

## The Impact of Digital Labor: Innovation or Exploitation? (Critical Perspective of Christian Fuchs on Economy Politics of Social Media)

<sup>1</sup>Dani Vardiansyah, <sup>1</sup>Universitas Esa Unggul

<sup>2</sup>Santi Delliana, <sup>2</sup>Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Kalbis

### Abstract

*The latest development of extraordinary potential user growth in social media proves that the communication technology revolution has reached its peak. Social media - not only for communication and interaction between people - but is also a new political weapon in ideological campaigns. Christian Fuchs, in his book Social Media: A Critical Introduction, discusses critical perspectives on digital work concepts that focus on understanding to shape the value of corporate social media. In this paper, the researchers wanted to find out the phenomenon of social media in the context of political communication based on Fuch's critical perspective of innovation and exploitation. Based on the innovation perspective, the idea of a digital workforce must be seen as extraordinary innovation, because social media managers are very interested when looking for opportunities and make these opportunities as innovations that come from basic human needs. In this case, social media comes with all the features that meet human needs. However, when viewed from the exploitation perspective, it seems that social media users exploit it because businesses use social media as a free tool in creating and developing their business potential, making social media a manifestation for the convenience of communication technology. However, everything in this world has a double impact: social media has both positive and negative sides that can't be deny*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Economic, Politic

### BACKGROUND

The era of social media Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and various similar applications, are not something foreign in this era. It can say that almost everyone who has a smartphone, has one of these applications or even has it all. Social media has radically become a communication revolution today. The radicality of this change in communication has left conventional ways of communicating. The era of business cards is becoming obsolete, replaced by the period of social media account exchanges. This condition seems to be a necessity caused by technological developments, especially internet technology. This internet and social media revolution is not only the culmination of the development of communication technology but also a manifestation of the emergence of various variants of new communication media.

Social media has made this world a world without borders. The aspect of human communication has been able to overcome the dimensions of space and time through social media. Social media has become a new trend in the means of human interaction. Not just a matter of delivering messages, social media has even become a method of sharing between humans related to various activities undertaken. Humans that one can know even able to follow all the actions of other human beings in so far presented through social media.

As a new trend in communication, social media is indisputable. Even another aspect, in addition to the interaction between humans, grow with the rise of social media. With social media, politics seems to have a new weapon in expanding political ideology. No wonder that practical political activity uses social media to reach the masses effectively and efficiently. Strong influence makes it felt in the economic field. Social media is one of the factors that foster economic activity. Business activities and promotional activities have taken social media to be a powerful tool. Business activities look great with the presence of social media. Promotional activities get low-cost facilities in carrying out their activities. Therefore, the presence of social media with an increase in users from day to day becomes a tangible proof of the power of internet technology (Nasrullah, 2015). The internet has become the result of technology that seems to be the breath of human life. Digital media that help fostering the cultural good help all humans to make their

voices heard, to achieve common understandings, and to achieve recognition. Humans all strive for recognition, but have different worldviews, identities, and lifestyles (Fuchs, 2020).

Research published by the IDN Research Institute in 2018, involving 1400 millennial generation, with a range of ages between 20 to 35 years to show verifiers indicate 49 % of respondents access the Internet 4- 6 hours a day with a time of 74.4 was used to access social media. The general conclusion of this research states that social media is becoming a communication media that is becoming a trend, and conventional communication media having deserted. The world of social media has proven to be a media revolution that is changing the way humans communicate. Communication is done through digital media so that the reality of communication is more virtual, ubiquitous in the sense of being exposed to all places, and pervasive in the mind that it can be studied scientifically (Soeparno & Sandra, 2011).

Christian Fuchs, an observer of the media, putting pressure on social media as a communication medium so spectacular that not only become a medium of communication but also, with the intrinsic social media, has given rise to a community of digital labor that inevitably has an impact on communication economically and politically. When the phenomenon of digital work is in the context of the political economy, there is a trade-off between digital labor as a form of innovation on the one hand. On the other hand, digital work becomes the exploitation of social media users. This paper will examine the phenomenon of Social Media in the context of political communication by departing from the critical perspective of Christian Fuchs.

