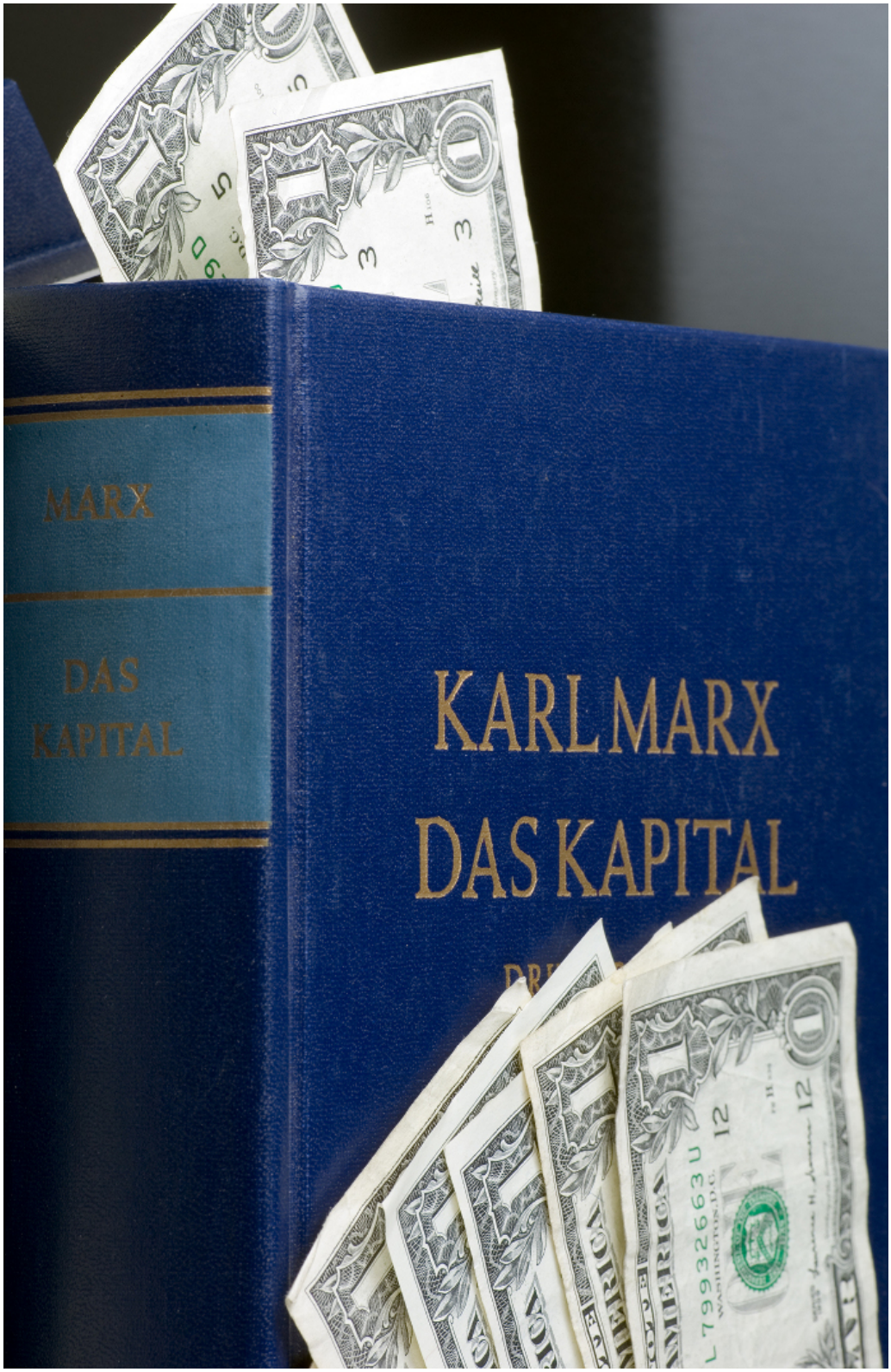
Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco, eds. 2012. Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today.



tripleC – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society (http://www.triple-c.at) 10 (2): 127-632.

Title image: U. Buman: Dollar – Das Kapital, http://www.digitalstock.de

Contents

127-140 *Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco*
Introduction: Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today.

Marx, the Media, Commodities, and Capital Accumulation

141-155 *Nicole S. Cohen*
Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation

156-170 *Mattias Ekman*
Understanding Accumulation: The Relevance of Marx's Theory of Primitive Accumulation in Media and Communication Studies

171-183 *Eran Fisher*
How Less Alienation Creates More Exploitation? Audience Labour on Social Network Sites

184-202 *Richard Hall and Bernd Stahl*
Against Commodification: The University, Cognitive Capitalism and Emergent Technologies

203-213 *William Henning James Hebblewhite*
"Means of Communication as Means of Production" Revisited

214-229 *Vincent Manzerolle and Atle Mikkola Kjøsen*
The Communication of Capital: Digital Media and the Logic of Acceleration

230-252 *George Pleios*
Communication and Symbolic Capitalism. Rethinking Marxist Communication Theory in the Light of the Information Society

253-273 *Robert Prey*
The Network's Blindspot: Exclusion, Exploitation and Marx's Process-Relational Ontology

274-301 *Jernej Prodnik*
A Note on the Ongoing Process of Commodification: From the Audience Commodity to the Social Factory

302-312 *Jens Schröter*
The Internet and "Frictionless Capitalism"

313-333 *Andreas Wittel*
Digital Marx: Toward a Political Economy of Distributed Media

Marx and Ideology Critique

334-348 *Pablo Castagno*
Marxist Theory in Critical Transitions: The Democratization of the Media in Post-Neoliberal Argentina

349-391 *İrfan Erdogan*
Missing Marx: The Place of Marx in Current Communication Research and the Place of Communication in Marx's Work

392-412 *Christian Fuchs*
Towards Marxian Internet Studies

413-424 *Christian Garland and Stephen Harper*
Did Somebody Say Neoliberalism?: On the Uses and Limitations of a Critical Concept in Media and Communication Studies

425-438 *Jim McGuigan*
The Coolness of Capitalism Today

439-456 *Brice Nixon*
Dialectical Method and the Critical Political Economy of Culture

457-473 *Michelle Rodino-Colocino*
"Feminism" as Ideology: Sarah Palin's Anti-feminist Feminism and Ideology Critique

474-487 *Gerald Sussman*
Systemic Propaganda as Ideology and Productive Exchange

Marx and Media Use

488-508 *Brian A. Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase*
"A Workers' Inquiry 2.0": An Ethnographic Method for the Study of Produsage in Social Media Contexts

509-517 *Katarina Giritli Nygren and Katarina L Gidlund*
The Pastoral Power of Technology. Rethinking Alienation in Digital Culture

Marx, Alternative/Socialist Media and Social Struggles

518-536 *Miriyam Aouragh*
Social Media, Mediation and the Arab Revolutions

537-554 *Lee Artz*
21st Century Socialism: Making a State for Revolution

555-569 *Peter Ludes*
Updating Marx's Concept of Alternatives

570-576 *Vincent Mosco*
Marx is Back, But Which One? On Knowledge Labour and Media Practice

577-599 *Wilhelm Peekhaus*
The Enclosure and Alienation of Academic Publishing: Lessons for the Professoriate

600-617 *Sebastian Sevignani*
The Problem of Privacy in Capitalism and the Alternative Social Networking Site Diaspora*

618-632 *Padmaja Shaw*
Marx as Journalist: Revisiting the Free Speech Debate

tripleC 10(2): 127-140, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Introduction: Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today

Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco

Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, christian.fuchs@im.uu.se

Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, moscov@mac.com

Abstract: This paper introduces the overall framework for tripleC's special issue "Marx is Back. The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today". We point out why there is a return of the interest in Marx ("Marx is back") and why Marxian analysis is important for Critical Communication Studies today. We also provide a classification of Marxian dimensions of the critical analysis of media and communication and discuss why commonly held prejudices against what Marx said about society, media, and communication are wrong. The special issue shows the importance of Marxist theory and research for Critical Communication Studies today.

Keywords: Marx, Marxism, Marxist political economy of media and communication, critical communication studies, critical media studies, critical theory.

** "'Marx is fashionable again,' declares Jorn Schutrumpf, head of the Berlin publishing house Dietz, which brings out the works of Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels. Sales have trebled - albeit from a pretty low level - since 2005 and have soared since the summer. […] The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, gave him a decent review last month: 'Marx long ago observed the way in which unbridled capitalism became a kind of mythology, ascribing reality, power and agency to things that had no life in themselves.' Even the Pope has put in a good word for the old atheist - praising his 'great analytical skill'". (The Times, Financial crisis gives added capital to Marx's writings. October 20, 2008)*

** "No one claims that we're all Marxists now but I do think the old boy deserves some credit for noticing that 'it's the economy, stupid' and that many of the apparently omniscient titans who ascend the commanding heights of the economy are not so much stupid as downright imbecilic, driven by a mad exploitative greed that threatens us all. Marx's work is not holy writ, despite the strivings of some disciples to present it as such" (The Evening Standard, Was Marx Right All Along?. March 30, 2009).*

** "Karl Marx is back. That, at least, is the verdict of publishers and bookshops in Germany who say that his works are flying off the shelves" (The Guardian, Booklovers Turn to Karl Marx as Financial Crisis Bites in Germany. October 15, 2008).*

** "Policy makers struggling to understand the barrage of financial panics, protests and other ills afflicting the world would do well to study the works of a long-dead economist: Karl Marx. The sooner they recognize we're facing a once-in-a-lifetime crisis of capitalism, the better equipped they will be to manage a way out of it" (Bloomberg Business Week, Give Karl Marx a Chance to Save the World Economy. August 28, 2011).*

** Time Magazine showed Marx on its cover on February 2nd, 2009, and asked in respect to the crisis: "What would Marx think?" In the cover story, Marx was presented as the saviour of capitalism and was thereby mutilated beyond recognition: "Rethinking Marx. As we work out how to save capitalism, it's worth studying the system's greatest critic" (Time Magazine Europe, February 2nd, 2009).*

These news clippings indicate that with the new global crisis of capitalism, we seem to have entered new Marxian times. That there is suddenly a surging interest in Karl Marx's work is an indication for the persistence of capitalism, class conflicts, and crisis. At the same time, the bourgeois press tries to limit Marx and to stifle his theory by interpreting Marx as the new saviour of capitalism. One should remember that he was not only a brilliant analyst of capitalism, he was also the strongest critic of capitalism in his time: "In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time. Finally, they labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries. The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of all lands unite!" (Marx and Engels 1848/2004, 94).

In 1977, Dallas Smythe published his seminal article Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism (Smythe 1977), in which he argued that Western Marxism had not given enough attention to the complex role of communications in capitalism. 35 years have passed and the rise of neoliberalism resulted in a turn away from an interest in social class and capitalism. Instead, it became fashionable to speak of globalization, postmodernism, and, with the fall of Communism, even the end of history. In essence, Marxism became the blindspot of all social science. Marxist academics were marginalized and it was increasingly career threatening for a young academic to take an explicitly Marxist approach to social analysis.

The declining interest in Marx and Marxism is visualized in Figure 1 showing the number of articles in the Social Sciences Citation Index that contain one of the keywords Marx, Marxist, or Marxism in the article topic description and were published in the five time periods 1968-1977, 1978-1987, 1988-1997, 1998-2007, 2008-2011. Choosing these periods allows one to determine if there has been a change since the start of the new capitalist crisis in 2008 and also makes sense because social upheavals in 1968 marked a break that also transformed academia.

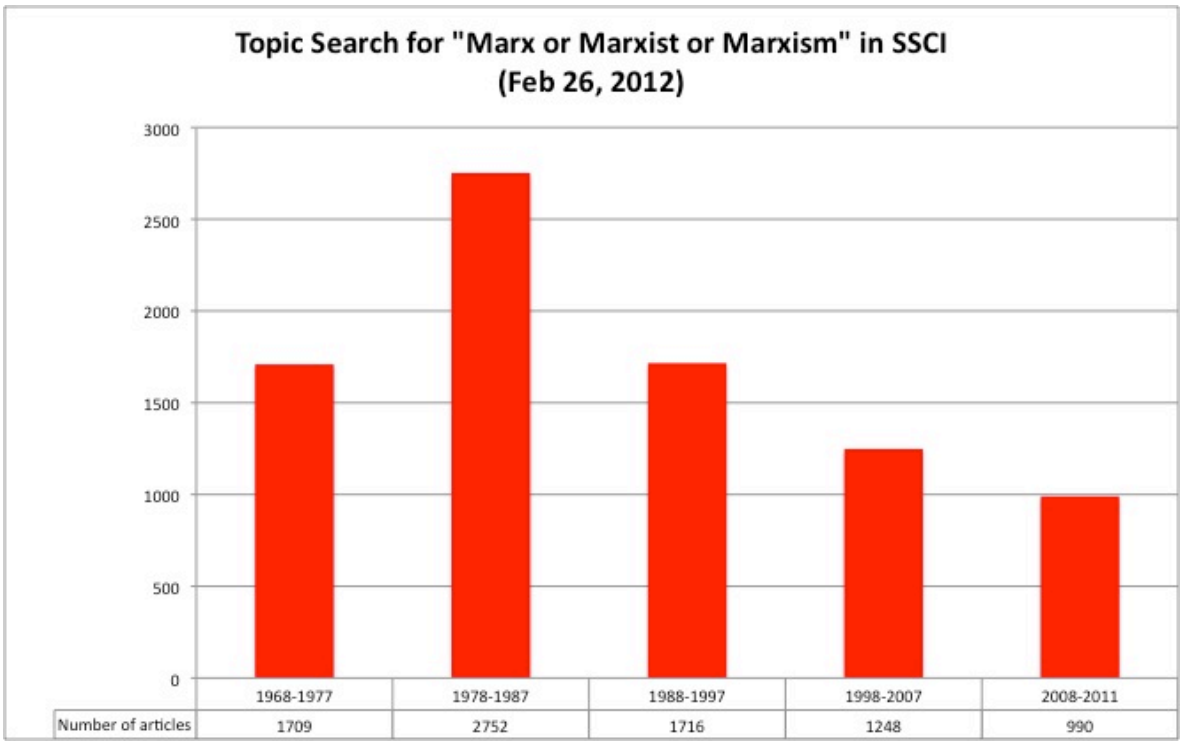


Figure 1: Articles published about Marx and Marxism that are listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index

Figure 1 shows that there was a relatively large academic article output about Marx in the period 1978-1987 (2752). Given that the number of articles published increases historically, interest in the period 1968-1977 also seems to have been high. One can observe a clear contraction of the output about articles focusing on Marx in the periods 1988-1997 (1716) and 1998-2007 (1248). Given the earlier increase of published articles, this contraction is even more pronounced. This period has also been the time of the intensification of neoliberalism, the commodification of everything (including public service communication in many countries), and a strong turn towards postmodernism and culturalism in the social sciences. One can see that the annual average number of articles published about Marxism in the period 2008-2011 (247.5) has increased in comparisons to the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

periods 1988-2007 (125 per year) and 1988-1997 (172 per year). This circumstance is an empirical indicator for a renewed interest in Marx and Marxism in the social sciences most likely an effect of the new capitalist crisis. The question is whether and how this interest can be sustained and materialized in institutional transformations.

Due to the rising income gap between the rich and the poor, widespread precarious labour, and the new global capitalist crisis, neoliberalism is no longer seen as common sense. The dark side of capitalism, with its rising levels of class conflict, is now recognized worldwide. Eagleton (2011) notes that never has a thinker been so travestied as Marx and demonstrates that the core of Marx's work runs contrary to common prejudices about his work. But since the start of the global capitalist crisis in 2008, a considerable scholarly interest in the works of Marx has taken root. Moreover, Žižek (2010) argues that the recent world economic crisis has resulted in a renewed interest in the Marxian critique of political economy.

Communism is not a condition in a distant future, it is rather present in the desires for alternatives expressed in struggles against the poverty in resources, ownership, wealth, literacy, food, housing, social security, self-determination, equality, participation, expression, healthcare, access, etc. caused by a system of global stratification that benefits some at the expense of many. It exists wherever people resist capitalism and create autonomous spaces. Communism is "not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself", but rather "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx and Engels 1844, 57). It is a revolution of the propertyless, by those who do not own the economy, politics, culture, nature, themselves, their bodies, their minds, their knowledge, technology, etc. Communism needs spaces for materializing itself as a movement. The contemporary names of these spaces are not Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, but rather Tahrir Square, Syntagma Square, Puerta del Sol, Plaça Catalunya, and Zuccotti Park. The context of contemporary struggles is the large-scale colonization of the world by capitalism. A different world is necessary, but whether it can be created is uncertain and only determined by the outcome of struggles.

The capitalist crisis and the resulting struggles against the poverty of everything are the context for this special issue. We have set ourselves the aim to contribute with this issue to the discussion about the relevance of Marx for analyzing communication and knowledge in contemporary capitalism.

Robert McChesney (2007, 235f, fn 35) has accurately noted that while Marx has been studied by communication scholars, "no one has read Marx systematically to tease out the notion of communication in its varied manifestations". He also notes that he can imagine that Marx had things to say on communication that are of considerable importance. The task of this special issue is to contribute to overcoming this lack of systematic reading of Marx on communication and media.

The articles in this issue, especially in the variety of topics grounded in Marxist theory and Marx's works, makes clear that Baudrillard was wrong to claim that "the Marxist theory of production is irredeemable partial, and cannot be generalized" to culture and the media and in also incorrect to insist that "the theory of production (the dialectical chaining of contradictions linked to the development of productive forces) is strictly homogenous with its object – material production - and is non-transferable, as a postulate or theoretical framework, to contents that were never given for it in the first place" (Baudrillard 1981, 214). Marshall McLuhan (1964/2001, 41) was wrong when he argued that Marx and his followers did not "understand the dynamics of the new media of communication". The special issue of *tripleC* on "Marx is Back: The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today" demonstrates the enormous importance of Marx's theory for Critical Communication Studies today. If one wants to critically study communication and to use that research for social change, then the work of Marx provides an essential building block. Moreover, the articles maintain that to critically examine communication we need to engage with the analysis and critique of capitalism, class, exploitation and with practical struggles for emancipation.

Our Call for Papers asked these questions:

* What is Marxist Media and Communication Studies? Why is it needed today? What are the main assumptions, legacies, tasks, methods and categories of Marxist Media and Communication Studies and how do they relate to Karl Marx's theory? What are the different types of Marxist Media/Communication Studies, how do they differ, what are their commonalities?

* What is the role of Karl Marx's theory in different fields, subfields and approaches of Media and Communication Studies? How have the role, status, and importance of Marx's theory for Media and Communication Studies evolved historically, especially since the 1960s?

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

* In addition to his work as a theorist and activist, Marx was a practicing journalist throughout his career. What can we learn from his journalism about the practice of journalism today, about journalism theory, journalism education and alternative media?

* What have been the structural conditions, limits and problems for conducting Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Research and for carrying out university teaching in the era of neoliberalism? What are actual or potential effects of the new capitalist crisis on these conditions?

* What is the relevance of Marxian thinking in an age of capitalist crisis for analyzing the role of media and communication in society?

* How can the Marxian notions of class, class struggle, surplus value, exploitation, commodity/commodification, alienation, globalization, labour, capitalism, militarism and war, ideology/ideology critique, fetishism, and communism best be used for analyzing, transforming and criticizing the role of media, knowledge production and communication in contemporary capitalism?

* How are media, communication, and information addressed in Marx's work?

* What are commonalities and differences between contemporary approaches in the interpretation of Marx's analyses of media, communication, knowledge, knowledge labour and technology?

* What is the role of dialectical philosophy and dialectical analysis as epistemological and methodological tools for Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Studies?

* What were central assumptions of Marx about media, communication, information, knowledge production, culture and how can these insights be used today for the critical analysis of capitalism?

* What is the relevance of Marx's work for an understanding of social media?

* Which of Marx's works can best be used today to theorize media and communication? Why and how?

* Terry Eagleton (2011) maintains that the 10 most commonly held prejudices against Marx are wrong. What prejudices against Marx can be found in Media and Communication Studies today? What have been the consequences of such prejudices? How can they best be contested? Are there continuities and/or discontinuities in prejudice against Marx in light of the new capitalist crisis?

A Marxist theory of communication should "demonstrate how communication and culture are material practices, how labor and language are mutually constituted, and how communication and information are dialectical instances of the same social activity, the social construction of meaning. Situating these tasks within a larger framework of understanding power and resistance would place communication directly into the flow of a Marxian tradition that remains alive and relevant today" (Mosco 2009, 44). A Marxist theory of communication sees communication in relation to capitalism, "placing in the foreground the analysis of capitalism, including the development of the forces and relations of production, commodification and the production of surplus value, social class divisions and struggles, contradictions and oppositional movements" (Mosco 2009, 94). Marxist Media and Communication Studies are not only relevant now, but have been so for a long time because communication has always been embedded into structures of inequality in class societies. With the rise of neoliberalism, Marxist communication theory has suffered a setback because it had become common to marginalise and discriminate against Marxist scholarship (see the contribution by Irfan Erdogan in this special issue) and to replace Marxism with postmodernism. So Marx was always relevant, but being Marxist and practicing Marxism were always difficult, in part because Marxist studies lacked a solid institutional base. What we can see today is a rising interest in Marx's work. The question is whether it will be possible to channel this interest into institutional transformations that challenge the predominant administrative character of media institutions and strengthen the institutionalization of critical studies of communication.

We can summarize the following areas of production, usage, and effects of media as they are found in Marx's works (for a detailed discussion of Marx on media communication in capitalism and explanation of a theoretical model, see: Fuchs 2010, 2011).

In commodity production:

- Specific: Media technology as rationalization technology in the media industry
- Specific: The process of capital concentration and centralization in the media sector
- Specific: The production of media capital, knowledge workers as wage labourers in media corporations
- General: Communication technologies for the spatial and temporal co-ordination of production in order to reduce constant and variable capital shares
- General: Communication technologies as means for the spatial expansion of capitalist produc-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tion

In commodity circulation:

- Specific: Transmission technologies as means of accumulating media infrastructure capital
- Specific: Media as carriers of advertisements
- General: Communication technologies as means for reducing the circulation and turnover time of capital
- General: Media as means and outcomes of the globalization of world trade
- General: Media as means of the spatial centralization of capital

In the circulation and reception of ideas:

- Media as carriers and circulators of ideologies

In the production, circulation, and reception of alternative media:

- Alternative media that are alternatively produced, distributed, and interpreted and function as means of class struggle and means of circulation of critical ideas

<table>
<tr><th>Circulation</th><th>Production</th><th>Circulation</th><th>Consumption</th></tr>
<tr><td>M – C (Mp, L)</td><td>.. P ..</td><td>C’ - M’</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Media Technology as Means of Rationalization: s/v↑</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>The process of capital concentration and centralization in the realm of the media</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Knowledge workers as wage labourers in media corporations</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Media as means of inter-organizational corporate communication and co-ordination: v↓, c↓</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Media for the spatial distribution and extension of capitalism</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Media as carriers of advertisements</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Transmission media as forms of capital</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Media and trade globalization</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Media and spatial centralization of capital</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td colspan="2">Media as carriers & diffusion channels of ideologies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Alternative media as negating forces in media production, circulation, and consumption</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1: A systematic account of the role of media in the Marxian circuit of capital.

The model in figure 1 summarizes the connection of four aspects of the media, i.e., four roles of the media in the capitalist economy:
1) the commodity form of the media,
2) the ideological form of the media,
3) media reception, and
4) alternative media.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

It focuses on the role of the media in the production, circulation, and consumption processes of the economy, not on the relations to the political system (state, civil society, laws, etc.) and cultural institutions (education, family, religion, etc.). Capital accumulation within the media sphere takes place in both the media content sphere and the media infrastructure sphere. These two realms together form the sphere of media capital. The Marxian circuit of capital is shown for each of the two realms, which indicates that they are oriented to capital accumulation.

The commodity hypothesis can be visualized as the following processes that are shown in figure 1: vertical and horizontal integration, media concentration, media convergence, media globalization, the integration of media capital and other types of capital, the rationalization of production, the globalization of production, circulation, and trade, and intra-company communication, advertising and marketing. The production of media content and the production of media technologies are shown as two different systems. They both belong to the media industry, but create different products. Processes of vertical integration make the boundaries between the two systems fuzzy. Concentration processes and horizontal integration, which are inherent features of capital accumulation, shape each of the two spheres. Media convergence is a specific feature of media infrastructure capital. The two realms together are factors that influence the globalization of the culture industry. The realm of the economy that is shown at the bottom right of figure 1 represents capital accumulation in non-media industries and services. It is partly integrated with the media sector due to corporate integration processes. Media technologies advance the rationalization of production in this realm as well as in the media content industry. Furthermore, they advance the globalization of production, circulation, and trade. These globalization processes are also factors that, in return, promote the development of new media technologies. Media technologies are also used for intra-company communication. Rationalization, globalization, and intra-company communication are processes that aim at maximizing profits by decreasing the investment cost of capital (both constant and variable) and by advancing relative surplus value production (more production in less time). The media content industry is important for advertising and marketing commodities in the circulation process of commodities, which is at the same time the realization process of capital in which surplus value is transformed into money profit.

The ideology hypothesis is visualized in figure 1 by media content capital and its relation to recipients. Media content that creates false consciousness is considered as ideological content. Media content depends on reception. The reception hypothesis is visualized in the lower left part of figure 1. Reception is the realm wherein ideologies are reproduced and potentially challenged.

Alternative media is a sphere that challenges the capitalist media industry. The alternative media hypothesis is visualized in figure 1 by a separate domain that stands for alternative ways of organizing and producing media whose aim is to create critical content that challenges capitalism. Media content depends on reception. Five forms of reception are distinguished in the left lower left part of figure 1. Reception is the realm where ideologies are reproduced and potentially challenged. In some types and parts of media content capital, capital is accumulated by selling the audience, at a rate determined by its demographic characteristics, as a commodity to advertising clients. Dallas Smythe (1977) spoke in this context of the audience commodity. As advertising profits are not a general feature of all media capital, there is a dotted line in figure 1 that signifies the audience commodity. In recent times, recipients have increasingly become an active audience that produces content and technologies, which does not imply a democratisation of the media, but mainly a new form of exploitation of audiences and users.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

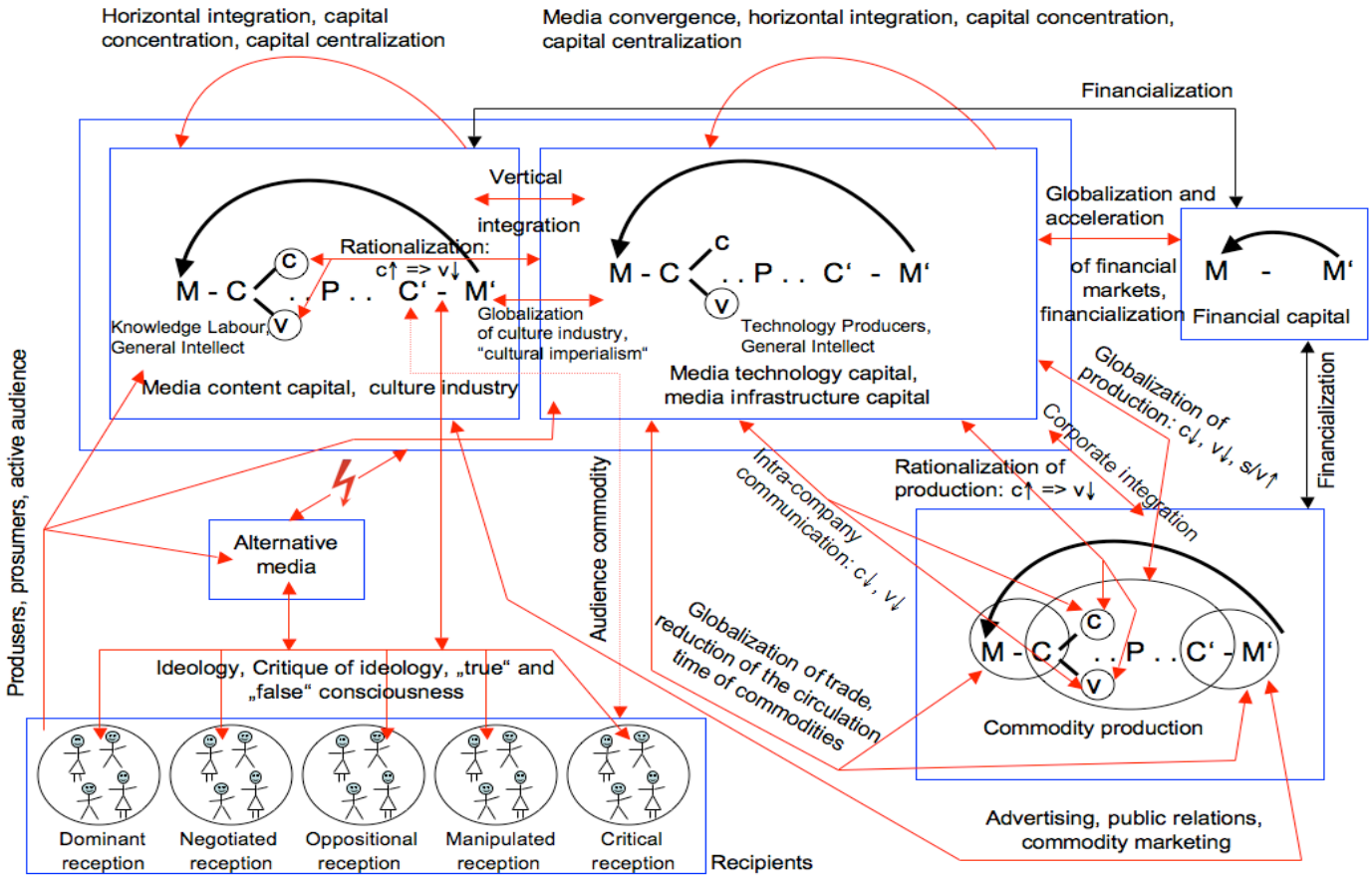


Figure 1: The processes of media production, circulation, and consumption in the capitalist economy.

The use value of media and media technologies lies primarily in their capacity to provide information, enable communication, and advance the creation of culture. In capitalist society, use value is dominated by the exchange value of products, which become commodities. When the media take on commodity form, their use value only becomes available for consumers through exchanges that accumulate money capital in the hands of capitalists. Media and technologies as concrete products represent the use value side of information and communication, whereas the monetary price of the media represents the exchange value side of information and communication. The commodity hypothesis addresses the exchange value aspect of the media. The ideology hypothesis shows how the dominance of the use value of the media by exchange value creates a role for the media in the legitimatization and reproduction of domination. The two hypotheses are connected through the contradictory double character of media as use values and as exchange values. The media as commodities are in relation to money use values that can realize their exchange value, i.e., their price, in money form. Money is an exchange value in relation to the media. It realizes its use value – i.e. that it is a general equivalent of exchange – in media commodities. Consumers are interested in the use value aspect of media and technology, whereas capitalists are interested in the exchange value aspect that helps them to accumulate money capital. The use value of media and technology only becomes available to consumers through complex processes in which capitalists exchange the commodities they control with money. This means that the use value of media and technology is only possible through the exchange value that they have in relation to money. Commodification is a basic process that underlies media and technology in capitalism. Use value and exchange value are "bilateral polar opposites" (MEW 13, 72) of media and technology in capitalist society. By the time media and technology reach consumers, they have taken on commodity form and are therefore likely to have ideological characteristics. The sphere of alternative media challenges the commodity character of the media. It aims at a reversal so that use value becomes the dominant feature of media and technology by the sublation of their exchange value. Processes of alternative reception transcend the ideological character of the media – the recipients are empowered in questioning the commodified character of the world in which they live.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx's analysis of the media in capitalism visualized in figure 1 can be summarized in the form of four major dimensions. The articles in this special issue are ordered along this categorization of the role of the media in capitalism.

1) Media and commodities:
capital accumulation, media technology industry, media content industry/cultural industry, digital media industry, media and financialization, media and globalization, audience commodification, media concentration, media convergence, etc

2) Media and ideology:
media manipulation, media propaganda filters, advertising, public relations, commodity marketing, cultural imperialism, etc

3) Media reception and use:
ideological reception, critical reception, critical media use, etc

4) Alternative media:
alternative media production spheres, alternative public spheres, media and social struggles, etc

The published and submitted contributions are predominantly in the areas of media and commodification, media and ideology, and alternative media. Media reception studies are not as well represented. This means that topics like the audiences' interpretation of reality TV, popular music, soap operas, sports, movies, quiz shows, or computer games are not so important for most contemporary Marxist media and communication scholars in comparison to topics like the exploitation of free labour on the Internet, the commodification of research and education, Internet ideologies, socialist struggles about the role of the media in various countries, the marginalization and discrimination of Marxists and Marxism in Media and Communication Studies, capitalist crisis and the media, communication labour, critical journalism, the socialist open access publishing, or alternative social networking sites (which are only some of the topics addressed in this special issue). This demonstrates three key points:

* In the current situation of capitalist crisis and exploding inequality, a focus on political economy topics, class struggle issues, the role of alternatives seems to be more important than the focus on cultural studies topics (like fan culture) that can easily be accommodated into capitalist interests and do not deal with the pressing problems such as precarious living conditions and inequalities in the world.

* Classical audience studies has to a certain extent been transformed into the study of the political economy of mediated play labour and media prosumption, which is an area in which the study of production, consumption and advertising converge. Marxist Media and Communication Studies have, as this special issue shows, welcomed this convergence and related topics have become an important topic of this approach. An important implication of this development is that the classical criticism that Marxist Media and Communication Studies is not particularly interested in reception and media consumption does not hold because the issue has been taken up to a great degree with the rise of consumption becoming productive, a development that has been started by the audience commodification typical of the broadcasting area and lifted to a new dimension of analysis by the rise of Internet prosumption.

* There is a pressing need for engaging with Marx and the critique of class and capitalism in order to interpret and change the contemporary world and contemporary media. Our published papers show a deep engagement with and care about Marx's theory and it is natural that they do not align themselves with research streams that are critical of or ignore Marxist studies. They are predominantly grounded in Critical Political Economy and Critical Theory.

The 28 papers published in this special issue show the crucial relevance of Marx today for coming to grips with the world we live in, the struggles that can and should be fought, and the role of the media in capitalism, in struggles against it, and in building alternatives. It is encouraging to see that there is a growing number of scholars, who make use of Marx's works in Media and Communication Studies today. Whereas Marx was always relevant, this relevance has especially not been acknowledged in Media and Communication Studies in recent years. It was rather common to misinterpret and misunderstand Marx, which partly came also from a misreading of his works or from outright ignorance of his works. Terry Eagleton (2011) discusses ten common prejudices against Marx and Marxism and shows why Marx was right and why these prejudices are wrong. We have added to the following overview a media and communication dimension to each prejudice. This communication dimensions point towards common prejudices against Marx within Media and Communication Studies. The papers in this special issue show that these prejudices are wrong and that using Marx and Marxian concepts in Media and Communication Studies is an important and pressing task today. As a summary of the results provided by the papers in this special issue, we counter each of the anti-Marxian prejudices with a counter-claim that is grounded in the analyses

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

presented in this special issue that show the importance of Marx for understanding society and the media critically.

1a) *Marxist Outdatedness!*
Marxism is old-fashioned and not suited for a post-industrial society.
1b) *Marxist Topicality!*
In order to adequately and critically understand communication in society, we need Marx.

2a) *Marxist Repression!*
Marxism may sound good in theory, but in practice it can only result in terror, tyranny and mass murder. The feasibility of a socialist society and socialist media are illusionary.
2b) *Capitalist Repression!*
Capitalism neither sounds like a good idea/theory nor does it work in practice, as the reality of large-scale inequality, global war, and environmental devestation shows. The feasibility of socialism and socialist media arises out of the crises of capitalism.

3a) *Marxism = Determinism!*
Marx believed in deterministic laws of history and the automatic end of capitalism that would also entail the automatic end of capitalist media.
3b) *Marxism = Dialectics and Complexity!*
Marxian and Hegelian dialectics allow us to see the history of society and the media as being shaped by structural conditioning and open-ended struggles and a dialectic of structure and agency.

4a) *Marxist Do-Goodism!*
Marx had a naïve picture of humanity's goodness and ignored that humans are naturally selfish, acquisitive, aggressive and competitive. The media industry is therefore necessarily based on profit and competition; otherwise it cannot work.
4b) *Capitalist Wickedness!*
The logic of individualism, egoism, profit maximization, and competition has been tried and tested under neoliberal capitalism, which has also transformed the media landscape and made it more unequal.

5a) *Marxist Reductionism!*
Marx and Marxism reduce all cultural and political phenomena to the economy. They do not have an understanding of non-economic aspects of the media and communication.
5b) *Marxist Complexity!*
Contemporary developments show that the economy in capitalism is not determining, but a special system that results in the circumstance that all phenomena under capitalism, which includes all media phenomena, have class aspects and are dialectically related to class. Class is a necessary, although certainly not sufficient condition for explaining phenomena of contemporary society.

6a) *Marxist Anti-Humanism!*
Marx had no interests in religion and ethics and reduced consciousness to matter. He therefore paved the way for the anti-humanism of Stalin and others. Marxism cannot ground media ethics.
6b) *Marxist Humanism!*
Marx was a deep humanist and communism was for him practical humanism, class struggle practical ethics. His theory was deeply ethical and normative. Critical Political Economy of the Media necessarily includes a critical ethics of the media.

7a) *The Outdatedness of Class!*
Marxism's obsession with class is outdated. Today, the expansion of knowledge work is removing all class barriers.
7b) *The Importance of Class!*
High socio-economic inequality at all levels of societal organisation is indicative of the circumstance that contemporary society is first and foremost a multi-levelled class society. Knowledge work is no homogenous category, but rather a class-structured space that includes internal class relations and stratification patterns (both a manager and a precariously employed call centre agent or data entry clerk are knowledge workers)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

8a) *Marxists Oppose Democracy!*
Marxists favour violent revolution and oppose peaceful reform and democracy. They do not accept the important role of the media for democracy.
8b) *Socialism=Democracy!*
Capitalism has a history of human rights violations, structural violence, and warfare. In the realm of the media, there is a capitalist history of media support for anti-democratic goals. Marxism is a demand for peace, democracy, and democratic media. Marx in his own journalistic writings and practice struggled for free speech, and end to censorship, democratic journalism and democratic media.

9a) Marxist Dictatorship!
Marxism's logic is the logic of the party that results in the logic of the state and the installation of monstrous dictators that control, monitor, manipulate and censor the media.
9b) Capitalist Dictatorship!
Capitalism installs a monstrous economic dictatorship that controls, monitors, manipulates and censors the media by economic and ideological means. Marxism's logic is one of a well-rounded humanity fostering conditions that enable people to be active in many pursuits and includes the view that everyone can become a journalist.

10a) Non-class-oriented New Social Movements!
New social movements (feminism, environmentalism, gay rights, peace movement, youth movement, etc) have left class and Marxism behind. Struggles for alternative media are related to the new social movements, not to class struggles.
10b) Class-oriented New New Social Movements!
The new movements resulting from the current crisis (like the Occupy movement) as well as recent movements for democratic globalization are movements of movements that are bound together by deep concern for inequality and class. Contemporary struggles are class struggles that make use of a multitude of alternative media.

1) Marx, the Media, Commodities, and Capital Accumulation

Nicole Cohen analyses the exploitation of freelancers in the cultural industries. She does not share the analysis that cultural work is beyond Marxian analysis, but rather argues that one needs Marx's theory for understanding precarious cultural labour. She maintains that cultural work in capitalism should not be separated analytically from the capitalism's universal structures of exploitation and from other forms of work. Moreover, exploitation and class are at the heart of labour process theory that remains well suited for understanding labour today. Concretely, she explores the role of unpaid and precarious labour in journalism.

Mattias Ekman discusses the role of the media and communication in capitalism's primitive accumulation. The author presents three examples: 1) The Swedish media representation of the global justice movement has focused on describing single acts of actual or potential violence and has rather ignored the political goals and causes of the struggles. 2) Swedish media and politicians presented the privatization of the Swedish telecommunication company Telia as an opportunity for the public to buy "people's shares". 3) The role of dispossession and violence in the commodification of users and their labour on social networking sites like Facebook.

Eran Fisher analyses the role of alienation and exploitation in audience commodification on Facebook. Building on the work of Jhally and Smythe, he introduces the notion of audience alienation, suggesting that audiences of commercial media are not only exploited, but also do not control content and content production. The author sees Facebook asboth means of production and communication, as both a technology and a medium. Facebook would result in the exacerbation of exploitation and the mitigation of alienation, whereas commercial mass media would be based on low exploitation and high alienation.

Richard Hall and Bernd Stahl discuss how innovations in the realm of digital technology impact the university. The authors stress that in neoliberal cognitive capitalism, the university has become an important site of production of surplus value and struggles. The context of the analysis is the intensified commodification of the university from the start of the current capitalist crisis. Emerging technologies are increasingly embedded, interconnected, invisible, adaptive, personalized, and pervasive and advance commodification and fetishization in the university.

William Hebblewhite discusses Raymond Williams' paper "Means of Communication as a Means of Production". The author argues that Williams established a reductionist culturalist con-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cept of the relation of base and superstructure and maintains that for overcoming the flaws identified in Williams' and Marx and Engels' concepts of base and superstructure, an engagement with Louis Althusser's theory is needed. Based on this theoretical framework, the author argues that the Internet is a means of production and communication and introduces the notion of promunication (production and communication).

Vincent Manzerolle and Atle Mikkola Kjøsen analyse changes in the cycle of capital accumulation that arise due to digitalization. The authors argue that personalization and ubiquitous connection are two important aspects of contemporary communicative capitalism that have impacted how the cycle of capital works. They point out that the critical analysis of capitalism and communication in capitalism should be based on the Marxian cycle of capital accumulation and that digital communication has resulted in a speed-up of the capital cycle and a facilitation of credit. They argue that the capital cycle is a communication process.

George Pleios focuses on how to conceptualize Marxist communication theory in the information society. He emphasizes that for Marx, communication in capitalism has a commodity aspect and ideological qualities and that communication is a productive force. Communication is not simply part of a superstructure, but integrated into class relations and the base. He observes this phenomenon in relation to *laissez faire* capitalism, monopoly capitalism, and symbolic capitalism. The convergence of leisure and work would further erase the boundaries between base and superstructure and between production and communication.

Robert Prey analyses the role of the network concept in contemporary capitalism's ideological structures. The author discusses Castells' analysis of power in the network society, highlighting the importance Castells gives to exclusion. Drawing on Boltanski and Chiapello, he stresses the problems of basing social criticism on the network metaphor, especially the lack of focus on class and exploitation. The author acknowledges the importance of networks in contemporary capitalism and argues for a combination of this approach with Marx's theory of exploitation.

Jernej Prodnik discusses the role of the commodity in critical media and communication studies. He gives an overview of how Marx discussed the notion of the commodity and points out that it is a category that has been relevant in all of Marx's works. Related concepts, such as commodity fetishism and the commodification of everything, are discussed. The author especially discusses the role of the commodity in Dallas Smythe's works and Autonomous Marxism and criticizes contemporary criticisms of Smythe's, especially the points made by Brett Caraway.

Jens Schröter examines the idea that the Internet would bring about frictionless capitalism. He stresses that the Internet became popular during the time of neoliberalism and was a technology into which hopes and ideologies of endless economic growth without crisis were projected. He stresses that the dot.com crisis of the early years of this century shattered this ideology. The Internet would instead be enmeshed in the contradiction between the forces and relations of production.

Andreas Wittel presents the foundations of a Marxist political economy of digital media that focuses on the concepts of labour, value, property, and struggle. The author introduces the notion of digital media as distributed media. He suggests that the means of information production have become more accessible in the digital age, whereas the capitalist class controls the means of information distribution. Wittel discusses free online labour, debates about the measurability of labour in the age of knowledge and digital media, challenges to property that began with file sharing, and struggles over the digital commons.

2) Marx and Ideology Critique

Pablo Castagno provides a Marxist framework for understanding the development of Argentina's political system and the role of media and media policies in various stages of this development. The author describes how the fascist military junta implemented neoliberalism that was later deepened by the Menem government (1989-2999). The author shows how political developments over the years influenced the role of the media in Argentina (fascist media control, neoliberal media privatization under Menen, Kirchnerismo's state-commercial nexus for establishing a national culture industry).

Irfan Erdogan analyses the role of communication in Marx's work and the role of Marx in communication studies. He conducted an empirical study of the role of Marx and Marxism in communication journals. He found that Marxian thinking has been systematically distorted and marginalized. One result is that while mainstream research tends to gently ignore Marx, alternative research traditions such as Cultural Studies tend to attack Marx and make uninformed claims. Erdogan's close study of Marx's writings shows that Marx considered communication as a crucial means of human life that has a class character in capitalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Christian Fuchs gives an overview of approaches to Critical Internet Studies and points out key concepts of this field. He argues that there is an ideological difference and struggle between "Critical" Cyberculture Studies and Critical Political Economy/Critical Theory of the Internet. He discusses the role of eleven Marxian concepts for Critical Internet Studies. Marxian concepts that have been reflected in Critical Internet Studies include: dialectics, capitalism, commodification, surplus value/exploitation/alienation/class, globalization, ideology, class struggle, commons, public sphere, communism, and aesthetics.

Christian Garland and Stephen Harper reflect on the role of the critique of neoliberalism and the critique of capitalism in Media and Communication Studies: They argue that there has been a shift from a conflict between Marxism and liberalism towards a dominance of liberal pluralism and a marginalization of Marxism. The critique of capitalism would have been replaced by a critique of neoliberalism that can be accommodated with liberal pluralism. The authors outline the limits of the critique of neoliberalism with two examples: the News of the World scandal and discussions about the causes of the economic crisis.

James McGuigan reviews the debate between Critical Political Economy and Cultural Studies in light of contemporary changes in capitalism. The author stresses that by criticizing economism, Cultural Studies has often eliminated economic criticism. He points out the role of "cool" in capitalist ideology. Consumer culture would be a particularly important expression of cool capitalism. The "coolness" of communication technology is especially important. The need for a Marxist analysis of contemporary culture and the media is ascertained in order to understand their ideological and economic roles.

Brice Nixon discusses the role of dialectical thinking for a critical political economy of the media and communication. The author argues that consciousness is a crucial issue for a critical political economy. He emphasizes the role of dialectical thinking for Marx as the foundation for Marx's opposition to classical political economy. Nixon points out that a dialectical method can be incorporated into Critical Media and Communication Studies through engagement with the works of critical theorists like Georg Lukács, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Henri Lefèbvre, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Raymond Williams.

Michelle Rodino-Colocino analyses Sarah Palin's politics and ideology from a Marxist-Feminist perspective. She argues that as part of the revival of Marxism, a revival of Marxist Feminism is needed. She maintains that there has been insufficient engagement with Marx and Marx's ideology concept in Media and Communication Studies. An engagement with Marx's ideology critique is needed today in Critical Media and Communication Studies as well as in Feminist Theory. The author shows how Palin appropriates and inverts the contents of Feminism for her own ideological political goals that serve anti-feminist purposes.

Gerald Sussman discusses the role of ideology and propaganda in the contemporary capitalist media economy. He argues that ideology and propaganda have become central productive forces and that we live in a propaganda society. The author describes the transformation of ideology under the neoliberal regime and in that part of the economy based on unpaid prosumer labour. The exploitation and surveillance of prosumers makes a Marxist theory of value crucial today. Digital media environments could also enable collective activities that resist capitalism.

3) Marx and Media Use

Brian A. Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase's contribution deals with the question of which methodology is needed for studying the digital labour and digital labour conditions of social media prosumers. The methodology for the suggested Workers' Inquiry 2.0 is grounded in Marx's questionnaire for the Workers' Inquiry and the Italian Autonomist Marxist co-research method. The authors point out with the example of research conducted about Flickr how the methodology of the Workers' Inquiry 2.0 works. They point out the importance of artefacts, communities, and produsers in the Workers' Inquiry 2.0.

Katarina Giritli Nygren and Katarina L Gidlund analyse the role of alienation in digital culture. They use Foucault's concept of pastoral power and Marx's notion of alienation. The authors draw on Foucault to describe the pastoral power of digital technology. It is a form of power that creates the illusion that digital technology allows individuality. Marx's notion of alienation is applied to the realm of digital technologies. Today traditional forms of alienation would be accompanied by digital alienation that is related to consumer culture, individualized self-expressions on platforms like Facebook, and a commodified Internet.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4) Marx, Alternative/Socialist Media and Social Struggles

Miriyam Aouragh provides a Marxist perspective on and analysis of social media in the Arab revolutions. The author connects the notion of mediation to Marxian theory and maintains that it is a connection between base and superstructure. The revolutions are framed in terms of capitalism, imperialism, and class. The author questions the Western-liberal framing of the revolutions and social media as Orientalism and presents a model of the revolution that situates social media in an online-offline dialectic of the revolutions.

Lee Artz analyses how 21st century socialism works in Venezuela and what the role of communication is in it. The public has the opportunity to discuss and influence all government proposals in public debates and social services were set up across the country. The author argues that Venezuela is a capitalist state with a socialist government. He analyzes the Venezuelan political economy of the media: More than 80% of the media are commercial in character. Community media and public service media oppose them. The author shows that Venezuela and Venezuelan media are in transition and have great potential for socialism.

Peter Ludes discusses the relevance of Marx's notion of a classless society. Based on a review of Marx's use of the term, he draws conclusions about the development of 20th century capitalism. He argues that the establishment of alternatives requires the networking of projects that start in the here and now. Ludes suggests updating Marx's notion of a classless society by engaging with the works of Norbert Elias. This would especially require taking into account the role of communication as well as civilizing and decivilizing processes when thinking about how to establish alternatives.

Vincent Mosco argues that the crisis of capitalism has resulted in a renewed interest in Marx and that it is therefore crucial to engage thoroughly with all of his work and to pay special attention to how it can help to illuminate a blindspot of Critical Media and Communication Studies, i.e., knowledge labour and media practice. He points out the importance of the discussion of information and the means of communication in the *Grundrisse* as well as the significance of Marx's journalistic practice as a political calling of considerable relevance for contemporary communication students and scholars, journalists, and knowledge workers.

Wilhelm Peekhaus analyses the political economy of academic journal publishing. He demonstrates how the exploitation of the free labour of academics, monopolization and capital concentration tendencies, and high journal prices coupled with declining library budgets shapes the this industry. He interprets capitalist academic publishing as a form of primitive accumulation and points out that open access publishing can pose a viable alternative. Open access would however have today certain limits that could only be overcome by an anti-capitalist open access movement that questions the capitalist character of academic publishing.

Sebastian Sevignani analyses the alternative social networking site Diaspora* in the context of discussions about privacy in capitalism. He stresses its connections to the free software movement and describes the origins of the privacy concept and its connections to the idea of private property. The author engages with the Marxist critique of the privacy concept, which has often been ignored by Marxist thinkers, and outlines the foundations of a socialist alternative. He applies this analysis to the case of Diaspora*.

Padmaja Shaw analyses the role of Marx's works on the press for contemporary politics in India. The author discusses the relevance of three aspects of Marx's works on the press: freedom of speech and censorship, the press as a part of free trade, and the role of media in bourgeois democracies. He stresses that on the one hand, there is a broad diffusion of left-wing voices in the Indian press and that, on the other hand, censorship and repression against the Left and Left journalism reign in the insurgent Red Corridor areas. The institutionalized Left would benefit by reflecting on Marx's press politics to better respond to this situation.

This special issue shows the importance of Marxist theory for Critical Media and Communication Studies today. It makes clear that Media and Communication Studies should not just be critical in character, but that we need a Marxist Theory and Marxist Studies of Media and Communication today. The interest in and quality of this special issue as well as the large interest in other related activities in Marxist Communication Studies (as e.g. the 4th ICTs and Society Conference: Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of Social Media. Uppsala University. May 2nd-4th, 2012. See: Fuchs 2012; and see also: http://www.icts-and-society.net/events/uppsala2012/), especially among PhD students and younger scholars, shows that Marx is back. The deep interest in Marx's works shows the unease about capitalism and capitalist communications and the desire for alternatives.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

References

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. St. Louis: Telos Press.

Eagleton Terry. 2011. *Why Marx Was Right*. London: Yale University Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. New Marxian Times. Reflections on the 4th ICTs and Society Conference "Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of Social Media". *tripleC – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 10 (1): 114-121.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Grounding Critical Communication Studies: An Inquiry into the Communication Theory of Karl Marx. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (1): 15–41.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (MEW). *Werke*. Berlin: Dietz.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1844. *The German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1848/2004. *The Communist Manifesto*. Peterborough: Broadview.

McChesney, Robert W. (2007). *Communication Revolution. Critical Junctures and the Future of Media*. New York: The New Press.

McLuhan, Marshall 1964/2001. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: Routledge.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage. 2nd edition.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-27.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2010. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso.

About the Authors/Editors

Christian Fuchs holds the chair professorship in media and communication studies at Uppsala University's Department of Informatics and Media. He is editor of triple and author of e.g. the books "Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age" (2008), "Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies" (2011), "Social Media. A Critical Introduction" (forthcoming).

Vincent Mosco is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Queen's University where he was Canada Research Chair in Communication and Society and head of the Department of Sociology. His most recent books include The Laboring of Communication (with Catherine McKercher, 2008), The Political Economy of Communication, second edition (2009), and Getting the Message: Communication Workers and Global Value Chains (edited with Ursula Huws and Catherine McKercher, 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Title image: U. Buman: Dollar – Das Kapital, http://www.digitalstock.de

Contents

127-140 *Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco*
Introduction: Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today.

Marx, the Media, Commodities, and Capital Accumulation

141-155 *Nicole S. Cohen*
Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation

156-170 *Mattias Ekman*
Understanding Accumulation: The Relevance of Marx's Theory of Primitive Accumulation in Media and Communication Studies

171-183 *Eran Fisher*
How Less Alienation Creates More Exploitation? Audience Labour on Social Network Sites

184-202 *Richard Hall and Bernd Stahl*
Against Commodification: The University, Cognitive Capitalism and Emergent Technologies

203-213 *William Henning James Hebblewhite*
"Means of Communication as Means of Production" Revisited

214-229 *Vincent Manzerolle and Atle Mikkola Kjøsen*
The Communication of Capital: Digital Media and the Logic of Acceleration

230-252 *George Pleios*
Communication and Symbolic Capitalism. Rethinking Marxist Communication Theory in the Light of the Information Society

253-273 *Robert Prey*
The Network's Blindspot: Exclusion, Exploitation and Marx's Process-Relational Ontology

274-301 *Jernej Prodnik*
A Note on the Ongoing Process of Commodification: From the Audience Commodity to the Social Factory

302-312 *Jens Schröter*
The Internet and "Frictionless Capitalism"

313-333 *Andreas Wittel*
Digital Marx: Toward a Political Economy of Distributed Media

Marx and Ideology Critique

334-348 *Pablo Castagno*
Critical Transitions: Marxist Theory and Media Democratization in Post-Neoliberal Argentina

349-391 *İrfan Erdogan*
Missing Marx: The Place of Marx in Current Communication Research and the Place of Communication in Marx's Work

392-412 *Christian Fuchs*
Towards Marxian Internet Studies

413-424 *Christian Garland and Stephen Harper*
Did Somebody Say Neoliberalism?: On the Uses and Limitations of a Critical Concept in Media and Communication Studies

425-438 *Jim McGuigan*
The Coolness of Capitalism Today

439-456 *Brice Nixon*
Dialectical Method and the Critical Political Economy of Culture

457-473 *Michelle Rodino-Colocino*
"Feminism" as Ideology: Sarah Palin's Anti-feminist Feminism and Ideology Critique

474-487 *Gerald Sussman*
Systemic Propaganda as Ideology and Productive Exchange

Marx and Media Use

488-508 *Brian A. Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase*
"A Workers' Inquiry 2.0": An Ethnographic Method for the Study of Produsage in Social Media Contexts

509-517 *Katarina Giritli Nygren and Katarina L Gidlund*
The Pastoral Power of Technology. Rethinking Alienation in Digital Culture

Marx, Alternative/Socialist Media and Social Struggles

518-536 *Miriyam Aouragh*
Social Media, Mediation and the Arab Revolutions

537-554 *Lee Artz*
21st Century Socialism: Making a State for Revolution

555-569 *Peter Ludes*

Updating Marx's Concept of Alternatives

570-576 *Vincent Mosco*
Marx is Back, But Which One? On Knowledge Labour and Media Practice

577-599 *Wilhelm Peekhaus*
The Enclosure and Alienation of Academic Publishing: Lessons for the Professoriate

600-617 *Sebastian Sevignani*
The Problem of Privacy in Capitalism and the Alternative Social Networking Site Diaspora*

618-632 *Padmaja Shaw*
Marx as Journalist: Revisiting the Free Speech Debate

tripleC 10(2): 127-140, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Introduction: Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today

Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco

Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, christian.fuchs@im.uu.se

Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, moscov@mac.com

Abstract: This paper introduces the overall framework for tripleC's special issue "Marx is Back. The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today". We point out why there is a return of the interest in Marx ("Marx is back") and why Marxian analysis is important for Critical Communication Studies today. We also provide a classification of Marxian dimensions of the critical analysis of media and communication and discuss why commonly held prejudices against what Marx said about society, media, and communication are wrong. The special issue shows the importance of Marxist theory and research for Critical Communication Studies today.

Keywords: Marx, Marxism, Marxist political economy of media and communication, critical communication studies, critical media studies, critical theory.

** "'Marx is fashionable again,' declares Jorn Schutrumpf, head of the Berlin publishing house Dietz, which brings out the works of Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels. Sales have trebled - albeit from a pretty low level - since 2005 and have soared since the summer. […] The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, gave him a decent review last month: 'Marx long ago observed the way in which unbridled capitalism became a kind of mythology, ascribing reality, power and agency to things that had no life in themselves.' Even the Pope has put in a good word for the old atheist - praising his 'great analytical skill'". (The Times, Financial crisis gives added capital to Marx's writings. October 20, 2008)*

** "No one claims that we're all Marxists now but I do think the old boy deserves some credit for noticing that 'it's the economy, stupid' and that many of the apparently omniscient titans who ascend the commanding heights of the economy are not so much stupid as downright imbecilic, driven by a mad exploitative greed that threatens us all. Marx's work is not holy writ, despite the strivings of some disciples to present it as such" (The Evening Standard, Was Marx Right All Along?. March 30, 2009).*

** "Karl Marx is back. That, at least, is the verdict of publishers and bookshops in Germany who say that his works are flying off the shelves" (The Guardian, Booklovers Turn to Karl Marx as Financial Crisis Bites in Germany. October 15, 2008).*

** "Policy makers struggling to understand the barrage of financial panics, protests and other ills afflicting the world would do well to study the works of a long-dead economist: Karl Marx. The sooner they recognize we're facing a once-in-a-lifetime crisis of capitalism, the better equipped they will be to manage a way out of it" (Bloomberg Business Week, Give Karl Marx a Chance to Save the World Economy. August 28, 2011).*

** Time Magazine showed Marx on its cover on February 2nd, 2009, and asked in respect to the crisis: "What would Marx think?" In the cover story, Marx was presented as the saviour of capitalism and was thereby mutilated beyond recognition: "Rethinking Marx. As we work out how to save capitalism, it's worth studying the system's greatest critic" (Time Magazine Europe, February 2nd, 2009).*

These news clippings indicate that with the new global crisis of capitalism, we seem to have entered new Marxian times. That there is suddenly a surging interest in Karl Marx's work is an indication for the persistence of capitalism, class conflicts, and crisis. At the same time, the bourgeois press tries to limit Marx and to stifle his theory by interpreting Marx as the new saviour of capitalism. One should remember that he was not only a brilliant analyst of capitalism, he was also the strongest critic of capitalism in his time: "In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time. Finally, they labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries. The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of all lands unite!" (Marx and Engels 1848/2004, 94).

In 1977, Dallas Smythe published his seminal article Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism (Smythe 1977), in which he argued that Western Marxism had not given enough attention to the complex role of communications in capitalism. 35 years have passed and the rise of neoliberalism resulted in a turn away from an interest in social class and capitalism. Instead, it became fashionable to speak of globalization, postmodernism, and, with the fall of Communism, even the end of history. In essence, Marxism became the blindspot of all social science. Marxist academics were marginalized and it was increasingly career threatening for a young academic to take an explicitly Marxist approach to social analysis.

The declining interest in Marx and Marxism is visualized in Figure 1 showing the number of articles in the Social Sciences Citation Index that contain one of the keywords Marx, Marxist, or Marxism in the article topic description and were published in the five time periods 1968-1977, 1978-1987, 1988-1997, 1998-2007, 2008-2011. Choosing these periods allows one to determine if there has been a change since the start of the new capitalist crisis in 2008 and also makes sense because social upheavals in 1968 marked a break that also transformed academia.

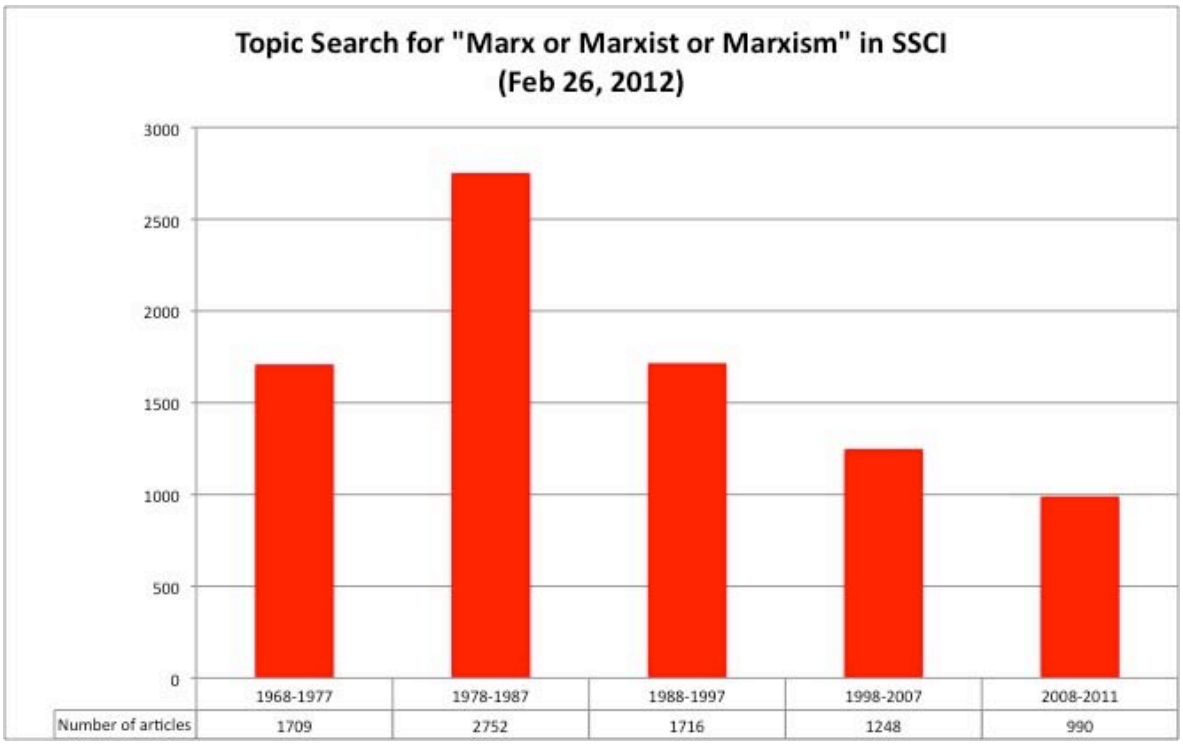


Figure 1: Articles published about Marx and Marxism that are listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index

Figure 1 shows that there was a relatively large academic article output about Marx in the period 1978-1987 (2752). Given that the number of articles published increases historically, interest in the period 1968-1977 also seems to have been high. One can observe a clear contraction of the output about articles focusing on Marx in the periods 1988-1997 (1716) and 1998-2007 (1248). Given the earlier increase of published articles, this contraction is even more pronounced. This period has also been the time of the intensification of neoliberalism, the commodification of everything (including public service communication in many countries), and a strong turn towards postmodernism and culturalism in the social sciences. One can see that the annual average number of articles published about Marxism in the period 2008-2011 (247.5) has increased in comparisons to the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

periods 1988-2007 (125 per year) and 1988-1997 (172 per year). This circumstance is an empirical indicator for a renewed interest in Marx and Marxism in the social sciences most likely an effect of the new capitalist crisis. The question is whether and how this interest can be sustained and materialized in institutional transformations.

Due to the rising income gap between the rich and the poor, widespread precarious labour, and the new global capitalist crisis, neoliberalism is no longer seen as common sense. The dark side of capitalism, with its rising levels of class conflict, is now recognized worldwide. Eagleton (2011) notes that never has a thinker been so travestied as Marx and demonstrates that the core of Marx's work runs contrary to common prejudices about his work. But since the start of the global capitalist crisis in 2008, a considerable scholarly interest in the works of Marx has taken root. Moreover, Žižek (2010) argues that the recent world economic crisis has resulted in a renewed interest in the Marxian critique of political economy.

Communism is not a condition in a distant future, it is rather present in the desires for alternatives expressed in struggles against the poverty in resources, ownership, wealth, literacy, food, housing, social security, self-determination, equality, participation, expression, healthcare, access, etc. caused by a system of global stratification that benefits some at the expense of many. It exists wherever people resist capitalism and create autonomous spaces. Communism is "not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself", but rather "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx and Engels 1844, 57). It is a revolution of the propertyless, by those who do not own the economy, politics, culture, nature, themselves, their bodies, their minds, their knowledge, technology, etc. Communism needs spaces for materializing itself as a movement. The contemporary names of these spaces are not Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, but rather Tahrir Square, Syntagma Square, Puerta del Sol, Plaça Catalunya, and Zuccotti Park. The context of contemporary struggles is the large-scale colonization of the world by capitalism. A different world is necessary, but whether it can be created is uncertain and only determined by the outcome of struggles.

The capitalist crisis and the resulting struggles against the poverty of everything are the context for this special issue. We have set ourselves the aim to contribute with this issue to the discussion about the relevance of Marx for analyzing communication and knowledge in contemporary capitalism.

Robert McChesney (2007, 235f, fn 35) has accurately noted that while Marx has been studied by communication scholars, "no one has read Marx systematically to tease out the notion of communication in its varied manifestations". He also notes that he can imagine that Marx had things to say on communication that are of considerable importance. The task of this special issue is to contribute to overcoming this lack of systematic reading of Marx on communication and media.

The articles in this issue, especially in the variety of topics grounded in Marxist theory and Marx's works, makes clear that Baudrillard was wrong to claim that "the Marxist theory of production is irredeemable partial, and cannot be generalized" to culture and the media and in also incorrect to insist that "the theory of production (the dialectical chaining of contradictions linked to the development of productive forces) is strictly homogenous with its object – material production - and is non-transferable, as a postulate or theoretical framework, to contents that were never given for it in the first place" (Baudrillard 1981, 214). Marshall McLuhan (1964/2001, 41) was wrong when he argued that Marx and his followers did not "understand the dynamics of the new media of communication". The special issue of *tripleC* on "Marx is Back: The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today" demonstrates the enormous importance of Marx's theory for Critical Communication Studies today. If one wants to critically study communication and to use that research for social change, then the work of Marx provides an essential building block. Moreover, the articles maintain that to critically examine communication we need to engage with the analysis and critique of capitalism, class, exploitation and with practical struggles for emancipation.

Our Call for Papers asked these questions:

* What is Marxist Media and Communication Studies? Why is it needed today? What are the main assumptions, legacies, tasks, methods and categories of Marxist Media and Communication Studies and how do they relate to Karl Marx's theory? What are the different types of Marxist Media/Communication Studies, how do they differ, what are their commonalities?

* What is the role of Karl Marx's theory in different fields, subfields and approaches of Media and Communication Studies? How have the role, status, and importance of Marx's theory for Media and Communication Studies evolved historically, especially since the 1960s?

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

* In addition to his work as a theorist and activist, Marx was a practicing journalist throughout his career. What can we learn from his journalism about the practice of journalism today, about journalism theory, journalism education and alternative media?

* What have been the structural conditions, limits and problems for conducting Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Research and for carrying out university teaching in the era of neoliberalism? What are actual or potential effects of the new capitalist crisis on these conditions?

* What is the relevance of Marxian thinking in an age of capitalist crisis for analyzing the role of media and communication in society?

* How can the Marxian notions of class, class struggle, surplus value, exploitation, commodity/commodification, alienation, globalization, labour, capitalism, militarism and war, ideology/ideology critique, fetishism, and communism best be used for analyzing, transforming and criticizing the role of media, knowledge production and communication in contemporary capitalism?

* How are media, communication, and information addressed in Marx's work?

* What are commonalities and differences between contemporary approaches in the interpretation of Marx's analyses of media, communication, knowledge, knowledge labour and technology?

* What is the role of dialectical philosophy and dialectical analysis as epistemological and methodological tools for Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Studies?

* What were central assumptions of Marx about media, communication, information, knowledge production, culture and how can these insights be used today for the critical analysis of capitalism?

* What is the relevance of Marx's work for an understanding of social media?

* Which of Marx's works can best be used today to theorize media and communication? Why and how?

* Terry Eagleton (2011) maintains that the 10 most commonly held prejudices against Marx are wrong. What prejudices against Marx can be found in Media and Communication Studies today? What have been the consequences of such prejudices? How can they best be contested? Are there continuities and/or discontinuities in prejudice against Marx in light of the new capitalist crisis?

A Marxist theory of communication should "demonstrate how communication and culture are material practices, how labor and language are mutually constituted, and how communication and information are dialectical instances of the same social activity, the social construction of meaning. Situating these tasks within a larger framework of understanding power and resistance would place communication directly into the flow of a Marxian tradition that remains alive and relevant today" (Mosco 2009, 44). A Marxist theory of communication sees communication in relation to capitalism, "placing in the foreground the analysis of capitalism, including the development of the forces and relations of production, commodification and the production of surplus value, social class divisions and struggles, contradictions and oppositional movements" (Mosco 2009, 94). Marxist Media and Communication Studies are not only relevant now, but have been so for a long time because communication has always been embedded into structures of inequality in class societies. With the rise of neoliberalism, Marxist communication theory has suffered a setback because it had become common to marginalise and discriminate against Marxist scholarship (see the contribution by Irfan Erdogan in this special issue) and to replace Marxism with postmodernism. So Marx was always relevant, but being Marxist and practicing Marxism were always difficult, in part because Marxist studies lacked a solid institutional base. What we can see today is a rising interest in Marx's work. The question is whether it will be possible to channel this interest into institutional transformations that challenge the predominant administrative character of media institutions and strengthen the institutionalization of critical studies of communication.

We can summarize the following areas of production, usage, and effects of media as they are found in Marx's works (for a detailed discussion of Marx on media communication in capitalism and explanation of a theoretical model, see: Fuchs 2010, 2011).

