

THE EXPLOITATION OF AUDIENCE AS DIGITAL LABOUR IN INDONESIAN YOUTUBE PLATFORM

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Abstrak. Di era digital saat ini, internet hadir pada media-media baru dan telah mengaburkan batas antara ruang produksi dan ruang konsumsi media, audiens tidak lagi sekedar menjadi konsumen tetapi juga turut aktif dalam memproduksi konten digital yang diunggah dan dibagikan ke audiens lainnya. YouTube sebagai salah satu platform yang paling banyak dikonsumsi oleh audiens telah mendorong perubahan budaya di kalangan masyarakat digital. Audiens YouTube tidak lagi sekedar menikmati konten yang diproduksi oleh media seperti halnya di era Televisi tetapi mereka menonton konten yang diproduksi oleh audiens YouTube lainnya. Audiens YouTube tidak lagi berperan sebagai konsumen tetapi juga sebagai pekerja digital yang tereksplotasi di atas kepentingan ekonomi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana peran audiens sebagai pekerja digital dalam industri YouTube di Indonesia. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah digital discourse yang akan membantu peneliti untuk mengungkap motivasi-motivasi di balik sebuah teks. Hasil penelitian menyebutkan bahwa audiens YouTube tereksplotasi dalam akumulasi pemilik modal dikarenakan aktivitas mereka dalam memproduksi budaya, juga melalui waktu dan perhatian mereka terhadap konten budaya yang menghasilkan data untuk menarik perhatian pengiklan telah menghasilkan keuntungan bagi kapital.

Kata Kunci: Audiens, YouTube, Pekerja Digital, Ekonomi Politik Media

Abstract. In today's digital era, the internet is present in new media and has eliminated the boundaries between production and consumption space. Audiences are no longer just consumers but also actively participate in producing digital content that is uploaded and shared with other audiences. YouTube as one of the most consumed platforms by the audience has driven cultural change in the digital society. YouTube audiences are no longer simply enjoying content produced by the media as in the era of Television but they are watching content produced by other YouTube audiences. The YouTube audience is no longer the role of consumers but also as digital labours who are exploited above economic interests. This study aims to determine the role of the audience as digital labours in the YouTube industry in Indonesia. The research method used is digital discourse which will help researchers to uncover the motivations behind a text. The research results show that the YouTube audience is exploited in the accumulation of capital owners because their activities in producing culture and their attention to cultural content that generates data to attract advertisers' attention have resulted in profits for capital.

Keywords: Audience, YouTube, Digital Labour, Political Economy of Media

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INTRODUCTION

A video has gone viral during the commemoration of National Children's Day 2017 in Pekanbaru, Riau. Joko Widodo as President chose a child to go on stage and asked about his dreams. Instead of answering that he wants to be a Doctor, Police or Engineer like the ideal of children in general, this boy named Raffi Fadilah answered that he wanted to become a YouTuber, and when asked why, he answered because YouTubers earn a lot of money (Official Net News, 2017). That is the representation of today's digital generation, whose aspirations are no longer limited to mainstream professions, but have turned to become YouTubers or content creators on YouTube.

Today YouTube is not just a moving image archive. More than that, YouTube is a social space that brings together various interests, from social, political, cultural to economic. YouTube features a virtual community that studies almost everything from science, photography, cooking, design to music. YouTube has also brought discourse and ideological wars not only through content production but also through the comments column.

YouTube appeared and started beta testing on February 14, 2005. The first video uploaded to YouTube was titled Me at the Zoo. The video was recorded by Jawed Karim at the San Diego Zoo on April 23, 2005. YouTube released a beta test in May 2005 and was inaugurated in November 2005. YouTube's growth accelerated in July 2006 with 65,000

videos uploaded per day and 100 million video views per day. In October 2006, Google Inc. bought Google for USD 1.65 billion. In the same year, there was a phenomenon that slowly emerged, namely the emergence of YouTube celebrities or who are now often called YouTubers (Gaveau et al., 2014).