## METHOD

The method used in this study is a paper analysis by examining what was written by Fuchs (2014b) in his book *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* and then looking deductively at cases in the field. After that, through the process of inductive thinking, researchers review the thoughts and perspectives written by Fuchs in his book. In this paper analysis, analyzing means breaking a topic or concept into several parts to inspect and understand it, then restructure its components in a way that makes sense (Vardiansyah & Febriani, 2018). In this paper analysis method, researchers become experts in a topic so they can rearrange and present part of the issue from their perspective.

Paper analysis, in the past, has rarely been considered in qualitative research methodologies. At present, the study of documents is an essential and integral part of the qualitative research methodology. Our research employs data in the form documents and complements the qualitative research process. Our research makes extracting data sources through document study complementary to the qualitative research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **DIGITAL LABOR: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN FUCHS**

Christian Fuchs is professor social media at the Institute for Research Communication and Media at the University of Westminster. He is the compiler of Triple C: Communication, Capitalism and Critique, and author of various kinds of writings on Social Media, such as *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (2014b), *Digital Labor, and Karl Marx* (2014a), *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis* (2014a), *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies* (2014a), *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age* (2014a).

Fuchs, through writings, provides a lot of analysis on social media and write also thinking - critical thinking. What is quite phenomenal is his writing about digital labor. The concept of digital labor is focused on understanding will be the formation of values in social media owned companies.

In his book *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, Fuchs provides an overview of digital labor issues. The general description he formulated was a description of the situation in which social media users created a commodity that was able to attract other parties to include advertisements. Of course, this raises the question of who accurately creates value and benefits the company's social media. From this question, a digital labor formula was built. Digital labor is a form of employment-related to production and consumption in rich digital media. This is what Fuchs calls the commercialization of social media users. This commercialization is the basis for the development of digital capitalism. Social media users

productively build a commodity that creates a profit space for social media providers (Fuchs, 2014b). Users have indirectly become workers from social media (corporation) organizers. However, the difference is that social media users do not share in the benefits of the commodity they have created. This is where the element of exploitation becomes an element of debate.

In short, it can be said that the users of social media are actually "working," even though sometimes it feels as "entertainment." This situation was the one who gave rise to the concept of a playground, where the actors necessarily worked even though they felt like they were just playing. They voluntarily share many things and interact with others, so that big data is formed, which is undoubtedly very beneficial for the corporation of social media. Important information is what the social media corporation uses as a way to invite advertisers, so they want to invest in social media in the form of advertising activities. We can imagine how much big data is built up through social media. Statistics indicate that in 2018, Facebook users reached 2.17 billion (*Facebook Q3 2018 Results*, 2018). Of course, these numbers have not been added by Twitter users, Instagram, Youtube, and others.

From the description above, we can conclude briefly that Fuchs formulated digital labor as social media users who have externally fulfilled their needs to be connected with others, to do sharing of life, but have fundamentally carried out work for social media corporations through big data which has unwittingly been used for profit. They indirectly Terek exploitation labor without reward and even very minimal share in the profits generated. In short, digital labor is a free worker that produces a lot of earnings for social media corporations. Users are sedated by the convenience of interacting, sharing, and being entertained by psychological entertainment without realizing that they have been exploited by those who use their activities for the business interests of social media organizers.

This is Fuchs's sharp criticism of the impact of social media. Social media, on the one hand, become an innovation, but on the other hand, it has become a tool of exploitation. Social media has made the public a kind of commodity- making machine and unpaid workers. However, the exploitation side is felt like something vague, free from the values offered by social media that can meet human needs to become social creatures. The need for connectedness, the need to show one's existence has blinded the eyes of social media users of their exploitation. In fact, the convenience offered by social media is no longer a user becoming conscious but rather to be indifferent towards exploitation at him.

### ***DIGITAL LABOR IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL ECONOMY***

The discipline of political economy is a discipline that is a counter-attack on the understanding of capitalism. In the context of communication science, political economy has two essential aspects: (1) A political economy is an approach that connects the media with a communication stem in society (McChesney, 1997). This shows that the media strongly influences and dramatically strengthens the fabric of society. (2) A political economy is an approach that sees elements of ownership, aspects of performance, and aspects of government policy that have a strong influence on media behaviour and media structure (McChesney, 1997).

