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The Relation Between Production, Labor Regimes and Leisure Forms: From slavery to digital capitalism

Olivier Frayssé

Introduction

- 1 The advent of the digital age has profoundly transformed the work and leisure environments of a growing number of people all over the world, and in many ways blurred the frontier between these two human activities, so that a reappraisal of the relationship between work and leisure is in order. To examine this changing relationship, one needs first to see how it has evolved over time. The focus here will be on the history of the relationship under specific conditions, capitalism, and in one country, the United States of America. For the historical background of this issue, we can draw on numerous studies of leisure activities that have pointed to their relations to specific historical and geographical, hence cultural work environments, and a few studies of the relationship itself. In their *Work and Leisure*, John T. Haworth and A. J. Veal have collected a wealth of information based on recent research on theoretical approaches and historical analyses (Haworth and Veal 2004). While they have stopped short of exploring the specific changes in leisure forms that the digital era has effected, they provide useful theoretical tools and explore many interesting issues. The second edition of Kenneth Roberts' *Leisure in Contemporary Society* (2006) devotes some space to this specific issue. On the other hand, the subject of leisure *per se* has not often been dealt with specifically by students of the digital era, who have focused more on work practices and organization, communication issues and economic mechanisms. In this regard, Payal Arora's inspirational *The Leisure Commons, A Spatial History Of Web 2.0* (2014) stands out as the one book that explores the issues of leisure in the digital age from an historical perspective, incorporating the work / leisure issue in its discussion of the concept of the commons, from gardens and parks to public spaces in general.

- 2 This paper has three objectives: first, to provide a theoretical approach inspired by Marx and Mingione to the connection between the way we work and the way we engage in leisure, based on the concepts of labor regime and production regime. Second, to present evidence of what this approach can contribute to the cultural history of the United States, and finally, to provide an assessment of the work / leisure relationship in the era of “digital capitalism”, to use the phrase coined by Dan Schiller (1999).
- 3 But first, we need to give a definition of capitalism, then explore the work / leisure dichotomy under capitalism. Then we will be able to define the notions of labor regime and regimes of production and see how it can be used to make sense of leisure forms in the history of the United States. Finally, we will see how the changes in work and leisure patterns that have occurred in the digital era confirm the central hypothesis, that labor regimes and production regimes to a very large extent determine leisure forms.

1. Capitalism

- 4 For a student of capitalism, Marx is not a bad place to start. When reading Marx, we can notice that he deals with the capitalist mode of production in two different ways.

1.1. The capitalist mode of production as one

- 5 First, he describes the capitalist mode of production as *one*, which can be distinguished from previous ones such as Asiatic or feudal. It is distinguished from the outset by two characteristic features: first, it produces its products as commodities; second, surplus-value is the direct aim and determining motive of production. “Capital essentially produces capital, and does so only as long as it produces surplus-value.” (Marx 1976 vol. 3: 1020).
- 6 In a footnote to the fourth German edition of Marx’s *Capital*, Friedrich Engels claimed that “the English language has the advantage of possessing two separate words for these two different aspects of labour” (Marx 1990: 138n16). The word *work* refers to all activities that produce differentiated values in use (a chair, a tomato, a show), regardless of the social context, while *labor* points to what produces undifferentiated values in exchange, labor time being the measure of this value. Unpaid labor time generates surplus value for the capitalist.
- 7 The production and capitalist appropriation of surplus value is obtained from human labor in two different forms. The first form is market subordination, when the appropriation of surplus value is done through what looks like market operations. This was the case of the putting out system that prevailed in the textile and clothing industry in England in the 18th century, the Lyon *fabrique* system in France that continued into the 19th century, or the price lists negotiated between carpenters and builders in the days of the Young Republic in the US: while the workers retained ownership of the means of production, they depended so much on capitalists for raw material inputs and access to markets that they had to work long hours and thereby create value for the capitalists who fixed the prices at which they bought their productions, below the full exchange value of the commodities they were producing.

This is what takes place today for “independent contractors”, “atypical workers”, or Uber drivers.

- 8 The second form involves an expropriation of the means of production of the workers by the capitalists and establishment of the wage relation, which involves formal subordination of labor to capital. Formal subordination under capitalism can take various forms: slavery, the master/servant relationship, and wage-based labor contracts, whether life-long employment, at will employment, zero-hour contracts, etc. This definition does not exist with Marx, for whom the distinction between formal subsumption and real subsumption points to something else, but what we are interested in here is not economic subjection but the social form of exploitation, which impacts the degree of control that capitalists have to exert on leisure forms.
- 9 The capitalist mode of production is characterized by the dominant part played by capitalist production in total production. Hence, Marx speaks of more or less developed capitalist *modes* of production, depending on the proportion of total production that is organized on capitalist principles, i.e., that produces values in exchange. There is no doubt, according to that definition, that we have been living under capitalism for at least two centuries, and have witnessed an extension of the capitalist mode of production everywhere and in every domain. On the other hand, identifying particular moments and specific spaces in this development of capitalism, particular capitalist modes of production, is also a necessity for the student of social and cultural history trying to make sense of leisure forms.

