2. Self-Making and Game Making in the Future of Work

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Abstract
Paid work has been a keystone of morality, normativity, sociality, and identity in capitalist societies. However, as the future of work is ushered in by technological unemployment, flexibilization, and precarity, researchers have to contend with what has been called the post-work society. The cultural industry of video game development provides a vantage into this future of work because it has been dominated since its inception by a vast field of informal creators and intermediaries, some of whom are paid for their activities while the vast majority are not. This chapter argues that gaming hobbies are exemplars of a conceptual shift in productive leisure not just as a mediating category in industrial capitalism but a mediating stage towards post-work.

Keywords: hobbies, post-work, digital labour, serious leisure, volunteerism

Introduction

This chapter is about how people use games and collective practices around playing and creating games to make sense of where their lives are going, where they have been before, and why it all matters. Sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (1991) call this the reflexive project of the self. In what Giddens characterized as the late modern age, this autobiographical process relies less on fixed social roles such as religion and class, and more on chosen aspects of one's life such as consumption and leisure. In particular, the waning of work as a stable source of identity has been core to influential arguments about the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist systems of production in Western societies. Richard Sennett (1998) argues that this 'new economy' of short-term teamwork and risk-taking erodes the sense

Sotamaa, O. and J. Švelch (eds.), *Game Production Studies*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. DOI 10.5117/9789463725439_CH02

of sustained purpose, integrity of self, and trust in others that previous generations associated with personal character. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) contends that as steady, durable, continuous, and structured working careers become rarer, people are struggling to define a sense of coherent identity through paid employment. In the past two decades, these accounts have been complicated and critiqued (Adams 2003; Strangleman 2007); yet, the ramifications of short-term and precarious work for human subjectivity are palpable (cf. M. Banks 2019).

Research in this area has considered how deindustrialization, globalization, and automation have led to high levels of technological unemployment and the 'End of Work' (Aronowitz and DiFazio 2010; Rifkin 1995). One thread of this research considers how these economic shifts have dismantled the Fordist social contract, which demanded a lifetime of compliance and discipline from workers in return for purchasing rights and social inclusion. Paid work is key to social belonging and individual achievement in capitalist societies. It is the primary means by which individuals are integrated into the economic system, but also into social, political, and familial modes of cooperation. Some of these studies propose how the 'post-work' society could be reorganized more equitably by reorienting social values and economic policy around social reproduction and care work (Hester 2018), by providing citizens with a basic income (Srnicek and Williams 2015; Standing 2017), and by countering beliefs about the sanctity of the work ethic (Graeber 2018; Weeks 2011). Other studies have suggested how, in the absence of enduring work, some people are turning to their achievements and relationships in leisure-based communities of practice (Chia 2019; cf. Stebbins 2017) and civically oriented volunteerism (Muehlebach 2011) for continuity, progression, and value in their sense of self.

Synthesizing research from game studies and cultural industries, this chapter puts post-work arguments within the context of game production. Giddens (1964, 86) commented in 1964 that professions with indeterminate divisions between work and leisure would experience 'considerable ideological ambiguity between values oriented towards stressing the value of work and those which emphasize the potential satisfactions of play.' Today, this ideological ambiguity is a defining feature of creative industries (McRobbie 2016). Like other popular cultural industries, the meaning of productivity in game production is not contained within the institutions of work. Relative to other creative industries, what it means to be productive in game production is densely interwoven from consumptive and leisure practices across personal biographies and collective identities as fans, players, and hobbyists. Game creators often start out as players and fans, moving in and

out of formal, informal, and intermediary roles as they collaborate on online platforms, in maker spaces, and in hobby organizations. Game production has been dominated since its inception by a vast field of informal creators and intermediaries (Parker, Whitson, and Simon 2018), some of whom are paid for their activities while the vast majority are not (Keogh 2019a). Many create and contribute to gaming within the widening margins between production and consumption, in the mediating category of productive leisure known as hobbies.

