

# The Precarious Work in Cultural Domains: The Case of Brazilian Youtubers

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## Abstract

The present study aims to identify possible indicators of precariousness in the work organisation of the occupation of the Brazilian Youtuber. The development of this study was based on problematic work in cultural domains. The research focus is essentially qualitative, with an exploratory and descriptive character. The data used in this research is primary, collected by 17 semi-structured interviews carried out via Skype between August and October 2017 with Brazilian Youtubers that produce game and cinema content. Data analysis was performed using the content analysis technique (CET). Based on the results, it was possible, in view of the reduction of the time dedicated and demanded in the production of content, to identify possible signs of precariousness the occupation of Brazilian Youtubers, such as low financial gains, the impossibility of creating productive relationships, as well as the often-overwhelming amount of work and lack of leisure time.

**Keywords:** Precarious Work, Cultural Domains, Youtubers, Brazil.

## 1. Introduction

For Howard-Grenville, et al (2017), changes in occupations are often reflected in broader changes in social values and norms. Changes in occupations may occur due to several factors: technology, regulatory standards and the development of some activities that affect another occupation, in addition to unforeseen factors. Throughout history, the extinction of some occupations, as well the arising of new ones can be verified.

Taylor and Littleton (2008) investigated a cultural industry, specific to art and design, in London, United Kingdom. The authors identified it as a promising sector, covering a series of occupations, such as: musicians, artists, fashion designers and graphic designers. Young people are attracted to a creative industry due to the freedom and status associated with the author's identity. This industry has come to be regarded as the "work of the future". Although these works are often associated with freedom and flexibility, a significant number of professionals have an uncertain income, since their work is carried out on demand or small projects. In this sector, the work provided by these individuals aims at self-realisation. For the authors, the artistic work is often seen in opposition to commercial activity. However, over the years in the cultural industry, it has become part of integrated into the commercial world and the logic of capitalist production. Within this context, the present study aims to identify possible indicators of precarious work in the occupation of the Brazilian Youtuber.

According to McRobbie (2002), without a uniquely creative work, views of the product or downloads are a few. Normally, artists perform custom work, that is, they are, in fact, freelancers.

Thus, they are required to work for seemingly endless hours to support themselves and they must guard the quality of their image and that of their “service” before society, because only through their image and their result can the artist have a small chance of recognition within a smorgasbord of content and stand out. According to Taylor and Littleton (2008), in some occupations in the cultural industry, it is sometimes necessary to lead a double life, that is, the individual works as an artist, but at the same time, burdened by one or more jobs to make a profit. Given this context, it is clear that the cultural industry has attracted many people in recent years, especially young people who seek personal fulfillment in the development of their work and creativity.

## **2. Work context and the Youtuber occupation**

Pre-capitalist societies were based on subsistence activities and rural life. People worked only to survive, there was no interest in capital accumulation, so part of their time was dedicated to other activities. With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the market took on an essential role in people's lives. A set of precepts were defined, which standardised thoughts and actions that were led by the dominant capitalist groups. The production process has become important, due to the expectation of absorption of the products made available on the market by consumers. Thus, people began to work more and more in search of capital accumulation. In this sense, the meaning of social action was associated with the utilitarian consequence calculation, that is, the individual started to act expecting specific results, that is, aiming at financial and individual interests, without considering, often, the impacts caused by their actions (Weber, 2004; Vizeu et al., 2015).

The market's operating principles and practices were built over a historical period by societal forces. Man abandoned the traditional way of life and submitted to the rules and principles of industrialised society, these being the results of the capitalist production system. According to Weber (2004), during the period of decline of the Middle Ages, social relations were rethought and thus the bourgeois mercantile order emerged, which had new customs, principles and values, increasing the participation of the bourgeoisie in society. In the same period, Protestantism emerged, which questioned the principles and practices of the Catholic Church, giving rise to a new social order. God granted opportunities to the individual and he should take advantage of them, man should focus on his vocation, avoiding idleness. The work was used for the evolution of human character and morals, since man left aside idleness and started to take advantage of opportunities. Work and vocation came to be seen as licit forms of life (Weber, 2004). For Luther, work is a divine vocation, God has assigned a vocation to each man, and he should carry out his activities with the best performance.

According to Weber (2004), capitalism was based on religion, but throughout its history, this has been detaching from it and adhering to its own characteristics. Through the Protestant Reformation, profit came to be seen as something not sinful and work started to be considered as something that improves and contributes to the life of man and justifies his vocation, enabling him to accumulate capital. According to Polanyi (2000), the Industrial Revolution was the historic landmark that caused social disarticulation, as people stopped living for survival and started to desire greater profits. From

that moment on, most of the society was dependent on the capital holders, who are in constant search of increasing it.

After the Industrial Revolution, there was an increasing separation from the economy, which was based on family farming and was organised through exchanges. Later, there was the introduction of machines and changes in the production methods. The development of modern capitalism is based on the expansion of markets, as well as mechanisms for the production and allocation of goods and services (Beckert, 2009). It is worth mentioning that modern capitalism is unrelated to religious issues and is based on the expectation of profit, using exchange opportunities with the perspective of profits, thus obtaining the most from the productive structures and labour of workers.

In this context, it is necessary to differentiate the terms "profession", "occupation" and "work" to better understand the phenomenon here analysed. A "profession" is a type of "occupation", since it is considered that certain activities can only be performed by specific people who have been accredited to perform them. An "occupation" refers to activities in which the individual does not need a certificate to exercise. And finally, "jobs" are a set of tasks, which are performed by an employee in an occupation (Anteby et al., 2016). In this sense, it is clear that throughout history work has taken on a different meaning. Through the marketing of cultural domains, art and culture have become products of modern society. Relationships in social domains are now based on profit. Cultural production started to be determined by economic calculation. The internet played a very important role in the commercialisation of the cultural industry. Web 2.0 stands out; whose main innovation is the participation and interaction of users since they can contribute and edit the available content. In this way, the individual himself can create his own image for society through videos, photos and other means made available on the internet (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

