital, and networks of contacts (McRobbie, 2002, p. 518).

It is true that the social factory can also be understood as a site of potential. As Nick Dyer-Witheford (2006) reminds us, "labour power is never completely controllable," and the knowledge, creativity, communication, and affect fostered by capital in the social factory can be used to create new ways of thinking, living, and being that may be used in ways that capital did not intend (p. 61). At the same time, these mechanisms of governmentality, built into the structures of creative and cultural workplaces, may not be as liberating as they seem. In fact, when understood as a form of discipline, the insidious implications of the biopolitical workplace begin to emerge.

Open-concept office spaces, for example, were ostensibly designed as a move away from isolating, alienating cubicles and to facilitate collaboration. Of course, an open-concept office does not dismantle the power arrangements between management and workers, and as Ross (2003) argues, "in practice, [this arrangement] demanded a high degree of homogeneity among employees, because it required a consensus about noise and activity levels, taste, morality, and the public sharing of personal habits" (p. 116). Thus, what seems to be freedom can, in fact, be a form of discipline. Ross's study found that the personalities of workers in new media firms were disciplined through a workplace culture for which being "fun" and funny was a mandatory

requirement: “To play along you had to contribute some usable wit that would improve the hour. Those who would not or did not know how to play were likely to be phased out over time” (Ross, 2003, p. 88).

Management strategies, although more relaxed and decentralized than in previous models of corporate culture, are designed to discipline, even when they appear to be unconventional or quirky, as in the example of Razorfish managers who sent employees on visits to the offices of corporate clients. Said one manager: “When they’d come back from seeing other companies, they’re like ‘I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to say any of these bad things. I had to eat lunch in a cafeteria with 400 people and everyone was in cubicles.’ And they never complain again” (Ross 2003, p. 16). This is a highly effective tactic to keep workers in line. Also effective is reinforcing the notion of “empowerment” as a strategy to remind workers they are self-regulating companies of one who do not need to rely on a conventional employment relationship, a contract, or job security. A manager at AOL describes to Ross (2003) the corporate logic behind these practices: “To give my employees job security would be to disempower them and to relieve them of the responsibility that they need to feel for their own success” (p. 17). Ross continues, noting that “The next step after that is when these managers begin to view employee benefits the same way – as an act of disempowerment” (p. 17).

By situating work outside of the formal employment relationship, firms have managed to extract even more surplus value from workers for much lower wages, more than would be extracted if workers were trapped in a “conventional” office with set working hours and ordered to create (McRobbie, 2002). This is not to deny the fact of agency, or to argue that workers in the creative and cultural industry are dupes or drones. These employer strategies should not be seen as deterministic. Their outcomes are always uncertain, as most workers are aware of the bargain they enter into and have the potential to resist in various ways. They are often highly attuned to biopolitical strategies; however, it is not always clear that workers understand the disciplinary effects of these strategies. One employee quoted in Ross’s (2003) study said: “Any manager worth his salt knew they had to empower us,” (p. 15) yet another favourably compared his work environment to the corporate culture he observed elsewhere: “What I’ve seen in other companies is a bunch of rats trapped in a room, poking to get pellets. Not to mention the drug testing, penalties for talking out of turn, and all the other disciplinary stuff” (p. 16).

Strategies of individualization are highly effective mechanisms of regulation. The downloading of responsibility from the employer to the self-

activated worker has seen employees spend their own, unpaid time on professional development, motivated in part by anxiety to maintain employability (Ross, 2003, p. 93). As capital offloads responsibility for finding, performing, and evaluating work onto workers, workplace politics and policies disappear, reproducing social asymmetries, and people move away from collective structures such as trade unions or professional associations (McRobbie, 2002).

In the case of freelance workers, the workplace itself disappears. Freelance work is heavily dependent on the self-regulating worker; there is no boss, no union, no workplace culture at all. The freelancer is the ultimate “free-agent” whose creativity and intellect is harnessed for brief periods before they are released into what Graham Murdock (2003) calls the “the reserve army of cultural labour” (p. 22). This can make creative and cultural work inaccessible to those workers who cannot adapt, or who require special accommodations, such as older workers and those with families (McRobbie, 2002). The temporal instability caused by unusual hours, extended overtime, and working from home has the potential to “disrupt the conditions and environment of sociality and the possibility of constructing sociality itself,” as many workers cannot afford to have children or remain dependent on parents or partners with more stable income (Tari and Vani, 2005). The implications of this are also corporeal, such as health risks (injury, stress, anxiety), and affective, such as experiencing a “[sense] of instability, peril and uncertainty” (§ 7). It is clear that bringing life into labour by injecting untethered “freedom” into the workplace via biopower can have insidious effects, reproducing power and control in the very places that on the surface appear to be annihilating these forces.