This chapter argues that the productive leisure of game production can provide a model for recuperating a sense of personal progression by relying less on economic measures of productivity and more on shared markers of individual competency and contribution to collective play practices. Modelling this shift across other cultural industries can be a step in reshaping the work ethic towards a more equitable and sustainable future of work. This argument proceeds in three parts: I outline post-work visions of the work ethic, in the context of post-Fordist relations of production that integrate leisure into its platforms of value creation. Second, I contextualize these proposals within cultural industries research on selfhood and career progression, with attention to game production studies. Third, I suggest that this shift in values about productivity will not come solely from revolutionary demands made by some post-work scholars, but also from the incremental boundary work of realigning work and leisure away from models of mutual exclusion and towards mutually inclusive understandings of productivity as contributions to a commons that is both social and economic. This heuristic shift away from models of mutual exclusion contributes to game studies by suggesting how decoupling duty of labour from the reward of leisure can help us understand productive gaming practices not as liminal to work and play, but as constitutive of modern capitalist life.

The Post-Work Ethic

Accelerationism is a political theory that responds to capitalism not through protest or critique but by accelerating its uprooting, alienating, and abstractive tendencies (Mackay and Avanessian 2014). The vision of post-work society by accelerationists such as Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams (2015, 108) involves 'fully automating the economy, reducing the working week, implementing a universal basic income, and achieving a cultural shift in the understanding of work.' According to Srnicek and Williams (2015), the biggest hurdle for proposals of a universal basic income

is not economic, but cultural and political: the work ethic is so deeply ingrained into identities of citizens and residents that the unemployed or underemployed are deemed unworthy of welfare, especially when it is not means-tested. Means tests are evaluations of a person's or household's financial circumstances to determine their eligibility for social welfare programmes. Crucially, this vision combines the future orientation of utopias with the immediate intervention of the reformist demand based on current tendencies and crises (Srnicek and Williams 2015). In other words, accelerationist demands are grounded in analyses of the present situation, which may not break us out of capitalism, but may break us out of neoliberalism towards a more equitable configuration of political, economic, and social forces.

This section analyses the accelerationist demand about cultural attitudes towards work, contextualizing it within research on post-Fordism's integration of leisure and consumption into circuits and platforms of production that are diffused throughout our lives. Feminist scholar Kathi Weeks (2011) contends that many workers today approach their work as if it were a career, just as the Protestant ethic conditioned workers to treat their occupation as if it were a calling. Instead of spiritual deliverance, work today provides the potential for social mobility as well as the promise of self-expression and self-fulfilment (Srnicek and Williams 2015). This glorification of paid work as a fundamentally human endeavour is key to social belonging and individual achievement; it constitutes the ideological foundation of contemporary capitalism.

Weeks (2011) emphasizes that the ideology of work establishes an ethical link between restraint and indulgence that frames leisure and consumption as rewards only deserving of those who perform paid work. In a similar vein, Srnicek and Williams (2015) state that the central ideological support for the work ethic is that remuneration is tied to suffering. Anthropologist David Graeber (2018) traces this conviction of work as self-sacrifice or self-abnegation to the Victorian essayist Thomas Carlyle's 'Gospel of Work,' which decreed that work should be painful and that the misery of the job is itself what forms character. The Gospel of Work conferred onto work a sense of nobility that made its compensation unnecessary or at least incidental – a legacy that carries on today in what sociologist Andrew Ross (2000) calls the 'sacrificial ethos' of cultural workers such as artists, who willingly accept deeply discounted compensation for their labour.

The pain and glory of work and its regulation of sacrifice and gratification is part of the work ethic's compensatory morality that has adapted from Carlyle's Gospel of Work to the contemporary mantra of 'Do What You Love'.

Elsewhere, I outlined how game industry aspirants use this compensatory morality to weigh their vocational passion against expectations of precarity (Chia 2019). In other words, aspirants felt that precarity was an acceptable trade-off for combining their gaming hobbies with their job. This compensatory morality relates to what Weeks (2011) calls the producer-consumer antinomy, which affirms that consumer goods are the reward for and a sign of one's contributions and status as a producer. This encouraged the belief that earning wages gave people the right to spend and that working hours authorized leisure time. Through this compensatory reasoning, industrialism carved out ethical connections between work, wages, consumption, and leisure. Because of this mutual implication, decentring paid work – as demanded by accelerationists – is not a question of posing labour against leisure, for in this dichotomy work remains dominant (Aronowitz and DiFazio 2010).

