

tripleC communication, capitalism & critique

Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society

Editorial: tripleC's 10th Anniversary and Its New Title *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique.* *Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*

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Abstract: This editorial introduces the background for tripleC's name change to *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*.

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1. tripleC's History, Aims and Focus

tripleC celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2013. Over the years, there has been a development of the journal's aims and focus from the science of information to the critical science of the information society. This has some years ago been explicitly expressed in the addition of a subtitle – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society. The notion of the “global sustainable information society” expresses a normative vision of an information society, in which all benefit from the use of communications, ICTs and media. Given the existence of global inequalities and global problems, it is clear that we do not live in such a society. So the normative vision of a global sustainable information society signifies a potential, how society should be, and indicates the need for the criticism of the information society that we have today, a society, where communications, ICTs and the media do not benefit all, but are embedded into asymmetric power relations and various forms of stratification. Along with this normative vision and a focus on the critical study of the information society, communications, ICTs and media, we introduced an editorial policy and journal focus that encourages the contributors to think critically about the information society, to conduct critical analyses and to reflect on issues that relate to power structures, the problems they cause in the information society, how these problems can be overcome, and what the potential alternatives are.

tripleC started in 2003 as a journal specializing in the science of information. Wolfgang Hofkirchner (2002, 2013) has elaborated a model of information that conceptualizes cognition, communication and cooperation as three interrelated dimensions of information. This

model has informed tripleC's fostering of research that has a broad, process-oriented and dynamic understanding of information. Cognition "is a necessary condition for communication, and communication is a necessary condition for cooperation. Given a system of systems, co-operation of these very systems shapes their communication. This, in turn, shapes the cognition in each of them. In this way, cognition, communication and co-operation are mutually conditioned" (Hofkirchner 2013, 2818). This model allows not only conceptualising information as dynamic, dialectical process in order to ground a science of information, but in addition also provides philosophical foundations for a critical and normative understanding of the information society and the quest for a good information society that benefits all. Information understood in this way reflects dynamic philosophical systems, such as Hegel's distinction between being-in-itself, being-for-others and being-in-and-for-itself as well as Charles Sanders Peirce's distinction between firstness, secondness and thirdness, as well as the dynamics of material reality itself. The triad as philosophical figure of thought that describes the actual development processes in the world is of particular importance for establishing a systematic theory of the world and of society. Today, there is much talk about "social media" in academia, business and the public. This discourse however falls short of understanding and differentiating the media's forms of sociality. The distinction between cognition, communication and cooperation allows in contrast to develop a systematic and dialectical differentiation of forms of sociality in the media and on the Internet as foundation for the analysis of the media's social reality (Fuchs, Hofkirchner, Schafranek, Raffl, Sandoval and Bichler 2010; Hofkirchner 2007).

The information concept is not limited to society, but extends to biological and physical systems. As a consequence, tripleC has also published articles that focus on these dimensions. The focus of articles published in the early years of tripleC was mainly on system theoretical analyses of information in social, biological and physical systems and on engagement with the concept of information. These discussions still matter because the information society and the Internet as information system can only be adequately understood if we have a unified and theoretically feasible concept of information that is reflected in the published articles. Over the years, the journal's focus has however shifted more and more towards publishing articles that analyse digital media, media, communication, collaboration and information in the information society, with a special focus on societal problems and forms of stratification in the information society and with a normative and critical edge. The explicit dedication of the journal to the publication of articles that also have an explicit critical focus on how media, technology and information limit and can contribute to the establishment of a good information society, in which all humans benefit and there is no exploitation and oppression, was explicitly stated in the journal's aims right from the beginning, which is also shown in the first editorial written in volume one's issue 1, where the editorial team said that the journal wants to "provide a forum to discuss the challenges humanity is facing today" and that it wants to help "shape technology for a sustainable global information society". The critical, normative, ethical and political dimension has however not always been present in every article published in the journal, which in my opinion required a refocusing of the editorial policy.