1.2. The capitalist mode of production as many

- 10 Capitalism involves “constant and daily revolutions in the mode of production” (Marx 1976, vol.3: 372), which suggests that each of these little daily “revolutions” changes some of the features of the capitalist mode of production while not altering its nature, which is to produce capital. When considering longer periods, Marx himself described a succession of stages: pre-industrial, where we can observe that market subordination is predominant as far as capital is concerned, and industrial, where formal subordination becomes the norm, when a labor contract is substituted for a commercial contract. Later students of capitalism paid attention to other dimensions of the conditions in which surplus value was produced: observers of the distribution of capital and the mechanisms through which it extracts surplus value speak of monopoly capitalism, financial capitalism, imperialism, state monopoly capitalism, “Wal-Mart” capitalism. Authors focusing on the characteristics of formal subordination, often in relation to the technical aspects of production identify pre-Fordism, Fordism and post-Fordism. Observers of the technical dimension of labor processes and the relation it bears with the mode of surplus-value production come up with concepts such as pre-industrial, industrial, post-industrial, digital, cognitive capitalisms, etc.
- 11 Furthermore, the development of the capitalist mode of production does not happen in a vacuum, but under specific technical, geographical and historical – therefore cultural – circumstances, hence a variety of modes of capitalist production, which led observers to distinguish between *models*: “Rhineland”, “Neo-Confucianist”, “Anglo-Saxon”, etc. (Albert 1991).
- 12 The history of capitalism in the US can similarly be considered as a succession of stages, each marked by the predominance of one mode of capitalism, and also by regional

variations, the case of Southern slavery as a mode of formal subordination under capitalism being the more visible.

1.3. The notions of labor regimes and regimes of production

- 13 This study of the connection between stages of capitalism and leisure forms will focus on two dimensions of these stages: the labor regimes in operation at one stage, and the production regimes.
- 14 I use labor regimes in the Mingione (1997: 158) sense: “the relatively coherent and permanent set of social rules which enable to mobilize the energy of workers in typical forms.” The typical forms would be, in the US case, slave, servant, wage earner (occasional, seasonal, at a point in the lifecycle, long life employment, professional mobility etc.), a particular role in a family production unit (artisan’s shops, agricultural or retail establishments), free-lancer / independent contractor, etc. This also involves culture and ideology, race and sex / gender assignations, etc. In other words, the concept addresses the question of what makes you work in a typical form.
- 15 The notion of production regimes is inspired by Marxism (capitalism as many modes of production, i.e. ways of producing commodities) and especially Gramsci’s approach to the Fordist system (Gramsci 1977): the typical forms of the work / labor process, which have an immediate effect on workers’ life at work. Production regimes are constantly revolutionized under capitalism, because of changes in technology linked with the advancement of sciences and techniques and the changing organic composition of capital (“labor saving devices”) under the pressure of competition and ultimately the iron laws of financial capitalism (which is the phase when financial capital becomes the driver rather than the auxiliary of production). In other words, the concept addresses the question of what working under specific conditions, in typical forms, does to you.
- 16 Several labor regimes may coexist on the same territory and at the same time, while one regime, because it concentrates the bigger share of value production or mobilizes the most important legal and institutional resources, is dominant. For example, in the Antebellum South, slavery (with several slavery sub-regimes depending on the nature of the occupation and the localization of the activity) was the dominant labor regime, but it coexisted competitively with independent farming, artisans, servants, apprenticeships, various types of free labor employment arrangements, etc. In the US, during the 1920-1970 period, original Fordism (the regimentation of workers that explicitly inspired both Communist Russia and Nazi Germany) and then what the French regulationist school called the “Fordist Compromise” (after the successful class struggles of the 1930s and the consolidation of the system during the war which made the production regime less oppressive) was the dominant production regime, which transformed the labor regime, but it coexisted with other regimes of production involving self-employment and non-Fordist work arrangements and prolonged the life of previous labor regimes, especially in the rural South. The dominant labor regime interacts with secondary regimes and profoundly influences society and culture, but is constantly in tension with the specificities of evolving regimes of production. For example, the temporalities associated with a labor regime, whether long (preparation for productive activity, productive phase, non-productive phase) or short (work day, week, year) become structuring elements of social life and cultural production that the revolutionizing of production regimes constantly challenges.