In commodity production:

- Specific: Media technology as rationalization technology in the media industry
- Specific: The process of capital concentration and centralization in the media sector
- Specific: The production of media capital, knowledge workers as wage labourers in media corporations
- General: Communication technologies for the spatial and temporal co-ordination of production in order to reduce constant and variable capital shares
- General: Communication technologies as means for the spatial expansion of capitalist produc-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tion

In commodity circulation:

- Specific: Transmission technologies as means of accumulating media infrastructure capital
- Specific: Media as carriers of advertisements
- General: Communication technologies as means for reducing the circulation and turnover time of capital
- General: Media as means and outcomes of the globalization of world trade
- General: Media as means of the spatial centralization of capital

In the circulation and reception of ideas:

- Media as carriers and circulators of ideologies

In the production, circulation, and reception of alternative media:

- Alternative media that are alternatively produced, distributed, and interpreted and function as means of class struggle and means of circulation of critical ideas

<table>
<tr><th>Circulation</th><th>Production</th><th>Circulation</th><th>Consumption</th></tr>
<tr><td>M – C (Mp, L)</td><td>.. P ..</td><td>C’ - M’</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Media Technology as Means of Rationalization: s/v↑</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>The process of capital concentration and centralization in the realm of the media</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Knowledge workers as wage labourers in media corporations</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Media as means of inter-organizational corporate communication and co-ordination: v↓, c↓</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Media for the spatial distribution and extension of capitalism</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Media as carriers of advertisements</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Transmission media as forms of capital</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Media and trade globalization</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Media and spatial centralization of capital</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td colspan="2">Media as carriers & diffusion channels of ideologies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Alternative media as negating forces in media production, circulation, and consumption</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1: A systematic account of the role of media in the Marxian circuit of capital.

The model in figure 1 summarizes the connection of four aspects of the media, i.e., four roles of the media in the capitalist economy:
1) the commodity form of the media,
2) the ideological form of the media,
3) media reception, and
4) alternative media.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

It focuses on the role of the media in the production, circulation, and consumption processes of the economy, not on the relations to the political system (state, civil society, laws, etc.) and cultural institutions (education, family, religion, etc.). Capital accumulation within the media sphere takes place in both the media content sphere and the media infrastructure sphere. These two realms together form the sphere of media capital. The Marxian circuit of capital is shown for each of the two realms, which indicates that they are oriented to capital accumulation.

The commodity hypothesis can be visualized as the following processes that are shown in figure 1: vertical and horizontal integration, media concentration, media convergence, media globalization, the integration of media capital and other types of capital, the rationalization of production, the globalization of production, circulation, and trade, and intra-company communication, advertising and marketing. The production of media content and the production of media technologies are shown as two different systems. They both belong to the media industry, but create different products. Processes of vertical integration make the boundaries between the two systems fuzzy. Concentration processes and horizontal integration, which are inherent features of capital accumulation, shape each of the two spheres. Media convergence is a specific feature of media infrastructure capital. The two realms together are factors that influence the globalization of the culture industry. The realm of the economy that is shown at the bottom right of figure 1 represents capital accumulation in non-media industries and services. It is partly integrated with the media sector due to corporate integration processes. Media technologies advance the rationalization of production in this realm as well as in the media content industry. Furthermore, they advance the globalization of production, circulation, and trade. These globalization processes are also factors that, in return, promote the development of new media technologies. Media technologies are also used for intra-company communication. Rationalization, globalization, and intra-company communication are processes that aim at maximizing profits by decreasing the investment cost of capital (both constant and variable) and by advancing relative surplus value production (more production in less time). The media content industry is important for advertising and marketing commodities in the circulation process of commodities, which is at the same time the realization process of capital in which surplus value is transformed into money profit.

The ideology hypothesis is visualized in figure 1 by media content capital and its relation to recipients. Media content that creates false consciousness is considered as ideological content. Media content depends on reception. The reception hypothesis is visualized in the lower left part of figure 1. Reception is the realm wherein ideologies are reproduced and potentially challenged.

Alternative media is a sphere that challenges the capitalist media industry. The alternative media hypothesis is visualized in figure 1 by a separate domain that stands for alternative ways of organizing and producing media whose aim is to create critical content that challenges capitalism. Media content depends on reception. Five forms of reception are distinguished in the left lower left part of figure 1. Reception is the realm where ideologies are reproduced and potentially challenged. In some types and parts of media content capital, capital is accumulated by selling the audience, at a rate determined by its demographic characteristics, as a commodity to advertising clients. Dallas Smythe (1977) spoke in this context of the audience commodity. As advertising profits are not a general feature of all media capital, there is a dotted line in figure 1 that signifies the audience commodity. In recent times, recipients have increasingly become an active audience that produces content and technologies, which does not imply a democratisation of the media, but mainly a new form of exploitation of audiences and users.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

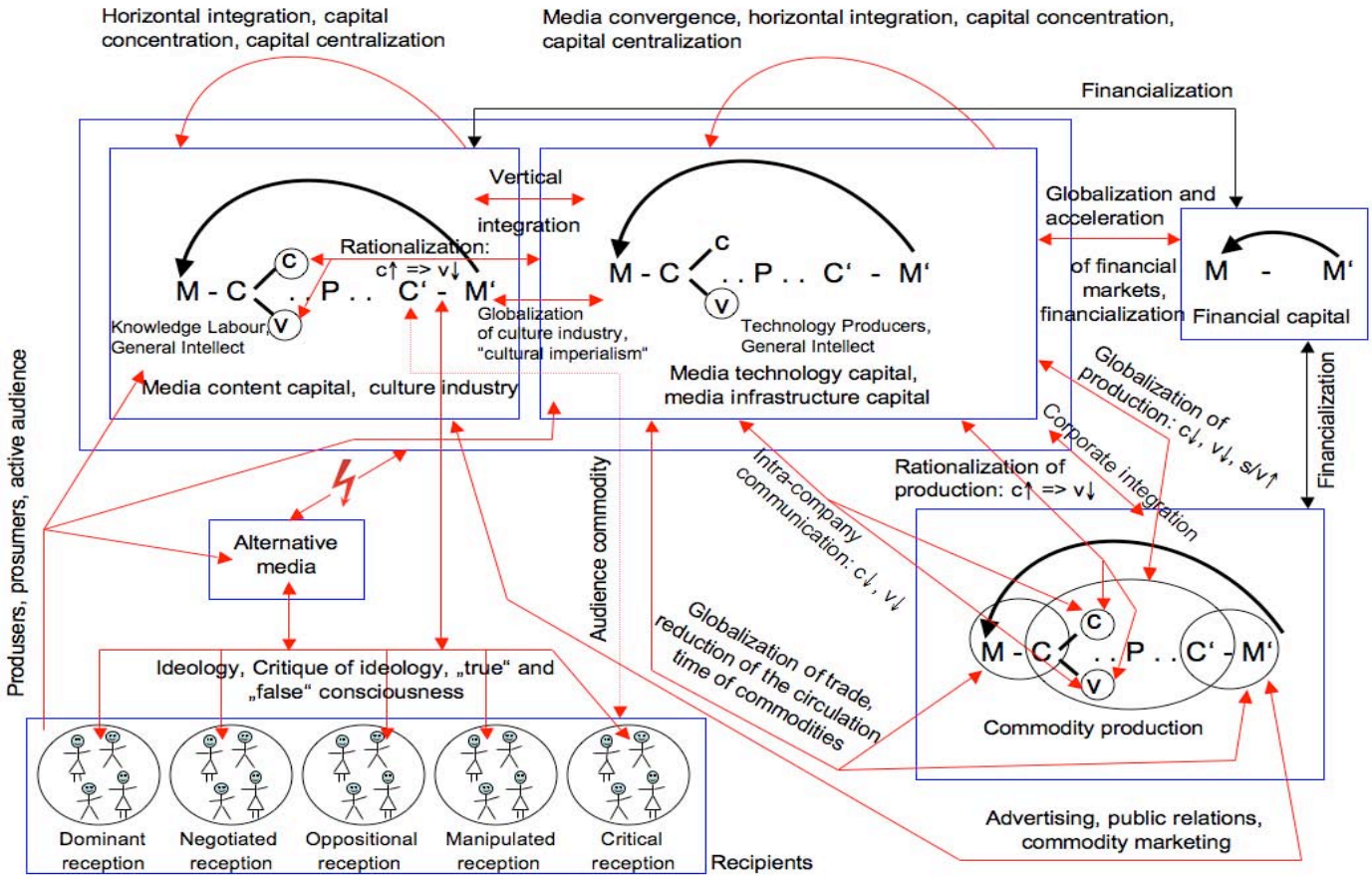


Figure 1: The processes of media production, circulation, and consumption in the capitalist economy.

The use value of media and media technologies lies primarily in their capacity to provide information, enable communication, and advance the creation of culture. In capitalist society, use value is dominated by the exchange value of products, which become commodities. When the media take on commodity form, their use value only becomes available for consumers through exchanges that accumulate money capital in the hands of capitalists. Media and technologies as concrete products represent the use value side of information and communication, whereas the monetary price of the media represents the exchange value side of information and communication. The commodity hypothesis addresses the exchange value aspect of the media. The ideology hypothesis shows how the dominance of the use value of the media by exchange value creates a role for the media in the legitimatization and reproduction of domination. The two hypotheses are connected through the contradictory double character of media as use values and as exchange values. The media as commodities are in relation to money use values that can realize their exchange value, i.e., their price, in money form. Money is an exchange value in relation to the media. It realizes its use value – i.e. that it is a general equivalent of exchange – in media commodities. Consumers are interested in the use value aspect of media and technology, whereas capitalists are interested in the exchange value aspect that helps them to accumulate money capital. The use value of media and technology only becomes available to consumers through complex processes in which capitalists exchange the commodities they control with money. This means that the use value of media and technology is only possible through the exchange value that they have in relation to money. Commodification is a basic process that underlies media and technology in capitalism. Use value and exchange value are "bilateral polar opposites" (MEW 13, 72) of media and technology in capitalist society. By the time media and technology reach consumers, they have taken on commodity form and are therefore likely to have ideological characteristics. The sphere of alternative media challenges the commodity character of the media. It aims at a reversal so that use value becomes the dominant feature of media and technology by the sublation of their exchange value. Processes of alternative reception transcend the ideological character of the media – the recipients are empowered in questioning the commodified character of the world in which they live.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx's analysis of the media in capitalism visualized in figure 1 can be summarized in the form of four major dimensions. The articles in this special issue are ordered along this categorization of the role of the media in capitalism.

1) Media and commodities:
capital accumulation, media technology industry, media content industry/cultural industry, digital media industry, media and financialization, media and globalization, audience commodification, media concentration, media convergence, etc

2) Media and ideology:
media manipulation, media propaganda filters, advertising, public relations, commodity marketing, cultural imperialism, etc

3) Media reception and use:
ideological reception, critical reception, critical media use, etc

4) Alternative media:
alternative media production spheres, alternative public spheres, media and social struggles, etc

The published and submitted contributions are predominantly in the areas of media and commodification, media and ideology, and alternative media. Media reception studies are not as well represented. This means that topics like the audiences' interpretation of reality TV, popular music, soap operas, sports, movies, quiz shows, or computer games are not so important for most contemporary Marxist media and communication scholars in comparison to topics like the exploitation of free labour on the Internet, the commodification of research and education, Internet ideologies, socialist struggles about the role of the media in various countries, the marginalization and discrimination of Marxists and Marxism in Media and Communication Studies, capitalist crisis and the media, communication labour, critical journalism, the socialist open access publishing, or alternative social networking sites (which are only some of the topics addressed in this special issue). This demonstrates three key points:

* In the current situation of capitalist crisis and exploding inequality, a focus on political economy topics, class struggle issues, the role of alternatives seems to be more important than the focus on cultural studies topics (like fan culture) that can easily be accommodated into capitalist interests and do not deal with the pressing problems such as precarious living conditions and inequalities in the world.

* Classical audience studies has to a certain extent been transformed into the study of the political economy of mediated play labour and media prosumption, which is an area in which the study of production, consumption and advertising converge. Marxist Media and Communication Studies have, as this special issue shows, welcomed this convergence and related topics have become an important topic of this approach. An important implication of this development is that the classical criticism that Marxist Media and Communication Studies is not particularly interested in reception and media consumption does not hold because the issue has been taken up to a great degree with the rise of consumption becoming productive, a development that has been started by the audience commodification typical of the broadcasting area and lifted to a new dimension of analysis by the rise of Internet prosumption.

* There is a pressing need for engaging with Marx and the critique of class and capitalism in order to interpret and change the contemporary world and contemporary media. Our published papers show a deep engagement with and care about Marx's theory and it is natural that they do not align themselves with research streams that are critical of or ignore Marxist studies. They are predominantly grounded in Critical Political Economy and Critical Theory.

The 28 papers published in this special issue show the crucial relevance of Marx today for coming to grips with the world we live in, the struggles that can and should be fought, and the role of the media in capitalism, in struggles against it, and in building alternatives. It is encouraging to see that there is a growing number of scholars, who make use of Marx's works in Media and Communication Studies today. Whereas Marx was always relevant, this relevance has especially not been acknowledged in Media and Communication Studies in recent years. It was rather common to misinterpret and misunderstand Marx, which partly came also from a misreading of his works or from outright ignorance of his works. Terry Eagleton (2011) discusses ten common prejudices against Marx and Marxism and shows why Marx was right and why these prejudices are wrong. We have added to the following overview a media and communication dimension to each prejudice. This communication dimensions point towards common prejudices against Marx within Media and Communication Studies. The papers in this special issue show that these prejudices are wrong and that using Marx and Marxian concepts in Media and Communication Studies is an important and pressing task today. As a summary of the results provided by the papers in this special issue, we counter each of the anti-Marxian prejudices with a counter-claim that is grounded in the analyses

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

presented in this special issue that show the importance of Marx for understanding society and the media critically.

1a) *Marxist Outdatedness!*
Marxism is old-fashioned and not suited for a post-industrial society.
1b) *Marxist Topicality!*
In order to adequately and critically understand communication in society, we need Marx.

2a) *Marxist Repression!*
Marxism may sound good in theory, but in practice it can only result in terror, tyranny and mass murder. The feasibility of a socialist society and socialist media are illusionary.
2b) *Capitalist Repression!*
Capitalism neither sounds like a good idea/theory nor does it work in practice, as the reality of large-scale inequality, global war, and environmental devestation shows. The feasibility of socialism and socialist media arises out of the crises of capitalism.

3a) *Marxism = Determinism!*
Marx believed in deterministic laws of history and the automatic end of capitalism that would also entail the automatic end of capitalist media.
3b) *Marxism = Dialectics and Complexity!*
Marxian and Hegelian dialectics allow us to see the history of society and the media as being shaped by structural conditioning and open-ended struggles and a dialectic of structure and agency.

4a) *Marxist Do-Goodism!*
Marx had a naïve picture of humanity's goodness and ignored that humans are naturally selfish, acquisitive, aggressive and competitive. The media industry is therefore necessarily based on profit and competition; otherwise it cannot work.
4b) *Capitalist Wickedness!*
The logic of individualism, egoism, profit maximization, and competition has been tried and tested under neoliberal capitalism, which has also transformed the media landscape and made it more unequal.

5a) *Marxist Reductionism!*
Marx and Marxism reduce all cultural and political phenomena to the economy. They do not have an understanding of non-economic aspects of the media and communication.
5b) *Marxist Complexity!*
Contemporary developments show that the economy in capitalism is not determining, but a special system that results in the circumstance that all phenomena under capitalism, which includes all media phenomena, have class aspects and are dialectically related to class. Class is a necessary, although certainly not sufficient condition for explaining phenomena of contemporary society.

6a) *Marxist Anti-Humanism!*
Marx had no interests in religion and ethics and reduced consciousness to matter. He therefore paved the way for the anti-humanism of Stalin and others. Marxism cannot ground media ethics.
6b) *Marxist Humanism!*
Marx was a deep humanist and communism was for him practical humanism, class struggle practical ethics. His theory was deeply ethical and normative. Critical Political Economy of the Media necessarily includes a critical ethics of the media.

7a) *The Outdatedness of Class!*
Marxism's obsession with class is outdated. Today, the expansion of knowledge work is removing all class barriers.
7b) *The Importance of Class!*
High socio-economic inequality at all levels of societal organisation is indicative of the circumstance that contemporary society is first and foremost a multi-levelled class society. Knowledge work is no homogenous category, but rather a class-structured space that includes internal class relations and stratification patterns (both a manager and a precariously employed call centre agent or data entry clerk are knowledge workers)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

8a) *Marxists Oppose Democracy!*
Marxists favour violent revolution and oppose peaceful reform and democracy. They do not accept the important role of the media for democracy.
8b) *Socialism=Democracy!*
Capitalism has a history of human rights violations, structural violence, and warfare. In the realm of the media, there is a capitalist history of media support for anti-democratic goals. Marxism is a demand for peace, democracy, and democratic media. Marx in his own journalistic writings and practice struggled for free speech, and end to censorship, democratic journalism and democratic media.

9a) Marxist Dictatorship!
Marxism's logic is the logic of the party that results in the logic of the state and the installation of monstrous dictators that control, monitor, manipulate and censor the media.
9b) Capitalist Dictatorship!
Capitalism installs a monstrous economic dictatorship that controls, monitors, manipulates and censors the media by economic and ideological means. Marxism's logic is one of a well-rounded humanity fostering conditions that enable people to be active in many pursuits and includes the view that everyone can become a journalist.

10a) Non-class-oriented New Social Movements!
New social movements (feminism, environmentalism, gay rights, peace movement, youth movement, etc) have left class and Marxism behind. Struggles for alternative media are related to the new social movements, not to class struggles.
10b) Class-oriented New New Social Movements!
The new movements resulting from the current crisis (like the Occupy movement) as well as recent movements for democratic globalization are movements of movements that are bound together by deep concern for inequality and class. Contemporary struggles are class struggles that make use of a multitude of alternative media.

1) Marx, the Media, Commodities, and Capital Accumulation

Nicole Cohen analyses the exploitation of freelancers in the cultural industries. She does not share the analysis that cultural work is beyond Marxian analysis, but rather argues that one needs Marx's theory for understanding precarious cultural labour. She maintains that cultural work in capitalism should not be separated analytically from the capitalism's universal structures of exploitation and from other forms of work. Moreover, exploitation and class are at the heart of labour process theory that remains well suited for understanding labour today. Concretely, she explores the role of unpaid and precarious labour in journalism.

Mattias Ekman discusses the role of the media and communication in capitalism's primitive accumulation. The author presents three examples: 1) The Swedish media representation of the global justice movement has focused on describing single acts of actual or potential violence and has rather ignored the political goals and causes of the struggles. 2) Swedish media and politicians presented the privatization of the Swedish telecommunication company Telia as an opportunity for the public to buy "people's shares". 3) The role of dispossession and violence in the commodification of users and their labour on social networking sites like Facebook.

Eran Fisher analyses the role of alienation and exploitation in audience commodification on Facebook. Building on the work of Jhally and Smythe, he introduces the notion of audience alienation, suggesting that audiences of commercial media are not only exploited, but also do not control content and content production. The author sees Facebook asboth means of production and communication, as both a technology and a medium. Facebook would result in the exacerbation of exploitation and the mitigation of alienation, whereas commercial mass media would be based on low exploitation and high alienation.

Richard Hall and Bernd Stahl discuss how innovations in the realm of digital technology impact the university. The authors stress that in neoliberal cognitive capitalism, the university has become an important site of production of surplus value and struggles. The context of the analysis is the intensified commodification of the university from the start of the current capitalist crisis. Emerging technologies are increasingly embedded, interconnected, invisible, adaptive, personalized, and pervasive and advance commodification and fetishization in the university.

William Hebblewhite discusses Raymond Williams' paper "Means of Communication as a Means of Production". The author argues that Williams established a reductionist culturalist con-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cept of the relation of base and superstructure and maintains that for overcoming the flaws identified in Williams' and Marx and Engels' concepts of base and superstructure, an engagement with Louis Althusser's theory is needed. Based on this theoretical framework, the author argues that the Internet is a means of production and communication and introduces the notion of promunication (production and communication).

Vincent Manzerolle and Atle Mikkola Kjøsen analyse changes in the cycle of capital accumulation that arise due to digitalization. The authors argue that personalization and ubiquitous connection are two important aspects of contemporary communicative capitalism that have impacted how the cycle of capital works. They point out that the critical analysis of capitalism and communication in capitalism should be based on the Marxian cycle of capital accumulation and that digital communication has resulted in a speed-up of the capital cycle and a facilitation of credit. They argue that the capital cycle is a communication process.

George Pleios focuses on how to conceptualize Marxist communication theory in the information society. He emphasizes that for Marx, communication in capitalism has a commodity aspect and ideological qualities and that communication is a productive force. Communication is not simply part of a superstructure, but integrated into class relations and the base. He observes this phenomenon in relation to *laissez faire* capitalism, monopoly capitalism, and symbolic capitalism. The convergence of leisure and work would further erase the boundaries between base and superstructure and between production and communication.

Robert Prey analyses the role of the network concept in contemporary capitalism's ideological structures. The author discusses Castells' analysis of power in the network society, highlighting the importance Castells gives to exclusion. Drawing on Boltanski and Chiapello, he stresses the problems of basing social criticism on the network metaphor, especially the lack of focus on class and exploitation. The author acknowledges the importance of networks in contemporary capitalism and argues for a combination of this approach with Marx's theory of exploitation.

Jernej Prodnik discusses the role of the commodity in critical media and communication studies. He gives an overview of how Marx discussed the notion of the commodity and points out that it is a category that has been relevant in all of Marx's works. Related concepts, such as commodity fetishism and the commodification of everything, are discussed. The author especially discusses the role of the commodity in Dallas Smythe's works and Autonomous Marxism and criticizes contemporary criticisms of Smythe's, especially the points made by Brett Caraway.

Jens Schröter examines the idea that the Internet would bring about frictionless capitalism. He stresses that the Internet became popular during the time of neoliberalism and was a technology into which hopes and ideologies of endless economic growth without crisis were projected. He stresses that the dot.com crisis of the early years of this century shattered this ideology. The Internet would instead be enmeshed in the contradiction between the forces and relations of production.

Andreas Wittel presents the foundations of a Marxist political economy of digital media that focuses on the concepts of labour, value, property, and struggle. The author introduces the notion of digital media as distributed media. He suggests that the means of information production have become more accessible in the digital age, whereas the capitalist class controls the means of information distribution. Wittel discusses free online labour, debates about the measurability of labour in the age of knowledge and digital media, challenges to property that began with file sharing, and struggles over the digital commons.

2) Marx and Ideology Critique

Pablo Castagno provides a Marxist framework for understanding the development of Argentina's political system and the role of media and media policies in various stages of this development. The author describes how the fascist military junta implemented neoliberalism that was later deepened by the Menem government (1989-2999). The author shows how political developments over the years influenced the role of the media in Argentina (fascist media control, neoliberal media privatization under Menen, Kirchnerismo's state-commercial nexus for establishing a national culture industry).

Irfan Erdogan analyses the role of communication in Marx's work and the role of Marx in communication studies. He conducted an empirical study of the role of Marx and Marxism in communication journals. He found that Marxian thinking has been systematically distorted and marginalized. One result is that while mainstream research tends to gently ignore Marx, alternative research traditions such as Cultural Studies tend to attack Marx and make uninformed claims. Erdogan's close study of Marx's writings shows that Marx considered communication as a crucial means of human life that has a class character in capitalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Christian Fuchs gives an overview of approaches to Critical Internet Studies and points out key concepts of this field. He argues that there is an ideological difference and struggle between "Critical" Cyberculture Studies and Critical Political Economy/Critical Theory of the Internet. He discusses the role of eleven Marxian concepts for Critical Internet Studies. Marxian concepts that have been reflected in Critical Internet Studies include: dialectics, capitalism, commodification, surplus value/exploitation/alienation/class, globalization, ideology, class struggle, commons, public sphere, communism, and aesthetics.

Christian Garland and Stephen Harper reflect on the role of the critique of neoliberalism and the critique of capitalism in Media and Communication Studies: They argue that there has been a shift from a conflict between Marxism and liberalism towards a dominance of liberal pluralism and a marginalization of Marxism. The critique of capitalism would have been replaced by a critique of neoliberalism that can be accommodated with liberal pluralism. The authors outline the limits of the critique of neoliberalism with two examples: the News of the World scandal and discussions about the causes of the economic crisis.

James McGuigan reviews the debate between Critical Political Economy and Cultural Studies in light of contemporary changes in capitalism. The author stresses that by criticizing economism, Cultural Studies has often eliminated economic criticism. He points out the role of "cool" in capitalist ideology. Consumer culture would be a particularly important expression of cool capitalism. The "coolness" of communication technology is especially important. The need for a Marxist analysis of contemporary culture and the media is ascertained in order to understand their ideological and economic roles.

Brice Nixon discusses the role of dialectical thinking for a critical political economy of the media and communication. The author argues that consciousness is a crucial issue for a critical political economy. He emphasizes the role of dialectical thinking for Marx as the foundation for Marx's opposition to classical political economy. Nixon points out that a dialectical method can be incorporated into Critical Media and Communication Studies through engagement with the works of critical theorists like Georg Lukács, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Henri Lefèbvre, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Raymond Williams.

Michelle Rodino-Colocino analyses Sarah Palin's politics and ideology from a Marxist-Feminist perspective. She argues that as part of the revival of Marxism, a revival of Marxist Feminism is needed. She maintains that there has been insufficient engagement with Marx and Marx's ideology concept in Media and Communication Studies. An engagement with Marx's ideology critique is needed today in Critical Media and Communication Studies as well as in Feminist Theory. The author shows how Palin appropriates and inverts the contents of Feminism for her own ideological political goals that serve anti-feminist purposes.

Gerald Sussman discusses the role of ideology and propaganda in the contemporary capitalist media economy. He argues that ideology and propaganda have become central productive forces and that we live in a propaganda society. The author describes the transformation of ideology under the neoliberal regime and in that part of the economy based on unpaid prosumer labour. The exploitation and surveillance of prosumers makes a Marxist theory of value crucial today. Digital media environments could also enable collective activities that resist capitalism.

3) Marx and Media Use

Brian A. Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase's contribution deals with the question of which methodology is needed for studying the digital labour and digital labour conditions of social media prosumers. The methodology for the suggested Workers' Inquiry 2.0 is grounded in Marx's questionnaire for the Workers' Inquiry and the Italian Autonomist Marxist co-research method. The authors point out with the example of research conducted about Flickr how the methodology of the Workers' Inquiry 2.0 works. They point out the importance of artefacts, communities, and produsers in the Workers' Inquiry 2.0.

Katarina Giritli Nygren and Katarina L Gidlund analyse the role of alienation in digital culture. They use Foucault's concept of pastoral power and Marx's notion of alienation. The authors draw on Foucault to describe the pastoral power of digital technology. It is a form of power that creates the illusion that digital technology allows individuality. Marx's notion of alienation is applied to the realm of digital technologies. Today traditional forms of alienation would be accompanied by digital alienation that is related to consumer culture, individualized self-expressions on platforms like Facebook, and a commodified Internet.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4) Marx, Alternative/Socialist Media and Social Struggles

Miriyam Aouragh provides a Marxist perspective on and analysis of social media in the Arab revolutions. The author connects the notion of mediation to Marxian theory and maintains that it is a connection between base and superstructure. The revolutions are framed in terms of capitalism, imperialism, and class. The author questions the Western-liberal framing of the revolutions and social media as Orientalism and presents a model of the revolution that situates social media in an online-offline dialectic of the revolutions.

Lee Artz analyses how 21st century socialism works in Venezuela and what the role of communication is in it. The public has the opportunity to discuss and influence all government proposals in public debates and social services were set up across the country. The author argues that Venezuela is a capitalist state with a socialist government. He analyzes the Venezuelan political economy of the media: More than 80% of the media are commercial in character. Community media and public service media oppose them. The author shows that Venezuela and Venezuelan media are in transition and have great potential for socialism.

Peter Ludes discusses the relevance of Marx's notion of a classless society. Based on a review of Marx's use of the term, he draws conclusions about the development of 20th century capitalism. He argues that the establishment of alternatives requires the networking of projects that start in the here and now. Ludes suggests updating Marx's notion of a classless society by engaging with the works of Norbert Elias. This would especially require taking into account the role of communication as well as civilizing and decivilizing processes when thinking about how to establish alternatives.

Vincent Mosco argues that the crisis of capitalism has resulted in a renewed interest in Marx and that it is therefore crucial to engage thoroughly with all of his work and to pay special attention to how it can help to illuminate a blindspot of Critical Media and Communication Studies, i.e., knowledge labour and media practice. He points out the importance of the discussion of information and the means of communication in the *Grundrisse* as well as the significance of Marx's journalistic practice as a political calling of considerable relevance for contemporary communication students and scholars, journalists, and knowledge workers.

Wilhelm Peekhaus analyses the political economy of academic journal publishing. He demonstrates how the exploitation of the free labour of academics, monopolization and capital concentration tendencies, and high journal prices coupled with declining library budgets shapes the this industry. He interprets capitalist academic publishing as a form of primitive accumulation and points out that open access publishing can pose a viable alternative. Open access would however have today certain limits that could only be overcome by an anti-capitalist open access movement that questions the capitalist character of academic publishing.

Sebastian Sevignani analyses the alternative social networking site Diaspora* in the context of discussions about privacy in capitalism. He stresses its connections to the free software movement and describes the origins of the privacy concept and its connections to the idea of private property. The author engages with the Marxist critique of the privacy concept, which has often been ignored by Marxist thinkers, and outlines the foundations of a socialist alternative. He applies this analysis to the case of Diaspora*.

Padmaja Shaw analyses the role of Marx's works on the press for contemporary politics in India. The author discusses the relevance of three aspects of Marx's works on the press: freedom of speech and censorship, the press as a part of free trade, and the role of media in bourgeois democracies. He stresses that on the one hand, there is a broad diffusion of left-wing voices in the Indian press and that, on the other hand, censorship and repression against the Left and Left journalism reign in the insurgent Red Corridor areas. The institutionalized Left would benefit by reflecting on Marx's press politics to better respond to this situation.

This special issue shows the importance of Marxist theory for Critical Media and Communication Studies today. It makes clear that Media and Communication Studies should not just be critical in character, but that we need a Marxist Theory and Marxist Studies of Media and Communication today. The interest in and quality of this special issue as well as the large interest in other related activities in Marxist Communication Studies (as e.g. the 4th ICTs and Society Conference: Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of Social Media. Uppsala University. May 2nd-4th, 2012. See: Fuchs 2012; and see also: http://www.icts-and-society.net/events/uppsala2012/), especially among PhD students and younger scholars, shows that Marx is back. The deep interest in Marx's works shows the unease about capitalism and capitalist communications and the desire for alternatives.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

References

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. St. Louis: Telos Press.

Eagleton Terry. 2011. *Why Marx Was Right*. London: Yale University Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. New Marxian Times. Reflections on the 4th ICTs and Society Conference "Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of Social Media". *tripleC – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 10 (1): 114-121.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Grounding Critical Communication Studies: An Inquiry into the Communication Theory of Karl Marx. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (1): 15–41.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (MEW). *Werke*. Berlin: Dietz.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1844. *The German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1848/2004. *The Communist Manifesto*. Peterborough: Broadview.

McChesney, Robert W. (2007). *Communication Revolution. Critical Junctures and the Future of Media*. New York: The New Press.

McLuhan, Marshall 1964/2001. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: Routledge.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage. 2nd edition.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-27.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2010. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso.

About the Authors/Editors

Christian Fuchs holds the chair professorship in media and communication studies at Uppsala University's Department of Informatics and Media. He is editor of triple and author of e.g. the books "Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age" (2008), "Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies" (2011), "Social Media. A Critical Introduction" (forthcoming).

Vincent Mosco is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Queen's University where he was Canada Research Chair in Communication and Society and head of the Department of Sociology. His most recent books include The Laboring of Communication (with Catherine McKercher, 2008), The Political Economy of Communication, second edition (2009), and Getting the Message: Communication Workers and Global Value Chains (edited with Ursula Huws and Catherine McKercher, 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 141-155, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation

Nicole S. Cohen

York University, Toronto, Canada, nscohen@yorku.ca

Abstract: This paper argues that Marxist political economy is a useful framework for understanding contemporary conditions of cultural work. Drawing on Karl Marx's foundational concepts, labour process theory, and a case study of freelance writers, I argue that the debate over autonomy and control in cultural work ignores exploitation in labour-capital relationships, which is a crucial process shaping cultural work. To demonstrate the benefits of this approach, I discuss two methods media firms use to extract surplus value from freelance writers: exploitation of unpaid labour time and exploitation of intellectual property through aggressive copyright regimes. I argue that a Marxist perspective can uncover the dynamics that are transforming cultural industries and workers' experiences. From this perspective, cultural work is understood as a site of struggle.

Keywords: Cultural work, Marx, political economy, freelancers, exploitation, labour process, copyright, precarity

Acknowledgements: Thank you to the reviewers for valuable comments and to Stephanie Ross, Leah Vosko, Patricia Mazepa, Greig de Peuter, and Matt Carrington for feedback on various versions of this paper.

1. Introduction: Missing Marx

Although once considered a blind spot of communication studies (Mosco and McKercher 2006, 493), cultural work has become a growing site of inquiry as scholars from a range of perspectives consider the work that goes into producing media, culture, and communication.[1] Marx, however, is largely missing from these studies. On the surface, Marx's inquiry into the characteristics of nineteenth-century industrialized production seems an outdated approach for understanding cultural work in the post-Fordist era. In *Capital* ([1867] 1990), Marx described conditions on the factory floor: the wage labourer with nothing to sell but that most peculiar of commodities, labour power, enters into a "free" relationship of exploitation with an employer, who sets the worker to work. Under the capitalist's control, the worker toils for a long stretch of the day. After earning more than what is necessary to reproduce her labour power, she generates surplus value, or profit, for capital. In the process, the worker becomes part of a generalized class of labourers. Her concrete labour is made abstract as it is sunk into standardized commodity production. Marx describes a subjugated, alienated worker who is interchangeable with other workers, rendered an anonymous input for production.

As work has moved out of the physical factory and into the studios, offices, and home-based workplaces of the creative economy, Marx's account has either been ignored or deemed outmoded. In many cases, cultural workers are understood to be unique kinds of workers and cultural work radically different from other kinds of work, removed from traditional labour-capital antagonisms (Caves 2000; Florida 2002; Deuze 2007; Christopherson 2009). In more critical accounts, Marx is dismissed as reductive because he does not attend to workers' agency or subjectivity (Banks 2007; Conor 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). The most prevalent critique is of Marx's theory of

[1] Definitions are contentious in studies of work and labour in the communication and cultural industries. In this paper, by cultural workers, I refer to people who work in the cultural industries, or those industries that generate and circulate commodities that "influence on our understanding of the world" and "produce social meaning" (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 3, 12). Banks (2007, 2) defines the cultural industries as "those involved in the production of 'aesthetic' or 'symbolic' goods and services; that is, commodities whose core value is derived from their function as carriers of meaning in the form of images, symbols, signs and sounds". I use the term culture in order to speak to the issues that arise from the association of this work with creativity and art. Precisely which sectors count as cultural industries varies. Statistics Canada (2012), for example, includes a range of occupations, from librarians and curators to writers, artists, and technical occupations in film and broadcasting. This perspective, while still somewhat broad, is useful because it views the character of cultural work through an understanding of the specificities of the industries in which it is performed rather than through the content of the work. There is something distinctive about cultural goods and their consumption that can explain why cultural production is organized in particular ways (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 101; Miège 1989; Garnham 1997). This avoids, for example, attributing experiences of cultural workers to personal character traits, which is part of the argument I develop in this paper. The term "creative labour", for example, draws attention to qualities specific to a person (Smith and McKinlay 2009a, 3), whereas I argue that the organization of cultural production has a structural effect on workers' experiences, and freelance writers' labour experiences flow directly from the logics of the industry in which they work.

alienation, which describes the worker as separated from control of the labour process, from the products she creates, from other workers, and from her own human essence (Marx [1844] 1978a). For example, Mark Banks (2007, 11) critiques a vision of cultural workers as "condemned to serve as alienated labour […] assumed to be devoid of active subjectivity and suppressed 'from above' by managers and owners." Cultural work is more often described as the antithesis of alienation: as social and collaborative work that grants workers relative autonomy in the labour process and facilitates self-expression and opportunities to engage in total human activity. Cultural workers feel great attachment to the products they create, particularly when these products carry a worker's name, such as a novel or a film. It is difficult to reconcile Marx's interpretation of work as an alien power, "not voluntary, but coerced" (Marx [1844] 1978a, 74), with conceptions of cultural work as highly desirable and glamourous.[2]

In a position I review in greater detail below, critical theorists argue that that the specificities of cultural commodities require that workers at the idea-creation stage of production be granted relative autonomy in the labour process (Ryan 1992; Banks 2010). Relative autonomy enables some cultural workers to enjoy more time, autonomy, and resources than other workers are granted, which diminishes experiences of alienation (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 70). Although relative autonomy is always tenuous and negotiated, this arrangement has led to arguments that cultural work should be understood as a potential site of "good work" or as work that grants opportunities to produce "'radical' autonomous critique" even within the confines of capitalism (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Banks 2010, 252). Contemporary conditions of cultural production, however, are undermining relative autonomy. Cultural workers are experiencing declining material conditions and intensifying precarity, defined as "intermittent employment and radical uncertainty about the future" or "financial and existential insecurity" (Ross 2009, 4; Brophy and de Peuter 2007, 180). Indeed, precarity has become a central feature of cultural work. Although a variety of interdisciplinary approaches are necessary for thinking through the complexities of cultural work – which can be simultaneously precarious and satisfying, risky and rewarding – Marx's understanding of the inner logic of work provides a foundational understanding of the structural forces giving form to cultural work.

Marx's foundational concepts[3] bring useful insights to bear on investigations of the transformations in work and workers' lives. In what follows, I argue that a dynamic Marxist political economy approach can account for the processes, practices, and structures that have resulted in the increasing precarization of cultural work. In particular, exploitation remains the key process driving transformations in the cultural industries and can account for the ways cultural workers' relative autonomy is being undermined. To demonstrate this, I draw on examples from an ongoing case study of freelance writers, a growing segment of the Canadian media labour force[4]. As freelancers are increasingly learning, stepping out of an employment relationship (or being denied one, as is rapidly becoming the norm) does not mean an escape from exploitation or labour-capital antagonisms. Whereas capital has historically increased surplus value by extending the working day and intensifying production (Marx [1867] 1990, 645), corporations that rely on freelance labour have developed alternate methods of extracting surplus value from workers. For writers, these methods include an increase in unpaid labour time and the aggressive pursuit of copyrights.

A Marxist political economy that is process-oriented, historical, and attentive to workers' agency and desires for autonomy provides insights into current conditions. Studies of cultural work can benefit from a materialist approach that understands work in these industries in relation to dynamics of capitalism and an approach that positions cultural work as a site of struggle. Many accept precarious conditions as the new reality that media workers in volatile industries must consent and adapt to, including industry, the state, training institutes, scholars, and workers themselves (McRobbie 2002; Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2007, 207). A Marxist approach disrupts this mindset to uncover dynamic processes that reveal a deeper understanding of the nature of cultural work and how it has evolved. In what follows, I outline a Marxist approach to cultural work and discuss the challenges and possibilities for considering cultural work through the lens of labour process theory. I then introduce a case study of freelance writers and examine dynamics of exploitation of

[2] In *Capital*, Marx describes alienation not as a subjective experience, but in an objective sense, as a way of being under a mode of production organized around private property and waged labour. For Marx, workers are alienated because they do not own the means of production and must to sell their labour power to survive.

[3] Other aspects of Marx's thought are useful for understanding the character of cultural labour, particularly his writing in *The Grundrisse*, which has been taken up by autonomist Marxists to interrogate the way contemporary capital incorporates general intellect, and workers' affect and personalities into the accumulation process on an unprecedented scale. In this paper, however, I want to focus on Marx's "old" concepts (Huws 2003, 135), which receive less attention in communication and cultural studies.

[4] This study is based on a qualitative survey of 200 freelance writers across Canada and interviews with representatives of freelance writer organizations. Unless otherwise cited, all quotes in this paper were provided by writers who participated anonymously in my survey.

unpaid labour time and copyright. I conclude with a discussion of how positioning cultural work as a site of struggle reveals possibilities for transformation.

2. Back to Marx: A Political Economy of Cultural Work

A Marxist political economy of cultural work is concerned with the dynamics of the labour-capital relation, tensions and contradictions that structure this relationship, struggles over control and exploitation, and with questions of power and resistance. This approach flows from an understanding that these practices and processes are situated within a particular historical context: capitalist commodity production, under which those who do not own the means of production must sell their labour power to earn a living, thus engaging in a consensual relationship of exploitation of surplus value. Countering the rejection of Marxism as reductive, David Harvey (1996, 49) argues that Marx must be understood as a dialectical thinker concerned with "processes, flows, fluxes, and relations" rather than an analyst of structures and things. Marx uncovers the processes that constitute and sustain capitalism (ibid., 50) and accounts for "unfolding and dynamic relations between elements within a capitalist system" (Harvey 2010, 12). His concepts capture the dynamic relations and contradictions propelling the change and instability inherent to the process of capital accumulation (Harvey 1996, 54).

A Marxist political economic analysis of cultural work speaks to the historical developments of cultural industries, which did not emerge fully formed but rather are the result of contestation about how to produce culture and how to organize work. A historical, process-oriented perspective reveals how taken-for-granted characteristics of cultural work – its volatile, project-based, precarious nature – are often the result of transformations in media and cultural industries that have occurred alongside shifting dynamics of capitalism. Most recently, this shift has been a transformation from Fordist mass production to a flexible accumulation regime[5] organized around lean production, information communication technologies, and deregulated and flexible labour markets (Moody 1997; Albo 2010). In this context, cultural industries have undergone significant change, which shapes workers' experiences (ILO 2000; Gough-Yates 2003; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Deuze and Fortunati 2011). For example, it is widely accepted that workers in cultural industries have "boundaryless" or "portfolio careers", which means they perform work for multiple engagers on a project basis, often simultaneously (Leadbeater and Oakley 2005; Hartley 2005). However, the portfolio nature of careers is more often described as an inherent trait of cultural workers themselves and less often as a coping strategy to deal with work made intermittent and precarious – a decidedly less glamorous view, but one that links work arrangements to broader political economic dynamics. The role of capitalism in shaping cultural work and the resulting power relations are obscured in many accounts of cultural work and directly situating cultural work in capitalist production relations reaffirms a materialist approach to the study of media, culture, and communication.

Marx is often overlooked in studies of cultural work because he did not attend to workers' subjectivity, and subjectivity is a key component of cultural work, which "is first and foremost about communicating meaning and very often also about identification and pleasure" (McGuigan 2010, 326). Indeed, subjectivity is a crucial component of all types of work, especially now that contemporary capitalism increasingly requires the incorporation of workers' subjectivities into production (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009, 4). Subjectivity is important for considering the limits of capital's ability to contain cultural workers' resistance and for considering how and why cultural workers choose to collectively organize in particular ways (de Peuter 2011; N. Cohen 2011). However, as Harvey (2006, 113) argues, it is difficult to understand current experiences of cultural work *primarily* through workers' subjective experiences of labour. It is first critical to understand the objective conditions of that labour, or, "what it is that workers are being forced to cope *with* and to defend *against*; to come to terms with the manifest forces that impinge upon them at every turn" (ibid., emphasis in original).

This approach stems from Marx's ([1852] 1978b, 595) assertion that people "make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances of their own choosing, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past". Of course cultural work holds potential to be fulfilling and provide a sense of creative autonomy, if

[5] Harvey (1990, 147) uses the term flexible accumulation to describe the regime of accumulation that has followed the gradual shift from Fordism in the early 1970s, characterized by flexible labour markets, labour processes, and consumption patterns, as well as the emergence of new technologies and financial services. Vosko (2010, 89) argues that this concept is preferable to terms such as post-Fordism because it emphasizes "continuity through change," or the "continuation of aspects of the system of mass production associated with Fordism alongside the expansion of new productive technologies and greater specialization" (Vosko 2000, 27).

indicated just by the increase in numbers of cultural workers, the expansion of education and training programs, and fierce competition for work that is generally insecure and low paid, or not paid at all (Hill and Capriotti 2009; Perlin 2011; Lacey 2011). To understand why work is experienced in particular ways requires broadening the focus from individual experiences to consider cultural workers as part of a class of workers struggling over the terms of the commodification of their labour power. The Marxist approach positions workers as active subjects engaged in a dynamic process of production with contested power relations, not simply as "brutalized and exploited workers" (Conor 2010, 31).

To maintain a connection to the broader social totality and the conditions of labour under capitalism, Marxist political economy avoids setting cultural workers apart as wholly unique. Mike Wayne (2003), for example, draws out Marx's relational conception of the connections between all workers under capitalism, conceived through the lens of class as a social relationship. Wayne acknowledges the "wider social conditions of creative and intellectual labour as a collective relationship occupying a contradictory position between capital and the 'traditional' working class" (7). He draws on Erik Olin Wright's (1978) theorization of the class character of intellectuals – defined as "a category of people…whose activity is primarily that of elaborating and disseminating ideas" (192) – in advanced capitalist societies. Wright argues that because intellectual workers do not control the labour of others nor maintain "real control over much of their own labour process", these workers "typically occupy a contradictory class location between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie at the economic level and between the working class and the bourgeoisie at the ideological level" (106, 204). Cultural workers occupy a contradictory class location because they are integrated into capitalism yet differentiated from the working class by "cultural privileges, relative workplace independence and (usually) by remuneration levels", but they are not capitalists: their "status as labour reasserts itself whenever [these workers] are subject to similar processes of exploitation and proletarianization as the working class below them" (Wayne 2003, 23). As I will demonstrate, cultural workers' status as labour is reasserting itself at a rapid pace.

Although there are important differences between workers, these differences are not absolute. Rather, workers in various sectors and occupations can be understood as different parts of a social and economic class that must sell its labour power to survive (Wayne 2003; Smith and McKinlay 2009a). Whereas capital seeks to establish a hierarchy between mental and manual labour, Marx emphasized the process "by which capital develops a socially unified labour capacity in which particular roles represent only a limb of the total labourer", while all work under capitalism is submitted to generalized exploitation (Wayne 2003, 15). This understanding of cultural work retains a notion of labour-capital antagonisms and of class struggle, and so can account for transformations in media forms, technology, and business models. Capital's "immanent drive" to increase surplus value by cheapening the cost of labour (Marx [1867] 1990, 437) clashes with workers' desires to pursue meaningful work, to be paid decently for their labour power, and to be able to sustain themselves.

A Marxist conception of class avoids setting cultural workers apart as exceptional types of workers. It refuses the tendency to understand cultural workers' actions as motivated by artistic temperament, personality, and by an insatiable "desire to create", making links instead to the political economic context in which they work (Caves 2000, 3; Christopherson 2009, 74). The nature of the market economy, regulatory frameworks, state and employer policies, the organization of industries, wages, and access to union protection, for example, influence workers' actions and experiences. For a full understanding of cultural work, research should integrate an understanding of "enduring features" of cultural work, such as risk and uncertainty, with historical analysis of the political economic context structuring these dynamics (Christopherson 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Miège 1989).

Key to this analysis is Marx's concept of exploitation, which occurs when one group (workers) produces a surplus that is controlled by another (capitalists) (Himmelwit 1983a, 157). Under capitalism, exploitation occurs through the extraction of surplus value, which Marx viewed as arising from the division of the working day into two parts: during the first part, the worker spends socially necessary labour time producing the equivalent of her wage; during the second, the worker spends surplus labour time producing profit for the capitalist (1983b, 474). It is this process of exploiting surplus value that drives capital accumulation and class conflict. As Susan Himmelwit (ibid.) writes: "the history of capitalist production can be seen as the history of struggle over attempts by capital to increase, and attempts by the working class to resist increases in, the rate of surplus value".

Exploitation is a dynamic concept. It links antagonism and resistance: those who exploit workers are also dependent on workers to realize surplus value, which gives workers power, an "inherent capacity to resist" (Wright 1997, 35). The process of exploitation includes worker agency, resistance, and a desire for autonomous forms of work. Autonomist Marxism, which theorizes capital

as always confronting and reacting to workers' resistance, provides a framework for this approach (Cleaver 2000). Under this view, capitalist cultural production is not a top-down process of domination, but dynamic and constitutive, reacting to workers' agency and, often, militancy. However, as Marx demonstrates in *Capital*, "capitalism is characterized by fetishisms that obscure, for both capitalist and worker alike, the origin of surplus value in exploitation" (Harvey 2006, 113). The labour-capital relations in cultural work can be obscured for a variety of reasons, including the fact that choosing to pursue cultural work despite the risks can be empowering, that an ideology of enterprise increasingly underscores cultural work, and that cultural work is based on personal relationships that can mask economic relations (Lorey 2009; Neff, Wissinger and Zukin 2005; Ekinsmyth 2002). Relations of exploitation can be so obscured that it often seems as if cultural work is not really work at all, giving rise to a "labour of love" discourse that preempts discussions of power relations (Beck 2003, 3). A return to Marx uncovers the antagonisms and social relations of capitalism that pervade cultural work. Traditionally, labour process theory has been at the core of Marxist studies of work. In the next section, I discuss the relevance of labour process theory for studying cultural work.

3. Labour Process Theory and Cultural Work

As a body of scholarship, labour process theory emerged from Harry Braverman's ([1974] 1998) critique of the organization of work under capitalism and its deleterious effects on workers' skills. Drawing on Marx, Braverman sought to understand the contradiction of modern work, which required increasing training and skill yet produced greater dissatisfaction. Braverman describes how the labour process is subsumed under and shaped by processes of capital accumulation: work is continually brought under capitalists' control in order to extract value from workers, and the labour process is rationalized, first in the factory, then in the office, transforming the labour process from an activity that creates something useful into a process explicitly designed to expand capital. Structural dynamics of competition and accumulation push capitalists to constantly revolutionize the process of production to increase productivity and lower labour costs. This impels capitalists to obtain control over the labour process. As Marx ([1867] 1990, 436-7) writes, "capital… has an immanent drive, and a constant tendency, towards increasing the productivity of labour, in order to cheapen commodities and, by cheapening commodities, to cheapen the worker himself". This process is carried out by applying new technologies and principles of scientific management to the labour process, dividing work into its constituent parts, deskilling workers, separating conception from execution, and bringing work under management's control (Braverman [1974] 1998, 49, 118).

Braverman argued that capitalism tends to reduce the majority of workers to a homogeneous group of interchangeable labourers who require little specialized training. In some cases, his vision of degraded work has been carried into the digital age. Consider, for example, the growing market for digital piecework, where mental labour such as research, translation, and design are broken into small tasks and farmed out to people working remotely for alarmingly low pay on websites like Mechanical Turk, ODesk, and Microtask. Yet labour process theory has some limits in the context of cultural work, particularly the creative aspects of cultural work. For one, labour process theory has been predominantly workplace focused and concerned with workers in employment relationships, and cultural work is increasingly situated outside of these structures. In addition, cultural workers seem to need no coercion to fully invest themselves in their work or to work long hours for low pay (Ursell 2000; McRobbie 2002). Finally, the argument that cultural workers have been granted relative autonomy at the point of production seems to challenge the relevance of labour process theory.

Michael Chanan (1976; 1983) and Bill Ryan (1992) trace a lineage from art and artistic practice to labour in the commercialized cultural industries, drawing on Marx to outline a conception of aesthetic labour – forms of labour in which, unlike in other commodity production, it is difficult to completely separate the author from her work. As artistic practice is brought under the logic of capitalist commodity production, the "art-capital contradiction" emerges, defined as a source of conflict inherent to the transformation of culture into capital (Ryan 1992, 34). Historically, for cultural commodities to have use values, these commodities must retain a trace of the person who created them, especially in instances of "person-specific" or personalized labour, where the creator's name is attached to the work (Smith and McKinlay 2009a, 12; Ryan 1992, 136). As Ryan (45) writes, "every book must have an author, every score a composer, every film a writer, director […] unlike cans of peaches, lines of cars […] where the direct producers of these commodities are entirely unknown to their purchasers. Artists must be engaged as named, concrete labour". Even cultural producers who are not "stars" – that small group for whom name recognition fetches high remuneration (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 199) – are valued because "of the identifiable, expressive abilities at-

tributable to and inseparable from each and each alone" (Ryan 1992, 44).

The requirement for concrete labour limits the extent to which the idea creation process in cultural work can be broken down and divided into constituent tasks, and so cultural industries have tended to grant relative autonomy to workers at the point of creation (idea and symbol generation), while tightening control over reproduction, distribution, and circulation of cultural commodities (Chanan 1979; Miège 1989; Ryan 1992; Hesmondhalgh 2007). As Chanan (1983, 318) writes, "the content of cultural forms cannot, in the last instance, be mechanized". Workers who create originating texts cannot be replaced with machines or with other people without altering the text[6]. This complicates the production process for capitalists. Usually, capital's compulsion to lower the costs of production has required that concrete labour – specific skills or tasks performed by a particular worker – be reduced to average levels so that it does not matter who performs the work. Ideally, individual workers are transformed into abstract labour: interchangeable inputs for production, their particular contributions congealed in and disguised by the commodity form. Capital's compulsion is to separate conception from execution and to reduce workers' specialized knowledge and heterogeneous skills to simple labour (Braverman [1974] 1998; Harvey 2006, 57).

Recognition of the structural tendency to grant cultural workers relative autonomy at the point of production has served to eject labour process analysis from studies of cultural work (notable exceptions include Murphy 1991; Im 1997; Ursell 2000; Smith and McKinlay 2009a). For if it is true that cultural workers have control over the process and products of their work, then it seems labour process theory and its Marxist heritage are no longer relevant. Many cultural workers are so self-motivated that they "set themselves" to work, working excessively long hours for little pay, embracing uncertainty and risk in order to pursue careers in culture (McRobbie 2002, 101; Ursell 2000). From this view, managers are not required to motivate cultural workers or increase productivity and cultural workers are considered to self-exploit. But identifying self-exploitation, while key to uncovering the myriad ways power operates, can mask true relations of exploitation, almost letting capital off the hook.

Sheila Cohen (1987) argues that labour process theory cannot be so easily sidestepped. She argues that the post-Braverman labour process debate was too focused on questions of control, neglecting the process of exploitation that is at the core of the capitalist labour process. It is not control that "constitutes the principal dynamic at work in the capitalist labour process", but rather exploitation, ownership over the means of production, and class (ibid., 35, 66). Cohen recasts the focus of labour process theory on valorization and exploitation, which is the motor of capitalist accumulation and production, fundamentally structured around the extraction of surplus value from workers. The labour process is political not because of an "ongoing power struggle over managerial domination", but because it is "the site of the central dynamic of […] exploitation and the generation of surplus value" (39). This means that control over production can be surrendered if it is not an impediment to exploitation. Indeed work is constantly reorganized to suit capitalism's overall objective of valorization (Braverman [1974] 1998), and ceding control over the labour process to certain workers is exactly in line with some needs of accumulation. This ranges from empowerment strategies on the factory floor (Moody 1997) to "fun" environments in the permissive offices of new media firms designed to capture workers' creative and emotional potential; their "freest thoughts and impulses" harnessed for productivity (Ross 2003, 19; Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009). In some ways, this loosening of control is a descendent of the age-old strategy of lengthening the working day. Pondering the playful offices of amenity-packed new media firms, Andrew Ross (2001, 78) wonders, "who would ever want to go home?".

More overt attempts to rationalize production are evident in forms of cultural work that have previously seemed impervious to organizing the author out of production. Consider Alloy Entertainment, a company that generates book projects for publishers, pumping out thirty books per year targeted to teen girls. What is unusual about this "book factory" (Semuels 2008) is not the formulaic plots and generic tropes Alloy relies on for mass-market appeal, but the way labour is organized in the production of each book: ideas are brainstormed at a meeting, an editor composes a story, and a writer is hired on spec to draft a chapter. The writer works closely with editors to develop the plot and produce more chapters. Alloy pitches the chapters, a book synopsis, and a cover image to publishers, retaining all rights to the intellectual property. Often, company-owned pseudonyms are used instead of real writers' names, and some names represent a team of ghostwriters (Mead

[6] This argument is perhaps best demonstrated by the embodied nature of performing arts work. As William Baumol and William Bowen (1966, 164) write, changes in the training or specificities of a performer "affects the nature of the service he supplies." Unlike manufacturing workers, "performers are not intermediaries between raw material and the completed commodity – their activities are themselves the consumers' goods" and therefore the specific worker cannot be separated from the work of performing.

2009). Perhaps an extreme case of rationalizing literary production, yet Alloy offers an example of how capital finds ways around the need to grant creative workers relative autonomy if and when it is required for profitable production. Under Alloy's model, it does not matter who writes a particular book. Authors, formerly assured the privilege of being named labour, are interchangeable and often not credited for their work.

Labour process analysis that draws on dynamic concepts from Marx remains a relevant method for researching cultural work, providing a theoretical foundation for an investigation of cultural work in its various and specific forms. Labour process theory centres on processes of capital accumulation and opens a critical line of inquiry: if the continuity of capitalist production has thoroughly penetrated the cultural industries and if exploitation is fundamental to the capitalist labour process, how does this dynamic manifest in cultural work? If cultural workers have been granted relative autonomy at the point of idea creation, how then does capital respond? In most instances, firms tighten control over workers who do not require relative autonomy in production, creating divisions in status, job quality, and material conditions between workers in cultural industries. Increasingly, and as technologies change, however, cultural workers' relative autonomy is being further encroached upon. This is especially the case for writers who pursue freelance work in order to claim some autonomy over their craft. A case study of freelancers reveals these tensions.

4. Case Study: Freelance Writers

On the surface, freelance writers seem removed from the capitalist labour process. Legally classified as independent contractors, freelancers work for multiple clients to produce one-off pieces or are hired for short-term projects. They write for magazines, newspapers, books, and produce content for corporations, governments, and NGOs[7]. The labour-capital relations that underscore freelance cultural production are often obscured: because freelancers are not engaged in an employment relationship and are not paid a salary, it appears that they sell simply a finished piece of work, or "labour already objectified in the product" (Marx [1867] 1990, 692), not the labour time required to produce that piece. However, Marx argues that piece wages are a form of time wages and that the existence of this form of payment "in no way alters [its] essential nature", which is "the general relation between capital and wage-labour" (693, 696). Freelance cultural work has relations of exploitation at its core.

Historically, piecework has been a method of lowering wages and lengthening the working day (698). For cultural workers, however, freelancing provides an escape from the employment relationship, a way to gain some control over where and when they work, what they work on, with whom, and how work is performed. But despite writing for profitable media industries (Winseck 2010), Canadian freelance writers' incomes have been stagnant for over three decades, averaging $24,000 before tax (PWAC 2006)[8]. In a survey I conducted of 200 freelance writers across Canada, 45 percent of respondents reported earning under $20,000 (before tax) from freelance writing in 2009, and 71 percent of these writers say that freelance writing is their main job.

While freelancing is presented as the ultimate freedom for workers (Pink 2001), it is also an ideal arrangement for capital. Freed from the burden of employment, relieved of the costs of training, overhead, benefits, and paying for unproductive time, firms can hire someone for a short-term project or purchase only completed works: an article, a piece of research, a design. The risks and costs of production are downloaded onto workers who, motivated by the relentless search for work and increasing competition, strive to produce their best works, providing capital ample choice from a pool of skilled workers bargaining down the costs of their labour power. This arrangement allows for relative autonomy in creative production yet impels firms to develop alternate methods of extracting surplus value. For publishers, exploitation is made easier by the casualization of media work, which has increased competition for work, made workers insecure, and pressured wages down.

Marx's ([1867] 1990, 697) observations on piece wages point to the contradictions of freelance work:

the wider scope that piece-wages give to individuality tends to develop both that individuality, and with it the worker's sense of liberty, independence and self-control, and also the competition of

[7] The freelancers I study are primarily freelance journalists who write for newspapers, magazines, and online journalistic outlets. However, because it is so difficult to earn a living solely from freelance journalism, many freelancers have expanded the types of work they perform to include a range of industries and formats. For this reason, I use the broader term freelance writer.

[8] The Professional Writers Association of Canada surveyed 858 freelance writers, most of whom are full-time writers, meaning that writing is their sole source of income (PWAC 2006).

workers with each other. The piece-wage therefore has a tendency, while raising the wages of individuals above the average, to lower this average itself.

This demonstrates the dialectical nature of the labour-capital relation: workers constantly seek to resist exploitation and capital constantly reorganizes to address workers' resistance. As Harvey (2006, 116) writes, "if the value productivity of labour can be better secured by some reasonable level of worker autonomy, then so be it. Capital is, presumably, indifferent to how the value productivity of labour is preserved and enhanced". Increasingly, capital secures the value productivity of labour through exploiting freelancers' unpaid labour time and copyrights to their works. I examine each example in turn.

5. Labour Casualization and Exploitation of Unpaid Labour Time

Working as a freelancer has traditionally provided journalists a way out of the strictures of an employment relationship and the limitations of routinized news production to pursue more creative, experimental, or interesting writing. However, what was once a strategy available to a small segment of journalists who could leverage a monopoly over their skills to build freelance careers has become a core business model as the media workforce is casualized. As companies download more of the risk and costs of doing business onto workers, the autonomy freelancers have enjoyed, even in the face of low pay, is being undermined.

By now the shift to precarious forms of employment is well documented (Vosko 2006; Standing 2011). In line with the neoliberal transformation of capitalist economies and the resulting restructuring of work and employment dating from the 1970s (Vosko 2000; Albo 2010), cultural industries have moved from production based on full-time, steady employment to more precarious forms: part-time, temporary, casual, contract, and freelance (Murdock 2003; Nies and Pedersini 2003; Walters, Warren and Dobbie 2006; Smith and McKinlay 2009b). Typically, this work has low wages, no benefits, little job and social security, limited access to union protections, and long working hours. Cultural work has been casualized, transformed from "internal and regulated labour markets" to networks of individuals providing specialized services on an as-needed basis (Smith and McKinlay 2009b, 29; Hill and Capriotti 2009). These changes are linked to firm strategies such as concentration, convergence, and outsourcing, the erosion of union power, and the spread and acceptance of precarious forms of employment. They are also made possible by a restructured global division of labour that harnesses information and communication technologies to establish chains of flexible accumulation spanning the globe, chains that begin from the outsourcing of components of the production process to the low-waged regions of the world and link to the outsourced work now performed in the homes of knowledge, information, and cultural workers in western capitalist states (Huws 2007). Although cultural industries have a history of non-standard forms of work,[9] accepting freelance, contract, or temporary employment is no longer a choice as firms shed their workforces, flooding the labour market with freelancers (Nies and Pedersini 2003; PWAC 2006; Walters, Warren and Dobbbie 2006; McKercher 2009). Rather than continuously employing people, cultural industries maintain loose affiliations with networks of cultural producers constantly developing ideas from which firms can pick and choose.

This "reserve army" of cultural workers (Murdock 2003, 22) absorbs cultural firms' financial risk, which is offloaded onto individuals. Because the creative stage of production cannot be completely rationalized, companies trade relative autonomy for the ability to extract higher value through contract and freelance status, protecting capital from risk, lowering labour costs, and intensifying competition for work (Ryan 1992, 48; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Smith and McKinlay 2009b, 40). Project-based work, short-term contracts, and freelance arrangements demonstrate some of the underlying contradictions of cultural work: these relationships grant workers the relative autonomy and flexibility required to develop creative works, but absolve firms of paying a salary and the benefits associated with secure employment. The benefits of autonomy are often undermined by precarity. This arrangement, despite having roots in political economic dynamics, has perpetuated the notion that to be a cultural worker one must accept and adapt to intermittent employment, low wages, and precarity, drawing out the romanticized notion of suffering for one's art into industrialized, highly capitalized cultural industries (Menger 1999; Ross 2000).

As pieceworkers, freelance writers are usually paid per word or per article (or, as the unfortunate joke goes, "perhaps")[10]. By purchasing finished stories from freelancers; publishers do not pay for time spent developing and researching ideas, pitching stories, conducting interviews, or for time

[9] Indeed, cultural industries are credited with serving as a model of flexible, project-based, work for other industries (Ross 2009, 18-19; McRobbie 2004).

[10] Kingston and Cole 1986. For corporate and non-journalism contracts, freelancers are usually paid per hour.

spent editing and rewriting. The arbitrary per-word form of payment, popular among magazines and newspapers, obscures a large portion of the labour that goes into the writing of those words. As one freelance writer explains: "The pay often does not reflect the work you put into a piece. You are expected to come up with ideas, research and pitch without pay, yet are not adequately compensated when your story ideas are accepted". Added to this are the crucial tasks of sourcing and securing work, self-promotion, training and skills development, invoicing and chasing payments, and the various other tasks involved in maintaining a freelance career. As I discuss below, once an article is written, the costs of reproduction for companies is minimal, yet writers are often not paid for multiple use of their works in various formats, or "the labour power that is still latent within the article" (D'Agostino 2010, 238).

As Marx explained, unpaid labour that contributes to the generation of surplus value for capitalists is exploited labour[11]. And exploitation is spreading throughout the cultural industries, thanks to the casualization of the labour force, which leaves a growing number of workers stitching work together to earn a living, paid for far less than the time required for production of their works. This glut of freelance and un- and under-employed workers represents huge value for companies, as competition for work pressures wages downwards. New forms of temporal exploitation are made possible by processes of spatialization, or extending the capacities for value extraction into new spaces – in this case, workers' homes (Mosco 2009). Media corporations capitalize on this arrangement, building business models on access to flexible, cheap, or free labour they need not employ. For example, firms are replacing paid workers with unpaid internships; writers are increasingly paid in "exposure" on profitable websites such as The Huffington Post, and skilled employees are laid off because major news networks such as CNN can increasingly rely on volunteer-submitted content, or exploit "citizen" journalism through "crowdsourcing" (Perlin 2011; Guthrie 2011; Kperogi 2011). These strategies are complemented by the intensifying exploitation of copyrights.

6. Copyright as Exploitation

Freelance writers' livelihoods in a digital age are built on the shaky foundations of copyright protection, which are being eroded by corporations' tightening grip on intellectual property rights. Unlike employees, who in exchange for salaries give up ownership of works they produce to employers (D'Agostino 2010, 4), freelance writers in Canada are legally classified as independent contractors and therefore own copyrights to the articles they write. Publishers are granted a limited licence to publish articles in designated publications for specified periods of time (Canada 1985, s.13; D'Agostino 2004, 6). Traditionally, this has been a benefit of working freelance, enabling writers to re-sell articles and in some way compensating for low rates of pay (Lorinc 2005, 37; PWAC 2006, 41). However, traditional practices are being undermined by uses of new technologies and aggressive publishing strategies.

The growth and consolidation of media and entertainment firms over the past few decades has been enabled by technological development, especially digital communications and digitization, a process that provides a universal language for media content and has led to convergence across media platforms, allowing corporations to deepen the exploitation of labour (Mosco 2003). Digitization enables quick transmission of information and simplifies duplication, especially online, which means publishers can repackage information for publication in multiple formats.

Most periodical and newspaper publishers in Canada are part of large media chains that control a range of integrated media properties and are hungry for content that can be re-purposed for various platforms. Digitization helped corporations realize their ambitions of concentration and convergence, aided by and fuelling the push to obtain copyrights (D'Agostino 2010, 20). These rapid shifts in corporate media organization have directly affected freelance writers' earnings, initially by shrinking the number of markets in which writers can re-sell work (PWAC 2006, 35).

These practices have grown more pervasive as they have moved online. For example, in Fall 2010, Rogers Media, a division of the massive media conglomerate Rogers Communications, began syndicating articles written for its magazines by freelancers to other websites without alerting writers, let alone paying them for extra use (Scott 2010; Story Board 2010). Unbeknownst to writers, executives began syndication as an initiative of Rogers Digital Media, which promotes access to its content to advertisers. Rogers Digital Media claimed the syndication was covered under the

[11] Feminist activists and political economists have long been arguing that unpaid labour time is valuable for capitalism, particularly the unpaid labour performed by women in the home. See, for example Waring 1999 and Dalla Costa and James 1972. McKercher (2009) makes important links between women's unpaid household labour and the precarious work of freelance writing.

"promotions" clause in Rogers' new standard contract all writers must sign, which states that Rogers can "publish the Work and/or an edited version thereof in any promotion of the publication and/or its brand in all forms of media" (ibid.). Writers' organizations, however, claim that this is a broad interpretation of the contract: "most contributors would not read 'promotion' as syndication on [websites] many months after their story first appears in a Rogers publication," argued freelance writer agent Derek Finkle (Scott 2010).

This example demonstrates publishers' growing desire to own outright the rights to writers' works, which are cheap to "digitally recycl[e]" into new profit (D'Agostino 2010, 239). This strategy aligns with Marx's ([1867] 1990, 325) explanation of surplus value: after a worker earns enough to reproduce her labour power, the capitalist owns the rest of the value she produces, which "for the capitalist has all the charms of something created out of nothing". Most large publishers now present writers with "streamlined" contracts that claim all copyrights for writers' works at once (D'Agostino 2005, 166). Contracts can demand, for example, "all rights, in perpetuity, throughout the universe" in any form, including rights for media formats yet to be invented. These contracts are generally non-negotiable and do not offer extra payment for extra rights (PWAC 2006, 35). Depending on the company and its media holdings, rights demanded can include translations, digitizing, adaptations and performances, reprints, relicensing, promotions, and storage of articles in electronic databases.

Current contracting regimes have effectively expanded possibilities for exploitation of surplus value indefinitely (D'Agostino 2010, 241). Economists view copyright primarily as providing economic incentive for creators to produce intellectual and artistic works (Bettig 1996, 7; Towse 2003). However, under the capitalist mode of cultural production, copyright's primary function is to guarantee its owner exclusive right to exploit the work and to extract surplus value from workers who have been granted relative autonomy at the point of production. With workers providing services on a one-off basis, companies need not be concerned with *how* works are created, as the real value for corporations lies in the continued exploitation of completed works. Notes one freelance writer, "No one cares where I am, just as long as I get the work done". What matters to firms is not the time spent on a project or the pace of work – control over the labour process – but ownership over the final product, which can be re-published, re-licensed, and re-purposed, generating surplus value from the works themselves and lowering labour costs.

Capitalism developed by generating technological methods of extracting knowledge from workers to control production and increase efficiency and exploitation (Braverman [1974] 1998), and continues this trajectory by claiming ownership of the information workers produce (May 2002, 318). This is a crucial, under-examined link between cultural work and capital, obscured either by a focus solely on the autonomy of cultural workers or by a failure to acknowledge that it is labour that creates the texts, images, ideas, and symbols that are transformed into private property (Rossiter 2006, 145).

Copyright has become a high-stakes site of struggle in Canada and beyond. Freelance journalists in North America have won class action lawsuits against publishers for using works without acknowledgement or extra payment (D'Agostino 2010). Film and television writers struck for three months in 2007-2008 to win a greater share of residual money from DVD sales and revenues from digital downloads (Klowden and Chatterjee 2008). Freelance photographers effectively delayed the launch of *People* magazine's iPad app over its licensing agreement, as photographers demanded payment for use of their photos beyond the pages of the magazine (Wallenstein 2010). Book producers such as Alloy Entertainment and Full Fathom Five[12] are transforming copyright relations between writers and publishers by hiring authors to write pre-fabricated books, often under a pseudonyms, and retaining all rights to their works, generating licensing deals for film and television while contractually barring writers from claiming authorship (Mozes 2010). These struggles will become more charged as we move deeper into the digital age.

