

The multitudinous creativity of the contemporary capitalisms

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To put it simply, *Creative Capitalism, multitudinous creativity. Radicalities and Alterities* introduces a new way of understanding work. In other words, the volume edited by Giuseppe Cocco and Barbara Szaniecki indicates how we should understand work (or labor) through the new challenges of the contemporary capitalism. As Vladimir Sibylla Pires observes in his excellent essay, work and intellect merge into the multitude in the contemporary world and this marks the disintegration of the classical division of human experience into labor (*poiesis*), political action (*praxis*) and intellect (or mind life); a clear distinction until the Fordist era but which becomes meaningless today, since work begins to absorb many typical characteristics of political action (135).

Cognitive and creative capitalism, multitudinous creativity, democracy or the emergence of precariousness (defined via Bourdieu as “an expression of a new mode of domination, based on the institution of a generalized and permanent state of insecurity that aims at forcing workers to submit to and accept exploitation” (205) are, among others, the key notions in understanding this new vision on capitalism and its departure from the basic post-war capitalistic economies.

The book is organized in three sections, each of them including five studies. The first section analyzes from various perspectives this notion of *creative capitalism* in the context of the contemporary global crisis and the efforts the European Union countries and the developing countries in South America make in order to target a post-crisis horizon. The *creative* part of this process goes beyond the need of changing the classic, industrial kind of economy and points to a deep revitalization of the cities and the degraded areas.

The chapter opens very appropriately with an article which stresses on some of the central notions the volume dwells on. For instance, from Andrea Fumagalli's contribution one can get an articulate idea about what cognitive capitalism or the precariousness phenomenon designate. The cognitive bio-capitalism marks the eclipse of what was named the Fordist-Tayloristic capitalism and it is characterised by the mobility of labor. This means that labor "is dispersed in a production environment that has no immediate boundaries: it can be neither closed in a single space (like a factory could be) nor in a single organizational model (4)". However, the changes the cognitive capitalism comes with mark the emergence of the precarity of human labor. And Fumagalli doesn't necessarily talk here about the difficult labor conditions that marked the decisive distinction between life time and labor time in the old days. He points out the individual bargaining that comes together with the mobility of labour, a phenomenon which affects the existence itself of the individual. Thus, it is not only about the precarious conditions of labor anymore. Precarity is at the same time subjective, existential, and generalized. In this respect, the author points to the experiences and practices of precarious workers who started the San Precario movement in Milan and concludes by challenging the welfare policies to transform the market and the quality of labor in order to outline a new kind of wage and maybe a basic income.

Oscar Garcia Agustin extends the analysis on the creative capitalism by marking out its effects on economics and particularly on the community (the common, the social cooperation). His contribution enters the field of creative industries and points to activities such as design. Perhaps it is

relevant to add here what Eeva Berglund writes about design activism in her chapter from the second section of the book. Hence, she uses “activist design to refer to design-led interventions that are both utilitarian and politicized, that seek to change both everyday artifacts and the social practices and relations that come with them (156).” Nowadays, design activism is more of a social movement and it comes up with a creative alternative which actually prefigures a better world and questions the dominance of consumer values (155).

These kind of activities (apart from design we can add here publishing, performing arts, visual arts, etc.) can fundamentally shift the purposes of work from sheer economical goals to community use based purposes. However, creative capitalism gets a leading role in overcoming the economical crisis of our times, being one of the most solid sources of innovation, improving the economic potential of social relations and thus boosting economic growth (especially of the urban space) and avoiding unemployment. Ultimately, in the context of global precariousness, the author opens an interesting debate around the separation between creative (immaterial) work and non-creative labor. He questions the general denial of creative skills in those considered manual workers and thus asserts the necessity to develop alternatives to the dominant model imposed by creative capitalism, with the city being understood as a common right, the central place of the creation of new social bonds, the production of general intellect, and the transformation of public spaces (57).