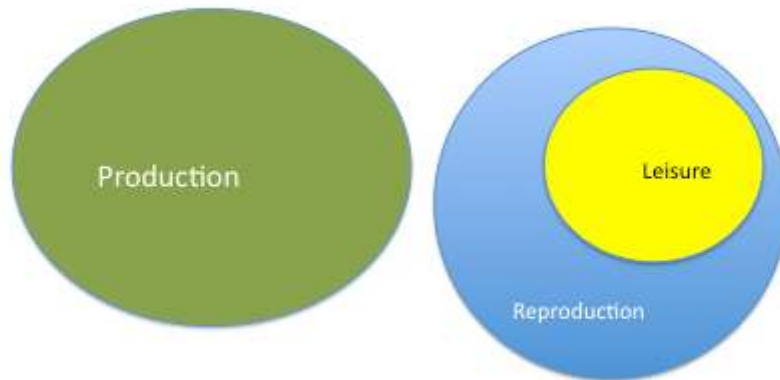
- 17 Articulating the two concepts enables us to understand specific situations and evolutions. Let us take two examples from the history of the textile industry in the Antebellum United States, in Massachusetts and Georgia.
- 18 In Massachusetts, “the Boston Associates, pioneer American industrialists, had built up Lowell and other towns like it to overcome early nineteenth-century rural and village prejudices and fears about factory work and life and in their regulation of working-class social habits hoped to assure a steady flow of young rural women (‘girls’) to and from the looms.” (Gutman 550). The case of the “Lowell girls”, who were not only well-paid, but encouraged to engage in genteel pursuits in their free time, shows how the prevailing labor regime (essentially rural, with a traditional restriction of women’s labor to the domestic economy and specific farming tasks, etc.) shaped the production regime in a first period (from 1814 to the mid 1830s). Then, the changes in the production regime resulting from competition (here, the severity of the clock, the intensification of work, reductions in wages, etc.) resulted in New England women organizing, making demands, striking, and then leaving the labor force (they were replaced by Irish immigrants). This helped shape the emerging labor regime as New England moved to an industrializing wage-based society.
- 19 In the Southern textile mills, the dominant labor regime, slavery, facilitated the creation of modern textile mills. Quoting a mill owner, Randall M. Miller observes: “In comparing the raw, undisciplined New England workers with bondsmen fresh from the fields, he favored the blacks. They were ‘early trained to habits of industry and patient endurance’.” (Miller 476). But the production regime soon challenged the labor regime: “The masters recognized their dependence on the bondsmen by offering incentives and rewards free time, overpayment, and internal mobility - to spur them on. Failing that, the masters inflicted punishment, but their growing dependence on slaves militated against excessive, sustained brutality, for the blacks would have none of it.” (Miller 474). Since the Civil War put an end to slavery, there is no way of knowing what changes the industrial production regime would have brought to the labor regime that was slavery.
- 20 The tension between a preexisting labor regime and a changing regime of production results ultimately in a change in the labor regime: for a while, the reshaped labor regime is in tune with the production regime, but the latter will change sooner or later, and tensions will reappear. During the period where the two regimes are aligned, the production regime is part of the labor regime, since it becomes the “normal” or “standard” way to engage in typical production activities, like assembly-line or waitress work in the 1940s.
- 21 But one can say that the labor regimes always contain the production regimes as one of their components. The stigma or valorization attached to a particular production regime (part of the old labor regime or of an emerging one) are part of the prevailing labor regime: the caste systems in Asia codified that dimension of labor regimes; in the West, it is rather cultural systems that define “good” and “bad” production regimes at a given time within a labor regime. The tensions born from the disappearance, due to changes in the production regime, of the place one’s occupation used to have in the labor regime (underpaid, procedure-driven teachers), or the emerging of a new labor regime in one’s production regime (on-call nurses) are cases in point.

- 22 The tension between labor regimes and production regimes participates in the shaping of class conflicts, influences the modes of organization of workers, and helps define the framework in which leisure activities are conducted.