Leisure is not simply the absence of work or free time from work. From its modern incarnation during industrialization, leisure has been and continues to be a normative institution for how the working and professional classes should spend their free time in socially sanctioned and economically productive ways. Industrialization lodged work at the centre of life and relegated non-work to a secondary, moderating function. The touted function of leisure was never for its own sake, but to counterbalance work by providing physical and mental rejuvenation for another day of toil (Gelber 1999). Leisure pursuits associated with idleness and hedonism were tolerated, while those that reinforced industriousness and economic productivity were extolled (Rojek 2009). Under industrial capitalism, play activities were accepted in schools only if they were associated with utilitarian goals (Kirkpatrick 2013). This utilitarian criterion continues to be deployed in popular culture to vindicate gaming practices such as e-sports as professionally and economically productive (Witkowski and Manning 2019).

Post-Fordism has made the times and spaces of labour and life increasingly indistinguishable, arguably making work's compensatory morality with leisure more intractable. Post-Fordism traded relatively stable long-term employment relationships for just-in-time and symbolic forms of production (Hardt and Negri 2001) that depended on communication networks and were more easily subcontracted and decentralized (Harvey 1992). Flexible, networked, and symbolic forms of Post-Fordist production stretched out the value chain by integrating consumer activity at various stages, for example through platforms and processes for user-generated content or co-creation. Mark Deuze (2006) qualifies that people still make meaningful distinctions between work, leisure, and other key organizing

categories of modern society, but any mass consensus about their inherence has eroded.

Post-work demands for changed attitudes towards work must account for leisure as intimately related to productivity in capitalism's organization of how one lives, works, reproduces, and relates to others. Accelerationists Srnicek and Williams propose the following measures to resist the work ethic:

> Changing the cultural consensus about the work ethic will mean taking actions at an everyday level, translating these medium-term goals into slogans, memes and chants. It will require undertaking the difficult and essential work of workplace organizing and campaigning – of mobilising people's passions in order to topple the dominance of the work ethic (Srnicek and Williams 2015, 126).

Post-work's resistance to work's value, its reduction of work hours, and its proposals for basic income must account for the compensatory morality that tethers labour to leisure. One's choice of and attitudes towards leisure derive their meaning *from* the work ethic, not in spite of it. Since leisure is systemic to capitalist work, it must also be integral to post-work proposals. Without dismantling the morality of paid work's worthiness for recompense *and* recreation – as Marxist feminists such as Leopoldina Fortunati (2007), Kylie Jarrett (2015), and others have done – accelerationist slogans, memes, and chants will not become part of public discourse or policy in meaningful ways. Srnicek and Williams (2015, 125) encapsulate that 'with work tied so tightly into our identities, overcoming the work ethic will require us overcoming ourselves.'

Self-Making in Creative Industries

In *Bullshit Jobs*, Graeber (2018) summarizes a contradiction arising from over a hundred studies in the past twenty-five years: many workers found their jobs uninteresting, unstimulating, and unimportant, yet still chose to work not just as a course of livelihood, but as a means of self-respect and self-definition. Although work has become less stable and more fragmented over this period, many people still look to work for a sense of self and a story about their lives. This section outlines arguments about this process of self-actualization through work and its adaptations to the New Economy, cultural industries, and the field of game making.

Two decades ago, sociologists such as Sennett (1998) argued that older features of working life such as the career pathway and ladder of promotion were in decline. Sennett lamented the loss of an autobiographical sense of self people developed through stories they told each other in a stratified but secure workplace. In the past, even though the work itself was routine, workers could gather in the pub at the close of the day to exchange stories about their jobs and colleagues, often over a lifetime. In comparison, the New Economy workplace was increasingly fissured and marked by fleeting and impermanent relations (Weil 2014). As employment that was durable and continuous, logically coherent and tightly structured became the exception rather than the norm (Bauman 2004), it became harder for people to construct a life project or an enduring sense of identity on the foundation of work as they knew it (Gorz 1999).