Over the years, I and many colleagues in the editorial board, editorial team and our academic networks have felt more and more that tripleC could further improve its profile by expressing its dedication to critical information society studies, critical Internet studies, critical media sociology, critical media and information studies and critical information science even more clearly. And as a consequence of this reflection process, the journal started a discussion in its editorial team, board and publishing body and therefore is with overall support after consultation and informed discussion now changing its name to

tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society.

tripleC as the analysis of interconnections of communication, capitalism and critique is grounded in a dynamic and dialectical understanding of information as process of cognition,

communication and cooperation and in the quest for a global participatory, cooperative and sustainable information society (Fuchs 2010) that overcomes stratification, power asymmetries, domination and exploitation.

The basic focus of the journal as a journal that focuses on publishing critical studies of the information society, ICTs, communication and media in the information society has been expressed since quite some time in the journal's formal aims and scope (see <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope>). tripleC is a journal that invites contributions that critically theorise, analyse and reflect on the power structures, societal problems, ideologies, social struggles that are connected to communications, ICTs and the media in the information society. It especially encourages scholars to connect their research results and writing to critical, normative, ethical and political reflections on how a good information society could look like, what today hinders its establishment and what needs to be done to establish such a society. The journal promotes contributions within an emerging science of the information society with a special interest in critical studies following the highest standards of peer review. It is a journal that focuses on information society studies and studies of media, digital media, information and communication in society with a special interest in critical studies in these thematic areas. The journal has a special interest in disseminating articles that focus on the role of information (cognition/knowledge, communication, cooperation) in contemporary capitalist societies. For this task, articles should employ critical theories and/or empirical research inspired by critical theories and/or philosophy and ethics guided by critical thinking as well as relate the analysis to power structures and inequalities of capitalism, especially forms of stratification such as class, gender inequalities, racist and other ideologies and capitalist patriarchy. Papers should reflect on how the presented findings contribute to the illumination of conditions that foster or hinder the advancement of a global sustainable and participatory information society. It is the journal's mission to encourage uncommon sense, fresh perspectives and unconventional ideas, and connect leading thinkers and young scholars in inspiring reflections.

tripleC is a transdisciplinary journal that is open to contributions from all disciplines and approaches that critically and with a focus on power structures analyse the role of cognition, communication, cooperation, information, media, digital media and communication in the information society. We are especially interested in how analyses relate to normative, political and critical dimensions of the information society and how they help illuminating conditions that foster or hinder the advancement of a global sustainable, inclusive and participatory information society. We accept articles from all disciplines and combinations of disciplines carried out with any type of methods that focus on topics relating to the role of information, media, digital media and communication in contemporary society, politics, culture, and economy and the interrelation of humans and technology. We publish both theoretical and empirical research.

2. tripleC's New Title: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society

It needs to be explained how the notion of "capitalism" in tripleC's title should be understood. For Marx, capital is self-expanding value and accumulation is its inherent feature. Capital needs to permanently increase, otherwise companies, branches, industries or entire economies enter phases of crisis. Capitalism is therefore a dynamic and inherently expansive system, which has implications for the exploitation of nature, centralisation, concentration, uneven development, imperialism, military conflicts, the creation of milieus of unpaid and highly exploited labour, the destruction of nature and the depletion of natural resources, etc. "The employment of surplus-value as capital, or its reconversion into capital, is called accumulation of capital" (Marx 1867, 725). The capitalist "shares with the miser an absolute drive towards self-enrichment. But what appears in the miser as the mania of an individual is in the capitalist the effect of a social mechanism in which he is merely a cog. Moreover, the development of capitalist production makes it necessary constantly to increase the amount of capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking, and competition subordinates every individual

capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production, as external and coercive laws. It compels him to keep extending his capital, so as to preserve it, and he can only extend it by means of progressive accumulation” (Marx 1867, 739). Capitalism is a society that is grounded in and driven by the accumulation of capital.

