

Call for Papers

FREE AND UNPAID WORK, GRATUITY, COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY AND PRECARIOUSNESS

Processes of subjectivity in the age of digital production

SOCIOLOGIA DEL LAVORO :: Special Issue (1/2014)

Edited By: Federico Chicchi, Elisabetta Risi, Eran Fisher, Emiliana Armano

Purposes. We propose to participate in an edited volume – a Journal Special Issue - that sums up theoretical considerations and recent empirical research on work (and its precariousness) in the digital age. The aim is to encourage discussions on new ways of working that, unlike industrial work, totally involve the lifeworld (subjectivity, personality, gender, and so forth) of individuals and are characterized by the fact that subjects invest and value their emotions, creativity, experience and communicability even when they are not rewarded. This workers' subjectivity is often experienced, shown and unveiled in and through on-line environments.

In particular we focus on precarious and unpaid work on the Web, with implications for the individuals' own identity and the emergence of new forms of value creation and new economic activities. We aim at understanding what the subjects involved in such work go through and how it affects their everyday online experience. We are open to theoretical and empirical submissions using a diversity of perspectives and methodologies to explore such issues.

1. Key points of analysis.

1.1 The first area of analysis, which constitutes the general basis of this proposal, is the experience of unpaid work. The goal is to collect contributions that describe the complex nature of this type of work and its composition of motivation, passion, involvement and sharing. These issues are full of contradictions when referring to unpaid work delivered spontaneously and voluntarily, especially by young people, through contractual arrangements. This situation entails emotional identification with the work being done, but the promise of paid work, meaningful experience, and stability is rarely kept. The phenomenon of unpaid, precarious work is pervasive. It is interesting to reflect on other manifestations of unpaid work related for example to internship or training curriculum. Another related topic is the theme of the feminization of work, where economic exchange is completely based on social and relational capital. The work of women, often involving care and assistance, is a good example of areas of work that is not recognized. More generally, in the digital age, individuals organise their work and life around 'creativity' and the auto-activation of their own resources. The paradigm of unpaid labour in its various guises of internships, volunteer work, unpaid overtime, working for a 'very bad salary' or 'working for free', has expanded and appears as a significant feature of labour within the late capitalist economy.

1.2 The second focus can be more specific and concerns a character of precariousness emerging on the Net and in informational capitalism. We aim at drawing attention to unpaid work, that is to say, the set of unpaid volunteer activities performed on the internet. The analysis of these positions on the Web is strongly related to the spontaneous cooperation of knowledge, which is not considered a *property* in the Net but as something *for the use* of subjects. It's because of this collaborative production of ideas, images, codes, languages, but also objects, events, chances, relationships and

thus especially subjectivity and emotions, that unpaid jobs are typical of co-production. In order to go deeper into the phenomenology of the analysis of norms emerging on Web 2.0, we would like to take into consideration all those situations where consumers/users take part – for free – in the creation of innovation and value for a company, encouraged by the will to have fun, but also to gain recognition and visibility by relevant communities, and to see their reputation grow bigger on-line – thus also encouraged on the basis of an identity and prestige that other users assign to them. On the one hand, being part of a social network is often experienced by individuals as a rewarding social activity, engaging, and full of emotions. On the other hand, companies see user-generated content (by what is terms *prosumers*, i.e. a combination of producers and consumers) mainly as an activity and work offered for free, often occasional and fragmented, but one that feeds itself constantly (since it is self-gratifying). Emblematic of this are *crowdsourcing*, where users are invited to “produce” ideas, projects, etc., and invitations to *peer production*, for example to provide solutions to software flaws. Concerning all these activities, our goal is, on the one hand, to understand, recognize and quantify a different kind of labour, able to produce value but often hard to be recognized by the subjects because it thrives on blurred boundaries between indistinct and interchangeable levels of meaning: play, self-expression, unprofessional involvement, unpaid work and “exploitation”. Investigating all this today means going straight to the heart of the contradiction of the “new enclosures”. On the other hand, we also like to make more explicit the possibilities of workers to use the web in order to resist precarious labour.

2. Articles.

Contributions are sought that consider the forms that precariousness takes on the Web, and how it is experienced by subjects and discuss research results or present in-progress studies. Papers with a mainly theoretical content, experience reports in a narrative form, and in-depth interview texts will also be considered. Critical methodological considerations on how these transformations are, or ought to be, studied are also welcome.

The articles can refer to both Italian and foreign research, or they can be comparative. Authors can be both early-stage and established researchers. Preference will be given to papers that open new perspectives, approaches and points of view, thus enriching the discussion.

3. Terms of participation: how to submit.

To participate in the project please send an email with the title of your contribution and a short abstract (between 500 and 1000 words, including spaces) and a very short abstract in English (1000 characters including spaces) by **April 15, 2013** to "SOCIOLOGIA DEL LAVORO" freeandunpaidwork@gmail.com. After the reception of the application form, an e-mail of confirmation of acceptance will be sent by **April 30, 2013**. Selected contributions, (long papers of 40000 characters, including spaces)) are then to be sent, in Italian or in English, in accordance with the editorial rules of the Journal “SOCIOLOGIA DEL LAVORO” by **June 15, 2013**.

The Journal does not allow Editors to admit articles not properly formatted according to the editorial standards. Papers of length exceeding 40000 characters, including spaces, will be accepted only in relation to the particular relevance of the research and theoretical issues raised.

4. Publishing project. The process of papers selection consists of an anonymous double blind referee. Further revisions and amendments may be required to articles both with respect to format and content of the contribution by September 15, 2013. The edited volume with the collection of contributions will be submitted to the Publisher of “Sociologia del Lavoro” by December 1, 2013.

Organizational references. To submit articles and for further information, please contact :
"SOCIOLOGIA DEL LAVORO" <freeandunpaidwork@gmail.com>

Co-editors:

Federico Chicchi

Dipartimento di Sociologia

Università di Bologna

e-mail: federico.chicchi@unibo.it

Elisabetta Risi

Istituto di Comunicazione

Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM

e-mail: elisabetta.risi@gmail.com

Eran Fisher

Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication

The Open University – Israel

e-mail : eranfisher@gmail.com

Emiliana Armano

Dipartimento di Scienze Sociali e Politiche

Università Statale di Milano

e-mail: emi_armano@yahoo.it