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Policy, Personhood and the Intellectual Properties of Web 2.0

New hybrid figures of cultural creativity—the “prosumer” or the “produser”—have emerged from the convergence of producer and consumer in digital environments. Consequently, claims of ownership to and appropriation of cultural creations have shifted. This paper examines the cultural policies of intellectual property in digital contexts by considering social networking sites such as Facebook. As the apotheosis of Web 2.0 convergence culture, Facebook exemplifies the “immaterial” and “affective” labor of the “social factory” of globalized, informational capitalism where cultural creativity is often reduced to the status of “content provision.” This reduction of status occurs through site-specific policies and these policies face frequency challenges by users themselves, resulting in a bottom-up struggle over policy issues such as control of intellectual property. Exploring controversies in spring 2009 between Facebook “management” and “labor” over the policies that govern creative personal work on the site, I argue that the actual performativity of immaterial labor in creating the cultural value of social networking reveals contradictory rhetorics of ownership, personality and appropriation that highlight the contradictions of informational capital.