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Abstract

What if – contrary to all carefully constructed appearances – the problem in neo-liberal culture is that there isn't *enough* management? Although neo-liberalism presents itself as an economic programme, it is better understood as a massive control apparatus designed to thwart the democratic socialist and libertarian communist experiments that effloresced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The systemic anti-productive inefficiency engendered by neo-liberal managerialism is neither a mistake nor a failure: it has precisely succeeded in its aim of producing a generalised resubordination of workers, and a disabling of former "red bases" such as universities and art colleges.

The route to overcoming this consists neither in the (capitalist) realist accommodation to managerialism nor in the fantasy of exit from institutions. Democratic socialism has always been about the promise of a better *managed* society (where management is precisely not synonymous with top-down control). In order to assert democratic control over our lives and work, we must therefore reclaim management from managerialism.

Accelerate Management

MARK FISHER

Mark Fisher (1968-2017), was a British writer, critic, cultural theorist, and teacher based in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. He initially achieved acclaim for his blogging as k-punk in the early 2000s, and was known for his writing on politics, music, and popular culture. He contributed significantly and uniquely to the radical reimagining of cultural production against neo-liberalism and wrote about and alongside many artists, musicians and writers.

In 2009, Fisher edited *The Resistible Demise of Michael Jackson*, a collection of critical essays on the career and death of Michael Jackson, and published *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, an analysis of the ideological effects of neoliberalism on contemporary culture. In 2014, Fisher published *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, a collection of essays on similar themes viewed through the prisms of music, film, and Jacques Derrida's idea of hauntology. In 2016, Fisher co-edited a critical anthology on the post-punk era with Kodwo Eshun and Gavin Butt entitled *Postpunk Then and Now* for Repeater Books, of which he was a co-founder and editor.

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"Life is too exciting to sleep"

"I usually get up at 5 or 5.15am. Historically, I would start sending emails when I got up. But not everyone is on my time schedule, so I have tried to wait until 7am. Before I email, I work out, read, and use our products… I am not a big sleeper and never have been. Life is too exciting to sleep." "I quickly scan my emails while my son is taking over my bed and having his milk. Urgent ones I reply to there and then. I flag others to follow up on my commute into work… I receive an average of 500 emails a day, so I email throughout the day."[1] These two quotations from "top CEOs" – the first from Tim Armstrong of AOL, the second from Karen Blackett of MediaCom UK – point to what seems to be a massive intensification of work and management in contemporary capitalist culture. The two CEOs' remarks confirm the entrenchment of the much-discussed Post-Fordist paradigm of work – with work no longer confined to the office or the factory, but invading all areas of life and practically all times of the day. Indeed, Armstrong's comments vindicate the analysis of Jonathan Crary in *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* that capitalism is now in the process of eroding one of the final barriers to perpetual circulation: sleep. The sleeping body is the quintessential example of the non-productive, non-communicative body and as such it constitutes an obstacle to the perpetual expansion of capitalist circulation.

The form that capitalist circulation now takes rests on more than the Post-Fordist restructuring of work: it depends on a technological, communicational and libidinal infrastructure, a system called communicative capitalism by Jodi Dean and semio-capitalism by Franco "Bifo" Berardi. In the context of communicative capitalism – which for the purposes of this piece I am treating as roughly equivalent to Berardi's semio-capitalism – individual messages function as "mere contributions to the circulation of images, opinions and information, to the billions of nuggets of information and affect trying to catch and hold attention, to push or sway opinion, taste, and trends in one direction rather than another."[2]

Berardi's work has consistently emphasised the psychopathological consequences of the constant subjecting of the nervous system to the imperatives of capitalist cyberspace. In his book *Precarious Rhapsody*, he wrote of the way in which the "acceleration of information exchange has produced and is producing an effect of a pathological type on the individual human mind and even more on the collective mind," "Individuals are not in a position to process the immense and always growing mass of information that enters their computers, their cell phones, their television screens, their electronic diaries and their heads. However, it seems indispensable to follow, recognise, evaluate, process all this information if you want to be efficient, competitive, victorious… The necessary time for paying attention to the fluxes of information is lacking."[3]