Almost a decade after the creation of the World Wide Web (WWW), in 2005, YouTube, a video sharing platform, appeared. This platform ignited a transformation process, whereby media consumers also started to operate in productions, reshaping the entire social media landscape (Wasko & Erickson, 2009). In this sense, YouTube begins to be seen, in addition to an entertainment platform, as an occupation, which may even involve commercial purposes, especially advertising. The most diverse works of the digital age challenge sociological studies. According to Lima and Bridi (2019), the economy that is organised and strengthened strongly through software and applications, such as Uber, YouTube, IFood, among others, demands an agenda with analysis of the new occupations, benefits and negative outcomes which are also emerging. The labour character of Youtuber can be considered both flexible and mobile, as well as precarious (Hardt & Negri, 2004; Chen, 2018). Flexible and mobile because the Youtuber can move around and work from different places. Precarious, because no contract guarantees stable, long-term employment (Hardt & Negri, 2004). There are neither bonds nor stability, nor, when autonomous, labour rights. It is the entrepreneur's logic of himself, with no journey limits or any other form of control of the time spent. In full-techno liberalism, there is no formalisation or limits of the days (Lima & Bridi, 2019).

In Brazil, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2011) considered work analogous to slavery if it met the following criteria: forced labour, exhausting work hours, degrading working conditions and

restricting mobility. However, in 2017 the Ministry of Labour and Employment, through Ordinance 1,129 attempted to include one more criterion to be considered a work analogous to slavery, that is: proof of the coercion made by the contractor, preventing the contractor's right to come and go. However, this ordinance was suspended by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and has been reconsidered, including the following items to be considered a work analogous to slavery: forced labour, exhausting work hours, degrading work conditions, restricted mobility due to the debt contracted with the employer and retention in the workplace (Brazil, 2017).

The flexibilisation of the working day and the reduction and labour rights provided an environment for new occupations to appear and to increase competition among workers. In Brazil, a bill of law - PL No. 10938 of 2018 - aimed at regulating the activity of Youtubers. Among the rights for the professional Youtuber foreseen in the project are not participating in work that puts their physical integrity at risk and a maximum workload of 6 hours a day and 30 hours a week with a 45-minute break for lunch and rest. This project already included the time needed for planning, recording, editing, publishing and promoting the videos. At the present time, the project remains open, pending discussions and opinions. In the case of Youtubers, they became the “entrepreneurs of themselves”, as they are responsible for delimiting their working hours and controlling activities. However, they do not have full control of their working time and working conditions, in view of the vast numbers competing in production, forcing them sometimes to meet market demands due to globalisation and increased competition. Some YouTubers work in inadequate working conditions and insubstantial wages.

### **3. Precarious work in cultural domains**

For Caves (2000), the creative industry is defined as “goods and services” associated with “cultural, artistic or entertainment values”. In this way, a cultural domain can include theaters, books, films, television, music, art museums and games. In the creative industry market, demand is even more uncertain, as the reaction of customers is not known. The artists, that is, the creators of books, works of art, music, films, and other goods and/or services are concerned with originality, with the harmony and uniqueness of the good that is being produced, in this way, each result is essentially unique. The artist's involvement with his work is different from the traditional way of industrial production, i.e., there is an emotional involvement of the artist with his goods and / or services. The results are protected by copyright, which allows the artist to enjoy the moral and patrimonial benefits resulting from the exploration of his creation (Caves, 2000).

According to Caves (2003), in creative work, artists tend to invest a lot in their careers without expecting monetary returns. A writer works hard throughout his life to complete a book; therefore, it takes a lot of time and he finishes a book infrequently. In order for a book to be marketed, the intermediation of an agent is required, who must present the book to a publisher. The agent's main role is to identify which publishers will be interested in the book and thus promote the book so that publishers are interested in the product. Thus, there is a division of sales revenue between writer, agent and publisher. The publisher is responsible for marketing and disseminating the work to the

literary market, thus obtaining the maximum amount of information about the author so that he can disclose the work for greater amounts of capital.

Cultural economists argue that in various situations, the behavior of artists, collectors and art dealers is no different from the behavior of actors in other markets. No matter how unique the good being sold in the arts market is, the actors involved act rationally to maximise profits. In this way, prices of works of art represent consumers' willingness to pay for a certain good, aiming at their social status. In the beginning, the arts were considered as something "priceless", unique, special, created in a singular way, because the entire production process was manual and thus, the result was an exclusive product, they could not be measured only by monetary means. The value of the artwork was irreducible to price. However, over the years, in the late 1980s, the art market started to be commercialised, "the power of the market" ended up distorting the other values of the work of art, such as: the work of the artists, their visual experience, meanings and others. Consequently, the meaning of art started to be transformed, the market started to reduce the entire value of the work of art only in price and in a sense, a commodity (Velthuis, 2003).

Several cultural domains have undergone major changes due to marketing. Something that was produced "artisanal" resulting in a unique and exclusive product, began to be adapted to the capitalist production system. With that change, the essence of the artist that was passed on to the product, resulting in something unique, was left out, given that the artist had to adapt to the production logic. In this sense, society has undergone major changes, soon there were adaptations in the way of life. It is important to understand how individuals behave in the midst of changes and how the market influences and is influenced by society. According to Banks (2010), society has monetised the arts and artists, the results of the cultural industry have become commodities for modern society. The popular aphorism "do what you love, the money will follow" certainly does not extend to cultural market. The artists as a result, proceeded to create their works aiming at the interests of the market and no longer in their "personal interests".

Investigating the English cultural market, McRobbie (2002) found that the "second wave" of the cultural industry is characterised by work on the internet, new media and the rapid growth of the arts. Thus, the work came to be understood as something self-fulfilling, with freedom and independence, consequently this sector attracted the attention of many people. Those who work in the creative market do not work under the "old work" standards, but under new rules. In this context, the individual produces three or four projects at the same time in order to meet the demands of the market and before completing these projects, the individual must have a list of new projects if he or she cannot obtain more than one job.