Sociologist Tim Strangleman (2007) summarizes that these 'End of Work' accounts were united in their regret for the loss of a characteristically masculinized form of work and family wage. These accounts also posited a new kind of entrepreneurial employee who manages a portfolio of jobs and packets of work rather than a traditional career. Anthropologist Ilana Gershon (2017) offers that New Economy workers are expected to switch jobs every few years with the right companies to craft resumes with upward career trajectories and steady salary increases. Gershon adds that professional social network services such as LinkedIn have created expectations for people to make their work histories publicly available instead of privately circulated. Strangleman emphasizes that even precarious and fragmented work provides structure and meaning in people's lives. Identity formation is a social process, fraught with contradiction, and achieved over time, in which people understand themselves as active agents. The entrepreneurial self narrates a different kind of self-realization through work, based less on the structure of work and the community it affords, and more on the work itself (Muehlebach 2011, citing Donzelot 1991).

Over the past decade, studies have shown that UK creatives often hold multiple jobs and that their creative work is project-based and organized around irregular, short-term contracts with little job protection and benefits (M. Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009). In a recent article, communication researcher Mark Banks (2019) assesses the claim that such precarious work and the lack of structured career progression has made it harder for creatives to narrativize their working lives into meaningful linear biographies. By re-interviewing creative workers decades after their first interview, Banks (2019, 552) found 'there are some cultural workers (in this case, owner-managers) who are more significantly endowed with the capacity to control time, to

map out stages of life, and secure themselves against the contingencies of the event.' This finding highlights exceptions to the idea that narrativized biographies are redundant structures for self-understanding in creative fields in the New Economy.

Like other creative industries, the precarity of video game production challenges biographical modes of self-realization. Additionally, commercial video games' highly rationalized and modular production processes challenge portfolio modes of selfhood. At the same time, relative to other creative industries, the institutionalization of gaming's diffuse production circuits beyond full-time and permanent employment facilitates the building of social connections between paid and unpaid game workers and the crafting of professional biographies between paid and unpaid game work.

Games researcher Aphra Kerr (2017) informs that successful commercial games require the coordination of globally distributed teams with creative, technical, and business expertise. This involves substantial below-the-line processes such as marketing and quality assurance processes such as playtesting, which lack the prestige of creative work, but are where many industry hopefuls find their first jobs (Bulut 2015; Ozimek 2019). Teams working off-site or offshore on a narrow slice of the game may not see a project through to completion. Contracted workers in the fissured workplaces of game production may not be included in closing credits. Workers who are abstracted from game products or services they have contributed to and lack resumes or portfolios with an upward trajectory may also struggle to craft a sense of self through work.

This circuit of game production encompasses a wider network of player associations that perform community management, co-creation, and content-creation (Kerr 2017). Games researcher John Banks (2013) informs that user-generated content in the form of players' feedback, commentary, and fan creations on and around game platforms is integral to the production of multiplayer online games, which are not finished products but are continually updated services that adapt to player engagement. Sociologist T. L. Taylor (2018) suggests that engagement with proprietary gaming services by livestreamers are not culturally intermediary but transformative, which needs to be reflected in current frameworks of intellectual property. Media scholars David B. Nieborg and Thomas Poell (2018) state that video games are no longer produced in a predominantly linear process but are 'contingent commodities' that are modularized, constantly altered, and optimized for platform monetization. More than other entertainment industries such as film and television, online gaming's contingent commodities rely on

engagement from players and amateur designers not just as consultants and promoters, but as an intrinsic part of its core service. This may contribute to a relative porosity between paid and unpaid work in gaming, as compared to other entertainment industries.

