

IMMATERIAL

LABOUR

UNION

ADVER-  
TISEMENT

#2



## **Editors' Note**

*Lidia Pereira and Rosie Gram*

We bid you all welcome to the second number of the Immaterial Labour Union Zine! The issue at hand revolves around the theme "Advertisement on Social Media". The process of marketing audiences for economic surplus was exposed and analysed in Dallas Smythe's 1977 essay "Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism". According to Smythe, all non-sleeping time is work that we commit to the communications industry, by means of our labour power being sold to advertisement agencies. What with our data being sold to advertisers, corporate entities having their own pages and accounts on mainstream social media, it is clear that we are ever more a part of Smythe's commodified audience. We hope you will enjoy the valuable contributions we have received, which will further reflect on our experiences of ad-mediated reality and the effects of this phenomena for socio-political movements, as well as for our own subjectivity.

### **Contributions by:**

Christian Fuchs, Daniel Aguilar Ruvalcaba, Lidia Pereira, Lucia Dossin, Mathijs van Oosterhoudt, Simone Cassiani, Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ ιναυστραλια

All contributions to the zine, unless otherwise specified, are licensed under the GNU General Public License<sup>1</sup>.

### **Exceptions:**

Christian Fuchs's contribution is licensed under the CC BY-NC-ND License<sup>2</sup>.

Daniel Aguilar Ruvalcaba's contribution is licensed under the CC BY-SA License<sup>3</sup>.