In a more recent piece, Berardi has argued that "Acceleration is one of the features of capitalist subjugation. The Unconscious is submitted to the ever increasing pace of the Infosphere, and this form of subsumption is painful."[4] Yet Tim Armstrong's comments above suggest that this submitting of the unconscious to capitalist cyberspace is not only painful – at least not for everyone. For the masters of cyber-spatialised capitalism, there is an enjoyment, a manic glee, to be derived from submitting to – or surfing on top of – the ceaseless flows of semio-capitalism. This libidinal dividend has to be reckoned within any adequate account of contemporary capitalist subjugation. For it is not as if the CEO simply imposes subjugation on her or his subordinates. Rather, the CEO offers their own near-total submission to work as an example for subordinates to follow – an example not so much of self-sacrifice in the name of duty (although the spectre of such a position is never far away), as the kind of sacrifice necessary to experience intense enjoyment. For these CEOs, work is best understood as kind of an addiction – an addiction which they understand in

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beneficent and productive terms. The asceticism ascribed to the protestant work ethic in an earlier moment of capitalism now explicitly coincides with a kind of hedonic compulsion. (I say explicitly because, for all its "official" position as an anti-libidinal mode of repression, asceticism has always been a libidinal formation, a form of enjoyment.)

Everyone is Peggy Now

To appreciate what is specific about contemporary capitalism's approach to management and work, let's consider two scenes from the first season of the television series *Mad Men*. In thinking through the contrast between the world depicted in the first season of *Mad Men* and now, we will be able to apprehend the difference between a form of capitalism which merely parasited and exploited creativity – the capitalism of the early 1960s – and a form of capitalism which makes creativity almost impossible – the neo-liberal (or nihiliberal) capitalism that dominates now. In the first scene, we see Cooper, the boss of the advertising agency in which the series is set, go into the office of the agency's leading "creative", Don Draper. Cooper says that he finds it difficult to adjust to the fact that he never seems to *see* Draper doing very much. And that's correct: there are many scenes in which we see Draper reclining in his chair, staring blankly, apparently doing nothing. The contemporary viewer is liable to relate to Cooper's bafflement – what this same viewer will find surprising is the fact that Cooper makes no further comment, turns on his heel, and leaves the office. Imagine how that scene would play out in a contemporary workplace. Instead of trusting that Draper's methods are effective, and leaving him to it, as Cooper does, a modern boss would foist a whole series of pointless tasks on Draper to ensure that there wasn't a moment when he wasn't *seen to be working*. For this is what so much of the frenzied inertia of contemporary work in the West amounts to – a simulation of productivity. One of the reasons that the concept of "cognitive work" is so unsatisfactory is that thinking is the last thing one is permitted to do at work now. Work only counts as work if you can be seen doing it, and if it is quantifiable: so answering emails feels like real work whereas "just" thinking doesn't. It's worse even that one of the most obvious ways to *be seen working* is *to make work for others*: to send out surveys, quality documents, self-surveillance log-books etc. And of course email is itself. And so the spiral of pointlessness goes vicious.

In the other scene from *Mad Men* I wish to draw attention to, Draper is advising his secretary, Peggy, who is aspiring to be a copywriter. Peggy is stuck on some copy, and Draper tells her to think very deeply about the subject, then forget about it – the solution will come to her. Today, this possibility of "forgetting about it", of allowing the unconscious to process a problem while we are doing other things, is as rare as the opportunity to just sit in a room thinking. Brains are not allowed to idle any more than they are allowed to be absorbed very deeply in something. Instead, the brain is bombarded by an unrelenting blitz of stimuli. If it isn't our employers forcing us to multi-task, it is our own addiction to capitalist cyberspace which constantly

1. Dowling, Tim, Barnett, Laura and Kingsley, Patrick. "What Time Do Top CEOS Wake Up". *The Guardian*. 1 April 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/apr/01/what-time-ceos-start-day (Accessed 2016-30-06.)

2. Berardi, Franco. *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. London and New York: Duke University Press. 2009. p. 24.

3. Berardi, Franco. *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation*. London: Minor Compositions. 2009. p. 41.

4. Berardi, Franco. "Accelerationism Questioned from the Point of View of the Body". *e-flux Journal*. #46. June 2013 (Accessed 2016-06-30.)

