

Kim, Yearn, Kwangwoon University, Korea

The Construction of ‘Participation’ in Digital Culture Industries: Study on UGC Cultural Workers

Raising a critical question on established discourses on the youth's culture, labour and cultural work in Korea's society, this paper inquires the youth's relation to digital network culture, social identities and labour values. Drawn upon theories on immaterial labour as a predominant mode of labour in the post-Fordist capitalism and contemporary media work in particular, I investigate how Korean young people have come to engage themselves in UGC production as this particular mode of work has become the field of media activity-labour. The complex mode is examined, in which the young people's participation is converted to free/low paid labour for business, normative power works in controlling flexible labours across public, economic and cultural sectors and the evaluation system of anonymous netizens' clicks influences on the evaluation of labour values. It is argued that the field of UGC production is defined as a virtuality of life, for apparently contradictory forces — economic subjection and voluntary activeness, structure of belonging and force of unbelonging — are constitutive of the very meaning and reality of 'participation' in the digital network and/or cultural work-nets.