[12] Frey, a controversial writer, launched Full Fathom Five to tap into the commercial young adult fiction market. Frey hires newly minted (and indebted) MFA graduates to write novels for $250 (some writers earn an additional $250 upon completion of the book). The writer earns a percentage of all revenue the book generates (30 percent if the idea came from Frey, 40 percent if the idea was the writer's), including revenue from TV, film, and merchandise licensing. The writer does not own copyright to the book yet is responsible for any potential legal action. Full Fathom Five has the right to decide to use the author's name or a pseudonym, even if the writer is no longer involved in the project. The writer has no say in the use of his or her image in publicity photos or biographies and must sign a confidentiality agreement, risking a $50,000 penalty for "admit[ing] to working with Full Fathom Five without permission." The terms of copyright on Frey's projects are non-negotiable (Mozes 2010).

7. Conclusion: Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle

A Marxist political economy approach to cultural work identifies the links between precarious working conditions and broader transformations underway in the cultural industries while also recognizing workers as agents who resist, struggle over, and negotiate their labour conditions. Without this powerful tool of analysis, based on Marx's foundational understanding of the labour process under capitalism, the manifestations of capitalist social relations in old and new forms can be obscured, especially as labour is casualized and digital technologies are used to transform production. As Marx argued, "capitalism is unique in hiding its method of exploitation behind the process of exchange" (Himmelwit 1983a, 158). Key to understanding the full experience of cultural work is discovering how exploitation shapes work and workers' lives.

In the case of freelance writers, exploitation is at the core of the casualization of work and the aggressive pursuit of copyrights. For freelancers, control over the labour process is traded for increased flexibility for employers and a greater extraction of surplus value from writers who are working harder for longer hours and earning lower wages (PWAC 2006). Although the market has long played a role in influencing the type of material writers could sell (Mills 1956; Kingston and Cole 1986), this pressure has intensified as publishers seek "content" that can be syndicated for use across multiple platforms. These new publishing practices limit the possibilities for writers to produce certain kinds of work, including longer pieces that require research, investigative journalism, and creative or challenging works that take time to produce. These limitations are reflected in Canadian freelance writers' experiences. Just over half of the writers I surveyed would most like to write long-form narrative features, creative non-fiction, essays, and investigative journalism. However, few find opportunities to pursue this type of work and to be compensated adequately for it. Other reports reveal a discrepancy between the type of writing freelancers most want to pursue (periodicals, books, and American magazines, which pay more) and the type of writing most do: writing for corporate clients and shorter magazine pieces that are faster to produce (PWAC 2006). As one writer says, "I've built my career on the 'service' journalism industry. It's paid my bills and helped establish my reputation and skills, but I would like to do more meaningful, issues-related writing. I do some, but there are probably three or four bill-payers for every piece I'm truly proud of". Increasingly, freelancers view their journalistic work, which motivated them to become freelancers in the first place, as a luxury to indulge in when time and money permit. These experiences trouble the concept of relative autonomy.

Because antagonism lies at the core of Marx's concept of exploitation and because capitalist production is "inherently, structurally a site of contestation" (Wayne 2003, 13), it is useful to conceive of cultural work as a site of struggle (see also Artz 2006). This conception is acknowledged in some studies of cultural work, where struggle manifests as tension between "artistic desires for creative autonomy" and the requirements of profit-oriented cultural production (Banks 2007, 6; Ryan 1992). A broader conception, however, views this struggle as labour-focused, as contestation over the terms of commodification and exploitation of labour power. Autonomist Marxist theorizing is useful here, as this approach begins from the notion that workers actively resist capitalist exploitation and enclosure, and that capital reacts to worker resistance, which always has the potential to escape capital's control. This cycle, in turn, generates new strategies and tactics of struggle among workers that threatens capitalism anew (Cleaver 2000; Brophy and de Peuter 2007, 178). As capital extends relations of exploitation, workers seek meaningful and autonomous forms of work. Autonomists view the move toward flexible work as partly motivated by workers themselves. For example, in his schema of the "precarious labour personas" found along a continuum of precarity in contemporary capitalism, Greig de Peuter (2011, 419, 420) argues that "the autonomous worker" – typified in freelance cultural workers – is subject to flexibility "instituted from above" but also desires this type of labour arrangement (see also Ross 2009; Vosko 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). As de Peuter (2011, 420) writes, "the autonomous worker is immanent to a genealogy in which the pursuit of flexible work in immaterial production is a decision taken in an act of self-determination and as a conscious rejection of standard work."

It is useful to consider freelance writers in this way. As journalism developed into a mass industry in the late nineteenth century, journalists were proletarianized, or brought under a system of wage labour, which standardized the labour of reporting (Smythe 1980). The introduction of formulaic news writing geared toward a mass audience challenged writers' independence and degraded the craft of writing (Carey 1969). Even as journalists gained professional status through unionization, many grew frustrated with anonymity, wage dependency, and routine conditions of work (Smythe 1980). Freelancing offered escape from reporters' descent into "a white collar proletariat" (Kaul 1986, 47) and the newsroom grind. Although the decision to work freelance is no longer a choice for most, many freelancers retain this spirit, seeking autonomy, the ability to pursue interest-

ing and creative work, flexibility, and control over the terms of commodification of their labour power. Freelancing can also represent a more politicized conception of work and how it should be organized, hinting at a radical conception of a "refusal of work" and escape from the wage relation (Weeks 2011). As Andrew Beck (2003, 4) notes, freelance cultural work can be viewed simultaneously as "labour at the margins" and as "a last space of resistance"[13].

As media industries continue to contract out work, as states envision entrepreneurial, creative cities populated with self-employed workers, with the rise of co-working spaces to absorb officeless workers, and with no shortage of work to be done, it would seem that the time of the freelancer has arrived (Horowitz 2011). However, freelance wages are generally low, incomes are intermittent, and workers are experiencing intensified precarity. These conditions demonstrate that in response to worker resistance, capital adjusts its strategies to exploit those who have seemingly escaped the wage relation, a continuation of labour-capital antagonisms.

The struggle takes on new dimensions as workers begin collectively organizing to address and resist precarious conditions. Alongside established unions in the film and television industries, workers in sectors not often considered sites of labour, such as modelling, art, and writing, are identifying and challenging conditions of their exploitation. Cultural workers in a range of sectors are reaffirming their status as workers by embracing the term "precariat," whose roots lie in European social and protest movements (Prickett 2012; Standing 2011; de Peuter 2011). Canadian freelance writers, who have historically organized in professional associations, are turning to union models to collectively improve low wages and exploitative contracts (N. Cohen 2011). The US-based National Writers Union has launched a "Pay The Writer!" campaign to protest free labour online and to set a fair wage scale for online freelance journalists. Canadian Artists' Representation/le Front des artistes Canadiens (CARFAC), which represents visual artists in Canada, is demanding payment for artists when paintings are re-sold, as the labour power embedded in their work generates surplus value for sellers (CBC News 2011). Building on CARFAC's model, artists in New York City formed Working Artists in the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) to organize around the demand that artists be paid for their labour in gallery shows. Also in New York, The Model Alliance was formed to recognize modelling as work and to challenge the exploitative relations that underpin models' affective labour (de Peuter 2012). Key to these initiatives is that cultural workers are naming and addressing the precise conditions of their exploitation.

Emergent efforts by cultural workers to collectively organize are significant for those concerned with labour movement renewal. These initiatives are attempting to organize the unorganized, often through experimental formations that could serve as "test cases" for how to organize precarious workers in a flexible economy (de Peuter 2010). These initiatives are raising awareness of labour struggles and power relations in industries that are generally under the labour movement's radar, either by establishing alliances with trade unions or by organizing outside of union structures. Underpinning these efforts are not demands to return to standard forms of employment, but rather policy proposals and demands that can build worker power outside of any particular workplace; demands that aim to reclaim non-standard work as a viable option for autonomous, flexible, yet secure work (de Peuter 2011; Vosko 2010). It remains to be seen if these efforts can build solidarity with the labour movement and politicize cultural workers, or if organizations will reinforce the individualism and entrepreneurialism underscoring cultural work under neoliberalism (Abrahamian 2012; N. Cohen 2011). Yet these initiatives signify changes underway that could have implications for labour politics and the way culture is produced.

As the rise in cultural worker organizing demonstrates, it is crucial to identify the processes, practices, and social relations that undermine autonomy in cultural work so that they can be interrupted. The need to disrupt the feelings of inevitability and self-responsibility that still pervade many cultural workers' outlooks is urgent, and requires a critical political economy approach that understands material conditions as "always active, always unsettled, always subject to change" (Artz 2006, 45). After all, in some of Marx's most famous ([1888] 1978c) words, the point is not just to interpret the world, but to change it.

References

Abrahamian, Atossa Araxia. 2012. The 'I' in Union. *Dissent*. Accessed May 16, 2012. http://dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=4094.

Albo, Gregory. 2010. The "New Economy" and Capitalism Today. In *Interrogating The New Economy: Restructuring Work in the 21st Century*, edited by Norene J. Pupo and Mark P. Thomas, 3-20. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

[13] Or, as the editors of *The New Inquiry* (2012) put it in their magazine's precarity-themed issue, "Most of us juggle two-and-a-half jobs, knowing the only thing worse would be a single stultifying career".

Artz, Lee. 2006. On The Material and The Dialectic: Toward a Class Analysis of Communication. In *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point Is to Change It*, edited by Lee Artz, Steve Macek, and Dana L. Cloud, 5-51. New York: Peter Lang.

Banks, Mark. 2007. *The Politics of Cultural Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Banks, Mark. 2010. Autonomy Guaranteed? Cultural Work and the 'Art—Commerce Relation'. *Journal for Cultural Research* 14 (3): 251-269.

Baumol, William J., and William G. Bowen. 1966. *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma*. New York: The Twentieth Century Fund.

Beck, Andrew. 2003. Introduction: Cultural Work, Cultural Workplace – Looking at the Cultural Industries. In *Cultural Work: Understanding the Cultural Industries*, edited by Andrew Beck, 1-6. London: Routledge.

Bettig, Ronald V. 1996. *Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy of Intellectual Property*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Braverman, Harry. (1974) 1998. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Brophy, Enda, and Greig de Peuter. 2007. Immaterial Labor, Precarity and Recomposition. In *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*, edited by Catherine McKercher and Vincent Mosco, 191-207. Lanham, MD: Lexington.

Canada. 1985. Copyright Act. Department of Justice. Accessed May 16, 2012. http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/ .

Carey, James W. 1963. The Communications Revolution and the Professional Communicator. In *The Sociology of Mass Media Communications*, edited by Paul Halmos, 23-38. Keele: University of Keele.

Caves, Richard E. 2000. *Creative Industries: Contracts between Art and Commerce*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

CBC News. 2011. Visual Artists Vie for a Cut of Resale Profits. *CBC News*. November 28, 2011. http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2011/11/28/art-resale-right-carfac-auction-gallery.html.

Chanan, Michael. 1976. *Labour Power in the British Film Industry*. London: British Film Institute.

Chanan, Michael. 1983. Labour Power and Aesthetic Labour in Film and Television in Britain. In *Communication and Class Struggle: Liberation, Socialism*, edited by Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub, 317-332. New York: International General.

Christopherson, Susan. 2009. Working In The Creative Economy: Risk, Adaptation, and the Persistence of Exclusionary Networks. In *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*, edited by Alan McKinlay and Chris Smith, 72-90. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cleaver, Harry. 2000. *Reading Capital Politically*. Leeds and Edinburgh: Anti/Theses and AK Press.

Cohen, Nicole S. 2011. Negotiating Writers' Rights: Freelance Cultural Labour and the Challenge of Organizing. *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 17 & 18: 119-138.

Cohen, Sheila. 1987. A Labour Process To Nowhere? *New Left Review* 165 (October): 34-50.

Conor, Bridget. 2010. 'Everybody's a Writer' Theorizing Screenwriting as Creative Labour. *Journal of Screenwriting* 1 (1): 27-43.

D'Agostino, Giuseppina. 2004. Should Freelancers Keep Their Copyrights in the Digital Era? *Copyright & New Media Law Newsletter* 8 (4): 6-8.

D'Agostino, Guiseppina. 2005. Freelance Authors For Free: Globalisation of Publishing, Convergence of Copyright Contracts and Divergence of Judicial Reasoning. In *New Directions in Copyright Law*, edited by Fiona Macmillan, 1: 166-215. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

D'Agostino, Guiseppina. 2010. *Copyright, Contracts, Creators: New Media, New Rules*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Dalla Costa, Mariarosa, and Selma James. 1972. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Bristol: The Falling Wall Press.

De Peuter, Greig. 2010. Creative Economy Contested: Notes on Precarious Labour Politics in New York City. Paper presented at Are We All Cultural Workers Now? Getting By In Precarious Times, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, November 25-26.

De Peuter, Greig. 2011. Creative Economy and Labor Precarity: A Contested Convergence. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 35 (4): 417-425.

De Peuter, Greig. 2012. Modelling Workers' Rights. *Shameless*. http://www.shamelessmag.com/stories/2012/04/modelling-workers-rights/.

Deuze, Mark. 2007. *Media Work*. London: Polity.

Deuze, Mark, and Leopoldina Fortunati. 2011. Atypical Newswork, Atypical Media Management. In *Managing Media Work*, edited by Mark Deuze, 111-120. London: Sage.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greig De Peuter. 2009. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ekinsmyth, Carol. 2002. Project Organization, Embeddedness and Risk in Magazine Publishing. *Regional Studies* 36 (3): 229-243.

Florida, Richard L. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1997. Concepts of Culture – Public Policy and the Cultural Industries. In *Studying Culture*, 2nd ed., edited by Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan, 54-61. London: Arnold.

Gough-Yates, Anna. 2003. *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships*. London: Routledge.

Guthrie, Marissa. 2011. CNN Cuts 50 Staff Members. *The Hollywood Reporter*, November 11. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/cnn-cuts-50-staff-members-260737.

Hartley, John. 2005. Creative Industries. In *Creative Industries*, edited John Hartley, 1-40. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Harvey, David. 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Harvey, David. 2006. *The Limits to Capital*. London: Verso.

Harvey, David. 2010. *A Companion to Marx's Capital*. London: Verso.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2007. *The Cultural Industries*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Hesmondhalgh, David, and Sarah Baker. 2011. *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge.

Hill, Kelly, and Kathleen Capriotti. 2009. *A Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada*. Hill Strategies Research Inc., February.

Himmelwit, Susan. 1983a. Exploitation. In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband, 157-158. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Himmelwit, Susan. 1983b. Surplus Value. In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband, 472-475. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Horowitz, Sara. The Freelance Surge Is the Industrial Revolution of Our Time. *The Atlantic*, September 13. http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/09/the-freelance-surge-is-the-industrial-revolution-of-our-time/244229/ .

Huws, Ursula. 2003. *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Huws, Ursula. 2007. Defragmenting: Towards a Critical Understanding of the New Global Division of Labour. *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation* 1 (2): 1-4.

ILO [International Labor Office]. 2000. *Symposium on Information Technologies in the Media and Entertainment Industries: Their Impact on Employment, Working Conditions and Labour-management Relations*. Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/smei00/smeir.htm

Im, Yung-Ho. 1997. Towards a Labour-Process History of Newsworkers. *Javnost/The Public* 41 (1): 31-48.

Kaul, Arthur J. 1986. The Proletarian Journalist: A Critique of Professionalism. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 1 (2): 47-55.

Kingston, Paul William, and Jonathan R. Cole. 1986. *The Wages Of Writing: Per Word, Per Piece, or Perhaps*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Klowden, Kevin, and Anusuya Chatterjee. 2009. *Writers' Strike of 2007–2008 The Economic Impact of Digital Distribution*. Santa Monica, CA: Milken Institute.

Kperogi, Farooq A. 2011. Cooperation with the Corporation? CNN and the Hegemonic Cooptation of Citizen Journalism Through iReport. *New Media & Society* 13 (2): 314-329.

Lacey, Liam. 2011. Screenwriting: It's a Terrible Job But Everybody Wants To Do It. *The Globe and Mail*, July 7, R1.

Leadbeater, Charles, and Kate Oakley. 2005. Why Cultural Entrepreneurs Matter. In *Creative Industries*, edited by John Hartley, 299-311. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Lorey, Isabell. 2009. Governmentality and Self-Precarization: On The Normalization of Cultural Producers. In *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, edited by Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, trans. Lisa Rosenblatt and Dagmar Fink, 187-202. London: MayFly Books.

Lorinc, John. 2005. *Creators and Copyright in Canada. The Working Conditions of Creators in Quebec and Canada*, Report prepared for Creators' Copyright Coalition and Droit d'auteur / Multimédia-Internet / Copyright. Accessed May 16, 2012. www.creatorscopyright.ca/documents/lorinc-beaulieu.html .

Marx, Karl. (1844) 1978a. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1884. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Robert C. Tucker, 594-617. New York: Norton.

Marx, Karl. (1852) 1978b. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Robert C. Tucker, 66-135. New York: Norton.

Marx, Karl. (1888) 1978c. Theses on Feuerbach. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Robert C. Tucker, 143-145. New York: Norton.

Marx, Karl. (1867) 1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*. London: Penguin Books.

May, Christopher. 2002. The Political Economy of Proximity: Intellectual Property and the Global Division of Information Labour. *New Political Economy* 7 (3): 317-342.

McGuigan, Jim. 2010. Creative Labour, Cultural Work and Individualization. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16 (3): 323-335.

McKercher, Catherine. 2009. Writing On The Margins: Precarity and the Freelance Journalist. *Feminist Media Studies* 9 (3): 370-374.

McRobbie, Angela. 2002. From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at Work in the New Cultural Economy? In *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, edited by Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke, 97-114. London: Sage.

McRobbie, Angela. 2004. 'Everyone Is Creative': Artists as Pioneers of the new Economy? In *Contemporary Culture in Everyday Life*, edited by Tony Bennett and Elizabeth Silva, 186-202. Durham, UK: Sociologypress.

Mead, Rebecca. 2009. The Gossip Mill: Alloy, the Teen-Entertainment Factory. *The New Yorker*, October 19: 62-71.

Menger, Pierre-Michel. 1999. Artistic Labor Markets and Careers. *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 541-574.

Miège, Bernard. 1989. *The Capitalization of Cultural Production*. New York: International General.

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Moody, Kim. 1997. *Workers in a Lean World*. London: Verso.

Mosco, Vincent. 2003. The Transformation of Communication in Canada. In *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation*, edited by Wallace Clement and Leah F. Vosko, 287-308. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Mosco, Vincent, and Catherine McKercher. 2006. Editorial. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31 (3): 493-497.

Mozes, Suzanne. 2010. James Frey's Fiction Factory. *New York*, November 12. http://nymag.com/arts/books/features/69474/ .

Murdock, Graham. 2003. Back To Work: Cultural Labor in Altered Times. In *Cultural Work: Understanding the Cultural Industries*, edited by Andrew Beck, 15-36. London: Routledge.

Murphy, David. 1991. Journalists and the Labour Process: White-Collar Production Workers. In *White-collar Work: The Non-Manual Labour Process*, edited by Chris Smith, David Knights, and Hugh Willmott, 139-161. London: Macmillan.

Neff, Gina, Elizabeth Wissinger, and Sharon Zukin. 2005. Entrepreneurial Labor among Cultural Producers: 'Cool' Jobs in 'Hot' Industries. *Social Semiotics* 15 (3): 307-334.

Nies, Gerd, and Roberto Pedersini. 2003. *Freelance Journalists in the European Media Industry*. European Federation of Journalists. http://www.ifj-europe.org/pdfs/FinalReportFreelance.pdf.

Perlin, Ross. 2011. *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*. London: Verso.

Pink, Daniel H. 2001. *Free Agent Nation: How America's New Independent Workers are Transforming the Way We Live*. New York: Warner.

Prickett, Sarah Nicole. 2010. SNP's Word of the Day: Precariat. *Fashion*. January 13. http://www.fashionmagazine.com/blogs/society/2012/01/13/snps-word-of-the-day-precariat/

PWAC [Professional Writers Association of Canada]. 2006. *Canadian Professional Writers Survey: A Profile of the Freelance Writing Sector in Canada*. Toronto. http://www.pwac.ca/files/PDF/PWACsurvey.pdf.

Ross, Andrew. 2000. The Mental Labor Problem. *Social Text* 18 (2): 1-31.

Ross, Andrew. 2001. No-Collar Labor in America's 'New Economy'. *Socialist Register* 37: 76-87.

Ross, Andrew. 2003. *No Collar: The Human Workplace and its Hidden Costs*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ross, Andrew. 2009. *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*. New York: New York University Press.

Rossiter, Ned. 2006. *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*. Rotterdam: NAi Publishers.

Ryan, Bill. 1992. *Making Capital From Culture: The Corporate Form of Capitalist Cultural Production*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Scott, D.B. 2010. Rogers Syndication Practices Called Into Question by Canadian Writers Group. *Canadian Magazines*. October 2. http://canadianmags.blogspot.com/2010/10/rogers-syndiction-practices-called-into.html.

Semuels, Alana. 2008. Book Publisher Finds Teen Lit Adapts Well in Hollywood. *Los Angeles Times*, August 2. http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/02/business/fi-alloy2.

Smith, Chris and Alan McKinlay. 2009a. Creative Industries and Labour Process Analysis. In *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*, edited by Alan McKinlay and Chris Smith, 3-28. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith, Chris and Alan McKinlay. 2009b. Creative Labour: Content, Contract and Control. *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*, edited by Alan McKinlay and Chris Smith, 29-50. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smythe, Ted Curtis. 1980. The Reporter, 1880-1900: Working Conditions and Their Influence on the News. *Journalism History* 7 (1): 1-10.

Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury.

Statistics Canada. 2012. Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport. National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2011. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVDDetail&db=imdb&dis=2&adm=8&TVD=122372&CVD=122373&CPV=5&CST=01012011&MLV=4&CLV=1&CHVD=122374 .

Story Board. 2010. Rogers Refuses to Remove Writer's Work From Yahoo. *Story Board*. November 30. http://www.thestoryboard.ca/?p=142 .

The New Inquiry. 2012. *The New Inquiry*. 1, February.

Towse, Ruth. 2003. Copyright Policy, Cultural Policy and Support for Artists. In *The Economics of Copyright*, edited by Wendy J. Gordon and Richar Watt, 66-80. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Ursell, Gillian. 2000. Television Production: Issues of Exploitation, Commodification and Subjectivity in UK Television Labour Markets. *Media, Culture & Society* 22 (6): 805-825.

Vosko, Leah F. 2000. *Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Vosko, Leah F. 2006. *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Vosko, Leah F. 2010. *Managing the Margins: Gender, Citizenship, and the International Regulation of Precarious Employment*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wallenstein, Andrew. 2010. People Magazine iPad App Delayed by Paparazzi. *The Hollywood Reporter*. Accessed October 14, 2010. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/exclusive-people-magazine-ipad-app-26788 .

Walters, Emma, Christopher Warren, and Mike Dobbie. 2006. *The Changing Nature of Work: A Global Survey and Case Study of Atypical Work in the Media Industry*. Switzerland: International Federation of Journalists. http://www.ifj.org/pdfs/ILOReport070606.pdf .

Waring, Marilyn. 1999. *Counting For Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth*, 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Wayne, Mike. 2003. *Marxism and Media Studies: Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends*. London: Pluto.

Weeks, Kathi. 2005. The Refusal of Work as Demand and Perspective. In *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri: Resistance in Practice*, edited by T.S. Murphy and A-K. Mustapha, 109-135. London: Pluto Press.

Winseck, Dwayne. 2010. Financialization and the 'Crisis of the Media': The Rise and Fall of (Some) Media Conglomerates in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 35 (3): 365-393.

Wright, Erik Olin. 1978. Intellectuals and the Class Structure of Capitalist Society. In *Between Labor and Capital*, edited by Pat Walker, 191-211. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Wright, Erik Olin. 1997. *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

About the Author

Nicole S. Cohen

Nicole S. Cohen is a PhD candidate in the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture at York University in Toronto, Canada, where she researches political economy of communication and labour. Her research has been published in *Democratic Communiqué, Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society, Feminist Media Studies* and the *Canadian Journal of Communication*.

tripleC 10(2): 156-170, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Understanding Accumulation: The Relevance of Marx's Theory of Primitive Accumulation in Media and Communication Studies

Mattias Ekman

Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, ekman@jmk.su.se

Abstract: The aim of this article is to discuss and use Marx's theory on primitive accumulation, outlined in the first volume of Capital, in relation to media and communication research. In order to develop Marx's argument the discussion is revitalized through Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession. The article focuses on two different fields within media and communication research where the concept of accumulation by dispossession is applicable. First, the role of news media content, news flows and news media systems are discussed in relation to social mobilization against capitalism, privatizations, and the financial sector. Second, Marx's theory is used to examine how communication in Web 2.0 and the development of ICTs could advance the processes of capital accumulation by appropriating the work performed by users of Web 2.0 and by increasing the corporate surveillance of Internet users. In conclusion, by analyzing how primitive accumulation is intertwined with contemporary expanded reproduction of capital, the article shows that Marx's theory can contribute to critical media and communication research in several ways.

Keywords: Marx, Capitalism, Capital Accumulation, Accumulation by Dispossession, Political Economy, News Media, Commodification, Privatization, Web 2.0, Facebook

Acknowledgement: I would like to express my gratitude to Andreas Widholm for his helpful comments on the article.

1. Introduction

The current global crisis of capitalism has inspired numerous social theorists to both revitalize and reinvent many of the key arguments and trails within Marx's magnum opus *Capital*. Without any other comparison to the increasing body of literature that draws on *Capital,* this article will be yet one more attempt to connect to the seminal work that has been counted out so many times before by the apologetics of capitalism.

The purpose of this article is to discuss Marx's (1867, 1990) theory of original/primitive accumulation ("ursprüngliche Akkumulation"), described in the first volume of *Capital*, and its relevance for analyzing the role of (mass) media, online communication and communication systems, in the process of capital accumulation. In order to revitalize Marx's argument in *Capital*, the theory of original/primitive accumulation is updated in relation to Harvey's (2003; 2006; 2010a) theory of "accumulation by dispossession". Harvey draws on Marx's discussion of primitive accumulation in order to unfold the neo-liberal shift within the development of global capitalism.

Following a basic theoretical understanding of primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession the article addresses two key ideological aspects of news media content and media structures in relation to the processes of accumulation by dispossession. The article examines the media representation of social struggle against capital accumulation, and how news media content and news media systems facilitate capital accumulation in the finance sector. Furthermore the article taps into how surplus value is produced in the realm of Internet use, particularly Web 2.0, and the development of communication technology. Here, some thoughts on how everyday Web surfing could be understood as surplus labour and how users are transformed into commodities will be addressed. In relation to the discussion on everyday online activities, Marx's theory of original/primitive accumulation provides an understanding of new forms of exploitation by the appropriation of intellectual assets and creativity in the field of cultural production, distribution and communication in the Web 2.0. Here the article discusses how the commodification of free time, the self and social relations, play a key part in the political economy of social media and the Internet. Included is also a short section that discusses if Internet surveillance, and the commercial gathering, owning and processing of personal information, could be understood as an underlying threat to subjects, and a part of what Žižek (2008) defines as the objective violence of capitalist exploitation.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The article combines the results of empirical research on news media with examples of how the everyday use of social media and intellectual assets and creativity in the field of cultural production/distribution could be explained through a Marxist theory of capital accumulation in a time of systemic crisis. Harvey's updated version of Marx's notion of original/primitive accumulation provides a strong argument for understanding the recent development of late capitalism.

2. The Process of Capital Accumulation

The immanent driving force of capitalism is the endless accumulation of capital, a process where capital is accumulated for the sake of accumulation, or as Marx (1867,1990, 595) put it "accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake". The very basic formula of capital accumulation, outlined by Marx (1885,1992) in the second volume of *Capital,* draws on how capital is circulated through several key phases:

$$M — C \ (Lp/Mp)…P \ (v/c)…C' — M'$$

To put it simple - the accumulation of capital is obtained by the circulation of capital, where money (M) is transformed into commodities (C) by the purchase of labour power (Lp) and means of production (Mp). To secure accumulation, the money needs to be greater in the end of the process than in the beginning, which means that the value of the produced commodity is higher than the value of the commodities used as inputs. In the production process the value of labour power and the means of production take the form of productive capital (P) when attached to the produced commodity. The value of labour force (v) equals the costs of the labour power bought (wages) and the value form of means of production (c) equals the cost of the means used (constant capital). So, surplus value is generated when the commodity is sold at a higher price than the costs of production, which is made possible by surplus labour (unpaid labour time). So what basically creates surplus value is the amount of labour time that is not paid for by the capitalists. When the produced commodity (C') is sold, capital once again enters the process of circulation in the form of (new) money (M'), and; the process of capital accumulation is thereby maintained (Marx 1867, 1990; Harvey 1982, 2006, 156ff; Fuchs 2011, 138).

Marx's theory of capital accumulation is highly complex and detailed (the whole second volume of Capital is basically an outline of the trails of capital accumulation), but its still possible to simplify it in this manner without losing too much of its inner nature. Under ordinary circumstances, capital accumulation is secured through expanded reproduction[1]. In this process of reproduction, not only commodities and surplus value are reproduced, but also the whole relationship between capital and labour – between capitalists and wage labourers (Marx 1967/1990, 578). And since surplus value relies on the exploitative relation between capital and labour force, the circulation of capital is ultimately the reproduction of exploited wage labour by capitalists. The commodity labour power (Lp) is subordinated to processes of absolute or relative exploitation. The former refers to the extension of the amount of time each worker needs to put in, and the latter to the intensification of the labour process (Mosco 2009, 131).

The circulation of capital is an endless process, and given the inner contradictions of accumulation, capitalism eventually faces systemic crisis. The historical Marxist debates over what type of crises capitalism is undergoing tend to shift. Luxemburg (1913/2003) stresses the problems of under-consumption to explain systemic crises, but under-consumption is hardly a sufficient explanation of the crises within capitalism today. Harvey argues that capitalism is currently facing an over-accumulation crisis[2], because we are experiencing a situation "when both surplus capital and labour exist but there are no way to bring them together" (Harvey 2006, 96). The over-accumulation crisis manifests itself when there are superfluous commodities, money and productive capacity form simultaneously with a surplus of labour power, but with the lack of "profitable opportunities" for capital to expand (Harvey 2003, 88). In order to deal with an over-accumulation crisis, capital tries to expand reproduction through temporal or spatial shifts. Harvey (2003, 89) calls these "spatio-temporal fixes". For example, by investing surplus capital and labour in long-term (large scale pub-

[1] Marx (1867, 1990, 711ff) distinguishes between "simple reproduction" and "expanded reproduction" (Marx 1867, 1990; 1885, 1992). Simple reproduction is basically the reproduction of capital-labour relations without any accumulation of capital.

[2] The definition of what characterizes over-accumulation crises is highly simplified here, since systemic crises tend to inherit several dimensions (see Harvey 2003; 2006; 2010b, for a more in-depth analysis of systemic crises, & see Fuchs 2011, for an overview of different contemporary crises-explanations).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

lic) projects, or by relocating the surplus of capital and labour to other geographical spaces (Harvey 2006, 96). Capitalists have a tendency to expand reproduction geographically by relocating the purchases of labour power or means of production elsewhere, and thus creating new spaces for the accumulation of capital. Since capitalism is a global system, expanded reproduction often results in a situation where crises are moved around geographically. The spatio-temporal fixes are reliant on and thrive from the advancement of communication technology and systems. Advancements in transport and communication that compresses time-space relations are therefore at the heart of temporal or spatial shifts. In search for new ways to invest surplus capital, capitalists also strive to appropriate new forms of labour and new resources, both material (such as natural resources), and immaterial (such as knowledge), into the circulation of capital. By doing so, it is possible to create surplus value from previously unexploited work and resources. One way to understand the process of appropriation of labour and resources, in contemporary over-accumulation crises is by looking back at the origins of the capitalist mode of production. In order to explain the relation between geographical imperialism and global capital, Harvey (2003; 2006; 2010a) draws on Marx's discussion of "ursprüngliche" or primitive accumulation in the first volume of *Capita*l, in order to unfold the neo-liberal shift in our contemporary societies.

2.1. Primitive Accumulation

In Marx's (1867, 1990, ch.26) discussion in *Capital,* primitive accumulation is the process in which pre-capitalist modes of production are transformed into capitalism - it is the starting point of the capitalist mode of production. Thus it is also the process, in which the producers are separated from their means of production and where they are transformed into wage labourers that are sold on the market (i.e. labour power becomes a commodity). So primitive accumulation also constitutes the very process, in which the working class is formed:

> *The capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour. As soon as capitalist production stands on its own feet, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a constantly extending scale. The process, therefore, which creates the capital-relation can be nothing other than the process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labour; it is a process which operates two transformations, whereby the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage-labourers. So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as 'primitive', because it forms the pre-history of capital and of the mode of production corresponding to capital. (Marx 1867/1990, 874-875)*

In Marx's depiction of how the old feudal system was transformed into capitalism, the liberal version of capitalism mounting like a natural evolution of capital is confronted by a much blunter version of reality. The transformation of the feudalist system was a process marked by a brutal and often violent expropriation of capital. The enclosure of the commons, the colonial system, imperialism, the use of slave labour, the expulsion of peasant populations forced into industrial wage labour, etc., were often violent. So in Marx's version of the "ursprüngliche" or primitive accumulation, violence plays a central part. As Marx (1867,1990, 875) argues in a famous statement in *Capital*; "…the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire". Undoubtedly Marx's depiction of the historical process of capital is only partly true; there were also peaceful or at least less violent transformations (Harvey 2010a, 304f). Nevertheless, Marx exposed the liberal myth, painting a picture of a smooth transformation originated from the shoulders of hardworking men with specialized labour skills that became employers – that story was anything but true.

For the labourer, the process of primitive accumulation was double sided, workers were set free from the feudal oppression system, slavery, etc. just to become entrapped in a new relation of exploitation, the system of wage labour – indirect forced labour. Or as Marx argues in *Grundrisse,* in a comment on the indignation of a former slave master on the fact that slaves were freed from bondage, but did *not* become wage labourers in the plantations owned by the latter:

> *They have ceased to be slaves, but not in order to become wage laborers, but, instead, self-sustaining peasants working for their own consumption. As far as they are concerned, capital does not exist as capital, because autonomous wealth as such can exist only either on the basis of direct forced labour, slavery, or indirect forced labour, wage labour. (Marx 1857/1993, 326)*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

We will return to some contemporary examples of how self-sufficient peasantry and collectively owned and organized agricultural production (mobilized in the form of social movements such as Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra [MST] and Via Campesina) is fighting the expulsion and enforcements of populations into wage-labour, and how media plays a crucial part in justifying the expulsions in the name of economic development.

So, if primitive accumulation is the starting point of the capitalist mode of production, how could it help us understand processes of capital accumulation in contemporary late capitalism? Harvey (2003; 2005; 2006; 2010a) argues, inspired by Luxemburg (1913/2003), that many of the specific features of primitive accumulation are highly visible in today's modern neo-liberal capitalism. For Marx the 'normal' process of accumulation is expanded reproduction, but Luxemburg (1913/2003) argued that the continuous accumulation of capital also inherited a "primitive" feature. This formed one key argument in her theory of imperialism - capital always creates new geographical spaces of exploitation, or "capitalism's penetration of non-capitalist societies" (Callinicos 2009, 40). Luxemburg's theory can also be used for understanding how other milieus outside the circulation of capital are colonised by capital. Marxist feminists have attached Luxemburg's idea of colonialism to the reproductive work done by women in the household (Hartsock 2006). Reproductive work constitutes "an inner colony and milieu of primitive accumulation", by ensuring the reproduction of (male) wage labourer (Fuchs 2011, 282).

Harvey (2006) argues that current accumulation of capital inherits characteristics from the original process as well. In fact, accumulation through expanded reproduction and by dispossession "are organically linked, dialectically intertwined" with each other (Harvey 2003, 176). There are at least two key arguments that locate specific features of primitive accumulation (embedded) in modern capitalist reproduction. First there are numerous examples of population expulsion and appropriations of land (particularly in Latin America and Asia), there are violent extractions of natural resources (all over the global south); and there is systematic and sometimes extreme violence against those who struggle against these processes all over the global south. The level of violence has also been intensified in some instances (Harvey 2010a, 308). Secondly, it seems that the ongoing reproduction of capitalism continues to involve some of the characteristics of primitive accumulation, such as increasing national debt and what Marx (1867/1990, 777ff) identified as the growing credit system. The whole endeavour of the financial credits and loans handed out by IMF and the World Bank have a striking resemblance to the emerging credit system and the state as actor in processes of privatization several hundred years ago. Harvey (2003; 2005; 2006; 2010a) describes these features of primitive accumulation as "accumulation by dispossession". It could be described as the (futile) neo-liberal answer to a continuous decline in global growth (Harvey 2003, 145; 2006, 42). Accumulation by dispossession is characterized by four key elements: *privatization, financialization, the management and manipulation of crises* and *state redistributions* (Harvey 2006)

2.1.1. Privatization

Accumulation by dispossession is manifested by the privatization of public assets - the appropriation of the commons. These privatizations include everything from natural resources (water, land, air), infrastructure (public transport, telecommunications, energy supplies), social systems of redistribution, social services, healthcare, education, public institutions, public housing, warfare, and so on, basically anything that is not already included in the circulation of capital. There is also a privatization of immaterial assets such as knowledge, genetic material, and reproduction processes. All these areas, which previously were outside capital accumulation because they were regarded as commons, public services, of national interest, etc., are appropriated to different degrees in the neo-liberal model of capitalism. By adding them to the circulation of capital they are incorporated into capitalist property relations, thus they also transform the social relations of subjects in society. Students, patients, water drinkers, citizens, etc., are transformed into clients, customers and buyers of goods and services as commodities. The process of accumulation by dispossession is therefore ultimately a process of social exploitation. The contemporary process of privatization has been defined by Indian writer and activist Arundhati Roy (2001 in Harvey 2006, 44-45) as a "barbaric dispossession on a scale that has no parallel in history".

Processes of privatization can be swift and clean without any particularly struggle or use of force, this is predominantly the case in the global north where the state has been the main propagator of privatizations. But the processes of dispossession in the global south are often followed by harsh or violent expulsions of rural populations and appropriations of everyday natural resources (Harvey 2006, 45). Sometimes the outcome of dispossessions is open social struggle and sometimes capital even loses. This was the case during the water wars in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

late 1990s. During a wave of privatizations orchestrated by the IMF, the city's public drinking water was sold to the US-owned company Bechtel, which resulted in increasing water prices and a limitation of supplies. The dispossession of water resulted in a hard struggle for the right to water as basic human asset, which ultimately forced the city to re-buy the water rights (Olivera and Lewis 2004). So processes of privatization can also sharpen class struggle and class-consciousness in various ways.

Privatization also includes warfare. War is in fact an increasingly commodified endeavour, where private companies make huge profits in security and torture. Warfare is simply a process in which huge transfer of government funding to private owned capital takes place. Luxemburg's (1913, 2003, 434) discussion of "militarism as a province of accumulation" of the early 20th-century could basically be an explanation of today's late capitalist imperialism, in which the military-industrial complex plays a key role in facilitating expanded reproduction of capital and 'creating' new spaces of exploitation by violence and destruction (Žižek 2009).

The appropriation of public assets by dispossession creates the appearance of a growing accumulation because new areas of exploitation and processes of surplus value are added to the circulation of capital.

2.1.2. Financialization

The second characteristic of accumulation by dispossession is financialization. The enormous increase in financial capital is intertwined with deregulations of markets, a rapid development of information and communication technology and the processes of privatization. Speculation in the capitalist financial system has contributed to an apparent economical growth through major capital redistributions. The financial system holds a particularly important position in the "thievery" of public assets such as pensions (Harvey 2006, 45). The on-going build-up of fictitious capital, through hedge funds, ponzi schemes and asset stripping, together with an overall emphasis on stock value, generates an apparent economical growth. These processes were depicted as one main factor when the global economic crisis set in 2008. Financialization, and the increasing importance of the financial sector, also mark the stagnation phase in the so-called Kondratiev cycles that distinguish growth and stagnation within the capitalist world system over historical periods (Arrighi 2010). Marx (1867, 1990, 920) stressed the importance of the credit system in order to understand the growing power of capital over states and the rapid (spatial) centralization of capital. As an example the IMF and the World Bank are doing the job by setting "up micro-credit and micro-finance institutions to capture what is called 'the wealth at the bottom of the pyramid' and then suck out all that wealth to support ailing international financial institutions...and use that wealth to pay the asset and merger games…" (Harvey 2010a, 272). Media researcher Almiron (2010) highlights the growing relationship between financial capital and news media organizations. News media are increasingly dependent on financial actors, such as banks, and therefore financialization has profound consequences on news practices and content (Almiron, 2010).

2.1.3. The Management and Manipulation of Crises

Third, the neo-liberal turn in capitalism has resulted in orchestrated economic crises. Crises permit rapid redistribution of assets and economic shock therapy in the form of structural adjustment programs. Orchestrated crises were more or less the rule in Latin America during the 1980s and the 1990s. Debt crisis in single countries enabled quick changes to the IMF's structural adjustment programs, and thereby transformed the national economies according to the neo-liberal model propagated by transnational institutions such as IMF and the World Bank. These provoked crises resulted in a massive relocation of capital and created an apparent accumulation of capital. The crises produced a large population of unemployed labour force that created "a pool of low wage surplus labour convenient for further accumulation" (Harvey 2006, 47). These crises also expose the use of violence that is applied in order to secure the interest of capital. The violence emanating in the intersection of capital and states is manifested through brutal suppression of protests, labour organizing and social movements all over the global south.

2.1.4. State Redistribution

In neo-liberal capitalism, the state is transformed into the most central actor in the redistribution (privatization) of public assets. The privatization of the public sector, or large cuts in the funding of public services, constitutes the fourth key element in accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2006, 48). There are numerous examples of how the state, despite the political character of the ruling government, has played a key role in processes of privatization. For example; the privatization of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the pension system under fascist dictatorship (in Chile 1980), during social-democratic governments (in Sweden in the late 1990s) and during the Peronist rule in Argentina (in the 1990s), privatization of public housing in the UK during Thatcher's government in the 1980s, during both social-democratic and centre-right wing (local) governments in Sweden over the past fifteen years, and the privatization of agricultural land during the nationalist rule [PRI] in Mexico in the 1990s. The list of privatizations is almost endless. In the greater perspective, state redistributions spawn massive relocations of public assets to private ownership. The transfer of public assets into the private sector is not only about the privatization of social services such as education, health care, social work, infrastructure, pensions, etc., but it also involves pure money transfers to the business sector in the form of bank rescue programs and government investment in the private sector. In the U.S. the "corporate welfare programs" which signify the neo-liberal turn, have resulted in an enormous redistribution of taxpayer's money into the hands of the private sector (Harvey 2006, 49).

The effects of state redistribution are sometimes violent. There are several cases of direct warfare against social mobilization, for example against social movements in Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico, trade unionists in Colombia, the organized landless rural workers in the MST in Brazil, the Adivasi in India, and so on. State redistribution may also involve a more latent symbolic violence against people who are forced from their homes due to property speculation that surfaced in the aftermath of the large privatization of public housing (as in London), or the expulsion of large populations caused by the private expropriation of natural resources (everywhere in the global South). The formation of such indirect violence is a key attribute in several processes in late capitalism. We will now tap into what distinguishes the violence of original/primitive accumulation in relation to our contemporary era of new imperialism through accumulation by dispossession.

2.2. The Role of Violence in the Process of Accumulation

In order to understand the neo-liberal turn in capitalist accumulation and the processes that mark the global expansion of capital, we must consider how global capital is connected to territorial geo-politics in a neo-imperialist manner. Primitive accumulation or accumulation by dispossession is basically a form of imperialism (Harvey 2003). Capitalism inherits a contradiction between the global expansion of capital, and a territorial logic of power (geopolitical behaviour of nation states) (Harvey 2006, 105). Harvey's (2003) analysis of imperialism shows that geopolitical rivalry and global capital accumulation coincide and reshape the basis of accumulation. The analysis of capital accumulation and the geopolitical development that consists of both primitive accumulation and expanded reproduction reveal that violence plays a central role in the expansion of the capitalist world system. Violence is simply part of the inner logic of accumulation, it surfaces when its needed as a necessary component in securing the "right" of capital. Wallerstein (2001:29) argues that the problems of expansion in a period of systemic crisis will be accompanied with potentially more violent capital expansion. Parallel to the political decline due to the weakening position of nation states in relation to transnational institutions such as the IMF/WB, the process will undoubtedly increase the amount of daily violence in the world system. Violence emerges at the intersection of global capital accumulation, especially in the accumulation by dispossession, and the territorial geopolitics of the U.S. as the leading hegemon in the world. So violence is inevitably part of a system that breeds further economic and social inequality, and thus it can be understood as an intra-systemic necessity.

Let us now turn to the specific role of violence in the accumulation by dispossession. The capitalist system relies on both active and underlying violence, as means of securing accumulation and the private control over the means of production. Žižek (2008) distinguishes between subjective and objective violence. Subjective violence, such as interpersonal aggression, crime, terror or the repressive apparatus of the state, is overt and exercised with a specific intent of some sort (pathological, political, patriarchal, religious, etc.). Objective violence is on the other hand built into the practices of capitalism, and manifested in overt discrimination, structural racism, economic destitution, or other forms of more subtle exploitation. The two forms of violence are relational. Subjective violence, for example the suburban riots in cities like Paris and London, can be comprehended in its relation to objective violence, the annihilation of social trust caused by economic exploitation, expulsion, racism and discrimination. Subjective violence is just the more visible of the two (Žižek 2008). As objective violence could be viewed as a consequence of the exploitative social relations in capitalism, it also appears as an underlying threat of violent acts against those who contest it. In this sense, the objective violence is part of what Gramsci defines as the consent of hegemony, a form of violence that intertwines the two forms of capitalist dominance, force and consent, or to put it in Gramsci's (1929-35, 1971, 263) words: "hegemony protected by the armour of coercion". Subjective and objective violence are two different manifestations of systemic violence constituted in

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

relation to socio-political power and economic exploitation. The global capitalist accumulation by dispossession is often marked with overt systemic violence in the form of crisis therapy, physical destruction of traditional means of production, and material expropriation through warfare and occupation, as we have seen in Iraq (Žižek 2009,17), and by an increasingly violent, economic impoverishment of subjects in the global South (Ekman 2011). Violence becomes a common feature of capitalist exploitation processes, much so because the system tends to increase an extreme asymmetry in the distribution of assets during processes of expropriation. Objective violence also includes symbolic violence, or what Galtung (1990) defines as "cultural violence". It refers to those aspects of culture that "can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (Galtung 1990, 291). So in relation to Žižek's model, cultural violence could include those aspects of news media that legitimize the use of force against social mobilization and protests, or to news media that justifies war.

So, in conclusion, we can view the historical processes of primitive accumulation preceding the capitalist mode of production, i.e. as a historical formation, characterized by colonialism, imperialism, mass expulsions of populations, the creations of mass industries, the working class and capitalists. But we can also consider primitive accumulation as a continuation of characteristics that are embedded in the capitalist mode of production. The never-ending appropriation of labour and recourses through time and space, forced into capitalist property relations, are undoubted tainted by many of the features described by Marx (1867, 1990). At the end, the main feature of primitive accumulation is the forced separation of means of production from the producers.

3. The General Role of Media and Communication in the Accumulation of Capital

There is a bundle of theoretical and empirical work that draws on Marx's theory of capital in order to understand the role of media and communication in the accumulation of capital (cf. Mosco 2009; McChesney 2007). Fuchs (2011, 141ff) distinguishes between several aspects, both internal to media and communication (as industries) and external to media and communication (as general accounts) that might illuminate its specific role in the processes of capital accumulation. I will only touch upon a couple of aspects that could be useful in order to understand media and communication in relation to primitive accumulation or accumulation by dispossession. The first aspect deals with the ideological dimension of media content and the structural relations between news systems and the financial sector. The ideological element is crucial to the reproduction of capitalism in various ways, economically, politically, juridical and so forth. For example, the media have a powerful position in reifying social relations by normalizing and facilitating the privatization of everyday life. For example, media content produces the audiences as consumers of goods and services. The aim here is not to evoke too much of the historical discussion of ideology critique, but to distinguishes some core ideological elements in relation to accumulation by dispossession. Second, the discussion on how the free time of individuals is appropriated and transformed into surplus labour, touches upon the notion of how social media work as an infrastructure for advertisement that advances capital accumulation (cf. Fuchs 2011, 149). Social media and modern information technology are crucial in the compression of time and space in the everyday circulation of commodities. We are, when using smart-phones, going online, and so on, constantly targeted as consumers. In fact, most parts of the Internet have been commercialized, and processes of commodification constantly subjugate users. There is not much that separates commercial from non-commercial content on the Internet (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 259).

3.1. News Media and the Naturalization of Accumulation by Dispossession

I would like to address a couple of cases, in which both structural and ideological dimensions of news media could be pinpointed in relation to processes of primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession. The first case discusses the role of news in relation to the privatization of public services and how news media coincide with the interest of, and facilitates the practices of, the financial sector (cf. Almiron 2010; Hope 2010). The second example deals with the media representation of the global justice movement, global protests and the World Social Forum in Swedish mass media (Ekman 2011).

3.1.1. Endorsing Privatization and Facilitating Financialization

In the 1980s and the 1990s most of the countries in the world were swept along the wave of privatizations that mark the neo-liberal turn in the global capitalist system. In Sweden, where the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

public sector previously was well developed and economically prioritized, processes of deregulation and privatization transpired in an increasing speed. The situation in Sweden reflected, more or less, the tendencies that were visible in the rest of Western Europe. In correspondence to the rapid wave of privatization in the 1990s the noun "market"[3] emerged as one of the most prominent agents in the news on economical matters (cf. Mårtenson 2003; Viscovi 2006). The representation of the "market" as a unified actor, which reacts on political decisions, declares which political actors are good or bad, and decides on how to view the overall economic condition, changed the discourse of news reporting on economical matters (Mårtenson 2003). The mediated notion of the "market" emerged as an ideological element to the neo-liberal turn and the massive deregulation of the capitalist economy. In correspondence to the emergence of the "market", news turned to the financial sector, and the stock market became a prevailing feature. This also meant that actors from the financial sector tended to dominate as experts in the everyday news flow. The representation of economic issues were signified by a shift from labour markets, unions, etc. to the financial markets and the construction of the mediated citizen as a private-economic subject (as opposed to wage-labourer, or someone outside the realm of finance speculation) (Viscovi 2006). Almiron's (2010, 167) study on two leading Spanish newspapers in 2006 shows a similar result. Financial actors and indicators dominate the news, and Almiron (2010, 167) conclude that: "the lack of independent journalistic investigation in most of the information was almost absolute". The paradigm shift within the news, identified by Mårtenson (2003) and Viscovi (2006), corresponded with the process of financialization in accumulation by dispossession.

Let's consider one specific Swedish case that signifies the role of news media in endorsing privatization by facilitating the transfer of ordinary people's savings into the financial market, and one truly global phenomenon that shows how news flows become intertwined with financial flows and how the interests of financial news coincide with the interests of financial actors.

In June 2000 the publically owned telecommunication company Telia was partly privatized (30 percent was sold to the public). Almost one million Swedes became shareholders after substantial commercial advertising (in television, newspapers and in the public space) and after a political campaign (the whole privatization was endorsed on a personal level by the minister of finance) aided by news media. In the process of privatizing part of the company, the stock was promoted as a "people's-share"[4] in the news. This ideological noun was used in order to smoothen out the fact that the public now could buy something that was already in their possession, and with the opportunity to make a profit[5]. For example, a couple of weeks prior to the privatization, the second largest tabloid, Expressen, published several articles endorsing the readers to purchase shares. One article used the luring headline: "Eight reasons in favor of Telia…This is why the share might become a winner" (Bolander 2000a). Articles, both in tabloids and dailies, used financial actors to boost the privatization and the opportunity to make a quick profit: "Stock market experts believe in a killing on the market" (headline in Bolander 2000b), "Telia is predicted a good start. Experts advise to purchase the new people's-share" (headline in Magnusson, 2000). Some articles were just plain buyers guides: "How to purchase Telia – the new people's-share" (headline in Norlin, 2000), "How you can purchase the people's-share" (headline in Wedel, 2000). The list of articles aiding the privatization could be extended. The whole construction of a "people's-share" is very much a media phenomenon interlinked to the increasing focus on the financial sector. When searching the largest Swedish press archive *Mediearkivet*, it reveals that the term "people's-share" appeared in a total of 186 articles prior to the privatization of Telia. But from the year 1999, when the privatization process started, and onwards, it has appeared 1113 times, peaking at 400 articles in the year 2000. The seven biggest Swedish newspapers published 220 articles containing the word "people's-share" in the year 2000 alone.

The privatization of public infrastructures such as telecommunication services corresponds to similar processes of marketization within news production (Almiron 2010). The mounting commercialization of news and the increasing symbiosis between financial news and the financial sector, paralleled by limited economic recourses and increasing time limits within journalistic production, results in a very uncritical journalism (of course with notable exceptions). The harsher conditions of news journalism as a result of increasing demands of higher profit margins (obtained from what Marx defines as relative surplus value, 1867, 1990, 429ff), simultaneously with a decrease in sales, make financial news an easy target for economically well-situated actors in the financial markets.

[3] The "market" will be used in brackets to signify its ideological status.

[4] The noun "people's-share", corresponds to the concept of the "people's-home", a term used to explain the Swedish welfare model that prevailed in Swedish society during the post WW II-period. The concept of a people's-home, was first used in 1928 in a speech by Swedish Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson (Meidner 1993, 212).

[5] However, this was not the case. The share became a huge disappointment, and by 2010 the value was reduced to half the launching price in 2000 (Dalarnas Tidningar 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

So apart from the obvious role of information and communication technology in facilitating the circulation of capital in the financial markets, the equivalent role of traditional news media should not be overlooked (cf. Hope 2010).

So, let us now look at a more global phenomenon where news media coincide with the interest of, and facilitates the practices of, financial markets. We now move to the accumulation of capital that Marx defines as M-M', money generated out of money (Marx 1867, 1990, 248). The relationship between news media and the financial sector is not new; on the contrary it goes back to the very first European newspaper, owned by a banking family (Almiron, 2010, 68). However, as a consequence of the massive deregulations of the financial sector (banking, credit flows, etc.) and the emergence of new means for financial speculation through information and communication technology in the 1990s, information within news media flows and financial flows started to overlap in real time (Hope 2010, 654). Broadcasters such as Bloomberg and CNBC became engines in the mounting flow of asset transfers within the financial sector, generating a massive speculative financial economy. In the 1980s and 90s large television networks fused with the world of financial transactions, providing vast amounts of financial information to journalists all over the world (Hope 2010). One could argue that finance broadcasting provided the raw material (in the form of digits, index, rates, financial "expert" discourses, etc.) to news outlets all over the world. This raw material was then used in producing news in different media settings in different economic and geographical contexts. A rapid movement on the stock markets somewhere in the global financial system had a direct impact on both actors in the financial sector as well in the media sector. In the mid 1990s these media/finance flows of information were also transferred online, creating an instant flow of financial information on the Internet. The merger of interests between the field of finance capital and news journalism that was visible to a certain extent in the 1980s became more or less standard after the rapid development of information and communication technologies in the 1990s (Hope 2010). In the beginning of the 21st century "most of the top news-media conglomerates have experienced a huge increase in their financial links and dependencies" (Almiron 2010, 152). So considering the instant flow of information through communication systems, the growth within the financial sector exploded in the first years of the past decade. The increase in Web-based financial actors flourished alongside computer generated algorithmic trading, secrete hedge funds, derivative trading, asset-stripping, and so on, creating an enormous build-up of fictitious capital. In all this, the relationship between actors within journalism and in the financial sector became even more blurred, both in case of ownership and personal interests among journalists. For example, high-prolific journalists became advisers on financial blogs and the blogosphere "helped to constitute the informational environments of financial print media and business television channels" (Hope 2010, 660).

The mutual interest between news and the financial sector was a great factor in the (almost) total failure of journalism in the build up to the economic crisis in 2008 (Almiron, 2010). The general oblivious attitude among journalists and news producers towards the preceding financial break down in 2008 have rendered some internal criticism (see for example Schechter 2009; Fraser 2009), but the overall discussion of the political economy of financial news is still marginal outside critical media research.

So considering the role of financial news outlets and economical journalists, news media have without a doubt contributed to the increasing speculation in the financial system, by aiding the processes of financialization. The 'superfluousness' of financial information, instantly transferred through communication systems, has together with an increasing dependency on, and ownership by, financial actors, contributed to uncritical news flows on economic issues. You could even argue that a major part of the financial news is mere an informational infrastructure of finance capital interests. In relation to what Marx (1867/1990, 920) identified as the emerging credit system (what is basically today's finance system), the role of banks, credit institutions and other financial actors could not be understated in relation to the compression of time and space through communications systems. Undeniably, the function of ICT's and financial news flows in facilitating the rapid centralization of capital in the hands of financial institutions, establishes them as key actors much as the banks and the credit system in the historic processes of primitive accumulation (Marx 1867, 1990).

3.1.2. The Global Justice Movement: Violence and Politics

The global justice movement is at the forefront of the struggle against accumulation by dispossession. It is a diverse but socially and politically coherent movement of movements that addresses the specific relation between capital and processes that resemble the features of primitive accumulation described by Marx. The struggles fought by different social movements are aimed at ongoing processes of peasant expulsions, privatization of natural recourses, the thievery of land and means

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

of production, the suppression of indigenous people, the financial system of debts and structural adjustment programs, all coerced by national and global capital aided by brute state power. In conclusion, the global justice movement could be seen as a social and political reaction to the processes that constitute capital accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2010a, 313).

The mobilizations against a series of global summits towards the end of the last millennium became visible to a transnational public during the WTO-meeting in Seattle in late November 1999. Following an explosion of protests around the world at similar events, the Global Justice Movement made headline news all over the world (Klein 2001). Through the creation of the World Social Forum (WSF) in 2001, the diverse political resistance generated by the dispossession of labour, resources and land, constituted a common ground. The World Social Forum facilitates a unique space for discussions, meetings, seminars, and social contacts that generates diverse political collaborations, platforms, campaigns, and decisions (Sen and Waterman 2009). In short - the WSF and the global justice movement represent the first step in organizing global resistance against capital in an age that has been characterized as post-political (Mouffe 2008).

So, how did the social mobilizations of the global justice movement come to the fore in (Swedish) mainstream news? On the one hand, the more moderate political issues connected to the features of accumulation by dispossession such as debt relief, financial speculation and the consequences of deregulations, did make it into the news flow. The demand for debt relief, taxes on financial speculation and the right to certain basic goods (particularly water), *were* addressed in the mainstream, and sometimes even endorsed by political commentators and actors outside the global justice movement. On the other hand, at the end, it also became clear that most of the representation focused on the social and political impossibilities of achieving any larger changes within the global economic system. When political action was represented in the news media, such as in the mobilization for a total debt relief, the framing neglected the long-going struggle among social movements against the structural adjustment programs of the IMF and the World Bank. Instead representatives of Western governments were given credit for putting the issue on the agenda of global summits (Ekman 2011). A similar conclusion could be drawn from research made on US news media. As Lance Bennett and colleagues conclude from their study on US news media: "Perhaps the greatest irony in the journalistic construction of the globalization debate is that WEF elites were given disproportionate credit for issues that activists had long before defined and attempted to get into the news on their own terms" (Bennett et al. 2004, 450). The struggles of large social movements against accumulation by dispossession were mostly ignored and when they did come to the fore in the news, their struggles were often depicted as obsolete. In the dominating liberal discourse on globalization, peasant mobilization and struggle were framed as something that stalled wider economic progress and prosperity in the global south. At least this was the case in the mainstream reporting on the political agenda of the World Social Forum (Ekman 2011).

More radical political issues that confronted the very rationale of global economic and political structures were less visible; instead much of the news coverage tended to focus either on what was framed as a political and social incoherence of the global justice movement or at the violence occurring during the protests. In the case of the global protests against summits, the political dimension in the news flow was totally subordinated to reports about violence, or even reports about *potential* violence. The latter was manifested by news reports on upcoming protests as violent threats, as unavoidable violent confrontations, and even as non-present violence (through comments on the surprisingly peaceful character of demonstrations) (Ekman 2011, 136). When political matters were addressed, the global justice movement was described negatively in relation to the dominant institutional practices and processes in summits (Ekman 2011).

A closer look at the representation of violence reveals that it constitutes one of the primary expectations in the news reporting. The focus on violence forms an element in a far-reaching historical understanding of protests, which is naturalized in the discursive practices between journalism and state/police institutions (cf. Halloran, Elliot and Murdock 1970; Murdock 1981; Carter and Weaver 2003; Doyle 2003; Cottle 2006). Mediated violence tends to reproduce a police-based law and order discourse, and works as a rationalization of power, in which journalism first and foremost reproduces the image of systemic violence as necessary for protecting citizens and for maintaining general order in relation to organized violent protests (cf. Wahl-Jorgensen 2003). So, mediated violence could be viewed as a double-edged sword in relation to the social mobilization of the global justice movement. On the one hand, news media dismiss part of the protests and the protesters for being violent. On the other hand, news media legitimize and justifies systemic violence by mainly disseminating a police discourse of law and order (cf. Galtung 1990). For example, in the news representation of the mobilization against the WTO-meeting in Cancún 2003, news media naturalized the militarization of the meeting by framing it as an issue of "security" (Ekman 2011). Several

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

news articles depicted the massive presence of military and police (more than 20.000), military helicopters, military vessels and police barriers as "protection" for the WTO-delegates (Ekman 2011, 157). Simultaneously, the demonstrations were depicted as threats to "free trade" (Ekman 2011, 156). This form of objective violence emerges at the intersection of state/capital militarization and news media (cf. Zizek 2008).

In conclusion, the news representation of the global justice movement is dominated by hegemonic discourses on globalization, economics, social protests and politics. The rationale of neo-liberal ideology is manifested in the dominant discourse of "globalism" (cf. Fairclough 2006). It holds a preferential position in explaining how social change takes place in mediated public political debates during the period of contested neo-liberal hegemony (between 1999-2007, Ekman 2011). News coverage of global mobilization and resistance are ultimately reified as a result of the absence of any larger discussions or explanations of the global economic system that are not intra-systemic. Instead the reality is truncated, simplified and packaged, and complex social relationships are reified in relation to dominant discourses of the global economy (Ekman 2011). As media scholar Berglez (2006, 180) argues: journalism "partly embraces and 'shows understanding' for the political struggle against the capitalist system, although in terms of *neutralizing* the radical dimension of the political struggle (making it less leftist and class-located), thereby paving the way for the transformation of the radical political struggle into another (normal) *everyday life practice*". So, huge global social mobilizations against accumulation by dispossession, do not gain any significant political legitimization through conventional media exposure.

3.2. Dispossession of Everyday Online Activity

The second part, in which Harvey's theory of accumulation by dispossession could be used in relation to media and communication research, is by examining the specific role of online communication systems and platforms. Here Marx's (1867/1990, 668ff) discussion on how surplus value is generated could explain how work performed by users of social media are appropriated by capital and transformed into surplus labour. So here we will tap into the ongoing discussion of how to understand the activity performed by everyday users of social media on Web 2.0 (often refer to as prod*users*) in relation to capitalist interests (cf. Fuchs 2009; Jakobsson and Stiernstedt 2010). The production of surplus value by exploiting the activity performed on social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, etc. is made possible by selling users, and more specifically, the output of their work, to advertisers. The concept of media audiences as commodities is well debated within the research field of political economy of communication (cf. Smythe 1982; Mosco 2009, 136ff). The main element in Smythe's (1982) argument is that the audience constitutes the main commodity of the mass media (Mosco 2009, 136). Smythe's concept highlighted the role of media producers in the construction of audiences in relation to advertisers. The idea of audience commodification also located media organizations into the "total capitalist economy" (Mosco 2009, 137), as an integrated part in the circulation of capital. However, the idea of audiences performing work for media owners, for example by watching television, have been largely debated within the field of political economy (Mosco 2009, 137). Media scholar Bolin (2011, 37) suggests that viewing television could be understood as "a part of the recreation of the worker's labour power". Watching TV is not an activity that produces something, but instead a process that could be defined as a *raw material* in the production process undertaken by advertisers and media companies. Thus, watching television is part of the means of production (viewer as statistics), but it can't be considered labour (Bolin, 2011, 37). In the first phase of the circulation of capital, when the capitalist acts as a buyer of commodities, companies purchases statistic on viewer demographics (Mp) used in producing advertisements (cf. Marx 1867/1990). However, Mosco (2009, 137) argues that whether Smythe's idea of audiences constituting labour is useful or not could be left aside. Instead the main insight of the materialist approach in Smythe's theory is the concept of a reciprocal relationship in the triad of "media company-audience-advertiser" (Mosco 2009, 137). The idea that mass media are not only ideological producers or transmitters, but also totally integrated in the circulation of capital is unquestionably useful when analyzing the political economy of mass media.

In the case of users of Web 2.0, the process of appropriation is indeed a process of appropriated labour. The work dispossessed by capital is everything users do when they are communicating through various commercial platforms and sites on the Internet. For example, in the case of Facebook and other networking platforms, this process of transferring surplus labour of online activity by everyday users into the circulation of capital, is refined by providing to advertisers specific segments of users, based on the information obtained from Web traffic, preferences and activities on networking sites and other places on the Internet. Here the appropriated labour consists of everything we do when we are online. Most parts of the work performed by users are monitored and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

enclosed by different networking sites, search engines, e-mail services, etc. Here you could actually speak about a process that separates the means of production (intellectual, communicative and creative) from the worker (prod*users*) (Marx 1867/1990:875). It is not a direct forced separation, but an indirect one. The indirect forcing factors are basically the disadvantages that you might experience when being outside a network platform such as Facebook, for example the loss of job-opportunities, personal connections, social relations, and other immaterial assets. The price of being outside could be measured against the fact that you "sell" all your information and activities to a commercial actor to be able to participate. As a consequence, everyday online activity constitutes a dynamic field of potential surplus labour ready to be transformed into surplus value. This is refined by surveillance systems that track user behaviours and monitor activity by categorizing what is uploaded, "liked" (in the case of Facebook), what your e-mails contains (in the case of Gmail), what Websites you visit on a regular basis, and basically everything that you do when surfing the corporate part of the World Wide Web (Fuchs 2011; Jakobsson and Stiernstedt 2010).

However it is not only the time and the work, in the form of texts, images, videos, and other aspects of personal information (in the form of unpaid labour) that are dispossessed by capital. Network sites such as Facebook also transform the social relations between users and business corporations. When users integrate companies, brands, and other commodities into their everyday social networks, the producer-consumer relationship becomes just another personal relationship, much like the one you have in your everyday social life. For example, Coca Cola has almost 40 million fans on its Facebook page[6]. Since companies, brands and products have their own pages in networking sites such as Facebook, the interaction between business and consumers is, potentially, instant and never ending. The activities on social networks sites also advance commodified individualism by transforming inter-personal communication in relation to products and consumption (cf. Fuchs 2011, 315). The marketing strategies of big multi-national companies aim to captivate the social being in itself, creating milieus that colonize every lasting part of private and personal life. This reflects, or indeed advances, what Jhally (2000, 29) refers to as the "overwhelming…commercial colonization of our culture". The most ultimate appearance of this reification process is probably the ideology and practice that indulges the construction of the individual self as a brand, or as a platform for commercial branding. This is a phenomenon that is highly visible in the blogosphere. In the anticipation of catching the eye of advertising firms, in order to get some revenue from the business sector, thousands of bloggers act like advertising posters for brand names and products by incorporating and mediating their consumption in communication platforms in Web 2.0. Consequently communication platforms and infrastructures constitute a highly dynamic arena for dispossession of labour and the "life" outside ordinary wage-labour. When free time and the social conditions of every-day life become integrated in the production-consumption relation of capital accumulation, users are reified simply by being unpaid producers of images, texts, videos, stories, etc., that transform them into commodities that are sold to advertisers and companies. All the user-generated content on commercial platforms such as Facebook are owned, stored and processed with the purpose of generating surplus value, this is of course the whole idea of corporate investments. In fact, the Internet is overflowed by capital interests, so you could primarily characterize it as a "space…dominated by corporations (Fuchs 2011, 337).

The rapid development of information and communication technology also has implications for the commodification of public space. For example, in relation to the research on the privatization of public space (cf. Harvey 1989; Sennett 1992), contemporary mobile phone technology has new and dynamic ways of luring subjects into the production-consumption relation of capital accumulation. The traditional debate on the privatization processes of public space has focused on how public spaces are transformed into shopping malls, corporatized areas, gated communities and so on, creating what Sennett (1992) refers to as "dead public spaces". These sanitized and corporately controlled commodified spaces are increasingly visible all over the globe. The most striking feature of these spaces is how they affect social relations and behaviours, by incorporating and naturalizing patterns of consumption into the organization of everyday life.

However, with the rapid development of mobile phone technology, *all* public spaces become potentially commodified. The mere fact that a person may well be constantly logged in to her/his Facebook account through the mobile phone opens up for a whole new dimension of the commodification of public space. This suggests that you are, at least potentially, submitted to constant corporate surveillance, monitored by several actors integrated in your online networks, and thus performing unpaid labour that is appropriated by capital. This has serious implications for the very idea of privacy (cf. Fuchs 2011, 313) and in fact the whole notion of what constitutes free time, what constitutes work and public space. Since smart phones enable the interaction between conventional

[6]In the form of "likes" (Facebook 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

advertisement (billboards, posters, etc.) and online activities by the use of Quick response-codes (QR) etc., the activities in physical public space (whether in the subway on your way to work or at the billboard posted on the wall in your neighbourhood) are integrated with your activities in your virtual space. The "apps" that seems to facilitate individual communication patterns, also colonize private subjects and alter patterns of social behaviour in everyday life by transferring them into the production-consumption relation of capital accumulation. The "apps" have a double-commodified character, they are goods that users are purchasing, and they also engage users in more consumer-based activities. Needless to say, the development of mobile phones and the massive dislocation of space when performing online communication also open up for a more positive and creative non-commercial communicative behaviour. It can enable political and social mobilization and resistance to capital and the political structures that uphold the exploitation of labour (Fuchs 2011). The problem is of course not rapid development of communication technology, but the colonization of communicative social relations by capital.