A country's economic growth and technological progress of a country are seen as vital elements in a national order. Media is an industry that is capable of creating jobs, producing goods and services as well as men so the growth of industry another stimulus (McQuail, 2011). The media has rules and norms that become a link with the community and institutions, essentially regulating the media as a social institution.

The media becomes an effective tool for an institution to convey the substance of communication (McQuail, 2011). The state, for example, uses the media to convey policies and ideology. Another more with employers, businessman using the media to strengthen business processes. Meanwhile, the public making the media source expectations information that trusted it even expected to control social.

So, the media has a burden that is not light. The media must be able to accommodate all the expectations for the functions assigned to it. The media can not only carry out functions for certain circles but has an obligation to accommodate all functions for all layers. Because the media are related to the lives of many people, the most pressing elements are economic and political functions. Therefore, the media are very closely related to economic aspects and political aspects. This is why the political economy approach

is very closely related to the existence of the media. The media is not only able to grow economic activity, but also effective as a means of political activity.

Economically, the media becomes an effective and efficient supporting tool. Business and media are two things that cannot be separated. It is impossible for a business to develop without the role of the media. In fact, businesses that are still very traditional also use the media as their supporters. It is through the media, entrepreneurs make business communications to the public because the public is the end-user of the output of a business.

Se political way, the media is an effective tool to build public opinion. It is media that help politicians to maintain ideology and maintain political communication regarding policy and strategy. Politics has always been the media's most popular consumption. This is caused by 2 important factors: (1) Politics requires the existence of the media. It is impossible to have a lively political life without the media. (2) Political events are a delicious menu for the media. The level of public interest in political themes has the highest-ranking position.

Therefore, the media, politically, moves by always using the opinion-forming strategy as its main force. In the context of the formation of public opinion, the media simultaneously always moves with three main patterns, namely the use of political symbols, message substrate packaging strategies and media agenda strategies.

Digital labor - cannot be separated from the context of the political economy. Moreover, digital labor was born from a media existence. It must be recognized that digital labor has a vital role in the context of the political economy. Economically, it is clear that digital labor is a labor function without costs. The economy is developing because of the contribution of Anoni workers. M. Business traffic seems to have a freeway, moves quickly, and has an increasingly broad scope.

In the context of social media, there is six economic through platforms to do social media (Srniccek, 2017): (a) Advertising Platform:

Social media that has big data has the potential to be used by companies to broadcast business advertisements, for example, ads on YouTube. (b) Data Storage Platform: Social media embrace opportunities for bi SNIS data storage online, for example, Amazon Web Services. (c) Industrial Platform: Empowering social media for the interests of industrial development, for example, General Electric and Siemens. (d) Product Platform: Empowering social media to market products, for example, application products. (e) Job Platform: Use social media to offer other possibilities of work, for example, job portals on social media or job applications such as Gojek. (g) Logistics Platform: Empowering social media for supply chain interests, for example, Amazon, Alibaba.

In the political context, digital labor in social media also has mission-important politically. It is certain that appears on social media is tissue growth between people who are given a significant influence on politics. The critical element in politics is information, and social media can virally disseminate information. Therefore, almost all political actors use social media as a means to convey ideas or tools for campaigns. Social media has become a tool network more efficient interaction between people.

Six things can be donated to social media digital labor. In essence, it's for the political life (Chadwick & Howard, 2008): (a) Social media is a means of digital political discussion, (b) Social media is a means of building shared political knowledge collectively, (c) Social media provides a method of sharing political data, (d) Social media be a means of documentation lasting political, (e) Social media becomes a means of expressing political attitudes, (f) Social media becomes a political website.

Thus it becomes clear that the role of digital labor in social media is closely linked to aspects of political economy.

## **DIGITAL LABOR: INNOVATION OR EXPLOITATION**

Of course, it is not easy to answer questions about digital labor as innovation or exploitation. Of each - each must be approached from the standpoint of proportionate. That is, each has a point of view that can be valued positively but also negatively.

From the paradigm of innovation, it must be recognized that the creation of digital labor must be seen as a powerful innovation. This is the foresight of the organizers of social media. They see the

opportunity and respond to it as an innovation. They are departing from basic human needs, namely the need for interaction, actualization, and the need for recognition. Social media comes with all the features of human needs present. With social media, humans are increasingly broadening the scope of their interactions and increasingly free from the constraints of space and time. At this point, the location of the innovation is quite precise.