Since 2005, YouTube has been present in Indonesia along with MySpace and Friendster. However, the presence of YouTube at that time was still very simple, not yet familiar with high definition video, recorded with cell phones or makeshift cameras, short duration and uploaded with minimal editing. YouTube is still lacking in enthusiasts. The audience was small in the past and the content was less diverse. At that time YouTube was formed more on the basis of technology than culture because the YouTube service was originally intended to remove the technical barriers faced by amateur users wishing to share videos on the website. YouTube provides a very simple and integrated interface that allows people to upload and view online videos without much technical knowledge by using a standard web browser and simple internet speeds.

2010 marked the beginning of YouTube's revival in Indonesia. Starting from the lipsync video "Keong Racun" uploaded by two teenage girls from Bandung, which suddenly went viral, were Sinta and Jojo. Many people were entertained by their innocent and funny actions until the two teenagers suddenly became famous and were invited to various television programs, even became magazine covers, and got a

recording contract (Tempo, 2010). After Keong Racun went viral, suddenly lots of songs lip-synced and uploaded to YouTube. Although not all became famous, there was a police officer named Briptu Norman who went viral because of the lip-sync video of a Bollywood song in early 2011. His Indian shaking was able to lead Norman to become a new artist on television, and he even chose to leave Brimob and pursue his new profession as a celebrity, even though then it doesn't sell.

YouTubers have become such promising careers that many teenagers are interested in making their debut as content creators. Even YouTubers have become new celebrities who have even managed to beat television celebrities, in terms of income from either Google AdSense or endorsements and advertising promos. According to the website Socialblade.com the top five subscribers in Indonesia are Atta Halilintar, Ricis Official, Gen Halilintar, Calon Sarjana and Rans Entertainment.

The success of YouTube as the audience's favorite platform in this digital era has made it a very promising media industry, especially for advertisers. This study aims to determine the role of the audience in the YouTube industry in Indonesia. Is it true that entering the digital era, where the audience is no longer only as consumers but also as producers and has a more dominant role than conventional media audiences or is it the opposite, digital audiences experience exploitation and are in a subordinate position?

Cultural studies scholars have highlighted audience activity as an active process in the formation of meaning which provides a useful starting point for enriching audience studies. Stuart Hall's Encoding / Decoding is a useful resource because of its focus on active "decoding" processes and discourse production. The audience as labour can be seen in a process that Hall describes as "decoding". Meanwhile, for Hall, the encoding process in message production is a work process consisting of interpretive work (Hall, 2006:169) the activities of the audience in encoding decoding are not necessarily marked as work. However, Hall's attention draws to the process by which audiences generate meaning by using the encoded meanings they encounter in messages produced by the communications industry which opens up the possibility to focus on the process by which audience members generate meaning through their activities of consuming culture.

Meanwhile, Jhon Fiske (1987) makes it possible to make further progress towards the reconstruction of the audience work process by enriching the concept of the audience through the aspects of an active audience. Fiske's emphasis on how meaning is created by active audience reading (Fiske, 1987:67) is useful in the process of further development of audience work theory. Audience activities such as reading, watching or listening are clearly consumptive because they involve an objective process of consuming meaning, but they are also productive because they involve the production of subjective

meanings. It is the product of these activities that is meant by meaning, therefore audience work is a process of significance through cultural consumption.

Cultural studies say that the presence of new media no longer makes the relationship between the audience and the media in an unbalanced position. In digital media, the audience has the authority to construct text and make use of the media. Digital media also gives the audience flexibility in transforming itself to take advantage of other audiences (Castells, 2009:156). Furthermore, the relationship between the audience and the media is not always in an unbalanced position, there is awareness of the strength of the audience which, if realized by the audience itself, can be a turning point for the audience not to become objects but to turn into active subjects or audiences, especially in digital media (Babe, 2009:62). For example, the practice of presumption on twitter, where the audience (users) can express their agenda through one hundred and forty characters in one upload, includes creating hate speech and constructing the world (Wirawanda & Wibowo, 2018). However, Andrejevic (2011) has a different opinion regarding an active audience in the digital era. He said, however, the audience was still at the bottom of the political economy of the media. Exploitation and alienation are objective realities and therefore audience awareness is irrelevant for validating them. Exploitation requires the use of the value generated by one social class (i.e. the audience as labour) with another social class (i.e.

the media as owners of capital). In order for value to be accumulated, it is necessary to separate it from the producer, as was the case with the theory of the work process proposed by Karl Marx.

