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The title of this book takes as its key site of inquiry what might be called communicative capitalism. This is a term taken from the work of Jodi Dean (see 2009; 2010; 2012) who uses it to pick out a system characterised by the 'amplified role of communication in production' (2012: 18). Communicative capitalism is a mode of production that exerts control over society by conditioning its occupants towards its own ends, namely the acceleration of its informational regime through establishing the primacy of cognitive labour and consumptive modes of communication that generate value. In its ideal form this is a state in which workers toil down the data mine under ever more precarious conditions, whilst in their free time they are subjected to data-mining through the communicational technologies with which they attempt to find respite and social connection. Facebook at Work provides one example of this exploitation of the overproduction of information and its communication, but as Maurizio Lazzarato (2014: 37) notes, we can observe similar of Google, which operates as a databank for marketing, gathering information about our web navigation, purchases, cultural tastes, and how we like to spend our leisure time, generating profiles that 'are mere relays of inputs and outputs in production-consumption machines'. Communicative capitalism constitutes an enclosure that entraps and exploits every facet of our existence. To get the future back on track we have to scrutinise the communication technologies that we too readily fetishise, to question how we are being constrained into relations and social organisations that are not necessarily in our own interests, and to slow down long enough to question the mythology of speed, acceleration and interactivity. It is time to stop eulogising the advances and to question the reorganisation of society by immateriality and the ideas that support it – and yet in many ways the change we might want to communicate is stuck in the circuits of the system that needs changing.

Dean (2009: 2) defines communicative capitalism more expansively as 'the materialization of ideals of inclusion and participation in information, entertainment, and communication technologies in ways that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism'. The exploitation of communication is reliant on exploiting our enjoyment of the system, of connecting, networking, consuming information and cultural commodities, capturing our social desires in networks of production and surveillance (Dean 2010: 4). By offering something for everyone it includes rather than excludes, whilst it fetishises communication in order to ensure participation:

> It embeds us in a mindset wherein the number of friends one has on Facebook or Myspace, the number of page-hits one gets on one's blogs, and the number of videos

> featured on one's YouTube channel are the key markers of success, and details such as duration, depth of commitment, corporate and financial influence, access to structures of decision making, and the narrowing of political struggle to the standards of do-it-yourself entertainment culture become the boring preoccupations of baby-boomers stuck in the past (Dean 2009: 17).

Far from questioning power or exploitation users become receptive to networking growth, web traffic and transactional data in the way one might expect of someone with the 'bullshit' (Graeber 2013) job title of something like *Social Media Marketing Executive*. All of this information – about how far content circulates, as with retweets on Twitter or re-blogging, the scale of social networks, consumptive behaviours – becomes part of a user's profile, an expression of identity or perhaps of social success. It is, at the same time, transparent evidence of the user's unrecompensed productivity and of their being tracked and traced, measured and valued. We have what Jean-François Lyotard once called 'Mr Nice Guy totalitarianism' (1993: 159), exploitation and surveillance out in the open, accepted because of the enjoyment of what is received in return. Our enthusiasm for communication, when we allow it to be channelled through thoroughly non-neutral circuits risks becoming enthusiasm for capitalism itself. It may seem peculiar that a system reliant on inclusion and participation is, as indicated above, held to account in this book for spreading social fragmentation and for breaking apart bonds of solidarity. But what is desired is simply widespread participation in the circuits of communicative capitalism, the capture of individuals for the agglomeration of information rather than their aggregation as a disparate community or social force. The system moulds workers as communicators, subjectifies consumers as producers, and, on the whole, creates the 'self-facilitating media nodes' once mocked by Charlie Brooker and Chris Morris in the British comedy *Nathan Barley*. This individualisation is a doubling of the atomisation of contemporary work. As Dean argues, here of the US,

> the experience of consuming media has become progressively more isolated – from large movie theatres, to the family home, to the singular person strolling down the street wearing tiny headphones as she listens to the soundtrack of her life or talks in a seeming dementia into a barely visible mouthpiece. This isolation in turn repeats the growing isolation of many American workers as companies streamline or "flexibilize" their workforce, cutting or outsourcing jobs to freelance and temporary employees (2009: 4).