An article I found very interesting from this first part of the volume is the one signed by Jose Neves and entitled *The Case of the Braga Stadium*. The Portuguese historian analyzes the actual Braga football stadium, a new architectural “wonder structure” which hints to democracy in various ways. For instance, the stadium was designed to only have two main stands symmetrically arranged along the sides of the pitch, facing each other. This configuration would give all the spectators a similar perspective at the pitch, unlike the other stadiums where stands extend behind the goals, wherefrom the view is significantly diminished (29). Another interesting thing about this stadium is that it is highly recognised as a great

example of a harmonious relationship between men and the surrounding environment, the stadium being raised between a valley and an erstwhile quarry. All in all, the Braga stadium is more than just a place where sport competitions take place; it is an artistic piece from which the city benefits and it is also a great example of how creative capitalism works. Souto Mora, the designer of the stadium is not necessarily a specialist in stadium designing but he was nevertheless selected to come up with an idea for building this stadium for the Euro 2004 Football Championship. This is to be understood as a yearning to go beyond the norms of globalization and commodification and “beyond an economy in which the division of work identifies the desire to produce with specialized tasks and their respective professional identities (36)”.

Veronica Gago starts her contribution by stating a central question: how is economy forced to become creative and flexible? She identifies two possible causes, namely the persistence and recurrence of crisis and the way the informal-popular economies (the proletarian micro economies, the market, *the urban fabric*, defined as the instituting sources of creativity) are intertwined with what the Argentinian sociologist calls the popular, vitalist pragmatics. In this respect, she focuses her analysis on an investigation carried out at the popular suburban market of Buenos Aires called Salada, widely known as the largest illegal market in South America. Practically the article investigates the flexibility and the mobility of the creative economy from a different perspective, namely analyzing the complex markets of the peripheral areas which more or less sabotage the main, legal, “original”, and approved markets of the capitalism world.

The first section concludes with Bruno Cava’s thoughts on the challenges of the Post-Fordist capitalism in the light of the network subjectivity. Nowadays we can define network as the front of a grand transformation of subjectivity. Basically, the Brazilian philosopher suggests that we should change our premises concerning networks, if we want to elaborate minimally effective strategies within globalized and integrated capitalism (86). Therefore it is important to build political fronts in network in order to resist the “free culture” supported

by proprietary companies such as Facebook or Google who make huge profit without directly charging the users a dime.

The articles present in the second section of the book focus on the other central theme of the book, that is the *Multitudinous Creativity: Radicalities and Alterities*. Here the focus shifts more on the urban space and on the issues the big cities encounter as a reaction to the side effects of the creative capitalism. The analysis of the new creative capitalism gets more practical with this second section of the book and “descends on the streets” of the cities, especially of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro, since some of the contributors of the volume apply their analysis on the issues regarding the Brazilian uprisings and protests of 2013. For instance, the Romanian psychoanalyst Raluca Soreanu proposes a new socio-political aesthetic paradigm starting from Guattari who identifies a modification of sensitiveness in the contact between bodies. Soreanu observes that the protests were generally invested with a violent dimension. She analyzes the events from a more phenomenological approach which leads her towards a new perspective on social proximity. Being closely surrounded by hundreds of thousands of faces and bodies (as it is the case during an uprising) the idea of social distance changes, as well as some other “phantasms” such as the traditional understanding of the individual being in opposition to the social. Regarding the recent Brazilian uprisings, bodies joined other bodies for a re-appropriation of public space (138).

In Rio de Janeiro the corporations and the governments include creativity and sustainability in their policies and projects as the key notions when it comes to recover, reorganize, reinvent, and revitalize the city for touristic, promotional, and mass culture reasons (take for instance *The Football World Cup* or *The Olympic Games*). Nevertheless, the new creative economy creates adverse effects and thus resistance from the urban side considered marginal, poor and not welcomed. As it is noted in the *Introduction* (xii), these adverse effects of creative capitalism include: *urban gentrification*, meaning that global cities combine monumentalism and clusters of creative workers and, thereby, legitimize the creativity of the few but expel the culture of the many; in other words, art, culture, and creativity

as a whole become institutionalized and, as Pires suggests in his article, cultural institutions such as museums start to create justification for the gentrification of the city; *social stratification* (the creative class in possession of creativity weakens the culture of the popular sectors that do not adhere to this faith), and *subjective precariousness* amongst those that depend on their creativity (their knowledge and practices) to survive, which comes together with the constant threat of forced and arbitrary removals from the urban places which are projected to be revitalized.