The audience labor introduced by Dallas Smythe (1977:6) through the concept of "audience commodity" into the political economy of media four decades ago is still considered relevant to audience problems in today's digital era. Chrstian Fuchs et al., (2013) through his book *Digital Labor* and Karl Marx introduces the concept of digital labor as a strong basis for discussions of the political economy of media in the digital era. The basic argument of Fuchs says that the dominant capital accumulation model of the contemporary digital platform corporation is built on the basis of exploitation of the audience's unpaid labour or is usually called as users, namely those who create and explore through social networking sites by creating content, providing feedback and share content with other users. The activities carried out by these digital media audiences have created value that is at the core of the profit creation process. Furthermore, Fuchs adapted the labour process theory from Marx, which states that the human work process has three elements. The first is an activity that has a purpose, namely the work itself which then becomes the concept of labor. The second is the object where the labour is carried out which then becomes the concept of labour objects. The third is the instruments of that labour which later became a labor instrument (Marx, 1990:284).

In many ways, the audience debate on political economy studies with cultural studies has been going on for a long time. Audience activities clearly involve cultural consumption, but conceptualizing such activities as audience labour is intended to place the audience in political economy terms in order to develop an understanding of the relationship between audience activities and capital accumulation. Every effort to incorporate audience activities as cultural consumption into the political economy must be made to avoid dead ends in the debate (Nixon, 2015; Peck, 2006).

Meanwhile, Sut Jhally & Bill Livant (1986) offer one of the two main alternatives of Smythe media's political economy from the commodity audience. They explore the concept of an audience as labour and the values of that audience for the benefit of capitalism. However, Jhally and Livant did not go further than Smythe in considering audience labour specifications, so they did not have an accurate picture of how the audience as labour was commodified or exploited. They focus on what they call the valorization of audience awareness. Jhally and Livant claim that audiences work for media owners, not advertisers as Smythe said and they state that the audience commodity is the viewing time used by the audience.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, many scholars have contributed to developing the political economy of digital labour. This includes the rise of the political economy of the commodity audience (see for example Manzerolle &

McGuigan, 2014). However, the development of the concept of digital labour then eliminates the concept of audience labour from the political economy of the media. Terranova (2000) can be called the first researcher to offer a detailed consideration of the political economy of digital labour which she describes as "free labor" but Terranova does not consider audience work to be cultural consumption. In addition, research related to surveillance has also received a large amount of attention because investors benefit from digital communication by collecting data about communication activities that researchers perceive as digital work. Some research related to this can be seen in surveillance and alienation in the online economy (Andrejevic, 2011) the validation of surveillance on Facebook (Cohen, 2008), the mobilization of commodity audiences in the wireless world (Manzerolle, 2010) and alternative views of privacy on Facebook (Fuchs, 2011).

The political economy theory of media put forward involves selling to advertisers from data collected through surveillance activities in digital media. In this case, it can be said that the renewal of the Smythe concept related to the sale of the audience (or referred to as users, prosumer or digital labor) to advertisers has also become the subject of significant research. Nixon argues that the study suffers from many of the same political economy errors that exist in Smythe's original theory and other audience commodities research. Retrieval of user-generated content by digital

labour is also the focus of Fisher (2012) research which tries to reveal how alienation can create exploitation for audiences as labour on social networking sites.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research method with a digital discourse approach. Discourse is a term used in a variety of different fields and can mean a variety of different things. This can refer to the formal nature of semiotic artifacts which make them unified as a particular type of text, it can refer to the way people use language and other semiotic systems to achieve certain social actions or it can refer to a broader thing namely systems of knowledge that act to regulate what is happening. people say, write or think (Fairclough, 1992). The object of this research is two YouTube video content from Aurelie Hermansyah entitled "*Perdana Atta Halilintar Buka Kamar untuk Aurel*" and the music video "*Cinta Seperti Aku*". The two contents were chosen with consideration, the first content was Aurelie's content which was watched the most compared to the other content. Then the second content was chosen because it included new content that was uploaded and had been on YouTube trending for several days. The collection technique used in this study to obtain complete, deep and detailed information consisting of the audio-visual text on the video content and also the text in the comments column. In addition, the researchers also collected data through other social media that were formed and followed by Aurel's

YouTube channel audience to follow more deeply and intently related to activities and interactions between audiences. Discourse is an interdisciplinary analysis technique that comes from a variety of disciplines from the humanities and social sciences, such as linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics, sociology, psychology, to media and communication. Discourse research does not provide concrete or visible answers to problems in scientific research, but provides tools to find out the epistemological and ontological assumptions that lie behind a scientific research. In other words, discourse will be able to help researchers to uncover the motivations behind a text or behind the selection of research methods used in a study to interpret a text (Ida, 2014).

