

# Creative Labour and Capitalism. The Life-Work Divide.

Alternatives. Anthropological Knowledge for Changing World. IP Creole, 31<sup>th</sup>  
May-11<sup>th</sup> July, 2005. U. Ljubljana (Piran)



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# **The work-life divide**

- ☀ Clarifying the research question.
- ☀ New Economy in Spain: some empirical data.
  - ☀ Three theoretical theses.
  - ☀ Discussion and some thoughts.

# **A Few Historical Insights**

# Chapter 1. At the beginning ... work and home were a whole [*peasants*].



# Chapter 2. The IR and the split work-life

☀ 19<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution.

☀ 20<sup>th</sup> C. Taylorism & Fordism pushed the split home-work further:

- From household to factory (space).
- From seasonal time to timetable (time).
- From casual wear to work uniform (mood).
- From communal life to hierarchical order (power) and meaningless work (being).



# **Chapter 3. ‘Reassembling’ back the work-home worlds**

Some structural patterns of a  
increasingly common kind of work





☀ 1960s-1970s onwards: the spreading out of 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, post-Fordism & cognitive capitalism (Machlup, 1962; Drucker, 1968)

- Technological boom.
- Massive incorporation of women.
- Higher academic profiles & highly skilled work (Martin, 2000)

☀ The rising of *meaningful work* (Overell, 2008)

- Work as a personal project (identity).
- Quest for post-materialist motivations beyond salary.

# **The New Economy: 20 enterprises in Spain**



# Methodology

- ☀ A request (OEI) between 2011 and 2013.
- ☀ 10 ethnographers and 20 small Spanish enterprises.
- ☀ *New Economy*: design, social innovation, consulting, architecture, software development...
  - ☀ Influence of IDEO, ZIBA, Apple or Google.
- ☀ Fieldwork, 67 registered in-depth interviews
  - ☀ No access to the domestic reality of individuals.



Home within work and  
work within home

A kitchen

Cool! A puff for resting



A photograph of an outdoor recreational space, possibly a cafe or a small business. The scene is set in a courtyard or a narrow alleyway between buildings. In the foreground, there are several black metal folding tables and chairs. A large, lush green plant with white flowers is the central focus, situated under a red awning. To the left, a dark interior space is visible, with a small table and chairs. The ground is covered in gravel. The overall atmosphere is casual and inviting.

Often it seems that in these recreational spaces people do "not work too much", but (these friendly spaces) have been made to face constant interaction to solve problems and generate new ideas (Scace, 2002: 88).



A photograph of a modern, open-plan office space. The room is filled with people working at desks. There are bookshelves on the left, and several hanging plants are suspended from the ceiling. The lighting is bright, and the overall atmosphere is casual and creative. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, handwritten font.

“Here you can smell creativity!” [constant inputs]