This doubling is carried over into surveillance, where the 'Shenzenism' defined by Guy Standing (2013: 133) as the complete surveillance of a workforce, as achieved in the factory-cum-panoptic-town of Shenzen (where the Apple iPhone is built, amongst other things) is repeated by the voluntary mass surveillance of social media users, who tacitly consent to the process by agreeing to terms and conditions it is unlikely many take the time to read.

How do we resist the negative social consequences of a system that elsewhere provides us with so much we enjoy? One of the biggest challenges is that communicative capitalism seems to promote individualism in a way that is incompatible with ideas of solidarity and collective resistance. Social media showcase a society that celebrates the individual, that locates (and corporations extract) value in opinion, commentary and the cult of the lone voice. This atomisation is perversely mirrored by the loneliness of the precarious worker, stripped of collective bargaining power and forced to compete against, rather than co-operate with, other workers for diminishing returns, where worker relations have been marketised by the ascendency of competition over co-ordination in a neoliberal social context – where, in any case, self-facilitating entrepreneurs, not collective labour forces, constitute the ideal and idealised worker. Virilio (2012: 52) argues that 'mass individualism is one of the major psychopolitical questions for humanity in the future'. The purpose of this book is to chart a pathological system that incorporates fragmentation in ways that leads to the precariousness of both labour and the social, that systematically produces mental fragilities whilst individualising the problem so to evade responsibility, that capitalises on the social anxieties that it helps to produce through excessive communication, and, ultimately, operates according to a logic of efficiency – in communication, development in general – that is utterly inhuman in its regard for human misery. What follows is intended as a diagnostic text rather than a manifesto, but the overarching concern is with a call for *autonomy over automation*. 'Autonomy', writes Berardi (2009a), 'is the independence of social time from the temporality of capitalism'. According to Michael Hardt, the Autonomists of the 1970s focused on

> the emerging autonomy of the working class with respect to capital, that is, its power to generate and sustain social forms and structures of value independent of capitalist relations of production, and similarly the potential autonomy of forces from the domination of the state (1996: 2).

Their slogan was *the refusal of work:* not of all productive labour but of productive labour constrained within the relations of capitalist production, autonomy from states, parties and corporations, self-valorisation in the form of a new kind of sociality needed to build a new kind of society (Hardt 1996: 2-3; for a history of the Autonomist worker movement see also Berardi 2007). It was a movement that declared that more work was not beneficial to society, that a massive reduction in work time was needed to free the social from the constraints of capital (Berardi 2009b: 213), to reject poverty shared equally in order to achieve a collective wealth of pleasure (Hardt 1996: 6-7). Technological development ought to have made this possible but instead automation has expanded work whilst diminishing its remuneration; new communication technologies might have invigorated social organisation free from capital but have instead transformed communication, the social, into productive forces. Automation has brought about new regimes of regulation and control that sprawl far beyond sites of work, occupying every facet of our lives by snaking through the circuits of communicative capitalism, achieving the governance of social existence by co-opting the social in work and making work out of the social. This is not to call for the rejection of automation but rather its subordination to social goods and the equal redistribution of the wealth of leisure it opens up, nor for the rejection of technological modes of communication in favour of some Year Zero of co-presence, but rather the uncoupling of communication from principles of productive efficiency and the interests of capital. This book, finally, aims to locate some of the key sites for the struggle of *autonomy over automation*. In Chapter One it is argued that cognitive labour is inherently precarious and that, with communication now a primary productive force, precariousness is not confined to a given class but is instead a defining feature of social existence under the governance of communicative capitalism. In Chapter Two it is argued that the acceleration of communication, and the demand to be attentive to hyperactive circulations of information, has created a mentally exhausted, *never not on* workforce, sleep-deprived and labouring under conditions of anxiety and sadness brought about by the precarious conditions of life in a 24/7 global economy. In Chapter Three it is argued that social anxiety is exacerbated by the organisation of both work and leisure time through circuits of communication that instrumentalise language, circuits of profitable connection but social disconnection that undermine conditions of community and solidarity. And in Chapter Four it is argued that communicative capitalism extends and accelerates itself according to an ideology of development that is pathological, whilst barriers to and potentials for resistance to this inhuman process are charted. Overall, this book is motivated by a desire to locate the ways in which our

communicational systems have become pathological so that we might then begin to question the ways that communication has come to be valued in contemporary society.