2. Production and reproduction

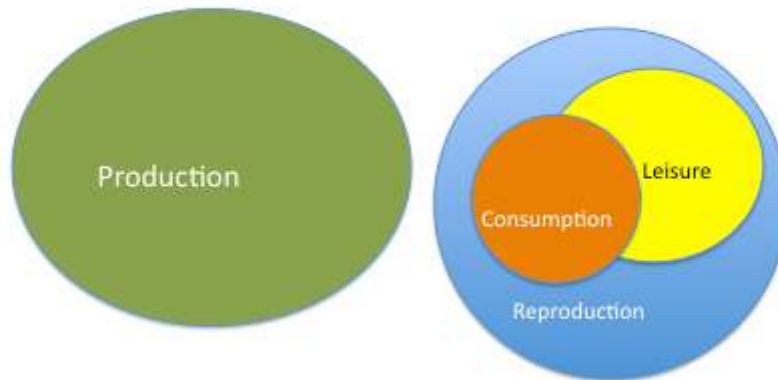
- 23 Obviously, the forms of leisure of laboring classes, rather than those of the “leisure class” identified by Veblen (Veblen 1899), are what we are interested here. How can we conceptualize leisure for the purpose of this inquiry? I will use the definition of leisure as residual (Roberts 1999: 5), not only in time management (time freed from working and other obligations), but also, fundamentally, in terms of power (moments when a person is left to her own devices, free to do what she pleases). As a matter of fact, the word leisure (*licere*) has its roots in the notion of the license, permission, given to an individual to do something else than what is expressly demanded by those exercising power over her by virtue of the type of subordination that shapes their relationship.
- 24 This definition is consistent with the observation by Marx that “the realm of freedom begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends” (Marx vol.3: 959-960). This labor determined by necessity has two forms: productive labor, that produces surplus-value, and reproductive labor, which reproduces this labor power. We can thus distinguish between a sphere of production, where the labor power of humans is expended, and the sphere of reproduction, where it is reproduced. The sphere of leisure is included in the sphere of reproduction, as we can see in the language of “rest and re-creation”, entertainment, which comes from *entretien*, in the sense of maintenance, and also amusement, or desport, as a necessary diversion from the torture that is work in one of its dimensions (Frayssé 2014). Leisure is only a part of that sphere, that includes sleep, and reproductive labor, usually performed by women, such as preparing food, clothing, rearing the next generation of workers, etc.
- 25 There is obviously a contradiction between the necessity for employers, especially direct employers (in the case of formal subordination) to relax control during a specific leisure time (whether as paternalistic charity or as included in a labor contract) to enable reproduction, and the necessity to keep control to ensure restoration of control when back to work both in terms of ability to work, willingness to work and submission to control, which in turn depends on the production regime. Indirect employers (in the case of market subordination) must also pay attention to the leisure time of workers to make sure that enough manpower is available (this depends on labor market conditions) and that workers will be willing to engage in further “commercial” relations when rested. This explains the huge role of employers, the ruling class as such, in organizing the leisure time of workers, through direct control, social control, notably in the form of morality (since *licere* and *decere*, what ought to be done, the decent thing, have always been correlated, issues of morality inform the debate on what is permitted), and with the help of political authorities. Their actions inform the labor regimes, since this social control determines “the relatively coherent and permanent set of social rules which enable to mobilize the energy of workers in typical forms”.

Diagram 1: the original division between production and reproduction spheres



- 26 Three questions arise: what is the sphere of necessity and where does it end, or conversely, what is the space reserved for leisure? To which extent is employer control over the sphere of what is permitted necessary? How is this control exercised: through prohibition, injunction, education, seduction? The question that we shall deal with within the space of this article is the issue of control.
- 27 Under capitalism, one obvious dimension of the control needed over the leisure sphere is the maximization of the consumption sphere within the leisure sphere, as soon as the wage society is in place: workers must buy and consume what has been produced so that surplus value is realized. This became particularly true when mass production demanded mass consumption, and organized consumer credit (as opposed to store credit) developed at the end of the 19th century. The turning point in the development of consumer credit was indeed 1919, when General Motors created General Motors Acceptance Corporation, its financing arm, which was one of the factors that helped it surpass Ford in the mid-1920s. As Daniel Boorstin wrote, “it was hardly an exaggeration to say that the American standard of living was bought on the installment plan” (Boorstin 426).

Diagram 2: the growth of consumption activities in the reproduction sphere



- 28 The other dimension is the social control of what is done in leisure times and spaces. The degree of social control over the leisure sphere of the laboring classes exercised by the class in power depends mainly on three dimensions of the labor regime: first, the nature of the labor process and what it demands from the workers (production regime): what kind of work is performed, hence what is required for the reproduction of the labor power of these workers (for example, some types of labor allow for, and sometimes require drunkenness to offset the most terrifying and gruesome aspects of the tasks, as soldiers know, whereas others demand sobriety); second, the mode of subordination of workers, i.e. how much and which type of control is needed / available during leisure time; thirdly, the type of class formation and struggle, expressed both quantitatively in the demands of the workers for more time “off the cross”, and qualitatively in the aspirations to autonomy during leisure time of the laboring class, that translate into hiding, transgression, negotiation, and revolt. Since leisure spaces / times are limited, competition between the classes, sexes, and races, for these spaces introduces another dimension of conflict. Thus the production regimes, the labor regimes and their interaction and conflictual character, together with other types of social conflicts define and structure the leisure times and spaces. Both the productive and reproductive spheres contain *dispositifs*, to use the Foucauldian notion, but the people that are meant to behave in a certain way by them constantly challenge these *dispositifs* in several ways, and this also holds true in the realm of leisure.

3. Practical application of these notions to US history

- 29 To illustrate the usefulness of these notions to understand the history of leisure in the US, four examples from different periods may be shortly mentioned.