In relation to the features of accumulation by dispossession, the surveillance and invasion of privacy by corporate Internet owners such as Facebook, MySpace, Gmail, YouTube, and so on, could be understood as means to expand the reification of social relations and the self. But I will also like to stress the possibilities of one other factor immanent in the processes of primitive accumulation – violence. If we accept Žižek's (2008) idea of systemic violence as inherited by a subjective (physical) and an objective (structural or symbolic) dimension, we could argue that corporate surveillance of private subjects through technologies that monitor the information we upload, and the activities we participate in our online activities, constitute a potential objective violence. The ownership of such a great amount of information on the private being of individuals and groups, without any transparency of how this huge bundle of information is stored or used, could be comprehended as a potential threat to subjects. Besides the fact that advertised based networks and platforms already censor and forbid certain content and activities in order to satisfy advertisers (Fuchs 2011), the information of private subjects could potentially be sold to anyone. This implies that information regarding political issues or other socially sensitive oriented matters (how private the user may think they are in respect to privacy settings and person-to-person communication) could be gathered and used for purposes other than commercial advertising. So, in this respect, the surveillance of the corporate Internet could be comprehended as a potential threat simply because there is no guarantee what the information will be used for, who is buying it and to what extent private/personal information is circulated. Sensitive information, owned, gathered and processed by companies like Facebook, could be sold as commodities to actors within the military-industrial complex, or to political actors. Since surveilled subjects, and the constant flow of information emanating from users, are commodities in the market place, objective violence appears as an underlying threat to those whose personal/private information contests the current interests of the ruling political and economical powers.

4. Conclusion

In order to identify the role and function of news media and communication systems in the ongoing accumulation of capital, I have argued that Marx's (1867/1990) concept of primitive accumulation and Harvey's (2003; 2006; 2010) theory of accumulation by dispossession could contribute to critical media and communication research. The concept of primitive accumulation as a continuing set of characteristics within the expanded reproduction of capital is useful in order to understand some distinctive elements in contemporary news media content, news flows and news media systems, and within the development of online communication platforms. The processes that distinguish capital accumulation in the time of neo-liberal global expansion, coincide with many of Marx's descriptions of how pre-capitalist modes of production were transformed into capitalism. The ongoing global crisis reveals that expanded reproduction of capital is facing many constrains, and thus the search for new ways to secure the accumulation of capital indicate that more and more aspects of our societies are, and will continue to be, relocated into capital property relations. In these transformation processes, new areas of commodification are located and new ways of appropriating unpaid (free time) labour are developed. In these processes news media systems and online communication play a considerable dynamic part. This article has targeted two areas in which primitive accumulation/accumulation by dispossession could contribute to the research field of the political economy of media and communication.

First, I have addressed the specific ideological dimension of news and the function of financial news flows and systems in relation to capital accumulation. Second, I have discussed various aspects of how surplus value is produced in relation to everyday Internet use and in relation to the rapid advancement of communication technology.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The first aspect that can be summarized here is how news media facilitate the privatization of the commons, endorse the transfer of public assets into private property relations and depoliticize and delegitimize social mobilization against capital. Furthermore the article shows how news flows and news media systems coincide and interlink with financial flows and actors, thus constituting a close relationship between financial news and the finance sector. This relationship is also attached to the rapid changes within information and communication technology and the compression of time and space in capital accumulation.

The second aspect dissects the political economy of Web. 2.0 with a specific focus on how pro*dusers* are commodified and sold to advertisers and how the work performed by users in network platforms such as Facebook is appropriated by capital. The commodification of social media and Internet use has potentially far-reaching possibilities. The colonization of free time, the total commercialization of recreation, personal social relations and even the self, by capital, is made possible by the corporate control over the user dimension in social networks and other social media platforms. Internet surveillance, in which commercial gathering, owning and processing of private information, is one of the major assets in the circulation of capital and could be viewed as a potentially threat to users, and even a part of the objective violence constituted in capitalist exploitation.

Undeniably this article has focused on the negative aspects of how mainstream news media facilitates and reproduces the exploitation of capital, how the use of new information/communication technology become colonized by capital, and how commodification processes tend to dominate the flow of information in global media and communication systems. However, there are also several aspects of media production and communication technology that point in an opposite direction and open up for counter-hegemonic formations in a global context. The dynamic production and circulation of alternative and radical media and the ongoing struggle for a commons-based Internet are important aspects to highlight within critical media and communication research. The realm of news media production and communication technologies is never monolithic, thus it also needs to be theorized and analyzed from the perspective of emerging alternatives (cf. Fuchs 2011). After all, the seminal theory of Marx on capitalism also points out alternatives to the total exploitation of capital.

References

Almiron, Núria. 2010 *Journalism in Crisis. Corporate Media and Financialization*. New Jersey: Hampton Press.

Arrighi, Giovanni. 2010. *The Long Twentieth Century*. London: Verso.

Bennett, W. L. Pickard, V. Iozzi, D. Schroeder, C. Lagos, T. and Caswell, E. 2004. Managing the public sphere: Journalistic construction of the great globalization debate. *Journal of Communication* 54: 437-455.

Berglez, Peter. 2006. *The Materiality of Media Discourse - On Capitalism and Journalistic Modes of Writing.* Örebro: Örebro Studies in Media and Communication 4.

Bolander, Hans. 2000a. Åtta skäl som talar för Telia. Expressens Hans Bolander: Därför kan aktien bli en vinnare. *Expressen*, May 21. 6.

Bolander, Hans. 2000b. Börsexperterna tror på klipp. *Expressen*, May 31. 6.

Bolin, Göran. 2011. *Value and the Media*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

Callinicos, Alex. 2009. *Imperialism and Global Political Economy.* London: Polity Press.

Carter, Cynthia. and Weaver, C. K. 2003. *Violence and the Media.* Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Cottle, Simon. 2006. *Mediatized conflict: developments in media and conflict studies.* New York: Open University Press.

Dalarnas Tidningar. 2010. Så mycket har Teliaaktien fallit. Dalarnas Tidningar 14 June 2010. Accessed 25 February 2012. http://www.dt.se/nyheter/dalarna/1.3086140-sa-mycket-har-teliaaktien-fallit

Doyle, Aaron. 2003. *Arresting Images: Crime and Policing in Front of the Television Camera.* Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Ekman, Mattias. 2011. *The Global Justice Movement in Swedish Media: Hegemonic formations in the relation between journalism and capitalism. (English title)* Stockholm: JMK.

Facebook. 2012. Facebook CocaCola. Accessed 20 February 2012. http://www.facebook.com/cocacola

Fairclough, Norman. 2006. *Language and Globalization.* New York: Routledge.

Fraser, Matthew. 2009. Five reasons for crash blindness. *British Journalism Review 20*(4): 78-83.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some reflections on Manuel Castells' book Communication Power. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 7(1): 94-108. Accessed 27 February 2012. http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/136/90

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies.* New York: Routledge.

Galtung, Johan. 1990. Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research.* 27(3): 291-305.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1929-35, 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* New York: International Publishers.

Halloran, James. D. Elliot, Philip. and Murdock, Graham.1970. *Demonstrations and Communication: A Case Study.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.

Hartsock, Nancy. 2006 Globalization and Primitive Accumulation: The Contributions of David Harvey's Dialectical Marxism. In *David Harvey. A Critical Reader*. Edited by Castree, N. and Gregory, D. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Harvey, David. 1982. 2006.*The Limits to Capital.* London: Verso.

Harvey, David. 1989. From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Tansformation of Urban Governance in Late Capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler.* 71B: 3-17.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Harvey, David. 2006. *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. London: Verso.
Harvey, David. 2010a. *A Companion to Marx's Capital.* London: Verso.
Harvey, David. 2010b. *The Enigma of Capital: And the crises of Capitalism.* London: Profile Books.
Hesmondhalgh, David. 2007. *The Cultural Industries*. London: Sage.
Hope, Wayne. 2010. Time Communication, and Financial Collapse. *International Journal of Communication* 4 2010: 649-669.
Jakobsson, Peter. and Stiernstedt, Fredrik. 2010. Pirates of Silicon Valley: State of exception and dispossession in Web 2.0. *First Monday* Volume 15, Number 7. Accessed February 25, http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2799/2577
Jhally, Sut. 2000. Advertising at the edge of the apocalypse. In *Critical studies in media commercialism.* Edited by R. Andersen and L. Strate. New York: Oxford University Press.
Klein, Naomi. 2001. Reclaiming The Commons. *New Left Review* nr.9
Luxemburg, Rosa. 1913, 2003. *The Accumulation of Capital.* London: Routledge Classics.
Magnusson, Karl. Erik. 2000. Telia spås en bra start. Experterna råder till köp av den nya folkaktien. *Göteborgs-Posten*, May 22. 35.
Marx, Karl. 1857,1993. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy.* London: Penguin Classics.
Marx, Karl. 1867,1990. *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Classics.
Marx, Karl. 1885,1992. *Capital: Volume 2: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Classics.
McChesney, Robert. W. 2007. *Communication Revolution.* London: The New Press.
Mediearkivet. 2012. Accessed on February 25. https://web.retriever-info.com/
Meidner, Rudolf. 1993. Why did the Swedish Model Fail? *Socialist Register* Vol. 29: 211-228.
Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication. Second Edition.* London: Sage Publications.
Mouffe, Chantal. 2008. *Om det politiska.* Hägersten: Tankekraft.
Murdock, Graham. 1981. Political Deviance: the press presentation of a militant mass demonstration. In *The Manufacture of News: social problems, deviance and the mass media.* Edited by Cohen, S. and Young, J. London: Constable.
Mårtenson, Bo. 2003. *Den televiserade ekonomin- Nyheter om statsbudgeten 1980-1995.* Stockholm: JMK.
Norlin, Arne. 2000. Så köper du Telia – Den nya folkaktien. *Aftonbladet,* April 15. 5.
Olivera, Oscar, and Lewis, Tom. 2004. *Cochabamba! Water Rebellion in Bolivia*. Boston: South End Press.
Schechter, Danny. 2009. Credit crisis: How did we miss it? *British Journalism Review 20*(1): 19-26.
Sen, Jai, and Waterman, Peter. (eds.) 2009 *World Social Forum Challenging Empires.* Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books.
Sennett, Richard. 1992. *The Fall of Public Man.* New York: W.W. Norton.
Smythe, Dallas. W. 1982. On the Audience Commodity and its Work. In *Media and Cultural Studies Keyworks. Edited by* Durham, M. G and Kellner, D. M. 2006. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
Viscovi, Dino. 2006. *Marknaden som monster och monster. Ekonomiska experter och nyheter om ekonomi i Rapport 1978-1998.* Göteborg: JMG.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2001. *Liberalismens död*. Stockholm: Vertigo.
Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. 2003 Speaking Out Against the Incitement to Silence: The Brittish Press and the 2001 May Day Protests. In *Representing Resistance- Media, Civil Disobedience and The Global Justice Movment.* Edited by Opel, A. and Pompper, D. Westport/CT: Praeger Publishers.
Wendel, Per. 2000. Så köper du folkaktien. *Expressen*. May 21. 6.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2008 *Violence. Six sideways reflections.* New York: Picador.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2009 *First as Tragedy, Then As Farce.* London: Verso.

About the Author

Mattias Ekman
Mathias Ekman is working as a lecturer in the department of Media Studies at Stockholm University. He has contributed to a chapter in the *Sage Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media* (2011).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 171-183, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

How Less Alienation Creates More Exploitation? Audience Labour on Social Network Sites

Eran Fisher

Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, The Open University, Israel, eranfisher@gmail.com

Abstract: The notion of audience labour has been an important contribution to Marxist political economy of the media. It revised the traditional political economy analysis, which focused on media ownership, by suggesting that media was also a site of production, constituting particular relations of production. Such analysis highlighted the active role of audience in the creation of media value as both commodities and workers, thus pointing to audience exploitation. Recently, in light of paradigmatic transformations in the media environment – particularly the emergence of Web 2.0 and social network sites – there has been a renewed interest in such analysis, and a reexamination of audience exploitation. Focusing on Facebook as a case-study, this article examines audience labour on social network sites along two Marxist themes – exploitation and alienation. It argues for a historical shift in the link between exploitation and alienation of audience labour, concurrent with the shift from mass media to social media. In the mass media, the capacity for exploitation of audience labour was quite limited while the alienation that such work created was high. In contrast, social media allows for the expansion and intensification of exploitation. Simultaneously, audience labour on social media – because it involves communication and sociability – also ameliorates alienation by allowing self-expression, authenticity, and relations with others. Moreover, the article argues that the political economy of social network sites is founded on a dialectical link between exploitation and alienation: in order to be de-alienated, Facebook users must communicate and socialize, thus exacerbating their exploitation. And vice-versa, in order for Facebook to exploit the work of its users, it must contribute to their de-alienation.

Keywords: Audience labour, social media, social network sites, Marxism, political economy, exploitation

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Uri Ram for his invaluable help formulating the argument. I would also like to thank Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco for their constructive remarks.

1. Audience Work in the Mass Media

The contribution of Marxist theory to communication studies runs wide and deep (see, for example, Hardt 1992, Artz, Macek, and Cloud 2006). Two analytical coordinates to the study of media, however, stand out as particularly influential: a cultural analysis and a materialist analysis.[1] The two approaches offer quite a different perspective on what it is precisely that audience does. A cultural analysis focuses on the superstructure and uncovers the ideological role of media content in the reproduction of capitalism. Such an analysis of cultural studies (Holmes 2005, 23-24) includes, for example, an investigation into the ideological content of books (Radway 1984), journals (Lutz and Collins 1993, Stevenson, Jackson, and Brooks 2001) advertisements (du Gay et al. 1997, Section 1), movies (Wasko 2001), television shows (Liebes and Katz 1994), and news (Said 1981) (see: Akass and McCabe 2007). Analyzing the undercurrent ideologies of media content could pertain to capitalist concerns, such as class, consumerism, and inequality, as well as to other concerns, such as gender, nationalism, and race (see: hooks 1996, Hall 1995).

Two intellectual legacies have been particularly central in the development of this analytical coordinate: the Frankfurt school (Adorno 2001, Horkheimer and Adorno 1976) and the Birmingham school (Hall 1980, 1995). The two schools differ in their interpretation of the workings of ideology and in the role of the audience. The Frankfurt School views ideological messages as forced down on passive audiences. This has led to study how ideology is coded into media messages. The Birmingham School attributes audience with an active capacity to decode, or "read" ideological messages in the media and resist them (Hall 1980, Mathijs 2002), leading to a theorization of audiences as participants in the construction of multiple meanings of media texts (Ang 1985, Morley 1992). Generally, then, whether assuming that ideological content is propagated top-down to audiences,

[1] I use the distinction between cultural studies and political economy as ideal types, referring to categories of analysis, rather than to actual coherent schools, or individual researchers, which always tend to be more nuanced. Thus, for example, I do not argue that the Frankfurt School has dealt merely with ideology, but rather that the ideal type of cultural studies and its focus on ideology is well epitomized in the thrust of the School's work.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

or whether audiences are seen as actively participating in the process of meaning-making, this strand of Marxist research contributes to the analysis of the media as an ideological site.

A second dominant contribution of Marxist theory to communication studies is a materialist analysis, focusing on the "base". Such analysis of political economy uncovers the relations of production entailed in media institutions. Here, too, one can discern two dominant approaches. Predominantly, the political economy of the media focuses on media ownership. This approach analyzes media as a means of production, investigating issues of media monopoly, media corporation's mergers and consolidations, links between government and the media, and employment arrangements of media workers (Mosco 2009; Mosco and McKercher 2009; Schiller H. 1991; Schiller D. 2010; McChesney 2008; Herman and Chomsky 1988). In the 1970-80s, the political economy of the media was greatly revised by analyzing media as a site of production in and of itself, thus highlighting the productivist role of audience in the creation of media value, both as a commodity and as labour power. This approach was pioneered by Dallas Smythe's groundbreaking work on the audience commodity (Smythe 1981). Smythe suggested that what goes on in mass communication is not primarily audience consumption of media content – produced by media corporations – but, in fact, the selling of audience attention to advertisers. This formulation rendered the audience as active participant in the political economy of mass communication. Smythe's notion of the work of the audience revolves particularly on cognitive and emotional work: learning to desire and buy particular brands and commodities. His was a critique of what he considered to be a "blindspot" in the aforementioned Marxist culturalist analysis, which tended to focus exclusively on the content of media products.

Rather than viewing the media merely as an ideological, superstructural apparatus, that supports relations of production in the economic base – presumably located elsewhere (for example, in the factory) – Smythe positioned the media as a vital component in the chain of capital accumulation. Smythe suggested that the media sells the audience commodity to advertisers. In return for the bait of programing, audience remains glued to the television screen, thus watching advertisements, which become an ever-important driving motor for consumption. For the first time, then, Smythe assigned the mass media and the audience central roles in advanced capitalism, arguing that the "mass media produce audience as commodities for sale to advertisers", and that "audience-power" is put to work by advertisers by "getting audiences to market commodities to themselves" (Jhally and Livant 1986, 129). In some respects, Smythe transplanted the Birmingham School's notion of the active audience, from the realm of meaning-making to that of money-making.

Further developments in this strand of Marxist political economy analyzed media as a site for the production of value in and of itself. Jhally and Livant (1986) argued that Smythe's focus on the contribution of audience labour for manufacturers of branded commodities "has tended to deflect the specificity of the analysis away from communications to the ensuing consumption behavior of the audience" (Jhally and Livant 1986, 129). "Ultimately" they say, "Smythe was concerned with drawing attention to the place of communications in the wider system of social reproduction of capital" (ibid., 129). Criticizing Smythe's heavy reliance on the use-value of messages (as motivating consumption), Jhally and Livant explore the blindspot that is "located more firmly within the media industries" (ibid., 129, emphasis in original). They therefore analyze watching as a form of working since it harnesses human "capacities of perception" (ibid., 126) to the creation of value. The creation of surplus-value in the media is based on "extra watching" of commercials, on watching more ads than are necessary to pay for programming. This "surplus watching time" (ibid., 127), then, suggests that audience, in fact, work for programmers, not advertisers.

Such analysis constructs the media as a dynamic site of struggle between audience (labour) and media providers (capital), a struggle that revolves on time. Jhally and Livant (1986) do that by employing Marx's distinction between extensive and intensive exploitation. Marx insisted that capitalist struggles ultimately revolve around time, since surplus-value can only arise from workers working more time than is actually needed to reproduce their lives. This extra working creates surplus-value which, rather than being exchanged for its equivalent, is rendered into capital and is introduced to the process of accumulation (for example, by investing in new technology). Since this entails the creation of value by one class of people (workers) and its uncompensated transference to another class (capitalists), Marx refers to that as exploitation. The problem, inherent to capitalist accumulation, is that surplus-value tends to diminish over time, dwindling away the source of capital accumulation (Marx 1993, Ch. 13). To expand, or even just conserve the rate of surplus-value, capital strives to find ways to enlarge the scope of exploitation. This is done by either of two forms: extensive exploitation and intensive exploitation. Extensive exploitation refers to techniques and arrangements by which more time is dedicated to work, for example, by elongating the working day or by cutting down on lunch breaks and vacation time. Intensive exploitation is achieved by having

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

workers produce more in less time, for example, by accelerating the rhythm of work or making the work process more efficient.

Jhally and Livant (1986) argue that both these processes of exploitation have been occurring in the mass media. The audience has been asked to work more and harder over the course of history. The extension of exploitation was achieved by introducing audience with more advertisements, thus making them watch (i.e., work) more time. The intensification of exploitation, or the increase in relative surplus-value was achieved in two ways: "reorganizing the watching population, and … reorganizing the watching process" (Jhally and Livant 1986, 133). The first involves all sorts of techniques, from media market research to the rating system, all of which are aimed at helping media corporations target a specific audience with a specific ad; such market segmentation leads to increase in the value of advertisement. As Jally and Livant put it: "Specification and fractionation of the audience leads to a form of 'concentrated viewing' by the audience in which there is … little wasted watching" (133). Since highly targeted advertising costs more, "we can say that the audience organized in this manner watches 'harder' and with more intensity and efficiency" (Jhally and Livant 1986, 133-4). The other way by which relative surplus-value is exerted is through the division of time, accomplished mainly by shorter commercials.

2. Mass Media Alienation

While Marxist political economy of the media has been concerned since the 1970s with the question of exploitation in the media, little attention has been given to the notion of alienation within this framework; an oddity, considering that Marx conceived an inextricable link between the two. Marx's conception of alienation is complex and multi-layered, pertaining to a process as a well as a result. Alienation pertains to the separation of the worker from vital life processes and objects, as well as to the resulting state of estrangement from these objects. It is the estrangement of workers from the labour process, from other workers, from the finished product, and ultimately from their selves, their species-being (Marx 1978). Rather than work being an activity that workers control and navigate, rather than the real essence of a person be objectified in what he does, rather than work be a means of self-realization and authentic expression, rather than work help a person connect, communicate, and collaborate with other human beings, work under capitalism results instead in alienation.

I use the term alienation somewhat leniently, to highlight the humanist aspects in Marx's critique of capitalism and distinguish it from his more structural and economic critique. In Marxist critique, alienation and exploitation are inextricably linked, and may even be thought of as complementary tenets. Alienation is both a pre-condition for exploitation and the result thereof. Both are corollaries of the very foundations of capitalism – private property and the commodification of labour; one problem cannot be resolved without resolving the other. They do, however, point to two different aspects in Marx's critique of capitalism. The distinction is often made (following Althusser) between the young and mature Marx, the former offering a more humanist analysis of capitalism, the latter a more economistic one. While the empirical accuracy of this distinction is questionable (the mature Marx of Capital still insists on the relevance of alienation as a central cause and effect of capitalism), it does capture two distinct thrusts in Marx's critique of capitalism.

Alienation entails not only a social-economic condition whereby "value" and the product are separated from their real producers and are transferred from one class to another. More than that, alienation signals an existential state of not being in control over something (the labour process, the product, etc.), of being estranged from something (one's humanity, etc.). The thrust of this concept and the reason to introduce it over and above exploitation is precisely to highlight the contradictions of capitalism from a humanist viewpoint.

Another liberty I take with the notion of alienation is that I use the term to refer to a condition whereby work, the work process, the product of labour, and one's essence are more or less alienated. Such compromise of Marxist theoretical purity is justified in the name of historical reality. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have shown, the social and political history of industrial capitalism has been one of mitigating one problem over the other, rather than eliminating both. Hence their distinction between the humanist artistic critique and the economistic social critique. In the context of this paper, less alienation refers to a greater possibility to express oneself, to control one's production process, to objectify one's essence and connect and communicate with others. Thus, for example, working on one's Facebook page can be thought of as less alienating than working watching a television program.

Watching the media is constructed as a leisure activity in liberal discourse. Media consumption is depicted as the opposite of the alienation that dominates production; a time away from the alienation of the workday, and a chance for de-alienation (as the case is for example in the prominent

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

uses and gratifications theory; see Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 1973-4). Constructing audiencing as a consumerist activity, positions the audience in an active capacity of choice. As opposed to the work process, of which workers had no control, watching television supposedly puts the control in the hands of the viewer (literally so, with the advent of the remote control). Watching the mass media, then, is constructed in liberal discourse as a consumerist, irrational, fun, and fulfilling practice.

While Marxist political economy of the media ignored the question of alienation, the culturalist-ideological analysis did pay attention to some core aspects of alienation, even if not attending to the concept per se. If watching – in the capitalist media environment – is a form of working, then the process and content of that labour are also alienated from the audience. In fact, both advertisements and programs (which support the content of the advertisements) feed into and thrive on audience alienation, suggesting that self-fulfilment and objectification should and will arrive from consumption and leisure activities, rather than from work. Such themes are most extensively explored in the work of the Frankfurt School on the culture industry (Adorno 2001, Ch.6). But such analysis does not explicitly link audience exploitation to audience alienation. According to Marx, alienation and exploitation are inextricably linked and are a corollary of the very foundations of capitalism – private property and the commodification of labour. One problem cannot be resolved without resolving the other.

3. Audience Work in SNS: The Case of Facebook

Recently, there has been a renewed interest in the notion of audience work in light of a changing media environment, particularly the emergence of web 2.0 and social network sites (SNS). Some features of this new media environment makes a revisiting of the concept of audience labour particularly important. As opposed to mass media, SNS is characterized by high levels of participation, by user-generated content, and by the ability to create varied channels of communication: one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many.

Marxist-inspired research on this new media environment has focused almost exclusively on audience exploitation. Simultaneously, mainstream (liberal) research has tended to reaffirm the common-sense and ideological construction of SNS as facilitating de-alienation by offering users opportunities for self-expression, authenticity, communication, collaboration with others, and deep engagement with, and control over cultural, social, and economic ventures.

My argument is that both these trends – seemingly contradictory – are in fact dialectically linked. Exploitation and de-alienation are not simply two contrasting interpretations of SNS; rather, Marxist theory encourages us to accommodate them within a single analytical framework. SNS give audience more opportunities for objectification by allowing self-expression, authenticity, and communication and collabouration with others. As the communication and sociability of users are commodified, so does their labour become a source for exploitation. In what follows I consider the dialectics of exploitation and alienation on SNS by taking a closer look at Facebook.

3.1. Facebook as a Means of Communication

What is the work that SNS users do? What is it precisely that they produce? And how are they exploited? To accommodate a dialectical analysis of Facebook we should be looking at it as both a means of communication and a means of production. That is, not only as a new form of media which allows for new modes of communication (Napoli 2010), but also as a technology that facilitates a new mode of production. This should help up overcome the shortcoming of previous Marxist analysis, which offers two divergent analyses of the media as *either* a means of communication or a means of production. While such dialectical approach is appropriate to any form of mass media it becomes particularly important in the new media environment, which can be defined precisely as tying communication and production more closely together. Indeed, the unique character of web 2.0 has encouraged researchers to look more carefully at the dialectics of these two coordinates (Scholz 2010, Lee 2011).

Facebook, the world's most popular SNS, was launched in February 2004 and had 845 million monthly active users at the end of December 2011 (Facebook 2012b). Facebook offers a platform where users can create personal profiles to present themselves and communicate in varying degrees of detail and complexity about their whereabouts, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Users may add other Facebook users as friends, exchange messages with them, and follow after their public messages and their whereabouts. Users may also create communities, or sub-networks, based on shared interests. The profile allows users to characterize themselves along various personal cate-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

gories, such as gender and education history, as well as through lifestyle choices, such as favorite artists and hobbies.

Users communicate with friends through various private and public tools such as “Status”, which allows users to inform their friends of their whereabouts and actions; “Wall”, which is the a space on every user’s profile page that allows friends to post messages for the user to see; and “Chat”, which allows private, synchronic communication with friends. Users may also create and join interest groups and “Like” pages, initiated and operated primarily by governmental, commercial, and non-governmental organization as means of advertisement, sale, and mobilization. The plethora of networks and communities of which Facebook users are part can generate social action – political, economic, communal, or societal – by mean of communication and organization. Facebook is reported to have an increasingly central role in facilitating and organizing social movements and political upheavals from the Anti-Globalization movement to the Arab Spring.

Facebook is inherently “biased” to communication so that even some personal activities on one’s own profile automatically translate into communication. Such is the case of photo “tagging” in the Photos application, one of the most popular applications on Facebook, where users can upload albums and photos. If an uploaded photo features a user’s friend, he may tag the photo. This sends an automatic notification to the tagged friend, containing a link to the photo. Thus, posting a photo may roll into a communication event.

Such banal description highlights the communication facet of Facebook, and the opportunities it facilitates for users’ de-alienation, especially, as opposed to the limited opportunities facilitated by mass media. The age of mass- media was dominated by broadcast television and radio, print newspapers, and film. It was centralist, allowing only a uni-directional flow of information from few to many, and from top down. Mass-media created a hierarchical dichotomy between active producers and passive consumers, content was prepackaged and thus limited in variety, at once assuming and constructing a relatively homogenous audience. Social media, in contrast, facilitates varied communication forms: few to few, few to many, many to many. It is interactive, allowing users more engagement, and rendering the passive, homogeneous audience of mass-media into an active and engaged audience. Communication on the Internet allows individuals to narrate their lives (e.g. blogs), make their views public (talkbacks), and express their creativity (YouTube). It also allows Internet users to collabourate among themselves in an increasingly participatory culture (Jenkins 2009, Burgess and Green 2009). Indeed, most research looks at the communication facet of Facebook, and at its ability to empower individuals by contributing to their objectification.

Thus, internet research tends to construct communication – multiple, democratic, trespassing boundaries of space and time – as an ideal, most fully materialized by means of the internet. It tends to focus on user’s experience with Facebook, emphasizing individual agents’ purposeful use of Facebook for communication. Such “methodological individualism” (Popper 1971: Ch. 14), where individual users are the point of departure for the analysis, leads much research to focus on users’ satisfaction (Bonds-Raacke and Raacke 2010, Quan-Haase and Young 2010), or on the consequences of communicating on Facebook to user’s subjectivity and psychological well-being (Gonzales and Hancock 2011, Ong et al. 2011). Lastly, studies in the tradition of virtual ethnography too emphasize the communication facet of Facebook, with privacy and the dissolution of the private sphere toping research concerns (West, Lewis, and Currie 2009, Brandtzaeg, Luders, and Skjetne 2010).

These studies, then, take Facebook’s mission statement – to “giv[e] people the power to share and make the world more open and connected … Millions of people use Facebook everyday to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet” (Facebook 2012). – at face value, and see it as a virtual space of communication, sociability, and community.

3.2. Facebook as a Means of Production

Having predominantly conceived as a means of communication, the public and academic discussion on Facebook tends to highlight its capacity to contribute to (or hamper) de-alienation among users. As aforementioned, my goal here is to point out how this capacity for objectification is linked with an empowered capacity for exploitation. This demands that we recall that being a commercial company, Facebook’s primary mission is to accumulate capital, and that we analyze Facebook as technology and see it as galvanizing social relations. Such analysis of Facebook as a capitalist technology that facilitated and exacerbates exploitation, should then be linked to the dominant analysis of Facebook as a media for communication allowing de-alienation.

Facebook’s accumulation strategy can be appreciated by proxy of its staggering market value. While Facebook’s market value is highly unstable and speculative, but it can nevertheless be de-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

termined to be in the neighbourhood of US$75-100 billion. What precisely in Facebook is worth $100bb? Where does the value of Facebook emanate from? And at a more sociological level: what are the relations of production upon which SNSs are founded? We can thus begin to outline a political economy of SNS by conceptualizing Facebook not merely as a means of communication but also as technology, as embodying social relations.

A full answer to these questions should tie both facets of Facebook: as a means of communication and a means of production; to understand Facebook as technology, we need to understand Facebook as being also a media. This dialectical link of media and technology, of communication and production, is in fact a key feature of contemporary capitalist society; Facebook epitomizes a new form of production relations, where value is created not primarily by workers of the company, but by the audience. And the most important thing that Facebook users produce – the primary source of Facebook's value – is communication and sociability.

The value of Facebook is derived from Facebook's unprecedented ability to have access to information, store, own, process, and analyze it, and deliver it to its customers. Metaphorically, then, Facebook might be mistakenly seen as a warehouse of information. But the term barely begins to uncover the novelty of Facebook. To better understand the political economy of Facebook we must ask what this information consists of, how it comes into being, and by whom. To do that I will distinguish between five different types of information, which are to some extent layered one on top of the other: demographic, personal, communicative, performativite, and associational. Such typology suggests that rather than a warehouse, a more apt metaphor for Facebook is a factory, where *information is produced through communication and sociability*, rather than simply stored. What is new and unique about Facebook, and crucial to its political economy, is that much of the information in SNS emanates from the very practice of using it, from being a media of communication and sociability. Here it is that Facebook as a means of communication (media) and a means of production (technology) converge.

Communication between Facebook users generates a plethora of personal and social information about users, information which is becoming increasingly valuable for companies in virtually all consumer industries, and which is eagerly sought after by advertising, public relations, and marketing professionals. Some of that information is quite "lean" and can be described as **demographic**. SNS become key sites where demographic information is written, recorded, aggregated, and organized. The availability of demographic information on SNS is based on either users' self-disclosure (for example, in the case of age, gender, marital status, or education), or the location of servers (in the case of geographical location). While this kind of information "precedes" Facebook, it is not completely independent of Facebook, since SNS encourage their users to self-disclosure. This has a formal manifestation in Facebook's terms of use, which forbid users to "provide any false personal information on Facebook", and directs them to "keep … contact information accurate and up-to-date" (Facebook 2011a). Indeed, Facebook's privacy settings have been persistently designed to keep users' information as open as possible for public viewing (Fuchs 2011a, 2011b). More subtly and fundamentally, the ethics and norms that developed on SNS put premium on a genuine representation of the self. This signifies a turn from the culture of anonymity, promulgated during the early years of online sociability in forums, chat rooms, and MUDs (Turkle 1997).

This brings us to a second, 'thicker' layer of information, which pertains to the **identity and authenticity** of users. The ethics of SNS call for publicness, for defining and identifying oneself to oneself and to others. Users are encouraged to reveal and present their true self and define who they are through profiling. Such a demand puts users in a position of forced reflexivity, an obligation to think about, define, and present themselves. Such reflexivity is built into the website's design, which encourages users to self-disclose abundantly and systemically. As Illouz (2007, Ch. 3) has shown, profile-based websites (such as dating sites) encourage users to think about themselves in particular terms and identify themselves according to preconceived and pre-packaged categories, thus rationalizing self-disclosure. For example, when constructing a personal profile on Facebook users are asked to define their "philosophy" with the following categories: "religion", "political views", "people who inspire you", and "favourite quotes". Even though this kind of personal information presumably precedes engagement with Facebook, it cannot really be thought of as pre-existing information that Facebook merely harvests, but as information which gets articulated within the specific context of social networks, i.e., that of communication and sociality.

The third layer of information is further dependent on the engagement of users with Facebook: information based on the communication **content** of users, on their conversations with each other. In economic terms, this is arguably the most valuable information produced by users. Indeed, the attention of companies, professionals, and applications engages in the endeavour of monetizing SNS is primarily focused on communication content. Such endeavour employs quantitative and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

qualitative methods to analyze the content of interpersonal and social communication in order to decipher what people are talking about and in what way. The analyzed trends, keywords, themes, and narratives can then be associated with demographic information (such as gender, geographical location, or age) or with behavioural information (such as consumption behaviour), and yield valuable commercial information. Such information is also highly individualized, allowing it to make a definite connection between a specific content and a specific person.

Commercial interests not only listen in to the conversation of users, but also use the SNS to initiate, engage with, and shape the conversation. They can participate in the conversation by propagating messages, creating a buzz, and designing fashions and fads. An exemplar of that is the viral message (or the meme), often originating and promulgated by public relations professionals (see: Downes 1999, Green 2010: Ch. 11). In such cases, users become the media through which messages are propagated.

While communication content on Facebook covers virtually every aspect of human communication, it is worthy to note two particular types of information that SNS is especially conducive in allowing their articulation and organization, and that are of increasing value in contemporary capitalism: mundane information, and emotional queues. Mundane information pertains to everyday expressions of lived experience, such as photos taken on a trip, or reports about one's whereabouts (Beer and Burrows 2010). These scraps of information about everyday life experiences were hitherto perceived as too fragmented, insignificant, and personal to be noticed or reported on in public. SNS is especially fit to host this kind of information, which in turn opens up a capillary gaze at the way people live. Emotional queues pertain to subjective emotional expressions, and to emotional characterizations which accompany the communication. Emotional queues are usually tied to some activity done by users, such as reading a news story, or waiting in line at the supermarket. The ever-presence and immediacy of social media through mobile devices means that sentiments are registered and expressed almost as they occur, rather than reported upon in retrospect. SNS – because they are personal, interpersonal, and social; because they are associated with leisure activities and sociability; because they encourage people to be expressive, frank, and above all communicative – are particularly apt for the production and extraction of such types of information.

The forth layer of information is **performativite**, pertaining to quantitative and qualitative characteristics of users' activities on SNS, such as the number of friends they have, the dynamics of the sub-networks of which they are part, their level of engagement with Facebook, time spent on Facebook, type of activities (number of posts, number of photos posted, number and nature of "likes" clicked) and so forth.

The fifth and last layer of information, closely related to the previous one, is **associational**. This refers to the very formation of sub-networks within the SNS: a user's link to other profiles, to commercial and political pages, to news stories, brands, and so forth. By forming networks of associations, users are producing webs of meaning, symbolic universes, and semantic fields. Association information is valuable in further identifying and characterizing individuals. In a postmodern culture, where identity is constructed through signs, the web of "Likes" that users form serves as an indicator of their identity. Associational information may therefore be valuable in uncovering correlations between indicators. Moreover, the sub-networks that are formed are highly valuable since they are likely to have an identifiable character; in public relations terms, sub-networks are highly segmented groups, because opt-in is voluntary and based on some manifest characteristic. Thus, associational information allows public relations professional to identify (as well as construct) groups based on their positive attitudes towards a material, service, or cultural product, follow the different layers of information they produce, and engage these groups directly (for example, by creating a buzz).

Beginning from the most basic demographic information to the most sophisticated, it is not merely pre-existing personal information that SNS now make easier to collect. More dramatically, the existence of much of this information is dependent on the very use of SNS, on people joining them and conducting large parts of their life in them; it is information that comes into being in the very act of communicating and socializing. In sum, my argument is that such types of information – which are of increasing value in contemporary economy – are dependent on a means of communication to be produced.

4. The Dialectics of Exploitation and Alienation on SNS

Marxist theory, then, introduced two coordinates to the analysis of the media: a culturalist, ideology approach, and a materialist, political economy approach. In more abstract terms, these two coordinates refer to two distinctive facets of media as either a means of communication or a means of production. Notwithstanding Marx's insistence on a dialectical analysis of society, Marxist studies of the media commonly employ either of these two coordinates (Fenton 2007). This is not to say

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

that such studies are flatly undialectical, but rather, that dialectics is not internalized into the analysis of media. Thus, for example, culturalist analysis shows how media products such as television programs work ideologically to support relations of production in general, not in the media particularly.

Scholarship on the political economy of new media, and on audience labour in particular, also tended to be relatively one-sided, highlighting SNS as a site of exploitation of "free labour" (Terranova 2004, Ch. 3). Such approach has been criticized as over-deterministic, structuralist, and functionalist (Caraway 2011). Rather than underscoring media as a site of struggle between labour and capital, such approach gives a one-sided analysis, that of capital. The crux of Smythe's argument is that with mass communication all time becomes productive time, an argument later to be much developed with the notions of the social factory, and immaterial labour. Caraway argues that such framework is unable to distinguish leisure time from work time, coerced labour from free labour, and capacity to work from willingness to work. This lack of distinctions, says Caraway, obfuscate the Marxist category of labour. He questions Smythe's historical narrative, according to which a decrease in factory labour time was complemented by an increase in labour time in front of media advertisements. Caraway suggests an alternative version which endows labour with agency. According to the alternative version, the reduction in working hours, and the corollary expansion of leisure time were a result of a persistent and bloody struggle of workers at the beginning of the 20th century. More theoretically, then, Caraway (2011) argues that the critical potentials of the notions of the social factory and immaterial labour are absent from contemporary accounts. And Scholz has emphasized the dialectical relations between Facebook as playground and as factory (Scholz 2010).

Following this line of inquiry, this paper has attempted to explore the dialectics of production and communication within contemporary media forms, both building on the work of Smythe (1981) and Jhally and Livant (1986), and updating it. It argues that the extension and intensification of exploitation of audience labour in the mass media ran into relatively low barriers. The extension of exploitation was limited by the capacity of viewers to watch advertisements. Watching television ads is not something that audience commonly enjoys. The media cannot therefore screen too many ads from fear of losing viewers' attention (which is the actual labour power that it sells to advertisers). New technologies of television viewing which allow audience more control over viewing (such as TIVO) are setting further limits on exploitation since they allow audience to skip over ads.

The intensification of exploitation is also fairly limited by two parameters. First, the monitoring, rating, and segmentation system of mass media is highly expensive.2 Moreover, it is imbued in a paradox: the more accurate the information on viewers is, the more the surplus-value of watching increases (Jhally and Livant 1986). However, such increase in value is somewhat undermined by the price of collecting more accurate information. Moreover, viewers' monitoring techniques are based on statistical analysis, and are hence inaccurate and unreliable by definition. The desires, personality, and behaviour of each and every individual in the audience of the mass media are hard to gauge. The second parameter which sets limits to the intensification of exploitation in the mass media is that the intensification of exploitation requires media corporations to create programs that provide the appropriate "bait" for the desired audience. They can fail miserably achieving this task, either by not attracting enough audience, or not attracting a desired segment of the audience.

SNS offer a transcendence of these limitations, allowing the extension and intensification of exploitation to go beyond the limits that the mass media set. The extension of exploitation is achieved by having users spend more time on SNS. The work of Facebook users is done incessantly. In January 2010 Facebook became the site where U.S. web users spend most time (Parr 2010). The average web user spends more time on Facebook than on Google, Yahoo, YouTube, Microsoft, Wikipedia and Amazon combined (Parr 2010). The Nielsen rating for that month revealed that the average American user spends more than seven hours a month on Facebook, or 14 minutes per day. And American Facebook users are not even the heaviest users. An industry study of the monitoring and analysis firm Experian from September 2011 found that Facebook is most heavily used in Singapore, where the average visit to the social network lasts more than 38 minutes (Emerson 2011).

Moreover, thanks to the ubiquity of mobile devices (from laptops to smartphones) and wireless networks (from Wi-Fi to 3G) users are almost always accessible to Facebook. Compared with television watching, which is spatially fixed and temporally limited, Facebook offers a much more flexi-

[2] For example, the 2011 revenues of Nielsen, the largest global media rating company, were over $5.5 billion (Nielsen 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ble usage patterns. More time, than, in more parts of the day (work day, leisure time) can be spent communicating and socializing on Facebook. Self-surveillance technologies, such as Foursquare or Facebook Places (or: Location) also put users at an arms-length from their friends, extending the duration they are likely to be active on the social network.

SNS allow also the intensification of exploitation. Rather than mass media corporations allocating resources to monitor and segment their audience, it is users of SNS that segment themselves in a manner that can only be dreamt of for television audience. Such procedure is much cheaper, as it is in effect "outsourced" to users, who act as produsers (Bruns 2008). Moreover, the information gathered about the audience is also much more accurate and thick. Whereas the mass media knew its audiences as statistical entities, as aggregates and abstract segments, Facebook knows its users as individuals. The capillary reach of SNS, then, facilitates the intensification of exploitation; a biopolitical nervous system which harnesses the immaterial labour of users.

This puts into question a central tenet of the Autonomist interpretation of Marxism. The notions of immaterial labour and general intellect suggest a process of deterritorialization of knowledge, the prime means of production of contemporary capitalist accumulations. Virno speaks of "a repository of knowledges *indivisible* from living subjects and from their linguistic co-operation" (Virno 1996, quoted in Dyer-Witheford 1999, 222, emphasis mine). Such knowledges are hard to locate, localize, and collect, since they are "produced" during leisure time, within private spaces, and within the communicative space between individuals, as part of their everyday lives. The analysis presented here suggests we should think about SNS as a technology for the reterritorialization of the kind of labour that produces such knowledges – immaterial labour – and the kind of knowledges that are produced – general intellect (Peterson 2008).

Hence, the extension and intensification of exploitation in social media compared with mass media relies on the unprecedented ability to harness new forces of production to the accumulation process, particularly the production of information through communication and sociability. The audience of SNS creates value simply by audiencing, by using the media platform to express itself, communicate, and socialize. Such exploitation, then, is conditioned by a promise for de-alienation. SNS offer a media environment where audience work can potentially lead to objectification: users have much more control over the work process and the product (although not owning it legally); work entails communication that helps users connect with others and objectify more facets of their species being. SNS is a space for self-expression, for making friends, constructing communities, and organizing a political, cultural, social, or economic action.

The two processes that SNS facilitates – the exacerbation of exploitation and the mitigation of alienation – are not simply co-present but are dialectically linked. SNS establishes new relations of production that are based on a dialectical link between exploitation and alienation: in order to be de-alienated, users must communicate and socialize: they must establish social networks, share information, talk to their friends and read their posts, follow and be followed. By thus doing they also exacerbate their exploitation. And vice-versa, in order for Facebook to exploit the work of its users, it must contribute to the de-alienation of their users, propagating the ideology that de-alienation can in fact (and solely) be achieved by communicating and socializing on SNS, an ideology of communication, networking, and self-expression (Dean 2010), which sees network technology and social media in particular as the golden route to de-alienation. In such ideology, alienation is linked with a lack of communication and with social isolation, a malady promised to be cured through communication and through SNS. And so, the more users communicate and socialize, the more they post photos and follow their friends, the more they "Like" – in short, the more they engage in authentic self-expression and interpersonal communication – the more they objectify and de-alienate. Put differently, the more they work, the more they create surplus-value, and the more they are exploited.

5. A Closed-Circuit of Communication and Production

The case of Facebook alludes to new relations of production, emerging within a new environment of social media. The new relations of production are markedly different from those crystallized in the mass media, and theorized by Smythe (1981) and Jhally and Livant (1986). They are based on a new trade off between exploitation and alienation. In comparison with mass media, and television in particular, SNS can be conceptualized as a technology that is able to extend and intensify exploitation, while at the same time alleviating alienation. Audience work on SNS is both more exploitative and more de-alienating. In fact, the capacity of SNS to exploit audience work is dependent on its capacity to alleviate alienation. SNS users work harder – producing more information, communication, and sociability – the more they perceive this work to be de-alienating.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Recently, there has been an emerging interest in the question of audience work and exploitation. In two complementary chapters, Andrejevic (2011a, 2011b) examines the application of the categories of exploitation and alienation, respectively, to analyze the political economy of social media. Andrejevic suggests that social media users can be thought of as alienated from their media labour only to the extent that they do not control the product on which they labour (Andrejevic 2011b). He distinguishes between two types of information that are subject to exploitation on social media: intentional/ unintentional information. The former pertains to data extracted from intentional actions of users (such as posting a photo, or tweeting), while unintentional information pertains to data that users produce unintentionally, while doing something else. The generation of unintentional data can be described, according to Andrejevic, "as the alienated or estranged dimension of their activity" (2011b, 85). My suggested categorization of the types of information produced by users suggests that such distinction is hard to make, and is therefore a problematic basis to discern alienated labour from unalienated one. Most data that users produce has a dual character: while being intentional, posting a photo also produces unintentional information such as the web of users that are exposed to the photo or comment on it.

My contentions in this article rely on a different understanding of alienation as a relative entity, arguing that *within* capitalism workers can be more or less alienated. Hence, I suggest that the relations of production entailed by social media are based on an implicit social contract which allows media companies to commodify the communication produced by users (i.e., exploiting them) in return for giving them control over the process of producing communication, and expanding their opportunity for de-alienation.

Andrejevic does point to the complexity of the relations between social media users and companies. Indeed he defines the challenge of employing the notion of exploitation in the context of social media as being about explaining "the relationship between willing participation and commercial exploitation" (2011a, 83). And suggests that to account for exploitation on social media we must also appreciate that the work of the audience is a source for enjoyment for users, and a way to "overcome alienation in the realm of consumption" (Andrejevic 2011b, 80). But he does not suggest a direct link between the two.

The dialectical link between media as a means of communication and media as a means of production in SNS and web 2.0 has been most productively theorized with the notion of immaterial labour (Virno and Hardt 2006). Indeed, Smythe's analysis forestalls this concept by pointing to the commodification of audience attention, i.e., the mobilization of its cognitive faculties for capitalist accumulation. Immaterial labour (and in other contexts: general intellect [Virno 2001]) pertains to a creative force of cognitive, emotional, and communicative capacities that are located within individuals, not factories. One of the key tenets of this analytical category, developed by the Italian Autonomist Marxist School, is that such productive potentials of human life and lived experience is extremely difficult to be harness, contain, or structure by capital. Hence, the increased reliance of capitalism on immaterial labour holds a revolutionary potential.

The dialectical analysis of the media presented here, however, suggests another interpretation, by taking into account the media within which such labour is carried out. Such analysis suggests that SNS offer precisely that space, that factory, which allows the extraction of these human potentialities and their subsumption by capital. As Napoli puts it, "the creative work of the audience is an increasingly important source of economic value for media organizations" (Napoli 2010, 511). Revisiting the notion of audience work on web 2.0, Napoli theorizes new media as mass communication, arguing that the term is flexible enough to account for audiences in contemporary media environment. The revolutionary nature of web 2.0 lies not in the ability of ordinary individuals to generate content, but in their newfound ability to distribute their content widely through the web (Napoli 2010). Napoli, then, directs us at circulation, not production, as the lynchpin of audience work in contemporary media environment, circulation that, as we have seen, is part and parcel of capital accumulation on SNS. If, as Napoli suggests, new media is mass communication, with the distinction that now more individuals are able to reach mass audience, then new media can be thought of as media which allows for far greater quantities of information (content) to be produced freely by far more people, and run over far greater numbers of channels of communication.

What is particularly unique in SNS is that they create an autarchic economic system, a closed-circuit of communication and production in a way that was fairly limited in the mass media age. Lee (2011) shows how Google's advertising program creates a self-propelling mechanism for the creation of exchange-value. The company "vertically integrates the search engine, the advertising agency, and the rating system" (434). Thus, for example, Google sells keywords for advertisers, allowing them to feature ads when particular words are searched. Such keywords, Lee notes, have no use-value, and in fact only have exchange-value within the Google universe, "*within* Google

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

AdWords" (Lee 2011, 440, emphasis in original). Cohen (2008) and Fuchs (2011a, 2011b) also highlight the integration of few distinct moments along the circulation of capital within SNS. Their respective works shows how, within the context of SNS, surveillance becomes a means of commodifying the information that users produce. Fuchs (2011a) offers a Marxist political economy perspective to understand surveillance over SNS users conducted by companies as an alternative to the liberal "civilian" perspective. Such surveillance is not aimed primarily at political control by states, but is rooted in a capitalist desire to commodify information. Fuchs (2011a) highlights the contradictory nature of surveillance and privacy in contemporary society. While capitalism is conditioned by the requirement for privacy (for ex., of bank accounts and holdings) to legitimate wealth inequality, it also promotes surveillance of workers in order to tighten control over them and render the accumulation process more efficient.

Indeed, the political economy of SNS is unique in allowing the integration and conflation of previously distinct processes of production, circulation, and consumption. Not only are they taking place at the same site, but they are also feeding into each other. The production of information by users is monitored, aggregated, analyzed, and rendered into information commodities which are further consumed by users, and so on.

Immaterial labour, the productive force that propels the valorization of SNS, embodies this dual character of exacerbating exploitation and enabling de-alienation. On the one hand, immaterial labour, in comparison with material labour, has a greater potential to be enjoyable, involve personal, idiosyncratic components, carried out during leisure time or even be perceived as a form of leisure activity, playful, emotional and communicative. On the other hand, to the extent that such labour is performed on SNS, it is also commodified and entails the creation of surplus-value.

As we have seen, Facebook, too, operates as a closed system that is able to commodify communication and sociability. Thus, for example, exchange-value arises from the links created between users by users. Such links become informational commodities because companies can learn from them about consumers' behaviours. But they also serve as channels of communication (i.e., as media) for the propagation of commercial messages. In summary, the audience in SNS is a commodity (sold to advertisers), a labour power (producing communication), and media (a means of communication) through which commercial messages are distributed.

6. Conclusion

Table 1 summarizes the argument. In the mass media the exploitation of audience work is fairly limited. The nature of the exchange between media corporations and their working audience is programming (which acts as "wages") for watching advertisements ("labour"). Surplus-value arises from extra-watching (Jhally and Livant 1986), from producing value that exceeds that value needed to produce the programming. In comparison, the level of exploitation in social media is more intensive and extensive. Here, the media itself, i.e., the platform ("wages") is exchanged for the audience work of communicating and socializing ("labour"). Surplus-value arises from extra-communicating, from producing thicker, more textured information than is possible for individual users to use.

	Exploitation	Alienation
Mass media	Low Exchange: Programming for advertisement	High Anonymity Passivity Hierarchy
Social media	High Exchange: Platform for communication	Low Engagement Authenticity

Table 1: Shifts in levels of exploitation and alienation in different media environments.

Alienation of the working audience in the mass media is relatively high. Television audience remains unidentifiable and anonymous to media corporations. Such audience is principally passive, merely choosing the programs it watches. The mass media also constructs a clear hierarchy be-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tween the producers of content and its consumers. Alienation of the working audience in social media is lower. The audience is actively engaged in the production of media content. Audiencing entails deep engagement with the media, opening up the opportunity for authentic self-expression, and for communication and collaboration with others. Lastly, a high level of exploitation of audience work enabled by social media is dialectically linked with a low level of alienation. Higher levels of exploitation are dependent on high intensity of communication and sociability, which, in turn, are dependent on the affordances that SNS allow for de-alienation.

References

Adorno, Theodor. 2001. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Adorno, T. W. 1976. Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture. In *The Critical View of Television*, edited by Horace Newcomb. New York: Oxford University Press.

Akass, Kim, and Janet McCabe. 2007. Analysing Fictional Television Genres. In *Media Studies: Key Issues and Debates* edited by Eoin Devereux, 283-301. London: Sage.

Altucher, James. 2011. Why Facebook is Worth $50 Billion, *The Wall Street Journal*, January 5. http://blogs.wsj.com/financial-adviser/2011/01/05/why-Facebook-is-worth-50-billion/.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2011a. Social Network Exploitation. In *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 82-101. New York: Routledge.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2011b. Exploitation in the Data Mine. In *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media*, edited by Christian Fuchs, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, and Marisol Sandoval, 71-88. New York: Routledge.

Ang, Ien. 1985. *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. London: Methuen.

Artz, Lee, Steve Macek, and Dana Cloud, eds. 2006. *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point is to Change It*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Beer, David, and Roger Burrows. 2010. Consumption, Prosumption and Participatory Web Cultures, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10 (1): 3-12.

Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello. 2005. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Verso.

Bonds-Raacke, Jennifer, and John Raacke. 2010. MySpace and Facebook: Identifying Dimensions of Uses and Gratifications for Friend Networking Sites. *Individual Differences Research* 8 (1): 27-33.

Brandtzaeg, Petter, Marika Luders,and Jan Haavard Skjetne. 2010. Too Many Facebook "Friends"? Content Sharing and Sociability Versus the Need for Privacy in Social Network Sites**.** *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction* 26 (11-12): 1006-1030.

Bruns, Axel. 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*. New York: Peter Lang.

Burgess, Jean and Joshua Green. 2009. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Oxford: Polity.

Caraway, Brett. 2011. Audience labour in the new media environment: A Marxian revisiting of the audience commodity, *Media, Culture, and Society* 33 (5): 693-708.

Cohen, Nicole. 2008. The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook. *Democratic Communiqué* 22 (1): 5-22.

Dean, Jodi. 2010. *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*. Cambridge: Polity.

Downes, Stephen. 1999. Hacking Memes, *First Monday* 4 (10), available at http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/694/604.

du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus. 1997. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Economist, The. 2012. The Value of Friendship. February 4. http://www.economist.com/node/21546020.

Emerson, Ramona. 2011. Facebook Use By Country: See Who Spends The Most Time Social Networking. *The Huffington Post*. October 1. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/30/facebook-use-by-country_n_987722.html#s379259&title=1__Singapore.

Facebook. 2012a. Information page. http://www.facebook.com/facebook?v=info.

Facebook. 2012b. Newsroom. http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22.

Fenton, Natalie. 2007. Bridging the Mythical Divide: Political Economy and Cultural Studies Approaches to the Analysis of the Media. In *Media Studies: Key Issues and Debates*, edited by Eoin Devereux, 7-31. London: Sage.

Foreman, Tom. 2011. How Much is Facebook Really Worth? *CNN*, March 8. http://articles.cnn.com/2011-03-08/tech/Facebook.overvalued_1_mark-zuckerberg-Facebook-worldwide-users?_s=PM:TECH.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011a. An Alternative View of Privacy on Facebook. *Information* 2: 140-165.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011b. Web 2.0, Prosumption, and Surveillance. *Surveillance and Society* 8 (3): 288-309.

Gonzales, Amy, and Jeffrey Hancock. 2011. Mirror, Mirror on my Facebook Wall: Effects of Exposure to Facebook on Self-Esteem. *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking* 14 (1/2): 79-83.

Green, Andy. 2010. *Creativity in Public Relations* (4th ed.). London: Kogan

Hall, Stuart. 1980. Encoding/decoding. In *Culture, Media, Language*, edited by Stuart Hall, A. Lowe, and P. Willis. London: Hutchinson.

Hall, Stuart. 1995. The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media. In *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, edited by Gail Dines and Jean Humez, 18-23. London: Sage.

Hardt, Hanno. 1992. *Critical Communication Studies: Essays on Communication, History and Theory in America*. New York: Routledge.

Herman, Edward, and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon.

Holmes, David. 2005. *Communication Theory: Media, technology, Society*. London: Sage.

hooks, Bell. 1996. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. New York: Routledge.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. 1976. *Dialectics of enlightenment*. New York: Continuum.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Illouz, Eva. 2007. *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
Jenkins, Henry. 2009. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Jhally, Sut, and Bill Livant. 1986. Watching as Working: The Valorization of Audience Consciousness, *Journal of communication* 36 (3): 124-143
Katz, Elihu, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch. 1973-4. Uses and Gratifications Research, *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 37 (4): 509-523.
Liebes, Tamar, and Elihu Katz. 1994. *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*. Cambridge: Polity.
Lee, Micky. 2011. Google Ads and the Blindspot Debate. *Media, Culture, and Society* 33 (3): 433-447.
Lutz, Catherine, and Jane Collins. 1993. *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Marx, Karl. 1978. Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert Tucker, 70-91. New York: Norton & Company.
Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital*, Vol. 1. New York: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1993. *Capital*, Vol. 3. New York: Penguin Books.
Mathijs, Ernest. 2002. Big Brother and Critical Discourse: The Reception of Big Brother Belgium. *Television and New Media* 3 (3): 311-22.
McChesney, Robert. 2008. *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Mosco, Vincent, and Catherine McKercher. 2009. *The Labouring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
Morley, David. 1992. *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge.
Napoli, Philip. 2010. Revisiting 'Mass Communication' and the 'Work' of the Audience in the New Media Environment, *Media, Culture and Society* 32 (3): 505-516.
Nielsen. 2012. Financial Information: Income Statement. http://ir.nielsen.com/reports.aspx?keyreport=592&iid=4260029.
Ong, Eileen, Rebecca Ang, Jim Ho, Joyclynn Lim, Dion Goh, Chei Lee, and Alton Chua. 2011. Narcissism, Extraversion and Adolescents' Self-Presentation on Facebook. *Personality & Individual Differences* 50 (2): 180-185.
Parr, Ben. 2010. Facebook is the Web's Ultimate Timesink. *Mashable*, February 17. http://mashable.com/2010/02/16/facebook-nielsen-stats/.
Peterson, Soren Mork. 2008. Loser Generated Content: From Participation to Exploitation. *First Monday* 13 (3).
Popper, Karl. 1971. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Quan-Haase, Anabel, and Alyson Young. 2010. Uses and Gratifications of Social Media: A Comparison of Facebook and Instant Messaging. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30 (5): 350-361.
Radway, Janice. 1984. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Said, Edward. 1981. *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. New York: Pantheon Books.
Schiller, Dan. 2010. *How to Think about Information*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
Schiller, Herbert. 1991. *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Scholz, Trebor. 2010. Facebook as playground and factory. In *Facebook and Philosophy: What's on Your Mind?*, edited by D.E. Wittkower, 241-52. Chicago: Open Court.
Smythe, Dallas. 1981. *Dependency Road: Communication, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*. Norwood: Ablex.
Spears, Lee, Brian Womack, and Ari Levi. 2012. Facebook's Epic Offering by the Numbers. *Bloomberg Businessweek*, February 2. http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/facebooks-epic-offering-by-the-numbers-02022012.html?campaign_id=rss_search.
Stevenson, Nick, Peter Jackson, and Kate Brooks. 2001. *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press.
Turkle, Sherry. 1997. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Virno, Paolo. 2001. General Intellect. In *Lessico Postfordista*, edited by Adelino Zanini and Ubaldo Fadini. Milano: Interzone [Italian, translated by Arianna Bove]. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htm.
Virno, Paolo, and Michael Hardt. 2006. *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Wasko, Janet 2001. *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*. Cambridge: Polity.
Wasko, Janet, Vincent Mosco, and Manjunath Pendakur. 1993. *Illuminating the Blindspots: Essays Honoring Dallas W. Smythe*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
West, Anne, Jane Lewis, and Peter Currie. 2009. Students' Facebook 'Friends': Public and Private Spheres. *Journal of Youth Studies* 12 (6): 615-627.

About the Author

Eran Fisher
Eran Fisher is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, The Open University, Israel. He studies the intersection of new media and capitalism. His book, *Media and New Capitalism in the Digital Age* (2010, Palgrave), offers a critical analysis of the discourse on digital, network capitalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 184-202, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Against Commodification: The University, Cognitive Capitalism and Emergent Technologies

Richard Hall* and Bernd Stahl**

** Directorate of Library and Learning Services, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, rhall1@dmu.ac.uk, http://www.richard-hall.org*

*** Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK,* bstahl@dmu.ac.uk, http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~bstahl/

Abstract: *This paper investigates how four specific emergent technologies, namely affective computing, augmented reality, cloud-based systems, and human machine symbiosis, demonstrate how technological innovation nurtured inside the University is commodified and fetishised under cognitive capitalism or immaterial labour, and how it thereby further enables capital to reproduce itself across the social factory. Marx's critique of technologies, through their connection to nature, production, social relations and mental conceptions, and in direct relation to the labour process, demonstrates how capital utilizes emergent technologies to incorporate labour further into its self-valorisation process as labour-power. The University life-world that includes research and development is a critical domain in which to site Marx's structural technological critique, and it is argued that this enables a critique of the public development and deployment of these technologies to reveal them as a fetishised force of production, in order to re-politicize activity between students, teachers and the public.*

Keywords: University, Emergent Technology, Academic Activism, Commodification, Cognitive Capitalism

1. Introduction

Emergent technologies, represented below in the four manifestations of affective computing, augmented reality, cloud-based systems, and human machine symbiosis, serve as examples of how technological innovation is commodified and fetishised within the University, and how it thereby enables capital to reproduce itself. Marx (2004, 493) understood and described this in terms of technology's place inside a historical totality: "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them". Thus, emergent technologies that are produced at the limits of "man's modes" of recasting and reforming social relationships offer a critical insight into how capital co-opts research and development inside the University, in order to restructure higher education for value formation and accumulation.

The argument outlined herewith will develop this idea of co-option through an analysis of how technological developments are underpinned by commodification and fetishisation. A focus on emergent technologies enables an exploration of the possible ways in which technological innovation may affect power struggles and resistance in the academy, in particular where these are still being embedded in the academic practices of the University. However, they demonstrate the potential to change significantly *both* the ways in which education is conceived and delivered, *and* through which its institutions reproduce capitalist social relationships, in order to re-inscribe the history of labour-in-capitalism (Postone 1996). Thus at the core of the argument lies an engagement with the mechanisms through which these emergent technologies reproduce hierarchical power inside the University. In analysing the interstices between commodity fetishism, emergent technologies and higher education, the relationships between emerging technologies, academic activism, and the possibilities for student/worker protests inside and beyond the academy will be addressed.

The domain of the University is important here as a site of cognitive or knowledge capital. Under modes of cognitive capitalism (Dyer-Witheford 1999, Virno 2004, Williams 2012), these social relationships are constructed out of the compression and enclosure of time and space themselveswrought by technologically-transformed capital (Lebowitz 2003, Marx 2004, Postone 2009). This process of transforming the University into an active site of struggle over the value produced by cognitive capitalism is accelerated through the commodification of emergent technologies and their subsequent fetishisation. This process amplifies how capital manoeuvres for power inside the academy, and promotes an instrumentalism of academic practice that is related through immaterial

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

labour and class struggles to critiques of academic activism and cybernetic control of knowledge production (Holloway 2002, Tiqqun 2001, Virno 2004).

One result is that an engagement with autonomous Marxism's critique of power relations can enable an argument *for* the development of emergent technologies as spaces for dissent. Here the co-operative conquest of power might be developed as a step towards the abolition of power relations (Holloway 2002, Dyer-Witheford 2004), in order to re-inscribe a different set of possibilities upon the world, and to critique how *our* technologically-enabled global webs of social relations contribute to the dehumanisation of people, where they are treated as means in a production/consumption-process rather than as ends in themselves able to contribute to a common wealth. At issue is whether students and teachers are able to recapture the production and distribution of emergent technologies, in order to dissolve the symbolic power of the University into the actual, existing reality of protest and negation. Moreover, in Harvey's (2010, 46) terms, can a critique of emergent technologies enable those who work in higher education "to find an alternative value-form that will work in terms of the social reproduction of society in a different image"?

2. A Note on Technology

The historical development of technology inside capitalism has served as a means for reproducing biopower (Feenberg 1999, Foucault 1977, Noble 1998, Weber 1969), and for systematising the control of labour through socio-technical routines, procedures and cultures (Postone 1996). This enculturation is a key point for the Ethical Issues of Emerging ICT Applications (ETICA) project's scoping of the interplay between ethics and technology. The argument detailed below builds on some of the findings of this project. The project team argue that a technology

> "is a high level system that affects the way humans interact with the world. This means that one technology in most cases can comprise numerous artefacts and be applied in many different situations. It needs to be associated with a vision that embodies specific views of humans and their role in the world" (Ikonen et al. 2010, 3-4).

This role in the world is underpinned by a range of socio-technical characteristics. Thus, in an analysis of ambient technologies, these characteristics are revealed by the actors engaged with them as embeddedness, interconnectedness, invisibility, adaptivity, personalisation, and pervasiveness. As a result, the ETICA project defined a socio-technical view of the world, in which human enterprise, or labour, requires and desires technological support that is increasingly seamlessly connected, and which is increasingly adaptive, through the systemic integration of artifacts such as sensors, networks, algorithms and grids.

The emerging and everyday reality of adaptive technologies shaping and redefining the relationship between humanity, nature or the world and power emerges as a central thread inside a Marxist analysis of the relationships between machines and humanity. Marx (1993, 594) argued that technologies in the form of machines "are the products of human industry, natural materials transformed into instruments of the human domination of Nature, or of its activity in Nature... they are the materialised power of knowledge". This materialised power then reflects the relationships that exist between those who use those technologies to create, repurpose and reproduce society, and *both* those who innovate around those specific technologies *and* those who use them in their labour. For Feenberg (1999, 83) this means that "technology is a site of social struggle", through which hegemonic positions are developed, legitimated, reproduced and challenged, and he argues (1999, 87) for "[a] critical theory of technology [that] can uncover that horizon, demystify the illusion of technical necessity, and expose the relativity of the prevailing technical choices".

This view of technology as a critical site of struggle reflects the amplified alienation of labour inside the social factory, achieved through the symbiosis of human and machine (Negri 1989, Tronti 1973). As humanity is entwined and embedded with technological appendages, the possibilities for cybernetic control and the further alienation of subjectivity become more apparent (Tiqqun 2001). Harvey (1990) argues that such objectification is a function of the incorporation of the flesh and blood of humanity inside the machines of capital as one response of neoliberalism to the economic and political crises of the 1970s. In this view, capital actively sought new strategies that "put a premium on 'smart' and innovative entrepreneurialism" (Harvey 1990, 157). Such entrepreneurialism was in part realised in emergent technologies that incorporate humanity inside the reality of fixed

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

capital. This fusion of dead and living labour from which new forms of value can be extracted, is a critical way in which the circulation costs of capital can be reduced (Marx 2006). For Hardt and Negri (2000, 406) this is a deeply political antagonism for "machines and technologies are not neutral and independent entities. They are biopolitical tools deployed in specific regimes of production, which facilitate certain practices and prohibit others".

Here it is the productive power of socio-technical systems and the creation of cybernetic systems that enable humanity or its life-world to become increasingly machinic, so that humanity's everyday existence is incorporated inside the means of re-production of capital (Habermas 1987, Hardt and Negri 2000, Marx 2004, Tiqqun 2001). In Marxian terms this further objectifies social relationships as commodities from which value can be extracted through, for instance, the monitoring and harvesting of personal data, the enclosure and control of spaces or applications of consumption, the use of venture capitalism to support specific social networks, and the technological augmentation and capture of affectivity. This real subsumption of everyday activity then ensures that for the individual

> "the creative power of his labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an *alien power* confronting him... Thus all the progress of civilisation, or in other words every increase in the *powers of social production*... in the *productive powers of labour itself* – such as results from science, inventions, divisions and combinations of labour, improved means of communication, creation of the world market, machinery etc., enriches not the worker, but rather *capital*; hence only magnifies again the power dominating over labour.. the *objective power* standing over labour" (Marx 1993, 307).

Thus, technologies are deployed by capital as revolutionary forces that enable it to destroy "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 1993, 409). This exploitation is constantly seeking to overcome the barriers that result from physical limitations, and increasingly rests on the fusion of the human as social being with technology, in order to create new commodities and forms of fetishisation. The University is one socio-technical space in which capital develops this process of overcoming.

3. On the Commodification of Technologies, Immateriality and the University

The period of global austerity politics signaled by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 has witnessed a neoliberal backlash against state-subsidized public assets, as a form of economic shock therapy (Klein 2007). In the United Kingdom, this process has led to the incorporation of higher education inside the market logic of capitalism, with a concomitant transfer of the idea of higher education as a public good to become one where it is produced as an individual good to be serviced through private debt on a North American model (Collini 2012, Bailey and Freedman 2011, Williams 2012). This subsumption of the life of the University inside the market reflects the systemic logic of capital, which aims to totalise itself (Hardt and Negri 2000). As Meiksins Wood (1997, 1) noted

> we're living in a moment when, for the first time, capitalism has become a truly universal system.... Capitalism is universal also in the sense that its logic – the logic of accumulation, commodification, profit-maximisation, competition – has penetrated almost every aspect of human life and nature itself.

One of the ramifications of this process for academics and students is the commodification of their scholarly work, in terms of courses, technologies, knowledges and cultural assets (Ball 2012, Canaan and Shumar 2008, Newfield 2012, Williams 2012). Labour inside the University is increasingly: driven by efficiency; underpinned by the dictates of key information sets and impact measures, public/private partnerships, knowledge transfer and external income generation; and disciplined by the logic that if a producer of educational goods is inefficient it will suffer in the market (Cullerne-Browne 2012, McGettigan 2012). Thus, higher education has become a site of marketisation in which knowledge-work as the labour of an individual academic is being brought into direct competition with that of other academics, across societies and inside new partnerships between state assets and private corporations.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Competition between individual academics and these new associations of which they form a part then forms a way of structuring socially the allocation/abundance of relevant, academic labour (Marx 2004). The incorporation of academic work inside the market catalyses the subsequent creation of academic use-values that can be exchanged, and scholarship that can be commodified. The nature of exchange, and the attempt to extract surplus value from a co-opted academic process, means that hierarchical power relations developed inside universities are re-produced as the relation between those things that can actually be exchanged. As a result, academic labour is directly subsumed under this drive to extract surplus value (Clark 1994, Marx 2004).