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overloads our brain and nervous system. (I say "our own", but this addiction is not a moral failing on our parts; it has been deliberately cultivated by those forces that want to deny us agency and the capacity to reflect.) The conditions that allowed the Don Drapers of the world to just sit in an office thinking involved massive exploitation. Part of this, of course, was the exploitation of women such as Peggy, or Draper's wife, Betty, consigned to the home while Draper stays late at work and conducts multiple affairs. But neo-liberal capitalism's version of equality has had the effect, not of giving everyone the opportunity to be a Don, but making us all like Peggy is in the early part of the first season – forced to spend most of the day doing administration, and to squeeze time for our creativity and our thinking in the hours after the official working day has finished. The bind is exacerbated by the fact that, as we have already seen, under the current conditions of capitalism, there is increasingly no such thing as an official working day. Drudgery expands without limits. There is no space for thinking outside the office, never mind inside it, and no manager who would protect such a space even if it existed.

Managerialism and Communicative Capitalist Realism

In these conditions, how could it be possible to construe the demand to accelerate management as in any way progressive? If Berardi is correct, the problem with contemporary capitalist work culture is that it is already far too accelerated and far too managed. When our lives are subject to micro-control, over-management and self-surveillance then, Berardi argues, the line of escape consists in some form of deceleration and withdrawal. But what if the problem with contemporary capitalism is not that there is too much management, but too little? The neo-liberal takeover of institutions and ideology has forced us to equate management with *managerialism*. However, managerialism is best understood as a specific set of strategies whose overall aim is the embedding of neo-liberal concepts and practices, as Kathleen Lynch explains:

> *New managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism… While it would be a mistake to view new managerialism as a unitary whole, implemented consistently across differing cultural and economic contexts, nevertheless in the redesign of public service provision key features of managerialism include: an emphasis on outputs over inputs; the close monitoring of employee performance and the encouragement of self-monitoring through the widespread use of performance indicators, rankings, league tables and performance management. The decentralisation of budgetary and personal authority to line managers, combined with the retention of power and control at central level, and the introduction of new and more casualised contractual employment arrangements, are all key features that serve to reduce costs and exercise control.*[5]

As Lynch further points out, the introduction of managerialism into public services has played a central role in the displacing of any concept of public good in favour of market mechanisms. More broadly, I would argue that managerialism has been crucial to the installation of what I have called capitalist realism – the widespread acceptance that there is no alternative to capitalism. The introduction of market-based languages and practices from business serves to naturalise neo-liberalism, and to position business as the "reality" to which the "ivory towers" of public services must adjust and adapt. Capitalist realism positions any alternatives to capitalism as obsolete relics of the past.

The combination of communicative capitalism with managerialism has engendered what we might call *communicative capitalist realism*. The new centrality of handheld electronic devices, and a widespread acquiescence in the idea that the future is to be

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fundamentally shaped by digital communicative technology, has allowed managerialist imperatives to penetrate consciousness and time to an unprecedented degree. Management by iPhone allows commands to be quickly disseminated with minimal reflection. Email itself is a technology that is extremely well adapted to managerialist purposes – it allows commands to be issued to multiple, spatially dispersed individuals in a single moment. Individuals accessing work email by means of smartphones are typically physically isolated, denied any prospect of solidarity with others. PDF attachments also obfuscate the amount of labour that workers are required to do – a document that runs to hundreds of pages can be attached as a single document. Transferring work tasks from physical form into a cyberspatialised form typically has the effect of intensifying the feeling of inundation pointed to by Berardi. A pile of papers that one could work through becomes an indefinite set of digital tasks. Accessing work tasks through screens – especially the screens of handheld devices – denies workers any sense of overview in respect of their work. There is instead a perpetual feeling of "underview" – of being overwhelmed by an endless stream of demands, over which it is impossible to feel any sense of control. Underlying all this is the claim that any objection to the capitalist cyberspatialisation of work is nostalgic, an attempt to resist the digital future.

None of this is liable to increase the efficiency of the worker; on the contrary. The worker embedded in communicative capitalist realism is likely to be more anxious and less able to focus on tasks than their forebears. If the goal of the implementation of communicative capitalist realism was an increase in productivity, then it would have to count as a failure. But this is not the real aim of this system, nor is it the aim of managerialism and neo-liberalism more widely. It is important that we do not take neo-liberalism at its own word. According to its own propaganda, neo-liberalism has been about the increase of individual freedom and economic efficiency – as individuals are liberated from bureaucratic interference and market mechanisms increasingly replace allegedly dysfunctional public services. But, as David Graeber has persuasively argued, neo-liberalism is best seen as a form of governance that has subordinated the aim of increasing economic growth to its real goal, which is the subjugation of workers. The shibboleth of individual freedom has obfuscated the way in which neo-liberalism has systematically sought to thwart the capacity for *collective* agency. "Given a choice between a course of action that would make capitalism seem the only possible economic system, and one that would transform capitalism into a viable, long-term economic system," Graeber writes, "neoliberalism chooses the former every time. There is every reason to believe that destroying job security while increasing working hours does not create a more productive (let alone more innovative or loyal) workforce. Probably, in economic terms, the result is negative – an impression confirmed by lower growth rates in just about all parts of the world in the eighties and nineties… But the neoliberal choice has been effective in depoliticizing labor and overdetermining the future."[6]