The purpose of this research is to see how the discourse related to audiences as digital labour is seen through YouTube channels in Indonesia. The object of this research is a Vlog (video-blog) on the YouTube channel which is currently in the Top Ten Influencer position with the most subscribers in Indonesia based on the socialblade.com site to see how YouTubers present content to get the attention of their audience.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Aurelie Hermansyah is the son of musicians Anang Hermansyah and Krisdayanti. After his parents divorced, Aurel was better known to be closer to the figure of his stepmother, Ashanti. The Anang Hermansyah family has had a YouTube channel since 2018 with a

total of more than 4.7 million subscribers. Apart from creating content with her family, Aurelie Hermansyah also has her own YouTube channel with an equally large number of subscribers, which is more than 3.3 million. Most of Aurel's YouTube content is about his daily activities, especially when he is with his family and girlfriend, Atta Halilintar. Aurel uploads content on his channel almost every day with hundreds to millions of viewers.

Don't Forget to Like, Comment and Subscribe

Figure 1. YouTube Channel of Aurelie Hermansyah



Source: YouTube, 2019

In the content entitled “Perdana Atta Halilintar Buka Pintu Kamar untuk Aurel” (Hermansyah, 2019) at 13:41 minutes, Aurel said:

“Jangan lupa di-like, dikomen dan di-subscribe”

Those sacred words are almost always present in every video content on YouTube, including in every Aurelie content. Don't forget to like, comment and subscribe are efforts made by creators to get engagement from their audience. Engagement can be defined as two-way communication or according to

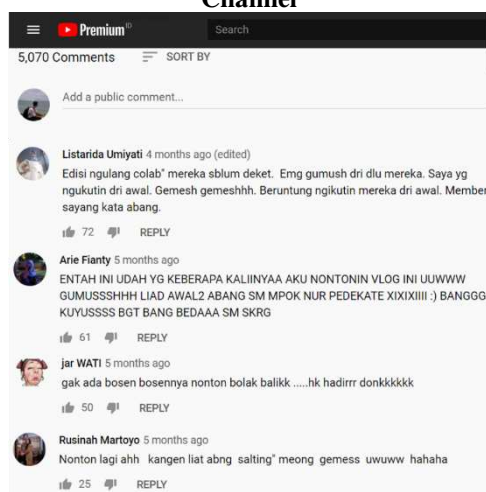
Wilbur Schramm is interactional communication. The key to interactional communication is feedback or responses to certain messages or content. The more content is discussed, the higher the engagement of the audience with the content and creators. This allows content to be watched over and over again and into trending topics so that the creators' chances of getting a profit are even higher.

YouTube is an online video platform that is self-regulated and consists of millions of creators without a “power center” who will control or regulate content production. Unlike television, which represents a hierarchical structure with many labour with various specific divisions of labor such as content creators (producers), actors, stylists, directors, screenwriters, financial managers, public relations, and many more. So making one impression requires a very large production cost. An important indicator for television is the number of viewers who watch it, as well as YouTube. If a television show is popular and achieves a high rating, advertisers are willing to pay a high price for the broadcast.

Meanwhile, the costs of producing video content on YouTube vary widely and are uncertain, depending on the creator who produces the content. A professional person may spend a fee that is similar to the cost of producing television shows, but an amateur creator can also not pay anything except for the internet connection fee to upload videos that he records amateurish using a simple cellphone. Despite its

popularity and fantastic number of users around the world, YouTube doesn't have the revenue that television has, at least not yet. The difficulty in describing YouTube's business model is the fact that the company doesn't reveal much about it.