Knowledge work inside the University is particularly valuable as a result of the amount of socially-necessary labour-time embedded in its products. Marx highlighted that the magnitude of the value of labour, determined by the labour-time socially necessary to produce a specific commodity, is defined as "the labour-time required to produce any use-value under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society" (Marx 2004, 129). Inside higher education, the specialisation of the work and the skill-levels required to innovate promise high rates of surplus value extraction, especially where technological research and development catalyses efficiencies in production and a reduced circulation time for specific capitals. This specialisation and the promise of increased rates of relative surplus value extraction fuels the employability agendas of government educational departments for whom the skills developed at University are framed increasingly by the needs of the labour market (Bailey and Freedman 2011, Ball 2012), which itself forms a central mechanism for regulating academic labour (Marx 2006).

As technologies inside capitalism are used to deliver systemic efficiency and further valorise value, it becomes difficult to sustain a positivist argument for the emancipatory potential of enhanced technological skills. The logic of technological innovation and deployment is for productivity gains or outsourcing, or for workplace monitoring and surveillance alongside labour management and stratification, or to catalyse the creation of value by opening up/harnessing new markets (Lebowitz 2003, Marx 2004). In the short-term, technological innovation gives capital a high marginal productivity underpinned by and underpinning high levels of demand from both public and private sectors. However, over time "moral depreciation" affects the gains made by technological innovation:

> "in addition to the material wear and tear, a machine also undergoes, what we may call a moral depreciation. It loses exchange-value, either by machines of the same sort being produced cheaper than it, or by better machines entering into competition with it. In both cases, be the machine ever so young and full of life, its value is no longer determined by the labour actually materialised in it, but by the labour-time requisite to reproduce either it or the better machine. It has, therefore, lost value more or less. The shorter the period taken to reproduce its total value, the less is the danger of moral depreciation; and the longer the working-day, the shorter is that period. When machinery is first introduced into an industry, new methods of reproducing it more cheaply follow blow upon blow, and so do improvements, that not only affect individual parts and details of the machine, but its entire build. It is, therefore, in the early days of the life of machinery that this special incentive to the prolongation of the working-day makes itself felt most acutely" (Marx 2004, 528).

As a result, the drive under the treadmill logic of competition becomes to deliver constant innovation across a whole socio-technical system, in order to maintain or increase the rate of extraction of relative surplus value, and to tear down the barriers of under-consumption. This has ramifications for academic labour as Newfield (2010, 13) highlights, with an increasing proletarianisation of scholarly work under three types of labour. The first type relates to "commodity skills", which are "readily obtained" and whose possessors are interchangeable, for instance, back-office or help-desk workers. The second type incorporates those with "leveraged skills", which require advanced education and which offer clear added-value to the University, and yet which are possessed by labour in many universities, for instance, computer programmers or network administrators. The third type includes those with "proprietary skills", defined as "the company-specific talents around which an organization builds a business". University management cultivate and commodify only those with the skills to enhance propriety knowledge, from which rents or profits can be extracted.

The first two types of labour noted above can be proletarianised or outsourced because of the low levels of socially-necessary labour time embedded in the value of their work. However, as pro-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

prietary skills are enclosed the competitive nature of marketised academic labour ensures that such work becomes increasingly precarious (Bonefeld 2010, Neilson and Rossiter 2008). This is because the socially necessary character of the labour-power expended in producing a particular commodity or innovation or technology is diminished over-time and this reduces its value in the market. As a result a persistent demand to innovate becomes essential inside the system. Thus, it is around the holders and management of these proprietary or creative skills, which can be exchanged, where academic work that is congealed in the form of emergent technologies tends to become fetishised in its social form as value (Marx 1993).

Fetishisation describes how, in a commodity producing society, the relationships that exist amongst producers, mediated socially in the market, take on the form of a "social relation between the products of labour" (Marx 2004, 164). This means that the exchange value of a specific commodity, which is in reality an expression of socially-necessary labour time, appears to be an inherent property of the commodity, as revealed in its market price. In part this is because commodity producing labour does not appear to be directly social as commodities are produced by independent individuals. As a result, labour only appears to be socially-necessary in the process of exchange, rather than in the processes of production and this underpins a reality of alienation.

> "[T]he result of the process of production and realization is, above all, the reproduction and new production of the *relation of capital and labour itself*, of *capitalist and worker*. This social relation, production relation, appears in fact as an even more important result of the process than its material results. And more particularly, within this process the worker produces himself as labour capacity, as well as the capital confronting him, while at the same time the capitalist produces himself as capital as well as the living labour capacity confronting him. Each reproduces itself, by reproducing its other, its negation. The capitalist produces labour as alien; labour produces the product as alien" (Marx 1993, 458).

The product or commodity has destroyed part of the living labour of the individual labourer and is alienated from her as a fetishised form of value through the process of exchange. Inside the University, where the struggle between labour and capital lies in the creation and commodification of cognitive capital, the notion of fetishism needs to be re-worked and re-analysed because the production and circulation processes are "immaterial" (Žižek 2009). For Feenberg (1999, viii) this is the reality of technological essentialism, where "technology reduces everything to functions and raw materials", with the result that individual emotions and affects, cultural cues and mores, and the construction of the relations between individuals "are themselves the very material of our everyday exploitation" (Žižek 2009, 139). From this process, two elements emerge as central in understanding how knowledge work or cognitive capital or the information society becomes fetishised. Firstly, capital finds mechanisms or technologies that enable it to enclose and commodify an increasingly fluid and identity-driven set of social relations, which can form the basis of further exchange (Virno 2001, Virno and Hardt 1996), catalysed by work inside the University and based on mutations of human subjectivity (Vercellone 2007). Secondly, capital commodifies and extracts value from everyday experiences and relationships, in order to reduce the unproductive circulation time of capital, and thereby increase the rate of profit and relative surplus value (Dyer-Witheford 1999; Marx 2006).

In this process of fetishisation, social relations are increasingly structured by technically-mediated organisations, like the University, which then re-inscribe anew socio-political hierarchies that are increasingly technological, coercive and exploitative (Foucault 1977). In part this alienates and separates individuals within a society through an exclusive division of labour (Lebowitz 2003; Marx 2004). Moreover, as Marx highlights (1993), the development of such technologies that subsume all of human life under capital's logic strengthens the idea that capitalist relations are natural and purely technical. However, this naturalisation process reveals the construction of knowledge through the reproduction of the general intellect, or knowledge as society's main productive force (Marx 1993). On the one hand, capital uses this process to subsume and alienate social relationships further as commodities, in particular through the control of communication and the repurposing of information (Dyer-Witheford 1999, Negri 1989). On the other hand, the reproduction of the general intellect as mass intellectuality becomes the actual foundation of subversion-through-praxis (Neary and Hagyard 2010; Virno 2001).

In part these processes of the production, distribution and consumption of mass intellectuality are amplified by the extreme socialisation of web-based technologies and the ways in which emer-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

gent technologies are socialised. Therefore, the research and development of emergent technologies inside the University is a critical site of struggle through which a critical theory of socio-technology and cognitive capitalism might be developed, and against which academic activism might be revealed. For Marx (2004) understanding socio-technical innovation and transformation was important because it highlighted the mechanics of the relationships between labour and capital.

> By means of machinery, chemical processes and other methods, [capital] is continually transforming not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labour process. At the same time, it thereby also revolutionizes the division of labour within society, and incessantly throws masses of capital and of workers from one branch of production to another (Marx 2004, 617).

4. Emergent Technologies and Cognitive Capitalism

The influence of neoliberal ideology on higher education is being increasingly documented and analysed (Ball 2012, Canaan and Shumar 2008, McGettigan 2012, Newfield 2012, Williams 2012). There is a pervasive narrative that sees education as primarily concerned with developing students' employability, where science and technology form primary means of fostering economic growth, and where technologies underpin discourses related to value-for-money, commercial efficiency and business process re-engineering. These ideas can be found in high level policy documents such as the European Vision 2020 (European Commission (EC) 2010) or the Higher Education Funding Council for England's support for technology-enhanced learning (HEFCE 2012), and in the funding protocols for innovation programmes (EC 2012; Hall 2012). These protocols then shape and legitimise the spaces in which individual universities develop projects, mission statements or strategies, and they connect educational innovation to fiscal "realities".

This ideological positioning is reflected through funding strategies, which focus on innovation and research in the natural sciences and technology, with a concomitant diminishing flow of resources of social sciences and humanities. The use of technology within education amplifies this ideological turn, and further catalyses the commodification and fetishisation of educational practices and institutions (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009; Feenberg 1999), alongside their enclosure (Hall 2012). This thereby undermines education's moral legitimacy (Stahl 2006). At issue here then is to move this argument beyond the critique of established and embedded technologies inside the University, in order to analyse how emergent technologies might impact the forms and content of higher education and thereby enable capitalist social relations to be re-produced.

Critical in this process is the organisation, disciplining and exploitation of an increasingly immaterial workforce, through the use of emergent technologies that are inserted into the everyday activities and life-worlds of living human subjects (Dyer-Witheford 1999, Habermas 1987, Valtysson 2012), and which are incubated inside universities as centers of research and development. This is a relentless dynamic, centered on capitalism's constant revolutionizing of the means of production, in order that capital can drive "beyond every spatial barrier... [and the ability to enhance] the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it" (Marx 1993, 524). In reducing the time of production and circulation, technology is implicated in a totalizing re-production of social relations, which are in constant flux and motion (Postone 2009).

However, in this war on time and production/circulation costs, the fusion of human and machine forms a new front in the use of the machine as a weapon in the struggle of capital against labour. Research, development and implementation inside the University are sites of alienation, and therefore form spaces from which negation and dissent might spring. In developing this position, an analysis of four interconnected examples of emergent technologies enable a clearer understanding of likely future developments to emerge. In the following sub-sections the definition of emergent technologies is outlined alongside a justification for the choice of the four technologies that are discussed in more depth, with a view to understanding their role in future higher education. The technologies in question are: affective computing; virtual and augmented reality; cloud computing; and human-machine symbiosis.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4.1. Emergent Technologies

The present discussion explores how emergent technologies that have been identified through horizon-scanning might be expected to influence higher education and contribute to the conceptual issues of fetishisation, commodification and immateriality. The basis on which to discuss such emergent technologies raises issues that are related to historical uncertainties in the future development of capitalism and the fundamental impossibility of predicting the nature and use of those technologies. Despite these future unknowns, humans have developed mechanisms for developing expectations and using these to make decisions that shape the future. One established mechanism in academia is the use of foresight research (Cuhls 2003), which does not claim to know the future but develops visions of possible futures that allow decision-makers to work towards possibilities that are deemed desirable. The argument developed herewith uses this logic and draws on existing research on future and emergent ICTs, which it then uses to explore the possible roles of such technologies in higher education.

The argument draws on the findings of the ETICA project (Ikonen et al. 2010) to clarify the roles that emergent technologies can play in higher education. The ETICA project was a European-funded research project, which ran from 2009-11, and that could be characterised as a foresight project. It aimed to identify emerging technologies with a view to analyze their ethical consequences and thereby consider governance and policy implications. ETICA defined emergent technologies as those that are likely to change significantly the ways in which humans interact with the world in the near future of 10 to 15 years. These technologies are characterized by the fact that they are subject to intensive research and development, which allows a reasonable prediction of their future shape. It is important to note that whilst they are described as emergent, this does not affect their current status. Some of these emergent technologies are already established, for instance cloud computing, but they are described as emergent because there are significant research and development activities currently going on that are expected to change their shape and possible applications, and thus their socio-political consequences.

The ETICA project did not focus on applications of technology, either in higher education or in any other field, and the project did not apply a specifically Marxist viewpoint. The argument detailed herewith does not claim to represent ETICA in any way, nor does it reflect the position of the ETICA consortium. However, an analysis of the outcomes of first stage of the ETICA project enables the identification of webs of emerging technologies that are particularly pertinent for higher education. Engagement with four interconnected technologies serves as a point of departure for a demonstration of the commodification and fetishisation of the social relations and identities that emerge from inside the University and that underpin the development of mass intellectuality. These technologies are: affective computing; augmented reality; cloud-based systems; and human machine symbiosis.

These four technologies were chosen out of the 11 technologies identified by the ETICA project because they enable an interpretation of early technological adoption inside higher education, and their status as emergent technologies means that they are likely to become even more influential through the premium placed on high-technology (Gartner 2011). Thus, they lend themselves to an analysis of how the University is impacted by emergent technology. They represent a spectrum of technologies that cover the issues discussed here and which then exemplify the re-production of socio-technical systems inside the University, as well as the potential to resist prevailing ideological developments. However, each of the four interacts with at least one of the others, and this offers the possibility that combinations of innovation might impact the relationships that exist between capital and labour inside higher education. Each of the four technologies are discussed in a separate sub-section which defines them, and which then discusses expected uses in higher education, and how utility relates to questions of ideology, fetishisation, commodification and immateriality. Pathways towards resistance, exemplified by these technologies, are then suggested.

4.2. Affective Computing

The technology: affective computing, sometimes also called emotional computing, aims to develop artefacts that can perceive, express and model human emotions. Interest in the computational aspects of affects or emotions developed inside research laboratories in the last decade of the 20th century, paralleled by the neoliberal focus on enterprise technologies that could be deployed as innovations in the social factory. A critical development was the increased capabilities of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

computers to model emotions (Cowie 2005), and to work for embedding emotionality into socio-technical systems that in turn enable capital to use cognition or immateriality to reproduce itself. Such re-production is witnessed in the widening of the definition of such technologies to include emotion-processing or human behavioral modeling.

Thus, this type of research underpins the creation of more responsive applications where human and computers interact, in order to harness the use of emotions in decision-making through data collection for profiling, and brain imaging tools and sensors for the detection of emotions. Whilst Robinson and el Kaliouby's (2009) research discusses a number of application areas related to social inclusion and modeling social cognition, it is clear that affective computing enables the commodification of social cognition. For instance, it is used: in modeling products related to the management of social-emotional intelligence by agents and robots (Tao and Tan 2005); in developing affective games that react to a player's emotional state and enabling the game to deliver content at the most appropriate moment (Sykes and Brown 2003); and generating the ability to communicate the affective state of a game player to third parties (Hudlicka 2009).

For capital, capturing and mining this type of activity is an important field of innovation and value extraction, because "data suggest that less than 10% of human life is completely unemotional. The rest involves emotion of some sort" (Cowie 2005). Thus, capturing emotionality or affect through technology focuses upon enhancing "the quality of human-computer communication and improving the intelligence of the computer" (Tao and Tan 2005, 981). As emotion pervades human interaction, sensitivity to emotions becomes fundamental to communicative action (Habermas 1987). As a result, affective computing influences the ways in which humans interact with the world as it is mediated through feelings and the physical changes associated with them, alongside shifts in perception, judgments, and actions.

Educational application: the ability to understand and react to the emotional states of users is envisaged through innovations in types of e-teaching related to games-based learning and virtual world simulations, where sensing the learner's mood allows the customization of learning content and presentation (Porto Interactive Center 2012, xDelia 2012). Driven by research and development in affective computing, cognitive and behavioral psychology are further commodified inside capital, in-part through the partnerships between universities and commerce, as affective computing drives the assumption that human emotions are capable of being measured, recognised, classified, produced and valorised (Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab 2012). An important aspect of this emergent technology is that there is a direct link between emotions and external actions like consumption.

Similarly an emotional awareness would allow better responses from teachers who are then able to monitor their own and students' emotional states, in order to gather mutual feedback on the success of teaching sessions. Thus, the MIT Media Lab (2012) focuses upon "computing that relates to, arises from, or deliberately influences emotion or other affective phenomena". The growing focus on learning analytics as a means of monitoring and surveillance learning outcomes, in order to commodify them, also connects cognitive and emotional practices and outcomes (Educause 2012), especially where they are connected to the on-going fetishisation of learning delivery through mobile devices (Blackboard 2012).

The potentially positive outcomes of the use of affective computing in higher education, in particular in work-based and placement learning, and related to simulations, can be contrasted with less beneficial ones, relating to increased manipulation and control. Personal behaviours and characteristics can be more easily inscribed inside teaching programmes by rewarding particular reactions to managed interventions. This is exacerbated by the fact that the use of such technologies in education would likely be designed by private corporations for profit or through rents emerging from application-based interventions. These interventions are likely to be translated into marketised solutions, which in-turn enable students to be more successfully oriented towards employability, rather than a critical questioning of the discourses around the political role of the University.

Resistance: a critical space for resistance related to affective computing is through re-humanisation and the co-operative development of solutions to problems related to gaming, simulations or work-based learning, and the outright refusal to commodify virtual interactions. In fact, affective computing offers a clear space for analysing socio-technical systems that are ethically problematic, as users are able to discern the possibility of being manipulated. Moreover, there is good reason to believe that where scholars resist the appearance of emotions in educational machinery, in-part because such emotions appear to be false in the sense that they are fundamentally different from human emotions, they are able to develop an ethical digital literacy. In particular this

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

relies upon the engagement of mutual networks of scholarly critique, in order to connect real-world emotionality to shared problem-solving. The hope is that this will overcome the threat of individuated, false or augmented affects, which separate users from each other and enable cognitive capitalism to maintain its power relationships inside the University, for example through the sousveillance (Ganascia 2010) of teachers by students or of management by staff.

4.3. Virtual and Augmented Reality

The technology: virtual or augmented reality is closely related to affective computing, It developed from Heilig's (1962) Sensorama Simulator that was designed to mitigate against the risks that came with hazardous jobs by simulating the environments in which capital needed labour to be trained. The history of the development of virtual and augmented reality deeply connects innovation inside the University with commercial enterprise. Thus, applications like Lanier's VPL DataGlove demonstrated that these technologies could be extended beyond head-worn displays to include handheld and LCD displays, and into smart-phones whose applications extend the marketisation of everyday experience, through the enclosure of content and concomitant subscription or rental. This content is then further commodified as virtual information is projected onto the augmented objects or as augmented information is projected onto the real life contexts (Zhou et al 2008).

Advanced computer hardware enables virtual and augmented reality applications to become more immersive and integrated into daily life. Thus, the technology is extendable into the manufacture and repair of complex machinery, in reducing the costs of maintaining fixed labour, alongside its potential to annotate objects and environments, and further fetishises the user's experiences of her life-world and her very identity. Capital uses these techniques to influence the behaviour, interpersonal communication and cognition of labour, and also to enhance the colonisation and enclosure of virtual space, meaning that virtual identities, like avatars, are individuated and commodified beyond the social relationships from which they spring. Thus, virtual objects convey information that enables the real subsumption of labour in its performance of real-world tasks. By supplementing an everyday reality with virtual objects or data the immaterial labourer is able to perceive the environment more comprehensively than with her own senses. Consequently the process of immersion enables the enhancement of labour's perception of and interaction with the real world by capturing and harnessing multiple sensorial channels (Cline 2005). This enables capital to reproduce itself in new forms and through the production of new services that move beyond the barriers of under-consumption.

Educational applications: the use of virtual and augmented reality technologies in higher education is well advanced, and focused on training, discover-based learning, modelling, gaming and extending virtual resources. It has historical links with defense and military training, and with extending opportunities for marketing (Hamilton 2011), and mobile learning (Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) 2012). For instance, Second Life (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009) serves as a platform to provide material and interactions inside scholarly communities, and for experimenting with simulations, in-part as a form of play. Universities have used this platform to provide specific training on topics that require more than a textual interface, for instance in the management of schizophrenia or in health sciences where views of bodies or organs may be required, as well as in interacting with remote students through the construction of virtual campuses. While Second Life may be the most prominent example of virtual environments, there is a broader move towards such technologies in higher education (Human Interface Technology Laboratory New Zealand (HIT Lab NZ) 2012), and to some degree Learning Management Systems like Blackboard increasingly seek to incorporate aspects of augmentation and immersion into their virtual environments.

Resistance: augmentation enables the creation of spaces from which rents can be extracted by private corporations operating inside education through in-world or application-based innovation. This demonstrates the co-opted inter-relationships between emerging technologies, the labour-in-capitalism and higher education (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009). Virtualisation catalyses significant discussion inside universities and from higher education policy-makers about whether external providers should host educational activities and extract rents as a form of accumulation. This is partly driven by practical considerations such as intellectual property and the security of teaching material in outsourced environments. However, scholarly resistance focuses upon technical and usability issues, alongside the acceptability of engaging in the further enclosure of virtualised space through augmentation technologies (Wake and Stahl 2010). At issue in the educational resistance

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

to augmented technologies is the ways in which scholars are actively encouraged to produce and share open curricula and artifacts in ways that reveal humanising engagements that do not form new commodities, but help maintain a diversity of expertise across communities. Thus, in these mutual spaces, the relevance of marginal developments like application-based, locative and augmented reality services might be questioned through consensus, and related to social need and issues of privacy and identity.

4.4. Cloud Computing

The technology: increasingly the innovative services addressed by affective computing or virtual and augmented reality, are being managed through cloud computing, which promises to deliver computing resources to different locations through globalised circulation networks. It originated with Licklider's work on ARPANET (Ikonen et al. 2010). Alongside the generation of value for the military, its development was predicated upon its value as a public utility like water or electricity. This became increasingly possible via the growth in bandwidth in the 1990s. As a direct result, its development was able to facilitate remote working, and the separation and surveillance of proletarianised work at a distance from any formal, Taylorised work setting, enabling capital to distribute available commodity and leveraged skills amongst low-wage societies through outsourcing (Newfield 2010). The evolution of cloud computing through phases of grid and utility computing, application service provision, and Software as a Service (Dikaiakos et al. 2009), enables the dynamics of cognitive labour to pervade the social factory and thereby amplify immateriality on a global scale (Hardt and Negri 2000, Virno 2004).

In particular, cloud computing enables capital *both* to extract value from social networks and personal interconnections through the corporate control of systems, networks and data, *and* to reduce the circulation costs of productive capital through scalable and elastic IT-enabled capabilities that are delivered as a service from low wage circuits into those spaces from where high value can be extracted (Marx 2006). As enterprises seek to consume their IT services in the most cost-effective way, interest has grown in drawing a broad range of services, for example, computational power, storage and business applications, from the "cloud" rather than from on-premises equipment. This outsourced approach is focused on reducing the costs of distribution of commodities and labour.

Where cloud services are used to store very personal data, such as photos and videos, data mining and tagging are enmeshed with capitalist accumulation through rental costs, and targeted marketing. In some cases this enables smart consumption, for instance through the data-driven connection between hardware like RFID tags and smart-phones, localisation services, and cloud-based services like customer relationship management systems and payment service providers (The Think-Trust project 2010). It also enables the commodification of data related to medical records between business and insurance partners (Andriole and Khorasani 2010), thereby supporting the further incorporation of bio-power into healthcare. Ease of use of cloud services is emphasized with very fast, optimized connections and enforced terms of service or agreements through which users give away ownership of personal data (Fuchs 2010). The interconnections generated by shared data in these networks are very dynamic and enable the consumers of these services to produce and consume a nomadic lifestyle that is bound less by space than by time. In fact, the permanent immateriality of these services forms an attempt by capital to annihilate space by time.

Educational applications: cloud computing is a technology that is already used in higher education, in particular to share services, like email and back-end information management, and for research processes or data storage (JISC 2011). It is particularly widespread with regards to social networks and other social media, which tend to be in profit-oriented and which then further reify and objectify human relationships. This is realised in the discourses around words like “follower” and “friend". Inside Universities, attempts are also being made to commodify and sell the idea of cloud computing in terms of green IT or sustainability, despite the lack of evidence that the cloud is “greener”, and industry has wrapped itself around this concept as a space for further service-led innovation (Hall and Winn 2011).

A related question is how cloud computing can affect the way in which higher education is structured and organised, and in particular how Universities redesign their teaching design and delivery around the cloud (Das 2012) and services like library provision (Sanchati and Kulkarni 2011). In the United Kingdom there is a debate about the use of technology to decrease the price of education and cloud computing is perceived to be one means by which services can be shared and thus

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

costs can be reduced. This is purely oriented towards the financial cost of education through labour costs, and redesigning the labour market around commodified services (JISC 2011), and does not consider the ways in which pedagogic considerations impact technological deployment.

Resistance: cloud computing highlights the complex entanglements of technology, the social relationships that are revealed in organisational structures, and politics. On the one hand one can see examples of resistance to the extraction of rents and value from the implementation of cloud technologies that are directed at business process re-engineering. This is a form of state-subsidized privatization, and highlights concerns about the continuation and provision of services to students through outsourcing and sharing. This has concomitant data and privacy issues, as well as opening-up educational data for mining by transnational venture capitalists. Such transnational networks also enable governments to use the logic of homeland security to monitor data (Walden 2011).

However, social media also allow the circumvention of control and thereby offer new avenues for subversive collaboration against and resistance to managerial agendas. These uses of cloud computing lead to a blurring of boundaries and higher education institutions which are driven by financial interests and subsequently find it increasingly difficult to legitimise the boundaries between inside and outside the University. This is a problem for capital because its structures cannot control the activities of their employees and students in networks beyond the University, and these can be co-opted to open-up cracks in intellectual property and the production of social relationships for other, mutual interests. The implementation of cloud technologies thereby contain the seeds of resistance towards the very enclosing motives that promote it.

4.5. Human-Machine Symbiosis

The technology: the apogee of this attempt to reduce the costs associated with and emerging from the processes of exchange and the extraction of relative surplus value, and capital's desire to reduce socially-necessary labour time, is human-machine symbiosis or human augmentation. This is a technology in which the connections between affective and augmented technologies for the production of socially-defined, identity-driven commodities, and their development, monitoring and distribution through cloud-based tools are revealed. What is witnessed is the apotheosis of the fetishised form of the human as optimised labour-power; of the human as machine designed, augmented and alienated for the valorisation of value (Marx 1993).

Human-machine symbiosis was originally envisaged by Licklider (1960, 1) as a means by which more efficient co-operative action could be catalysed, through a "very close coupling" between human and machine, in order to increase the efficiency of "formulative thinking" and the control of "complex situations without inflexible dependence on predetermined programs". Licklider (1960, 1) hoped that "the symbiotic partnership will perform intellectual operations much more effectively than man alone can perform them". The premise was that human intellect could be augmented, and that as a result human beings would be able to perform tasks or labour that was beyond their ordinary physical limitations.

This approach led to the development of the mouse, to innovations in human-computer interaction, interactive computing, hypermedia, and video-conferencing, as mediums that enhance the efficiency and value of labour and reduce the circulation time of commodities (Ikonen et al. 2010). For Roy (2004) this meant that human-machine symbiosis could be understood as a technology that enhances and improves human potential where human capacities are restricted. He views the technological machine as an extension of the human, and such symbiosis emerges through wearable technologies, assistive technologies or neural implants (Ikonen et al. 2010).

Pace Marx (1993, 2004), this is one of the logical outcomes of capital's need to enforce co-operation in industrialised labour. This co-operation is dissolved into the fabric of society through: the development of personal consoles; the affective desires integrated into mobile and personal technologies; and the integration of machinery into the labourer's body as an extension of her labour-power. As Greef et al (2007, 1) argue in relation to augmented cognition, the aim is "the creation of adaptive human-machine collaboration that continually optimises performance of the human-machine system". This connects to Marx's (1993) view of the incorporation of labour inside the machinery of capitalist re-production.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "In machinery, objectified labour confronts living labour within the labour process itself as the power which rules it; a power which, as the appropriation of living labour, is the form of capital... The development of the means of labour into machinery is not an accidental moment of capital, but is rather the historical reshaping of the traditional, inherited means of labour into a form adequate to capital. The accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is thus absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital" (Marx 1993, 694-695).

Human-machine symbiosis has now permeated society to an extent where technology appears as a fetish or veil, as the social brain appears to be a natural well-spring from capitalism's forces of production, constructed through emergent technologies. Thus, consumers have become dependent and reliant to a large extent on their personal technology, as it extends their role or identity in the social factory. This affects how labour is enabled to access information, to conduct business, and to communicate globally. However, although such symbiosis enables labour *both* to perform more complex computations *and* to reduce the costs of circulation of commodities as information or communication, the impact of moral degradation means that there is a persistent need to innovate.

Educational applications: possible applications relate to the provision of immediate and personalised feedback, as is seen in the medical work being carried out by the Human Machine Symbiosis Lab (MIT Media Lab 2012), which is designing, developing and evaluating new human machine interfaces that can be applied in haptic user interfaces related to the sense of touch. The lab aims to incorporate psychophysics, biomechanics and neurology in its development of smart and effective haptic interfaces and devices. Elsewhere, the MIT 10x program (2012) continually evaluates a cross-section of applications including aspects of memory, in order to enhance and expand human cognitive abilities. This focuses upon the radical re-structuring of the practices that underpin knowledge work both inside the University and through knowledge exchange into the social factory. Such symbiosis demonstrates a constant striving to commodify and re-produce human experience beyond the limits of human capabilities, as they are organised inside capitalism.

This augmentation of cognitive processing power underpins innovation in brain-machine interfaces, an emerging neuro-technology that translates brain activity into command signals for external devices. Research on these interfaces began in the 1970s at the University of California Los Angeles, with the establishment of a direct communication pathway between the brain and specific devices to be controlled. Whilst these technologies are mainly being developed for medical reasons (Berger 2007, Gasson and Warwick 2007) they also enable different forms of immaterial labour to be imagined inside the University, and as a direct result everyday experience is co-opted for the extraction of surplus value by corporations. This is seen in Human-Systems Integration for Optimal Decision Making, which augments labour in dynamic and complex environments like air traffic control and nurse training (Ikonen et al. 2010). Not only does research inside the University catalyse these innovations in immateriality, but those same University contexts provide work-based spaces in which they can be trialled and then embedded across society.

Thus, there is a focus inside the range of higher education contexts on the amplification of human-systems integration, in order to consider socio-technical issues related to personnel, training, system safety, and health hazards, in the design of the symbiotic technologies that a targeted audience will use. The Cognitive and Organisational Systems Engineering project (COSE 2012) is modelling human-systems integration to support optimal decision-making in a range of environments. This demonstrates how research that is generated inside the University enables integrated processes and tools to be developed and tested, in order that they revolutionise capitalist work and enable the re-production of capitalist social relations in the spaces beyond higher education. Thus, whilst these projects initially support people's cognitive work-based learning in health and air traffic management environments, the specific intention is to extend this immaterial work to other domains, through the integration of learning and training, people, technologies and the environments in which they work.

Resistance: human-machine symbiosis is a technology that carries the possibility of radical resistance to the incorporation of humanity inside the means of re-production on capitalist social relations, in particular through its impact on what human beings perceive as natural. This is amplified as close relationships between humans and technology are depicted as problematic and undesirable, in particular where a process of dehumanisation is uncovered as labour-power is continually optimised through upgrades. This is a refusal to accept humanity as machine designed, augmented and alienated for the valorisation of value. These uses of ICT are therefore be likely to encounter

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

dissent inside higher education environments where one of the traditional aims is that of the development of autonomous individuals, rather than commodified individuality, an aim which is contradicted in the redevelopment of the technology itself.

4.6. Summary: Emergent Technologies in Higher Education

The innovations located in these four emergent technologies enable cognitive labourers to transcend physical barriers through virtual reality, and to consume their educational life-world in new ways. As those experiences are produced and commodified both globally and yet on an individual level, capital is able to capture and harness everyday experiences as commodities for rent, value extraction and profit (Clark 1994, Marx 2004), and for the subsequent re-production of itself through the development of proprietary skills. The very fact of capital's enclosure of the human body inside its machinery of exploitation is catalysed by research inside the University. However, it is also played out in: the deployment of marketised and cloud-based learning environments and educational services; the application of virtualisation and augmentation to education as a means of maintaining hegemonies; in work-based learning and placement experiences; and through the insertion of emergent machinery directly into the life-world of labour. This means that labour's very educational life-world is a site of surplus value creation and extraction, and accumulation through commodification and rent. As Meiksins-Wood (1997) identified, there is no outside of this system of alienation.

However, for Postone (1996) it is the historic role of labour-in-capitalism that contains revolutionary potential, precisely because its increasing exploitation, alienation and dehumanising mechanisation is persistently revealed in its everyday practices. As education becomes a core site for the re-production of hegemonic discourses and power relationships, this revelation of commodification that is amplified through technological innovation precedes reflexivity and praxis from inside the University. The possibility remains that labour will realise the increasing proletarianisation of its educational practices. Thus, it is possible to sketch and support a flowering of dissent based on the autonomous utilisation of those same emergent hardware, software and networks that are used to immiserate (Coleman 2012, Dyer-Witheford 1999, Newfield 2010). At issue here is how the production of emerging technologies inside the University might affect academic labour as a form of activism.

5. For Exodus and the Courage of Academic Activism

Holloway (2002) argues that we deceive ourselves if we believe that the structures which exist in order to reproduce capitalist social relations can be used as a means to overcome its alienating organisation of work. Whilst he makes this point for the structure of the democratic state as a symbol of failed revolutionary hope, his point might equally be made about the University.

> "In reality, what the state [University] does is limited and shaped by the fact that it exists as just one node in a web of social relations. Crucially, this web of social relations centres on the way in which work is organised. The fact that work is organised on a capitalist basis means that what the state [University] does and can do is limited and shaped by the need to maintain the system of capitalist organisation of which it is a part" (Holloway 2002, 6).

Thus, any institution's room for manoeuvre is constricted by transnational global capital, and in particular by the compression and enclosure of time and space wrought by technologically-transformed, finance capital. In this view, working to take control of an institution crushes the transformatory intent of those who would fight against capitalism, because this transformation is always about limited manoeuvring for power. In Virno's (n.d.) terms this is based on "weak thought", or a political philosophy that "was developed by philosophers with theories that offer an ideology of the defeat [of the labour movement by neoliberalism] after the end of the '70s". Thus, educational values are predicated instrumentally on the tenets espoused by liberal democracy as it is revealed inside capitalism, tied to tropes of equality or liberty, or on often ill-defined practices/qualities like respect or openness. Even inside the University it becomes difficult to imagine a different form of social life beyond the realities of capitalist work.

In this way the fetishisation of emergent technologies risks reinforcing hegemonies, so that they are seen as revolutionary only in terms of how they generate individual, user-generated outcomes,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

rather than in describing new forms of value. In this view, they re-produce a set of universal, transhistorical norms, through which it is simply not acceptable to argue for other forms of value or organisation beyond those imposed by democratic capitalism. Moreover, it no longer becomes possible to address the structural dominance of educational elites within capitalism, or the limited, procedural definition of the value of education and educational innovation inside capitalism. Important here are the mechanisms by which innovation flowing to/from the University supports the ways in which neoliberal capitalism intentionally designs, promotes and manages forms of democracy and governance that complement its material objectives (Harvey 2010). This is achieved, in-part, through the implementation of ideological control inside the socio-technical institutions and cultures of civil society, which in-turn make it impossible to step beyond the controlling logic of the rights of consumers.

This is not to say that oppositional forms that are against the University, and which utilise open and emergent technologies do not exist (EduFactory 2012, Hall 2011, OpenDemocracy 2012, FThe Sociological Imagination 2012, Occupy Wiki 2012). The counter-hegemonic practices of occupation are increasingly being seen as educational, and are enabling the re-imagining of socio-technical systems and forms of life, through general assemblies, militant research strategies and activity that is deliberative and conducted in public. In fact, it is from the activities of these global movements, arising from indignation, that a critique of the development of emergent technologies inside the University might be situated, in order to identify opportunities for dissent, negation and pushing back against the alienating rhetoric of capitalist work (Holloway 2010). This critique emerges from two strands: firstly, in being *against* pedagogies of consumption that define the uptake of emergent technologies through the commodification of engagement and activity; secondly, from the recognition that those technologies help to critique the reality and history of labour-in-capitalism.

In some cases these radical education projects are working politically to re-define issues of power and are an attempt to re-inscribe higher education as higher learning dissolved into the fabric of society. In most cases they see the institution of the school or the university as symbolically vital to a societal transformation. They form a process of re-imagination that risks fetishisation or reification of radical education, but which offers a glimpse of a different process that shines a light on the University as one node in a global web of social relations. This also focuses upon rethinking in public the role of academics in society, facilitated through emergent technologies and where the use of these technologies for production-in-public is the central organising theme. One focus is on overcoming individuation through association and embedding resources in target communities with an academic, co-operative consideration of the issues involved (Downes 2012).

Thus, where a critique of everyday scholarly activities, related to higher learning inside and beyond the academy, is folded into the logic of capital's production of these technologies, they become a networked space within which negation, dissent and revolt can emerge (Holloway 2002). Here, globally-connected, human-machine symbiosis might become especially important in overcoming the totalising logic of capitalism where it enables the mutual, co-operative conquest of power as a step towards the abolition of power relations. Critical here is the revelation of the dehumanisation of people as means in a production/consumption-process, for example in the mining of emotions enabled by affective computing or in the virtualisation of educational life, rather than as individuals able to contribute to a common wealth. Thus, the use of cloud-based, emergent technologies offers the possibility to connect a global politics of refusal through socio-technological systems. This demands the invocation of a world of disjuncture, disunity, and discontinuity, where academic labour inside capitalism becomes riskier as the repetitive, precarious nature of its alienation and dehumanisation is revealed.

The connection of higher education and society through emergent technologies is important in defining spaces for dissent and pushing-back that are technologically-enabled, because the University remains a symbol of those places where mass intellectuality can be consumed, produced and more importantly contributed to by all. Thus, the revelation of shared experiences of alienation inside the social factory, using emerging technologies that heighten the sensation of oppression and enable them to be shared, offers a possibility that new sites of opposition and critique can be created. In amplifying this process, scholarly practices inside the University offer sites for courageous action against states of exception (Agambe 2005) that enclose how and where and why people assemble, associate and organise. However, academics inside the University have little room for manoeuvre in resisting the enclosing logic of competition and in arguing for a socialised role for higher education, given the ideological, political drive towards, for instance, indentured study and debt, internationalisation, privatisation and outsourcing. As a result, the internal logic of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the University is increasingly prescribed by the rule of money, which forecloses on the possibility of creating transformatory social relationships as against fetishised products and processes of valorisation.

The idea of exodus is important here, as a form of dissent, revolt or rebellion against capital's exploitation of the entirety of social life, as it is revealed through emergent technologies. This exploitation is witnessed in affective technologies through playbor in games-based industries (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009), and in the harvesting of cloud-based data for the the subsumption of identities for further accumulation by social networks (Winer 2011), or in the enclosure of the open web through augmentation applications that are designed for profit (Short 2011). Thus, the fetishisation of personalisation, of self-branding, of the emergent technologies through which individuals connect, risks the commodification of each and every action we take in the world. However, this enhanced, connected, semantic web of social relations also offers a crack through which the domination of capital might be opposed. As Illich (1975, 82) argues: "Only among convivially structured tools can people learn to use the new levels of power that modern technology can incorporate in them". Thus, the very automation or human-machine augmentation and symbiosis that capital demands and develops in order to discipline and control labour makes possible an exodus from the society of capitalist work through the radical redisposal of the surplus time that arises as an outcome of that automation, alongside the new ways in which different groups can interconnect in that surplus time (Virno 2004).

Academics then have an important role in amplifying the potentialities for an exodus away from the society of capitalist work. This is more than a series of atomised rearguard actions against capital's cybernetic command (Dyer-Witheford 1999). This role begins in negation or refusal of the starting point for cognitive labour. For Noble (1998), this meant arguing against the conversion of intellectual activity into intellectual capital and hence private property, catalysed through virtualisation that is itself driven by the commodification of research and teaching and the emergence of commercially-viable, proprietary products that can be marketised. The capitalist processes of deskilling and automation, fetishisation of products, and proletarianisation of labour are at the core of this process. Thus, by reconnecting the University life-world that includes research and development to Marx's deeper, structural technological critique, it is possible to legitimise the development-in-public of emergent technologies, and their revelation as a fetishised force of production, as a repoliticised form of activity between students, teachers and public. Moreover, it becomes possible to use this legitimation to catalyse spaces of dissent or protest that underpin new workerist revolts (Coleman 2012, Mason 2012). The workerist nature of these protests is important because of the tendency of capital to subordinate and exploit proletarianised social labour, in order to sustain and enhance the more valuable, cognitive labour of those with proprietary skills (Newfield 2010, Dyer-Witheford 2004).

Thus, in the mass of protests that form a politics of events against austerity academics need to consider their participatory traditions and positions, and how they actively contribute to the dissolution of their expertise as a commodity, in order to support other socially-constructed forms of production. In the critique of knowledge production, revealed through the production/consumption of specific emergent technologies, the University can grow in excess of its symbolic role. As a result, students and teachers might reconsider how they engage with emergent technologies, in order to contribute to a re-formation of their webs of social interaction. How do students and teachers contribute to public dissent against domination and foreclosure? For Marx (1992, 2004), technology is a central strand in the revolutionary transformation of society. This transformation overthrows the capitalist value-form in the construction of an alternative value-structure, and an alternative value-system that does not have the specific character of that achieved under capitalism. *Pace* Marx scholars might consider how their work on and with emergent technologies dissolves the symbolic power of the University into the actual, existing reality of protest, in order to engage with this process of transformation beyond mere commodification.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Andriole, Katherine P., and Ramin Khorasani. 2010. Cloud Computing: What Is It and Could It Be Useful? *Journal of the American College of Radiology* 7 (4): 252-254.

Azuma, Ronald T., Baillot, Yohan, Behringer, Reinhold, Feiner, Steven, Julier, Simon and Blair MacIntyre. 2001. Recent Advances in Augmented Reality. *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*. Accessed April 1, 2012.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

http://www.cs.unc.edu/~azuma/cga2001.pdf

Bailey, Michael, and Des Freedman. 2011. *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto of Resistance*. London: Pluto Press.

Ball. Stephen J. 2012. *Global Education Inc. New Policy Networks and The Neo-Liberal Imaginary.* London: Routledge.

Berger, Theodore W. 2007. Report on International Assessment of Research and Development in Brain-Computer Interfaces. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.wtec.org/bci/BCI-finalreport-10Oct2007-lowres.pdf

Blackboard Inc. 2012. Blackboard Mobile. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Mobile/Overview.aspx

Bonefeld, Werner. 2010. What is the alternative? *Shift Magazine*, 11. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://shiftmag.co.uk/?p=400

Canaan, Joyce. E, and Wesley Shumar, eds. 2008. *Structure and Agency in the Neoliberal University*, London: Routledge.

Clarke, Simon. 1994. *Marx's Theory of crisis*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.

Cline, Mychilo S. 2005. *Power, Madness, and immortality: The future of virtual reality*. University Village Press.

COSE. 2012. COSE Project. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.nicta.com.au/research/projects/cose

Collini, Stefan. 2012. *What Are Universities For?* London: Penguin.

Colman, Gabriella. 2012. Our Weirdness is Free. *Triple Canopy*, 15. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://canopycanopycanopy.com/15/our_weirdness_is_free

Cowie, Roddy. 2005. What are people doing when they assign everyday emotion terms?. *Psychological Inquiry* 16 (1): 11-48.

Cuhls, Kerstin. 2003. From forecasting to foresight processes - new participative foresight activities in Germany. *Journal of Forecasting* 22 (2-3): 93–111. Accessed April 1, 2012.

Cullerne-Brown, William. 2012. Research Blog. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://exquisitelife.researchresearch.com/exquisite_life/williamcullernebown.html

Das, Gaurav. 2012. 6 universities to teach cloud computing, mobile tech. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-08/guwahati/31037183_1_cloud-technology-manipur-university-curriculum

Dikaiakos, Marios D., George Pallis, Dimitrios Katsaros, Penkaj Mehra, and Athena Vakali. 2009. Cloud Computing: Distributed Internet Computing for IT and Scientific Research. *IEEE Internet Computing* 13 (5): 10-13.

Downes, Stephen. 2012. Welcome to Change: Education, Learning, and Technology! Accessed April 1, 2012. http://change.mooc.ca/about.htm

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 2004. *Autonomist Marxism and the Information Society*. Canberra: Treason Press. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://libcom.org/library/autonomist-marxism-information-society-nick-witheford.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greg de Peuter. 2009. *Games of empire: global capitalism and video games*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

EduFactory. 2012. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/

EC. 2010. *COM(2010) 2020: Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/

EC. 2012. *Research and Innovation: Framework Programme 7*. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/

Educause. 2012. Learning Analytics: 51 Resources. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.educause.edu/Resources/Browse/LearningAnalytics/39193

Greef de Tjerk. E., Arciszewski Henryk F.R., and Mark A. Neerincx. 2010. Adaptive Automation Based on an Object-Oriented Task Model: Implementation and Evaluation in a Realistic C2 Environment. *Journal of Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making* 4 (2): 152-182.

Feenberg, Andrew. 1999. *Questioning Technology*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Pantheon.

Friedewald, Michael. 2005. The Continuous Construction of the Computer User: Visions and User Models in the History of Human-Computer Interaction. In *Total Interaction: Theory and Practice of a New Paradigm*, edited by Gerhard M. Buurman, 26–41. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.

Ganascia, Jean-Gabriel. 2010. The generalized sousveillance society. *Social science information* 49 (3): 489–507.

Gartner. 2011. Gartner's 2011 Hype Cycle Special Report Evaluates the Maturity of 1,900 Technologies. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=1763814

Gasson, Mark, and Kevin Warwick, K. 2007. D12.1 Study On Emerging AmI Technologies. *FIDIS - Future of Identity in the Information Society*. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.fidis.net/resources/deliverables/hightechid/d122-study-on-emerging-ami-technologies/doc/8/

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason,* volume 2 of *The Theory of Communicative Action.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Hall, Richard. 2011. Occupation: a place to deliberate the socio-history of re-production. In *Roundhouse Journal: Reimagining the University* 2: 54-63.

Hall. Richard. 2012. Educational Technology and the War on Public Education. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.richard-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

hall.org/2012/03/22/educational-technology-and-the-war-on-public-education/

Hall, Richard, and Joss Winn. 2011. Questioning Technology in the Development of a Resilient Higher Education. *E-Learning and Digital Media* 8 (4): 343-356.

Hamilton, Karen E. 2011. Augmented Reality in Education. Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/Augmented_Reality_in_Education

Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Harvey, David. 2010. *A Companion to Marx's Capital*. London: Verso.

HEFCE. 2012. Enhancing Learning and Teaching through the Use of Technology. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/techlearn/

Heilig, Morton L. 1962. *Sensorama Simulator*. Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://www.mortonheilig.com/SensoramaPatent.pdf

HIT Lab NZ. 2012. BuildAR. Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://www.buildar.co.nz/

Holloway, John. 2002. *Change the World Without Taking Power*. London: Pluto Press.

Hudlicka, Eva. 2009. Affective Game Engines: Motivation and Requirements. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Foundations of Digital Games,* 299-306. Orlando, Florida: ACM. doi:10.1145/1536513.1536565

Human Machine Symbiosis Lab. 2012. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://symbiosis.asu.edu/research_hms.html

Ikonen, Veikko, Kanerva, Minni, Kouri, Panu, Stahl, Bernd Carsten & Wakunuma, Kutoma. 2010. ETICA Project Deliverable D.1.2: Emerging Technologies Report. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://ethics.ccsr.cse.dmu.ac.uk/etica/deliverables/D12Emergingtechnologiesreportfinal.pdf

Illich, Ivan. 1975. *Tools for Conviviality*, London: Fontana.

JISC. 2011. Cloud Computing Increasingly Attractive to Universities. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/stories/2011/05/cloud.aspx

JISC. 2012. Mobile Learning Infokit. Accessed April 1, 2012. https://mobilelearninginfokit.pbworks.com/w/page/41122430/Home

Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Penguin.

Lebowitz, Michael A. 2003. *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lepratti, Rafaello. 2006. Advanced Human-Machine System for Intelligent Manufaturing: Some Issues for Employing Ontologies for Natural Language Processing. *Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing* 17 (6): 653-66.

Licklider, Joseph C.R. 1960. Man-Computer Symbiosis. *IRE Transactions on Human Factors in Electronics*, HFE-1: 4-11. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://groups.csail.mit.edu/medg/people/psz/Licklider.html

Mason, Paul. 2012. *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions*. London: Verso.

Marx, Karl. 1992. *Capital, Volume 3: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin

Marx, Karl. 1993. *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy. London: Penguin.*

Marx, Karl. 2004. *Capital, Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 2006. *Capital, Volume 2: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin.

McGettigan, Andrew M. 2012. Critical Education: All about the Arts, Humanities and Higher Education today. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://andrewmcgettigan.org/

Meiksins-Wood, Ellen. 1997. Back to Marx. *Monthly Review* 49 (2): 1-9.

MIT Media Lab. 2012. Affective Computing. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://affect.media.mit.edu/

MIT. 2012. 10x Human-Machine Superperformance. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://10x.media.mit.edu/

Neary, Mike, and Andy Hagyard. 2010. Pedagogy of Excess – an Alternative Political Economy of Student Life. In *The Marketisation of Higher Education: The Student as Consumer*, edited by Mike Molesworth, Richard Scullion and Elizabeth Nixon, 209-24. London: Routledge.

Negri, Antonio. 1989. *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty First Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Neilsson, Brett, and Ned Rossiter. 2008. Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception. *Theory, Culture & Society 25 (7-8): 51-72.*

Newfield, Christopher. 2010. The Structure and Silence of Cognitariat. *EduFactory Webjournal* 0: 10-26. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.edu-factory.org/edu15/webjournal/n0/Newfield.pdf

Newfield, Christopher. 2012. Remaking the University. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://utotherescue.blogspot.com/

Noble, David F. 1998. Digital Diploma Mills: The Automation of Higher Education. *First Monday* 3 (1): Accessed April 1, 2012. http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/569/490

Occupy Wiki. 2012. OccupyWiki.org. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://occupywiki.org/

OpenDemocracy. 2012. #occupy communiques. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.opendemocracy.net/freeform-tags/occupy-communiques

Postone, Moishe. 1996. *Time, Labour and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Postone, Moishe. 2009. Rethinking Marx's Critical Theory. In *History and Heteronomy: Critical Essays* (UTCP Booklet 12*)*, edited Moishe Postone, Viren Murthy and Yasuo Kobayashi, 31-47. Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Center for Philoso-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

phy.
Porto Interactive Center. 2012. LifeisGame Project. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.portointeractivecenter.org/lifeisgame/
Really Open University. 2012. The Really Open University. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://reallyopenuniversity.wordpress.com/
Robinson, Peter, and Rana el Kaliouby. 2009. Computation of Emotions in Man and Machines. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 364 (1535): 3441-3447. doi:10.1098/rstb.2009.0198.
Roy, Deb. 2004. 10x: Human-Machine Symbiosis. *BT Technology Journal* 22 (4). Accessed April 1, 2012. http://10x.media.mit.edu/10x draft.pdf
Sanchati, Rupesh, and Gaurav Kulkarni. 2011. Cloud Computing in Digital and University Libraries. *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology* 11 (12): 36-41. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://globaljournals.org/GJCST_Volume11/6-Cloud-Computing-in-Digital-and-University.pdf
Short, Adrian. 2011. It's the End of the Web As We Know It. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://adrianshort.co.uk/2011/09/25/its-the-end-of-the-web-as-we-know-it/
The Sociological Imagination. 2012. Radical Education Projects. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://sociologicalimagination.org/a-work-in-progress
Stahl, Bernd Carsten. 2004. E-Teaching - The Economic Threat to the Ethical Legitimacy of Education? In *Journal of Information Systems Education* 15 (2): 155–66.
Sykes, Jonathan, and Simon Brown. 2003. Affective gaming: measuring emotion through the gamepad. In *CHI '03 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems*, 732-733. Ft. Lauderdale, FL: ACM. doi:10.1145/765891.765957
Tao, Jianhua, and Tieniu Tan. 2005. Affective Computing: A Review. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* 3784: 981-995.
The Think Trust. 2010. Cloud Computing Scenario. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.think-trust.eu/downloads/think-trust-documents/cloud-computing_v0-2/download.html
Tiqqun. 2001. *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://archive.org/details/Tiqqun1
Tronti, Mario. 1973. Social Capital. *Telos* 17: 98-121.
Valtysson, Bjarki. 2011. Facebook as a Digital Public Sphere: Processes of Colonization and Emancipation. *tripleC - Cognition, Communication, Co-operation* 10 (1): 77-91. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/312
Vercellone, Carlo. 2007. From Formal Subsumption to General Intellect. *Historical Materialism* 15 (1): 13-36.
Virno, Paolo. 2001. General Intellect. *Generation Online*. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htmVirno, Paolo. 2004. *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life.* Los Angeles: Semiotext.
Virno, Paolo. n.d. General Intellect, Exodus, Multitude: Interview with Paolo Virno. *Archipélago* (54). Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno2.htm
Virno, Paolo, and Michael Hardt, eds. 1996. *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Walden, Ian. 2011. Accessing Data in the Cloud: The Long Arm of the Law Enforcement Agency. *Social Science Research Network.* Accessed April 1, 2012. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1781067
Wake, Matthew, and Bernd Carsten Stahl. 2010. Ethical Issues of the Use of Second Life in Higher Education. In *Proceedings of ETHICOMP*, 13 to 16 April 2010, Tarragona, Spain.
Weber, Max. 1969. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Macmillan.
Williams, Jeffrey, J. 2012. Deconstructing Academe: The birth of critical university studies. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/deconstructing-academe-the-birth-of-critical-university-studies/
Winer, Dave. 2011. Facebook is scaring me. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://scripting.com/stories/2011/09/24/facebookIsScaringMe.html
xDelia. 2012. Xcellence in Decision-making through Enhanced Learning in Immersive Applications. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.xdelia.org
Zhou, Feng. Duh, Henry Been-Lirn, and Mark Billinghurst. 2008. Trends in Augmented Reality Tracking, Interaction and Display: A Review of Ten Years of ISMAR. In *ISMAR '08: Proceedings of the 7th IEEE/ACM International Symposium on Mixed and Augmented Reality*.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2009. *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*. London: Verso.

About the Authors

Richard Hall
Dr Richard Hall is De Montfort University's Head of Enhancing Learning through Technology. He is a UK National Teaching Fellow and a Reader in Education and Technology. Richard is a Research Associate in the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility at De Montfort University, and his research interests include: the idea of the University and radical alternatives to it; technology and critical social theory; resilient education and the place of co-operative practice in overcoming disruption in higher education; and the place of social media in the idea of the twenty-first century University.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Bernd Stahl
Bernd Carsten Stahl is Professor of Critical Research in Technology and Director the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. His interests cover philosophical issues arising from the intersections of business, technology, and information. This includes the ethics of ICT and critical approaches to information systems.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 203-213, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

"Means of Communication as Means of Production" Revisited

William Henning James Hebblewhite

Philosophy Department, Latrobe University, Melbourne, Australia,
whebblewhite@students.latrobe.edu.au

Abstract: *This paper seeks to examine the claim made by Raymond Williams that the means of communication are a means of production. While agreeing with the central claim by Williams, the paper argues that the model which Williams' represents this claim with is insufficiently realized. By looking at the work of Marx and Althusser in relation to this claim, we suggest a new conceptual tool to actualize Williams' claims.*

Keywords: *Raymond Williams, Means of Communication, Internet, Means of Production, Marx, Althusser*

Acknowledgement: *The author would like to acknowledge the help of Lachlan Doughney who inspired the idea for this article and to Aaron Harrison and Brook Novak who were not only supportive while researching and completing drafts of this paper, but offered excellent feedback throughout its process.*

1. Introduction

In this essay I wish to explore Raymond Williams' assertion that the means of communication can be identified as a means of production. I seek to do this in the context of a critical enquiry of Williams' paper *Means of Communication as a Means of Production* (2005[1978]). It will be my thesis that Williams work opens up new possibilities in *new communications* theory. However I contend that despite opening up these possibilities, Williams' own theory is unable to develop these possibilities to their ultimate conclusion and we must turn towards Althusser's structural Marxism to assist in such development. The essay itself will be structured in three main sections. In the first section I'll outline Marx's definition of the means of production and how he viewed the means of communication as a form of the relations of production. I will also discuss Marx's base-superstructure and what defining the means of communication as the relations of production does for this understanding of society. In the second section I'll outline Raymond Williams' argument for identifying the means of communication as a means of production, drawing on the vast literature provided by Williams over his career, I'll argue that while Williams offers an interesting proposition, his argument is based on a definition of terms like 'production', which reduce their capability to express what the explicit means of production are. I'll argue that while Williams' wants to insist that production is beyond that of just 'commodity production', the use of communications now is one in which the information provided by the means of communication is treated like a commodity. In the last section, I want to examine how elements of Althusser's philosophy can produce the theoretical intervention necessary to examine the the internet as a means of communication identified as 'means of production' which produces 'information as a commodity'. The aim of this paper is twofold. To develop a foundation for the continued analysis of the means of communication such as the Internet, in the vein of Marxist theory and, to attempt to overcome the criticisms of structuralism that are contained in Raymond Williams' work.

2. Karl Marx and the Means of Production

In 1857, Marx wrote one of his more enduring pieces of work. The *Preface* to *a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Marx 1859/1994) is for many within Marxist theory the Rosetta stone, by which all work by Marx and Engels produced after this time are understood. However it is one significant passage within this document, which has received substantial exegetical focus. Marx writes that

> "In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a give stage in the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social formation is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since close examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation" (Marx 1994, 211).

The passage itself is rich with information that can help guide our understanding of the *means of* production. From the idea that "the totality of relations of production constitute the economic structure of society…on which arises a legal and political superstructure" (Marx 1990, 211), which briefly outlines the base-superstructure edifice which has become a central component, and heavily debated aspect of the Marxian tradition, to the idea that "at a certain stage of development; the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production" (ibid.), we can begin to formulate how Marx constructed the *means of production*. Necessarily it is these two important segments from the passage of the preface that concern us in this paper. If Raymond Williams' proposal that the means of communication are a means of production then this would necessitate a rethinking of society's structure, or would it? In order to understand the problem, we need to first be able to understand the elements that are used in constructing the problem. The main elements, as we see in the title of Williams essay, are: 1.) The means of communication and 2.) the means of production. We may argue that the title of the essay *Means of Communication as a Means of Production* identifies the means of production as a larger category than the means of communication, that the means of communication become just a subcategory of the means of production. Seem in this way it is then necessary, that if we are to identify the means of communication as a means of production, to come to an understanding of what the means of production are.

In Marx, the means of production refers to two elements of production that when entered into a labour process becomes a unified productive force. We can understand then, according to the account of *historical materialism* that is outlined in the passage above that these elements, the instruments of labour and the raw materials are then an aspect, in their development, of the conflict that arises between the productive forces and the relative production. As such they play a role in defining the social structure. It is then required that we explore these categories further. For Marx "an instrument of labour, is a thing, or a complex of things, which the worker interposes between himself and the object of his labour and which serves as a conductor, directing his activity onto that object" (Marx 1990, 285). While there is debate surrounding the actual means of production and what can and cannot be understood by them, G.A. Cohen (2000) argues that such things as strength, skills, knowledge, and intelligence are not an aspect of either raw materials or instruments of labour but that they are in effect a means of the labour process. The ambiguity of terms such as *means of production* and *instruments of labour* allow for discrepancies in how one describes such elements of the productive process. It seems then that what an instrument of labour is, according to

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

such a definition, is an instrument such as a hammer, or even a factory, anything which focuses activity on an object of labour. Despite the broadness of such a concept, it become even broader when we take into account Marx's assertion that "we may include among the instruments of labour...all the objective conditions necessary for carrying on the labour process" (Marx 1990, 286).

We can, I believe, infer then that included in the instruments of labour are the raw materials and objects of labour. We must also be careful about the conflation of the raw materials with the objects of labour. While all raw materials are objects of labour, it cannot be said that all objects of labour are raw materials. In Marx's sense raw materials are only to be understood as raw materials if they have already passed through the labour process (Marx 1990). We may say then that a plank of wood is a raw material, while a tree standing in the forest is a natural resource. The difference between them is that the plank of wood has been worked on already by instruments of labour to turn it into such a product. According to what I've said above, the instruments of labour can be understood as the totality of the means of production. This is because for Marx any form, which provides the objective conditions for carrying out labour, is an instrument of labour. Seeing as such that the object of labour is needed for labour to take place, we can infer then that an object of labour is an instrument of labour, which is worked on by other instruments of labour to produce a product for consumption. We may perhaps say then that, the means of production are nothing more then the instruments of labour. Considering that the productive forces are the unity between the labour process and the means of production, it is the attribution of 'work' to the instruments of labour that unifies them as productive forces.

2.1. Marx and the Means of Communication as a Means of Production

How does this pertain to our discussion that the means of communication are a means of production? If we are to interpret the means of production as an instrument of labour which is a necessary condition of the labour process, then we must provide evidence that the means of communication are an instrument of labour and that the means of communication as a means of production provide a necessary condition for the labour process.

In *Capital* Vol 1, in the section entitled *Machinery and Large Scale Production*, Marx discusses the relation of the means of production and the means of Communication. He writes briefly that "the revolution in the modes of production of industry and agriculture made necessary a revolution in the general conditions of the social processes of production", these "social processes of production" are what Marx calls the "means of communication" and the "means of transportation" (Marx 1990, 506). When Marx was writing, these forms of *social processes of production* could be seen actualized in the telegraph and railroad systems. However, Marx does not often speak of the "means of communication" apart from the times he speaks of the means of transportation. In fact it is difficult, at least in the work of *Capital,* to evaluate any discernible differences between what Marx calls the means of communication and the means of transportation. This is given strength by comments that Marx makes in Vol. II of *Capital* in asserting the non-commodificatory aspects of the communication industry "for moving commodities and people and the transmission of mere information" (Marx 1992 134). If we follow Marx, can we not then ascertain, from the Preface to *The Contribution of a Critique of Political Economy* that the means of communication are a form of relations of production for Marx? By the relations of production we may understand the totality of the social relationships that promote production and reproduction of the means of life. We see this in the Preface where Marx writes that "in the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production" (Marx 1994, 211).

In the sense that we attribute the means of communication as relations of production we refer to the social relations of production, thus understood as the socio-economic relations that constitute the social structure of society. What we see here is the necessary foundations between the material productive forces (instruments of labour + labour) and the social relations of production (the means of communication and transportation). It is easy to recognize the means of communication as relations of production in exactly the way Marx has set it out. What we see in Vol 2. of *Capital* is another type of distancing, in which the communications industry is signalled out as an important branch of industry, along with the transport industry, "in which the product of the production process is not a new objective product" (Marx 1992 134). For Marx, both the transport industry and the communications industry do not produce new products, but only "displace people and things" (Marx 1992 135). It is well documented in *Capital,* as shown above, that for Marx the means of communi-

cation were closer in structure and process to the means of transportation then they were to the means of production, and even developed in the same way when revolutionized (Marx 1990, 506). What is remarkable and in need of further discussion is that in the revolution of the means of transportation and the means of communication they become fetters upon the large-industry manufacturers (which we may understand as productive forces). According to Marx, at a stage in the development of the material forces of production the social relations of production block (or fetter) any further development. At this stage, social revolution takes place which revolutionizes the relations of production allowing for further development of the productive forces. Of course if Marx argues that the means of communication are a relation of production, then at some stage we must confront a contradiction between what Marx says about the means of communication and what Raymond Williams says. In the next sections I will look at Raymond Williams' Cultural Materialism as a proposal of society's structure against Marx's historical materialism and argue that it is the emphasis on culture rather then the economic in Williams' works that allows him to identify the means of communication as a means of production.

But we must recognize a difference between the tangible nature of goods and the intangible nature of "communication". At one level, there exists a form of communication between the producers and the suppliers; at another level between workers and managers. There is also a level of communication that exists between the consumer and the producer. We must then recognize a distinction between *mass communication* and *localized communication.* The distinction between *mass* and *localized* is never made in Marx's work; the type of communication that is discussed in the work of Marx is ultimately related to that of mass communication. This is communication that appears on a grand scale in the productive process. We can say that *localized communication* is a sub-domain of *mass communication*. Without the effects of *localized communication*, or the manager telling the workers what to do, then there would be no effective *mass communication* or the dispersal of information from the workers as producers of a certain product, to various other groups including suppliers and consumers.

3. Williams on Base and Superstructure

In the exposition of Williams' discussion on the base and superstructure, we find the focus is on specific keywords that formulate the discourse. We are confronted in Williams work with a detailed discussion of *production*, *determination*, *base* and *superstructure*. It is Williams's position that the base and superstructural construction of society originally formulated by Marx has been misconstrued by thinkers throughout the generations due in part to a misunderstanding of Marx's use of particular forms of language. It was an aspect of Williams's method to study the language of individual thinkers rather then the abstractions that they posed (Eldridge and Eldridge 1994). As he writes in *Marxism and Literature* (1977): "In the transition of Marx to Marxism, and then in the development of expository and didactic formulations, the words used in the original arguments were projected…as if they were precise concepts, and…as if they were terms for observable 'areas' of social life" (Williams 1977, 77). For Williams, the description that Marx posed of the base and superstructure edifice is no more than an analogy (Williams 1993), a linguistic expression of the structure of society which does not adequately portray society, it merely provides a simplified variation of what society is actually like. For Williams, the letter to J. Bloch written by Engels in 1890 provides grounds which lessen the usefulness of the formula of the base-superstructure that Marx used (Williams, 1993). Of the formula provided by Marx, Williams turns to a passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* to show that Marx asserted rationalism to the superstructure which Williams's states increased the complexity of the formula. He writes of this that "recognition of complexity is the first control in any valid attempt at a Marxist theory of culture. The second control…is an understanding of the formula of structure and superstructure" (Williams 1993). In the letter that Engels writes to Bloch, Engels argues that any statement which reduces the social structure to the determined effect of the economic base has misconstrued what Marx and himself meant and that any such reduction becomes "meaningless, abstract and absurd…." (Engels 1890). Engels writes further that "the economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure….also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form" (Engels 1890, 475). Building from this, Williams argues that Engels provides the complexity of the social structure, which is needed in the development of a Marxist theory of culture and shows Marx's formula to be just an analogy, in reality the structure is less absolute and less clear. Williams does not fully follow Engels approach, chastising him for failing to escape

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the formulaic approach in terms of levels. Williams argues that Engels' model falls into the same problem as Marx's. He writes that "Engels does not so much revise the enclosed categories….as reiterate the categories and instance certain exceptions, indrectnesses, and irregularities which obscure their otherwise regular relation" (Williams 1977, 80). We can argue from this point that Williams is determined to move away from any Marxian theory of culture that privileges the economic base over the superstructure. For Williams, "Marx…had correctly stressed the connection between culture and the economy, but had badly mistaken the nature of that connection. Culture and communication were to be understood as primary and not secondary components of the social totality, constitutive and not reflective in the maintenance and development of the social order" (Higgins 1994, 110)

Williams' objection to the base and superstructure analogy of Marxian theory is summed up in this passage which appeared in *Marxism and Literature*. He writes: "The social and political order which maintains a capitalist market, like the social struggles which created it, is necessarily a material production. From castles and palaces and churches to prisons and workhouses and schools; from weapons of war to a controlled press: any ruling class, in variable ways though always materially, produces a social and political order. These are never superstructural activities. They are necessary material production within an apparently self-subsistent mode of production can alone be carried on" (Williams 1977, 93). Of course, it is only logical to conceive of castles, palaces, churches and prisons as material production, despite their "superstructural activities", but we can immediately perceive a deficiency in Williams' argument. While it may be true that the "superstructure" has in the past been seen to be nothing more then a immaterial form of consciousness. This is a rejected claim in contemporary Marxian theory. As Terry Eagleton has pointed out: "there is a strong implication through…Williams' work that to label a phenomenon 'superstructural' is somehow to assign it a lesser degree of effective reality than an element of material production" (Eagleton 1989, 168). It may be perhaps that Williams, like Althusser, had in mind a Hegelian form of causality which expressed the idea that all phenomena of the social totality may be reduced to a particular form of essence. But unlike Althusser, who showed that Marx had moved past the Hegelian influence of his past, Williams' contends that the base-superstructure of the late Marx was still heavily invested in this form of effective causality. In Eagleton's mind all Williams' has done thus far is to re-invent the wheel. His criticism of an outdated model of the base and superstructure is more ritualistic then useful in any theoretical sense (Eagleton 1989). Williams' *Marxism and Literature*, like Althusser's *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* can be seen as "a return to the complex unity of Marx's original insight into the 'indissoluble unity' of the 'whole social process'" (Higgins 1994, 114) It is "the overcoming of the dichotomy between 'society' and 'nature'" (Williams 1977, 19) For Williams instead of the economy as the central concept of society, he has argued that it is culture at the centre "of modern thought and practice" (Williams 1977, 11). The term *culture* thus become a central concern of Williams, evidenced by his attempt to formulate a *Cultural Materialism* (See Williams 1977, 1993) and a *Sociology of Culture* (See Williams 1981). For Williams, "Marx…had correctly stressed the connection between culture and the economy, but had badly mistaken the nature of that connection" (Higgins 1994, 110). It was not that culture was a secondary attribute aligned with the superstructural elements such as the politico-legal, as some Orthodox Marxists were fond of saying, but that "culture and communication were to be understood as primary…components of the social totality" (Higgins 1994, 110). Cultural Materialism is the position that *Culture* should be recognized as both a social and material productive process and practice which identifies "the arts" as social uses of material means of production (Williams 1980). Following on from the German Romanticism of Herder and Coleridge, Williams sort to establish culture "as separate from and yet superior to both economics and politics" (Milner 1994, 45). Is this culturalism, however, not just simply a form of determinism, which privileges culture over economy? A reverse of the formulation of the Orthodox Marxists that Williams criticizes? Not necessarily. Though it appears as such, *determinism* in Williams is a quite specific meaning different from that which he seeks to criticize. The notion of *determination* plays a large role in Williams' work: "no problem in Marxist cultural theory is more difficult than that of 'determination'", he writes in a section of *Marxism and Literature* entirely dedicated to this keyword. He seeks to define determination, not as a "predicted, prefigured, controlled content", but moreso as content which sets the limits and exerts pressure (Williams 2005, 34). This is in keeping with his dislike of the technological determinism that he feels is present in the orthodox Marxist presentation. Once again we must point out a similarity that Williams shares with Louis Althusser. Both thinkers, rather than see determination as a process of control, saw it as a setting of limits. Both to some extent follow the Engelsian description

of determination laid out in the letter to Bloch which we discussed above. Williams criticizes what he calls *abstract objectivity* in which the determining process is independent of men's will in the absolute sense that they cannot control it. This is the basis for the position of economism that was widespread in the 2nd International, furthermore Williams thinks this position as a philosophical and political doctrine is worthless (Williams 1977). Economism is rejected by Williams, but despite his words to the contrary, determinism still plays a role in his work. Williams asserts the primacy of culture within the societal structure, culture is no longer superstructural but becomes a basic process along with other determining elements such as the economy and politics. In order to escape from the *cultural determinism* that may be levelled at such a position as Williams, he connects his work with that of Antonio Gramsci, specifically the concept of hegemony. Hegemony in this sense refers to notions of dominance and subordination. This is to say that the dominant element of the societal structure does not "rule" over the other elements, as one might be persuaded to say in the sense of Orthodox Marxism, but that the dominant element necessitates the needs and wants of other elements of society and in those other elements recognizes its own needs and wants. In this sense, for Williams, the cultural, political and economic elements of the societal structure work cooperatively in the construction of society.