It was in this context when the Brazilian uprising took place and, as some of the contributors of the volume suggest, it was also an effect of the “carnivalizations”, a phenomenon widely spread in that part of the world. However, it is not about the “official” carnival of Rio we all know about, but the carnival of the multitude; a carnival against capitalism and against a specific model of the “creative city”, which brought together a variety of singularities taken to the streets by a multiplicity of causes, issues, and claims. That is perhaps why Pires uses the collocation *the uprising of the multitude*. Moreover, the carnival has always been assimilated as a space and a time of alternative creativity. Hence, as Clarissa Moreira suggests in her study, the use of the term *creative* becomes problematic and we should distinguish the morbid creativity, which systematically produces a silent social damage, from the vital creativity that develops new ways of living to survive and thrives in a balanced way (96). In this respect, the marginal, the independent part of the urban space has the potentiality to come up with more authentic, creative, and ecological solutions, which may enable new ways of life and which can rule out the mere economic and political goals.

The last section of the book focuses on the importance of networks, connections, connectivities, and new technologies as aspects of labor in the creative economy and their (creative) role in this new form of capitalism. Sarita Albagli opens the section with her article *The “Creative Turn”* suggesting that the new digital platforms and networks have become the new arenas for what creativity and innovation can produce. If in the industrial ages of capitalism the focus was on the exploitation of the

human mechanical energy, in the more recent times it became clear that the most important value the workers can produce would come from their creative acts, measures, and the decisions they make (176). Thus, it is the immaterial labor that actually matters most when it comes to the creative and innovative dimension. It is maybe important to add here what Bruno Tarin writes about immaterial labour in his contribution to this section. He states that “the immaterial, beyond representing just the production of intangible services and goods, reorganizes the forms of production oriented at industries.” At the same time, labor focuses more on creativity, cooperation, and intellectualization, hence the change of “the previous relations of division between production, circulation, and generation of wealth” (185).

In the old twentieth century capitalism, work was socially divided between creative work (arrested by a high class minority) and executorial, repetitive work of the masses which eventually led to a crisis, but also to the emergence of what we call cultural industry or creative capitalism. In this context, what is more valued is not the identity or the feeling of belonging (to a “glamourized” minority) but the collaborative dynamics of *the multitude*; and the digital platforms come here as the most appropriate space to receive this new mobile and relational kind of work. Under these circumstances, it is the less integrated, the poorest, and the most marginal social areas and groups that present the greatest mobility, flexibility, and capacity to adapt to change; and as the author suggests the policies of the creative capitalism should take them into consideration too and not just stick to the dominant.

The chapter entitled *Autonomy, Free Labor, and Passions as Devices of Creative Capitalism*, a well-informed co-research, brings us back to the topic of precariousness labor, this time regarding one of the core activities of the creative industry, namely the journalism and editing industry. It seems that being a journalist nowadays is not such a creative job as it used to be. The current bio-capitalist forms of exploitation are based on a mix of direct and indirect forms of control which directly affects the workers cognitive capacities (which include talents, creativity, and passion), decisive elements of the

production process today. The dynamics of journalism and publishing labor are directly influenced by phenomena such as marketization, increased direct control, and decreased autonomy. As a consequence, the creativity normally required during this kind of work process significantly reduces. “Creativity thus gets redefined and repositioned as a capacity to efficiently recompose given resources according to given objects and time frames” (210). Thus, new forms of coalition and resistance became promoted (via webside networks such as Re.Re.Pre) as the workers try to cope with experiences of precarization, changing forms of labor control, and daily work conflicts and start defending their rights, changing their working conditions and realizing their own interests (202).

There is a lot more information and valuable content that *Creative Capitalism, multitudinous creativity. Radicalities and Alterities* provides, than can be shortly presented in a limited 2000 + words book review. Nevertheless it should be noted that the volume edited by Giuseppe Cocco and Barbara Szaniecki is by all means a contemporary book. The themes analyzed here are more than up to date. Moreover, the editors have put together different perspectives from different parts of the capitalist world, gathering specialists from diverse fields of research, which is probably the most appropriate way to approach such a complex and controversial phenomenon as (creative) capitalism. Besides, as the editors realistically and responsibly state in the *Introduction*, “these changes of perspective about creativity show themselves as extremely important for generating a debate that faces the current challenges of contemporaneity without proposing magical solutions”.

Furthermore, as a personal opinion, I would say that the volume as a whole suggests that capitalism can be defined as a “work in progress”; a living social, economic, and political system which thus creates reactions and eventually provokes human creativity to search and find new social orders, new ways of understanding and using the common and the urban space, new ways of assuming the very notion of contemporary work. It seems that capitalism creates alternatives from within as it is a system which always expands and innovates.

Somehow, I believe that capitalism, in its cognitive-creative form, is as complex, multitudinous, diverse, and controversial as the La Salada, the largest informal market in Buenos Aires.

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