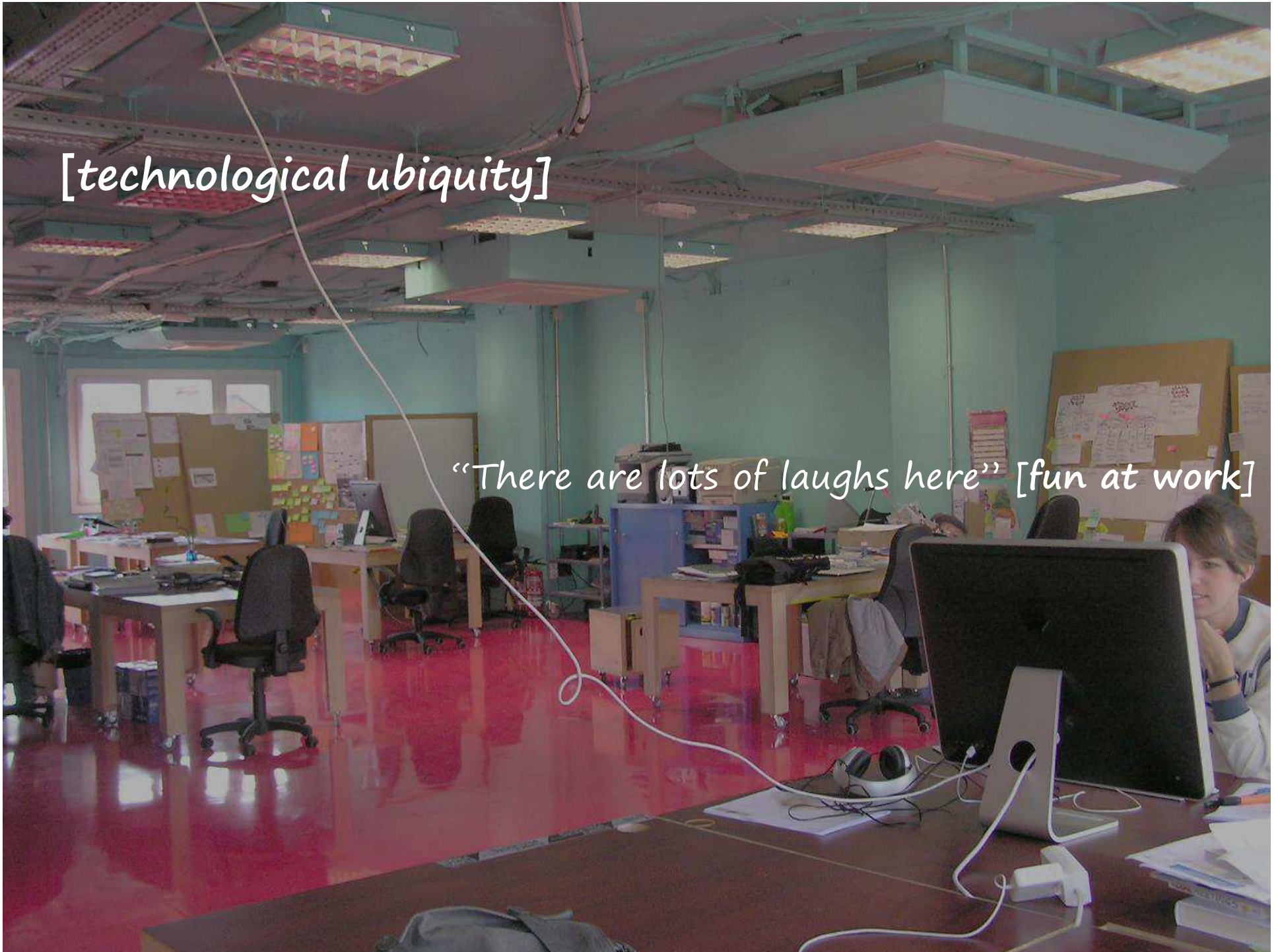
“Please, feel like at home, you don't need a tie!” [casual wear]

“Art of hosting” : take a sexy-salad! [commensality]



*[technological ubiquity]*

*“There are lots of laughs here” [fun at work]*





*We look for nerds, not sharks!  
[anti-individualistic stance]*

*Here you get really involved, it is like  
a personal issue, this is like a family,  
we are all equals, we are all friends!  
[communitas] [flat organigram]*

*“We do what we want, we create  
stories that matter ... this work is  
our life. Whoever understands this as  
job is dead.” [Work-life fusion]*