Under Williams model, due to his own neglected way "material" is used in describing the "base" and "superstructure", the means of communication cannot properly be identified as a means of production. If we were to accept Williams model, then the use of *production* would be broadly defined to such an extent that the Marxian notion of *production in general* would become colloquially used to be defined as any type of *production*. Without a determining base, even one that "in the last instance" is never actually realized. Society becomes an open category, always being redefined. Instead in the following section, I will argue that the means of communication can be adequately identified as a means of production by applying the structural-Marxist formulation of society that was devised by Louis Althusser.

4. Althusser and the Means of Communication as a Means of Production

Unlike Williams, Althusser strongly recommends the model first proposed by Marx in the 1859 *Preface*. However, Althusser also takes into account the reaction by Engels, formulated in a letter to Bloch, to the point that the economy is the primary determinant of the social structure. Louis Althusser's reading of Marx overcomes the determination and economism that Williams also tried to overcome, but the benefit of Althusser's reading is that he does not fall into a deterministic mode of relying on culture as Williams did. Like Williams, Althusser's starting point is the importance of complexity in the Marxian social structure and Engels' letter to Bloch. For Althusser there is still the importance of the base-superstructure edifice, but in following Engels, Althusser argues fro the *relative autonomy* of the superstructural elements, of which the economy only determines in the last instance. Now at a glance this determination in the last instance seems to present an extrapolated version of Marx's determinism. However for Althusser, the type of determinism involved is one of setting limits. This is to say that the economy, in the last instance, determines the elements of the social whole that dominates in the social formation. This is not a fixed absolute, as Williams may contend, the dominant element "varies according to the overdetermination of the contradictions and their unseen development" (Althusser and Balibar 2009, 357). We are interested in two points that arise from this firstly, the differences between *determination in the last instance* and *structures in dominance* and secondly, the role of *overdetermination*. Williams' criticized the notion of *overdetermination* as being a "repetition of the basic error of 'economism' which is that it still relies on the economy as a primary determinant within the social structure (Williams 1977). However before we get to deep into a discussion about *overdetermination,* we must discuss the difference between "*determination in the last instance"* and *domination*. The category of *determination in the last instance* first becomes known in the letter between Engels and Bloch that we have referred to throughout this paper. Engels writes that "there is an interaction of all…elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (hat is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary" (Engels 1890). This is to say that where a causal connection cannot be found in regards to the elements of the social structure, it is the economic base, which asserts itself as the determining force. Althusser takes up Engels notion and expands it in regards to the structural reading of Marx's social structure. One of the expansions that Althusser added to this form of determination is that the *last instance* is never actually realized (Al-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

thusser 2005). What Althusser is trying to do is apply an applicable form of causal relation instead of the two past forms of causal relation (i.e. mechanical and effective) which he sees as containing flaws. For Althusser, structural forces are at work within social formations. Contained within these social formations are elements of the social structure which interrelate with one another to determine the effect that the social formation has. This is understood in that the effects of the social structure are determined not by something that lies outside the social structure but by the elements of the social structure itself (Althusser 2009). What Williams and the Orthodox Marxists had in common was that they conceived of the base structure (whatever it may contain) as a separate entity from the superstructure. Althusser remedied this by arguing that the base and superstructure were elements of the same structure and that it was the interrelationship between these elements that explained the social structure.

How does Althusser's structural theory succeed in identifying the means of communication as a means of production, where Williams's theory failed? In Williams' theory, as we have shown already, his problem was that he had presupposed that the superstructural was combined of immaterial content that as such, in arguing for the materiality of the superstructure, attempted to show that the elements of the superstructure were just as much an aspect of material production as was economic production. However, no one would disagree that the elements of the superstructure are material and that they themselves produce things. In Althusser's famous essay *Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus* (1990), he argues for the materiality of ideology, which makes up the elements of the superstructure. For Althusser, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus" (Althusser 1990, 112) and he claims that ideology has a material existence. For Althusser, the notion of material exists in different modalities, which are all rooted in physical existence. So while ideology may not be "material" in the sense that Williams' palaces are material, they still nonetheless exist in a specific material modality. So while we may maintain that *ideology* as an imaginary relation to reality doesn't have material existence, Althusser wants to argue that the realization of these beliefs in action and practices confirm their materiality. We have certain relations to the real that require us to partake in certain practices within the material ideological apparatus. These practices can then be confirmed as the material existence of our ideological beliefs. In this sense the superstructure pertains to be a material structure. The practices of the social, legal and political ideologies are to be seen as the material existence of these ideologies. In Williams' case he argues that the means of communication can be understood as a means of production because of the sense in which "material" is used. But as I have just shown, there is no need to change the keyword of "material" if we just apply a structuralist thinking to the problem.

5. E.P. Thompson's Critique of Althusserian Marxism

Having given an overview of Althusser's position, I'll now attend to a critique of Althusser's Marxism by E.P Thompson (1978). Thompson's critique, as polemical as it was "moving from irony to caricature….to mere abuse" (Thompson 1978, 130) attributing Althusser's Marxism to a neo-Stalinism does provide good insights and has provided influential. Although Gregory Elliot has stated that Thompson's critique has less to do with Althusser and more to do with Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst (Elliot, 2009). Nevertheless we shall outline one particular criticism provided by Thompson in an attempt to over come it. For E.P. Thompson, Althusser and his Marxian methodology are unable to provide answers to questions about Culture (Communications) because the structuralism that Althusser endorses departs from Marx's historical method he writes that "Althusser (and his progeny) find themselves unable to handle, except in the most abstract and theoretic way, questions of value, culture – and political theory" due to in part the "structuralism of stasis" that departs from Marx's own historical method (Thompson 1978, 197). He further argues that Althusser's conceptual universe does not provide the adequate tools for the explanation of change. According to Thompson, Althusser' structuralism does not allow for transformations; historically or socially. "Structure, like a whale, opens up its jaws and swallows process up…process survives unhappily in the structure's stomach" (Thompson 1978, 283). This is to say that while processes may take place within the structure of society as elaborated by Althusser, they don't actually change the structure itself which remains a constant. However Althusser's structuralism is far from a static monolith as Thompson would like to suggest. The explanation of the structure, in Althusser's structural causality does not exist in a form of static. The relationship between the irreducibility of the base and the superstructure does not allow for the stasis that Thompson sees, it is the overdetermination of processes within the structure which Althusser saw, and by introducing concepts such as 'determina-

tion in the last instance and structures in dominance, he avoided the structures collapse into relativism. Anderson (1980) shows that Thompson's reading of Althusser does not show that Althusser put forward a definition of "the object of history" which unveils a dynamic structure: "For Althusser does attempt a more substantive definition of the object of history: a historical fact is one 'which causes a mutation in the existing structural relations'….Thompson has overlooked what is the hinge of the definition he is attacking, the term 'mutation'. Althusser's formula puts an impeccable emphasis on *change*, rather than on stability as Thompson imagines it to do" (Anderson 1980, 14).

Althusser's structuralism is based upon the notions of *Overdetermination, determination in the last instance* and *Structures in dominance*. It is these notions which provide the dynamism within Althusser's system which is at odds with Thompson's allegations. For Althusser, as we showed above, the determination he speaks of one which exerts pressure on the particular elements, setting the limits by which the 'structure in dominance' is able to function. this Thompson misreads in Althusser and would very much agree with him, as he himself states that 'Williams and I have been insisting for years of defining "determine" in its senses of "setting limits" and "exerting pressures" (Thompson 1978, 351). *Structures in Dominance* are not permanently fixed but vary according to the overdetermined contradiction (Althusser 2009). If it is true, as we believe it is, that Althusser's structuralism is one of dynamism and not one of stasis as Thompson believes, then we may also argue that Althusser's conceptual universe does provide us with the conceptual tools to judge and analyse change and further more allow us to grasp questions related to culture.

The contestation between Althusser and Thompson lies in the heated debate between that of structure and human agency. The debate is that of the primacy of structure or agency in the development of human behaviour. We know from Marx that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Simon 1994, 211). For Marx it is the structure of the superstructure (ideology) that determines the consciousness of human behaviour. Althusser follows this presenting humanism as an ideology which manifests itself in the interpellation of the individual as a subject by the ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1990). In contrast to this Thompson argues that while social structure may have an effect on human behaviour, its effect is weak "for any living generation, in any 'now', the way in which they 'handle' experience defies prediction and escapes from any narrow definition of determination" (Thompson 1978, 363).

The debate between structure and agency is far too large to cover adequately in this paper. But let us try and think what we have already said back to the main argument of the piece. The internet, it cannot be denied, as proved to be a major cultural change in Western society. As such, human behaviour has itself changed in order to cope with such change. One is now always connected to the internet; the checking of emails is a daily (or even twice daily) occurrence. Contra Thompson, Structures of society do determine our behaviour, but I agree with Thompson to the extent that I do not think Structure is the only determinate of human behaviour. Given Althusser's structural causality as a dynamic structure, I do not think that it is claimable that structure determines every aspect of human behaviour. In many respects the debate between structure and agency is also a debate of nature or nurture.

6. The Internet as a Means of Communication and a Means of Production

The technological advancement of media and communications has been astounding since the publication of Raymond Williams' paper. In this last section, I want to argue that the means of communication that we have available to us via the Internet, such as Facebook and Google, are in fact a type of means of production, though not in the way that Williams would probably suggest. In Marx, the means of production are the unity between the tools of production and the materials of production. The tools of production are, or can be defined as things, which an agent will use on the materials of production in order to formulate a specific item of interest. In an economic situation, this item of interest, known as a commodity, would then be sold in the marketplace for a value. However, the type of process we have described does not only take place within an economic framework. Let us take as an example: the production of this paper you are now reading. The author is provided with two things: 1. The tools of production, by which we mean, in this case, conceptual tools such as Marx's theory of capital and Althusser's structural Marxism, the PC used to write the paper on, the books poured through in order to understand the fundamental components of each thinkers arguments and so on and so forth. 2. The materials of production, or the work of Raymond Williams. The author then uses his material and conceptual tools to develop the material of production

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

into a product, or the paper that now sits before you. Essentially, the author is not driven primarily by the capitalist commodity production, which Raymond Williams argued dominates society, of course we may argue that a reason to be published is in order to secure a position at an academic institution, but this is only a subset of reasons which play into the whole publishing culture of academia. This type of production is not only limited to the production of knowledge, which happens in academia, and the production of commodities that happens in the economy, but can also be applied to the idea of the means of communication that we have available to us via the Internet. Let me give an example of how the types of means of communication described above act as a means of production. In the use of Facebook, the user will gain access to this Internet forum by use of a computer, mobile phone or any sort of electronic device, which has access to the Internet. We have thus identified two forms of tools of production: 1) An electronic device linked to the Internet and 2) The Internet itself. Our task now is to identify the materials used in production. In this case the materials provided to be used by the tools of production are the voluntarily submitted information. Whether it is everything about you, including your hobbies, your likes and dislikes etc, or just a simply name and email address, what you provide Facebook with is raw materials, which are then used to produce a finished product, i.e. your Internet profile. I must admit that the use of the term "production" is broad in this sense, but I do not think that this denigrates that such Internet forums as "Facebook" can be identified as a means of production.

The internet as a means of communication is also a fast growing means of production. Following Alvin Toffler (1980) and Christian Fuchs (2012), I want to use the notion of a prosumer in the development of this idea. Prosumer, as the name suggests is a neologism of "producer" and "consumer". The Internet as a means of communication and a means of production has seen the growth of the prosumers. Fuchs (2012) has argued that while users of the Internet have seen to the growth of the commodity market of the internet based on their user activity, they have also recognized as content producers that "there is user-generated content, the users engage in permanent creative activity, communication, community building and content production" (Fuchs 2012, 43). As a means of production, the Internet, or in particular, web-based companies such as Google, Facebook and Youtube are able to take the raw material of information that is provided to them by the user and use that information to create new products, whether that be new online games designed to have the user invest time and money or simply a new addition to their integral system which gets such companies more users. We have briefly confronted the question of the Internet both as a means of communication and as a means of production, but can the Internet be a means of communication as a means of production.

We can also distinguish between the social means of production and the economic means of production. As Jacob Torfing has written: "Mass media are…engaged in the production of the fabric of everyday life as they organize our leisure time, shape our social behaviour and provide the material out of which our very identities are constructed in terms of class, race, nationality, sexuality and distinctions between 'us' and 'them'" (Torfing 1999, 210). In terms of social "means of production", sites like Facebook and the search engine Google are said by Eli Pariser to have formulated algorithms so that what you view on your specific page is informed by your interests and has even gone so far as to suggest that ideological viewpoints dissimilar to your own are filtered from your immediate view, what he called "filter-bubbles" (Pariser 2011). I call this a social "means of production" because the product generated by this algorithm working on your personal information generates an identify of yourself viewed by the world. In the same way we can understand the means of communication as an economic means of production, in which your personal information is used by advertisers of certain products to appeal to you. One needs simply to look at the front-page of their Facebook profile to be bombarded with advertisements that "you may like" according to Facebook. Fuchs (2012) has discussed this in relation to the advertising cookie *DoubleClick*. Purchased by Google in 2007, *DoubleClick* "collects and networks data about usage behaviour on various websites and sells this data" (Fuchs 2012, 46). This information allows companies to then target you with personalized advertising messages.

7. Smythe: Blindspots, Audience Commodity and the Means of Production

The role of advertising, both in the economic and cultural milieu of the capitalist mode of production was heavily analysed by Dallas Smythe. Smythe (1977) argued that when it came to mass media and communications, an inability to present "the economic and political significance of mass communication systems" presented a blindspot in "Marxist theory in the European and Atlantic basin

cultures" (Smythe 1977, 1). As we mentioned above Google employs tactics of data mining in order to target the consumer of Google's product with advertisements that are produced in line with the consumer's interests. For Smythe, such advertisements are an aspect of the economic function of capital (Smythe 1977, 1981) In answering the question of what the form of the commodity of mass-produced, advertiser-supported communications are (Smythe 1977) the audience. According to Smythe, the advertisements that appear on television, Radio and (in our case) the internet are bought from the communicative industry in an attempt to build particular audiences of their specific product. Traditionally it was thought that advertisers bought space from the communications industry in order to advertise their products. It was understood that space was the commodity. (Meehan 1993) However if the commodity of advertisers and communications was space then space would be equal value no matter where the advertisers placed their advertisement. However this is not the case. The value of certain spaces of advertisement (i.e. Billboards, Television ads, Radio ads, Internet ads) is higher according to the space in which the advertisement occupies. In terms of the internet, A website with a high-traffic yield is capable of charging more for advertising then a website with a low-traffic yield. This presents us with the fact that while space is an aspect of the commodity that advertisers purchase, it is not the whole aspect. Smythe argues that what the advertiser is purchasing is the "services of the audiences with predictable specifications who will pay attention in predictable numbers and at particular times" (Smythe 1977, 4). This can be seen in respect to television and internet advertisement. For example, if I am watching a particular television show, advertisers who product may correspond to that particular show will press for that advertising space (i.e. A Cartoon show usually have advertisements about the toys of characters presented in the show). For Smythe, the audience becomes the commodity in the communicative industry as it is bought and produced, and sold, in various ways.

How can we understand this further in terms of the means of communication as a means of production? I showed in the previous section that the internet has seen the growth of the productive consumer; this is to say that while we as users of the internet consume its products, we also have the ability to generate products for the internet. An obvious case in this is the ability to join and create your own Facebook page. Why is this product? In creating your own Facebook page, regardless of what it is about, you use the means of production (i.e. information, computers, internet access) to produce something that others will use. It is these types of pages which generate much interest in Facebook and contributes much to its survival as one the largest social networking site. In introducing the work of Dallas Smythe, we also introduce a new level to the means of communication as a means of production. In this sense we can see the means of communication (Television, Radio, Internet etc) as producing audiences through advertising. We may then seek to understand the means of communication as a means of production at the structural level, in which the level, which has been elaborated by Smythe, helps inform, the level of prosumers.

8. Conclusion

The Internet challenges the conception of industrial production that Marxist theory has been most comfortable with. It may be suggest that in our time, Marx's conception of the productive forces and relations of production may be better used to understand the productive processes of television, telecommunications and newspapers. But the Internet is not only a combination of these three processes, but expands upon them in new directions in terms of cognition, communication, cooperation, production, circulation, distribution, consumption. As a "virtual world", its capacity to participate with a materialist theory of production is still in need of much discussion and theorizing. The introduction of concepts such as *prosumers* may only account for a tiny amount of the projects that need to be actualized in relation to a Marxian theory of the Internet. Perhaps in a similar vein to *prosumers*, a concept of *promunication* (productive communication) needs to be thought out.

The way forward in developing a theory in which one can properly address the issues raised by the communicative array of the internet is by submitting it towards a structural Marxist interpretation of society. While the economy is an element which is involved in the development of the internet, not only as a productive force but also as a politico-legal and cultural element, it is far from being a determining factor. I have discussed above the difference between *determination in the last instance*, an instance that never comes, and *domination.* This is the type of relation which occurs daily, hourly, minutely on the Internet. In respect to Williams, we may say that the dominating force of the Internet is culture. The vast majority of interactions between people are social interactions; whether they are via an online game, a dating website, or just friends communication for free using

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

various types of freeware and software. But this is not to say that culture is a determining element of the internet. In the tradition of the structural Marxists, the Internet is overdetermined, but each interaction that takes place on the Internet is dominated by a different element, whether that be political, legal, economic or cultural. This cannot however be the final word on the subject, nor will it. What I have tried to provide in the paper above is a foundation for further development of the idea that the Internet as a means of communication can be identified as means of production.

References

Althusser, Louis. 1990. *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Althusser, Louis. 2005. *For Marx*. London: Verso.

Althusser, Louis and Etienne Balibar. 2009. *Reading Capital*. London: Verso.

Anderson, Perry. 1980. *Arguments with English Marxism*. London: Verso.

Aune, James A. 1994. Rhetoric and Marxism. San Francisco, CA: Westview Press.

Cohen, Gerald A. 2000. *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dix, Hywel. 2008. *After Raymond Williams: Cultural Materialism and the Break-Up of Britain*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Eagleton, Terry, ed. 1994. *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*. London: Polity Press.

Eldridge, John and Lizzie Eldridge. 1994. *Raymond Williams: Making Connections*. London: Routledge.

Elliot, Gregory. 2009. *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*. London: Haymarket Press.

Engels, Friedrich. 1890. Engels to J. Bloch in Königsberg. Retrieved January 6, 2012, from http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. Google Capitalism. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*. 10 (1): 42-48.

Higgins, John. 1999. *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism*. London: Routledge.

Johnson, Lesley. 1979. *The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams*. London: Routledge.

Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital: Vol 3*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1992. *Capital: Vol 2*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1994. *Capital: Vol 1*. London: Penguin.

Meehan, Eileen. 1993. Commodity Audience, Actual Audience: The Blindspot Debate. In *Illuminating the Blindspots*, edited by Janet Wasko, Vincent Mosco and Majunath Pendakur, 378-397. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

O'Connor, Alan. 1989. *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture, Politics*. London: Blackwell.

Pariser, Eli. 2011. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. London: Penguin.

Prendergast, Christopher, ed. 1995. *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Simon, Lawrence S., ed. 1994. *Karl Marx: Selected Works*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Candian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-27.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1981. *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Snedeker, George. 2004. *The Politics of Critical Theory: Language, Discourse, Society*. New York: University Press of America inc.

Thompson, Edward P. 1978. *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*. London: Merlin Press

Torfing, Jacob. 1994. *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1981. *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1993. *Culture and Society*. London: Hogwarth Press.

Williams, Raymond. 2005. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso.

About the Author

William Hebblewhite

A postgraduate student in the philosophy department at Latrobe University, Melbourne. His interests revolve around contemporary Marxist theory, in particular the relationship between Analytical Marxism, Post-Marxism and Althusserianism.

tripleC 10(2): 214-229, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Communication of Capital: Digital Media and the Logic of Acceleration

Vincent R. Manzerolle* and Atle Mikkola Kjøsen**

*University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, vmanzero@uwo.com

**University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, akjosen@uwo.ca

Abstract: *This paper argues that questions concerning the circulation of capital are central to the study of contemporary and future media under capitalism. Moreover, it argues that such questions have been central to Marx's analysis of the reproduction of capital vis-à-vis the realization of value and the reduction of circulation time. Marx's concepts of both the circuit and circulation of capital implies a theory of communication. Thus the purpose of our paper is to outline the logistical mechanisms that underlie a Marxist theory of media and communication and thereby foregrounding the role new media plays in reducing circulation time. We argue that the necessity of theorizing communication from a circuit and circulation-centric point of view stems from the emergence of a number of new technological phenomena that intensify, but sometimes undermine, the capitalist logic of acceleration. For the purposes of understanding the evolution of digital technologies, ostensibly employed to accelerate the circulation of capital—or put differently, to reduce circulation time—we need to pay attention to volume 2 of Capital, and key sections in the Grundrisse.*

Keywords: *Capital Volume 2, Grundrisse, marxism, media theory, digital media, mobile payment systems, convergence, acceleration, diagrammatics, cybernetics and dromoeconomics.*

Acknowledgement: *Thanks to Nick Dyer-Witheford, Edward Comor, and Bernd Frohmann for their various contributions to the intellectual development of this paper. Thanks are also due to Veronica Manzerolle for offering her time and editorial skills, and to Lee McGuigan for reading and commenting on a draft of the paper.*

Before considering the circulation of capital and its logic of acceleration, we begin by considering an emerging area of digital media that will set the tone for a broader theoretical discussion: mobile payment technologies. Near field communication (NFC) is a set of technical specifications for short-distance transmission of data, similar to *tap-to-pay* features of some credit and debit cards. NFC allows for the secure transmission of personal data, with limited read-write abilities integrated into an NFC chipset and software. This technology builds on existing contactless standards with the goal of creating global interoperability across systems and devices; it "enables devices to share information at a distance of less than 4 centimeters with a maximum communication speed of 424kbps."[1] According to the NFC Forum (www.nfc-forum.org), a lobbying and standardization group:

> Near Field Communication is based on inductive-coupling, where loosely coupled inductive circuits share power and data over a distance of a few centimeters. NFC devices share the basic technology with proximity (13.56MHz) RFID tags and contactless smartcards, but have a number of key new features….An NFC-enabled device can operate in reader/writer and peer-to-peer mode, and may operate in card emulation mode. An NFC tag is typically a passive device (for example, integrated in a smart poster) that stores data that can be read by an NFC-enabled device.

[1] "Users can share business cards, make transactions, access information from smart posters or provide credentials for access controlsystems" (http://www.nfcforum.org/aboutnfc/nfc_and_contactless/). "Structurally, NFC Forum specifications are based on existing and recognized standards like ISO/IEC 18092 and ISO/IEC 14443-2,3,4, as well as JIS X6319-4" (http://www.nfc-forum.org/aboutnfc/interop/).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

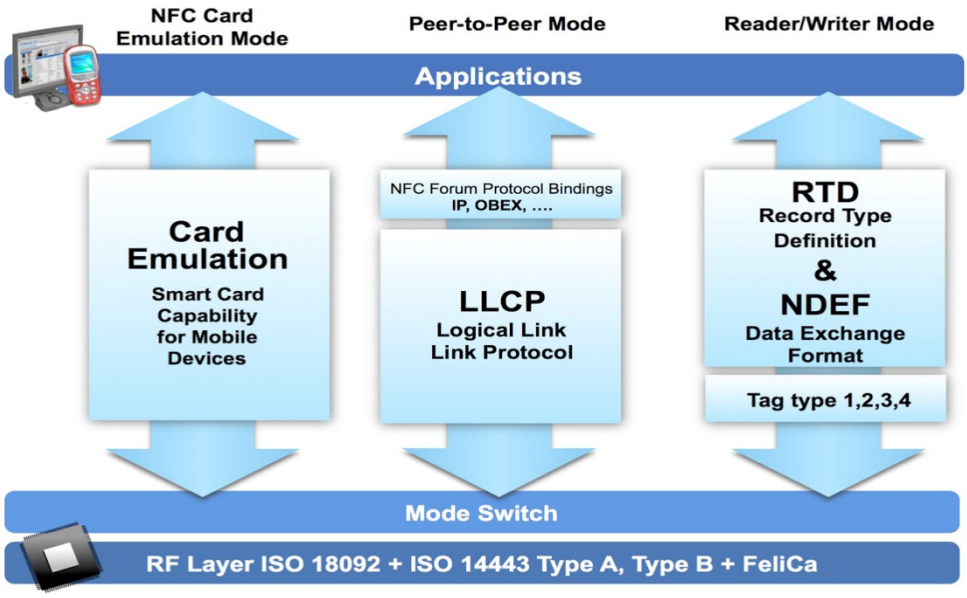


Figure 1: Schema of NFC modalities (www.nfc-forum.org, 2012)

Although NFC based-technologies have a range of uses—including healthcare, transportation, and general information collection and exchange—commercial attention has been increasingly fixated on creating mobile payment systems that would effectively eliminate the need for debit or credit cards, indeed, any kind of personal identification.[2]

NFC is a standard now supported by major corporations across the mobile ecosystem: from software developers (Google, Microsoft), to handset designers (Samsung, Research In Motion), semiconductors (Qualcomm, Broadcom, and NXP), to credit card companies (Visa and Mastercard). For example, the ISIS[3] payment network, which is now rolling out in the United States, has specifically brought together major telecommunications companies (Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile) and credit card companies (Visa, Mastercard, and American Express) around the NFC standard. Perhaps what is most notable for media researchers is the broad convergence between telecommunications and finance institutions and infrastructures.[4] That very convergence is evidenced by Canada's Rogers Communications' recent application to become a bank and creditor.[5]

NFC not only demonstrates a new political economic configuration for media and finance industries, but at a more micro level, NFC points to two of the most defining characteristics of contemporary digital media: personalization and ubiquitous connectivity. These qualities are not simply autonomous expressions of technological change, but as we will argue, they reflect a teleology of digital media itself—one largely shaped by the barriers existing in capital's sphere of circulation. Indeed, we hope to situate these new phenomena within Marx's theorization of circulation, but also suggest new theoretical modes of analysis that expose new tensions and prospective contradictions.

[2] There have been a number of alternative mobile payment systems proposed, reflecting a diversity of interests; for example, PayPal's cloud-based approach to mobile payment is seen as a potential competitor of NFC (Barr 2012). Startup company Square has also offered a mobile payment service using a card reading adaptor that plugs into a mobile device (https://squareup.com/). Hedging its bets, Visa has invested heavily in Square (Barth, 2011). Joining the mobile payment race, Apple is using its mobile iTunes app to allow Apple iPhone users to charge purchases of items in-store to their account using a special Apple store app (Boland, 2011). Apple is also actively developing a portfolio of mobile payment patents (Tode, 2012). However, what distinguishes NFC is the broad support it has from major corporations across the mobile industry.

[3] http://www.paywithisis.com/

[4] More recently, pressure from credit card and banking companies on retailers to upgrade pay terminals to accept "smart cards" may result in the added inclusion of NFC compatibility. "Merchants are facing heavy pressure to upgrade their payment terminals to accept smart cards. Over the last several months, Visa, Discover and MasterCard have said that merchants that cannot accept these cards will be liable for any losses owing to fraud… While updating the terminals for smart cards, VeriFone also plans to upgrade for smartphone wallets, providing the capability for near-field communication, the technology used by the Google and Isis wallets, the two biggest smartphone wallet projects" (Brustein, 2012b). This pressure may help NFC reach a critical mass for widespread adoption of mobile payment by consumers and retailers.

[5] "The [Rogers] bank would likely primarily deal in credit and mobile payment services, as opposed to bricks and mortar bank branches that take traditional savings and loan accounts" (Evans 2011).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

We argue that NFC is just one small example of a more general evolution of digital media in line with capital's *logic of acceleration.* It is precisely this logic we will address by examining and situating the place of communication media within the overall circuit of capital. We therefore want to reframe the analysis of media from the perspective of capital; that is, we want to take capital as the *subject* and *purpose* of communication, a subject whose communicative activity is shaped by the circulation process. Media enable capital to move as an iterative process and is therefore the key component for capital's circulation; and it is media, we argue, that are the means by which capital communicates itself to itself in and through society.

This paper argues that questions of circulation are central to the study of contemporary and future media under capitalism; that is, of the critical analysis of *capitalist* media specifically. Moreover, it argues that such questions—questions that evidence strong parallels with those of media theorists and historians largely outside of the Marxist tradition—have been central to Marx's analysis of the reproduction of capital vis-à-vis the realization of value and the reduction of circulation time. Marx's concepts of the circuit and circulation of capital implies a theory of communication. Thus the purpose of our paper is to outline the logistical mechanisms that underlie a Marxist theory of media and communication that foregrounds the role new media play in reducing circulation time.

Few authors have approached media from the perspective of the circuit or the circulation of capital, though there are notable exceptions (Garnham 1990; Martin 1991; Fuchs 2009). Nicholas Garnham calls for an approach to Marxist theories of communication that eschews the vertical base-superstructure approach for one that treats capitalism as a horizontal "process which is continuous, circular and through time" (Garnham 1990, 45). According to Garnham, the circulation of capital—in essence classical Marxist value theory—is the "crucial starting point for any political economy of mass communication" because it refocuses analyses of communication on capital's physical, spatial and temporal moments of its self-realization (Garnham 1990, 45). He suggests that a comprehensive analysis of most media phenomena can be gained from a focus on the circulation of capital (Garnham 1990, 45-53). Although Garnham made his suggestion decades ago, Marxist media studies is dominated by production-centric or base-superstructure analyses. Christian Fuchs (2009) is one of the few exceptions. He argues that for a "systematic location of the media in capitalism, one can take as a starting point the Marxian circuit of commodity metamorphosis and the accumulation of capital as it is described in Vol. 2 of *Capital*" (Fuchs 2009, 377). The benefit of using the circuit of capital is that Fuchs is able to treat capitalism as a system of production, circulation and consumption of both commodities and ideologies.

We argue that the necessity of theorizing communication from a circuit and circulation-centric point of view stems from the emergence of a number of new technological phenomena that intensify, but sometimes undermine, the capitalist logic of acceleration. Two contemporary examples will help illustrate this necessity. On the one hand, the convergence of telecommunications and finance industries in the form of mobile payment systems and technologies like NFC allude to a broader conceptualization of communication media as a moment in which both circulation and exchange are re-commodified and sold to consumers. Mobile payment systems allow a logistical efficiency (through personalization) in both the communication of marketing messages *and* in the realization of value, fused together in one ubiquitously connected technology. On the other hand, the growth of digital piracy suggests the disintegration of the commodity form as the circulation of capital approaches the speed of light (or twinkling of an eye)—a phenomena that will reach new levels of intensification with the deployment of more bandwidth, and consumer adoption of 3D printers (Kjosen 2010).

How can we understand the development of these often contradictory or self-defeating technological systems using Marxist political economy? For the purposes of understanding the implementation of such technologies that are ostensibly employed to accelerate the circulation of capital—or put differently, to reduce circulation time—we need to pay attention to *Capital Volume 2*, and key sections in the *Grundrisse*.[6] It is here that we find clues to capital's logic of acceleration underlying the communication of value through the circuit(s) of capital and the evolution and rollout of contemporary and future digital media. Our goal is to situate the ongoing evolution of contemporary media within an existing logic identified by Marx in *Capital Volume 2* and *Grundrisse.* We add to Marx's analysis a focus on the formal and material qualities of specifically *digital* media. To do this we employ theorists in the media theory tradition (Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Friedrich Kittler, and others). In so doing we ground the logic of acceleration within the materiality of contemporary digital media, and in so doing uncover prospectively new tensions and contradictions.[7] The new-

[6] See Marx 1973, 401-423, 516-549, 618-690, 717-735.

[7] It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider resistance and class struggle in relation to circulation. Revealing how capital can be short circuited, however, is the ultimate goal of our exploration of the increasing importance of circulation.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ness of our contemporary moment lies in the maturation (in complexity, sophistication, profitability) of digital media and the development and convergence of the telecommunications and media industries. Out of this convergence, the digital form allows the moment of exchange to become ubiquitous and immediate. Indeed our opening example of NFC encapsulates this phenomenon.

Digital media not only offer an acceleration of circulation in time and space, but through personalization, provide new vectors for capital; finding the shortest route between the point of production and exchange, and producer and consumer. Thus in addition to its acceleration, circulation becomes diagrammatic through personalization (Elmer 2004, 41-48).[8] The *telos* of acceleration, however, is the suspension of circulation and with it (re)production based on capital. What we identify as new is how the logic of acceleration is being taken to its logical end in the conditions of ubiquity and immediacy engendered through digital media. In our analysis of communication media, capital is posited as an anti-human subject[9] engaged in an ever-intensifying iterative process—a process in which value is communicated as self-augmenting difference, as "value in motion."

1. The Circuit of Capital

Garnham (1990) and Fuchs (2009) argue that media and communication should be systematically located to the circuit of capital. We take their argument one step further and argue that what capital communicates is value, that the circuit of capital (M – C…P…C' – M) can be understood as a schematic for this communication of value and that consequently the circulation of capital can be understood as a theory of communication.[10]

The circulation of capital incorporates the circulation of commodities on the market (C-M-C) as a moment of its own process. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the circulation of commodities is wider than an individual circuit of capital; C-M-C can also refer to general circulation, in which all individual circuits of capital interact. "The circulation of capital… contains a relation to general circulation, of which its own circulation forms a moment, while the latter likewise appears as posited by capital" (1973, 619-620). The sphere of circulation refers to more than simply market exchange. Nicholas Garnham argues that within the sphere of circulation "we need to look at what

Research (for example, Bonachich and Wilson 2008, 239-243) suggests that labour has been generally weakened by the recent logistics revolution. However, the streamlining and rationalization of the supply chain has given workers that are strategically positioned in the distribution network more potential class or bargaining power (Silver 2003, 100-103; Bonachich and Wilson 2008:244-249). Similarly, unionized and non-unionized workers in the telecommunications industry have repeatedly demonstrated that capital's circulatory infrastructure can become a site for class struggle (see Mosco and McKercher 2008).

[8] D. N. Rodowick describes diagrammatics as "the cartography of strategies of power," and thus the figure of the diagram helps depict "a historical image of how strategies of power attempt to replicate themselves in forms of surveillances, documentation, and expression on the one hand, and in the spacial organization of collective life on the other" (quoted in Elmer 2004, 41-42). Elmer writes, "In the realm of contemporary infomatics, the diagram therefore allows us to trace the everyday data economy in which habits, routines, rhythms, and flows are digitized, coded, and diagnosed for the purposes of control" (Elmer 2004, 47).

[9] Here we take capital to be both a structure and a subject in the process of its self-communication (and therefore, reproduction) through time. This rhetorical strategy is frequently employed by Marx throughout the volumes of *Capital* wherein capital acts as subject, or agent, for which the capitalist is simply a personification of capital's own agency. For example, Marx writes "…in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular or, so to speak disguised mode. It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus *becomes transformed into an automatic subject*. If we pin down the specific forms of appearance assumed in turn by self-valorizing value in the course of its life, we reach the following elucidation: capital is money, capital is commodities. In truth, however, *value is here the subject of a process* in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it changes its own magnitude, throws off surplus-value from itself considered as original value, and thus valorizes itself independently. For the movement in the course of which it adds surplus-value is its own movement, its valorization is therefore self-valorization. By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring or at least lays golden eggs. As the dominant subject of this process, in which it alternately assumes and loses the form of money and the form of commodities, but preserves and expands itself through all these changes, value requires above all an independent form by means of which its identity with itself may be asserted" (italics added, Marx 1976, 255). Later in the chapter on "The Working Day," Marx writes, "As a capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself..." (Marx 1976, 342).

[10] Importantly, because capital is a circuit or a closed feedback loop, capital can be understood as both the subject and purpose of the communication of value. In Grundrisse, Marx argues that when the circulation of commodities is incorporated into the life process of capital, it gives the process the content of value (1973, 626). Marx writes that capital "exists as the subject of circulation" and that it is the "predominant" subject of the metamorphoses of value (1973, 620; see also 1976, 255). We argue that capital is an anti-human subject that seeks to transmit value-content through the circuit, which can only occur by forcing the content to assume and discard the three forms of capital. In this communication process, other actors, such as workers and capitalists, are reduced to mere relays (transmitters and receivers) or a data source in the case of living labour.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx called the locational and temporal moments, referring to the problems both of the actual spatial extensions of the market (the physical transport of goods) and the time expended in commercial transactions (this time refers not to any labour time used in commercial transactions, but to the actual lapsed time expended in transforming a commodity into money and vice-versa...)" (1990, 46).

As Marx explains in the second volume of *Capital*, capital is a circuit because it enables a quantity of value to pass through a sequence of three mutually connected metamorphoses. As it passes through these stages, value both maintains itself and increases its magnitude. Once it has moved through each of these stages, capital has completed one turnover and can repeat the process anew.

Figure 2 depicts the circuit's three stages: the sphere of production (stage 2) and circulation (stages 1 and 3**)**; and the three particular forms of capital (money [M], commodity [C] and productive-capital [P]). When capital fulfils the specific function of one of its particular forms it completes a stage and assumes the next form. Stage 1 is completed by the capitalist using money's function as means of payment and/or purchase to acquire labour-power and means of production. When these commodities are set in motion as productive capital (P), and are productively consumed, the second stage is completed. The result of the production stage is a mass of commodities (C') with a higher quantity of value than originally advanced. The third stage is completed when the commodity's function of being bought and sold is fulfilled, thereby realizing the surplus value created in production, and making capital accumulation possible in the first stage (Marx 1978, 132-133).

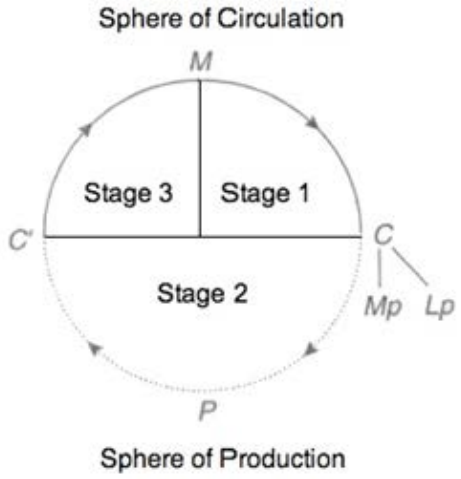


Figure 2: The circuit of capital (adapted from Lebowitz 2006: 61)

The circuit is Marx's concept of capital. It is the universal form within which the particular forms of capital are internally related. The identity of capital can thus be found in its unity and in the difference to itself as unity. This *negative unity* is found when capital exists in either of its stages or forms (Arthur 1998, 102-116). Capital is found in two aspects: "first as the unity of the process, then as a particular one of its phases, itself in *distinction* to itself as unity" (Marx 1973, 622). Capital is unified in the movement from its universal to particular forms. Although the forms of money-, productive- and commodity-capital are necessary for the existence of capital, the particular forms are not in and for themselves capital. Outside the circuit they simply function as money, commodities and labour processes. Only in the circuit do they also have the social function and forms of capital (Arthur 1998, 107). The three forms are only capital insofar as they are internally related to each other in the totality of the circuit and are the functional forms of circulating capital (Arthur 1998, 102; Marx 1978, 133). In other words, they are forms of capital because each form is the possibility of assuming the next form and completing and moving to the next stage of the circuit, and because of their specific functions in the overall circuit (Marx 1978, 112). When capital is in negative unity, it is only potentially capital and perpetually becoming—it is capital if, and only if, it can discard its current form and metamorphose into the next form, which occurs only when the associated function is fulfilled. Money-capital is latently productive capital, which is the possibility of commodity capital that in turn is the becoming of money-capital.

Marx's conceptualization of capital as a circuit is nearly identical to Hegel's Concept because *formally* capital is a process that moves from universal to particular forms; in order for capital to be capital it must assume each of the forms and complete its associated stages (Arthur 1998). How-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ever, Marx denies that capital can automatically complete the circuit and he also denies it the fluidity and speed of thought of the Concept. For Marx, it is never guaranteed that an individual capitalist will complete a turnover:

> The three processes of which capital forms the unity are external; they are separate in time and space. As such, the transition from one into the other, i.e. their unity as regards the individual capitalists, is accidental. Despite their inner unity, they exist independently alongside one another, each as the presupposition of the other. Regarded broadly and as a whole, this inner unity must necessarily maintain itself to the extent that the whole of production rests on capital, and it must therefore realize all the necessary moments of its self-formation, and must contain the determinants necessary to make these moments real (Marx 1973, 403).

In other words, the formal circulation of capital (inner unity) contradicts its *real* circulation process (external unity), in which capital assumes a *material* form alongside its particular economic forms. The first obstacle to capital's circulation is that capital must "*invest itself in matter*, something that may in fact be resistant to it" (Arthur 1998, 117). This is why capital "*risks* getting tied up for certain intervals," because it is never guaranteed that capital will metamorphose into its next form (Arthur 1998, 133). Consequently, circulation must be considered from both its formal and real moments.

Real circulation refers to the actual circulation of matter, i.e. the movement at a given speed, of commodities and money through space and time. Real circulation thus includes transportation, infrastructure, vehicles, packaging, warehouses, banking, and so on. Consequently, the circulation of capital is inherently a logistical affair that requires a specific organization or binding of space and time[11]. In addition, this affair has always been about accelerating capital's movement and has been done through progressive re-organizations of space and time and the adoption of newer and faster media such as jet transportation, container shipping and digitization together with telecommunications.

There are several benefits for capital to accelerate its metamorphoses. Because the sum and mass of surplus value created within a period is negatively determined by the velocity of capital the faster capital moves through the sphere of circulation, the more surplus value will be created and validated. The rate of surplus value and profit may be increased by acceleration when speed contributes to reduce circulation costs (Marx 1973, 518; 1978, 124, 389). In a given period, the velocity of turnover substitutes for the volume of capital (Marx 1973, 518-519, 630). It is also beneficial for individual capitalists to reduce their turnover in relation to the social average turnover time (Harvey 1989, 229).

For accumulation to take place, capital must constantly move between the two spheres of production and circulation; although surplus value is created in the sphere of production, it must be *realized* and accumulated in the sphere of circulation. This realization is a necessary condition and moment of the entire motion of capital: capital is the unity-in-process of production and circulation (Marx 1973, 405-6, 535, 620; 1978, 205). Effectively, capital must always be in motion in order to *be* capital; when capital is not in movement, it is stuck in a particular form and stage and is therefore negated and devalued (Marx 1973, 621). It is because of this negation and devaluation that capital must increase its velocity while decreasing the time it spends in circulation. To accelerate, however, capital must develop or adopt media that allows it to bind space and time, and thereby progressively overcome the barriers capital posits to its functioning.

2. On Barriers: Space and Time

In *Grundrisse*, Marx argues that capital posits barriers in contradiction to its tendency to function freely and expand boundlessly, delaying the transition of capital from one form and phase to the next and/or limit the quantity of surplus value produced and realized within a given period (Marx 1973, 421, 538). Marx identifies necessary labour as a barrier in the sphere of production; and need/use-value, availability of equivalents (money), space and circulation time as barriers belonging to the sphere of circulation (Marx 1973, 404-405, 542-543).

To "release its own potency" capital constantly tries to overcome its barriers (Negri 1984, 115). We posit that capital relies on various media technologies to overcome these barriers. The function of machinery in the sphere of production is to manipulate time, i.e. decrease the necessary labour of the worker. Media have a similar function of manipulating time, but belonging to the sphere of circulation media may manipulate circulation time rather than labour time. Media are employed in

[11] It is only recently, however, that logistics have become a central concern for the managers of capital (Bonacich and Wilson 2008, 3-4).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the sphere of circulation in order to reduce circulation time, which can increase the mass of surplus value produced within a given period and/or reduce costs associated with circulation (i.e. storage). More importantly, media can reduce circulation time by enabling capital to overcome the barriers of need, money, space and time—for example, new infrastructure. Larger and faster vehicles enable capital to overcome the barriers of need, space and time by extending markets in space, annihilating space with time or reducing absolutely the time capital circulates from a given place to the other. Credit is an example of a medium that enables capital to overcome the barrier of money, but as we will explain below, it also acts to increase the speed *and* vector of capital's circulation. What is peculiar about mobile devices is that they open up for dealing with these barriers simultaneously as we will discuss in the following section.

The circulation of capital proceeds in space and time. As capital extends itself in space and strives to make the earth into a market, capital tries to "annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum time spent in motion from one place to another" (Marx 1973, 539). That space is annihilated by time means that spatial distance is reduced to temporal distance; spatial extension folds into circulation time. Thus the annihilation of space by time becomes identical to abbreviating the circulation time of capital. Circulation time is also a barrier to capital because the time spent in circulation is time that could be used for the valorization of value. The barriers around use-value and equivalents are also significant, but will be addressed later in the paper.

In other words, circulation time is a deduction from production time, specifically a deduction of surplus labour time (Marx 1973, 538-539). The maximum number of repetitions is reached when the velocity of circulation becomes *absolute,* i.e. when circulation time is zero. If this occurs there would be no interruption in production resulting from circulation and overall turnover time would be equal to production time (Marx 1973, 544-45, 627). It is the "necessary tendency of capital to strive to equate circulation time to 0; i.e. to suspend itself, since it is capital itself alone which posits circulation time as a determinant moment of production time" (Marx 1973, 629). The closer circulation time comes to zero "the more capital functions, and the greater is its productivity and self-valorization" (Marx 1978, 203). It is in this tendency that capitalism seeks new methods of communicating value at ever-greater velocities. Capital's increasing attention to logistics or supply chain management – as evidenced in the rapid development of telecommunications and transportation infrastructure – comes from this logic of acceleration, which is identical to reducing circulation time.

As an example of the apotheosis of this drive consider recent investments in fiber-optic trans-Atlantic cables purporting to shave off six milliseconds of transmission time. Cable company Hibernia Atlantic is currently building the first new trans-Atlantic cable in a decade. By shortening the cable length by approximately 310 miles, the four-fiber pair optical cable system promises to reduce transmission time between London and New York by six milliseconds from the current 65-millisconds. In the world of high-frequency, trading time is not measured according to the human scale, but the anti-human scale of algorithms and software bots with the salient being the millisecond. For human action and perception, the milliseconds saved means nothing, but for high-frequency financial trading houses that rely on algorithms to execute buy and sell orders, a single millisecond could result in as much as $100 million to the annual bottom line (Hecht 2011; Williams 2011). Fifty-nine milliseconds between London and New York is, however, not fast enough for the world of algorithmic finance capital.

Although for so-called humans the world shrinks to nothing when our electromagnetic media operate at speeds of 60 to 90 percent of the speed of light, the expanse of the globe is massive for anti-human subjects that reckon time in microseconds. The fastest fiber-optic route between New Jersey and Chicago is approximately 16 milliseconds. In the world of algorithmic trading, according to Donald MacKenzie (2011), it's "a huge delay: you might as well be on the moon." Indeed, Andrew Bach head of network services at NYSE Euronext said that "[t]he speed of light limitation is getting annoying" (in Hecht 2011). More recently, researchers are exploring the possibility of further shortening the time distance between financial centres by shooting neutrinos *through* the earth. The use of neutrinos to communicate financial transactions is significant because "neutrinos travel at the speed of light" thus "traders using the technology would on average have a nearly 30 millisecond time advantage, with participating London and Sydney brokerages garnering a full 44 milliseconds" (Dorminey, 2012).

Through the unfolding *telos* of capitalist media, circulation time is reduced to the point of elimination, or at least to an intensive time that has no meaning to humans. There is, however, a limitation to the acceleration of capital. In *Grundrisse* Marx argues that

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> circulation time *must* appear as a deduction from its production time… the nature of capital presupposes that it travels through the different phases of circulation not as it does in the mind, where one concept turns into the other at the speed of thought, in no time, but rather as situations which are separate in time. It must spend time as a cocoon before it can take off as a butterfly (1973, 548-49).

Although capital is working towards the elimination of circulation time—indeed, it is its tendency to strive towards a circulation time of zero (Marx 1973, 629; 1978, 203)—but if this was actually achieved capital would negate itself. Absolute velocity is represented as a circulation time of zero, which is nothing but the suspension of the sphere of circulation. Without the moment of exchange, surplus value cannot be realized and capital is therefore negated. If circulation time is suspended, it would be the same as to "suspend the necessity of exchange, of money, and of the division of labour resting on them, hence capital itself" (Marx 1973, 629).

The phenomenon of digital piracy can be understood as capital having reached absolute velocity (Kjosen 2010). Digitization allows the commodity to shed its form and can take off, creating what Nick Dyer-Witheford poetically dubs "instant butterfly" (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 202). Since the Internet and computers operate according to the speed of electronic pulses bound by basic laws of electromagnetism, the three stages of the circuit occur simultaneously. There is no time for capital to proceed through its metamorphoses; there must be latency between capital's various moments in order for it to metamorphose properly. The phenomenon of digital piracy should be understood as capital breaking its own speed limit and therefore being unable to metamorphose properly so that an aliquot part of capital cannot assume the commodity form. In other words the commodity form may disintegrate at the speed of electromagnetic waves, and consequently the circuit of capital leaks value (Kjosen 2010:87-102).

3. On the Convergence of Universal Equivalents: Money and Digital Code

"Money as such has become a pseudo-event – information only" (McLuhan and Nevitt 1972, 78)

Capital must "*invest itself in matter*, something that may in fact be resistant to it" (Arthur 1998, 117). The ability of capital to be transported or transmitted depends on both the economic and material form that capital takes—this materiality also includes the encoding of digital data and electromagnetic waves. For example, the mobility of commodity capital depends on the means of communication and the natural qualities of the commodity, such as weight, size, fragility and perishability. The mediation of capital in this way requires the specific organization and production of space and time (Harvey 1989).[12] It is in this process that capital relies upon various media to bind space and time in ways commensurable to its logic of acceleration. The digital form takes this logic to its natural end.

Here we focus on digital code as a "form of appearance" assumed by capital, a form unique to our contemporary moment. The formal qualities of digital code and the material infrastructure enabling its storage and transmission are simultaneously precursors and expressions of "informational capitalism" (Fuchs 2010). To situate the development of specifically *capitalist* media within a broader history of media change (which allows us to foreground formative, material, and technical difference in different media), we turn to the medium theory tradition (Innis, McLuhan, Kittler) to get a sense of how this logic is reflected in the material and technical composition of media. Specifcally, we find an analysis of how media are central to the organization of space and time that bridges phenomenology and political economy. As Harold Innis (1964; 1995) argues, media organize space and time and thereby contribute to the reproduction (or disintegration) of social/power structures. For this tradition, however, media are conceived broadly to include institutions, organizations, and technologies (Comor 2001, 276).

Analyzed comparatively, different media emphasize different space/time ratios, reflecting the relative bias of a given medium. In comparison to media that emphasize their persistence through time (architecture, stone engraving, religious rituals and institutions), media that emphasized the control of space are said to possess a *spatial bias*. For Innis, spatial bias refers to media, such as the price system and the market that break up time into "discrete, uniform, measurable chunks that can be valuated in money terms" (Babe 2000, 73; Innis 1995, 66-87). For example, Innis notes that the spatial bias of the price system in Western political economies "facilitated the use of credit, the rise of exchanges, and calculations of the predictable future essential to the development of insurance" as a way to predict the future and minimize risk (Babe 2000, 72; see Innis 1964, 33-34).

[12] Indeed, it is precisely this process that is captured by Harvey's (1989) concept of "space-time compression."

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Moreover, the concept of bias is also a reflection of a medium's capacity to bind space and time in accordance with the reproduction of a given political economic configuration. "The development and application of the concept of bias emerged from Innis' application of the term 'capacity'" and for Innis, "capacity is an index of potential" (Comor 1994, 122-123). Thus, "capacity involved Innis in analyses of the limitations and opportunities faced by people in their day-to-day lives and the factors that may influence them in any given place and at any particular time…History, therefore, involves communication media, broadly defined, as the means through which the production process can be pursued and as tools providing the capacity to utilize information" (Comor 1994, 123).

In relation to capital, capacity and potential should be understood as referring to the production of surplus value. There is always unused capacity in the sphere of production, which is in part what Marx refers to with the concept of relative surplus value. Media that reduce circulation time or overcome other barriers effectively release the productive potential of capital. Time set free in the sphere of circulation can be converted into surplus labour time.

In the effort to overcome the physical, spatial and temporal barriers to circulation, digital code is one of the dominant forms in which capital now invests itself because digitization is acceleration. In digital form, capital's real circulation approaches capital's formal and ideal circulation. Indeed, digital data appears to be the perfect medium for self-valorizing value. When something is digitized it exists only conceptually or symbolically, which represents the primacy of images and signs over material objects. Any object rendered digitally is a numerical representation (Manovich 2001, 52).

Digital code abstracts all qualitative differences into pure quantity. Inside the computer "everything becomes a number: quantity without image, sound, or voice" (Kittler 1999, 1). Effectively all use-values are transformed into the singular anti-human use-value of binary code. Any difference between digital objects is quantitative rather than qualitative (Manovich 2001, 27-30, 174; Kittler 1999, 1-2). Their qualitative differences—intelligible to human senses—are merely *surface effects* or *superficially distinct forms* (Kittler 1999, 1; Betancourt 2006). Digital code, like money, is a universal equivalent; it reduces qualitative differences into pure quantity.

Binary code or digital data is, like money, a universal equivalent that can represent qualitatively different objects in terms of pure quantity. In *Capital Volume 1*, the function of the universal equivalent is that it brings all commodities into relation with each other and makes them appear as exchange-values, i.e. quantity without any reference to their qualitative aspects. Money represents the world of commodities and can be translated and transformed into any commodity. In the form of digital code, value-as-money merges with a *material* form that is equivalent to its quality of being pure quantity.

The transmission of digital data is tautological: the immediate result is an increase in information and not a change of form. This material tautology is potentially of enormous benefit to capital: digital commodities require minimum storage and nearly no upkeep because the additional copy does not exist until it arrives onto the digital device of a consumer. Digital data appears to be produced *ex nihilo*, with almost no expenditure of living and dead labour.[13]

Most importantly, however, is that capital in the form of bits is less resistant to circulation than when it is comprised of atoms; in digital form, capital can circulate at the speed of electromagnetic waves. There is no need for a real metamorphosis of qualitatively different material forms; what is left of the circulation of commodities on the integrated circuit are mere differences in voltage and a proliferation of digital data. At the speed of electromagnetic waves the expanse of the earth is reduced to nothing. Without having to traverse real space, the time capital spends in the commodity form due to transportation is eliminated. Capital in digital form has little dead time compared to substantial commodities; it spends literally no time negated and devalued in its commodity form.

In one of his prophetic probes, Marshall McLuhan correctly observed that there is a "steady progression toward commercial exchange as the movement of information itself" (1964, 149). We should be under no illusions that this is exactly what has happened with financial exchanges. M – M' is the archetypal commercial exchange as movement of information. With technologies such as NFC, this process occurs with the traditional metamorphosis of commodities as well.

4. Consumption Capacity and the Communication of Capital

In the pages Marx dedicates to the circulation and reproduction of capital lie a teleology of capitalist media in which capital is the subject of communication. As Marx often characterizes capital (or its personification in the bourgeois capitalist) as the agent, and sometimes protagonist, of the volumes of *Capital,* we assume a similar starting point to understand the relationship between

13 For a critique of the argument that the digital represents production without consumption of resources, see Michel Betancourt (2006; 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

communication and capital's logic of acceleration. However, for capital, communication constitutes a spectrum that spans logistics and cultural production (including ideology). It is from this communicative spectrum that we can reveal capital's logic of acceleration within the evolution of contemporary digital media. Yet as we initially noted, it is not simply a quantitative increase, but additionally that personalization and connectivity enhance the *vector* of capital's circulation. Acceleration becomes diagrammatic as capital's circulation is overlaid onto the ubiquitous flows of personalized data.

We argue that qualities of ubiquitous personalization and connectivity offer clear evolutionary examples directed at overcoming two crucial, yet interconnected, barriers external to capital's internal unity by binding space and time in accordance with the needs of circulation. In a lucid passage from the *Grundrisse*, we might refer to as the "Fragment on Communication" (Marx 1973, 398-423), Marx explicates capital's communicative spectrum in light of two significant barriers. The first barrier is a cultural barrier involving the expansion of needs, use values and desires; the second involves the means to pay. As Marx writes: "Its first barrier, then, is *consumption itself*—the *need for it*…Then, secondly, there has to be an equivalent for it" (Marx 1973, 404-405). Taken together these two barriers reflect a specific consumption *capacity* or *magnitude*. While the first barrier traces the entire evolution of the advertising and marketing apparatus (and its migration onto digital platforms), the latter has been overcome by the creation of credit and crediting mechanisms (whose expansion has been directly related to digital media and infrastructure; see Manzerolle 2010). What we find increasingly with digital and new media are the converging poles of capitals' communicative spectrum in the articulation of consumption capacity. Cultural and logistical barriers find their articulation, and prospective panacea, in the proliferation of personalized and networked devices. Moreover, we might assess how consumption capacity articulates a very specific organization (and production) of space and time.

It is significant that the fragment on communication is preceded by a brief passage on the creation of free time in society.

> It is a law of capital… to create surplus labour, disposable time; just as it is equally its tendency to reduce necessary labour to a minimum…it is equally tendency of capital to make human labour (relatively) superfluous, so as to drive it, as human labour, towards infinity. (Marx 1973, 399)

As more free time is created, so too are the productive capacities of the social individual. Importantly, free time gives way to the more full development of the social individual, and of culture generally, a process of enculturation that creates an ever-greater diversity of needs. As culture grows in complexity and sophistication, so does the individual.

> [T]he cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations—production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures, hence cultured to a high degree – is likewise a condition of production founded on capital. (Marx 1973, 409)

Because surplus value relies on the production of free time to increase the ratio between necessary and surplus labour, capital also creates free time generally, allowing for the expansion of cultural activities, and as a result capital can circulate more freely as surplus value is realized through an expanding set of needs variously produced by the culture industry.

Consequently, the consumption associated with this expanding bundle of needs comes to reproduce "the individual himself in a specific mode of being, not only in his immediate quality of being alive, and in specific social relations" (Marx 1973, 717). The social being of the individual and the circulation of capital are tied to the perpetual modulation of consumption. It is for precisely this reason that free time can be mobilized to serve the circulatory needs of capital, particularly through the advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Webster and Robins 1999; Manzerolle 2011). Both the cultural sphere of consumption (use values) and the political economic development of ICTs reproduce a *social being* whose capacities develop in line with the requirements of circulation.

The development of free time is important for another reason: It creates new moments within daily life that can be subsumed into, and is an expansion of, circulation itself. On this note, Smythe identified the productive capacity of attentional forms and the mobilization of audiences towards an expanding array of new use values (Smythe 1981, 40; McGuigan 2012). The colonization of every-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

day life by digital and networked devices has opened up new pores, cracks, and crevices of daily life into possible moments of communicative utility in service of capital's logic of acceleration. As Leopoldina Fortunati has suggested, mobile ubiquitous media help fill the pauses and downtime of everyday life with potentially new moments of "communicative use" (2002, 517). The intensifying technological mediation of human capacities by digital media give way to the exploitation of free (often enthusiastic) labour of users (Zwick et al. 2009).

The rise of web 2.0 (and its various corollaries) evidences the growing, increasingly necessary, input of free labour to capital's circulation. The unpaid work in free, or unwaged, time is constantly a point at which capital seeks to harness capital's spiralling algorithm of accumulation. Capitalism here requires a cultural exteriority as a source for future commodification. As Marx tacitly suggests, capital creates greater free time in order to subsume that time for the purposes of circulation (Marx 1973, 401). Using an analogy Marx deploys to understand the necessary work of circulation, this creative and communicative labour "behaves somewhat like the 'work of combustion' involved in setting light to a material that is used to produce heat" (Marx 1978, 208). In free time, produced and/or enabled by ICTs, human capacities (creative, cognitive, attentional and affective) act as fuel speeding up the circulation of capital (see Stiegler 2010). Of specific importance is the creation, whether explicitly or implicitly, of a mass of personal data (Manzerolle and Smeltzer 2011).

Thus in trying to overcome the various barriers to circulation, capital's specific organization and management of space and time is crucial, but only insofar as this management coincides with the production of an expanding bundle of needs and the related ability to purchase commodities. This is where the capitalist development and application of ICTs – including a wide variety of ubiquitous, personalized, mobile digital media – becomes so crucial to the overall circulation of capital, but specifically the transformation of commodity-capital into money. Similarly, the ubiquity and instantaneity of personalized digital media offers the possibility of precisely coordinating production and consumption, replacing the traditionally accidental and ideally anonymous moments of exchange with over-determination that comes from the ability to identify and pin-point consumers in space and time. It is by this very process that capital enhances the vector of its circulation and makes the circuit diagrammatic.

The twinkling of an eye becomes a metaphor for the electronic pulses that encompass all cultural and economic information. We take as emblematic of this process the current evolution of mobile payment systems, but perhaps more generally, the convergence of communication media and crediting mechanisms. Consumption capacity is increasingly articulated in and through digital media, and we can situate the development of mobile payment technologies like NFC within the process to generally heighten consumption capacity while offloading costs onto consumers for their means of consumption—in this case the convergence of telecommunications and finance opens up new areas of commodification through digital data, in addition to the general expansion of consumption capacity.

The digital devices that enable our articulation as communicating subjects also act to absorb and translate our behaviour into usable flows of data. As many recent commentators have suggested, we live in an era of *big data* in which the production of data is no longer a competitive obstacle for capital (Hardy 2012; Lohr 2012); now it is the ability to store, process, and mine an immense accumulation of personalized or scalable data. Thus in the same way that industrial machinery absorbed the physical and intellective capacities of the worker in the sphere of production, so too, our networked environment absorbs the digital streams produced by the very nature of personalization and connectivity in the sphere of circulation. For this reason, it is not surprising that such processes are *baked* into the design, technical composition and functionality of smartphones—particularly in light of the rapid global adoption of these devices in both so-called developed and developing markets (ITU 2011). Indeed, such surveillance operates on at least three levels—operating systems, carriers, and third-party applications—creating a torrent of personal data flowing to and from these connected devices virtually ubiquitously. This invisible dataveillance is an embedded component of our social lives and relationships as they are increasingly mediated by digital networked technologies. Social networks like Facebook leverage the social work of users to subsume them, turning them into a means of piggybacking the circulatory requirements of capital onto the social relationships (and unpaid cultural labour) of communicating subjects.

The increasing economic centrality of personal data—and the various forms of paid and unpaid digital labour enabled by mobile digital media—was recently raised in a TechCrunch interview in which Tim O'Reilly (web 2.0 guru) and Reid Hoffman (founder of LinkedIn) were asked to theorize what web 3.0 might entail. Although acknowledging the problems behind the characterization *3.0*, they both claimed that the World Wide Web will be increasingly powered primarily by the explosion

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

of personal data generated by digital and networked media. Hoffman explains that web 3.0 comprises "a torrent of innovation that's going to be unleashed by all of this personal data being collected" (TechCrunch 2011). Moreover, they both note how web 3.0 fundamentally does away with anonymity as a basic characteristic of the Web, once and for all, as online and offline identities are fused together. This is perhaps one of the most significant, yet least understood transformations of modern digital media. Unlike the previous era, in which personal data was segregated in silos by institution specific databases, the era of personalization and ubiquitous connectivity not only provides exponential growth in the quality and quantity of personal data, but also allows that data to be automatically indexed by user and location (primarily through mobile services).

To what end? Digital media help transform our very social being into multiplying nodes in the process and vectorization of circulation. As Marx notes, the overall effect on social being is to turn individuals into independent centers of exchange, ever-more subjected to the rhythms of this intensifying circulation process.

> Consumption is mediated at all points by exchange…To each capitalist, the total mass of all workers, with the exception of his own workers, appear not as workers, but as consumers, possessors of exchange values (wages), money, which they exchange for his commodity. They are so many centres of circulation with whom the act of exchange begins and by whom the exchange value of capital is maintained. (Marx 1978, 419)

Indeed with the rise of ubiquitous media, the body itself becomes inseparable from a steady stream of digital data. The combination of personalization and ubiquity makes the widening circulation of information a resource in the diagrammatic expansion and intensification of capital's vector.

As we have described in the preceding section, digital media are premised on a homogenization of all information into digital code and given form as electronic pulse. This is the same for all information regardless of actual content; the formative existence is the same. In the rise of financial capitalism – or the financialization of the economy, particularly its application of ICTs networked globally – the irresistible impulse is towards employing the means of communication for a total abbreviation of the transformations within the circulation process that gives rise to the abbreviated formulation M – M' – the circuit of finance capital. It takes less time to complete a turnover when capital does not need to pass into the material forms of productive-capital and commodity-capital. But the pressure to shorten circulation time is nevertheless there for the same reason as a normal circuit, as the example of the new transatlantic cable demonstrates.

Yet even before the advent of both digitization and extreme financialization, Marx alluded to how this irresistible impulse expresses itself in ever-more sophisticated abstractions. In creating abstractions "by way of book-keeping, which also includes the determination or reckoning of commodity prices (price calculation), the movement of capital is registered and controlled. The movement of production, and particularly of valorization—in which commodities figure only as bearers of value, as the names of things whose ideal value-existence is set down in money of account—thus receives a symbolic reflection in the imagination" (Marx 1978, 211)[14]. Indeed, the very expansion and speed-up of circulation requires capital to create a variety of abstractions that help to bind space and time, often to stand-in for the necessary metamorphoses capital must complete in order for accumulation to occur. The price-system, various forms of commercial information, the stock market, increasingly exotic financial instruments, derivatives, debt-commodities, what Smythe described as the "audience commodity"--all are circulatory abstractions.

Indeed, Marx identified that the capitalist system is not only premised on the money system as a medium of exchange and store of value, but as a process in which abstractions become real in the process of speeding up circulation because capital must take such abstractions as real to fulfill the production of evolution. As circulation speeds up to mirror the flows of information, these abstractions are increasingly treated as *real* commodities (and *appear* to contain realizable surplus value) in their own right (rather than having logistical effects). Chief among these abstractions is the function of credit which itself creates new products of circulation, and while it strives to reduce circulation time it also struggles "to give circulation time value, the value of production time, in the various organs which mediate the process of circulation time and of circulation; to posit them all as money, and, more broadly, as capital" (Marx 1973, 659-660).

The problem of credit, a topic Marx regularly brings up only to defer his analysis (Marx 1973, 519, 535, 542, 549; 1978, 192, 330, 420-421, 433), reflects a similar problem with digital data; its nominal existence is interchangeable with all other types of information. As digital code creates an

[14] Though the "symbolic reflections in the imagination" are daily taking on an autonomous, algorithmic, even machinic, life of their own.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

abundance of information through a process of abstraction, credit and crediting mechanisms proliferate to ensure the acceleration of capital's circulation.

As credit overcomes a recurring lack of equivalents available for purchase while capital expands its production of surplus value, it multiplies the use of abstraction in circulation. "Where does the extra money come from to realize the extra surplus-value that now exists in the commodity form?" (Marx 1978, 419). "The storing up of money on the one side can proceed even without cash, simply through the piling up of credit notes" (Marx 1978, 422). Throughout Marx's explication of the sphere of circulation, particularly in *Grundrisse*, there is a constant reference to the *deus-ex-machina* of the entire system, namely, credit. At various points, he raises the spectre of credit to suggest how it overcomes barriers, or artificially bypasses circulation, precipitating crises of circulation in the creation of fictitious or virtual money capital. "The entire credit system, and the over-trading, over-speculation etc. connected with it, rests on the necessity of expanding and leading over the barrier to circulation and the sphere of exchange" (Marx 1978, 416). All information becomes homogeneous and interchangeable. For capitalism's accumulative algorithm this is problematic precisely because its logic is based on a process of transforming value and is validated step by step through its metamorphoses. When subsumed by digital code, only machines can tell the difference between a financial transaction and a text message. This allows for the virtual multiplication of value, capital and digital code by machinic or algorithmic means, well beyond the material limitations of human or natural life.

Although his analysis is not developed in *Volume 2*, Marx explains that the *credit economy* is merely an extension of the money economy, but that each represents "different stages of development of capitalist production" in contrast to the *natural economy* "…what is emphasized in the categories money economy and credit economy, and stressed as the distinctive feature, is actually not the economy proper, i.e. the production process itself, but rather the mode of commerce between the various agents of production or producers that corresponds to the economy" (Marx 1978, 195-196). It is precisely the personalization of our media represented in the credit economy that qualitatively changes the mode of commerce between agents of production. Through the personalization afforded by digital data/code, crediting mechanisms generally become intertwined with media.

Credit is not only a medium by which to accelerate the circulation of capital and its turnover time (Marx 1981, 567), but is also a system of abstractions for personalizing, and prospectively commodifying the various moments of exchange by the aforementioned production of abstractions. Credit overcomes temporal boundaries by allowing the identity and character of the creditor to act as leverage against future payment (for example, see credit reporting and rating agencies; Manzerolle and Smeltzer 2011). By credit, we include not only the lending of money but also the technical mechanisms that allow credit to be granted so as to reduce circulation time. Digitization has enabled the expansion of credit, sometimes for pernicious or predatory purposes (Manzerolle 2010). As such, digital media systems increasingly produce greater and greater financial abstractions – i.e. financialization – and these become *real* abstractions through the consumption of materials and labour time.

This speed-up via abstractions and crediting mechanisms cannot occur on its own, but requires infrastructure to actually transmit speeds, expand the range of financial and personal data and thus fuel the creation of ever-more sophisticated abstractions. Although the creation and provision of credit is important, it is equally important to provide crediting mechanisms that leverage personalized data to speed up transactions (whether of credit or real money). NFC technologies are only one small example of the broader credit apparatus. Our digital media are increasingly functioning as means of either facilitating credit or making credit more efficient (credit ratings, credit cards, virtual goods, mobile payments). Increasingly, these flows of data are being treated as a kind of pseudo currency, or at least ascribe some nominal value for their marketing importance. The production of abstractions, like those emerging from the credit system for example, function as mediators of value approaching zero circulation time. This mirrors similar considerations that have suggested that personal data itself be transformed into currency (Brustein 2012a; Zax 2011).

5. Conclusion: The Cybernetic Imagination of Capitalism

The combination of personalization and ubiquity makes the widening circulation of information a resource in the acceleration, expansion and intensification of capital's circulation. The proliferation of credit and crediting mechanisms, as well as faster fiber-optic cables, are media used to reduce capital's overall circulation time. As Marx notes in *Grundrisse*, one of the overall tendencies of capital's circulation is to turn individuals/workers into independent centers of exchange, evermore subjected to the rhythms of this intensifying circulatory process (1973, 419). This process increasingly occurs through the flows of digital, personalized and interactive media, but articulates *consumption*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

capacity in order to address and overcome its barriers. Through our interactions with these flows of information we experience at a phenomenological level, the speed-up of everyday life, what Tomlinson (2007) refers to as "the coming of immediacy"—a result of the convergence of cultural production and the circulatory dynamics of capital.

As we have noted, recent developments in mobile payment systems and fiber-optic cables provide evidence of capital's logic of acceleration. These media reflect the evolution of digital media under capitalism as a search for overcoming barriers of use-values, equivalents, space and time. What we have argued is that a Marxist theory of communication takes capital as the subject of communication. Marx's description of circulation describes the communication of capital as a spectrum tuned to overcoming different barriers. At one end we find the logistical circulation of capital (commodities, labour and money); at the other, we find questions of need, desire, and use value shaped by cultural practices and institutions.