A different mode of self-realization emerges in these sprawling circuits and networks of game production, one that perhaps has the potential to decentre paid work. In *The Jobless Future*, sociologists Stanley Aronowitz and William DiFazio (2010) ask what can replace work in self-formation after five centuries during which work has been upheld as the Western cultural ideal. The work of game production is not always paid or duly acknowledged; but, like Sennett's workers who exchanged stories in the pub, it is always social and often happens over a lifetime. Game scholar Brendan Keogh (2019a) suggests that the focus on AAA game production misses the legions of people making games as an everyday practice, who may not aspire towards commercial success or employment in a development studio. Keogh (2018) states that like writing or music, making video games is not *fundamentally* an economic activity and should be considered primarily as a creative process and secondarily as an industry. There is a broader range of informal practices of game development and distribution that are not market-driven, which are integral to the formal video game industry (Keogh 2019a).

These practices of making games online and offline in communities and associations provide structure and meaning for narrativizing the self. In line with Strangleman's (2007) insights, self-narrativization is an active process and people will weave together a sense of who they are and where they have been even with fragments of precarious, informal, and volunteer work for game companies and player associations. Elsewhere, I have described how not-for-profit gaming organizations provided a codified structure for gaining and displaying personal competence and social influence (Chia 2019). Gaming hobbies provide the self-defining career pathway, the ladder of promotion, and the role of bureaucracy that Sennett (1998) lamented were missing from modern work. Many hobbyists I interviewed spoke proudly about their 'club résumé': a document of past achievements as game makers, organizers, and players that is circulated within gaming organizations and hobbyist scenes to demonstrate competence for volunteer roles. For example, Ned was a volunteer storyteller in the Boston chapter of a live-action role-playing hobby club with over 3000 members across the United States. As a middle-level manager in the club's hierarchical organizational structure, Ned oversaw around twelve local storytellers in Boston, New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

When I asked Ned to describe his volunteer work, he rolled his eyes to emphasize how much he had done and listed ongoing tasks such as electing new and sanctioning errant storytellers, managing their writing of game plotlines, mechanics, and negotiating with the club's board of directors to reform procedures for organizing regional conventions. Ned reassured me that he did not do all of this alone. He had four assistants overseeing plot development, seven writers planning special events and overseeing the overall cosmology of games in the region. He also had a chief of staff and assistants taking care of recruitment and scheduling. Listing items on his club résumé, Ned emphasized that these responsibilities were accrued over three years in nine different elected and appointed storytelling positions at local, regional, and national levels of the organization. Like the work résumé, the club résumé frames experiences in hobby organizations as a trajectory of accumulated skills and increasing responsibilities, in a structure similar to that of a professional career.

For many gaming hobbyists in my study (Chia 2019), their progression in informal game making had the durability and continuity missing from their paid work in creative industries. For example, before moving to Boston, Ned undertook a string of jobs as a play-tester for several large video game development studios. He was one of 600 workers organized in three eight-hour shifts, who tested content around the clock. The modularity and transience of shift work in knowledge economies – often terminated before the end of a playtester's contract – made it hard for Ned to interact, much less socialize with his colleagues. This contrasted with the lasting social circle formed through the national gaming hobby organization, which gave Ned and others like him leadership and reputation building opportunities that were portable despite moving from the South to the Northeast.

This systematic pursuit of leisure activities in complex organizations often takes the structure of careers in which hobbyists acquire specific knowledge, skills, and experiences. These careers bear a profound sense of temporal continuity in terms of social, personal, skill growth, and reputation as competent, knowledgeable practitioners. In addition to amateur and volunteer activities, these pursuits are known as 'serious leisure' (Stebbins 2017). Sociologist Garry Crawford (2004) offers that fans within sports communities also talk about their practice as a career path, which provides a sense of structure and recognition for activities that dominate so much of their lives. Gaming practices in hobby organizations are serious leisure whereby members use hierarchical volunteer systems and club résumés to structure and communicate an upward trajectory of achievement, recognition, and status, which may be missing from many of their professional lives.