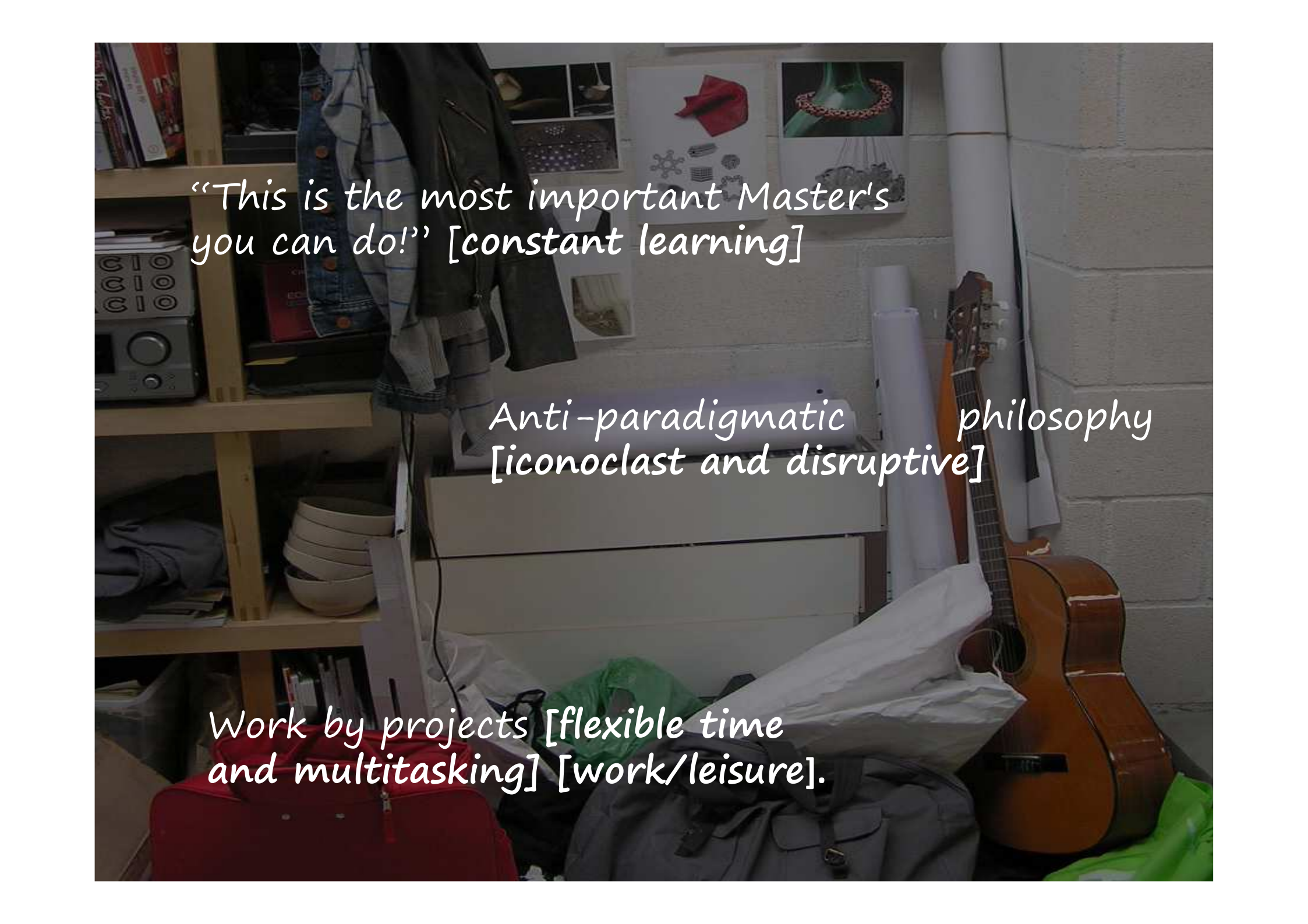




*Flexible timetable and space [symbolic elements]*

*“...we took our baby to the work, you do not distinguish between your personal life and your professional life” [embeddedness]*



A photograph of a cluttered workshop or studio. On the left, there are wooden shelves holding various items, including a stack of books, a stack of white bowls, and a red bag. In the center, a white cabinet with drawers is visible. To the right, an acoustic guitar is leaning against a wall. The wall is covered with various items, including a red cloth, a green necklace, and some papers. The overall scene is one of a busy, creative space.

*“This is the most important Master's  
you can do!” [constant learning]*

*Anti-paradigmatic philosophy  
[iconoclast and disruptive]*

*Work by projects [flexible time  
and multitasking] [work/leisure].*

# Work at home

Workers were apparently very happy.

☀ Pervasive presence of work at anytime (technology).

- Multi-tasking but scarce recreational life.

☀ Different domestic arrangements and negotiations:

- Singles & renegotiation of housework or outsourcing.
- Conflicts arise in couples when both partners pursue professional career.