30 The first example is that of the slave holidays. One dimension of these holidays that was regularly reported by former slaves was that slaveholders insisted on getting the slaves drunk during these holidays, where they enjoyed a degree of freedom. They got sick for want of habit, so that a connection between freedom, foolishness and pain was established in their minds, and they returned to work happily (Douglass 47-8). Here we can see how subordination during the leisure time served to enforce the disciplines of hard labor in working periods. Douglass's and other slaves' resistance to the getting drunk schemes of masters, also based on Christian morality, was evidence of the larger conflict about the institution of slavery itself (Frazier 52).

31 The second example is that of public parks, which were largely designed to provide clean and Americanizing leisure for 19th century workers, especially immigrants, as part of establishing a labor regime consistent with industrialization. In his address to the American Social Science Association of 1870, Frederick Law Olmsted made a case for public parks as first enabling the reproduction of the labor power of workers in the unhealthy urban environment: "Is it doubtful that it does men good to come together in this way in pure air and under the light of heaven, or that it must have an influence directly counteractive to that of the ordinary hard, hustling working hours of town life?" (Larice and Macdonald 42). But the moral imperative, providing an alternative to unclean and immoral pastimes is just as important:

Again, consider how often you see young men in knots of perhaps half a dozen in lounging attitudes rudely obstructing the sidewalks [...]. There is nothing among them or about them which is adapted to bring into play a spark of admiration, of delicacy, manliness, or tenderness. You see them presently descend in search of physical comfort to a brilliantly lighted basement, where they find others of their sort, see, hear, smell, drink, and eat all manner of vile things. Whether on the curbstones or in the dramshops, these young men are all under the influence of the same impulse which some satisfy about the tea-table with neighbors and wives and mothers and children, and all things clean and wholesome, softening, and refining (Larice and Macdonald 42).

32 And the park is the place where Victorian ideals of genteel family life, complete with gender roles, can be impressed on the masses. Olmsted describes the achievements of New York's Central Park:

There is one large American town, in which it may happen that a man of any class shall say to his wife, when he is going out in the morning: "My dear, when the children come home from school, put some bread and butter and salad in a basket, and go to the spring under the chestnut tree where we found the Johnsons last week. I will join you there as soon as I can get away from the office. We will walk to the dairy-man's cottage and get some tea, and some fresh milk for the children, and take our supper by the brook-side" and this shall be no joke, but the most refreshing earnest. (Larice and Macdonald 43).

33 As a matter of fact, many workers rapidly turned these leisure spaces into political spaces where they would express their aspirations for "time for what we will", which often fell short of Victorian expectations in terms of behavior and included demands for the 8-hour day (Rosenzweig 1983).

34 A third example would be the totalitarian organization of leisure under Ford, when the harsh demands of the regime of production on the assembly-line required an overhaul of the labor regime. Off-duty workers were enrolled in sporting activities to keep them healthy, were required to attend church services and educational courses to keep them moral, and the fitting character of their behavior during their time off was

scientifically organized and monitored by Ford's "Sociological department" which functioned as an engineering department of *dispositifs* and a secret police. The aim was to prepare the workers for the unrelenting disciplines of the assembly line, and temperance was of the essence (Ford was a staunch supporter of Prohibition... and a promoter of the 40-hour week, so that workers could have leisure). Workers resisted the disciplines imposed on both labor time and leisure time by organizing inside the factory and taking over the management of leisure activities (Lichtenstein 1995). At the same time, one way to adapt while at work in the Fordist factory, as shown by the famous study by Michael Burawoy (Burawoy 1979), was to inject into the labor process itself elements traditionally associated with leisure, such as play, thus proving Huizinga right in his anthropological approach of play as a quintessentially human activity (Huizinga 1951).

- 35 Contemporary examples abound. One can mention the importance of the leisure activities of workers to recruiters in order to find the appropriate candidate for a specific job within a specific labor regime: recruiters, looking mainly for healthy temperate churchgoers in Fordist days now target diverse types, such as humanitarian activists or extreme sports adepts, who have perfected their particular working skills in their leisure time.

4. Leisure and work in the Digital Age: solution and dissolution?

- 36 One of the promises of the Digital age was to make work more like play, a leisure-like activity, thus providing a solution to the problem posed by the competition between the time one has to devote to labor and time "off the cross", free time, a competition that has always been at the center of class struggles. Much has been written about the blurring frontier between work and play, work time and leisure time, workspaces and leisure spaces (Scholz 2012).