## **Conclusion**

Foucault’s concept of biopolitics presents an approach to understanding the subsumption of workers’ subjectivities in the post-Fordist creative and cultural workplace. Biopolitics is a way to understand how capital attempts to foster and manage life itself, and the ways in which the creative workplace remains a site of power. As Foucault (1978) wrote, “the adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profits, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application” (p. 141). These features have been deployed in such a way that has enabled capital to maintain its grip over workers’ productive potential, seeping out of the workplace and into society at large. A thorough understanding of this tendency must take into account not only a Marxist notion of the commodification of labour power and the subsumption

of labour under capitalism, but the role the “brains and bodies” of workers play in this process, harnessed through biopolitical strategies that seem, on the surface, to empower (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 23, 25).

Biopolitics makes clear that managing life is important for production, not just by the reproduction and maintenance of the population through health regimes and government policies, but also by situating a regime of biopolitics in the workplace, giving workers more affective and communicative roles and empowering them in specific and strategic (or, governed) ways. Biopower is deployed to keep workers working, to encourage workers to work beyond work. Biopower is a way to produce subjectivities in the workplace and to put these subjectivities to work for capital. The humane face of the creative and cultural workplace can mask more insidious tendencies of capitalism that were once more easily recognized, which limits the capacity of workers to react, to reclaim potentiality, and to envision alternative arrangements of production.

Ross notes a shift from workers being encouraged to define themselves through consumption in leisure time to an emphasis on work as the place “where our identity is to be most deeply felt and shaped” (Ross, 2000, ¶ 2). Once we can see that this is organized through biopolitical strategies that put workers’ subjectivities and personalities to work for capital in the social factory, a question arises: if all time is made to be working time, what are the conditions required for the possibility to move outside of the capital relation? Potential lies in the fact that biopolitical strategies can be re-harnessed and re-directed, deployed in ways that capital did not intend. Labour power can never be entirely stolen from workers, as it is a potential owned by the worker herself, attached to her very body and being. New forms of work organizations, with access to information technology and the development of communicative and affective skills, have the potential to facilitate new forms of resistance (Hardt & Negri, 2000). For these reasons, it is important to understand the contours of the creative and cultural workplace and unpack the strategies that allow them to govern workers’ potentialities.

## Notes

1. I have broadly understood creative and cultural work to be that which produces media, communicative, and entertainment commodities such as (but not limited to) websites, magazines, newspapers, advertising, public relations, broadcasts, films, and music videos.
2. Although it is unclear in these accounts, it is likely that not all company workers are able to access and partake in these amenities.

3. For example, Ursula Huws argues that immaterial products are directly tied to material goods that very much exist in an embodied, material, capitalist economy (Huws, 2003, p. 135). Others have warned against the privileging of such a concept over the material labour required to support such immaterial endeavours, such as industrial production in the global south and other forms of low-wage, material labour in advanced capitalist countries (see, for example, Dyer-Witheford [2005] and Wright [2005]). Emma Dowling, Rodrigo Nunes, and Ben Trott have argued that immaterial labour is often presented as the “de facto” form of labour prevailing over other forms, when in fact there are important differences in labour arrangements, particularly in the context of hierarchies in the global division of labour and polarized degrees of exploitation (Dowling et al., 2007).
4. Communication and affect are also present in manufacturing processes that have been restructured along post-Fordist lines. Just-in-time and lean production means that firms often keep no stock; commodities are produced after they have been sold. The marketing and sales decision can come before the production decision, facilitated by links through transnational telecommunications technology (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 290).
5. Marx (2000) defined labour power as “the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description” (p. 489).
6. Indeed the move by firms to pay employees in stock options can be viewed as a way of investing workers with a sense of ownership in the company (Ross, 2003, p. 10) – a postmodern wage for loyalty.

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