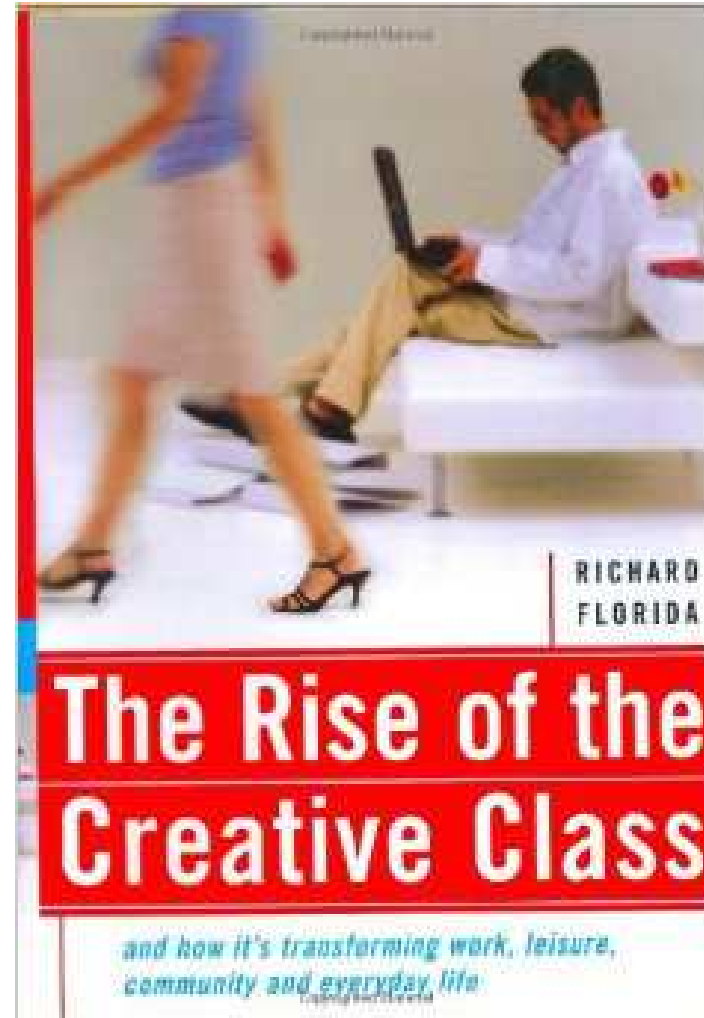


# How to interpret the merging of work and life?

Three perspectives – not fully  
incompatible.

# 1. Life is enriched by work

- ☀ Optimistic approach.
- ☀ Work = sense, identity, passion, imagination.
- ☀ Post-executive enterprises avoid old hierarchical control – *flat organigram*.

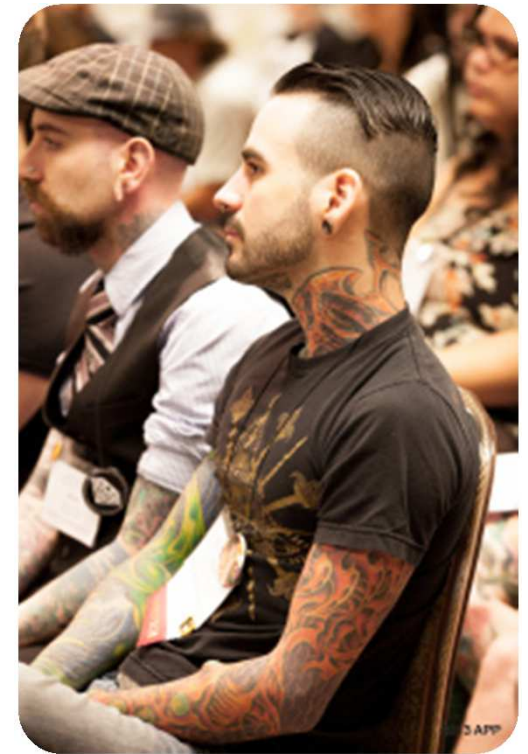


# 1. Life is enriched by work

☀️ “You do what you really love, and you get paid for that!”



“Their self-presentation usually includes a piercing in some highly unlikely body part and cultivating an air of total independence. Actually, what these people all were, or appeared to be, were artists. They kept artists’ hours. They wore artists’ clothes. They had persevered [in] the sort of odd habits that membership in any group—other than the group ‘artists’—tends to drum out of people. Maybe the most interesting thing about them was their lack of obvious corporate attachments (....) Andrew Ross (2001:80) “No –Collar Labour in America’s New Economy”, *Socialit Register*