The drive to accumulate is in contemporary society not limited to money capital. We also find the accumulation imperative in the accumulation of political decision power and the accumulation of cultural distinction, reputation and definition power. Capitalism is not a purely economic system, but rather a society, in which the subsystems are driven by the accumulation imperative. Accumulation logic is multidimensional and shapes the modern economy, politics, culture, private life, everyday life and the modern humans’ relationship to nature. The subsystems of modern society have their own specific forms of the accumulation logic, which means that they all have their own specific economies of production, circulation and distribution of power. Power takes on economic, political and cultural forms. Pierre Bourdieu (1986a, b) has generalised the concepts of capital and accumulation and describes capitalism as a class system based on the accumulation of economic, political and cultural capital. Jürgen Habermas (1987) uses the distinction between the systems of the economy and the state and the lifeworld for critically analysing how the instrumental logic of capital accumulation and administrative state bureaucracy colonises lifeworld communication and how social movement struggle against the colonisation of the lifeworld for a communicative rationality. Michel Foucault (2007) has used the notion of governmentality for arguing that power is not just located in the state, but that attempts to make humans the instrument of power and of particularistic interests are ubiquitous in modern society.

These and other approaches differ in various way, but are all critical theorisations of modern society that show how the accumulation of power by the one results in disadvantages for others, exploitation, oppression and inequality. The logic of accumulation that is inscribed into modern society results in fundamental inequalities. Capitalism is not only a society that is based on the logic of accumulation, but is a society that features fundamental inequalities and power asymmetries. One of the important achievements of Marx is that he has uncovered the logic of accumulation immanent in capitalism and pointed out the *immanent* inequalities that this logic produces.

tripleC encourages authors to critically analyse how the logic of accumulation shapes ICTs, communications and media in the information society and how this logic results in inequalities, struggles against these inequalities and the need for alternatives. Topics can e.g. include, but are not limited to the analysis of ICTs, communications and the media in the context of commodification, the exploitation of labour, the concentration and centralisation of markets marketization, consumer and advertising culture, ideologies, hegemony, class, gender and capitalist patriarchy, racism, discrimination, counter-power, crises, resistance, social movements, protests, revolutions, civil society, the public sphere, common goods, public services, alternative media, citizen media, the culture industry, democracy, bureaucratization, participatory democracy, conflicts, global wars, peace, the new imperialism, surveillance, privacy, security ideology and securitisation, ethics, inequality, play labour, the culture of everyday life, the logic of gifting, the logic of the commons, the commodification of the commons, neoliberalism, financialization, acceleration and the culture of speed, the environmental crisis, the depletion of natural resources, ecological sustainability, governance, regulation and policy making, welfare, education, social security, health care, mainstream and critical or investigative journalism, changing identities, migration, global problems and risks, right-wing extremism and fascism, ethical challenges, etc. The list is incomplete, but is based on the insight that modern society necessarily results in necessary inequalities and stratifications that express themselves also in the realms of the media, culture and technology. For critical social science, the task arises to analyse these phenomena in a critical way. The digitisation of information poses a challenge for this task.

tripleC will neither develop into a journal that has an economic perspective nor into a journal that only publishes articles that have a Marxist perspective. The reason why I write this is that too many people have a narrow understanding of Marx and his works. Marx tends to be misunderstood, deliberately falsely interpreted (often by people, who have not read his

works or only know some quotations and one of his articles). Terry Eagleton in his book *Why Marx Was Right* shows why all of the prejudices against Marx are wrong. Such prejudices against Marx's works and Marxism include that they are outdated, repressive, deterministic, naïve, reductionist, anti-humanistic, focusing on the outdated concept of class, undemocratic, in favour of dictatorship, ignorant of new social movements and narrow. Eagleton in contrast shows that Marx and Marxism are needed for understanding contemporary society and that Marx's works are topical, unmasking capitalist repression, wickedness and dictatorship, provide a complex and dynamic analysis of society, are profoundly humanist, argue for participatory democracy and allows us to understand how in contemporary social movements and society class and exploitation interact with identity and oppression. Prejudices against Marx normally tell more about the experiences, fears and political values of those who voice them than about actual failures or problems of Marx's works and politics. Reading and using Marx is not a necessary requirement for an article to be published in tripleC. There is a rich history of critical theory that should be used for understanding and changing contemporary society. tripleC encourages authors to make use of this rich history. At the same time, I am personally convinced that Marx is the foundational thinker of a critical theory of contemporary society, that he has been contemporary society's most profound critic and that we can much benefit from reading, engaging and reinterpreting Marx in the contemporary situation.