4.1. The myth of the idealized digital production regime

- 37 In a typical Google work environment, members of the "creative class" (Florida 2003) develop new ideas while playing table tennis and toy with them when back in front of their screens. In the production regime of the "symbolic analysts" identified by Robert Reich (1991), lifestyles born with the counterculture are often a prerequisite for recruitment in the cultural industries and no obstacle in the hiring of geeks.
- 38 Indeed the counterculture was essentially a rebellion against Fordism that took place in the leisure sphere, but paid attention to the production sphere and looked for a change in both spheres, and in the connection between them: in the countercultural project, mass production by robotized workers would be replaced by customized artisan productions, consumption was to be tailored to the needs of individuals and not the necessary mass outcome of mass production (Frayssé 2015). The concept of digital artisan developed by Barbrook (1997) accounts for the changes to be made on the production side. On the consumption side, the sharing economy would replace the vertical submission of consumers to marketing schemes of companies, both equalizing and inferiorizing, by cooperation and dialogue between producers and consumers, among consumers themselves, and even coproduction by producers and consumers

(one of the meanings of prosumerism), on a horizontal plane. Because of its anti-Fordist origins, participants in the counterculture could adapt to, and inform, this obviously post-Fordist production regime, reshape the labor regime accordingly, and thus provide an ideology for new aspects of contemporary capitalism. As a matter of fact, the cultural paradigm of the new labor regime is so strong that even the logistics employees at Amazon, who perform drudgework in a Fordist-Taylorist *dispositif*, are constantly reminded that they are supposed to “work hard, have fun, make history” (Malet 2013).

- 39 The result is that what was touted as a solution to the contradiction between two types of human activities, work and play, seems to have resulted in the dissolution of these categories for the tiny minority that “works hard, has fun, and makes history.” One is tempted to question the reality of even this production regime in terms of autonomy, though, since the economic and social pressure on these “knowledge workers” is huge in terms of economic performance (production) and stage performance (be a team member and play with your teammates).
- 40 The frontier between work and play might also look blurred for the millions who perform a growing part of their work and spend a growing part of their leisure time on their computers, tablets and smartphones, but a closer analysis of their production regimes is needed, and, first, of the conditions for their existence.

4.2. The conditions of the new production regimes

- 41 First, the productive sphere is expanded when consumer goods are turned into producer goods. Most visible is the triple use of computers, tablets and smartphones, which are versatile by nature. One can work on them, but also use them to purchase on-line entertainment, to play and communicate. The omnipresence of these machines in our daily lives has consequences on the home / travel / work categories: the combination of spatial and time arrangements are infinite, as you work “in the comfort of your own home”, attend to your emails in the bus, and take five minutes here and there in your office to surf on the Net, text or email family and friends.
- 42 Second, the “sharing economy” turns consumer goods such as houses (Airbnb) and cars (Uber) into producer goods. These are also highly symbolic goods, symbolic of the home, the private, autonomy and power (“an Englishman’s home is his castle”), of freedom from the obligation to grow capital and freedom to do “what we will”. Subjectively, these goods become tainted with the stigma of obligation as we interiorize the profit motive into our interiors. Objectively, the work we perform to get our houses ready for “guests” and our cars tidy, the handing out of house keys, the driving of clients, etc. produces surplus value, one part of which is appropriated by the platform we depend on to rent out our possessions and market our labor power. This is clearly a form of market, not formal, subordination, although Uber drivers in the US have successfully challenged the commercial nature of their contract, as part of the campaign against misclassification that has been going on for several years. It is part of the new labor regime marked by market subordination.
- 43 Third, the labor market relies increasingly on “amateurs”, who engage in “serious leisure” for free, to establish themselves as brands, or for profit. Wikipedians produce what encyclopedia writers used to get paid for.

- 44 What labor regimes are permitted by these new conditions, and what are the controls that are exerted on workers during their leisure time? Here we must distinguish between what the workers usually consider as work, and what comes out as labor because it produces surplus value but is not regarded as work by the people who provide that labor, i.e., some forms of prosumer labor.