Boundary Work and Leisure

In *Creative Justice*, Mark Banks (2017, 42) states: 'work is a moral endeavour. But that doesn't necessarily mean it's any good.' This suggests that not only are the meanings and values of work constructed but that they can be reconstructed. Both the end of work and post-work writers respond to technological unemployment with some form of basic income. Strangleman (2007) summarizes that end of work arguments propose a mix of paid employment and voluntary work, with the state providing a minimum income. The point made across these proposals is that the revival of civil society can only be achieved by decoupling paid work from a person's right to sustenance. Cultural theorist Bifo Berardi (2009) declares that the economic framework of income in exchange for work has to be abandoned and that doing so will require a fundamental shift in the way people value themselves and relate to each other as human beings. This shift entails not just rethinking paid work, but also leisure and unpaid work, such as volunteer efforts in gaming hobby organizations. This means philosophical and pragmatic considerations of the human condition, and whether it should be defined by economic, libidinal, or social forms of productivity.

Work has been a keystone of morality, sociality, and identity in capitalist societies for centuries. Political theorist Anton Jäger (2018, para. 32) observes, 'Since leisure was a dialectical counterpart of modern employed work under capitalism, it also was utterly conditioned by it.' Sociologists Robert Snape et al. (2017) state that the work–leisure binary is no longer fit for purpose, and that a semantic reformulation of this binary needs to go hand in hand with economic and social reforms such as basic income. Human flourishing in a post-work society 'is likely to require a new and socially shared understanding of leisure that is much more than just the opposite of work. If work is to lose its current meaning, work-based understandings of leisure must also change' (Snape et al. 2017, 190).

Reformulating the work-leisure binary is not simply a matter of hybridizing polarities into a neologism (Chia 2020). For example, in sociology, the concept of prosumption emphasizes productivity harnessed from the rationalization of consumptive practices, while in games research, playbour looks at how digital environments extract commercial value using techniques and ideas about play to engage users and workers in repetitive or laborious tasks (Kücklich 2005). While these critical concepts were useful for signalling change, as these marginal practices concretize into common sense, hybridity implicitly harbours sociotechnical, cultural, and regulatory ambiguities. These ambiguities legitimize a range of power imbalances

in media platforms and participation: from worker misclassifications in on-demand labour to the exploitation of aspirational (Duffy 2017) and venture labour (Neff 2012). Post-Fordism normalizes hybridity, thereby instituting ambiguity as an abstract state of potentiality that is embodied by individuals as anxiety, precarity, and ambivalence.

Instead of hybridity, what is needed is what Christena E. Nippert-Eng (2008) calls boundary work, which attends to the discursive and material work of defending, bridging, subverting, and transforming symbolic divisions. In her qualitative study, boundary work describes efforts to mentally, practically, and spatially demarcate and relate work and home in people's lives. The boundary framework (Lamont and Molnár 2002) is instructive for understanding different interacting systems for meaning-making, value circulation, and identity formation under post-Fordism. Rather than hybrid neologisms, conceptual precision is needed for understanding the boundary work people are performing every day to make ends meet while making sense of it all.

One example of such conceptual clarity is sociologist Alison Gerber's (2020) gravitational model for creative industry work. Using the metaphor of planetary movement in a solar system, Gerber provides an alternative to models of polarity and binarism that oppose passion and profit in creative industry work as mutually exclusive. Based on interviews with creative workers, the gravity model highlights bodies that are not suspended between stable oppositions, but orbit according to forces that are relational, contingent, and historically specific. Removing the conceptual architecture that forces ideal types into dichotomies is a step away from compensatory and sacrificial thinking that justifies precarity as a trade-off for passionate work (McRobbie 2016; Ross 2000) and that vindicates wages and recreation as recompense for paid work. In other words, it is a step towards dismantling the work ethic by morally decoupling work from the right of sustenance and leisure. This decoupling of work from leisure can create a clearing for the realignment of moral values away from the individualizing discourse of the work ethic and towards civic concerns of Arendtian action.