Figure 2. Comment on Aurelie Youtube Channel



Source: YouTube, 2019

Like social media today, YouTube makes money from monetizing video content uploaded by its users by selling advertisers the possibility to place their ads on videos. The price an advertiser is willing to pay depends on the number of audiences and the quality of the content. In addition, YouTube also earns income from users who subscribe to YouTube premium, a YouTube channel that does not contain ads at all.

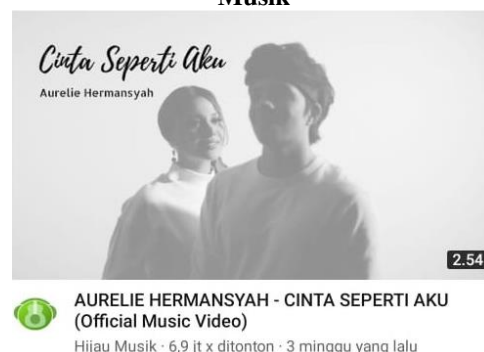
So the role of the audience is very important related to the income of a YouTuber. They have unconsciously worked for YouTubers through their activities of watching YouTube, commenting, liking and sharing.

The content of *"Perdana Atta Halilintar Buka Kamar untuk Aurel"*

received 5,070 comments. Some of these comments said that the content was interesting and worthy of being watched over and over again. Of course, these positive comments will attract attention for other viewers to also watch the video and will increase the number of viewers.

Share YouTube Content on Other Social Media and Let Audience work

Figure 3. YouTube Channel of Hijau Musik



Source: YouTube, 2021

With a background in his own house, Aurel appeared with Atta Halilintar as the star of this video clip which was watched more than 6.9 million times.

On February 12, 2021, Aurel Hermansyah released a music video through the Green Music YouTube channel with the title *Cinta Seperti Aku* and managed to reach trending one on the Indonesian YouTube platform for several days. Like *Aku* is a song that tells about love and longing so great for her lover. With a background in his own house, Aurel appeared with Atta Halilintar as the star of this video clip which was watched more than 6.9 million times. Information about the latest content is often shared by Aurelie through other social media such as Instagram by

including a link that will lead to his YouTube content. Not only that, but the YouTube audience also has communities on other social media that are happy to participate in promoting any content from their idol YouTubers.

Figure 4. Instagram Story about Aurelie YouTube Content



Source: Instagram, 2021

Through various posts on the Instagram story, the audience is massively promoting content from YouTube Aurel. As written by the @theattamimi account who reposted from the @zahraa_yulia account said

“... tolong nontonnya dikasih jeda waktu yaa...diselang seling dengan vlog lain, vlog abang atau vlog kak loly yg lain...biar nggak dipotong viewnya oleh youtube, dikira robot.”

Meanwhile, the @ahha.emak-indonesia account wrote “Boom like

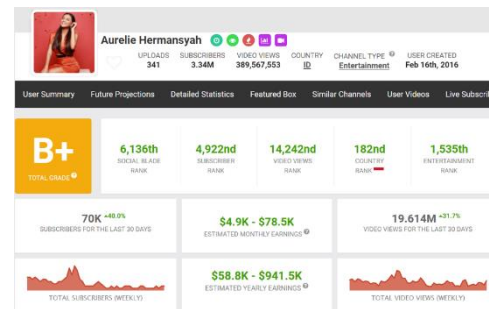
plus naikin views yaah”. The meaning of “Boom like” is an invitation to press the like button on YouTube content. In addition, there is also an @ariinkinanti account that congratulates Aurelie for being in the first position of YouTube's top trending. The account also shared that he had worked hard for two days repeatedly replaying Aurelie's videos, posting on Instagram, and commenting on the fanbase group.

YouTube audience as Digital Labor

The presence of the internet encourages cultural change in the digital society, the roles of consumers and producers can be transformed easily. Likewise with YouTube where the audience no longer only acts as a consumer of culture but also at the same time produces a new culture that is participatory and contributive or known as a culture of participation. According to Jenkins et al. (2017), a culture of participation is defined as a new culture that develops because of the support of information technology, where individuals or members of a community can participate in content creation and distribution. YouTube offers new viewing that was previously only controlled by large capital media such as television, replaced by ordinary people who not only watch shows on YouTube but also share their videos for other users to watch. Even so, the role of the audience in the digital era does not necessarily change its position in line with the producers and owners of capital. The audience is still in a position to be carried away in the study of the political economy of the media.