The new relationship between art and economics marks a rupture in the concept of creativity, work has been reinvented to satisfy the demands and needs of a new generation. In this context, more and more young people are opting for career insecurity in social media, in search of success. Young people try to see the world of work as something pleasant. However, there are contradictions in this way of looking at work within the capitalist system. For instance, a fashion designer works around 18 hours a day completing seams to finalise an order. Some people start to work within this imagined

market that will have more freedom, however, if you do not place limits on your mode of production, you may be working much more than you imagined. It is noticed that more and more people are looking for new ways of working, including working with the internet, as is the case of Youtubers (McRobbie, 2002).

#### **4. Conceptions about pleasure and suffering at work**

Some jobs are perceived as worthy or unworthy by the person himself or by others. The understanding of dignified and unworthy work varies greatly by class, gender and 'race' (Sayer, 2007). Pleasure and suffering at work often result from the dignity of the individual of his activities and self-worth performed in conjunction with other factors, such as salary and organisational climate (Bolton, 2005).

The work usually involves interacting with several individuals. It is natural to think that respect and dignity are conventional and institutionalised attitudes, which do not require discussion. However, harassment, shame and precariousness continue surrounding work environments and causing suffering (Sayer, 2007). Stacey (2005) investigated the relationship of pleasure and suffering in an activity of increasing demand in the USA: Home Care Workers. She found, for example, that Home Care Workers have a conflict, often contradictory, about work. Eventually, some considered their activities unworthy and tiring, which sometimes make them think about giving up, but others reported the various rewards and pleasure that come from caring for dependent adults, who are often abandoned by their families.

In a study in England on pleasure and suffering in creative work, McRobbie (2003) argues that there are two sides of the same coin: pleasure and pain. The pleasures of leisure culture are related to management and identity in the world of work. However, there are no limits. Both work and leisure activities invade all corners of life, including "flexible" work at home, sociable work in the café, among other environments and at inopportune times (Stacey, 2005). Naturally, pleasure and suffering are personal dimensions. However, some studies have pointed out that pleasure is associated with the organisation's recognition and appreciation of the employee; likewise, when activities have a beginning, middle and end, that is, they are not interrupted. Therefore, factors that make pleasure possible play a role in the construction of the subjects' identity, being a "mental health armor" (Gernet, 2010). In relation to suffering, it comes from the underutilisation of technical potential and creativity, the lack of participation in the decision and the lack of professionalism (Antologa et. al, 2012).

Considering the Youtubers, it is known that their activities fall into the so-called flexible employment, which may, due to this flexibility, compromise not only the financial well-being of workers, but also their individuality (Holmbom, 2015). However, the relations of pleasure and suffering in this sector are still little known. Some workers feel molded according to the requirements of the market, are "forced" to act according to what the media requests, in many cases contradicting their own wishes and interests. They surrender physically and psychologically to the demands of productivity, if they do not correspond to the expectations, they feel unsuccessful (Ferreira, Dias &

Siqueira, 2019). In the case of Youtubers, the focus on results is constant, so they need to dedicate a lot of time to obtain results that are satisfactory for the market. There is a paradox in the feeling of freedom for being self-employed workers, as in many cases they work more than the conventional workday; in addition, the content produced does not always express their identity. This freedom is only apparent, given that YouTubers find it difficult to set limits on their working hours (Holmbom, 2015).

## 5. Uberization of Labour

From the late 1990s onwards, work has been extensively reorganized (Fleming, 2017), and this has included the decline of unions (International Labour Organization, 2016); the lifelong jobs and casual or freelance work (Rashid, 2016). And, maybe, flexibility is the most common term to describe employment today (Fleming, 2017). In this context, many types of companies and activities emerge, stressed by flexibility and networking, such as the Youtuber professional, which activity has a lot to do with the so-called “uberization” phenomenon.

The uberization of labor phenomenon derives from the way the company Uber is organized. This phenomenon is generally associated with the business of so-called sharing economy and includes online labor relations. Without any labor relations, Uber has self-employed professionals that take a variety of risks to offer the “Uber service”. In this sense, employees are unprotected, because there is no working relationship.

According to Franco and Ferraz (2019), the uberization of work represents a particular way of capitalist accumulation, by producing a new form of work relationship, where the worker assumes responsibility for the production and productive activity. Although there are some shortcomings, workers no longer totally toil for someone else, but are able to be their own bosses, deciding alone when and how to do their jobs. This shift has transformed employment relations, so that the costs of labour are pushed onto the employee, self-employment, portfolio careers and zero-hours contracts (Fleming, 2017).

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According to Selwyn (2013) and Marx (2000), work is a condition of man's existence. It is detached from all social forms and it is a mediator between man and nature and, therefore, human life. In this way, uberization has depreciated the nature of “old” employment relations, because fluctuations in labour demand, combined with a one-sided power relationship inevitably lowers income expectations, consequently, increase inequality (Fleming, 2017). Besides, problem solving, cell phones ringing anytime and the urgency of novelty, blur the border of working and non-working time, rearranging personal and professional life, a usual situation to the so called – “digital activities”.

## 6. Methodological Procedures

The data used in this research are from primary sources, 17 semi-structured interviews were carried out via Skype with Brazilian Youtubers from August to October 2017. It is noteworthy that the channels were chosen at random, but the categories of channels (games and cinema) were selected, as it was considered that the channels that present cinema content are more "artistic" and channels that present game content are directed to the logic of the market.

All interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and then were transcribed in full, resulting in 426 pages, the average duration in minutes of each interview was 90 minutes. Data analysis was performed using the content analysis technique, all interviews were categorised. To perform the categorisation of the data, at the beginning of the research some categories of analysis were defined, which were related to the theoretical framework. However, at the time of categorisation, the researchers were always available to identify new categories. The interviews were categorised by phrases, so first-order themes were defined, which were grouped into second-order themes and finally constructed the final categories.

Subsequently, the data analysis was triangulated at two different times in the research group in which the researcher is present. Since, in the first meeting, the codifications of the first four interviews were presented, after the analysis and discussion in the research group, a review was carried out and the codifications of another two interviews. During this first meeting, the researchers presented the first and second order themes to verify whether the data was valid and consistent. The research group suggested changes and additions. In a second meeting, the codifications of the first six interviews were presented, as a result the confirmations of the codes and categories of this study were achieved. The structure of the data coding was based on the study by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013).