---

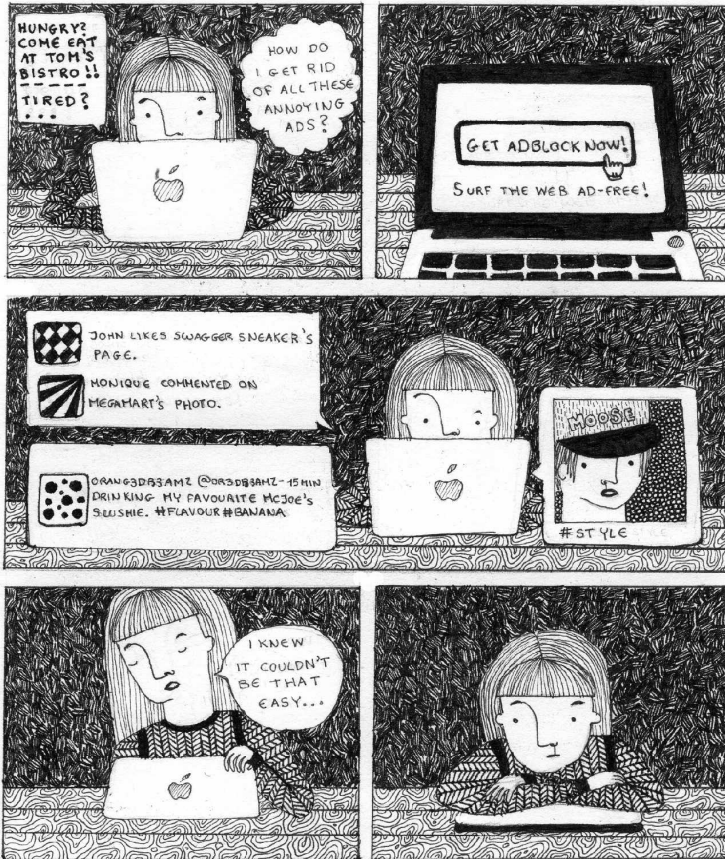
1: <https://GNU.org/copyleft/gpl.html>

2: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

3: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

## AdBlock

Lidia Pereira and Mathijs van Oosterhoudt



## Cookies

Rosie Gram

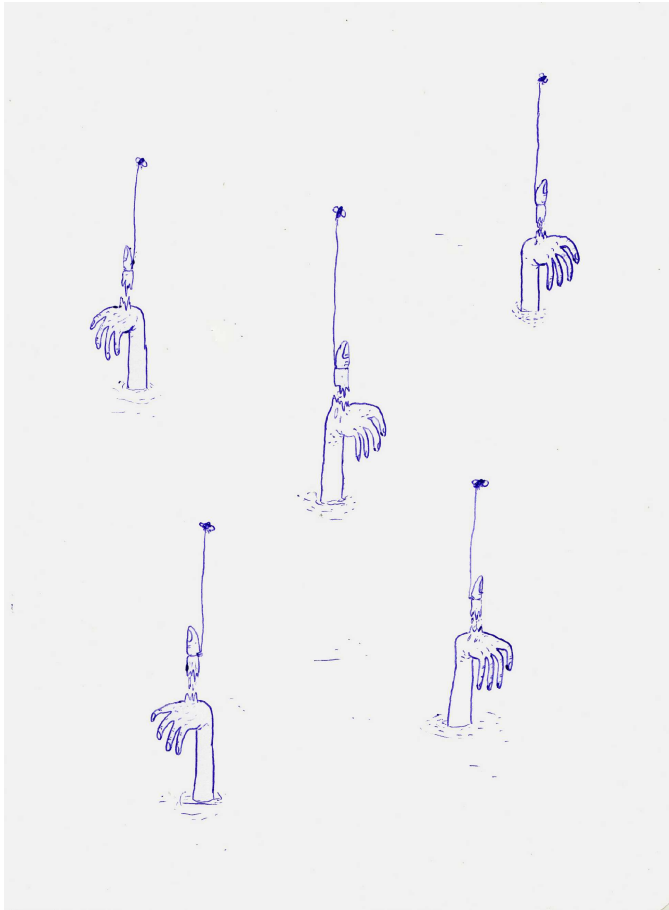
In March 2015, an article<sup>1</sup> on the Technology section of "The Guardian" reported Facebook's misuse of user and non user data, actively breaching EU law. A report, commissioned by the Belgian data protection agency and conducted by researchers of the Centre of Interdisciplinary Law and ICT, the University of Leuven and Vrije Universiteit Brussels, had been published recently which denounced the abusive practices enforced by the company in regards to the tracking of user data for targeted advertising purposes. These practices extend beyond the platform itself, and apply to any website making use of its Facebook's services (e.g. "share" and "like" buttons). This is possible by the placing of browser cookies which retrieve users' online behaviour information. There are options offered for opting-out of advertisement on diverse online platforms, Facebook included. However, as the report shows, for EU citizens that just means the placing of a new cookie on the user's computer.

You can read the report @ <http://www.law.kuleuven.be/icri/en/news/item/facebooks-revised-policies-and-terms-v1-2.pdf>

1: <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/mar/31/facebook-tracks-all-visitors-breaching-eu-law-report>

## The Extraction of Likes by the Flies of Commerce

*Daniel Aguilar Ruvalcaba*



## Toil

*Simone Cassiani*

Great Zuckerboss, delightful Schmidt master,  
Prithee! Tell me, what's my price on the market?  
I'll give you some more content, for more accurate suggestions  
I swear I'll be productive and share with my connections.  
Shape me profitable, formulate your ideal subject  
Groom me to your investors, I want to look product perfect.

Bullseye! Another fool falls - it's investment!  
It went viral and took some balls  
But product sold - you own an audience.

It's been a long day at work today...  
With data I toil, with adverts you pay.

## Union campaigning in the social media and advertising age: Perspectives for a digital labour union

Christian Fuchs

Global advertising investments have in 2013 amounted to US\$ 513.4 billion, up 9% from 2008, the year the new world economic crisis started. The share of Internet advertising has in these years increased from 12% to 27%, making this realm the second largest sphere of ad investment after television. In the same time period, ad investment share in newspapers has dropped from 25% to 16%, contributing to the survival crisis of news journalism and print media. Online advertising allows targeting consumers based on constant surveillance of their online behaviour. Especially in times of crisis, when businesses worry more than usual about bankruptcy and losses, such a shift from print to online advertising is therefore likely to take accelerated pace.