In its development, social media, which was initially a means of interaction, has been placed in a more complex grand design. Innovators in the field of social media see an opportunity for the creation of big data in the development of social media. The innovation instinct is further expanded. Big data becomes a promising business opportunity. Moreover, big data is built without costs. Big data is automatically made along with the willingness of users to meet the basic needs of humans as social beings and created a series of digital labor that was recruited at no charge. Obviously, this is a more profound innovation. When big data and digital labor created, innovation is enhanced by inserting its business platform in social media. All business activities easily find a place. Herein lies the genius of the designer of social media. Of course, we cannot claim that the grand design of social media has been formulated from the start. It is very likely, and very reasonable in terms of percentages that the grand design of social media is in line with the progress of social media.

In the exploitation paradigm, we naturally say that the exploitation of social media users has happened very quickly. This is because unconsciously, they have entered into a digital labor community that is used by business people as a free tool in creating business potential. The organizer of social media mass has cleverly directed the users of social media as the creators of the big data or the creators of the digital commodity from all of their social media activities.

It is unfair if we only look at it biased. Social media and digital labor should be recognized as an innovative communications technology. But on the other hand, social media and digital labor created digital exploitation. Social media users are becoming positioned as mere business tools. However, regarding the context of the political economy became apparent that digital labor - even, at last, could appear as a subject of economic and subj oak political. In this economic and political sphere, they experience subjective existence so that they do not necessarily feel they are digital business tools. Digital labor - also turns out to have the potential to take and utilize social media wealth to strengthen self-actualization further.

Proportionally we can not sentence him that digital labor is a form of exploitation per se. Still, it must be recognized that digital labor is also an innovation humane towards social media. Social media users economically and politically find effective and efficient means in social media to actualize the economic and political aspects.

## CONCLUSION

The priority of technology and science is absolute. Not a da change without technological and scientific civilization. Technology is an indication of human glory. Humans not only need to eat, but humans also need more than just eating (Toynbee, 1957). This would emphasize that technology is a necessity for human needs.

The development of revolutionary communication technology developed with the advent of internet technology, which gave birth to various kinds of facilities, including ease in interacting. Social media is a manifestation of the technology for the comfort of interaction. In a short time, social media became a breath for humans. Social media makes people more economically and politically available.

The quantitative effect that arises from social media is the growth of the digital labor community, which is used by certain circles for business purposes. However, there is nothing in this world that does not have a double effect. Social media cannot be denied that it still has both positive and negative content.

## REFERENCES

1. Chadwick, A., & Howard, P. N. (2008). European Political Organizations and The Internet. In *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. New York, United States: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203962541.ch3>

2. *Facebook Q3 2018 Results*. (2018). Retrieved from [https://s21.q4cdn.com/399680738/files/doc\\_financials/2018/Q3/Q3-2018-Earnings-Presentation.pdf](https://s21.q4cdn.com/399680738/files/doc_financials/2018/Q3/Q3-2018-Earnings-Presentation.pdf)
3. Fuchs, C. (2014a). *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. United Kingdom: Routledge.
4. Fuchs, C. (2014b). *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. California: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446270066>
5. Fuchs, C. (2020). The Ethics of the Digital Commons. *Journal of Media Ethics*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1736077>
6. McChesney, R. W. (1997). *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*. New York, United States: Seven Stories Press.
7. McQuail, D. (2011). *Teori Komunikasi Massa*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
8. Nasrullah, R. (2015). *Media Sosial (Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sosioteknologi)*. Jakarta: Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
9. Soeparno, K., & Sandra, L. (2011). Social Psychology: The Passion of Psychology. *Buletin Psikologi*, 19(1), 16–28.
10. Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform Capitalism*. United Kingdom: Polity Press.
11. Toynbee, A. J. (1957). *A Study of History: Abridgment of Volumes VII-X*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press Inc.
12. Vardiansyah, D., & Febriani, E. (2018). *Filsafat Ilmu Komunikasi: Pengantar Ontologi, Epistemologi, Aksiologi*. Jakarta: Indeks.