## 7. Data Description and Analysis

The data regarding the number of subscribers and the viewing of the channels were collected on January 19 and 24, 2018. The profile of the interviewees can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Interviewer’s Profiles**

Interviewer	Demographic Data	Channel Category	Interviewer	Demographic Data	Channel Category
Interviewer 01	Male gender Age: 25 Marital Status: Single Education: Graduation in Journalism	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies	Interviewer 10	Male gender Age: 19 years old Marital status: Single Education: Studying Degree in Advertising	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies
Interviewer 02	Male gender Age: 31 years Marital status: Married Education: Graduation in Business Administration	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies	Interviewer 11	Feminine gender Age: 24 years old Civil state: Single Education: Complete High School	Channel: Vlog and Cinema 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games And Cinema
Interviewer 03	Male gender Age: 38 years	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games	Interviewer 12	Male gender Age: 41 years	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games



	Marital status: Single Education: Graduation in Materials Engineering. Master in Materials Engineering	2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 4 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games		Marital status: Divorced Education: Graduation in Administration. Graduation in Biological Sciences with emphasis on Clinical Analysis. Interruption in the third year of Law Graduation. Interruption in the second year of Graduation in Letters (Portuguese and English). Specialisation in advertising and Marketing. Master of Science in Religion. PhD in Religion Science.	
Interviewer 04	Male gender Age: 35 years Marital status: Married Education: Complete High School	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Vlog 4 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Vlog	Interviewer 13	Male gender Age: 35 years Marital status: Single Education: Graduation in Visual Audio.	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games
Interviewer 05	Male gender Age: 22 years old Marital status: Single Education: Complete High School. Interruption in the third year of the Graduation in Architecture and Urbanism	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies	Interviewer 14	Male gender Age: 35 years Marital status: Single Education: Graduation in Advertising. Specialisation in Design, Cognition and Media	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games
Interviewer 06	Male gender Age: 32 years Marital status: Married Education: Graduation in Computer Science	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games		Male gender Age: 32 years Marital status: Divorced Education: Graduation in Marketing and Advertising.	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games
Interviewer 07	Male gender Age: 20 years Marital status: Single Education: Studying Graduation in Cinema	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Cinema	Interviewer 15	Male gender Age: 35 years Marital status: Married Education: Graduation in Advertising.	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games
	Male gender Age: 18 years old Marital status: Single Education: Complete High	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Cinema	Interviewer 16	Male gender Age: 30 years Marital status: Married Education: Graduation in	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies

	School			Industrial Design. Specialisation in Graphic Design.	
Interviewer 08	Male gender Age: 30 years Marital status: Single Education: Complete High School	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games	Interviewer 17	Male gender Age: 24 years old Marital status: Single Education: Graduation in Digital Marketing. Interruption in the third year of the Graduation in Administration	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Vlog 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Movies
Interviewer 09	Male gender Age: 22 years old Marital status: Single Education: Graduation in Graphic Design.	1 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Vlog 2 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 3 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games 4 <sup>o</sup> Channel: Games			

Source: Authors (2017) - Interviewer's data

### 7.1 Interviewee's channel history

The first interview was held in August 2017. The interviewee created a channel called “Entre Planos”, which addresses content about the cinema. He is 25 years old, male and lives with their parents in Brasília. His parents are divorced, so he spends a few days at his mother's house and others at his father's house. The interviewee considers that he has a good control of his time and manages well his social life and his Youtuber occupation. In 2015, he graduated in Journalism from the University of Brasilia (UNB). During his graduation he spent an exchange semester in France, where he was able to improve his knowledge in cinema. It was during his graduate university that he had the idea of creating a channel on YouTube. It was his first channel on the platform, and it was created in 2015. His idea was to write his graduation project about the knowledge acquired in France, and if it would be fun and a positive experience, he would invest in the channel as a content production project. After graduation, he dedicated himself to the channel. Therefore, he began to financially invest in the channel. Much of the financial assistance for improving the channel came from his parents and his uncle. Since the beginning of the channel, he was focused on producing good content to attract more subscribers and commercial investments on the channel. The second interview took place on August 21, 2017. The interviewee started his career on YouTube in 2010. He had already created three channels on the platform, but currently had two active channels, all of which dealt with cinema content.

He is male, 31 years old and married. He is graduated in Business Administration from Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie. His first YouTube channel was created with two more friends in 2010. The channel was called “Wednesdays Movies Night” and it had entertainment purposes: every Wednesday, the interviewee met his friends for dinner, and, in sequence, they watched a movie

and then discussed about the movie they had watched. The channel was on for a year and a half, but one of the friends moved to another city, so it was not possible to continue recording the videos for the channel. However, still intending to continue posting videos on YouTube, he invited another person and decided to create another channel in 2012, which was called “Os Bons Companheiros”, which kept the same routine and objective than the previous channel. This channel is still on; however, the frequency is low since everyone has other occupations.

The third interview took place in August 2017. He is 38 years old and not married. He has a channel about video games and computer. He is graduated in Material Engineering. After his graduation, he obtained a master’s degree in Engineering. He is not only a Youtuber, but also works at his family’s engineering company in the mornings. He began to work as Youtuber in 2005, when he created the “Calique” channel. It is a channel about video games, but at that time he did not have any worries about the “copyrights”. At that time, the YouTube channel was used as a way to take subscribers to the blog. In addition, the interviewee won 5 trophies for his blog. Back then, his main objective was to monetise the website, as YouTube was still in the beginning, so it was not profitable. As of 2008, he started to invest in the “Consoles e Jogos Brasil” channel to make it profitable, thus investing in equipment and higher quality of videos. Throughout his career on YouTube, he has always tried to reconcile his financial gain and the dissemination of the gaming culture.