tripleC is not the Journal of Marx Studies, the Journal of Žižek Studies, the Journal of Bourdieu Studies, the Journal of Habermas Studies, the Journal of Foucault Studies, etc. So it does not limit itself to any one specific critical theory. It rather encourages the use of a broad range of critical theories for the analysis of ICTs, communications, the media and culture in the information society. It is a journal of critical information society studies that stresses the importance of critical theory and the importance of engagement with philosophical and theoretical questions in a critical manner for understanding and changing power and inequalities of the information society.

Social theory has in the past three decades moved away from Marx. This move away from Marx was a move away from the analysis of class that was deemed to be unimportant or a minor issue. At the same time, class inequality, precarious labour and precarious life rose dramatically everywhere in the world on local, national, regional and global scales. The global crisis that started in 2008 has made clear that one cannot neglect class, labour and the economy, but that rather forms of oppression are in modern society structurally coupled and dialectically related to exploitation. Analysing how ICTs, communications and the media are shaped by and shape various forms of power and oppression requires therefore awareness of how power and oppression are articulated with class power and exploitation.

The notion of the "global sustainable information society" that is part of tripleC's subtitle is an application of the concept of the good society to the information age and can, according to Wolfgang Hofkirchner (2013, 3504), be defined as a society that a) exists "on a planetary scale", b) is "capable to act upon the dangers of anthropogenic breakdown" and c) utilizes and generates "knowledge that serves that function".

The notion of sustainability has certain ideological connotations. The Brundtland Commission defined it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, 43). Neither the Commission nor subsequent policy applications of the concept clarified the relationship of sustainability and capitalist logic. In contrast, it was in the subsequent policy discourse rather suggested that capitalism and sustainability are compatible. The claim I want to make in contradistinction to such an understanding is that Karl Marx invented the notion of sustainability and conceptualized it in the context of the destructive forces of capitalism. In a quite striking formulation that makes one wonder if the Brundtland Commission uses Marx, but leaves out his broader conclusions, Marx says: "From the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in another men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations, as *boni patres familias*" (Marx 1894, 911). The destructive forces of capitalism

are multidimensional. The notion of sustainability has to do with the creation of a society that is socially just, ecologically preserving, technologically convivial, economically self-managed and wealth-generating for all, politically participatory and culturally wise. It is the antipode of the broad notion of capitalism set out in this article.

So Marx argues that in a just society, the globe must be improved by human beings and passed on to succeeding generations in such a condition. This concept is also a criticism of capitalism's destructive economic, technological, ecological, social, political and ideological forces. Capitalism is undermining "the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the worker" (Marx 1867, 638). "In the development of productive forces there comes a stage when productive forces and means of intercourse are brought into being, which, under the existing relationships, only cause mischief, and are no longer productive but destructive forces (machinery and money); and connected with this a class is called forth, which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages, which, ousted from society, is forced into the most decided antagonism to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness, which may, of course, arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class" (Marx and Engels 1846, 69).

This passage from the "German Ideology" suggests that the productive forces are socially destructive in modern society; they cause global societal problems such as inequality, poverty, precarious living conditions, unemployment, crises, environmental degradation, etc. For Marx the destructive power of capital turns against humans and nature: "It [Capital] is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces" (Marx 1857/58, 323).

The notion of the global sustainable information society is a normative vision that criticizes the instrumental and destructive forces of contemporary society. Without shaping ICTs, communications, media and society "to the requirements of a Global Sustainable Information Society, the technological future will be numb and dull, eventually leading to our extermination" (Hofkirchner 2013, 3715).

