



Call for papers for an *ephemera* special issue on:

Consumption of work and the work of consumption

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Work and consumption have always been intertwined, their interaction shaped by social and historical circumstances. The ‘consumer society’ (Baudrillard, 1998/1970) that we arguably live in is often associated with a fading interest in work. On this view, wage labour is seen simply as a way of funding consumption during leisure time (Berger, 1964; Gorz, 1985). However, the boundaries between consumption and work have become increasingly blurred. Consumption is no longer confined to leisure, having become central to the employment relationship (Korczynski, 2007; Dale, 2012), but also transcending it. At the same time, some consumption has become productive in the circuits of capital (Arvidsson, 2005). While both the themes of work and consumption have been discussed separately (including in *ephemera*, e.g. Beverungen et al., 2011; Dunne et al., 2013; Egan-Wyer et al., 2014), this special issue aims to bring them together by exploring consumptive aspects of work and productive aspects of consumption within and beyond organizations.

Since the 1990s customer service and corporate branding have become central elements of organizational production processes (du Gay, 1996; Kornberger, 2010). In this context, concepts such as immaterial work and affective labour have gained in importance (Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 2005; Dowling et al., 2007). Indeed, customer focus and branding tend to spread to all practices within organizations, from training and development to organizational decor and artefacts (Russell, 2011), while employees are encouraged to ‘live the brand’ (Pettinger, 2004; Land and Taylor, 2010). This tells us that consumption now

takes place at work. For example, images of work have themselves become objects to be consumed (Dale, 2012; Chertkovskaya, 2013). These consumptive aspects of work are promoted via employer branding practices, which emphasise the symbolic characteristics of work (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). For example, skyscrapers often appear on the covers and pages of recruitment brochures in the banking sector, which can be seen as a sign-value of status. Such 'opportunities' for consumption are not only created within large organizations with distinctive hierarchies. 'Fun cultures' (Butler et al., 2011), self-management (Lopdrup-Hjorth et al., 2011) and the rhetoric of authenticity (Murtola and Fleming, 2011) may also facilitate the consumption of work-related sign-values as well as engagement in hedonist consumption (Campbell, 1987).

While consumption has certainly entered into the heart of the employment relationship (Korczynski, 2007; Dale, 2012), it also goes beyond it as work increasingly happens outside traditional organizational boundaries. For example, the rhetoric of personal branding (Lair et al., 2005) is becoming increasingly prominent and the ability to 'sell oneself' is in many cases now a condition for employment (Chertkovskaya et al., 2013). Moreover, when addressing modern modes of consumptive work, we should also reflect on how consumption can inform the meanings of work and work relations. For instance, we cannot lose sight of critiques of the degradation of work as the effect of consuming (other's) vital capacities (cf. Barrett, 1999; Moten, 2003; Federici, 2004). Indeed, this 'depletion' (Rai, 2010) seems to be the condition of possibility not only for contemporary modes of production but also for conspicuous forms of consumption. Given the condition of precarity that increasingly structures global labour markets (Standing, 2010), we are thus asked to also think through the complex of worker/consumer relations and subjectivities; most notably the increasing debasement of selves into commodity forms.

However, consumption is not necessarily destructive but may also have productive elements to it. We can now talk of working consumers, who act according to their own interests and principles, and thereby serve themselves and other customers (Rieder and Voß, 2010). While drawing on co-creation and participation rhetoric, organizations often also build their brands on the ideas, creativity and work of their consumers or 'brand communities' (Arvidsson, 2005). Online social media, like 'Facebook', is a good example here: while the organization provides a (usually free) online platform for individuals and groups, their communication within it creates market value for the organization, for example via targeted advertising based on online user behaviour. The consuming employees, as long as they consume in line with the image and values of the organizational brand, may also contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of the organization and its brand, with their personal lives being mobilized for it (Land and Taylor, 2010).

In this special issue, we are looking for conceptual and empirical contributions that critically discuss consumptive aspects of work and productive aspects of

consumption. We welcome studies that explore these issues within and beyond organizational boundaries, and in various forms and contexts of work. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Forms and meanings of consumptive work/productive consumption
- History of the relationship between consumption and work
- Consumption through work processes within and beyond the employment relationship
- Roles and use of (personal) branding in consumptive work/productive consumption
- Employer branding and the image of work in organizational self-presentations
- Depicting work through consumption
- Marketing and marketization of work
- Commodification of work and working subjects
- Consumption and production of affective/embodied labour
- Value creation/destruction through consumptive work/productive consumption
- Ethical and political questions associated with consumptive work/productive consumption
- Implications of blurring boundaries between consumption and work for worker-consumer relations and worker/consumer subjectivities
- Work-life (im)balance of consuming employees/producing consumers
- Resisting consumptive work/productive consumption

Deadline for submissions: 30 September 2014

All contributions should be submitted to one of the issue editors: Ekaterina Chertkovskaya (ekaterina.chertkovskaya@fek.lu.se), Rashné Limki (rashne.limki@gmail.com) or Bernadette Loacker (bernadette.loacker@fek.lu.se). Please note that three categories of contributions are invited for the special issue: articles, notes, and reviews. Information about these types of contributions can be found at: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/call-for-papers>. The submissions will undergo a double blind review process. All submissions should follow ephemera's submission guidelines, which are available at: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/how-submit>. For further information, please contact one of the special issue editors.

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