4.3. The new labor regimes of the digital age

- 45 The new paradigmatic production regime tends to be the logged-in labor regime (Huws 2016). Wherever you happen to be, work starts when you log in, and stops when you log out. It is the contemporary version of the clock-in regime used in factories. Here we must distinguish between formal and market subordination, which imply different and competing labor regimes, and between different types of work.
- 46 When labor is formally subordinated, that is when the wage relationship exists formally, or is disguised as independent contract work (Uber), the logged-in regime works in two different ways, depending on the nature of the tasks.
- 47 For repetitive tasks, there is a strict monitoring of the number of hours spent actually using whatever software your company or “client” has decided you should be working with, the length and content of your conversations if you are a call-center operative, etc. The labor process itself is thus closely monitored, and we can speak of this production regime as neo-Taylorism. The distinction between labor time and time off is clear-cut. The training period for these tasks is very short, there is an ample pool of workers willing and able to take up these jobs, including on-call workers, and new employees are not expected to work as quickly as experienced ones. Thus absenteeism or turnover are not a problem. This is different from the situation on assembly lines, where the need to have the same workers showing up every morning to work at a predetermined rhythm was the reason why Ford had to control both their loyalty to the firm with high wages and their capacity to perfectly perform their tasks, which had led him to make the reproduction of their labor power a scientific matter, and hence to control their activities during their leisure time. The only control that the service companies we are dealing with here need on the leisure time of their employees is control of the image of their companies, and absence of anti-capitalist activities. Here, the surveillance tools provided by the Internet, especially the monitoring of Facebook profiles, enables firms to exclude applicants or fire employees when they have engaged in activities that damage the company’s image or pose a threat of labor organizing, a surveillance that has been extended to tenants by landlords (Dewey 2016).
- 48 When tasks are more diverse, and do not need to be performed immediately and / or sequentially, the logged-in labor regime does not involve control of the process, but of the result. You may log in at any time you want, provided you get things done. The time pressure is not applied during long sequences, bounded by clear limits, but throughout your life, as long as you are employed. Catching up with professional emails at any moment is routinely expected by supervisors, colleagues and customers alike, so that every second of your waking lives is potentially or actually devoted to work. The same surveillance tools of the leisure time apply, i.e. as far as the image of the company or the willingness to organize are concerned. Here, leisure monitoring through Social Networking Sites (and forced participation in them) brings employer’s control of the leisure sphere to unprecedented heights (Fuchs et al. 2013). And, conversely, a case has

been made for allowing workers to wander away from their tasks to get a breathing space by cyber-loafing to increase productivity, thus also “manufacturing consent” in the Burawoy sense (Chen and Lim 2011).

- 49 When market subordination prevails, the division between complex tasks and repetitive tasks remains somewhat valid in terms of time management but get blurred too: for complex work like tasks contracted for on Upwork (the 2015 new name for result of a merger between Elance and oDesk in 2014), such as writing, translating, fixing software bugs, etc., the usual commercial contract spells an expected result and a deadline. It is up to the freelancer to manage her time, but the pressure of the usually short deadline means that when you accept a task, you must forget about time off for the duration.
- 50 For repetitive tasks such as performed by Amazon Mechanical Turk workers, each task (HIT) comes in with an amount of time in which the worker must complete the HIT, and an amount of time after which the HIT will no longer be available to workers, which means an apparently stricter discipline. In both cases, looking for tasks that you want to perform on the basis of labor time/reward, the reputation of clients, etc. is a very time-consuming task that you are not paid for, and which also creates surplus-value for the platforms. In both cases, the consequence is that leisure time, as residual time off work, is to be found between moments of task searching and task performing. Here economic necessity is the primary engine.
- 51 In terms of control of your leisure time, surveillance is not performed by the final clients, but by the platforms, that check both your appreciation of their services and your willingness to organize with other workers to obtain better rates by calling employers to account. Workers escape this surveillance by setting up their own platforms, where they exchange anonymously on these subjects. Unsurprisingly, low-paid workers, geographically concentrated in the US and Canada, have more experience in that field than better-paid freelancers, working from the whole world, the US but also India, the Philippines or Africa and the Middle-East, and have been using sites like Turker Nation and MTurk Forum, or even installed the Turkopticon application, which enables them to offer find “ways of supporting one another in context of their existing practices. The system allows workers to make their relationships with employers visible and call those employers to account.” (Irani and Silberman 616).

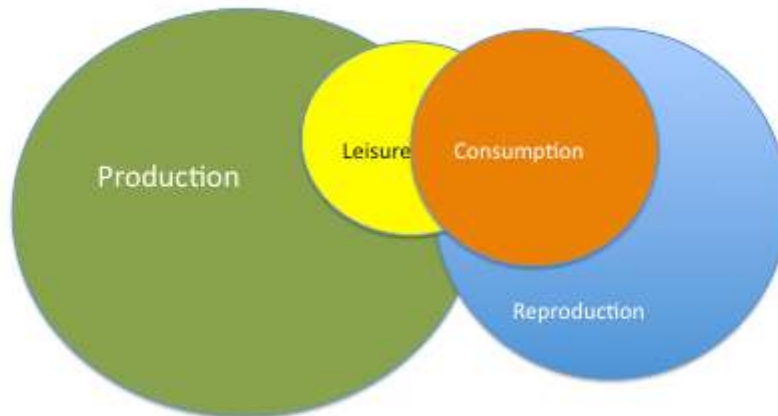
4.4. Specificities of prosumer labor

- 52 Under the name prosumer labor or work, we can distinguish five completely different realities: first, the coproduction of goods and services by consumers, which was the countercultural project and exists marginally at the artisan level, but has long been the norm for the professions, as patients describe their symptoms, comply with prescriptions, report progress, etc., or when clients provide the material that lawyers work on; second, the shifting of tasks from the company to the consumers: it started with self-service “super”-markets in the 1930s, and has profited immensely from digital devices, starting with the touch-tone keypad in 1963 (Palm 2015) and culminated when millions could navigate along the pages of platforms to input product details and delivery information, effect payment, download tickets, vouchers and invoices (and

print them originally, but increasingly just download them on a device). These two first types do not appear like leisure at all, it is work all right and feels like it.