3. Open Access Online Publishing as tripleC: Criticising the Capitalist Form of Academic Communications

tripleC is a non-profit and non-commercial open access journal. The advantage is that we do not limit articles to 8,000 words (there is no upper limit for articles), that there are hardly waiting times after an article has been accepted until it is published, that the use of a Creative Commons license does not dispossess authors' rights and does not exploit their labour for profit purposes, and the access to articles is not a matter of money. Commercial publishers in contrast dispossess and exploit authors, they commodify academic knowledge and turn it into a private good that is owned by a handful of dominant media publishing houses and they are responsible for a publication system, in which access is a matter of either being member of a well-endowed university or wealthy enough for paying US\$ 20 or more for access to a single article, that discriminates scholars in developing countries, independent scholars and smaller research institutions. The social sciences are dominated by large corporations, such as Routledge/Taylor & Francis, Sage, Palgrave Macmillan, Wiley-Blackwell, Polity, Berg, Pearson, Ashgate and Edward Elgar. They treat academic knowledge that is an inherently public good as a commodity. But their hegemony is not just economic in character, but also shapes reputation structures. The most important mechanism for reputation generation in the Social Sciences is the Social Sciences Citation Index. Being published and cited in SSCI journals is crucial for the reputation of many academics. Yet SSCI is controlled by Thomson Reuters, one of the world's largest publishing corporations. The selection mechanism is not transparent to the academic public and open access journals form a minority of indexed journals. Non-profit open access journals seem to be systematically excluded and discriminated.

Open access publishing is not automatically non-profit and non-commercial. For example, Bentham Science publishes more than 200 open access journals (see <http://www.benthamscience.com/open/a-z.htm>). The basic model is that authors or their institutions have to pay publication fees. So for example the publication fee for an article in the Open Communication Journal is US\$800. In this model, academic knowledge is also a commodity, but the exchange of money for access does not take place between the reader/reader institutions (libraries) and the publisher, but between the author (or his/her organisation) and the publisher. In both cases, the goal is the accumulation of capital with the help of academic knowledge. A similar model is offered by operated by MDPI (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute), a company that runs journals such as Future Internet, Humanities, Information, Social Sciences or Societies that have publication fees of up to 500 CHF (= around 400 Euros, 450 US\$).

tripleC is different. It is a non-profit journal that wants to make critical academic knowledge freely accessible to the public. It opposes the commodification of academic knowledge and the exploitation of authors' labour. It wants to advance the democratisation of academic knowledge production and diffusion. In its operation, it practically struggles against capitalism in academic publishing. For-profit academic publishing harms, colonises and feudalises the academic public. At the same time, tripleC is like all non-profit alternative media facing the problem of having to exist in a capitalist world shaped by the logic of money. Publishing articles online requires server space and labour power. The reality of many alternative media is one of self-exploitation and voluntary precarious labour. tripleC has mainly operated and survived with the help of private donations of its editors and voluntary labour of editorial assistants and managing editors. The most time-intensive step in the production process is layouting and copy-editing. Given the resource limits we face, we have asked and will continue to ask authors to take care of the article layout themselves. Given that tripleC is a project that offers a non-profit publication platform to the academic public, this is a feasible practice. We provide a template that we think is easy to use and have strived to continuously make the citation style as straight forward and simple to apply as possible.

tripleC's new title tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society on the one hand reflects the scope and focus of the articles we want to publish. On the other hand it is also a political statement about the politics of academic journal publishing: The journal opposes and criticises the capitalist publishing business that imposes the commodity logic on the way academics communicate their knowledge to their peers and the public. tripleC practices non profit-open access publishing as critique of the capitalist/commodity form of academic communication. It has a vision of academic publishing that is sustainable and democratic and a vision of a sustainable and participatory information society.

tripleC is an open project that invites critical academics' participation. It is also a discursive journal that invites reflection and discussion pieces. You can support the journal by submitting articles, commentaries, book reviews, by helping us reviewing articles (in a timely manner) and in many other ways. Also suggestions and self-nominations for new editorial board members are always very much welcome to the editor.

tripleC has set out to be the leading journal for the critical study of communications, ICTs, media and social media in the information society. This task is ambitious and has dominant powers set against it. So please help us in building counter-power and transforming the status quo.

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