To find out how the discourse of exploitation of the audience as digital labor occurs, the researcher analyzes it based on three elements of Marx's work process theory. In this case the YouTube audience is abstracted by involving audience labor, audience work objects and audience instruments. First, audience labor in this sense is the activity of the audience involved in various subjective cultural consumption activities. The presence of the internet has blurred the boundaries between the space for production and the space for media consumption, audiences are no longer just consumers but also actively participate in producing digital content that is uploaded and shared with other audiences. This is evident in the activities of YouTube platform users in Indonesia. YouTube audiences are no longer just passive consumers who only enjoy the content that is shared, more than that they also interact with each other, make comments, give likes or dislikes, share the content they watch to make videos as a reaction to the content they watch. They do it voluntarily without realizing that their activities have been used by YouTubers and capitalist corporations to make a profit. The YouTuber, represented by Aurelie Hermansyah in this research, has benefited greatly from the activities of the audience.

Figure 5. Aurelie YouTube Analytical



Source: Socialblade.com, (2021)

Through his YouTube channel, Aurel has generated tens of millions to billions of rupiah per month. According to the Social Blade site, in one month Aurelie Hermansyah earned \$ 58,800 to \$ 941,500 from Google AdSense. The monetization policy created by YouTube has created a promising new profession for YouTube users. Through video content produced, users strive to attract the attention of other users to watch, subscribe, comment, and share their video content with others. This is done so that their content has a lot of viewers so that creators can monetize their content and get financial benefits from it. When talking about audience labour, we have positioned this labour in certain social relations, or in the production of certain capitalist communications. YouTube audience labor has become part of a process that has historically utilized cultural consumption and subjective meaning-making.

The second is the work process which concretely has a basic material object. According to Marx in the same way, the work process of the audience also has certain material cultural objects whose significance is determined objectively. As a work object, culture is a product of the work of other humans which is called

cultural labor. Thus, culture is what Marx calls the raw material in the form of meaning, and in order to become part of the audience's work process, this material must be objectified and tangible. In this case, the YouTube platform as the media owner does not produce content for the audience themselves, they only provide space for the audience to share content and then they attach advertisements to user-generated content with the lure of monetization from the advertisements they watch. Unconsciously, the audience has worked for the YouTube corporation by producing content and authorizing the YouTube corporation to sell their content to advertisers. To influence the audience to be productive in producing content, YouTube ranks the content most-watched and includes it on the trending chart. The trending chart itself is divided into trending in certain countries (for example Indonesia) or trending globally. This triggers creators to compete to produce video content, even though their chance to enter the trending column is very small.

The third is the audience work instrument or what the audience uses in working on its work object. According to Marx, an instrument is an object that a labour inserts between himself and the work object which functions as a conductor, directing his activity on that object. Audience work instruments are communication media, covering technology used to consume culture. So the instruments used by the audience in this study were browsers, websites, and the YouTube platform. In general, the audience is free of charge for using

the YouTube platform (except for YouTube Premium audiences who have to pay monthly rent). But that doesn't mean the audience gets all the facilities for free. Tristan Harris, a former Google design ethics expert in the documentary film *Social Dilemma* (2020) said "if you are not paying for the product, You are the product!". YouTube as the owner of the capital tries to earn back from the platform it has created through the time and attention that the audience spends in front of their gadget screens. The more audiences who produce content, whether, in the form of videos or liking activities, comment and sharing will generate surplus value for the company. YouTube Corporation offers user-generated content to advertisers by offering a targeted advertising strategy so that the effectiveness of the message will be more related to the product being advertised. Meanwhile, content creators or YouTubers strive to produce creative content to be watched and monetized by advertisers. Audience count is a product for the YouTube corporation that is sold to advertisers.

The activity of the audience as labour in consumer culture and the process of individual significance is a singularity. The product is a subjective meaning that cannot be alienated as a product of other individual work. But this does not make audience labour free from social determination or exploitation because it is possible that culture (as the audience's work object) and media (as the audience's work instrument) are owned by capital. And through the possession of the means of production

of communication, the working members of the audience can be brought into the process of circulation and capital accumulation. And that applies to digital audience labour as well.