- 53 The third form of prosumer labor is the “labor of watching” described by Dallas Smythe for TV viewers forced to watch ads and thereby build brands and which is omnipresent on the Web (Fuchs 2015).
- 54 The fourth form, content generation, has all the characteristics of leisure activities: posting a photo on Instagram or Facebook, writing a comment on a newspaper article, “liking” a product, brand, comment, event or person on Facebook, rating hotels on Tripadvisor, etc. is done voluntarily, it often contains less of the “toil and trouble” characteristics that Adam Smith ascribed to labor and provided as a rationale why labor should be paid (Smith vol. 1 1976: 82) than bridge, bassoon or softball playing. Viewed subjectively, it is leisure pure and simple. From an objective economic viewpoint, since these contents become the platform’s property, it is labor, generating surplus value that is appropriated by the platform. The success of this type of crowdsourcing depends on the crowd’s members’ willingness to spend some of their leisure time in these particular leisure activities, and platforms compete for this leisure / labor time, via reminder emails or, in the case of Facebook, by integrating all the communication needs of users into the platform.
- 55 The fifth and last form is data generation. The data we produce routinely and more or less unwittingly when surfing the Net at leisure during our leisure time are stored and analyzed for a variety of commercial purposes. “Big data” gathering is the digital form of the labor of being watched. Cookies that help track consumer behavior are hosted for free in the Internet user’s digital device, whereas AC Nielsen pays (a little) to install its “people meters” in the homes of the people it wants to watch (and for the labor of pressing the buttons to tell them whether you are watching or not), and Nielsen Audio (formerly Arbitron) pays 45 dollars a month plus goodies to have you carry their device measuring your exposure to radio signals (Fong-Torres 2010). The difference with content generation is that the labor we provide is not connected to the form of leisure we engage in, but with the substance of our leisure, the time spent on leisure activities on the Net. The digital Fable of the bees has us buzzing around for our own diverse purposes and producing honey for the platforms.
- 56 Since consumption and leisure activities have themselves become part of the production sphere, the arrangement of the various spheres is reorganized.

Diagram 3: the overlapping spheres in the digital era



Conclusion

- 57 In the forms of content generation and data production, and to some extent of exposure to ads, the digital era thus provides a solution to the contradiction between two imperatives of capital: the maximization of unpaid labor time versus the necessity to preserve reproductive time. The more time we spend surfing, the more labor we provide, and the more we reproduce our labor power, both for paid and unpaid work. The multiple pathologies that arise from spending our leisure time on the Net, starting with lack of physical exercise and inability to concentrate for long periods, or memory loss (Carr 2011) may have huge social and personal costs, but they usually do not get in the way of reproducing the specific types of labor power that are demanded by the digital economy, rather the opposite, since the forms of work and leisure activities, and the skills they develop, converge, so that, here again, the leisure forms are aligned with the labor regime.

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ABSTRACTS

article uses the notions of stages of capitalism, labor regimes and production regimes to explore the relationship between the way people work and their leisure. It starts with a clarification of what is meant by the capitalist modes of production, proceeds to define labor and work regimes, and analyzes the specific demands made by various labor regimes and production regimes on the leisure time of workers, which it illustrates by examples taken from the history of leisure in the US. The advent of digital capitalism, rooted in the US, has profoundly transformed the work and leisure environments of a growing number of people all over the world, and in many ways blurred the frontier between these two human activities, so that a reappraisal of the relationship between work and leisure is in order, especially from the angle of prosumer capitalism, which is the subject of the last part.

Cet article utilise les concepts de stades du mode de production capitaliste, de régime de travail et de régime de production pour explorer la relation entre la façon dont nous travaillons et nos loisirs. Dans un premier temps, la notion de mode de production capitaliste est explicitée, celles de régime de travail et de régime de production définies, et les conséquences de chaque régime de travail et de production sur les loisirs des travailleurs analysées, ce qui est illustré par des exemples tirés de l'histoire des loisirs aux États-Unis. L'avènement du capitalisme numérique, une invention américaine, ayant largement bouleversé à la fois les procès de travail et les loisirs, la relation entre les régimes de production et de travail du numérique et les loisirs est l'objet de la dernière partie, qui porte une attention particulière au travail du consommateur.

INDEX

Keywords: capitalism, labor regime, regime of production, digital capitalism, leisure, production, reproduction, United States, history, prosumerism

Mots-clés: capitalisme, capitalisme numérique, régime de travail, régime de production, loisirs, production, reproduction, histoire, États-Unis, travail du consommateur, prosumérisme

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