5. Lynch, Kathleen. "'New Managerialism' in Education: the Organisational Form of Neoliberalism". OpenDemocracy. 16 September 2014. https://www.opendemocracy.net/kathleen-lynch/'new-managerialism'-in-education-organisational-form-of-neoliberalism (Accessed 2016-06-14.)

6. Graeber, David. "Of Flying Cars and the Declining Rate of Profit". *The Baffler*. No. 19. 2012. http://thebaffler.com/salvos/of-flying-cars-and-the-declining-rate-of-profit (Accessed 2016-06-16.)

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Accelerationism Reviewed

Graeber makes this point in the context of a discussion of the ways in which neo-liberal capitalism has systematically failed to deliver on the promises of "flying cars… force fields, tractor beams, teleportation pods, antigravity sleds, tricorders, immortality drugs, colonies on Mars" which seemed to be on offer at a certain point in the twentieth century. Graeber's claim – which echoes and expands some of the central arguments of Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* – is that the rise of neo-liberalism has coincided with the displacement of the kinds of technologies that enabled space exploration by simulation technologies. "The postmodern sensibility," Graeber writes, "the feeling that we had somehow broken into an unprecedented new historical period in which we understood that there is nothing new; that grand historical narratives of progress and liberation were meaningless; that everything now was simulation, ironic repetition, fragmentation, and pastiche – all this makes sense in a technological environment in which the only breakthroughs were those that made it easier to create, transfer, and rearrange virtual projections of things that either already existed, or, we came to realize, never would. Surely, if we were vacationing in geodesic domes on Mars or toting about pocket-size nuclear fusion plants or telekinetic mind-reading devices no one would ever have been talking like this."[7]

It is at this point that we can review the recent debates around the term accelerationism.[8] Part of the importance of the accelerationist discourse is that it has sought to build a politics around the problem that Graeber identifies: namely, the tendency of a neo-liberal/postmodern capitalism to *obstruct* the very technological, social and economic forces that it both depends upon and makes possible. Some critics have positioned accelerationism as a heretical form of Marxism, but the key claims of the major left accelerationist thinkers are in tune with Marx's idea that capitalism necessarily thwarts the productive potentials to which it gives rise.

Broadly speaking, we can distinguish three waves of accelerationist theory. (Although there are clearly precursors: Marx himself of course, but *The Accelerationist Reader* also identifies Nikolai Fedorov, Samuel Butler and Thorstein Veblen as "anticipators" of later accelerationist positions.) The first wave is associated primarily with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy.* Deleuze and Guattari's position is rooted in their analysis of capitalism, which understands capitalism to be characterised by a tension between "deterritorialising" and "retteritorialising" forces. Deterritorialising forces push against established identities, limits, and vested interests; they open up new spaces and potentials. Reterritorialising forces work in the opposite direction, seeking to re-establish settled boundaries and archaic forms of (religious, nationalistic, authoritarian) power. Deleuze and Guattari's argument is that capitalism is *defined* by this tension, which means that it cannot but include archaic elements. We could say that capitalism is fundamentally anachronistic – that it is best understood as a kind of steampunk collage, in which the technologically new will combine with the socially regressive: much as in twenty-first-century austerity UK, where food banks co-exist with iPhones. From this perspective, the accelerationist gambit, then, is clear: the revolutionary path is the one that allies with deterritorialising forces of modernisation against the reactionary energies of reterritorialisation. A corollary of this is the claim that there is no (cultural, political, psychological) region untouched by capitalism. There is no pure outside of capitalism, from which the attack on capitalism can be launched. Equally, however, there is very little in the capitalist world that necessarily belongs to capitalism. On the contrary, the effort that capital has to go to contain and obstruct the technological and social potentials which arise under its rule is a testament to the fact that it is easy to imagine those potentials being actualised under very different

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political-economic conditions. Indeed, you could say that it is *only* possible to imagine these potentials being actualised in very different conditions.