The fourth interview was held in September 2017. The interviewee has a channel that portrays content about video games and computers. The interviewee is male, 35 years old, married and lives in the city of Curitiba with his wife and son (two months ago on the date of the interview). His schooling is complete high school. He worked for ten years in Japan in a company that produced auto parts, he acted as a “dekasegui”, that is, a worker in Japan. He informed that he moved to Japan with his wife and son, as they wanted a better life and Japan gave them that opportunity. In 2012, he created his first channel on YouTube, called “Velberan”, whose content was about games. Later on, he opened another channel about games but decided to close it. While living in Japan, in 2015 he opened another channel called “Japan through different eyes”, a vlog about some everyday experiences, such as: curiosities about the subway in Japan, city tours, a tour of the neighbourhood where he lived, and so forth. This channel is still active, but the interviewee reported that the channel's profitability decreased after they returned to Brazil, as the channel had many facts about Japan.

When he returned to Brazil, the name of the channel was changed to “Life through different eyes”. Due to the decrease in profitability of the channel, in 2017 he decided to create another one called “Bom de Garfo”, where contents about food tastings are presented. The interviewee has already created some blogs, but decided to close them, as he did not have time to dedicate himself to both YouTube and the blogs. Currently, he dedicates his time entirely to activities on YouTube, especially the channels “Velberan” and “Bom de Garfo”, consequently all of his income comes from YouTube, as both channels are profitable.

The fifth interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee created the “Nerd Land” channel, in which he disseminates cinema content, specifically in the geek community. The interviewee is male, 22 years old, has two brothers and lives with his mother in the city of Curitiba.

The interviewee completed high school and started studying Architecture and Urbanism. This course has a duration of four years and he dropped out after three years. He justified his withdrawal due to numerous factors, such as: a high monthly fee (his parents paid for the course), the difficult content, the difficulty to find an internship in the area and the lack of time, because it was during this period that he created his YouTube channel. The interviewee also worked as a designer in a furniture store but was not satisfied with this work. He had always been interested in geek content since his childhood and said that he had noticed that some people were making money from monetising videos on YouTube. So, he decided to create his own channel with content of interest, in addition to being autonomous to produce something according to his will. Therefore, he decided to create the channel in 2014. In the same period, the channel started to become profitable and he decided to give up his undergraduate course and dedicate his time entirely to the “Nerd Land” channel. In 2016, the channel started to have such a high profitability, that the interviewee, as he states, it was possible to live only with the money coming from his channel on YouTube.

The sixth interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee has a channel called “Fênix Down”, which addresses content about computer games. The interviewee is male, 32 years old, was born in Rio de Janeiro and lives in Ottawa with his wife. He currently lives in Canada, as his wife is taking a professionalisation course in the area of information technology (IT). He holds a degree in Computer Science from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

He worked in the computing area and in parallel developed content for the internet since 2006. In 2011, he created his first channel called “Continue” with the purpose of publishing some videos about games. In 2013, he invited a friend to create a blog called “Blog Fênix Down” and the second YouTube channel called “Fênix Down TV”, also addressing content about games. The goal was to use the YouTube channel to make subscribers access the blog, that is, the channel was a way of promoting the blog. In 2012, it won the “Top Blog” trophy, that is, it was considered the best blog in Brazil (academic jury category).

The seventh interview was conducted with two people. The interview took place on September 2017. The two friends created the channel “Referência Nerd”, which addresses the theme of cinema. Interviewee A is male, 20 years old and lives in Rio de Janeiro with his parents. He is studying the third year of graduation in Cinema at Estácio de Sá College. During high school he was a technician in administration and had an internship in the administrative area.

Interviewee B is male, is 18 years old and lives with his father and grandmother in Rio de Janeiro. He has a sister who lives with his mother. He recently graduated from high school, had professional experience as a minor apprentice in the trade area. He created his first YouTube channel in 2012/2013, where he addressed contents about games. However, the channel closed in 2016, as he was not satisfied with its progress and the games area was very saturated at that time. Interviewee A

was already helping interviewee B to record videos for the first channel. The “Referral Nerd” channel is the first channel created by interviewee A and the second channel created by interviewee B. This channel was created in 2016. Currently, the two dedicate their time entirely to the channel's activities, that is, they do not exercise parallel activities.

When they created the channel, both thought of transmitting different and enriching information about pop culture and comics. However, over the months, they thought of reconciling this channel with the financial return. But, currently, the channel is not profitable. Both consider YouTube as an income supplement, that is, they do not plan to live exclusively on the channel's financial income, as they wish to work in parallel occupations in addition to YouTuber.

The eighth interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee created a channel called “Madrugatina - a Jogatina da Madrugada”, which addressed content about computer games. The interviewee is male, 30 years old, he has an only child and lives with his mother in the city of São Paulo. He has completed high school and has worked as a computer analyst since 2014 at a company that provides outsourced services to a telephone company. Throughout his life he has worked as a computer and music teacher. He informed that he has always liked to draw, edit audios, videos, and so on. Since 2012 he has produced a podcast about games and geek culture and disseminates the content on the website of one of his friends. When he started to work a large part of his income was dedicated to games, as this means entertainment art and culture for him. In 2012, he decided to create the channel “Madrugatina”, his objective was to meet people who have an affinity with video games, that is, YouTube is considered a network of friends and games that gathers groups with common interest. When he created the channel, he invited a friend to help him with the recording, but his friend stayed for only two months and then gave up. Thus, the interviewee proceeded with the channel alone. Currently, the interviewee dedicates his time to the channel, as well as to his analyst occupation.

The ninth interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee created a channel called “The MFW”, which addresses content about video games and computers. The interviewee is male, 22 years old and lives with his mother in São Paulo. He is currently single. He has a degree in Graphic Design and started a specialisation in audio visual course, but interrupted, as the course was not meeting his expectations. The interviewee has always dedicated his time exclusively to activities on YouTube, so his channel has always been his main source of income. In 2006 he created the “Rafa Produção”, and the main purpose of the channel was entertainment. The interviewee informed that he always liked games, so in 2007 he decided to create the channel “Worth”, which only addressed content about games. In 2009 he created the fourth channel on YouTube called “The MFW”, this channel addresses video game and computer game content. Currently, he has only this last channel active on the platform. Approximately in 2014 the channel started to be profitable, so he started to reinvest in the channel with the money that the channel generated.