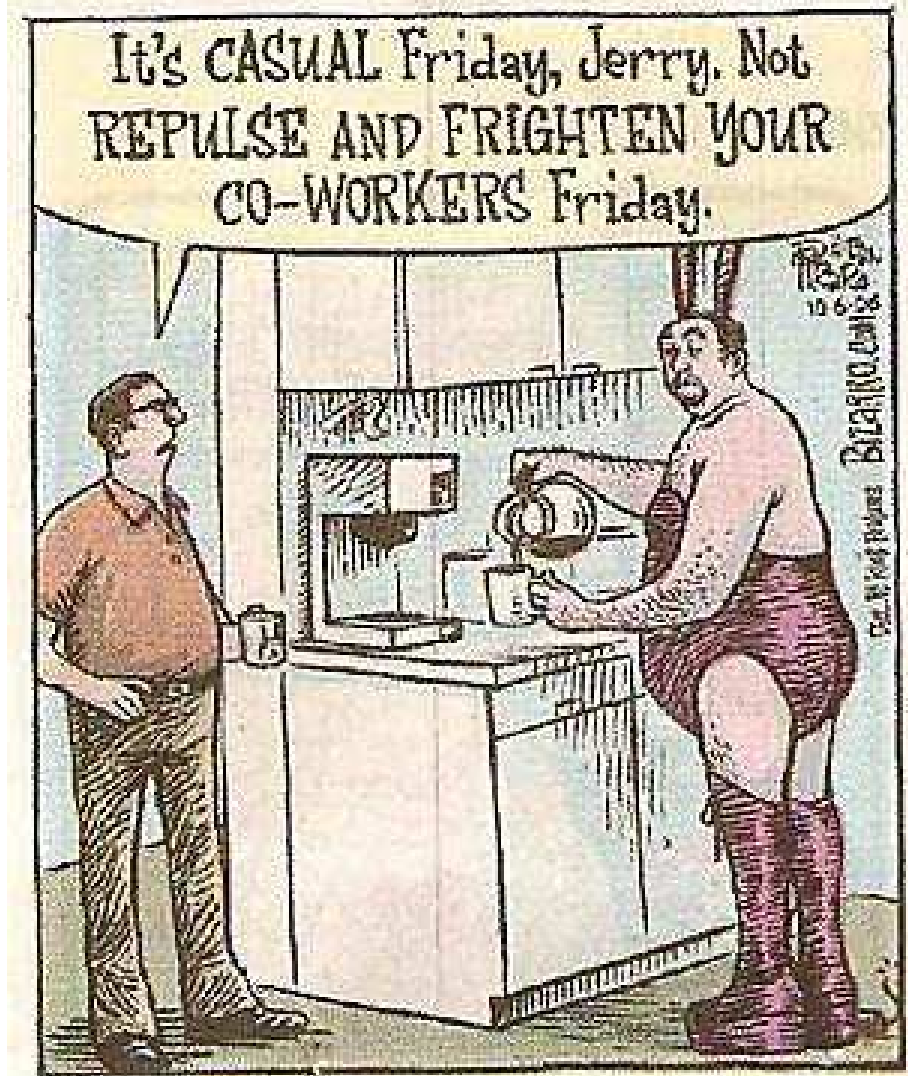


# 1. Life is enriched by work

☀ Corporate culture promotes solidarity.

☀ You can work from home (or feel at home when working).

**BIZARRO** | DAN PIRARO





## 2. Life is colonised by work

“Great people wanted! Reinvent yourself in Funky Projects: 5 years’ experience minimum, total availability to travel abroad, excellent English, 150% involvement, continuous learning & resilience to stress”.

**Recruitment Campaign 2012. Funky Projects Enterprise**

“90 hours a week, and I love it!” (**Google**)

## 2. Life is colonised by work

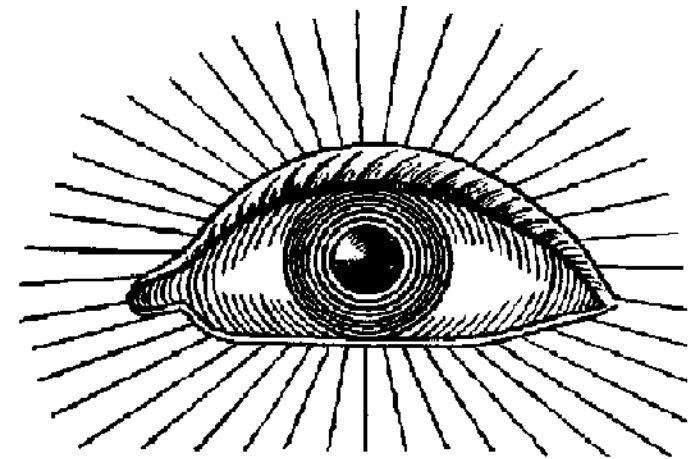
- ☀ Technology constantly monitors the worker.
- ☀ Peer control or emotional attachment to work.



## 2. Life is colonised by work

☀ Breeding ground for the proliferation of workaholics and perfectionists.

☀ Self-management as the most demanding boss (“technologies of the self”).



## 2. Life is colonised by work

### **The appropriation of value...**

☀ In creative work ones produces basically ideas.