The second wave of accelerationist thinking is particularly associated with the work of Nick Land in the 1990s. Written in the context of 1990s cyberculture, Land's key texts offered a kind of cybergothic or technihilistic remix of Deleuze and Guattari. Land's work has been described as neo-liberal, but it is perhaps best understood as a kind of libertarianism, in which the forces whose autonomy is being celebrated are not human. There is little space for human freedom in Land's vision, which instead aligns with forces of revolutionary deterritorialisation for which humans are mere puppets, or better, machine parts. In effect, Land ignores Deleuze and Guattari's claim about the tension between deterritorialising and reterritorialising forces in capitalism, and construes capital as a straightforwardly revolutionary agent which is driven to escape what he calls the "human security system".

The importance of Land's thought to the third wave of accelerationist thought is precisely the challenge it poses to contemporary left-wing thought. Land taunts the left for being regressive, technophobic and oriented towards the negative attractors of resistance and critique. Capital, by contrast, becomes figured, in Land's terms, as a quasi-vitalistic energetic system which is always seeking to overcome any actually-existing limits, including its own. The third wave of accelerationist theory has sought to overturn this understanding, in part by enumerating and rejecting those features of contemporary anti-capitalist struggle which most resonate with Land's attack on the left. "We believe", wrote Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams in "#Accelerate: Manifesto For an Accelerationist Politics", which has become the founding document of the new leftist accelerationism, "the most important division in today's left is between those that hold to a folk politics of localism, direct action, and relentless horizontalism, and those that outline what must become called an accelerationist politics at ease with a modernity of abstraction, complexity, globality, and technology."[9] The significance of Srnicek and Williams's intervention for our purposes here concerns just this opposition: between a politics of immediacy, spontaneity and authentic experience and a politics which is centred on the (virtual and actual) infrastructures necessary for sustained social transformation. The "folk political" tendencies that Srnicek and Williams identify came to the fore in the Occupy movement, with its emphasis on direct democracy and assemblies, and its hostility towards parliamentary politics and mass media (and indeed mediation of all kind). However, those tendencies did not originate with the Occupy movement. Rather, Occupy was merely the culmination of a number of activist and discursive currents that had been in place at least since the anti-capitalism of the 1990s. The dominant mood of folk politics is neo-anarchist: it declares the age of the political party and the trade union to be over, embracing the self-organising and horizontal dynamics of the network against what it characterises as oppressive (and obsolete) hierarchical structures.

7. Ibid.

8. For a detailed discussion of the history of the term, see the introduction to *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader.* Armen Avanessian and Robin Mackay (eds.). Falmouth: Urbanomic. 2014.

9. Srnicek, Nick and Williams, Alex. "#Accelerate: Manifesto For an Accelerationist Politics". In Avanessian and Mackay, p. 354.

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In practical terms, this has led to a politics based on a mixture of protest (against particular injustices) and prefiguration (an anticipation of a new society). This combination is incoherent, philosophically, libidinally and strategically. For one thing, the rationales of protest and prefiguration contradict one another. Protest presupposes a big Other, a commanding authority, who can hear the protest and respond to its demands. Prefiguration is supposed to do away with the need for this authority, to abandon demands, and immediately to enact a new set of social relations. Between these two strategies is so-called direct action – but too often this has amounted not to any action that will disrupt the logistical operations of Capital, but to a symbolic destruction of property, as easily ignored on a practical level as it is recuperated on a propagandistic level.