The tenth interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee created a channel in partnership with a friend. The channel was called “Session of the Afternoon”, which addressed the cinema content. The interviewee is male, 19 years old, lives in Santo André with his parents and older

brother. He is studying publicity and works as an intern at a digital marketing agency. He also teaches media strategy. The interviewee reported that in 2000 he created a channel about games. At that time, he watched other gaming channels and had the desire to do the same, so he decided to create his first YouTube channel. Years later, he started doing theatre at school and watching some videos about cinema. Therefore, he decided to create a second channel on YouTube, the channel was called "Análise LL". This channel addresses content about cinema. After some time, he decided to change the name of the channel to "Fileira do Meio". However, as the years went by, he became discouraged with the channel's progress, as the number of subscribers always remained constant.

The eleventh interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee has an active channel on the platform. The channel is called "Freud-type Kreuzer", which addresses content about cinema. The interviewee is female, 24 years old, and lives in Rio de Janeiro. Her schooling is complete high school. Currently she is exclusively dedicated to the activities of the channel on YouTube. However, she has already worked for an advertising agency with video editing. The channel started in 2010. The channel's purpose was to promote entertainment. The interviewee reported that over time, YouTube has changed its rules. Consequently, she preferred to address only cinema content and create new channels with other subjects. In 2012, she created the second channel on the platform, the channel called "Crusher Plays", which only addressed game content. In 2015, she created the third channel called "Tv Nerd", which addressed content about games and cinema. The interviewee informed that she preferred to dedicate herself only to one channel, as she values the quality of the videos and with more than one channel on the platform, it was not possible to accomplish this. She reported that her income comes exclusively from her YouTube channel.

The twelfth interview took place in September 2017. The interviewee created a channel called "Jogos da Madrugada", which addresses content about board games. The interviewee is male, 41 years old, divorced and lives in Rio de Janeiro. The interviewee has a degree in business administration and a specialisation in advertising and marketing. While taking his first undergraduate course he also started his internship in the administration area. Later on, he joined the firefighter group, and during this period, he started to have financial stability, so he decided to graduate in Biological Sciences, which was a course he liked.

The interviewee reported that he had always been interested in Role Playing Game (RPG) and one day a friend introduced him to board games. From the moment he retired, he had a lot of free time. Given this situation, in 2017 he decided to create the channel "Jogos da Madrugada" on YouTube. Currently he is dedicated exclusively to the channel's activities, but the channel is not profitable.

The thirteenth interview took place in October 2017. The interviewee created a channel called "Covil", which addressed video game content. The interviewee is male, 35 years old, single and lives in São Paulo. He has a degree in Visual Audio. During his undergraduate studies, he did an internship at TV Cultural, a place where he improved his skills. The interviewee informed that he had always been interested in video games. In 2016 he decided to create the "Covil" channel in partnership with a friend. When they created the channel on the platform, they thought they would make money from the

channel, but they knew it was difficult, due to numerous factors, including the increase in the number of channels on the platform. Since the beginning the channel, it has not been profitable and because of this reason he will need to dedicate less time to the channel.

The fourteenth interview was conducted with two people. The interview took place in October 2017. The two friends created the channel “Tábula Quadrada”, which addressed content about board games. Interviewee A is male, 35 years old and lives in the city of Maringá. Graduated in Advertising and Postgraduate in Design, Cognition and Media. Currently he works in the commercial sector in a company in the city of Maringá. Interviewee B is male, 32 years old and lives alone in the city of Maringá. Graduated in Marketing and Advertising. In about 2013, interviewee B created a blog and a YouTube channel. But, over time, the blog and channel did not continue, as it was not possible to reconcile the activities with his job. The idea of creating the “Tábula Quadrada” channel arose when interviewee A went to work in a company in the city of Campo Mourão. There he met a person who invited him to produce content about board games, so they decided to create a website together.

The two partly dedicate their time to the channel's activities, as they have parallel occupations. The channel covers content about board games. Usually, they recorded videos together. When they created the channel, they both thought about entertainment and transmitting differentiated information. Currently, the channel is not very profitable. Both view YouTube's income only as income to reinvest in the channel.

The fifteenth interview took place in October 2017. The interviewee has an active channel called “Siga o Coelho”, which addressed content about board games. The interviewee is male, 35 years old and lives in Rio de Janeiro. He has a degree in Advertising. The interviewee reported that in 2014 he already published content about board games on a blog and also recorded podcasts with a friend. That same year, in partnership with this friend, they decided to create their first channel on YouTube, the channel was called “Bafo do Dragão”, which addressed content about board games. The purpose of the channel was to disseminate personal experiences about board games. However, the partnership between the two friends did not work, due to personal issues, so in 2016 the interviewee created the second channel called “Siga o Coelho” to disseminate content about board games.

The interviewee mentioned that the channel is not very profitable, but through it several opportunities arose. He lives exclusively with the financial income from these opportunities that the channel provides him.

The sixteenth interview took place in October 2017. The interviewee has an active channel called “Território Nerd”, which addresses content about cinema. The interviewee is male, 30 years old, and lives with his wife in Burlington, Canada. He has a degree in Industrial Design and a specialisation in Graphic Design. After graduation he started working in the design field. The interviewee informed that he has been working with the production of independent content since 2007. In 2011, he created his first YouTube channel, which was called “Território Nerd” and addressed content about cinema. The purpose of the channel was to disseminate his opinion about cinema. In 2016, the interviewee moved to Canada and currently, he dedicates himself exclusively to the channel's activities.

The seventeenth interview took place in October 2017. The interviewee has a channel called “BoarDadoGames” that addresses content about board games. He is male, 25 years old, single and lives with his parents in São José dos Campos. He currently works on a research project with two more professors at the Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica (ITA). The project focuses on the production of videos aimed at distance learning (EAD), thus collaborating in the recording and editing of videos. He has been in this project for more than three years. In 2012 he created the second channel on YouTube, focusing on board games, card games and RPG. However, the interviewee mentioned that he also gave up on continuing this channel. In 2014, he created the channel “BoarDadoGames”, which only addresses content about board games. The focus is entertainment. The interviewee mentioned that he can reconcile the activities of the channel with other tasks, including once a week he plays RPG with his friends for fun.