☀ In friendly, open, unconstrained environments creativity flows more freely.

☀ The fruits of creativity, or even emotions, are appropriated by companies who make huge profits (Fumagalli, 2010).

- Google: 20% time to *personal* projects



## 2. Life is colonised by work

☀ Crowdsourcing and *prosumers*.



## 2. Life is colonised by work

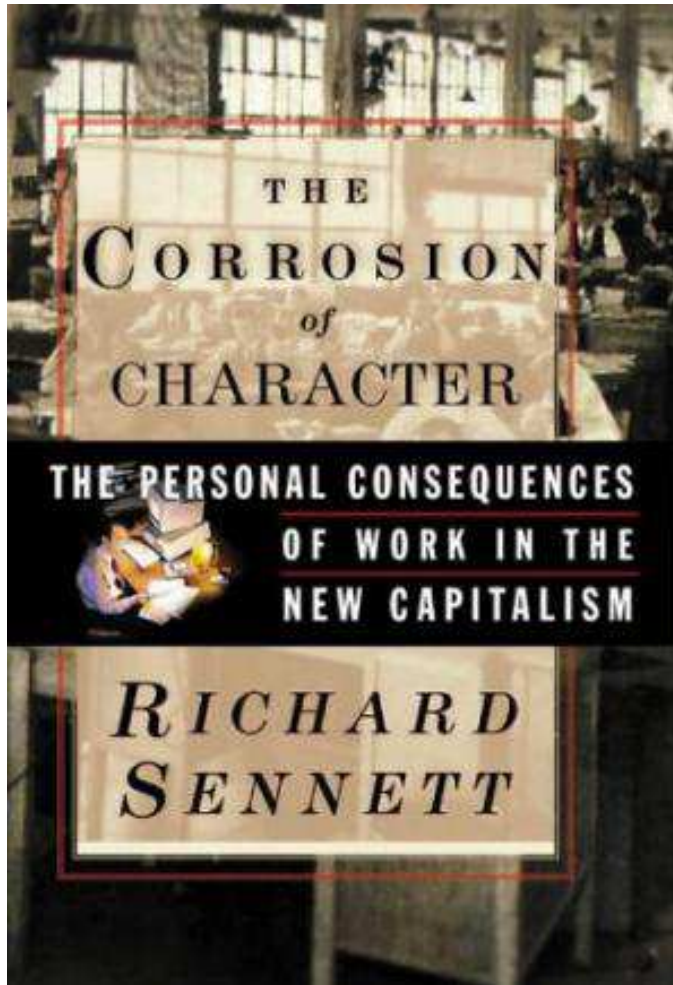
☀ Non-creative (monotonous) work is outsourced or offshored:

- *Peripheral cognitive Fordism* (MacCall, 2001).
  - Chinese teenagers and video games (Barboza, 2005)
  - Young secretaries in Barbados (Salzinger, 2003).
  - Call-centres and sweatshops.