In defining the human condition, political theorist Hannah Arendt (1987) elevates action above labour and work. Labour encompasses human activity that sustains biological processes of nourishment, consumption, and reproduction; work designates human efforts towards built objects and environments, which have a certain durability in the world. Action is constituted by words and deeds that disclose who one is as a person and set intersubjective change in motion within communities, publics,

and political institutions. All along the diffuse circuits of game making, Ned and others like him that I interviewed assert and express themselves, build communities, engage in publics, and enact politics in the co-creation of games. This conception of action draws from civic humanism: the idea that the exercise of virtue in the public realm is an end in itself, and not simply a means to an end. Leisure-based game making does not simply compensate for the lack of progression in paid work, it can be understood and experienced as a practice in its own right that sets intersubjective change in motion in consumer as well as broader publics. Arendt (2019, 176–77) states that 'through action, we insert ourselves into the human world, confirming and taking upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance in the world.'

Post-work proposals about basic income are largely compatible with this Arendtian framing of action. Aronowitz and DiFazio (2010), for example, state that basic income gives people time usually occupied for wage labour to wield their political power towards civic, community, and cultural concerns. Historians Edward Skidelsky and Robert Skidelsky (2012) use this framing of action to designate leisure as an activity done for its own sake, not as a means to something else, such as recuperation for work. As production scholarship has emphasized (Gauntlett 2013; Keogh 2019a; 2019b; Young 2018), informal game and media making are *largely* activities done for their own sake, to express oneself, to communicate one's politics, and to connect with others; even though game making is often framed and experienced through the politics of passionate work and aspirational labour, it is not exclusively a means of or towards livelihood in the formal game industry. Accordingly, cultural, social, or civic pursuits like game making – regardless of whether they are remunerated – could be considered leisure. This delineation of leisure in relation to Arendtian action, regardless of monetary recompense, is key to disrupting the work ethic's compensatory morality, thereby contributing towards the legitimization of basic income. This is because it realigns the dialectic of work and leisure and moves towards decoupling paid work from a person's prerogative of sustenance and their imperative of political participation.

Conclusion: The Normative Ends of Leisure

These conceptual shifts about the dialectics of leisure are vital to accelerationist plans of toppling the dominance of the work ethic through workplace organizing and campaigning. As a form of productive leisure that scaffolds the digital

age, understanding everyday practices of game making can help us navigate the economic instabilities and moral obduracies of post-work. Like other forms of serious leisure organizations, people in gaming collectives weave their play and creative practices around gaming into a narrative of self, which becomes the social fabric of their lives. This trajectory of avocational progression and the social structure within which it is performed have a temporal continuity and resilience that is increasingly absent from New Economy employment.

Transforming attitudes towards the compensatory morality of leisure in game making at an everyday level through slogans, memes, and chants can reverberate through other creative industries in the medium term and contribute to institutional change in the organization and valuation of productivity in the longer term. Christopher Lasch (1967) suggests that instead of overthrowing the work ethic, the political Left should invest it with new meaning. Half a century later, in an age of unprecedented cognitive automation, the task of investing the work ethic with new meaning must continue, away from economic circuits between things and towards civic relations between people.

This chapter proposed that game production can provide an avenue for self-realization once obtained through paid work by relying less on notions of individual productivity and more on ideals of Arendtian action. Synthesizing research on post-work, creative industries, and game production, I suggest that the institutionalization of diverse circuits of game production may facilitate the decoupling of the moral and compensatory link between work and leisure. Recognizing the value of this decoupling in other cultural industries can be a step in reinvesting the work ethic with new meaning, towards a future of work that is oriented around civic rather than productive relations. Snape et al. (2017) maintain that reorienting leisure away from its secondary, moderating function of priming the working class for the rhythms of industrial work, and towards human flourishing and social wellbeing is a utopian vision. However, they affirm that articulation of new constructs and imagined communities is needed for theorizing work and leisure for a changed world. Gesturing towards this utopian potential, Rojek (2009) emphasizes that leisure is inherently paradoxical. On the one hand, leisure is the primary normative institution in society, reproducing structural conditions of community, race, ethnicity, and nation. On the other hand, leisure is organized around some degree of freedom and free time, allowing individuals and groups to engage in actions and explore social relations that resist, challenge, and transcend normative structure. Game making as productive forms of leisure is well placed to direct such freedoms towards transformed meanings of self and structures of work.

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