## **7.2. Precarious Occupation of Brazilian Youtubers**

In this study, it is considered that Youtubers are inserted within a cultural domain, as some channels address content related to the artistic, musical, cultural and other areas. Some Youtubers started the channel as a hobby looking for entertainment, social interactions, personal recognition and even use the channel as a way to express themselves. However, when they saw a market opportunity for the channel to be profitable, they opted for such an alternative.

In the past, the commercial side in a cultural domain was disregarded. However, nowadays, this commercial side has come to be fully accepted and effectively incorporated into cultural domains. The new relationship between the cultural market and the economy marks the beginning of the marketing process in a given cultural domain (McRobbie, 2002). This fact is seen in the occupation of Youtubers. One of the interviewees reported that he was one of the first Youtubers to enter into exchange partnerships in Brazil. At the beginning of the creation of YouTube, this practice was not well regarded among Youtubers. About this, another interviewee adds: “[...] sometimes, I won a game or another to make a video. I was also one of the first, I was not the first, but I was one of the first. And at that time, as nobody earned anything and there were already a lot of people making videos, so I became a mercenary [...].”

According to the study by Caves (2003), the artist's success is related to the intensity of his talent. The same fact can be observed in the case of Brazilian Youtubers. The second interviewee (2017) said: “If you have talent, if you learn cool, if you are beautiful, if you speak well, if you are funny; I think they are characteristics that can make you live from YouTube. If the individual does not have a differential, he will be considered one more on the platform, that is, he will not be highlighted.”

McRobbie (2002) mentioned in her study that cultural producers work creating short-term projects, so they need more than one job to cover their financial needs. Earnings are usually contract-bound. The same happens with Youtubers: some sponsors pay for the number of videos produced, or for the number of views and subscribers on the channel. Therefore, most of the interviewed Youtubers have another parallel occupation, as it is not possible to live exclusively from the channel's financial



income. There are Youtubers who manage to live exclusively with the channel's financial gains, but in most cases, it is not possible. Typically, the financial performance of the channels is low. As the first interviewee (2017) mentions: "I have effectively earned R\$ 650.00, we never exceed R\$ 700.00." In some cases, the financial income of the channel is enough only to pay the costs of operating the channel. The excerpt from one of the interviews exemplifies this situation:

*"[...] the 'Support yourself' of 'Fênix Down' is around R\$ 280.00 per month. And 'Support yourself' takes about 15% more or less of what I earn. There are about two hundred and a little, and of those two hundred and little I have to pay R\$ 175.00 in software licenses. So, R\$ 30.00 or R\$ 40.00 per month is left over, which is the money we keep there that if I ever need to buy a lens or a new device, I will buy it. It is not money that I really count to be able to pay the bills here." (INTERVIEWEE 06, 2017)"*

Some respondents mentioned that several opportunities arose after they opened the channel on YouTube. Therefore, they share the time of their Youtuber occupation with other activities. The excerpts from some interviews exemplify this fact:

*"[...] I think I had to give up a certain form of dedication and focus [...] on the other hand, it opened up a possibility that I wouldn't have had, had I not opened the channel for six years without earning one Real, which is today having an online school." (INTERVIEWEE 02, 2017)"*

*"[...] I recently participated in a movie that is even on Netflix. If you want to watch 'amor.com', the main character is [played by] Isis Valverde, and I am one of her bad friends. It is a small participation, but there I am more uninhibited." (INTERVIEWEE 11, 2017)"*

Throughout the interviews, some Youtubers mentioned that they make commercial alliances. Channel partners are considered to be those who collaborate with the channel, whether financially or otherwise. As such, the partners are diverse, and may be the subscribers themselves, some stores and brand representatives. Partnerships can provide financial return through exchange or channel disclosure. It should be noted that some Youtubers mentioned that some partnerships are not good, as the channel has no rewards. This fact can be exemplified according to the following interview excerpt:

*"[...] you saw the number of hours I spend making a video. And the video has less than a thousand views. And then, when a publisher comes to talk to me to make some kind of partnership, the guy does not even give me the game to record. The guys want to make money off us, without spending anything. The business is revolting. You see all the time the amateurism of the market in wanting to make money without investing, without paying the people who work for it. This is because, today, this is a full-time job for me. So, when I talk about a game and I get comments from people saying, 'I bought this game, just because you said it', I'm making money for another person. And I do not have that industry recognition. I say 'me', but they are all content producers [...]" (INTERVIEWEE 15, 2017)"*

Respondents consider that the channel requires a lot of time and dedication. Some Youtubers mentioned that they work several days a week and more than eight hours a day. The time of dedication depends on the model of the video. There are videos that need more time and preparation for recording and editing. However, they consider that sometimes their work is not recognised.

There is a dispute in the market to post the content in advance on the platform. The fifteenth interviewee (2017) said of this: "I work even more than eight hours a day." The third interviewee (2017) said: "it is a production pace. You record a video and edit it, record another one and edit it and put it to profit. So, I learned not to procrastinate." The eighth respondent (2017) reported: "I made many videos, in one month I had made thirty videos." This proves that freedom is sometimes only apparent, Youtubers perform autonomous work, they themselves define their days and working hours as well as define their place of work, but sometimes they work more than eight hours a day and in environments inadequate.

According to the study by McRobbie (2002), some cultural activities started to be carried out through the internet. The cultural market expanded and began to seek more and more economic gains. Individuals started to develop their activities individually and are sometimes overwhelmed. The same happens with the Youtubers, they usually do most of the channel's activities alone, from recording to editing and posting the video. Most respondents mentioned that they dedicate a lot of time to the channel. The first interviewee (2017) said: "It's very busy and it's a lot of work." The third interviewee said: "the work is gigantic." (INTERVIEWEE 03). The thirteenth respondent (2017) reported: "[...] I need a vacation." Throughout some interviews, some Youtubers mentioned that they feel they lack the time to record the videos, as there are many tasks, in addition to having to deal with commercial issues. It can be noted that they do not have full control of working time. Youtubers recognise that they have difficulties in limiting their time and work environment with their personal lives.