## 2. Life is colonised by work

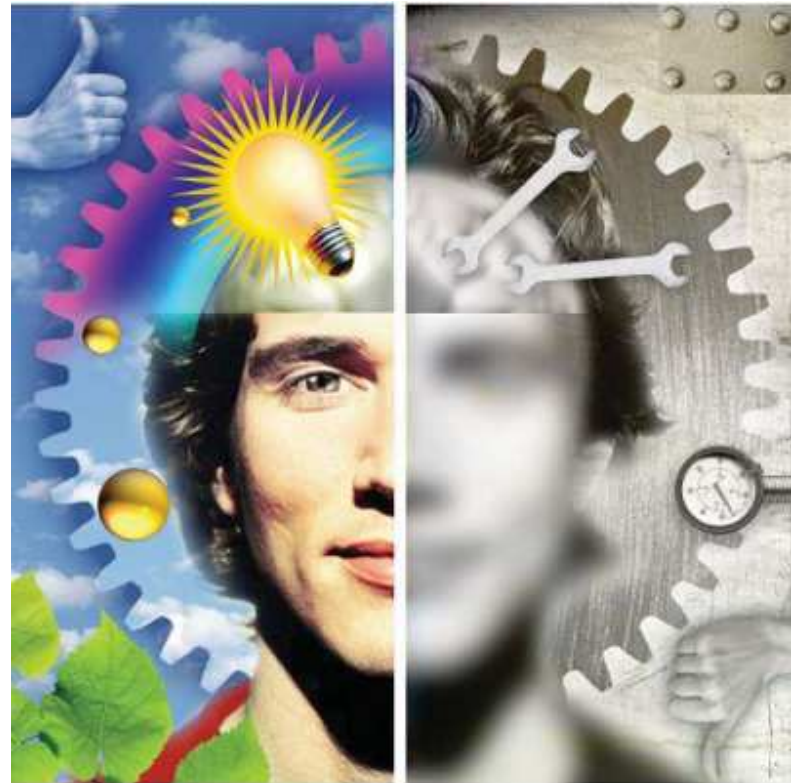


☀ The mantra of late capitalism (*Nothing in the long run*) takes to the corrosion of character (Sennet 1988).



# But *who* are the creative class after all?

- ☀ Highly educated.
- ☀ Cosmopolitan
- ☀ Young (<35's), white, middle-class, males.
- ☀ No family constraints.



### 3. Balance between bad or good.

☀ A contradictory product of late modernity:

- While committed employees tend to be happier, work insecurity causes stress and exploitation.
- Ambivalent nature of work-life (Baumann, Giddens, Beck...)
- Self-awareness, reflexive individual and the critique of modern institutions (family, etc.).

A few years later...a shift towards  
traditional forms of management  
[Spain, 2013, economic crisis]

## Re-split between home and work: testimonies.

### **BOSSES**

☀ “Culdesac IT. is *emotion*, but we are tending towards *reason*. We are looking for *balance*... we are now more *credibly crazy*”

☀ “This is no longer a project about “Let's see what happens”... now we have family.

### **WORKERS**

☀ “Sometimes they complain because I leave when it is my time to do so. I practice sports, I go to the theatre. I can not lock myself up in one world. Culdesac is just one part of my life.

☀ “At the end of the day, happiness is found in friends, family, love, and yes, work is an important part, but just one part like any other..”

# Discussion: the swing between work and life

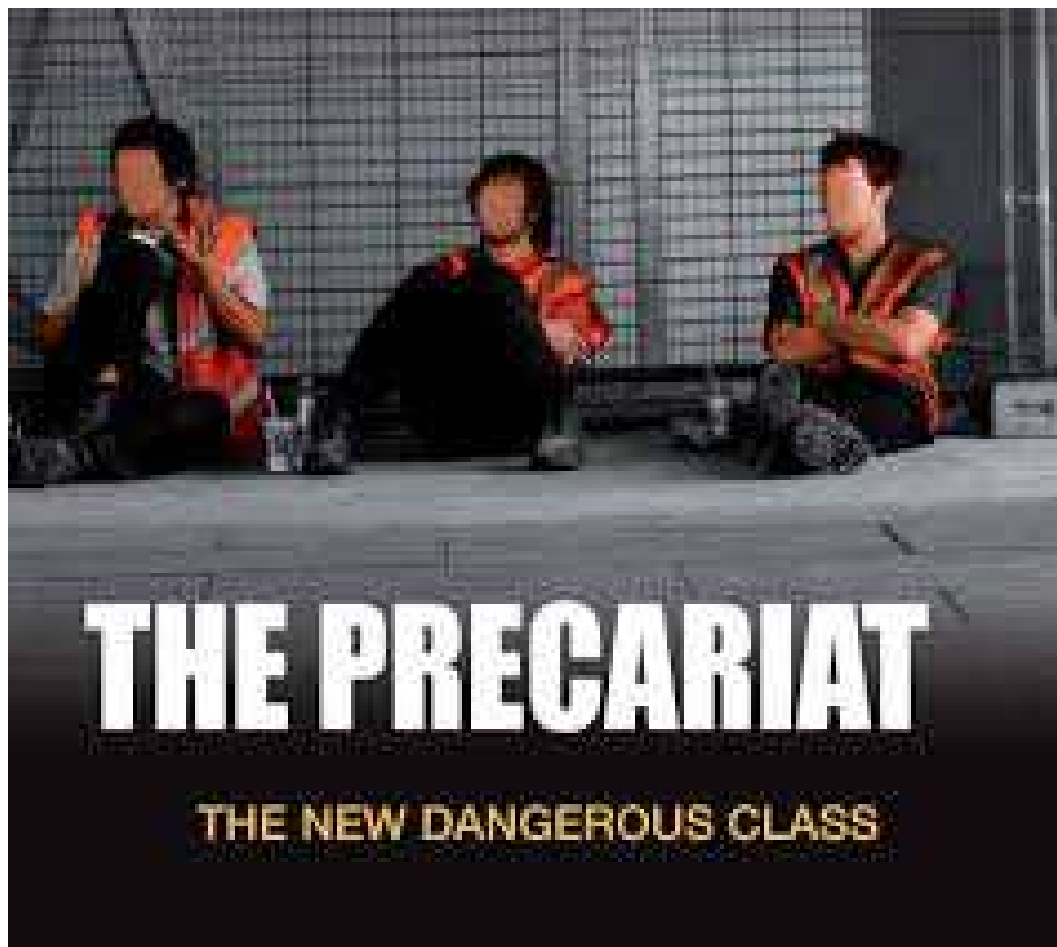
☀ Nippert-Eng (1996, 1997) [Douglas' purity/danger]: in industrial work artifacts of each area were clearly established, but in *significant work* artifacts are exchanged, mixed.