A commodity is a good that under capitalist conditions is sold on capitalist markets in order to achieve profits. Wherever there is a commodity, there is labour that creates it. Google, Facebook and Twitter are no commodities because there is "free" access to them. But this freedom comes at the (zero) price of digital labour: There is a data commodity created by users' digital labour that online advertisers exploit in order to achieve monetary profits. In the case of Google and Facebook, this strategy works: Google in 2014 was with profits of US\$ 13.7 billion the world's 39th largest company, Facebook with profits of US\$ 2.9 billion the 280th largest. Don't be mistaken: These two Internet giants are not communications companies, but the world's largest advertising agencies. The WWW is a global information and communication space dominated by advertising that reduces us to the status of digital workers and consumers. This model is however not universally successful: Twitter is making loss after loss, increasing its losses from US\$ 132 million during 2014's first quarter to US\$ 162 million in 2015's first three months. Targeted advertising is a volatile organisation model.

Labour unions fight for workers' rights vis-à-vis capital. The most common tradition in this respect is making demands for wage

## Outbursts for Sale

Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ ιναυστραλια

The image displays three sequential screenshots of a Facebook status update interface. Each screenshot shows the top navigation bar with 'Update Status', 'Add Photos/Video', and 'Create Photo Album' options. Below the navigation bar, the status text is visible, followed by a row of icons (camera, person, smiley, location) and a 'Friends' dropdown menu with a 'Post' button.

The first screenshot shows the status text: "it was quite interesting when I realised that, although I've been using many different facebook profiles and none of them included any relevant info to my professional life, not even a single reference, at one point I was getting ads about library equipment like book trolleys. yes im a librarian yes".

The second screenshot shows the status text: "The borders between selling and storytelling are thin. Storyselling is the creative act of unpacking the narratives of labour through social media advertisement".

The third screenshot shows the status text: "Over 1 billion people. We'll help you connect with the right ones." Advertisement here is not about reaching your audience, because your audience is already here".

# Spontaneity

Mathijs van Oosterhoudt



increases. Advertising relates to consumption and has therefore not traditionally been an issue that unions care about. It was rather predominantly left as political field to consumer organisations. But if consumers more and more become workers, then the situation changes. Union activities and demands then have to change.

But social media's digital workers do not get wages, which is why Facebook and Google's profits are so large. Imagine a strong and powerful digital labour union having many social media users as committed members. Should it demand wages for social media use? The problem is that such demands do not foster alternatives to the corporate Internet and leaves existing and future alternatives in a precarious state. So what should a digital labour union do and demand?

Corporate taxes are extremely low today. But capitalist companies massively exploit unpaid and paid labour, including unremunerated labour that creates commons such as communication, social relations, knowledge, education, culture, etc. A basic income funded by corporate taxation is a social wage. But basic income can be made up of different components. One of it can be a wage for the creation of the information and communication commons that advertising-funded media exploit.

Let us assume the world's advertising revenues of US\$ 513.4 billion are charged by an ad tax of 10%. The resulting US\$ 51.34 billion could via participatory budgeting be distributed to the Earth's 7.2 billion inhabitants. A media cheque of US\$7 per year could be generated that citizens could collectively use for funding alternative, non-commercial, non-profit, community-community/worker/user/consumer-owned media projects. Further corporate taxes could be added in order to increase this amount. The concrete use of this money could be decided in local or regional assemblies. Work in non-profit cultural and digital co-operatives funded by a participatory media fee could take on new qualities, could reinvigorate critical and investigative journalism, public engagement, political and cultural community life, etc.

The struggle for a participatory media fee and an alternative, post-capitalist media landscape that combines public power and civil society power could be part of what the a digital labour union considers as feasible demands. Wages for Facebook is a too

limited demand. A social wage for the creation of the communication commons at large is possible.

## Body and Soul

*Lucia Dossin*

*Replacing "information" with "soul" and "content" with "body" on Facebook's Advertising Policy.*

### **About Advertisements and Other Commercial Content Served or Enhanced by Facebook**

Our goal is to deliver advertising and other commercial or sponsored body that is valuable to our users and advertisers. In order to help us do that, you agree to the following:

You give us permission to use your name, profile picture, body, and soul in connection with commercial, sponsored, or related body (such as a brand you like) served or enhanced by us. This means, for example, that you permit a business or other entity to pay us to display your name and/or profile picture with your body or soul, without any compensation to you. If you have selected a specific audience for your body or soul, we will respect your choice when we use it.

We do not give your body or soul to advertisers without your consent. You understand that we may not always identify paid services and communications as such.