Regarding the time dedicated to the channel, the first interviewee (2017) said: "lately I worked basically from Monday to Saturday, in the tightest weeks from Sunday to Sunday." The fifteenth interviewee said: "[...] I would say that I have a twelve-hour day job for the channel, more or less." The ninth interviewee said: "[...] it is practically twelve hours in front of the PC and sometimes exceeds even more [...]."

In the study carried out by Holmbom (2015), some Youtubers mentioned that to stand out on YouTube it is necessary to dedicate a large part of their time, in some cases it can cost a university degree, family life, holidays and weekends. This fact is similar with some Brazilian Youtubers who gave up part of their leisure time to perform the channel's tasks. The sixteenth interviewee said: "[...] my leisure time is totally compromised." The fourth interviewee said: "And then we start to sacrifice all our free time to make more and more videos for people to watch." One of the interviewees mentioned that he is going through a complicated period on the channel, as his partner had to leave the recordings for personal reasons. Therefore, he is alone and did not imagine that this would happen. Another factor that frustrated him was the performance of the channel, because at first, he imagined that the channel would be profitable and so far, has failed to achieve this goal. The thirteenth respondent (2017) said: I hoped that it would grow much more than it actually did. And it has not grown. So, I do not know, it's a failure. I really consider it a failure [...]

It should be noted that the Youtuber occupation is not regulated, therefore, Youtubers do not have labour rights. Considering the analogy to slave labour, it can be noted that Youtubers meet some

requirements that were imposed to consider work analogous to slave labour. Youtubers feel forced to produce content according to market demand, in addition they have an exhaustive workday, given that they have and many difficulties to establish limits and sometimes work in degrading working conditions, as they work at home and end up mixing work and personal life.

### **7.3 Discussions**

Throughout the research, it was possible to notice that this occupation is still under development, the Youtuber concept is still under construction. But some rules and routines already helped to define what a YouTuber is. Through the formation of habits, which are socially accepted, the occupation creates its social limitations. Thus, certain tasks are already assigned to the YouTuber occupation. One of these rules, which marks this occupation is the frequency of posting videos on the platform. Thus, there is a standardisation of the tasks performed.

Another factor that contributes to the typification of the YouTuber occupation is the distinction of who a YouTuber is. In other words, the content producer for YouTube, who creates and posts the videos and who have subscribers, that is, those who agree with the posted content. Therefore, there is a clear distinction between social roles. As these actions are carried out several times and accepted by society, the institutionalisation of such practices occurs. Bearing in mind that this is an emerging occupation, it is possible to perceive some resistance on the part of society.

Some people still do not recognise this occupation as legitimate, that is, there is still some resistance in relation to some factors. It was identified that most of the interviewees still divide their time with a parallel occupation, as it is not possible to live only from the financial income from YouTube.

Given this context, it is clear that some people dedicate their time exclusively to the platform, trying to make this their main income. However, there are some people who use YouTube as a means of entertainment, that is, the channel is aimed at entertainment. Therefore, certain channels are still resistant to changes imposed by the market; consequently, these channels have less subscribers, views and financial income.

Some interviewees take care of the channel, as part of their identity, as they express their opinions in the videos and use the platform as a network of friendships and as a personal record. Thus, there is an investment in the channel, but not for financial purposes. However, some channels started to follow the logic of the market. Thus, there was a certain level of misrepresentation of initial objectives.

Some respondents mentioned that the platform is the main means of presenting their work, that is, the end result of their effort. Others consider their videos as something unique and personal, so they value your way of expressing themselves. This fact satisfies many of the interviewees, as they consider themselves autonomous. That is, the result of their work depends exclusively on themselves, they are not submissive to other people. Many take pleasure in the autonomy of content production.

Most content producers started to follow the “model” required by the platform itself. If the content producer decides not to follow this model, he is disowned and gradually excluded from the medium. Even so, it is possible to notice that there are content producers who are resistant to the imposed changes, as they value their ideologies. Some YouTubers started to submit to these partnerships that give a reasonable return, leading to a devaluation of the work of many YouTubers.

Most respondents have parallel occupations, as it is not possible to live exclusively from the channel's financial income. According to the study by Taylor and Littleton (2008), workers in a cultural domain need to have more than one job to live, because their artistic occupation does not yield great financial returns. As a consequence, it is necessary to have a parallel occupation to have higher incomes financial resources. This fact is also represented in the case of YouTubers.

## **8. Final Considerations**

The objective of this research was to identify possible indicators of precariousness in the organisation of the work of the occupation of the Brazilian Youtuber. It was observed that the meaning of work has changed over the years, and the precariousness of work has been present at various times in history, through the capitalist mode of production (Vizeu et al., 2015). In the beginning, an artist from a cultural domain sought self-satisfaction through the result of his work, that is, the artist used work as a form of expression, as well as self-realisation. However, over the years, this situation has changed, as artists in the cultural industry have adapted to the capitalist mode of production. With the emergence of Web 2.0, new occupations emerged, as in the case of Youtubers. The organisation of work in the cultural industry developed on the internet came to be perceived as something flexible. However, the intensification of job insecurity was strongly present, as it started to seek greater profits and greater productivity.

In this research, it was identified that most of the interviewees still divide their time with a parallel occupation, as it is not possible to make ends meet exclusively with the YouTube channels. Some interviewees mentioned that the partnerships are not very profitable, as some happen through barter and, in some cases, the brand just wants to be disclosed without offering something in return to the Youtuber. Regarding the time dedicated to the production of content for the channel, many Youtubers dedicate more than eight hours of work per day, and in many cases, they give up part of their free time to produce content for the channel. It was found that in some cases the Youtuber became demotivated over time and the pace of work directly impacts other spheres of his life, in addition to the professional sphere. You can see the weakness in the self-esteem of Youtubers due to the high workload and competition in the job market.

Therefore, the work configuration of the Youtuber occupation can be perceived as “perverse”, considering that many opt for such an occupation with the idea that he/she will be able to work from home with more time flexibility and less workload than in a traditional occupation. However, the reality is different, given that many of the interviewees end up mixing their leisure time with professional activity. As recently as February 26, 2020, The US Federal Court of the northern District of California

ruled that Google / YouTube is not a state agency and the first amendment and restriction of content which may result in a loss of “moneyfication” of content or advertisement does not apply.

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