☀ The swing depends on work perception: either fair (enriching) or unfair (alienating) – e.g. Elton Mayo.

- Growing number of part-timers, internship.
- Back to a classical and hierarchical model of management.
- Some get married and have family.
- Some were fired - job insecurity, dissatisfaction, alienation.
- From 2008 work conditions & unemployment get much worst.



A final thought: labor as a *limited good* and the **extractive logic** of capitalism.



Standing, Guy (2011) *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class*. London & New York: Bloomsbury.

From the 2008 financial crisis onwards.

☀ It is not “the squeezed middle-class”, but many millions around the world without an anchor of job *stability* or *security*.

☀ *Truncated status* or *status discord*.

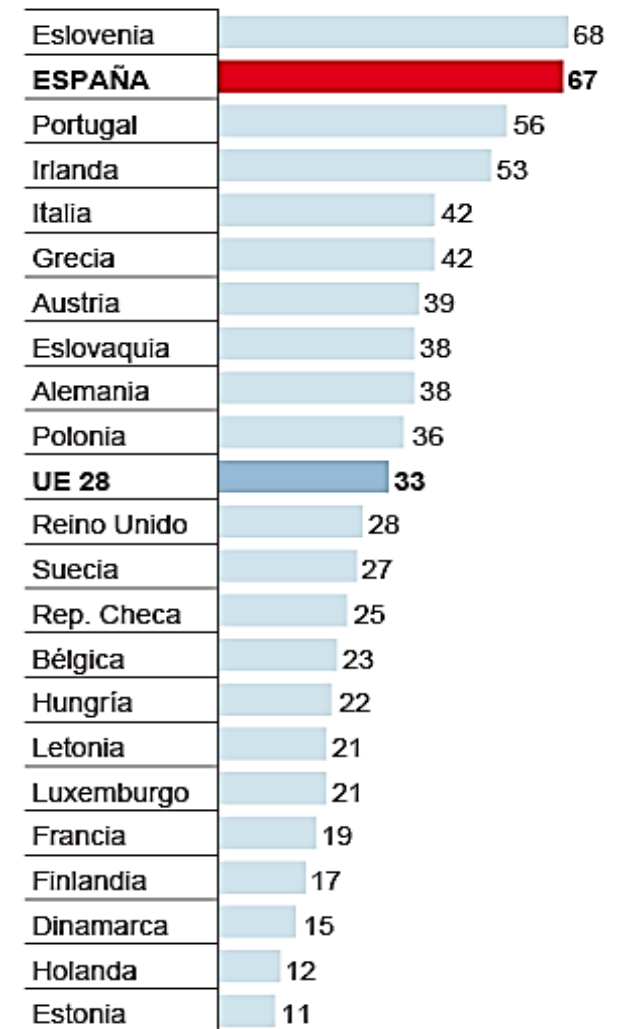
☀ “Their intellectual heroes included Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, and Michael Hardt and Tony Negri, with Hannah Arendt (1985) in the background” (Standing, 2011: 2).

☀ They are *denizens*: “someone who, for one reason or another, have a more limited range of rights than citizens do”.

☀ A growing sense of anger, anomy, anxiety and alienation could be translated into uprisings and political discontent.

#### BECARIOS TITULADOS

Encuesta realizada entre 12.921 personas de 18 a 35 años. % que ha realizado prácticas en empresas tras concluir sus estudios



Fuentes: OCDE y Comisión Europea.

EL PAÍS



Thank you.