The personalization of media mimics the liberal market ideal of matching consumers with commodities. The evolution of mobile devices with integrated NFC capabilities will turn these devices into tools for providing/automating a whole range of personalized services. This evolution has important implications for post-industrial, service based economies. Personalization of this sort will make obsolete a whole mass of service sector jobs as they are either automated or replaced by the unpaid labour of these ubiquitously connected users, which is a process that of course offloads costs associated with circulation onto the consumer, while expanding the range of data that can be offered commercially, by telecoms and other third parties (for example, mobile application developers).

We can think of the growth of personalization in the era of ubiquitous connectivity as a feedback mechanism that flows through our personalized media, part of a much broader algorithmic expanding and speeding-up through the growing torrent of digital data (whether financial, logistical, personal, or increasingly, all of them together).

The algorithmic qualities of Marx's conception of capital as a circuit is neither surprising, nor, arguably, is it accidental. Marx's use of the term circuit to construct his model of capital's logic of motion is particularly deliberate, perhaps alluding to the imminent biases in the political economists and theories Marx was critiquing. Otto Mayr (1971a) has written about the relationship between the genesis of liberal-market theory and the development of feedback technologies—that is, a history of cybernetics *avant la lettre.* The roots of this algorithmic nature appears rooted both in the intellectual apparatus and the historical context of its genesis, although perhaps it is mere coincidence that early schemas of global trade reflect feedback loop diagrams (Mayr 1971a, 4), or that Adam Smith and James Watt were friends and perhaps shared the same cybernetic imagination of society. Perhaps it was coincidence that Charles Babbage not only schematized a *difference engine* but also wrote treaties on capitalist political economy, or that James Clerk Maxwell (see Mayr 1971b)—first theorist of the electromagnetic spectrum—also designed the first commercial self-regulating governors for industrial capital, and is cited by none other than Norbert Wiener as the grandfather of cybernetics (Wiener 1948).

According to Mayr (1971a), the concept of self-correcting/self-regulating system was one of the chief metaphors for the free market, in which the flows of goods, money and prices would create a self-correcting system that could maximize social welfare for the largest number of people. Personalization of the sort we are now seeing falls closely in line with the beliefs and values of typical liberal market theories; using both personalization and ubiquitous connectivity as a means of efficiently and instantaneously matching services and products with consumers. Our media systems have largely evolved within "the cybernetic imagination of capitalism" (Webster and Robins 1999, 111). Although we are inundated with a quantitative increase in human communication, there is infinitely more expansive network of machinic communication governing the communication of capital and its logic of acceleration. In an early form it expresses Shannon's mathematical theory of communication, which is itself a feedback system (Shannon and Weaver 1949). In both, it is the search for perfect information – the elimination of noise – that constitutes a mathematically perfect communication system. It is no surprise then that our means of communication and our means of exchange (including both money and information over a network) are converging. While personalization creates nearly perfect information about users and their locations – in the context of technologically mediated social networks – noise will increasingly constitute those voices, opinions and messages that do not already conform to our personally cultivated algorithm, which are outside of our preference schema. Within the cybernetic imagination of capitalism, digital media offer capital the vectors through and by which the logic of acceleration is articulated *diagrammatically*. Our media are indeed in transition, but transitioning under what structural biases and political economic imperatives? How will we understand the growth of cloud-computing, the internet of things, and 3-D print-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ing evolve through market forces? We have argued that answering this question will involve a media-centric interpretation of Marx's expansive analysis of the circulation of capital.

References

Arthur, Christoper. J. 1998. The Fluidity of Capital and the Logic of the Concept. In *The Circulation of Capital: Essays on Volume Two of Marx's Capital*, edited by Christopher J. Arthur and Geert Reuten, 95-128. London: MacMillan.

Babe, Robert E. 2000. *Canadian Communication Thought: Ten Foundational Writers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Barr, Alistair. 2012. Paypal execs woos big retailers with pricing, data, *Reuters*, February 10. Accessed February 27, 2012. http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/10/paypal-kingsborough-idUSL2E8D8AE720120210

Barth, Chris. 2011. Visa and Square: Why Goliath is investing in David, *Forbes*, April 27. Accessed May 3, 2012. http://www.forbes.com/sites/chrisbarth/2011/04/27/visa-and-square-why-goliath-is-investing-in-david/

Betancourt, Michele. 2006. The Aura of the Digital. *CTHEORY*. Accessed February 10, 2012. http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=519

Betancourt, Michele. 2010. Immaterial Value and Scarcity in Digital Capitalism. *CTHEORY*. Accessed February 10, 2012. http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=652

Boland, Michael. 2011. Apple's Mobile Payment Plans Come into Focus, *Huffington Post*, November 16. Accessed May 3, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-boland/apples-mobile-payment-plans_b_1090003.html

Bonachich, Edna, and Jake B. Wilson. 2008. *Getting the Goods: Ports, Labor and the Logistics Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Brustein, Joshua. 2012a. Start-ups Seek to Help Users Put a Price on Their Personal Data, *The New York Times*, February 12. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/13/technology/start-ups-aim-to-help-users-put-a-price-on-their-personal-data.html

Brustein, Joshua. 2012b. Many Competing Paths on the Road to the Phone Wallet, *The New York Times, May 6.* http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/07/technology/many-competing-paths-on-the-road-to-a-phone-wallet.html

Comor, Edward. 1994. Harold Innis's Dialectical Triad. *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29 (2): 111-127.

Comor, Edward. 2001. Harold Innis and 'The Bias of Communication.' *Information, Communication & Society* 4(2): 274-294.

Dorminey, Bruce. 2012. Neutrinos to Give High-frequency Traders the Millisecond Edge, *Forbes*, April 30. Accessed May 3, 2012. http://www.forbes.com/sites/brucedorminey/2012/04/30/neutrinos-to-give-high-frequency-traders-the-millisecond-edge/

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Elmer, Greg. 2004. Profiling Machines: Mapping the Personal Information Economy. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Evans, Peter. 2011. Rogers Wants to Start Bank, *CBC News*, September 6. Accessed February 8, 2012. http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2011/09/06/rogers-bank.html

Fortunati, Leopoldina. 2002. The Mobile Phone: Towards New Categories and Social Relations. *Information, Communication & Society* 5 (4): 513-528.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Theoretical Foundations of Critical Media Studies: Reflections on Karl Marx and the media. *International Journal of Communication* 3: 369-402.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Labor in Informational Capitalism and On The Internet. *The Information Society* 26: 179-196.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1990. *Capitalism and Communication: Global culture and the Economics of Information.* London: Sage.

Hardy, Quentin. 2012. I.B.M.: Big Data, Bigger Patterns. *New York Times*, February 15. Accessed February 11, 2012. http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/i-b-m-big-data-bigger-patterns/

Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. New York: Blackwell.

Hecht, Jeff. 2011. Light is Not Fast Enough For High-speed Trading. *New Scientist*, October 1. Accessed March 10. http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21128324.700-light-is-not-fast-enough-for-highspeed-stock-trading.html

Innis, Harold Adams, and Daniel Drache. 1995. *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change : Selected essays [of] Harold A. Innis* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Innis, Harold Adams. 1964. *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

ITU. 2011. *The World in 2011: ICT Facts and Figures*. International Telecommunications Union.

Kittler, Friedrich A. 1999. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kjosen, Atle. 2010. *An Accident of Value: A Marxist-Virilian Analysis of Digital Piracy*. MA Thesis. University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. Available from http://uwo.academia.edu/kjosen/Papers/387636/An_Accident_of_Value_A_Marxist-Virilian_Analysis_of_Digital_Piracy

Lebowitz, Michael. 2006. *Beyond Capital*: *Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class.* New York, NY: St. Martins.

Lohr, Steve. 2012. The Age of Big Data, *New York Times*, February 12. Accessed February 13, 2012.http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/sunday-review/big-datas-impact-in-the-world.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1&ref=technology

MacKenzie, Donald. 2011. How to Make Money in Microseconds. *London Review of Books* 33 (10): 16-18.

Manovich, Lev. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Manzerolle, Vincent. 2010. The Virtual Debt Factory: Towards an Analysis of Debt and Abstraction in the American Credit Crisis. *tripleC - Cognition, Communication, Co-Operation* 8 (2); 221-236.

Manzerolle, Vincent. 2011. Mobilizing the Audience Commodity: Digital Labour in a Wireless World. *Ephemera* 10 (3/4): 455-469,

Manzerolle, Vincent, and Sandra Smeltzer. 2011. Consumer Databases and the Commercial Mediation of Identity: A Medium Theory Analysis. *Surveillance and Society* 8 (3).

Martin, Michele. 1991. Communication and Social Forms: The Development of the Telephone, 1876-1920. *Antipode* 23 (3): 307-333.

Marx, Karl. 1973. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Martin Nicolaus, Trans.). London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1976. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, volume 1* (Ben Fowkes, Trans.). London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1978. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, volume 2* (David Fernbach, Trans.). London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1981. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, volume 3* (David Fernbach, Trans.). London: Penguin.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Mayr, Otto. 1971a. Adam Smith and The Concept of the Feedback System: Economic thought and technology in 18th-century Britain. *Technology and Culture* 12 (1): 1-22.
Mayr, Otto. 1971b. Maxwell and the Origins of Cybernetics. *Isis* 62: 425-444.
McGuigan, Lee. 2012. Consumers: The Commodity Product of Interactive Commercial Media, Or, Is Dallas Smythe's Thesis More Salient Than Ever? Unpublished manuscript.
McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
McLuhan, Marshall, & Nevitt, Barrington. 1972. *Take Today: The Executive As Dropout*. Don Mills, Ont.: Longman Canada.
Mosco, Vincent, and Katherine McKercher. 2008. *The Labouring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* New York: Lexington Books.
Negri, Antonio. 1984. *Marx Beyond Marx*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers Inc.
Silver, Beverly. 2003. *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
Shannon, Claude Elwood, and Warren Weaver. 1949. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Smythe, Dallas Walker. 1981. *Dependency Road : Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub.
Stiegler, Bernard. 2010. *For a New Critique of Political Economy*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity.
TechCrunch (Producer). 2011. So is Web 3.0 already here? (tctv). [Video] Accessed March 1, 2012 .http://techcrunch.com/2011/04/18/so-is-web-3-0-already-here-tctv/
Tode, Chantal. 2012. Apple's Mobile Payments Aspirations Come into Focus with Patent Award, *Mobile Commerce Daily*, March 8. Accessed May 3, 2012. http://www.mobilecommercedaily.com/2012/03/08/apple%E2%80%99s-mobile-payments-aspirations-come-into-focus-with-patent-award
Tomlinson, John. 2007. *The Culture of Speed : The Coming of Immediacy*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
Webster, Frank, and Kevin Robins. 1999. *Times of the Technoculture*. New York: Routledge.
Wiener, Norbert. 1948. *Cybernetics, or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. New York Paris: John Wiley & sons
Williams, Christoper. 2011. The $300m Cable That Will Save Traders Milliseconds, *Telegraph*, September 11. Accessed March 2, 2012.http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/news/8753784/The-300m-cable-that-will-save-traders-milliseconds.html
Zax, David. 2011. Is Personal Data the New Currency. *Technology Review,* November 30. Accessed March 1, 2012. http://www.technologyreview.com/blog/helloworld/27377/
Zwick, Detlev, Samuel Bonsu, and Aaron Darmodt. 2009. Putting Consumers to Work. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8 (2): 163-196.

About the Authors

Vincent Manzerolle
Vincent Manzerolle is a PhD Candidate and Lecturer in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. His research and publications lie at the intersection of media theory, political economy of information, and sociology of technology. His dissertation project examines the historical antecedents and political economic significance of ubiquitous connectivity by focusing on the evolution of smartphone technologies and related markets.

Atle Mikkola Kjøsen
Atle Mikkola Kjøsen is a PhD student in the Faculty of Media and Information Studies at the University of Western Ontario. His research focuses on media theory, Marxist value theory, philosophy of technology, and information theory/cybernetics. His dissertation project aims at developing a Marxist theory media through an analysis of logistics through a combined theoretical framework of value-form theory, medium theory and information theory.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 230-252, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Communication and Symbolic Capitalism. Rethinking Marxist Communication Theory in the Light of the Information Society

George Pleios

Associate Professor, University of Athens, Greece. gplios@media.uoa.gr
https://sites.google.com/site/georgepleioswebsite/

Abstract: *Communication is examined in the realm of Marxist theory not as an autonomous social field, but as a component in the total social structure. It is argued that there was a shift from the initial Marxist idea of forms of communication as relations of production to communication as part of the superstructure, and that this view has prevailed in Marxist theory for a long period of time. In the work of later Marxists, we can spot a re-connection of communication with the capitalist mode of production, but not with the process of structuration and changing of relations of production. In my view, first we must connect these modifications in Marxist theory with the changes in the capitalist mode of production itself and secondly we must seek the role of communication primarily in the production process. We stress that at the end of the 19th century there was a shift from extensive to intensive forms of surplus value which was tightly interconnected with the mass (enlarged) consumption of symbolic commodities and commodities – symbols as stimulus for the intensive production. In this way capitalism was transformed to symbolic capitalism. In the '60s, the symbolic logic of enlarged consumption led to the need for diverse and flexible production and therefore to the deep information – symbolic changes in technology and social organization of the labour. Thus the logic of consumption became the logic of production. This made possible on one hand the shrinkage of the enlarged consumption and on the other the high productivity of the economic systems. This was the rise of a new, deep symbolic capitalism, which made possible the social change without seizing the power. Therefore, the recent developments in the capitalist mode of production takes us back to the primary Marxist notion of communication forms as relations of production and make possible to change the laters by changing the first.*

Keywords: *Marxism, Capitalism, Symbolic Capitalism, Communication Theory, Mass Culture, Mass Production, Flexible Specialization, Post-Fordism, Enlarged Consumption, Cultural Industries, Consumer Capitalism, Information Society, Organization of Labor, New Technologies, Postmodernism, Social Change.*

1. Methodological Issues

The main purpose of this article is not to examine the Marxist theory of communication as a specific social field, but to look into communication as a parameter in general Marxist social theory. In other words, this article aims to look into the structural role of communication on the basis of a base – superstructure model of social organization with regard to its historical transformation and to different approaches in Marxist social theory. Therefore, it elaborates the discussion mainly between the approach of traditional Marxism and those of later schools of thought, both Marxist or any influenced by them in an effort to assess the development of the capitalist mode of production as a result of the key role of communication.

In my opinion we can draw a development of the Marxist concept of the relations between the capitalist mode of production and communication, in four steps or moments. At first (e.g. in "The German Ideology"), communication and the relations of production are identical. In the primary formulation, in the "German Ideology" (Marx and Engels 1978a, 67), the relations of production (or property relations) are characterized as "forms of communication". With this term, Marx and Engels aim to explain ideology, which they perceive as being equal to idealism, in relation to the mode of production and class relations. A certain degree or form of division of labour leads to a certain quality and quantity of distribution of the products of labour. In other words, the structure of distribution is connected to the division of labour within the production process. Certain social relations of production and distribution emanate from this division of labour and (Marx and Engels 1978a, 78). Marx and Engels understand relations of production as class/property relations on one hand, and as communication forms on the other.

As they note, "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Con-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (Marx and Engels 1978a, 67-8).

Thus they understand relations of production as social relations within a broader context, where social interaction, the use of symbols in it and the ideas that derive from it or refer to that interaction are regarded as a whole. In this formulation, the "forms of communication" become a means of establishing, sustaining and changing the social relations of production, and vice versa, in connection to the division of labour. From this point of view, communication and symbolic structures are not only passive means but also an essential part of the social relations of production, especially in pre-capitalist societies. For example, Marx notes that Moses managed to establish new laws in favor of virtue, justice and morality because he grounded the new principles on land ownership (Marx 1983, 100). In other words, the answer to the question about the importance of forms of communication regarding the social relations of production and social organization depends on the division of labour and the overall mode of production overall.

In a second step/moment, Marx accepts that, communication and especially its ideational content are relatively separated from the relations of production, which are perceived to be class and property relations, and placed within the superstructure. "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" (Marx and Engels 2001, 39).

Here, communication depends on and reflects what is taking place in the base, in class and property relations. According to Marx and Engels: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it" (Marx and Engels 1978a, 94). This view can be interpreted, in two ways.

a. In a more instrumental approach, where it is accepted that the means of communication belong to those that own the means of production and thus use them "on purpose" to express their views in order to gain profit from this business or/and justify and maintain social inequality. The communication product (or text with semiotic terms) as merchandise, i.e. a product of commodity production, which is bought for money and is intended to satisfy certain needs. As Marx states: "beyond all commodity is an external object, something which with its attributes satisfies human needs. The nature of these needs, no matter their origin, for example stomach or imagination, does not change the nature of the work" (Marx and Engels 2001, 39 – 42; Marx 1979, 45). Marx and Engels also assert that those who own the means of production, also own the means of communication, which they use in order to maintain political and ideological control over society and preserve capitalist property and class relations. "The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (Marx and Engels 1978a, 94)
b. The above mentioned statement can be interpreted in a more structural notion, one that asserts that those who own and control the means of production, may usually see their views being reflected in the products of communication Such an approach focuses mainly on the ideological aspects of communication content. "The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (Marx and Engels 1978a, 94). Communication (of ideas) reflects the social relations that exist in the base of a social structure, an idea supported by positivists according to Williams (Williams 2001, 153). The communication product is examined in its content as a whole of ideas. In this context, communication and communication products/commodities are becoming part of the superstructure.

Overall, in the second step of the evolution of the Marxist theory of communication, the latter is regarded more or less as an autonomous social field. Marx himself not only separates the superstructure from the structure, but also the idea of the "relative autonomy" between art and superstructure (Marx and Engels, 1975). Such a view has long dominated Marxist theory.

Thirdly, other Marxists have developed various notions of communication – production relations are discussed in phase two in a more systematic way and often separated from each other. At the same time, their accounts constitute different types of Marxism or (neo) Marxist communication theory. In my analysis, it is important to remember that what is under investigation in each case happens in tandem with the specific historical or spatio-temporal context of the communicative process.

For a long period of time, a distinct Marxist tradition was developed that was looking at communication as a cultural field, which reflects the broader structures of capitalist society in the form of ideas and discourses. Therefore it focused on the ideological aspects of communication content and practices (also mainly of the fictional types of content). Such an approach was undertaken by Marxist structuralism (Althusser 1990, 69–95) and, in a different manner, by Soviet Marxism. Marxist structuralism does not focus on the process of production of cultural products or other goods and their relation to communication content and ideology; rather, it absorbs the relations of production in the communication content as the ruling classes' view of reality. The two aspects of cultural production (economic and communicative) were considered as structural parallels, which however are not essentially interconnected. The ideological function of cultural production, even if linked to its commodity character, preserves its autonomy and depends to a great degree on the cultural rules and the particular cultural field to which the product belongs – otherwise, the commodity function of the cultural product is absorbed by ideology. Whatever the case, the ideological function of communication is not connected organically to its economic role, being a special symbolic process. This particular Marxist approach is not related to my analysis of communication as a key component of the social structure.

Besides the above mentioned, mainly cultural approach, a different one has been developed in the realm of (neo) Marxism. It analyzes, in different ways and degrees, communication and its content in relation to the process of commodity production of symbolic and non-symbolic products, and the relations of production. Critical Theory, mostly Adorno, undertook a more structural socio–philosophical approach and investigated communication as a field which penetrated the industrial capitalist mode of production (and structures) that characterizes State Monopoly Capitalism (Horkheimer and Adorno 1986; Adorno and Horkheimer 1987, 219-243). Industrial production, hand in hand with commoditization, enters the communication field, but the problem is not technology because it is materialization of the capitalist mode of production. This on one hand leads to an extreme commoditization of communication products that eliminates their commercial character and on the other to the embodiment of the ruling classes' ideology in the content. The mass production of communication products leaves little room for alternative ideas. Adorno and Horkheimer underline that "Films and radio no longer need to present themselves as art. The truth that they are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce. They call themselves industries and the published figures for their directors' incomes quell any doubts about the social necessity of their finished products" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2001, 72).

Beyond that, commoditized communication (e.g. advertisement) became a means that helps the circulation of industrial non-cultural commodities, which also dominate the everyday life of individuals. The consumption of communication products satisfies the needs of the routine reproduction of the labour force like the non-cultural ones. "Entertainment is the prolongation of work under late capitalism. It is sought by those who want to escape the mechanized labor process so that they can cope with it again. At the same time, however, mechanization has such power over leisure and its happiness, determines so thoroughly the fabrication of entertainment commodities, that the off-duty worker can experience nothing but afterimages of the work process itself" (Adorno and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Horkheimer 2001, 82). Due to the embodied ideas and the commoditized form of their consumption, this leads to the integration of the working class in the system.

Thus communication serves the sustainment of the (Monopoly State) capitalist mode of production. In this way, Critical Theory does not focus only on the consequences of the capitalist mode of production on the autonomous superstructure, like Marxist structuralism does. Instead, it looks at the penetration of the capitalist mode of production in communication and its ideological and structural consequences, which results in the abolition of the autonomy of the superstructure - the base, thus, conquers and homogenizes the superstructure. For this reason, such an approach in the words of Garnham could be characterized as "economic determinism" in cultural and communication studies (Garnham, 1979) in contrast to the idealism of Marxist structuralism. But Critical Theory does not examine the role of communication in the formation of the State Monopoly Capitalist mode of production itself at the level of production (i.e. the role of consumed symbolic goods at the work place). It only examines the reproductive role of regarding the capitalist base as determining its contestation.

The propaganda model accepts a more instrumental version of the Marxist theory of communication. More precisely it informs the way in which the agents of capitalist cultural production embody the ruling ideas in the content (mainly the factual content) in order to fulfill economic as well as political goals. Thus the propaganda model focuses also on the process of production of communication commodities and their ideological content, on their political consequences, and thus the sustaining of capitalist economic and social relations, in close relation to the activity and objectives of those that own the means of cultural production (Herman and Chomsky 2001). In this manner, communication contributes to the sustaining of the capitalist mode of production not directly, but trough manufacturing consent in the political and ideological arena.

The "encoding/decoding" model connects organically a cultural and economic analysis of communication with the production and consumption (reading) moment of the communication process (Hall 1980). From this starting point, Critical Political Economy of Communication combines the Critical/theoretical analysis with the positive/empirical analysis of economic, cultural and political factors that determine communication products, and the field of communication as such, as part of the capitalist economy (Schiller 1973; Mosco 2009; Curran 1979; Golding and Murdock 2001). The industrial–capitalist manufacturing of communication products is regarded not as the core, but as part of the broader capitalist economy and structure of interests (Golding and Murdock 2001, 26–28). Critical Political Economy examines the consequences of the capitalist mode of production for communication in a more complex and historical way. As Nicolas Garnham put it "… the superstructure/culture is and remains subordinate and secondary and the crucial questions are the relationship between, on the one hand, the mode of extraction and distribution of the material surplus, e.g. class relations and, on the other, the allocation of this material surplus within the superstructure, for instance, the problem of public expenditure among others" (Garnham 1979). Despite the importance of Critical Political Economy in understanding the complex role of economic, political and cultural mechanisms in the production of communication commodities (and their ideology) in lat capitalism, the question about the contribution of communication to the process of production of (non-communication) commodities and to the 'division of labour" remains unanswered.

In general, in this third stage, communication is conceived as part of the superstructure and as a field of extension and penetration of the capitalist–industrial mode of production. In a nutshell, in the Marxist theory of communication, while the contribution of the capitalist mode of production in the communication field and the mode of communication has been under examination for long, the significance of (the mode of) communication in the production, not the circulation of commodities, the political, has not been enough analysed.

The later is a key issue in a fourth step or moment in the development of the Marxist Theory of Communication, which is indispensable from those Marxist theories of the third step that connect communication with the production process. Critical Theory is in my view a neomarxist approach that focuses extensively on the role of communication in sustaining and reproducing the (State Monopoly) capitalist mode of production. But, as I already mentioned, this is limited to the simple reproduction of the labour force just before it visits the workplace. Williams tended to treat the "base" as indispensable for certain superstructure elements, especially at the level of the work force (Williams 2001, 154–155). In his view: "If we have the broad sense of forces of production, we look at the whole question of the base differently, and we are then less tempted to dismiss it as superstructural, and in that sense as merely secondary certain vital productive social forces, which are in the broad sense, from the beginning basic" (Williams 2001, 155). Ezensberger investigates

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the organic role of communication in the sphere of production. It is argued that the means of communication are means of production (Ezensberger 1981). Finally, put in its historical context, one must reconfigure in Marxist terms Baudrillard's idea that the mode of production is a result of the communication mode and not the other way round (Baudrillard 1990, 112; Pleios 1993, 50–64). At this point, one should not leave aside Debord's theory, according to which the spectacle is the superior form of commodity production, exchange and consumption (Debord, 1986).

The connection of communication with the mode of production (and especially the relations of production) in the frame of the Marxist rationale can be seen into two ways. Firstly, communication is regarded as a process which is placed mostly in the sphere of commodity circulation, that is to say that it facilitates the sale of the product (for example as it happens with advertising or promoting a consumerist way of life (Marx and Horkheimer 2001; Fuchs 2010a).

Secondly, it can be argued that the economic role of communication is not limited only to the sphere of trade and consumption. In my opinion, communication can be regarded as a process that facilitates, strengthens or changes the capitalist mode of production in its core (the "division of labour"), beyond the sphere of cultural industries or cultural consumption alone. That perhaps could explain the modifications of the capitalist mode of production and the deeper role of communication and cultural industries the development of the capitalist mode of production.

My analysis is situated within this fourth step. I do not examine communication just as form of the superstructure which reflects and reproduces the base or as a field that penetrates the industrial capitalist mode of production or as a means that facilitates the circulation of goods. I explore the role of socially organized communication (including cultural industries) in the core of the capitalist mode of production, namely in the process of the production of goods (of non cultural industries) as well as in the structuration of relations of production. In other words, I examine communication as force of sustaining and changing the mode of production in its core, in the social relations of production at the workplace. This is not something that characterizes every form/stage of capitalism, but it is a historical result of the development of the capitalist mode of production. Hence, I accept that communication contributes not only to the realization of the surplus value that has been created in production, or to the simple reproduction of the workforce. My starting point is that via consumption certain attributes (values and norms) are created among the workforce that renders them more productive, so that surplus value is increased during the process of production under specific organization of the work. This second stance is feasible in the frame of consumer capitalism.

Enlarged consumption does not only help the consumption of commodities, but also reconstructs the labor force in such a way that it becomes more productive and consequently increases its productivity, which in other words decreases the working time needed for its own reproduction and as a result contributes to the increase of surplus value (Pleios 1993, 56–58). This approach is not unknown, but has been proposed with the help of other terms. Human capital theory, for example, which is a functionalist theory, adopts a similar approach (Schultz 1961). In the present article, this second spectrum of analysis is followed, focusing on the social-symbolic construction and not the biological-bodily manufacture and reproduction of the working force via consumption and communication.

2. The Marxist Approach and its Contestation

In the frame of Marxist tradition, especially as it has been formulated in Marx's work "Towards a Critique of the Political Economy", the dialectics of relations of production and forces of production are considered to be a fundamental force, which contributes to the configuration of the social system as a whole, or in Marxist terms, to each socio-economic formation (Marx 1978, 115). The effort to comprehend and evaluate this dialectic in the further economic analysis, particularly within Marxism, led to the separation between those that attribute the prime role to the forces of production (means of production, objects of production, working force) and those that attribute a bigger priority to the relations of production (property relations, class relations, etc.) and furthermore to the political and ideological conflict (Plamenatz 1963, 282–283; Blackledge and Hunt 1995, 160). This division prevailed for a long period in the Marxist camp not only in theory, but also on political, cultural and other levels.

At this point it is imperative that the importance of two points is emphasized. Firstly, as we already mentioned, Marx and Engels, on one hand, define relations of production as "forms of communication" (Marx and Engels 1978a, 67). On the other, (Marx 1978), the relations of production are seen as the base, above of which is erected all what with another term could be characterized

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

as “communication forms” (law, policy, art etc.) and other social institutions. It is obvious that henceforth relations of production refer mainly to an economic-social category, the class relations (or property relations) and that the “forms of communication” have been removed from the base.

In order to comprehend this contradiction, one should question whether class/property relations are distinguished from the forms of communication, where class relations determine and shape forms of communication. a) How is the existence of relations of production possible without forms of communication. b) If we remove communication from “forms of communication”, then what remains of them? The answer to the first question is that it is obvious that the class relations, as all social relations, are not conceivable without the communication aspect. According to George Gerbner, communication is “social interaction through messages” or symbolic constructions (Gerbner 1970, 72). Thus, the various class relations (also including their political form) are possible only via communication and the various forms and types of communication. Actually, class relations acquire substance and are transformed (to the particular historical form that they take in each society) via the forms of communication.

Based on our previous analysis, the answer to the second question, i.e. what remains from the “forms of communication” if we remove communication altogether, is: ideas. Consequently, at a second stage or moment, classic Marxism perceives the “superstructure” as a whole of ideas, as Marx himself wrote (Marx and Engels 1975, 68), that are shaped by the material base of society, in which the institutional mechanisms of the production of ideas are also included,.

This approach has been interpreted mainly in two ways. Firstly, the Marxist approach, especially the analysis of capitalism, was seen as a theoretically erroneous or one-sided approach. This stance has been especially popular within positivism, functionalism and Weberian sociology (Alexander 1987). The importance of the mode of production has been pointed out, but has been considered to be rather one-sided. In this case, the economy has been considered as an insufficient factor for further social analysis. Marx and Engels have also pointed out that the analysis of the societal organization must be completed by communication/culture or by what in Engels’ words has been called “form” of the “content”, which in its turn are the economic processes. This work, according Engels, had to be carried out by the next generation of Marxists (Marx and Engels 1978b, 469).

Secondly, the classic Marxist approach (mainly in Marx’s “Capital”) is characterized as a theoretical imprinting of a historical reality. Marx actually describes the way in which 19th century laissez faire capitalism operates (Russell 2006, 26–29), not capitalism in general or class societies in more general terms. In my opinion this assumption is also at the heart of the Williams’ conclusion that the base–superstructure model is a bourgeois formula (Williams 1978, 75–82). Thus the analysis of further stages of capitalism should take into consideration the role of communication/culture.

So, no matter if one looks from inside or from outside at the initial Marxist position on the role of the mode of production or class relations in the organization of society, one can observe a convergence. It concerns the need to complete the role that is carried out by the “base” or more widely the mode of production, from the activities that take place in the superstructure. This conclusion, like similar developments in social theory, owes a lot to theoretical activity. However, the conclusions did not become only possible due to theory, they at the same time had to be applied in the ontological field (Horkheimer 1976, 213). Theories are social constructs and social constructions are never arbitrary, except in solipsism (Demertzis 2002, 144-175). Social constructions always organize through discourse a sum of events that are independent from individual subjects, not of the subject in general. Or they contain events that are objective as the natural or economic events (Demertzis 2002, 149–152).

The perception that the mature Marx described a specific socio-economic formation in a specific period, appears feasible at least for two reasons. Firstly, it corresponds to the more general course of his work from the abstract and general to the concrete and specific, and from the philosophical and general sociological analysis to the economic and political one. Secondly, the description of capitalism, capital, work, commodity etc. that Marx develops in “Capital”, constitutes an analysis of an “ideotypical” capitalism. But it could historically be observed in the frame of liberal, laissez-faire capitalism, and particularly in Great Britain.

Any attempt to adopt this analysis in any other country or form of capitalism presupposes smaller or bigger modifications, as Engels himself underlines in his letter to Paul Ernst (Engels 1978a, 426–428). These “modifications” can be perceived either as an adjustment to different historical circumstances and/or as an adjustment to a different phase, as an adjustment to the “ideotype” of another phase in the development of capitalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

3. The Genesis of Symbolic Capitalism

Seeing the ontological foundation for the characterization or the transformation of Marxist perceptions of base and superstructure as insufficient, one should turn attention to those facts that rendered it restrictive. The great transformation, according to the terminology set out by Polanyi (Polanyi 2001), is a change in the nature of capitalism that took place at the end of the 19th century. A result of this change was the appearance of monopolies or in other words organized capitalism (Lash and Urry 1987; Sennet 2008, 27) and the reduction of competitive, free market capitalist economy and the liberal state. But to look at this from another perspective, the rise of monopoly capitalism is connected to radical changes in the process of production, especially the social organization of work (Burawoy 1979), on the one hand and the rise a large public sector on the other (Hobsbawm 1978).

The significance of this change is immense for the study of communication from the Marxist perspective. Through this change, Baudrillard for example explains the development of media and the sovereignty of the mode of communication over the mode of production in an undisputed way (Baudrillard 1990, 112). Although Baudrillard correctly locates the point of historical transformation of capitalism, I believe however that he does not correctly interpret this change. Baudrillard locates this change in the market circulation of commodities and more specifically in the relationship between producer and consumer, between the commodity and its consumption. It is true that the circulation of commodities and financial capital can exercise influence over the production process, as Engels recognizes in his letter to Conrad Schmidt. But the “decisive moment” is production (Engels 1978b, 436).

The specificity of capitalism does not lie in the circulation or production of commodities (which existed before the capitalist mode of production), but in the production of surplus value and furthermore in generalized commodity production. “Capitalist production is not merely the production of commodities, it is essentially the production of surplus-value” (Marx 1979, 520). Circulation is the moment of realization of surplus value, not the moment of its creation. The most important condition for the production of surplus value is the relationship between capital and labour, where the labour force becomes itself a commodity (Jessop 2002, 12–13. The production of surplus value, and more precisely the rate of surplus value (s/v), is the historical form and essence of the capitalist relations of production. Thus, the phenomenon of monopoly as a relationship between producers and its changes are not explained or at least not located in the organization of production. From the Marxist point of view, any change in the evolution of capitalism is first and foremost a change in the form and method of the production of surplus value rather than the form of its realization (circulation of commodities), no matter how important this is for commodity production.

We can claim that the crisis of the 1870s was a crisis of the production system of surplus value in laissez faire capitalism, which according to representatives of the Regulation School (Aglieta 1979, Lipietz 1990) is characterized by extensive production of surplus value and economic development (of an individual company or national economy as a whole). The resolution of the crisis was achieved by turning to the intensive model of organized capitalism that included the appearance of monopolies. This constituted a different production system of surplus value that led to a different way of its realization.

In the extensive model (featuring laissez faire capitalism), both production and the increase in surplus value are ensured, in Marxist terms, mainly through increase of absolute surplus value production. Firstly, this takes place through wage reductions to the limits of survival combined with the extension of working hours and so on. The labour force here appears mainly as an unskilled and unwilling muscular force whose effective engagement in the production process is ensured through economic violence (lack of means of survival). Because of this function of capitalist enterprise, the intervention of politics, morality etc in the relations between capital and labour, apart from the economic means, is very difficult. This relation was present in the laissez faire capitalism of the 19th century, or the relationships between different parts of capital or between different enterprises. Secondly, and as a result of this, the extensive model (laissez faire capitalism), the absolute increase in surplus value and economic development are obtained by multiplying the business of a sole businessman through investment earnings (based on a secular or religious Protestant spirit) creating new production units.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Hence, laissez faire capitalism was a period of unbridled expansion of industrial capitalism that reformed the structure of the economy and fundamentally altered social relations, as well as the distribution and organization of population, in the manner that second wave societies were described by Alvin Toffler (Toffler 1982). Finally, in the extensive model, as a result of all aspects mentioned earlier, the leading role in increasing absolute surplus value, according to the terminology of Rueschmeyer, is played by the technical organization of labour (Rueschemeyer 1986), in other words the organization of machinery. The continuing revolution in technology results in the reduction of the necessary labour time and the increase of surplus labor time. To sum up, laissez faire capitalism is the macroscopic aspect of absolute surplus value production in capitalism.

In my view, within this form of the capitalist economy, social communication is to a paramount degree separated from work and vice versa, although it is subjected to the same rules as labour. The labour process is free of socially-organized communication – an end in itself, serving the needs and aspirations of its subjects. Moreover, socially organized communication is subjected to a great degree to the requirements of universal exchange in two ways. On the one hand, the social production and consumption of communication that is commercialized is characterized by the same procedures and relations between producers and businesses as well as the production of material commodities.

The producers of symbolic products have more or less the same relationship with their employer as a the factory worker (Pleios 1993, 49–50; Mosco 2009, 133). This model finds its theoretical expression in Marx's conception of the commodity. Marx considered as commodity any merchandise "whether addressed to the stomach or mind" (Marx 1979, 45), exactly because of the conditions and the means of its production, and because it is produced not to meet the needs of producers, but of consumers. On the other hand, the predominance of exchange relations is expressed through the predominance of natural language, and of written language and the press in social communication in particular.

Natural language as a semiotic system becomes the symbolic equivalent of value. It becomes the symbolic "currency" to redeem "on the show" any other representation. This is why print media become the predominant media and the content categories on the axis of information - literature become predominant (content categories) inside and outside print media (Pleios 1993, 51). In other words, in laissez faire capitalism, social communication is relatively separated from labour, but both fall under the same rules of production of surplus value on the one hand and commodity production on the other. This does not mean that all cultural production and communication are commercialized. On the contrary, the masses use largely forms and products of communication that are not commercialized. This statement is especially true for socially organized, i.e. commodified, cultural production.

However, there are limits beyond which the continuity of the extensive model and laissez faire capitalism is impossible. Classical Marxist political economy interprets the emergence of monopoly capitalism (organized capitalism) mainly as a result of the relations between different parts of capital, considering the relationship between capital and labour as stable. This means that monopoly is interpreted simply as a result of the integration of individual businesses targeting the largest company's monopoly profit. As mentioned earlier, the emergence of monopoly capitalism, as well as of liberal capitalism, should be thought of as part of production (at the micro-level) rather than as part of the market (the macro-level). More specifically, the emergence of monopolies is more related to the transformation of the organic composition of capital, the relationship between constant capital (dead labour) and living labour (the workers' labour) (Marx 1979, 627–664). But the increase of the organic composition of capital, due to the primary role of the technical organization of the labour, which Marx accepts in the long-term (Marx 1979, 627 – 664), is at the same time a process of the intensification of labour, if one has to face the declining rate of profit. In other words, the increase of the organic composition of capital is at the same time an increase of the productivity of the "total quantity of live and materialized labour production" (Richta 1976, 47). Thus, the emergence of monopoly capitalism (organized capitalism) must be associated with the increase of the relative surplus value and an increase in productivity, or otherwise the transition to a new, intensive model of development of the capitalist mode of production.

This is achieved through the transformation of the social, and especially the bureaucratic organization of labour in the production process rather than by changes in technology (Rueschmeyer, 1986; Sennett 2008, 28, Braverman 1974). "The way in which the enterprises were organized internally played the most important role" (Sennett 2008, 28). Therefore, it is no coincidence that the monopolistic organization of the economy (at the macro-level) is accompanied by forms of labour

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

organization (at the micro-level), such as Taylorism, Fordism, "human relations", the Gantt system, Halsey, Rowan etc. which places emphasis on the social–organizational aspect of labour (Parker 2000; Pleios 1993, 54). In fact, the intensive model is the one that brings out this aspect of organization of labour as vital in the production process. On the contrary, the social organization of labour within the extensive model, does not constitute a problem that needs special attention. Within the extensive model the social organization of labour is a mere extension of technique – machines organize work and not vice versa.

Labour under monopoly capitalism is eventually organized into patterns that can very generally be described as "military". "The profits that markets put in jeopardy, bureaucracy sought to repair" (Sennett 2008, 28). This is especially true for models like Taylorism and Fordism. Sennett mentions that the application of a military pattern of organization to the industry, and further to the rest of society, was the form of labour organization that inspired Weber and that he kept in mind in all his work. In Sennett's words: "We owe the analysis of militarization of society […] to Max Weber" (Sennett 2008, 28), who saw and analyzed it in his own country. Germany is regarded as the birthplace or, according to Lash and Urry, the "ideal type" (Lash and Urry 1987, 17–28) of such an industrial and social organization of capitalism. However, on the one hand, these patterns of (militarily) organized capitalism and society are characterized by a vertical and strict hierarchical organization requiring discipline, and on the other hand their effectiveness is based on the voluntary involvement of individuals.

These patterns are based on the assignment of certain tasks, which must be carried out with active participation (Sennett 2008, 30–39). They require acceptance by the workforce and its voluntary conformation to them. In such an organization of labour, the economic violence upon which liberal capitalism is based, is an insufficient incentive for the workforce to be efficient. On the contrary, if the process of production shall be effective, then the relationship between labour and capital has to be built and it was built on a consensus basis (Burawoy 1979, xii). In order to be effective in the new environment, the workforce needed to find a purpose, to adopt the purposes of the productive process as if they were its own and to seek their application and fulfillment. We could note that although Marx studied liberal capitalism, Weber looked into organized capitalism. However, they both equated capitalism in general with the form of capitalism they studied.

Therefore, to achieve the necessary level of control and voluntary participation of the workforce as an essential element of the intensive model, economic violence (hunger) and the exploitation of labour through absolute surplus value that have a divisive function do not suffice. It is necessary to integrate elements apart from the economy such as political and cultural ones to the economic culture and the production process. Such purposes could be initially established and set a political vision (such as democracy, nation, or later socialism etc) (Pleios1996).

It is a fact that in the initial period of monopoly capitalism (when also the collective form of property conceals its private character), the intensive model was developed primarily as a reorganization between different forms of capital and businesses or, to be more accurate, between the state and monopolies. By the end of the First World War, this was indeed the case. Burawoy is right (Burawoy 1979, xi) on this point, but only regarding the initial period of organized capitalism, particularly in countries with less liberalism and a greater presence of a romantic spirit, in which the militarization of labour and of the whole of society was for different reasons easier to achieve, as e.g. in Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, Greece etc. However, in countries influenced more by the liberal tradition, where personal gain is the existence and purpose of the state (Hobsbawm 2008, 51-52), or in countries where the intensive model exists, this development is not sustainable or feasible in the long term.

The problem of integrating extra-economic mechanisms into the production process, which ensure the voluntary participation and discipline of workers in the military organization of labour and make possible the production of relative surplus value (Jessop 2002, 56, 58), was solved by enlarged consumption (Pleios 2001, 207–209). Adorno and Horkeheimer note that "significantly, the system of the culture industry comes from the more liberal industrial countries, and all its characteristic media, such as movies, radio, jazz, and magazines, flourish there" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2001, 79).

Enlarged consumption certainly served to offset the additional forces of labour spent in intensive production. But mostly enlarged (mass) consumption was enforcing productivity, not the other way round, as some scholars suggest (Jessop 2002, 7; Matsuyama 2002). There is no rational explanation why capitalists should increase salaries of their workers given their high productivity if at the same time the higher levels of workers' consumption couldn't increase their productivity. Productivi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ty does not result only from “economies of scale” (Jessop 2002, 56). Increased productivity was a necessary condition for enlarged consumption only if enlarged consumption was a necessary condition for increased productivity. But from the capitalists’ point of view, profits and not workers’ way of life were (and still are) the purpose. Thus from the capitalists' point of view, enlarged consumption is justified only as a productive factor.

However, enlarged consumption could be a precondition of the intensive model to the degree to which: a) extra (beyond a minimum existence) money is not saved in order to protect the business system from being accessed by new competitors, but it is spent on consumption and b) when money is spent on commodities that can develop within the labour force the notions of voluntary participation and discipline. And this was (is) possible to the extent that the workforce is no longer a mass of workers excluded from privileges, but is upgraded and according to Arendt integrated in society or to some extent subjected to the same rights that the elite enjoy (Arendt 1991).

In other words, the problem was solved by the consumption of commodities – namely commodities that have a symbolic value (Baudrillard 1990; Arendt 1959, 72–83, 108-110) beyond their use value (which aims at the simple reproduction of labour power) as well as symbolic commodities (e.g. communication products). The form that this consumption took was individual.

The enlarged consumption of commodities – symbols and symbolic commodities – allowed the workforce to become subjects. Rosalind Williams in her work pointed out the connection between mass consumption and upper classes’ life style (Williams 1991, 13). Thus the consumption of such commodities became means for the elaboration of common goals and meaning among the elites and the workforce. Or, as Marglin and Bhaduri have expressed it in macroeconomic terms: “If demand is high enough, the level of capacity utilization will in turn be high enough to provide for the needs of both workers and capitalists” (Marglin and Bhaduri 1990, 153). This way the workforce could share its interests with those of the elites. Thus, the main, not necessarily the more obvious, goal of the enlarged consumption was that the labour force accepted and served the historically shaped division of labour, not the diachronic division of the extra-economic power, as Baudrillard suggests (Baudrillard 2003).

In fact, the usefulness of enlarged consumption was not to form an effective workforce in terms of functionality of an unproblematic natural force, as assumed by human capital theory (Schultz 1961) or other analyses (Lash and Urry 1987, 67–8). It was, rather, to form an effective workforce with intentions and consciousness, in symbolic terms, which manifest themselves in terms of incentives, motivation, goals, etc. Such an operation is ensured at the point when consumption occurs within the context of consumerism as an ideology (Bocock 1997). In this perspective, consumerism is not so much the personal pursuit of the use value of commodities, but of their symbolic value, which represent socially acceptable virtues and ways of life (Pleios 2001, chapter 3). In this sense, symbolic value differs from commodity fetishism because of its key productive function and usefulness.

On the political level, the problem was resolved with the implementation of Keynesian policies, or in other words by supplementing the system of mass production with arrangements that ensured mass consumption (Aglieta 1987; Lipietz 1990). Keynesianism is not only the origin of the explosion of the production of commodities – symbols, but also of the symbolic commodities of mass culture. However, this is not the main cause, but the result of the shift to intensive production, the production of surplus value, and the extended model of development. The economic cost of wide consumption is not an expense as it may seem, but an investment (the rate of labour force), without which intensive production and high business profit are impossible.

Thus, the result and precondition of intensive production is the consumption of commodities - symbols (and symbolic commodities) and vice versa. Enlarged (mass) consumption enforces productivity, not the opposite as Matsuyama suggests (Matsuyama 2002). Mass consumption aims to produce some “properties” of the labour force, and thus some factors that are necessary for mass production. In this sense enlarged consumption becomes a force of production. Its role is not limited to the sphere of circulation of symbolic commodities (directly) or/and commodity–symbols (indirectly). Besides, in many countries, the objects for enlarged consumption are being offered in natural, non-commodity form, including for example television, education or other media and cultural products (Allen 1992; Mosco 2009, 134).

This change is not only the cornerstone for the development of mass communication in general, but of visual communication as well. These visual media offer in a concrete manner the symbolic value of commodities and the notion of lifestyle that surrounds them. They offer the image of commodities as an essential precondition for the circulation of the commodity itself and also of the la-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

bourforce as a commodity. In other words, the circulation of the commodity's image becomes crucial for the circulation of the commodity itself (Adorno and Horkheimr 2001; Pleios 1993, chapter 2; 2001, chapter 3), not the opposite (Debord 1986). This shows the crucial role of culture in the capitalist mode of production and vice versa. But the enriched and costly circulation (and consumption) is possible to the extent that they can stimulate a higher productivity, which covers the cost of circulation (and consumption) and leads further to the rise of surplus value and economic growth. Thus the real scope and outcome of the enlarged consumption and circulation is the rise of surplus value (Pleios 2001, chapter 3; 1996) and not its sharing.

However, in this way, mass communication is dynamically evolving as a mechanism that encourages and implements mass cultural consumption and provides the conditions for the production of (relative) surplus value and intensive production. In this sense, mass culture and moreover commercialized communication cease to belong to the realm of the superstructure. It becomes a "basic superstructure" in the same way that it constitutes a "superstructure base". Or, in other words "things become media and media becomes things" (Lash and Lury 2007, 4).

From this viewpoint, capitalism is changing significantly and is becoming a "symbolic capitalism". It is becoming a capitalism that produces and consumes commodities - symbols (and the actual labourforce is no longer a mere commodity and becomes a broader symbolic - cultural identity). Hence, in symbolic capitalism the symbolic-informational processes are embodied organically both in production (and the production of surplus value) and in the consumption of commodities as integral elements of the economic process (Webster 1995; Castells 1996, chapter 4; Fuchs 2010b). In this way, communication is integrated again into labour but now with an instrumental logic and labour is integrated organically into communication, and into the process of the production of cultural products (cultural industries). But this integration is achieved in a way that connects these procedures organically as contributors to the system function as a whole. On the macro-level, the combination of "economic and extra-economic institutions and practices" becomes a key structural feature of symbolic capitalism (Jessop and Sum 2006, 1).

From this perspective, what Cultural Political Economy stresses (Jessop 1990), is rather a historical product of capitalism's evolution. In this process, symbolic capitalism appears in many national, cultural and other forms because communication and culture are not yet an epiphenomenon or simply a superstructure. On the contrary, they become a structural element of relations of production and of the mode of production. However, these different forms of symbolic capitalism do not constitute national or cultural exceptions compared to an "ideal" symbolic capitalism. They are rather specific forms of a more generalized phenomenon – symbolic capitalism. The relation between symbolic capitalism in general and the specific national or other symbolic capitalisms (e.g. Western European or American or Mediterranean capitalism) is the relation between the general and the specific. This problem is of great importance in theorizing symbolic capitalism, but its analysis lies far beyond the purposes of the present paper. Symbolic capitalism appears at the interception of two changes. First, the shift to or the establishment of relative surplus value within the relations of production (the intensive model of capitalist production) and second the introduction of enlarged consumption regulations that sustain the intensive model.

Furthermore, the diversity of symbolic capitalism depends mostly on three factors. Firstly, it depends on the type of welfare state that follows a specific form of enlarged consumption. Esping Andersen's study of welfare regimes concludes that there have been three (later four) types of welfare state: Liberal (e.g. USA), Corporatist- Statist (e.g. Germany), Social Democratic (e.g. Scandinavian countries) and Mediterranean (e.g. Greece) (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999).

Following this typology, we could say that there have been four types of enlarged consumption.

a) A type of enlarged consumption based on limited state intervention on the one hand and individual distribution on the other. In that case, the means for enlarged consumption, a minimum social wage, are given mostly in the form of money to the working individual in order to buy education and healthcare services, mass media products etc (e.g. USA).

b) A type of enlarged consumption, based also on market relations on the one hand but on collective distribution on the other - families, professional groups etc (e.g. Germany). Within that model, local, religious, or other organizations provide non-commodity services (e.g. childcare services) to disadvantaged social groups.

c) A type of welfare state that is based upon state intervention and individualism. The means for enlarged consumption are given to the working individual not only in commodity form (wage), but also in non-commodity or natural form - direct access to education and health services, mass media products etc (e.g. Scandinavian countries).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

d) A type of welfare state that is based also upon state intervention, but where the means for enlarged consumption, in commodity as well as in non-commodity form, are addressed to the family and professional or social groups etc (e.g. Greece).

Secondly, the variety of symbolic capitalism depends on the extent and form of traditional culture that prevails in society. More precisely, it depends on the functions of traditions in modern societies. Thompson (1995) supports the idea that traditions carry the potential for the following functions: interpretation, legitimation, normativity, and identity. According to Thompson, in modern societies only two of them, namely interpretation and identity functions, are still active. n my opinion, this is so in typical Western democracies. On the contrary, in authoritarian regimes tradition often had also less or more normative and legitimatory functions supported by state power.

This was the case in Greece for a long period of time. In this case, enlarged consumption is encapsulated in traditional, cultural nationalist or even religious practices and discourses (Tsoukalas 1983). In my opinion, the wider the presence of traditions (especially its normative and legitimatory functions) in the cultural system, the more extra-econonomic (e.g. political) scopes are being served by enlarged consumption. That may also mean a non-effective or non-rational interrelation between the intensive model on the one hand and the enlarged consumption on the other (Charalambis 1983). This results in a higher autonomy of enlarged consumption from the intensive model.

Thirdly, the variety of symbolic capitalism depends also on political culture and the political system in a given society. However, as I mentioned earlier, this needs more systematic elaboration.

4. The Two Eras of Symbolic Capitalism

Although we generally have not left behind us the era that initiated the crisis of 1870 and particularly the end of WWI, the period of symbolic capitalism does not have a homogeneous character. We can distinguish two distinct sub-periods. The first period is strongly connected to mass production, mass consumption and Fordism, and very generally it is the first/initial period of symbolic capitalism, which is organically linked to heavy industrial machinery on the hand and the hierarchical, one-dimensional old media on the other. The second period was initiated by the economic and cultural crisis of the 1960s-70s and the new phase of globalization that has been characterized by diversified production and consumption and is inextricably linked to information technologies and "new media" (Davis 1988, Castells 1991; Mosco 2009, 15).

4.1. The Initial, Symbolic (or Organized) Capitalism

The first era of symbolic capitalism, the one that from another perspective is the socio-economic core of a mature (vs. early) modernity, is actually a transition period between industrial capitalism of early modernity and post-industrial capitalism of late modernity. As mentioned earlier, this first era was shaped by mass production and mass consumption. More precisely, it was shaped by Fordism as a form of work organization, and led to mass (intensive) production and enlarged consumption (monopoly regulation of labour relations) (Lipietz, 1990).

The model of mass production was not invented during by Fordism, but had already existed before, in early industrial capitalism (Chandler 1994, 1–14). In the words of Daniel Bell: "Almost all the major industries we still have – steel, electric power, telegraph, telephone, automobiles, aviation – were 19th century industries" (Bell 1999, 20). What Fordism did was that it directed the intensive pattern and extended it into any possible direction. The really new element was not mass production, but enlarged consumption (Baudrillard 1990, 112), characterized by commodities that were mass-produced. This development took place, as pointed out by representatives of the Frankfurt School, by transferring the model of massive industrial production to symbolic commodities (cultural industries) (Horkheimer and Adorno 1986). But, as we shall see below, the enlarged consumption of commodities - symbols or even more symbolic commodities – was the main factor of depletion of mature and any previous capitalism.

Enlarged consumption was a process of appropriation of all these symbolic values that were unthinkable without the mechanisms of promotion (e.g. advertising) and mass culture (Wernick 1991, Ewen 2001, Lash and Lury 2007). Through such mechanisms, the creation of an illusory social mobility within the labourforce and an identification with the upper classes were enabled. In other words, the enlarged consumption became the basis of what Sennet described as "social capital-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ism" (Sennett 2008, 35-44). This fact resulted in achieving social cohesion, social peace, political stability (Breed 1958), as well as the planned systemic organization of society at the national level, which strengthened the nation state as a whole organization of society, and nationalism as ideology.

Consequently, the new development was really the industrial mass production of socially organized communication (Horkheimer and Adorno 1986). This was a key factor in intensive production. I don't think that Burawoy (1979) is right when he separates the consensus at the work place from the consensus achieved through media and enlarged consumption. In my opinion they are interconnected. The cultural industry includes the industrial mass production of many and different commodities or symbolic products, products that are organized by various symbolic systems. However, for reasons that I cannot elaborate here in details, for the most important reason for the emergence and reproduction of consumerism was the moving image (Pleios 2001, chapter 4).

It should not be regarded as a coincidence that the period of the emergence of organized capitalism was not only the period of the flourishing of enlarged consumption and display devices, but also the period of the emergence and dominance of cinema and later of television in social communication. The moving image can be defined as a changing set of visual images (according to Arnheim the image represents an object to a higher degree of abstraction) (Arnheim 1969, 135–152) resulting in a specific performance of an abstract representation of symbolic importance.

In other words, this created at the level of communication and especially of text, what was for the simple worker organized capitalism at the level of production and especially at the level of enlarged consumption, i.e. it offered its prototype and meaning (Debord 1986; Ewen 1999; Pleios 2001, chapter 3). In this sense not only television but also any iconistic medium can be a source of lifestyle patterns in consumer capitalism.Therefore, both cultural consumption in general and even more the consumption of moving images and enlarged consumption were interdependent with Fordist mass production (Benjamin 1968). If intensive production was the hallmark of organized capitalism, then the hallmark in public communication was the dominance of the moving image. Consumption commodities – symbols – constituted the core in the fields of society and culture.

I should note here that the moving image does not relate to the specific forms of audiovisual media such as cinema or TV, but is an attribute of many representational systems and particularly audiovisual ones. In fact, cinema, television, video and digital modern media (such as computers or the internet), are different and successive forms of the moving image that are in line with different forms of symbolic capitalism (Pleios 1993). Therefore, from a sociological and cultural point of view. they should not be compared only among themselves but mainly in relation to their respective socio-economic and cultural conditions in which they occur and which they serve and are served by them. In this sense, the enlarged consumption (of commodities - symbols) and cultural industries, are indissolubly linked to the intensive, organized capitalism or in other words to the first period of symbolic capitalism. The enlarged consumption and cultural industries allow for intensive production and its dynamics, as well as profitability and financial development of countries and businesses.

If one looks at this the other way round, the cost of enlarged consumption and cultural industry (especially that of heavy cultural industry such as the visual one) is covered by the high productivity model (Matsuyama 2002). This relationship is certainly possible under the condition that it occurs in a strictly national systemic organization. Looking into the matter from the Marxist perspective, we come to the conclusion that the "forms of communication" are no longer part of the superstructure, but a condition that ensures the process of production and the production of surplus value. They constitute a factor of production. In other words, although capitalism is identical with the removal of any extra-economic relations regarding the shaping of economic inequalities (Wood 1997), in its evolution, the extra-economic relations are organically embedded in economic ones, especially in relations of production and the production of surplus value.

But the question that is most interesting from the perspective of future developments is the one about the boundaries of the system and the reasons which rendered it historically obsolete. From the point that this issue is approached, there are three conditions that make the system of intensive organized capitalism viable: a) mass consumption, which ensures mass production and therefore the functioning of the enlarged consumption as an engine for intensive development, b) the amortization of the costs of enlarged consumption through the contribution of enlarged consumption to increased productivity and surplus value, and therefore, the maintenance of class stratification, c) the national and systemic organization of society based on this status.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

These three conditions were shaken, which resulted in the beginning of the degradation of organized intensive capitalism and the welfare state (Lash and Urry 1987; Lipietz 1990). Differentiated consumer demand and flexible production became a key industrial tendency in the late 60s and onward (Jameson 1984, Harvey 1989, Castells 1991; Mosco 2009, 15). The rebellions of 1968 seem to be uprisings against mass consumption and a turn to diversified, fragmented and/or individualized consumption of commodities – symbols and symbolic commodities (Perniola 1991, 30 40). Representatives of the Regulation School showed that the enlarged consumption following an increasing trend could further contribute to economic development and profitability, leading to an inverse relationship, while the reduction of class differences that was caused by a reduction in profitability led the ruling classes to react with cuts in welfare policies and the flow of capital abroad in search of cheaper inputs (Lipietz 1990; Vergopoulos 1999). Therefore, the national organization of capitalism changed due to the contemporary phase of globalization (Sassen 2009, 113-124).

Although these three factors are equally important, very often authors argue that one or two of them were catalytic in the overthrow of the system of mass production – enlarged (cultural) consumption with particular emphasis placed on globalization (Sassen 2009, Sennet, 2008). However, we must concentrate our attention to the core of the system on the micro-level. As mentioned earlier, this is the ability of consumption, through its symbolic functions, to contribute to the discipline of employees, organization and the logic of production, as well as to the increase of productivity and profitability. Therefore, the dismantling of the system should be sought in changes occurring on a symbolic-communicative level and its social and economic functions.

The enlarged consumption of commodity-symbols and of symbolic commodities can be put in a double sense, as Hall (1980) has shown for the second case, but above all it is a symbolic-communicative process, as the appropriation of symbolic value is more important in social terms. Production and the exchange and consumption of symbolic commodities in particular as an economic process cannot be explained without first understanding its symbolic-communicative dimension (Hall 1980). As a result, we must first explain the function of symbolic commodities as text in the frame of social conditions. This function was to provide an illusional individual social mobility, individual freedom from social constraints and individualization in general. Besides, especially in visual production as shown by Hall (Hall 1980), the basic mechanism of interpretation are the connotation and personal experiences and aspirations. Therefore, from this point onwards, mass consumption cannot satisfy the functions for which it was established. This fact is a straight questioning of its foundations, i.e. of mass production. On the other hand, the continuous expansion of the enlarged consumption, that is its nuclear element with the assistance of social demands, have contributed so that it cannot contribute to growth or cause a reduction in profitability and economic development (Lipietz 1990).

4.2. Deep Symbolic (or Disorganized) Capitalism

The crisis of organized, intensive (and symbolic) capitalism emerged as the imbalance between the efficiency of the production system on the one hand and the cost of enlarged consumption on the other. In other words, the enlarged consumption could contribute to an increased productivity (growth) of the economic system. While the cost of enlarged consumption remained stable, or (mainly) increased, the levels of productivity remained stable or increased.

This was expressed as a reduction in profits (“profit squeeze”) (Marglin and Bhaduri 1990), which needed to be addressed in order to ensure the existence of class rule. As shown by the analyses of the representatives of the Regulation School, this crisis was actually a crisis of "underproductivity" or the decrease of the rate of productivity in the late '60s and '70s (Lipietz 1990; Cook 1990, 79-84). While the working class enjoyed the benefits of enlarged consumption, this did not lead to the purpose, for which it was established (to increase productivity and profitability of intensive production). It became a social and cultural process detached from its economic base in the given class structure.

This crisis was initially treated in two ways that, however, did not reach the root of the problem: a) the flow of businesses abroad, where they could find cheaper labour (Elam 2000, 64-65) and/or b) the reduction of enlarged consumption (Lipietz 1990; Pond 1989). Nevertheless, the radical treatment of the problem required the activation of the "interest" of employees so that their work could contribute to a productivity and profitability increase, as it was the case with the establishment of enlarged consumption. Thus, the idea was that the logic of symbolic capitalism should be maintained but the means by which its financial results are achieved should change. In other

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

words, the production system should be reconstructed in the direction that the logic of consumption had changed (commodity-symbols and symbolic commodities) as well as social action had as a whole. Key elements of this change were the differentiation-individualization, active interaction of the public and the collapse of the one-way hierarchical action, the activation of the symbolic, the cultural capital of the public etc (Lash and Urry 1994).

The necessary changes in the production system that faced the crisis of "under-productivity" were completed by two simultaneous and interlinked transformations: firstly the technical organization of labour (Robins and Webster 1988; Toffler 1982; Webster 1995, chapter 1) and secondly the social organization of labour (Lipietz 1994, Mouriki 1994). The introduction of digital technologies of automation, basically communication and information technologies (Richta 1976, Castells 1991; Mosco 2009, 15), has enabled the diversification of production in order to meet the diverse needs of consumption (Davis 2001). That had already been created through the "game" of communication in the field of enlarged consumption, which besides was the key factor for the maintenance and expansion of this consumption (Bauman 2005, 16-33; Pleios 2001, chapter 3).

It should be underlined that beyond the sphere of production, the emergence of "new media" in the area of cultural consumption, such as the Internet, was the result not only of technological developments. It was mostly the result of the circumstance that these technological developments provided answers to the democratization demand and the individualization of the communication process. But that demand had already developed in the period of the "old media". "Old media" were long before the emergence of the «new media» the centre of theoretical, social and political criticism due to their centralized and one-dimensional nature (Baudrillard 1986, Manovich 2001).

This was perfectly logical as the logic of consumption of symbolic commodities and commodity-symbols evolved in the exact opposite direction from that of the "old media". The logic of cultural consumption had the characteristics of individual choice and the ability of participation, active personal involvement, negotiation of meaning. We should also note that the exact same logic of democratization and participation that is visible in cultural consumption (Jameson 1991), was also the case in the area of commodity–symbols' consumption (Brown 1992) and that democratization is an inherent and permanent process within enlarged consumption (McCracken 1988).

As far as the social organization of labour is concerned, the transformations made in order to attract "the interest" of workers were applied through the introduction of the so-called post-Fordist forms of work organization (Lipietz 1994, Mouriki 1994). In contrast to Fordism and its "single logic", post-Fordism does not consist of a single model of organization, but includes many different and complementary settings (Hirst and Zeitlin 1991). As Amin underlines: "The relationship between the ideal-type of dominant form of Fordism has also been questioned, with critics arguing that recognition of national diversity undermines the notion of a single, dominant Fordist logic" (Amin 1994, 11). Coriat also recognizes that the world wide spread of Fordism was the expansion of a single Fordist model – that of the American methods of mass production (Coriat 1997, 242). The multiple logic of post-Fordism makes perfect sense if one considers that the purpose is to cause the active participation of workers, characterized by different ways of thinking and living, not only on a global, but also on a national and local scale. On the macro-level it depends on "whether capital, labour, or the state has the most influence over the process of restructuring" (Lash and Baggueley 1988).

Despite their diversity, the post-Fordist settings are based on a new type of labour motivation, which can be described as "production initiative" as opposed to "production discipline", which is the case in the Fordist organization of labour (Pleios, 1996). The "production discipline" required the voluntarily discipline of employees concerning the logic and purpose of production, as well as the pace in order to satisfy the common interests of workers and employers, business and national economy, economy and state. Meeting the specific individual goals, lifestyles, etc. was a case of free time and enlarged consumption, which depended upon the efficiency of the production process.

On the contrary, "production initiative" combines the participation of the employees with a real interest in achieving personal goals, as if the success of the company, the overall process within the business, was a personal matter of the employee. "Production initiative" is characterized by "loyalty to the company" and a "more committed workforce" (Hickox and Moore 1992, 109). In this case, not only material economic objectives, but also the exercise o control and authority, the projection of particular views and taste, in a nutshell the complete manifestation of the personality of the individual, lies therein. Therefore, particular features of post-Fordism are to create a horizontal hierarchy, to transfer administrative responsibilities to the workforce, and also personal involve-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ment, horizontal cooperation, participation, the effective use of educational, symbolic and cultural capital, the identification of the worker not only as producer, but also as a citizen and consumer (Lipietz 1997; Mouriki 1994; Sennett 2008).

The introduction of horizontal hierarchy, combined with other elements as well as the responsibility involved that is required due to the use of new technologies, lead to the false assumption of an elimination of class and other social differences in the production process. Thus, functions applied by enlarged consumption are now undertaken by the production process through a set of settings that are regarded as post-Fordist. This is the first, and in a macro-perspective, perhaps the less obvious side of the change. The other one and more obvious change is constituted by the strengthening of the power and functions of the central units of a (worldwide) production system. Sennet remarks that “One of the consequences of the information revolution has thus been to replace modulation and interpretation of commands by a new kind of centralization” (Sennett 2008, 39). Sassen also points out that the functions of the central units of such a (global) system, especially in the area of finances and the new economy, are being strengthened (Sassen 2009, 99–100). Hence, these two sides of the new organization of labour taken together lead not to a military, but to a ”gang” or “guerilla” like structure, as one can see for example in the advertising industry (Arvidsson 2007). It is similar to the military structure of organized capitalism but without any civic, political, ideological or other commitment, value system or restrictions, beyond effectivity and success. Sennett describes this new form of social organization of labour as “MP3 organization”, and it differs from the pyramidal, hierarchical form of organized symbolic capitalism (Sennett 2008, 65–88). This form of labour can respond to the new technological organization (digital automation technologies) and to the needs of diverse, flexible and changing production and vice versa (Amin 1994, 14-15; Davis 2001).

Thus, a major difference of developed (deep) symbolic capitalism in comparison to both liberal and initial symbolic (or organized) capitalism is the simultaneous change in both the technological and social organization of labour. Unlike in the liberal capitalism of the 19th century when the technological organization of labour plays a key role, and the initial symbolic capitalism where the social organization of labour takes a decisive role in the deep symbolic (or disorganized) capitalism, both technology and social (re-)organization of labour now have the same importance. Technological change comes hand in hand with a new form of social organization of labour and vice versa based on the “production initiative”. It is impossible to separate in technologies (of production) the technical aspects from communication aspects –social aspect and vice versa. It is a combination of technicality and communication forms. Thus, a key aspect of the work organization of labour, the organization of power relations in the production process, comes to overcome the inequality that results from property relations. That was covered symbolically by enlarged consumption, ensuring the discipline and active participation of the workforce, the objectives and rationale of intensive production.

The points that can be analyzed are numerous. Among them, two are of particular importance in our analysis. First of all, the changes made in the area of labour and the production process, at least concerning the structure and their rationale, from a temporal, spatial and social point of view derive from the field of enlarged consumption both of commodity-symbols and symbolic commodities, which were developed thanks to a variety of communication '”games”. In other words, it is rather post-Fordism that comes from postmodernism than the opposite, or at least in Gartman’s view, postmodernism “dialectically influenced this economic change” (Gartman 1998, 119). Thus, it seems that changes in the mode of production are imported and incorporated into production to a great extent from the area of enlarged consumption. From a Marxist perspective, in the "new capitalism" not only the role of communication (and of the “superstructure” as a whole) stays intact, but it also becomes more vital as a factor of production, though in a new social form/structure. The change in communication forms serves as a guide and supplement for changes in production relations and the mode of production. Therefore, not only does it not get diminished, but it also becomes even more organic as far as the character of the new capitalism as symbolic capitalism is concerned.

Moreover, the fact that patterns of change in production come more or less from the area of (enlarged) consumption and socially organized mediated communication, implies that a part of the enlarged consumption has become superfluous. Its functions are undertaken by the changes in production and particularly in social organization of labour or, at least become more “rational” from an economic point of view (including the privatization and individualization of consumption) (Hamnet 1989). This does not only reduce the costs of consumption and therefore increases profitability

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

in production, but also achieves a more solid consensus, an objective identification between workers and employers, and effective stability. This is valid especially at the micro-level, without needing to have long-term arrangements on the level of public policies that the welfare state required (monopolistic regulation of labour) (Jessop 1994, Loader and Burrows 1994). Secondly, the (digital) technology used in the automation of production is structurally and functionally similar to that used in consumption (Sennett 2008; Barrett and Davidson 2008; Fuchs 2010b). This stands in contrast to what was happening in symbolic capitalism, where production technology differs significantly from the technology of enlarged consumer activity of symbolic products or commodity-symbols (Burawoy 1979). This has many side effects.

First and foremost, the ability to use technology and the culture of new technology acquired in the area of cultural consumption is a qualification needed to operate in the area of work (labour or education) and vice versa (Green, Reid and Bigum 1998, 22; Gualerzi 2010, 147). Secondly, among others, it has resulted in the relative decline of significance of formal qualifications compared to the merits (or the qualifications acquired at the workplace) of the labour market and the emergence of a new egalitarianism that eliminates the differences between different hierarchical levels of knowledge and qualifications. As Thursfield points out: "technological innovations may, for example, deskill task but not the worker, although worker's skills may be devalued as a result of this process. In addition, although a worker may not possess formal qualifications, he or she may be high skilled in the task requirements of their particular occupation" (Thursfield 2003, 47). What formal education provides to the workforce in order to be effective in the post-Fordist work organization, is a working ethos and citizenship rather than a set of work skills and knowledge (Hickox and Moore 1992, 108–110). This means that the overall skills that are necessary at the workplace are a matter of socialization in a broad sense (Pleios, 2004).This is shown particularly in the "new media" and cultural consumption and public communication, especially on the Internet. As Poulet has shown regarding the interaction between press and the Internet, in the latter knowledge is equated with the opinion of amateurs on various issues and in general there is a widening egalitarianism, which overrides any established hierarchies of formal knowledge (Poulet 2009, 175-178). Successful is not the one who is good in one field, but the one that is becoming popular in the public. This also occurs in the production process, but through a set of complex interactions in a post-Fordist business (Sennett 2009; Terranova 2004, 20–27).