Particular distribution is also an important aspect because the social relationship that most determines digital labour is the distribution relationship: rent. Capital control over culture as the object of work for the audience creates class relations between those who have the means of communication products and those who do not. This ownership occurs most clearly through the copyright. But culture is not a typical commodity. Culture is non-rival, consumption by one person does not preclude consumption by another. Objective significance is never fully consumed but only used as an object where the audience works to produce meaning subjectively and remains available for use by other audiences or by the same audience over and over again, such as watching YouTube video content.

The ownership and control of cultural access determine the conditions of the audience's practices regarding consumption and cultural significance. The communication production of audience significance is influenced by rent (distribution relationship) as the condition under which that production occurs. Access to culture is required for the production of communication through the audience work process, but the YouTube corporation as the copyright holder controls that access. A copyright holder is like a landlord but also a capitalist. Landlords in the

capitalist mode of production do not use land but instead treat privately owned land as a pure financial asset. In return for direct monetary payments, the landlord gives everything for his land as an instrument and conditions of production. The owner of culture operates in the same way, he gives the right to use culture in exchange for payment, thereby taking the value of the labour' wages or the surplus-value of the profits, interest or rent of other capitalists. Any individual who desires access to the culture that a communication capitalist has will become audience labour and that significantly individual audience activity through cultural consumption becomes the means by which communication is treated as capital. Consumption of culture thus becomes an exploited activity.

Owners of capital can also use their power to obtain surplus value from advertisers by providing free cultural access to the audience. This appears to be a more common process by which digital audience labour is exploited. Most of the video streaming activities are capitalized by YouTube. Corporations exploit digital audience labour in this way without having copyright rights. Its ability to determine audience practice conditions is based on patents and the strength of technology and contracts. The exploitation of audience labour to generate advertising revenue is an indirect exploitation process.

Advertisers can only achieve their immediate goal (i.e. influence the actual meaning generated through audience significance) by changing significant objects that are designed to

have a specific impact when they are consumed and worked on insignificant audience work processes. But advertisers don't have audience work objects, because the YouTube corporation owns those objects. Cultural ownership gives owners the power to agree to a constant flow of rent (until the copyright expires), such leases can be treated as the capital by being capitalized as interest on some imaginary and fictitious capital. The YouTube corporation lends cultural space and time to advertisers, but not as rent is taken from the audience but rather borrows a portion of the culture it is aimed at. This looks like it lends space and time duration to advertise on YouTube video content. And in return for this cultural space and time loan, the advertiser pays interest to the lender, namely the YouTube corporation as the owner of the capital. The extraction of interest from these advertisers is indirect exploitation of audience labour with the owners of capital because the surplus-value is taken from the advertiser rather than from the labour audience.

This process can still be seen as a process where the audience as labour is exploited indirectly because the owner of the capital exerts control over the audience's activities that consume the culture to the appropriate value and directly modifies the audience's work process by changing the object part of the work process into advertisements. The advertiser will pay interest on obtaining a portion of the owner's power over the audience's labour by doing so.

When cultural space and time are exchanged as commodities, loaned by owners of capital and borrowed by advertisers, the process becomes not only a usurping of interest but also the circulation of fictitious capital. In contrast to land, which can be leased and capitalized as profitable capital by selling it, culture does not seek ownership of rights to leases that can be adjusted in the future through control over certain cultural objects. They do not seek to derive a fair surplus value from audience labour in the process of producing significant communication through cultural consumption. Advertisers are looking for claims on future work, but a specific product of audience labour, namely: meaning.

CONCLUSION

The YouTube audience on the Aurelie Hermansyah channel not only gets the opportunity as a prosumer who participates in producing culture. More than that, this audience also acts as digital labor by providing benefits to creators in particular and the YouTube corporation in general through their activities in watching and providing comments, liking and promoting content through other social media as well as the concept of audience labor conveyed by Dallas Smythe. The YouTube corporation operating as a communications capitalist by making profits from payments for access to culture or advertising revenue is, in fact, exploiting audience labour. It seems that controlling and extracting value from audience activities (i.e. cultural consumption activities) are the main

ways in which communication is treated as capital in the digital age.

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