In contrast to this somewhat confused melange of strategies and orientations, left accelerationism draws attention to the need for *indirect action*: action which will target the hegemonic and ideological infrastructures that frame what is experienced as reality. Here we can return to the question of management, which is liable to be construed by neo-anarchism as necessarily oppressive. Yet the focus on management precisely entails an appreciation of the difference between political agency and its conditions, between what is immediate and the virtual machineries that shape experience. It also entails shifting the left from the model of rebellion which has dominated activism since the 1960s and instead asks the left to imagine what it would do – what it will do – when it seizes control of social, cultural and economic resources. In addition, the left accelerationist perspective allows us to reclaim management as a fundamental communist and socialist value. What is a communist society if not a managed society? But management here need not – indeed cannot – mean authoritarian command. In fact, it is neo-liberal managerialism that has combined authoritarianism with social and political chaos, as it surrenders all agency to the blind automatism of capital. To appreciate this, it is worth turning to Francis Spufford's extraordinary work – I hesitate to call it a novel – *Red Plenty*. *Red Plenty* is a kind of retro-speculative fictionalisation of the moment in the post-Stalinist USSR when the Soviet economy was growing faster than its American counterpart, and the dream of full communism seemed as if it could actually be realised in the near future. The point is neither to deny that this dream failed, nor to offer any sort of apologia for the Soviet system (even in this post-Stalinist moment, in which authoritarianism and repression declined). The point, rather, is to recover something of the sense of ambition that left-wing politics once possessed. The rise of folk politics and neo-anarchism on the left can be correlated with a decline in ambition: where once the left aimed to construct a managed society, now it is reduced to offering temporary autonomous zones, small spaces of withdrawal from capitalism. The perspective offered by *Red Plenty* is properly accelerationist, in the sense that it conceives of capitalism – and all its undeniable wonders – as merely a way station en route to communism. The good things produced by capitalism arise in a haphazard fashion, whereas, under communism, they will be delivered in a designed and managed – a rationally-co-ordinated – way. The sentiments of one character early in the book are typical:

> *He was lucky enough to live in the only country on the planet where human beings had seized the power to shape events according to reason, instead of letting things happen as they happened to happen, only here had people escaped this black nonsense, and made themselves reality's deliberate designers rather than its playthings.*[10]

The left accelerationist position has produced so many misunderstandings that in their recent book, *Inventing the Future: Folk Politics and the Left,* Srnicek and Williams have abandoned the term altogether. In particular, left accelerationism has been dogged by two persistent fallacies. The first is the idea that accelerationism is about "making things worse in order ultimately to make

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them better": intensifying the misery of capitalism to the point that it becomes unbearable, and revolution becomes inevitable. As should already be clear from the rough sketch I have offered above, this is not the left accelerationist position, which insists instead on intensifying those processes which will lead to the dissolution of capitalist power and hegemony. It is not about accelerating capitalism tout court, and certainly not about accelerating the most egregious aspects of capitalism. The second fallacy concerns the idea that the acceleration being sought is a *phenomenological* acceleration. It is easy to see how this misunderstanding can arise, and the equation of acceleration with an ever-more accelerated experience underlies the critique which Franco Berardi offers, and that I cited above. But the acceleration that left accelerationism wants concerns processes and tendencies, not experience. Indeed, one could argue that the inundating of the individual and collective psyche with stimuli that Berardi describes has led precisely to a *deceleration* at the political and cultural level. Overloaded minds do not have the existential resources necessary to innovate. Moreover, brains constantly subject to the flows of communicative capitalism – like the brains of the CEOs discussed at the beginning of this article – do not have the capacity to plan ahead or to offer any kind of effective overview. Instead, they can only spread panic and draw others into their reactive urgency fields. The result is a kind of frenzied inertia, which can be overcome only by a radically different way of managing time and resources.

It should be clear by now that the call to accelerate management here is also a call to wrest the concept of management from its being held hostage by neoliberal managerialism. Particularly in the context of culture and creative work, it is crucial that we re-imagine the role of the manager. As Jeremy Gilbert and I have argued elsewhere, "wouldn't most managers really prefer to think of themselves as the Brian Epsteins and Tony Wilsons of public service, rather than the latter-day Gradgrinds which neoliberalism insist they become?"[11] Instead of managers who overload us with work – using their own addiction to work as an example – can we not imagine managers who *protect* us from overwork? In place of managers who inundate us with micro-demands, can't we imagine managers who see their role as providing us with a space to think?

The aim to allocate resources rationally, the desire to make ourselves "reality's deliberate designers rather than its playthings" – the restoration of a collectively deliberated human agency – this is fundamentally a management problem, and the left must retain its confidence that only it can manage society properly.

10. Spufford, Francis. *Red Plenty*. London: Faber and Faber. 2010. p. 11.

11. Fisher, Mark and Gilbert, Jeremy. *Reclaim Modernity: Beyond Markets, Beyond Machines*, Compass pamphlet. October 2014. Available at http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Compass-Reclaiming-Modernity-Beyond-markets_-2.pdf (Accessed February 2017.)

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