Thirdly, the use of new technologies in production, especially when coupled with strengthening functions of the central units of a system, eliminate the autonomy of individual sectors and their placement in a direct decision-making center, at the end of complex interactions (Sennet 2008; Sassen 2009). The same can be observed in the field of communication, which means that the MP3 structure becomes a more general structure of social action. Overcoming the independence of functional units, is something that characterizes texts as well, particularly in "new media". Differences of content categories tend to become assimilated to a great extent (Hill 2007). Almost all types of content fall within a new paradigm, that of "pleasant information" and not just information, as claimed by theories of the information society. "Information" is rather a quantitative-technical dimension of the content (Webster 2005). In qualitative terms, texts can coexist and can be shared because they have a common qualitative ground. They inform and at the same time they entertain. In other words, they are organized according to infotainment patterns (Thussu 2007) and this tends to eliminate the large differences between different types of content categories and the various texts (Pleios 2011, chapter 2). The differences in the content categories are more quantitative and technical rather than textual.

Fourth, these processes in the sphere of production unfold mostly on a symbolic and functional level and less on an economic and structural–divisive one, as it was the case in initial symbolic capitalism. The differences in social class and economic level as well as the differences in the "order of discourse" (Fairclough 1995, 78) on the text level are realities that are significantly curtailed. Thus, the emergence of MP3 capitalism contributes to an even greater convergence and continuous dynamic permutation of production and consumption, work and communication, economy and culture (Toffler 1982; Fuchs 2010a). The difference is that Toffler focused on the functional aspect of the phenomenon rather than on the fact that it is based on social inequality and class relations that exist in the production process. The convergence and swapping of communication and production can take many forms.

Fuchs (2010a) indicates that the free work of the Internet user for entertainment purposes is utilized for product marketing, i.e. the entertainment of the user becomes work for profit. Despite the importance of other aspects of this convergence, its main dimension is surplus value production,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

i.e. (digital) communication enhances the productivity of labour force and thus reduces the time required for reproduction, not only in the field of the realization of surplus value, i.e. trade. Besides, “new media” and especially the Internet have been created according to the model of the telephone that in turn derived from business needs and reflects their organization and relationships (Garnham 2003).

However, from this approach, the distinction between the base and the superstructure disappears even further, as well as the distinction between work and communication, which allows focusing on the functional aspect of the phenomenon. Therefore, the use of “new media”, which are at the same time means of production and means of communication, inevitably links the logic of labour to the logic of entertainment, the logic of production to the logic of consumption (Toffler 1982, Fuchs 2010a). A supporting role in this is played by the technical and institutional capacity of free and working time, leisure and work, workplace and leisure space. As a result, work is treated as a process of pursuing individual goals and personal pleasure and personal fulfillment process as a job, as an activity to produce useful causes for the subject. In my opinion this constitutes a typical distancing from the literal meaning of economic Marxism, but on the other hand it is a rapprochement of sociological and philosophical Marxism.

5. Conclusion

From the Marxist perspective, the analysis of social process acquires a practical importance to the degree to which it examines and participates in the process of social change, as it was claimed by Marx himself in the famous 11th Feuerbach thesis. Social science does not exist for its own sake (to explain the world), but for the change and progress of society. This way, this social analysis fulfills its social utility and functional existence in a society, in which there is a division of labour.

The question that arises is whether social change is a reality in deep symbolic capitalism. According to the analysis presented above, the development of relations of production within the capitalist mode of production, leads to revisions and even false democratization (at least partially) of the relations of production, power relations, and the management of the production process. Horizontal hierarchies, labour force participation, the transfer of administrative functions to the labour force etc. are signs of this change. Moreover, and most importantly, this change is organically associated with a certain form of communication, which is consistent with the so-called “information society” (Webster 1995; Castells 1996, Poster 1990). In deep symbolic capitalism, a core direction of change is towards power relations and production management and it is true that this side of deep symbolic capitalism has been neglected in the post-Fordist approach (Vallas 1999; Kennett 2003). Instead, in initial symbolic capitalism, the change was one of relations of consumption firstly and secondly of power relations. This reflects the strong relationship of initial symbolic capitalism with the past, with liberal capitalism. However, the change in the relations of production in deep symbolic capitalism appears as a continuation of changes in initial symbolic capitalism.

The social relations of power and management in the production process are perhaps the most primordial and long established relations of class and social inequality (Mann 1986), structured also (and mostly) symbolically and not only by economic means (Mouzelis 2008, 10). Perhaps that's why the changes in power relations seem to be more important in deep symbolic capitalism compared to initial symbolic capitalism. It is all about power relations and other forms of production relations are the means. It seems that the development of the capitalist mode of production and especially of its relations of production, due to their symbolization, leads to the point, where power relations become more or at least equally important compared to other forms of relations of production, despite the fact that this happens in order to hide the latter. Perhaps this circumstance fueled Baudrillard’s postmodern criticism (as well as poststructuralism’s approach), who recognized that relations of production (and consumption) serve power relations and not vice versa (Baudrillard 1990). From this perspective, we should consider postmodern social theory more as a distorted reflection of the reality of deep symbolic capitalism than as a set of diachronic truth claims.

Thus, it appears that relations of production (of deep symbolic capitalism) are associated organically with "forms of communication" of the information society. This change, as it happened earlier on with enlarged consumption, serves both the concealment of class inequality and capital accumulation/the production of more surplus value. But what is most important is that the "forms of communication" are not considered as passive anymore when compared to relations of production.

In other words, communication in deep symbolic capitalism is becoming the guide of conservation or change of the mode of production and especially of its relations of production. Certainly

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

something similar happened in the past with the democratization of consumption. However, this situation differs significantly in that this interaction is not regulated mostly at the macro- or midterm level, i.e. that of a whole national economy, but largely takes place at the micro-level of an enterprise or a local economy and, as a result, it is not necessary to keep up the regulations at the enterprise level with the regulations at the national level - in fact the national regulations are significantly cut down.

This conclusion leads us to a fundamental issue. The process of social change does no longer necessary depends mainly on the developments at the macro-level. In other words, changes in "relations of production" can be caused by appropriate changes in communication. It is not necessary to require regulations primarily at the level of a national society or transnational ones (or transnational formations). From the standpoint of classical Marxism, this has enormous significance. Firstly, social change (including change of class relations) can be achieved through the kind and forms of communication developed in deep symbolic capitalism and secondly it can be performed at the level of individual economic structures or businesses, changes that explain the historical basis of modern relativism. In other words, it is no longer essential to seize power in order for someone to be able to change the world, but as argued by John Halloway this can be done without seizing power (Holloway 2006, 340), changing the world from below, changing the world in parts. Holloway notes that today social relations can change the capitalist relations of production. The error of Holloway, in my opinion, is that he neglects the power of technology and especially the power of communication in social change.

Social change can partly be achieved in individual parts of the economic system, especially if one considers this system not as national or global, i.e. in the context of globalization. This does not mean that regulations at the macro-level are not necessary. Social change at the workplace is impossible without its socio-political equivalent and vice versa. What links these two spheres is the tendency towards grassroots democracy. If deep symbolic capitalism and information technologies go hand in hand with horizontal hierarchies at the work place, then democratization in the economic sphere is impossible without grassroots democracy in the political sphere - and vice versa. In my opinion, the use of “new media”, such as blogs, social media etc, in protests and symbolic politics is needed in order to achieve grassroots democracy, especially since “military” organized economies and hierarchical party democracies have failed. This could explain to some degree the ‘indignados” movements (all based on “new media’) in very different countries, such as Egypt, Algeria, Spain, Greece, or the USA.

Greece has a failed, state-centred, economic system (Sakellaropoulos 1992; Kazakos 2001). At the same time, it has a failed (and corrupt) centralized party democracy (Lyrintzis, Nikolakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 1996). Thus, it can be explained, at least to some extent, why during the last two years (2010–2012), the “new media” have played a crucial role in the delegitimization of the political system as well as in the emergence of new grassroots political organizations and mobilizations. These movements would be unthinkable without the “new media” and new kinds of content (Labrakou 2011). This movement in Greece has already been called “The Facebook May 1968”. But the problem of social change remains unsolved until one can achieve grassroots regulations in the political sphere as well as in the relations of production.

Grassroots democracy in politics as well as in economy cannot be achieved only by use of “new media”. In my opinion “new media’ no matter where they are used, in politics or in the production process, are today still based on the “spectacle’. Image/spectacle, though in a different manner, still play a key structural role in “new media” as well as in “old media” and enlarged consumption. However, in the process of social change, social scientists are no longer the generals, but the engineers of this change. In the age of information technologies, the functional and the revolutionary side of the social scientist converge to a new indivisible whole.

References

Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. 1987. Sociology. Essays. Athens: Kritiki (in Greek).

Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. 2001. The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. In *Media and Cultural Studies*. Keyworks, edited by Meenakshi Durham and Douglas Kellner, 71 – 101. Oxford: Blackwell.

Aglietta Michael. 1979. A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The US Experience. London: Verso.

Alexander, Jeffrey. 1987. Sociological Theory Since World War II. New York: Columbia University Press.

Allen, Robert. 1992. Audience-Oriented Criticism and Television. In *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, edited by Robert Allen, 101 – 137. London: Routledge.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Althusser, Louis. 1990. *Positions*. Athens: Themelio (in Greek).

Amin, Ash. 1994. Post-Fordism. Models, Fantasies and Models of Transition. In *Post-Fordism: aAReader*, edited by Ash Amin, 1 – 39. Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Arendt, Hannah. 1959. *The Human Condition. A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man*. Garden City, New York. Anchor Books.

Arendt, Hannah. 1991. Society and Culture. In *The Media Culture,* edited by Kostas Livieratos and Takis Fragoulis, 121 – 126. Athens: Alexandria (in Greek).

Arvidsson, Adam. 2007. Creative Class or Administrative Class*? ephemera. theory & politics in organization* 7 (1): 8-23 .

Barrett, Michael and Elizabeth Davidson. 2008. Exploring the Diversity of Service Worlds in the Service Economy. In *Information Technology in the Service Economy: Challenges and Possibilities for the 21st Century*, edited by Michael Barrett, Elizabeth Davidson, Catherine Middleton and Janice DeGross, 1 – 12. 2nd edition. New York: Springer.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1986. *Requiem for the Mass Media*. Athens: Eleftheros Typos (in Greek).

Baudrillard, Jean. 1990. *The Mirror of Production*. Athens: Alexandria (in Greek).

Baudrillard, Jean. 2003. *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*. London: Sage.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2005. *Work, Consumerism and the Poor.* Berkshire: McGraw Hill.

Bell, Daniel. 1999. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books.

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In *Illuminations*, edited by Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, 219-253. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Blackledge, David and Hunt Barry. 1995. Sociology of Education. Athens: Metechmio (in Greek).

Bocock, Robert. 1997. Consumption: Key Ideas. London: Routhledge.

Braverman, Harry. 1974. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Breed, Warren. 1958. Mass Communication and Socio-Cultural Integration. *Social Forces* 37 (2): 109-116.

Brown, Doug. 1992. Doing Social Economics in a Postmodern World. *Review of Social Economy* 50 (4): 383-403.

Burawoy, Michael. 1979. *Manufacturing Consent. Changes in the Labour Process under Monopoly Capitalism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Castells, Manuel. 1991. *The Informational City. Information Technology, Economic Restructuring and the Urban-Regional Process*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Networked Society*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Chadler, James Jr. 1994. *Scale and Scope. The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Charalambis, Dimitris. 1983. *Clientelism and Populism*. Athens: Exandas (in Greek).

Cook, Phillip. 1990. *Back to the Future. Modernity, Postmodernity and Locality*. Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman.

Coriat, Benjamin. 1997 Globalization. Variety and Mass Production. In *Contemporary Capitalism: The Embeddedness of Institutions*, edited by Roger Hollingsworth and Robert Boyer, 240–264. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

Curran, James. 1979. Capitalism and Control of the Press, 1800-1975. In *Mass Communication and Society* edited by James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott, 7-11. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Davis, Stanley. 2001. *Management: Managing the Future Now*. London: Simon and Schuster.

Debord, Guy. 1986. *The Society of Spectacle.* Athens: Eleftheros Typos (in Greek).

Demertzis, Nikos. 2002. *Political Communication. Risk, Publicity, Internet*. Athens: Papazisis (in Greek).

Elam, Mark. 2000. Puzzling out the Post-Fordist Debate: Technology, Markets and Institutions. In *Post-Fordism. A Reader*, edited by Ash Amin, 43 – 70. Oxford: Blackwell. Engels, Friedrich. 1978a. Letter to Paul Ernst. In *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Engels Friedrich*, Vol. 10, 426 – 428. Sofia: Partizdat (In Bulgarian).

Engels, Friedrich. 1978b. Letter to Conrad Schmidt. In *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Engels Friedrich*, Vol. 10, 435 - 442. Sofia: Partizdat (In Bulgarian).Ewen, Stuart. 1999. *All Consuming Images*. New York: Basic Books.

Esping-Andersen. Gøsta (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Esping-Andersen. Gøsta. (1999). *Social Foundations of Post-Industrial Economies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ewen, Stuart. 2001. *Captains of Consciousness. Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: Basic Books.

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. 1981. *Toward a Theory of Mass Media*. Athens: Epikouros (in Greek).

Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010a. Grounding Critical Communication Studies: An Inquiry into The Communication Theory of Karl Marx. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (15): 15-41.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010b. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1979. Contribution to A Political Economy Of Mass-Communication. *Media, Culture & Society* 1 (2): 123–146.

Garnham, Nicholas. 2003. *Emancipation, the Media and Modernity*. Athens: Kastaniotis (in Greek).

Gartman, David. 1998. Postmodernism; Or the Cultural Logic of Post-fordism? *The Sociological Quarterly* 39 (1): 119-137.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Gerbner, George. 1967. Mass media and Human Communication Theory. In *Human Communication theory,* edited by Frank Dance, 40-57. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Golding, Peter and Graham Murdock. 2001. Culture, Communication and Poltical Economy. In *Mass Media and Society*, edited by James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, 25-52. Athens: Patakis (in Greek).

Green, Bill, Joe-Ann Reid, and Chris Bigum. 1998. Teaching the Nintendo Generation? Children, Computer Culture and Popular Technologies. In *Wired Up: Young People and the Electronic Media*, edited by Sue Howard, 19-41. London: UCL Press.

Gualerzi, Davide. 2010. *The Coming of Age of Information Technologies and the Path of Transformational Growth. A Long-Run Perspective in the Late 2000s Recession*. New York: Routledge.

Hall, Stewart. 1980. Encoding/Decoding. In *Culture, Media, Language*, edited by Stewart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis, 507–517. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

Hamnet, Chris. 1989. Consumption and Class in Contemporary Britain. In *The Changing Social Structure*, edited by Chris Hamnet, Linda McDowell and Phillipe Sarre, 199–213. London: Sage.

Harris, Jess and Catherine McDonald. 2000. Post-Fordism, the Welfare State and the Personal Social Services: A Comparison of Australia and Britain. *The British Journal of Social Work* 30 (1): 51-70.

Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge: Blackwell.

Herman, Edward and Noam Chomsky. 2001. A Propaganda Model. In *Media and Cultural studies*. Keyworks, edited by Meenakshi Durham and Douglas Kellner, 180–217. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hickox, Mike and Moore, Robert.1992. *Education and post-Fordism: A New Correspondance?* In *Education for Economic Survival: From Fordism to Post-Fordisim*, edited by Phillip Brown and Hugh Laude, 95-116. London: Routledge.

Hill, Annette. 2007. *Restyling Factual TV*. London: Routledge.

Hirst, Paul and Jonathan Zeitlin. 1991. Flexible Specialization versus Post-Fordism: Theory, Evidence and Policy Implications. *Economy and Society* 20 (1): 1-156.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1978. The Forward March of Labour Halted? *Marxism Today*, September: 279–286.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 2008. *The Age of Revolutions. 1789–1848.* Athens: Cultural Institute of National Bank (in Greek)

Holloway, John. 2006. *Change the World without Taking Power. The Meaning of Revolution Today*. Athens: Savalas (in Greek).

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno. 1986. *The Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Athens: Ypsilon/books (in Greek).

Horkheimer, Max. 1976. Traditional and Critical Theory. In *Critical Sociology: Selected Readings*, edited by Paul Connerton. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Jameson, Fredric. 1984. Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. *New Left Review* 146: 59–92.

Jessop, Bob. 1990. *State Theory. Putting Capitalist Economies in their Place*. Cambridge: Polity.

Jessop, Bob and Ngai-Ling Sum. 2006. *Beyond the Regulation Approach. Putting Capitalist Economies in their Place*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. J

Jessop, Bob. 1994. The Transition to Post-Fordism and the Schumpeterian Workfare State. In *Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State*?, edited by Brian Loader and Roger Burrows,13–17. London: Routledge.

Jessop, Bob. 2002. *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kazakos, Panos. 2001. *Between State and the Market. Economic Policy after War in Greece 1944–2000*. Athens: Patakis (1n Greek).

Kennett, Patricia. 2003. Exclusion, Post-Fordism and the "New Europe". In *A New Europe? Economic Restructuring and Social Exclusio*n, edited by Phillip Brown and Rosemary Crompton, 14–32. London: Routldege.

Lash, Scott and Paul Bagguley. 1988. Labour Relations in Disorganized Capitalism: A Five-Nation Comparison. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6 (3): 321-338.

Lambrakou, Zoi. 2011. New Social Movements in the Age of the Internet. The Case of Collective Action with the Use of New Media in Greece 2007-2011. Unpublished MA thesis. Athens: Department of Communication and Media Studies (in Greek).

Lash, Scott and Celia Lury. 2007. *Global Culture Industry. The Mediation of Things*. Malden MA: Polity.

Lash, Scott and John Urry. 1987. *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Lash, Scott and John Urry. 1994. *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: Sage.

Lipietz, Alain. 1990. Mirages and Miracles. Athens: Exandas (in Greek).

Lipietz, Alain. 1994, Post-Fordism and Democracy. In *Post-Fordism: a Reader*, edited by Ash Amin, 251-279. Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Lipietz, Alain. 1997. The Post-Fordist World: Labour Relations, International Hierarchy and Global Ecology. *Review of International Political Economy* 4 (1): 1 – 41.

Loader, Brian and Roger Burrows. 1994. Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State? The Restructuring of Britain, Social Policy and the Future of Welfare. In *Towards a Post-Fordist welfare state*?, edited by Brian Loader and Roger Burrows, 1 – 13.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

London: Routledge.Lyrintzis, Christos, Ilias Nikolakopoulos, and Dimitiris Sotiropoulos, 1996. Introduction. In Society *and Politics: Aspects of the Third Greek Republic 1974-199*4, edited by Christos Lyrintzis, Ilias Nikolakopouloa and Dimitiris Sotiropoulos, 19-42. Athens: Greek Society of Political Science and Themelio Publishing (in Greek).

Mann, Michael. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760. Vol. I.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Manovich, Lev. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Marion.Marglin, Stephen and Amit Bhaduri. 1990. Profit Squeeze and Keynesian Theory. In *The Golden Age of Capitalism. Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, edited by Stephen Marglin and Huliet Schor, 153–186. Oxford: Chalderon Press

Marx, Karl and Engels Friedrich. 1975. *For the Art*. Athens: Exandas (in Greek).

Marx, Karl and Engels Friedrich. 1978. *The German Ideology, Vol. 1*. Athens: Gutenberg (in Greek).

Marx, Karl and Engels Friedrich. 2001. The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas. In *Media and Cultural studies*. Keyworks, edited by Meenakshi Durham and Douglas Kellner, 39–42. Oxford: Blackwell.

Marx, Karl. 1978a. Towards a Critique of the Political Economy. In *Collected Works* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Vol. 7, 113–291. Sofia: Partizdat (In Bulgarian).

Marx, Karl. 1978b. Letter to Franz Mering. In *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Engels Friedrich*, Vol. 10, 477 - 472. Sofia: Partizdat (In Bulgarian).

Marx, Karl. 1979. *Capital.* Sofia: Partizdat (in Bulgarian).

Marx, Karl. 1983. *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*. Athens: Kalvos (In Greek).

Matsuyama, Kiminori. 2002. The Rise of Mass Consumption Societies. *Journal of Political Economy* 110 (5): 1035-1070.

McCracken, Grant. 1988. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of the Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage. 2nd ed.

Mouriki, Aliki. 1994. Politics of Reform and New Forms of Organization of the Labour. *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 54 (in Greek).

Mouzelis, Nicos. 2008. *Modern, Postmodern Social Theorizing. Bridging the Divide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parker, Martin. 2000. The Sociology of Organizations and the Organization of Sociology: Some Reflections on the Making of a Division of Labour. *The Sociological Review* 48 (1): 124–146.

Perniola, Mario. 1991. *The Society of Simulacra*. Athens: Alexandria (in Greek).

Plamenatz Petrov, John. 1963. *Man and Society*. London: Longman.

Pleios George. 2004. Labour and Meaning in Late Modernity: The Significance of Education and the Culture of Image. *Review of Social Research*, B2004(114): 61-87 (in Greek).

Pleios, George. 1993. Moving Image and Artistic Communication. Athens: Delphini (in Greek).

Pleios, George. 1996. The Crisis of Education in Mature Capitalism. *The Tribune of Social Sciences* 19: 143–185 (in Greek).

Pleios, George. 2001. *The Discourse of Image. Ideology and Politics*. Athens: Papazisis (in Greek).

Pleios, George. 2011. *The Society of Pleasant Information. Modernity and the News*. Athens: Kastaniotis (in Greek).

Polanyi, Karl. 2001. The Great Transformation. Boston: Beacon Press.

Pond, Chris. 1989. The Changing Distribution of Income, Wealth and Poverty. In *The Changing Social Structure*, edited by Chris Hamnet, Linda McDowell and Phillipe Sarre, 43–77. London: Sage.

Poster, Mark. 1990. *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Poulet, Bernard. 2009. *The End of Newspapers and the Future of Information*. Athens: Polis (in Greek).

Richta, Radovan. 1976. *Civilization at Crossroads*. Athens: Rappas (in Greek).

Robins, Kevin and Frank Webster. 1988. Cybernetic Capitalism: Information, Technology, Everyday Life. In *The Political Economy of Information*, edited by Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko, 44–75. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. *1986. Power and the Division of Labor. Polity Press.*

Russell, James. 2006. *Double Standard*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Sakellaropoulos, Theodoros. 1992. *State and Social Interests during the '80s.* Athens: Kritiki (in Greek)

Sassen, Saskia. 2009. *A Sociology of Globalization*. Athens: Metechmio (in Greek).

Schiller, Herbert. 1973. *The Mind Managers.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Schultz, Theodore. 1961. Investment in Human Capital. *The American Economic Review* 51 (1): 1- 17.

Sennett, Richard. 2008. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. Athens: Savalas (in Greek).

Terranova, Tiziana 2004. *Network Culture. Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press.

Thompson, John. 1995. *The Media and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thursfield, Denise. 2003. *Post-Fordism and Skill: Theories and Perceptions*. Burlington: Ashgate.

Thussu, Daya Kissan. 2007. *News as Entertainment. The Rise of Global Infotainment*. London: Sage.

Toffler, Alvin. 1982. *The Third Wave*. Athens: Cactos (In Greek).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Tsoukalas, Konstantinos. 1983. Tradition and Modernity. Some General Issues. In *Hellenism and Greekness*, edited by Demetrios Tsatsos, 37-48. Athens: Estia.

Vallas, Steven.1999. Rethinking Post-Fordism: The Meaning of Workplace Flexibility. *Sociological Theory* 17 (1): 68-101.

Vergopoulos. Kostas. 1999. *Globalization. The Great Mirage*. Athens: Nea Synora (in Greek).

Webster, Frank. 1995. *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.

Wernick, Andrew.1991. *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Williams, Raymond. 1978. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 2001. Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory. In *Media and Cultural Studies*. Keyworks, edited by Meenakshi Durham and Douglas Kellner, 152-165. Oxford: Blackwell.

Williams, Rosalind. 1991. *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Wood, Ellen M. 1997. Modernity, Postmodernity or Capitalism?, *Review of International Political Economy* 4 (3): 539-560.

About the Author

George Pleios:

Associate Professor and Head of the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Athens, Greece, and director of the Laboratory for Social Research in Mass Media. He is author of 5 books, 13 chapters in edited books, co-editor of 1 book and author of more than 40 articles which have been published in Greek and internationally. In his recent work "The society of pleasant information", he examines the relations between the news and modernity and especially analyses news culture in late modernity. He has been primary investigator in more than 20 research projects and has presented about 50 papers in national and international conferences. His current interests are focusing on the relations between consumer capitalism, ideology and visual culture.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 253-273, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Network's Blindspot: Exclusion, Exploitation and Marx's Process-Relational Ontology.

Robert Prey

Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, robp@sfu.ca

Abstract: The 'network metaphor' impoverishes our understanding of power. Its binary logic of inclusion/exclusion leaves it blind to relations of exploitation. However, instead of ideological critique – the standard Marxist approach - this paper reconstructs Marx's theory of exploitation from a common "process-relational ontology" that is shared by both network theorists and Marx. From this shared ontology it becomes possible to demonstrate how Marx's materialization of *process* through 'production' and his understanding of *relations* as 'internal' and 'contradictory' lead him not into an inclusion/exclusion cul-de-sac but rather to a critique of exploitation *writ large*. This paper concludes by briefly demonstrating how the theory of exploitation that emerges from Marx's process-relational ontology is ideally suited to understanding and critiquing the *intensification* and *extensification* of exploitation under informational capitalism.

Keywords: Networks, Marx, Castells, Hardt, Negri, Process-Relational Ontology, Exploitation, Exclusion, Internal Relations, Production, Contradiction, Informational Capitalism.

1. Introduction

From the terrorist networks that brought down the twin towers to the financial networks that brought about the credit crunch, today, as Hardt and Negri put it, "we see networks everywhere we look" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 142). As the key isomorphism and central metaphor of our times, the idea of the network has become the new "organizing framework" (Cavanagh 2007, 24) for how we understand social interaction in contemporary society.

This of course raises some important questions for social critique. The metaphors, narratives, and frames we draw on for meaning perform into being both forms of power and our ability to imagine critiques of power. Thus, this paper begins by asking what should be an obvious question: how does the network metaphor shape our understanding of power?

In what follows, I argue that the network metaphor provokes a one-dimensional understanding of power, one that fixates on an inclusion/exclusion binary and is largely blind to relations of exploitation. The reasons for the homology between network thinking and the critique of exclusion will be discussed, as will the inadequacy of thinking about power solely in such terms.

Given the theme of this special issue, I then turn to an examination of how Marx can provide us with a better-rounded critique of power in a world that – while increasingly connected - remains resolutely wedded to the exploitation of surplus value. However, instead of carpet bombing the network metaphor from the heights of ideological critique, this paper takes a reconstructive approach by first acknowledging a common ontological basis – what I call a "process-relational ontology" – that is shared by both network theorists and Marx. By starting from this common position it becomes possible to reconstruct the distinctive path Marx takes by materializing 'process' and internalizing 'relations'. These critical differences, I argue, explain the importance of exploitation in Marx's work and its neglect in the work of most network theorists. Our final destination is the argument that the theory of exploitation that emerges from Marx's process-relational ontology is no relic of a hierarchical world of industrial capitalism but rather a theory of social relations that is uniquely suited to critiquing power within contemporary "informational capitalism" (Castells 2000a, Fuchs 2010).

Before network thinkers and Marx can be brought together in conversation however, let us first turn our attention the network metaphor; its ubiquity and the mode of critique it engenders.

1.1. The Network Metaphor

The incessant use of the terms 'network' or 'networking' in the media may give the impression that these are simply superficial fad terms. However, in some academic circles the study of 'networks' is regarded as the new super-science (Barabasi 2003; Watts 2004) and "a leading contender for the basis of a long hoped for 'theory of everything'" (Cavanagh 2007, 25). For Manuel Castells, one of the leading theorists of 'the network society', "network theory could provide a common language, a common approach toward the understanding of nature and society through the fundamental shared

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

networks of biological networks, neural networks, digital networks, and human communication networks" (Castells 2011b, 795).[1] Regardless of how we judge the soundness of such statements it is certainly true, as Duncan Watts points out, that "a mutual investment in networks as a research agenda has united researchers in the physical and social sciences, and has brought together mathematicians and sociologists, psychologists and biologists in the search for understanding" (Cavanagh 2007, 25).[2]

For media and communication theorists, the network form is widely understood to be one of the key characteristics of 'new media' (Gane and Beer 2008). Indeed 'networks' are one of the information revolution's 'hurray' words as Allison Cavanagh (2007, 9) puts it. The Internet in particular is taken as the "gold standard" (Cavanagh 2007, 48) of what a network is, emerging in recent years as "the world's hardest-working metaphor" (Cavanagh 2007, 23).

Of course it is a particularly impoverished perspective that reduces the idea of 'the network' to a recent technological form. Networks are certainly not a contemporary invention.[3] They can be recognized in all societies throughout history. However, Castells and other contemporary scholars believe that "contemporary social circumstances provide, for the first time, a unique basis for [the] pervasive expansion [of networks] throughout the whole social structure" (Hepp, Krotz, Moores, and Winter 2008, 4). This basic argument – that a unique combination of technological, political and cultural factors have coalesced so that networks have emerged from under the shadow of previously dominant hierarchical forms of organization – accounts for "the rise of the network metaphor" (Cavanagh 2007).

Yet, if we accept the idea that metaphors don't just describe but also prescribe – that metaphors actively constitute the world we attempt to understand – then we must be willing to accept that there are direct political implications for how we choose to describe our world. This is not an argument against the use of metaphors. Indeed as John Urry writes: "social scientific work depends upon metaphors and much theoretical debate consists of contestation between different metaphors" (Urry 2003, 42). However, we must think carefully about the type of metaphors we employ and their effects on shaping our perceptions of social reality.[4]

Precisely how the network metaphor shifts our understanding of social and political critique will be examined in the following section. I will argue that the network metaphor orientates critique towards a binary focus on inclusion and exclusion. In doing so it simultaneously orients critique away from the problem of exploitation. In what follows I will focus on the most common tendency by network thinkers: to organize all critique under "the theme of exclusion" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 347).

1.2. The Network Metaphor and 'Exclusion': A Homology

It is almost conventional wisdom amongst contemporary social and political theorists that relations of power and inequality today operate more through exclusion than through exploitation. The sociologist Scott Lash, for example, argues that exploitation has ceased to be the locus of power, having been replaced by exclusion, including the self-exclusion of "relatively disembeded" elites (Lash 2002, 4). Similarly in his latest book *Communication Power*, Castells argues:

[1] In discussing network theory in this paper I will primarily focus on Manuel Castells' notion of networks and his thesis of the 'network society'. I do this because his is arguably the most prominent and familiar version of network theory within Communication and Media Studies. While Castells presents an original theory of networks much of my analysis and critique can be understood to apply to network theory in general.

[2] In part this has to do with how broad the definition of networks is. As Watts observes: "In a way, nothing could be simpler than a network. Stripped to its bare bones a network is nothing more than a collection of objects connected to each other in some fashion. On the other hand, the sheer generality of the term network makes it slippery to pin down precisely" (Watts 2004, 27). The myriad ways of understanding the 'network metaphor' as it is used in social theory has resulted in a situation whereby "even within a discipline it would be serendipity rather than design if two theorists were talking about the same concept at the same time" (Cavanagh 2007, 9).

[3] The attempt to understand society through the study of networks is not new either (see Quandt 2008). In Communication and Media Studies, Mattelart and Mattelart (1998) describe how pioneering communications scholar Everett Rogers drew from the work of Gregory Bateson, Georg Simmel and Jacob L. Moreno to update his theories of innovation by foregrounding communication network analysis. However, while network analysis has never been more than a marginal endeavor Castells and other contemporary proponents of the 'network society' thesis believe that it is more applicable than ever.

[4] Castells is certainly aware of this issue; indeed it is a central part of his theory of "communication power". In his most recent book he draws on neuroscience and cognitive linguistics to argue that we are made up of neural networks connected to an outside world of networks through the metaphors, narratives, and frames we draw on to make meaning. As Castells (2009, 145) puts it "[p]ower is generated in the windmills of the mind" and thus "the fundamental form of power lies in the ability to shape the human mind" (ibid., 3).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "There is a fundamental form of exercising power that is common to all networks: exclusion from the network […] there is one form of exclusion – thus, of power – that is pervasive in a world of networks: to include everything valuable in the global while excluding the devalued local" (Castells 2009, 50).

We can see from this quote that not only does Castells see exclusion as "a fundamental form of exercising power", but 'exclusion' and 'power' actually appear to morph into one concept. According to Castells and other social theorists, if networks and connectivity are the dominant logic or morphology of life, then oppression is defined by disconnection from these networks. As the British geographer and theorist Nigel Thrift puts it matter-of-factly, "new forms of connection produce new forms of disconnection" (Thrift 2002, 41).

For Castells, the emergence of the new spatial logic that characterizes the network society is expressed through the fragmentation of physical space in a variable geography of hyperconnection and structurally induced "black holes" – what he refers to as "the Fourth World". This "new geography of social exclusion" includes much of Sub-Saharan Africa, American inner-city ghettos, French banlieues and Asian mega-cities' shanty towns (Castells 2000c, 168). Exclusion thus becomes the predominant side effect of contemporary 'informational capitalism'. For Castells, according to one commentator,

> "[...] large sections of the world population are not so much repressed – rather they are abandoned, declared worthless, and bypassed […] by the global flows of wealth and power […] The intense, if repressive, attention totalitarian regimes paid to their citizens has been replaced by the extensive neglect of informational capitalism, which also declared entire populations to be "redundant", to be ignored or treated as undesirable migrants if they show up at the gated communities of the rich" (Stalder 2006, 131).

Power in 'the network society' is exercised through network gatekeeping (Barzilai-Nahon 2008) with social actors establishing their positions of power "by constituting a network that accumulates valuable resources and then by exercising their gatekeeping strategies to bar access to those who do not add value to the network or who jeopardize the interests that are dominant in the network's programs" (Castells 2011, 774). "If a node in the network ceases to perform a useful function it is phased out from the network, and the network rearranges itself – as cells do in biological processes" (Castells 2000b, 15). Enrolling all that is useful and required for the continued survival of the network and expunging all that is considered useless or detrimental, the network "works on a binary logic: inclusion/exclusion" (ibid.).

What is most important to take away from such a conceptualization of power is that it is not enacted through personalized decisions but rather through the protocols that a network sets. A protocol is a mechanism that binds seemingly autonomous agents together so that they are able to interact and form a network.[5] "Without a shared protocol, there is no network" (Galloway 2004, 75).[6] Protocol allows power to become disassociated from the acts of individual agents and instead embeds power in the rules and regulations that make up the system.

Exclusion is perfectly situated to assume pole position as the dominant political critique in a society that seemingly coheres around networks; where being connected in constantly shifting links of affinity becomes the ultimate aim and where power is never manifested in a fixed 'class', individual, or institution.[7] As Daniel Béland explains:

[5] In the world of digital computing, the term 'protocol' refers to the standards governing the implementation of, and the communication between, specific technologies. However protocol is not a new word. A protocol may be technical, legal, financial, or cultural in nature. As Alexander Galloway notes, "[p]rior to its usage in computing, protocol referred to any type of correct or proper behaviour within a specific system of conventions. It is an important concept in the area of social etiquette as well as in the fields of diplomacy and international relations" (Galloway 2004, 7).

[6] For example, the highway system, like any system held together by protocols, allows "interdependence on the basis of independence" (Stalder 2006, 134). To be denied entry, or to be excluded from the system – to be refused a driver's license for example – represents the gravest threat. Thus, unlike traditional command-and-control hierarchies, which monitor the content of interaction, power operates in a network through the protocols that set the 'rules of engagement'. As Felix Stalder notes, "[t]his is precisely the point where we can locate the transformation of power operating through repression to power operating through exclusion" (Stalder 2006, 135).

[7] The post-Marxist critique of the idea that power emanates from an identifiable centre has almost become a new academic orthodoxy. When Castells describes power as operating in a 'space of flows' he is building on and adding to a diverse tradition that includes Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe and other influential post-Marxist theorists. In a different way, the recent work of Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) which I will be discussing in more detail later on, also builds on this tradition. The contribution of Castells and Hardt and Negri is in providing the perfect metaphor for the diffuse, de-centred world of post-Marxists, because "[b]y definition, a network has no centre" (Castells 2000b, 15).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "[...] social exclusion is based on a horizontal, spatial metaphor rather than a vertical model of inequality focusing mainly on income disparities. From the perspective of the social exclusion paradigm, people are more 'in' or 'out' of mainstream society than 'up' or down' the class or the income distribution structure." (Béland 2007, 127)

The network metaphor is also a horizontal, spatial metaphor. The "world is flat" because it is increasingly networked. This is the source of the homology between the network metaphor and "the theme of exclusion" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 347). In their groundbreaking text *The New Spirit of Capitalism* French academics Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello argue persuasively that "the theme of exclusion" is "clearly based on a representation of society constructed around the network metaphor" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 348):

> "In our view, the very rapid diffusion of a definition of the social world in terms of networks that accompanied the establishment of the connexionist world makes it possible to understand how the dynamic of exclusion and inclusion – initially associated with the fate of marginal groups – was able to take the place previously assigned to social classes in the representation of social misery and the means of remedying it." (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 349)

Thus, according to Boltanski and Chiapello, the increased focus on networks during the 1980s and 1990s helped shift social and political debate away from class inequality and income redistribution. The relative success of individuals or groups instead becomes dependent on their ability to tap into networks: to be judged to be 'of value' to the network. Failure to do so results in exclusion. If the success of an argument is determined by its simplicity and coherence then this binary model of inclusion/exclusion would certainly win the day.

1.2.1. The Problem with 'Exclusion'

While recognizing that exclusion is a worthy target of critique in our "connexionist" world, Boltanski and Chiapello take issue with the dominant, almost single-minded focus on exclusion in much of contemporary social theory.[8] This is because 'exclusion', in their opinion, exhibits numerous shortcomings as the central locus of critique.

First of all, 'exclusion' defines the excluded as those who lack something, or possess negative characteristics. Boltanski and Chiapello describe how the discourse of exclusion originally emerged in the 1970s as a way to discuss the marginality of those with physical or mental handicaps, but it has since grown to include those 'at risk' populations who are considered to have social handicaps.[9] A lack of qualifications is the explanation most frequently given for the exclusion of certain populations. "It is precisely this link between poverty and fault - or, to be more precise, between poverty and personal properties", Boltanski and Chiapello (2005, 354) recognize, "that can easily be converted into factors of individual responsibility". This is clearly a step backward as blaming the victim, in whatever guise it assumes, was something "the notion of class, and especially that of the proletariat, had succeeded in breaking" (ibid).

> "Unlike the model of social classes, where explanation of the 'proletariat's' poverty is based upon identifying a class (the bourgeoisie, owners of the means of production) responsible for its 'exploitation', the model of exclusion permits identification of something negative without proceeding to level accusations. The excluded are no one's victims, even if their membership of a common humanity (or 'common citizenship') requires that their sufferings be considered and that they be assisted." (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 347)

[8] Likewise, in this paper I am not attempting to deny the existence of exclusion, only that it has become too hegemonic. We thus find ourselves in a very different intellectual moment compared to what Raymond Murphy (1985) was describing when he tried to overcome the limitations of the then dominant voice of critique – Marxist theories of exploitation – with an appeal to Weber's social closure theory of exclusion.

[9] In an essay entitled "The Social Exclusion Discourse" Daniel Béland documents the French origins of the concept. He writes "[a]s early as 1965, social commentator Jean Klanfer published a book entitled *L'Exclusion sociale: Étude de la marginalité dans les sociétés occidentales* [Social exclusion: The study of marginality in western societies]. In this moralistic book emphasising personal responsibility, the term 'social exclusion' refers to people who cannot enjoy the positive consequences of economic progress due to irresponsible behavior" (Béland 2007, 126).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Thus 'exclusion' is for Boltanski and Chiapello a "topic of sentiment" rather than a "topic of denunciation". This shifting of responsibility onto the backs of the oppressed seriously weakens the political force of critique; leaving the critic with little choice of weaponry, save for appeals to generosity and compassion.[10] Exclusion, Boltanski and Chiapello recognize, is presented as "someone's misfortune (to be struggled against), not as the result of a social asymmetry from which some people profit to the detriment of others" because "exclusion, unlike exploitation, profit[s] no one" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 354).

Finally, reintegration becomes the only recourse in a world where injustice is understood as being about exclusion from the system. If this is the solution though, how do we then assess oppression that occurs through the inclusion of subjects into exploitative networks or systems? Modern regimes of power – as critical thinkers from Marx to Foucault have recognized – in fact work through modes of incorporation. Modern power is productive, Foucault concluded in his study *Discipline and Punish,* because "its aim is to strengthen the social forces - to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply." (Foucault 1991, 207). 'Panopticism' for Foucault, or capitalism for Marx, fuse the economic with the political - the creation of value with the organization of power. Any attempt to update theories of power for the contemporary era must not forget that the creation, extraction and circulation of value is fundamentally an exercise and an expression of power; it both requires asymmetries of power in order to occur and it produces new power relations in the process. It is not very clear in Castells' work, for example, how 'exclusion' as the fundamental form of exercising power in the network society increases economic productivity. It should instead be asked, as Marcuse puts it, "whether the excluded are really excluded from the system, or whether they are in fact quite useful for it but simply excluded from its benefits" (Marcuse 2002, 139).

Common to all of the shortcomings of "the theme of exclusion" is an implicit assumption: that the world is made up of an inside/outside binary. In such a world the traditional critique of exploitation makes little sense if "on one side, we have highly prosperous strong people and, on the other, little people in a miserable state, but there is no link between them and they move in completely different worlds" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 360). Can this really describe the social world we live in? The answer is of course no.

This is where the problem with the single-minded focus on exclusion by network thinkers gets interesting; for isn't the 'network' the form *par excellence* for understanding the world as shared and common? Isn't "the science of networks" a super-science for "the connected age" (Watts 2003)? Here we arrive at what seems to be a contradiction: the network metaphor posits a connected and relational world while at the same time conceiving of power as operating predominantly through exclusion and disconnection.

The limitations acknowledged call out for a reintroduction of 'the theme of exploitation' into contemporary social critique. This is certainly not a groundbreaking realization. But when it has been acknowledged we have usually been presented with one of the following two options. The most common response taken by Marxian scholars has been that of '*ideologiekritik*': all talk of networks is deemed ideological and a return to the analysis of class and exploitation is called for (Garnham 2004; Callinicos 2006). Alternatively, following Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) lead, we can largely accept the network discourse and attempt to generate a new theory of exploitation more suitable for our "connexionist" world.

In what follows, I attempt to offer a third approach, turning away from the discursive self-representation of a society cloaked in the metaphors and narratives of networks and towards a common ontological framework that I argue guides the thinking of network theorists and Marx. Clearly Marx was not a 'network' theorist as conventionally understood. But his discussion of capital as a relation and as value-in-motion shares deep affinities with network thinking.[11] This is no mere coincidence. In this paper I argue that this affinity stems from a shared *process-relational* ontology. By locating a common position from which to begin, it becomes possible to reconstruct the distinctive path Marx took in conceptualizing 'process' and 'relations', and in turn, understand

[10] Béland writes "the dominant political discourse about social exclusion has done little more than legitimise modest social programmes that seldom challenge the liberal logic seeking to limit social spending while encouraging citizens to become increasingly dependent on market outcomes (ie 'recommodification')" (Béland 2007, 134).

[11] Scott Kirsch and Don Mitchell develop in detail the affinities between Marx and network theory – in particular actor-network theory: "Marx, of course, did not write in the language of networks. But he did write in the language of circuits, showing in great detail how capital – as value in motion – travels a set of circuits, from, for example, the hands of the capitalist, into the machines and buildings of the work place, and on into the produced commodity. He shows how capital precisely *because* it is a relation, becomes "frozen" for greater or lesser duration as the means of production or the produced commodity, only to be returned to the capitalist when the commodity is exchanged on the market. Commodities "stabilize" social relations in technologies and "things as such", and commodity circulation in this sense is a network." (Kirsch and Mitchell 2004, 696)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

how this path leads us not into the inclusion/exclusion cul-de-sac but rather to a critique of exploitation *writ large*.[12]

2. Network Ontology

Let us now leave behind the network metaphor and work our way down to the level of ontology. Once we do so we will quickly realize that this metaphor is no more than a contemporary representative strategy of a much older philosophical position which can be traced back to the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus. This "process-relational ontology", as I will call it, has found new life in network analysis. I will begin by explicating what is meant by 'process'.

2.1. Process

Network thinkers emphasize processes. Social reality is composed not of static things, but of activity, of change, of flows. The idea that that process precedes substance has been the primary argument of process philosophers from Heraclitus to Alfred North Whitehead.

How does this relate to networks? Networks are *dynamic* patterns of processes. The physicist Fritjof Capra, a former colleague of Castells at Berkeley, has been a tireless popularizer of the new science of complexity and autopoeisis, which places networks at the center of all life processes. Capra, drawing on the seminal work of the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, argues that what makes life a dynamic process and not a static system is the characteristic of renewal and recreation. "[L]iving networks continually create, or recreate, themselves by transforming or replacing their components. In this way, they undergo continual structural changes, while preserving their web-like patterns of organization" (Capra 2004, 10). Thus, networks are not determined by one individual component (contra the genetic blueprint argument for example), nor are they characterized by the static and stable organization of relations. Instead, it is the entire *process* of interactions and the continuous bringing into being of emergent properties through interactions with the surrounding environment, which prevents a network from entering a state of decay.

Networks are also not characterized by one-off interactions but rather by enduring, recurrent, recreative patterns of interaction over time. Thus a focus on process necessarily draws our attention to the importance of temporality. From a process perspective, "how we make ourselves as beings is how we make ourselves in time, how we are time, and how time is us" (Pomeroy 2004, 108). Being *is* time because being is always becoming.

It is true that many network theorists often slip back into substantialism. The ubiquitous web diagrams that seem to accompany every discussion of networks often privilege spatiality over temporality and narrative emergence. However as Mustafa Emirbayer (1997) points out, this can be blamed on the hegemony of substantialism in everyday thought patterns and its very embeddedness in Western languages which force us to reduce processes to static conditions.[13] What is important to remember though is that network thinking (if not always its representation) conceives of networks as always in the process of becoming.

[12] Although my focus in this paper is on exploitation and exclusion in the economic field, it is important to point out that Marx's theory of exploitation need not be limited to this field. Buchanan (1979, 122) argues that Marx's work includes "three distinct but related conceptions of exploitation: (a) a conception of exploitation in the labor process in capitalism, (b) a transhistorical conception of exploitation which applies not only to the labor process in capitalism but to the labor processes of all class-divided societies, and (c) a general conception of exploitation which is not limited to phenomena within the labor process itself". Marx's most general conception of exploitation appears in one of his earliest works, *The German Ideology,* where he describes the bourgeois view of interpersonal relations which sees all human relations *in general* as exploitable:

> "[...]all[...]activity of individuals in their mutual intercourse, eg., speech, love, etc., is depicted (by the bourgeois) as a relation of utility and utilization. In this case the utility relation has a quite different meaning, namely that I derive benefit for myself by doing harm to someone else (*exploitation de l'home par l'home)* […] All this actually is the case with the bourgeois. For him only one relation is valid on its own account – the relation of exploitation; all other relations have validity for him only insofar as he can include them under this one relation, and even where he encounters relations which cannot be directly subordinated to the relation of exploitation, he does at least subordinate them to it in his imagination. The material expression of this use is money, the representation of the value of all things, people and social relations." (Marx 1974, 110).

[13] We can only express change by adding a verb to a thing. Emirbayer quotes Norbert Elias for an example of this: "We say "The wind is blowing," as if the wind were actually a thing at rest which, at a given point in time, begins to move and blow." (Elias 1978, 111f. cited in Emirbayer 1997, 283).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

2.2. Relations

Relations, writes the Dutch network theorist Jan van Dijk, are "the prime focus of attention in a network perspective"[14] (van Dijk 2006, 25). Relations can be understood as the most basic form inherent to any network and a network can be said to exist whenever two or more linked relations are present.

Rather than attempting to understand actors by looking at the institutions and structures under which they live, or through the individual traits and characteristics they posses, network thinkers believe that we can learn far more about someone or something through the relations they are embedded within. This argument is based on an ontology which sees the world as constituted by forms instead of substances. Relational ontology posits that relations *between* entities are ontologically more important than the entities in and of themselves (Wildman, 2010). In any network, Felix Stalder points out, "it makes no sense to argue that nodes come first and then they begin to create connections. Rather it is through the connections that nodes create and define one another. Nodes are created by connections, and without nodes there can be no connections." (Stalder 2006, 177)

Network thinkers can be situated along a spectrum in terms of how they conceptualize the relative importance of relations to nodes. Jan van Dijk adopts what he calls a "moderate network approach" by focusing not solely on relations, but "also on the characteristics of the units (nodes) that are related in networks (people, groups, organizations, societies)" (van Dijk 2006). Other network theorists take relational ontology to its logical extreme, arguing that there are no essences (units or nodes) at all. Actor-Network theorists Bruno Latour and John Law call their approach "radical relationality". This is the principle that "[n]othing that enters into relations has fixed significance or attributes in and of itself. Instead, the attributes of any particular element in the system, any particular node in the network, are entirely defined in relation to other elements in the system, to other nodes in the network" (Law, 2003, 4).[15] It is not necessary to go to this extreme though in order to accept the central argument agreed upon by all network theorists; that "[a]ll entities […] achieve their significance by being in relation to other entities" (ibid.).

Finally, process and relation must be understood as co-dependent because "a universe driven by the movement of process is necessarily a relational universe. In fact, the processive movement itself is the self-generation of relationality" (Pomeroy 2004, 143). As I will demonstrate in the following sections, a process-relational perspective is also the key to understanding Marx's philosophy, and in particular his theory of exploitation.

3. Marx's Process-Relational Ontology

How is Marx also a process-relational thinker? How does Marx's process-relational ontology differ from that of network theorists such as Manuel Castells? In what follows, I will attempt to answer these questions by demonstrating how Marx materializes process philosophy through his category of 'production' and how Marx does not simply emphasize relations, but *internal* relations. Finally I will elaborate on the importance that 'contradiction' plays in generating the dynamic nature of Marx's ontology and how the theory of exploitation which emerges from such an ontology is particularly relevant for critiquing power within contemporary informational capitalism.

3.1. Materializing Process

As Bertell Ollman argues, Marx consistently prioritizes movement over stability in his writings:

> "With stability used to qualify change rather than the reverse, Marx – unlike most modern social scientists – did not and could not study why things change (with the implication that change is external to what they are, something that happens to them). Given that change is always a part of what things are, his research problem could only be *how, when,* and *into what* they change and why they sometimes appear not to (ideology)." (Ollman 2003, 66)

[14] While Castells is well known for not providing clear definitions of the concepts he uses - preferring instead to let definitions emerge organically through their usage – Jan van Dijk provides a very useful definition of networks in his book *The Network Society*. "A network can be defined as *a collection of links between elements of a unit*. The elements are called nodes. Units are often called systems. The smallest number of elements is three and the smallest number of links is two. A single link of two elements is called a relation(ship)". (van Dijk 2006, 24)

[15] Just as in the idea, first proposed by de Saussure, that all words only achieve meaning when they are juxtaposed with other words – ie. father and son, day and night etc – radical relationality extends this insight beyond language to all things and beings.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

However, while Marx shares this predilection with network theorists, process nevertheless takes on a whole new meaning in his writings. This is because, as the philosopher Anne Fairchild Pomeroy argues, Marx materializes process through his foundational category of 'production'.[16] Pomeroy compares Marx to the process-relational philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, illustrating how the category of 'production' in Marx is the "functional equivalent" of the category of 'process' in Whitehead's metaphysics (Pomeroy 2004, 44).[17] A brief overview of what Marx means by 'production' may be helpful to demonstrate how it informs his process-relational ontology.

'Production' is for Marx a highly complex term that serves as a necessary abstraction. Just as 'process' for Whitehead performs multiple levels of analysis, Marx's concept of 'production' functions on numerous levels from the most abstract and general to the most concrete and specific. In Marx's writings 'production' operates:

> "(1) on the level of the general conditions found in all production as the interchange between, indeed identity between, human life and nature; (2) on the many levels of historical forms of production: communal, feudal, capitalist, (3) within each of these, on the levels of different branches of production, and (4) on the levels of the activity of the social subjects who are 'active in a greater or sparser totality of branches of production'." (Marx 1973, 86; cited in Pomeroy 2004, 46)

It is important to first nail down the most general characteristics of production because as Marx says "[n]o [specific mode of] production will be thinkable without them" (Marx 1973, 85).

Most importantly, Marx conceives of production as a temporal process. Production in general involves three analytically distinct but unified moments: *appropriation* (of the social-natural world), *productive activity* (creative re-creation by and of the subject) and *objectification* (of a novel relational being or object). Whether one is building a house or reading a magazine one is always engaged in this production process. Importantly, the subject engaging in the productive activity is also changed by and through this activity. "[P]roductive activity not only makes "things" or objects in the natural world, but also objectifies the form of the subjective activity itself. It is a production of a certain kind of individual" (Pomeroy 2004, 54). As Marx put it in *Capital*, "He acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature" (Marx 1990, 283). Thus, "[t]he processive or productive individual *is what it does*" (Pomeroy 2004, 70). This is made very clear in *The German Ideology* where Marx and Engels write that the mode of production:

> "[...] must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is […] a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce." (Marx and Engels 1974, 42)

While bourgeois economists distinguish between production, distribution and consumption, Marx argued that all were specific moments in the productive process. While clearly not identical they are distinctions within a unity. They all serve to drive the productive process forward. When I 'consume' a meal I am also 'producing' my being. "Consumption as a moment, production as a moment, are occurring for the sake of the movement itself, process itself" (Pomeroy 2004, 53).

Production as process is necessarily also production as relation. As Pomeroy expresses it, "the processive movement itself is the self-generation of relationality" (Pomeroy 2004, 143). Thus, at the centre of this production process stands not the independent, isolated producer – the Robinson Crusoe character celebrated by bourgeois thinkers – but the individual as the ensemble of social relations, or as Carol Gould (1978) phrases it, "individuals-in-relations".

[16] Since process is a temporal concept it may be helpful to give a brief overview of Marx's theory of time. Against Kant Marx argues that time is not an a priori form of perception, nor is it an objective sequence that is located purely outside collective subjectivity (à la Newton). Instead, Marx argued, human time-consciousness emerges out of the very labouring activity which objectifies our world. This is because it is only through labouring activity (production) that real novelty comes into being. While Heidegger posits the activity of 'Being' as the source of temporality, Marx regards this activity (labour) as introducing time into things (objects, institutions etc). In turn the 'objectified' form of labour introduces objective time (see Gould, 1978, 56-68, for a much more detailed explanation).

[17] It is possible to sum up Pomeroy's argument for the equivalence of 'production' and 'process' as follows. Firstly, "[b]oth Marx and Whitehead use their respective terms to refer both to the general abstract character of all productive processive activity and to any specific concrete instance or moment of that activity." Second of all, "[p]roduction and process both refer to and serve to explicate the movement of becoming that is the temporal or historical world…" and finally "[b]oth process and production are affected by socially related individuals…" (Pomeroy 2004, 60).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "[T]he *social* character is the general character of the whole movement: *just as* society itself produces *man as man*, so is society *produced* by him. Activity and consumption, both in their content and in their *mode of existence*, are *social*: *social* activity and *social* consumption." (Marx 1988, 104).

Thus, for Marx, each human being is what he or she does, and what he or she does, constantly, is produce. We are continuously re-producing ourselves as we produce something new.

Earlier I described how network thinkers regard the processes of renewal and recreation as crucial to how networks are able to sustain themselves. Marx's conception of 'production' performs much the same function, but for "individuals-in-relations" and the objective world produced into being. In Castells' theory of "the network society", the locus of production is transformed from individuals-in-relations to knowledge-in-networks. This is because for Castells the key source of productivity in the network society is not the knowledge worker, but knowledge itself. The tendency by network theorists to naturalize knowledge is a continuation of a long trend in economic thought of bestowing innate qualities of value on factors of production. Marx criticized this fallacy vehemently in his day and would no doubt concur that knowledge or information "is not inherently valuable but that a profound social reorganization is required to turn it into something valuable" (Schiller 1988, 32, cited in Jessop 2003, 2).

A network approach doesn't necessarily preclude a material view of process. Like Castells, Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) posit the network as the dominant form power takes in contemporary society**.** Unlike Castells and most other network theorists though, Hardt and Negri understand power as operating through processes of *inclusion.* The logic of capital, what they call "Empire", is best understood as a "universal republic, a network of powers and counterpowers structured in a boundless and inclusive architecture" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 166). Hardt and Negri understand this logic to be one that necessitates constant movement and expansion outwards. Echoing Marx, Hardt and Negri write, "the capitalist market is one machine that has always run counter to any division between inside and outside. It is thwarted by barriers and exclusions; it thrives instead by including always more within its sphere" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 190). By focusing on inclusion, Hardt and Negri are able to better conceive of power as productive.

Who is the source of this production that 'Empire' seeks to include? In Hardt and Negri's Spinoza-influenced language, it is the 'multitude'. The multitude is a conception of class that extends beyond the wage-labourer to include all those who labour to produce "the common". It follows from this that Hardt and Negri re-evalute exploitation to be about the expropriation of the common. We could think of this as 'network exploitation' whereby the common which is produced through the networked activity of the multitude is simultaneously exploited by Empire. Capital is therefore dependent on the multitude's production.

Hardt and Negri thus follow Marx in understanding human agency to be generative of a surplus: life as a process of production. This represents an advance over network theories that can only conceive of power as working through exclusion. As discussed earlier in the paper, the theme of exclusion tends to focus attention on deficiencies or handicaps, broadly construed. The excluded are those who lack proper educational qualifications for example. Exclusion thus emerges as a problem of *lack*. Exploitation on the other hand is a problem of *excess*. 'Exploitation' defines the exploited as those who *have* something, for why else would they be exploited? As Hardt and Negri (2004, 333) write in *Multitude*, "[t]he oppressed" (or excluded) may name a marginal and powerless mass, but "the exploited" is necessarily a central, productive, and powerful subject."

By shifting the focus of critique from exclusion to inclusion, Hardt and Negri are better able to address more complex modes of power, including contemporary processes of exploitation. At the same time their adherence to the network metaphor still generates some problems that I will be addressing in more detail later. First, let us move on to a discussion of how Marx's process-relational ontology can be distinguished by its understanding of relations as internal.

3.2. Internal Relations

In his widely cited "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology", Mustafa Emirbayer (1997, 290) describes Marx as a "profoundly relational thinker" whose relational ontology is revealed through his "analyses of alienation […] his discussion of commodity fetishism, his keen insights in the internal relations among production, distribution, exchange, and consumption, and, indeed his understanding of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the capital/wage-labor relation itself". It has also been said that "[p]erhaps no word appears more frequently in Marx's writings than *Verhältnis* (relation)" (Ollman 2003, 73).[18]

But to simply state that Marx was a relational thinker does not tell us very much. The question should instead be what kind of a relational thinker was Marx?

Marx's relationality is generated from a philosophy of internal relations - what Ollman considers to be "the much-neglected foundation of his entire dialectical method" (Ollman 2003, 116). While Marx draws inspiration from Hegel, the philosophy of internal relations traces its origins to the Greek philosopher Parmenides, reappearing in the modern period as a central tenet of Spinoza's thought.

To say that all relations are internal is to imply that everything has some relation, however distant, to everything else and that these relations are *necessary*. To say that relations are necessary is to argue that they are essential to the characteristics of the *relata*. "Internal relations are those in which the individuals are changed by their relations to each other, that is, where these relations between individuals are such that both are reciprocally affected by the relation" (Gould 1978, 37). Contrarily, external relations serve to link up *relata* but "each *relatum* is understood to be a separate self-subsistent entity, which exists apart from the relation and appears to be totally without change in their nature or constitution" (Gould 1978, 38).

The importance of distinguishing between a relationality composed of *internal* relations and one made up of *external* relations becomes clear when we look at Castells' thesis of the network society. What allows Castells to posit the emergence of a novel social formation – a "network society" - is the distinction he makes between "modes of production" and "modes of development."[19] The current mode of production is still capitalist, according to Castells, but with a new mode of development that fuels its productivity: "*informationalism*".[20] However, Castells does not sufficiently anchor this mode of development within the mode of production. "Informationalism" appears to act as an external causal force. As already mentioned, knowledge or information is naturalized as a factor of production (like land, capital or labour) obscuring the conditions under which it is produced. Value is thus erroneously attributed to the immanent qualities of things *brought into* the production process rather than to a process generated *out of* particular social relations.

The problem, as Wayne realizes is "[h]ow can we assess the continuities and differences *within* a mode of production that is oriented toward the perpetual transformation of technological forces and social relations?" (Wayne 2004, 141). As Marx writes in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, bourgeois political economy is unable to understand the internal dynamics and connections that drive capitalist development. Instead this development is attributed to "external and apparently accidental circumstances" (Marx 1972, 106, cited in Wayne 2004, 139). This is precisely the problem with Castells' analysis.

For Castells, network relations are external. The network society is the emergence of a new social morphology resulting from the development of new (technological) relations between pre-existing *relata*.[21] Castells is careful to acknowledge that technology does not *cause* the transformation to a network society, but he insists that it is "the indispensable *medium*" (Castells 2000b, 14). In other words, for Castells (technological) networks provide the means through which individuals are brought into relation.

Much of the commentary on this aspect of Castells' theory revolves around accusations of technological determinism (see Webster 1995; van Dijk 1999). However, I would argue that any such determinism is itself a direct result of an ontological focus on *external* rather than *internal* relations. In other words, technological determinism, or any form of determinism for that matter, is but one symptom of a philosophy constructed around external relations.

[18] Ollman (2003, 73) also acknowledges though that "the crucial role played by *Verhaltnis* in Marx's thinking is somewhat lost to non-German-language readers of his works as a result of translations that often substitute "condition," "system," and "structure" for "relation."

[19] According to Castells, modes of production are characterized by "[t]he structural principle under which surplus is appropriated and controlled" (Castells, 2000a, 16). The "network society" is still founded on the capitalist mode of production, however the causal force which gives the network society its defining characteristics is its specific "mode of development". Modes of development are distinguished by the main source or "element" that generates their productivity.

[20] While the industrial mode of development was based on new forms and uses of energy, the current "informational mode of development" locates its source of productivity in "the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol communication" (ibid., 17). Castells acknowledges that knowledge and information is key to all modes of development throughout history, his argument is instead that specific to the informational mode of development "is the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself as the main source of productivity" (ibid.).

[21] This is even more evident in Jan van Dijk's work when he proposes that in the network society "basic units are held to be individuals, households, groups and organizations *increasingly linked by social and media networks*" (van Dijk, 2006, 28).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

As different as Hardt and Negri's employment of the network metaphor is from Castells', it too offers a form of determinism that emerges out of an external relation. As autonomist Marxists, Hardt and Negri see capital as dependent on the productivity of the multitude. Indeed, the position that labour is the active subject which capital attempts to domesticate represents the single most innovative idea put forward by autonomist Marxists. It stands on its head the old orthodox Marxist position that capital unfolds according to some automatic, self-contained logic. But it is just as one-sided.

The problem is that while Hardt and Negri foreground production as the networked process that capital feeds off of, the 'multitude' and 'Empire' – are not *internally* related. The multitude is conceived of as *autonomous* from Empire. Hardt and Negri (2004, 225) insist that the multitude must not be understood as Empire's "dialectical support". "Empire and the multitude are not symmetrical: whereas Empire is constantly dependent on the multitude and its social productivity, the multitude is potentially autonomous and has the capacity to create society on its own" (ibid.).

Thus, it could be said that what network technology is to Castells' theory of the "network society", network struggle is to Hardt and Negri's "commonwealth". The theories of both Castells and Hardt and Negri can be considered essentialist to the extent that they isolate a single external causal force.

This is not to say that the influence of network technology or network forms of struggle are false explanations. Essentialist explanations are not so much false as they are partial. As Resnick and Wolff put it "…each essentialist moment is understood to be true —it illuminates a connection—*and* false—it obscures other connections that, if and when considered, will show all previously elaborated connections to have been true and false in this sense." (Resnick and Wolff 2006, 83) In other words, technological determinism and what could be called "class struggle determinism" are partial explanations, or in Marx's terminology "abstractions". According to Carol Gould, "an external relation is only an appearance for Marx in the sense that they are the way internal relations appear from a one-sided or abstract point of view" (Gould 1978, 38).

A theory of internal relations means for Marx that "interaction is, properly speaking, *inneraction* (it is "inner connections" that he claims to study)" (Ollman 2003, 27). This means that, for Marx, relationality is always already there. It doesn't require network technology to be brought into existence. It is an a priori *condition of possibility* for such technology. While the pervasiveness of network technology may serve to intensify and highlight this intrinsic relationality, it does not invent it. Facebook, for example, is an ingenious way of capturing the connective desires and practices that are internal to human relationality. Mark Zuckerberg though did not invent social networking; he simply organized sociability under one domain.

To make such an argument is certainly not to say that that network technologies and new network forms of organization have no impact on social development. Of course they do. But these technologies and forms of organization do not appear from outer space. They emerge from within, reifying and abstracting from internal social relations. Consider money, the most powerful and pervasive network 'technology'. At first glance it may appear to be an external relation that influences and distorts almost all realms of life. However Marx regards money as an abstraction of internal relations. This is most forcefully (and humorously) demonstrated in the final chapter of *Capital: Volume 1,* "The Modern Theory of Colonization". Marx tells the story of the British politician E.G. Wakefield who discovered in the colonies the truth about capitalist relations - that money has no meaning if there is no wage-labourer to buy:

> "A Mr. Peel (Wakefield) complains, took with him from England to the Swan River district of Western Australia means of subsistence and of production to the amount of £50,000. This Mr. Peel even had the foresight to bring besides, 3,000 persons of the working class, men, women, and children. Once he arrived at his destination, 'Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river.' Unhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River!" (Marx 1990, 932f.)

Here Marx is substantiating his well-known argument that "capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things" (ibid.). Exploitation describes the terms of this relationship under capitalism.

Exploitation for Marx is a *necessarily* relational concept. It could only have emerged from a philosophy of internal relations. While the exploiters require the exploited in order to generate surplus value, the exploited in the capitalist system also require the exploiters in order to sell their labour power – in order to survive. Marx's theory of exploitation is more than simply the observation that

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the success of certain individuals or groups is causally related to the deprivation of others. Marx's theory of exploitation begins from the observation that the *existence* of a certain class in society is dependent on the *existence* of another class. Indeed, as with the two ideal categories in Hegel's master/slave dialectic, exploiters and the exploited need each other in order to retain their identity. In other words Marx's theory of exploitation presupposes the existence of a necessarily shared world composed of internal relations.

When network theorists such as Castells acknowledge the existence of exploitation they do so with an understanding of exploitation as an *external* relation – an event rather than a process – hich one prefigured entity or relata performs on another. In certain times and spaces this event occurs more frequently than in others but exploitation is not considered necessary to the existence of the relata.

However, it would be insufficient to end our argument here. Marx's process-relational ontology and the theory of exploitation that emerges from it cannot be understood without discussing the importance of 'contradiction'. It is to the concept of 'contradiction' that we will now turn to.

3.3. Contradiction

Contradiction offers the ability to understand *how* and *why* change occurs. Contradiction, of course, describes the existence of two structural principles within a system which simultaneously depend upon and negate each other. It is commonly acknowledged that capitalism is defined by contradictions and its relative success or failure in managing them.[22] Contradiction is also the principle that unites Marx's understanding of process and internal relations, as process is instigated through internal *contradictory* relations.

The importance of contradiction to Marx's process-relational ontology and his theory of exploitation is perhaps best revealed by contrasting it with Castells' approach. Castells offers up a model of power that minimizes contradiction. As Mike Wayne recognizes, at times Castells' mode of development even "sounds suspiciously like a new mode of production which has transcended the antagonistic contradictions of capitalism" (Wayne 2004, 142). By introducing a mode of development/mode of production duality Castells downplays the origin of all knowledge within specific class relations. In turn this flattens the dialectical contradictions which exist within Marx's mode of production argument - between the forces and relations of production.

Remember that power, for Castells, circulates through the 'space of flows' which by definition contains no centre. Instead it works through inclusion and exclusion; enrolling what is of value and rejecting all else. Castells does not shy away from critiquing the injustices that emerge from such an account of power, such as the aforementioned 'black holes'. However such critique, regardless of how arresting it may be, offers only *description* not *explanation.* Massimo De Angelis captures this problem well:

> "When we understand power as a flow, however insightful the metaphor may be, until we pose this 'flow' in terms of a flow of social relations and the *mode* of their exercise, power remains a thing (a fluid thing, but a thing nevertheless), since it is not explained how its exercise as a *relation* makes it move. Thus, I can understand capital flows as a thing in terms of interest rate differentials across countries, but until I have related this movement to the broad problematic of how livelihoods in the two countries are systemically pitted against each other *by virtue* of this capital movement or the threat of this movement, and until I have understood and problematised the *rationale* of this, my concept of power is quite useless from the perspective of radical alternatives." (De Angelis 2007, 172)

No matter how highly sophisticated and detailed Castells' theory of the transition to a society constructed around networks is, at its core it is still based on a traditional cause-and-effect chain of description. Such an account of social change is what Hegel referred to as "bad infinity": an end-

[22] Bob Jessop (2001, 4) describes some of the main contradictions within capitalism:

> "For example, the commodity is both an exchange-value and a use-value; the worker is both an abstract unit of labour power substitutable by other such units (or, indeed, other factors of production) and a concrete individual with specific skills, knowledge, and creativity; the wage is both a cost of production and a source of demand; money functions both as an international currency and as national money; productive capital is both abstract value in motion (notably in the form of realised profits available for re-investment) and a concrete stock of time- and place-specific assets in the course of being valorised; and so forth."

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

less series of causes generated from effects caused by previous effects that never arrives at an explanation of the *how* or the *why* (Rees 1998, 7).

As discussed earlier, this is due to the tendency to understand 'cause' as something *external* rather than *internal* to the system. As Ollman (2003, 18) writes "[w]hereas nondialectical thinkers […] are involved in a nonstop search for the 'outside agitator', for something or someone that comes from outside the problem under examination and is the cause for whatever occurs, dialectical thinkers attribute the main responsibility for all change to the inner contradictions of the system or systems in which it occurs".

It is this legacy of Hegel's dialectical philosophy that most clearly distinguishes Marx's process-relational ontology from that of network theorists such as Castells. For it is through relations of exploitation that Marx was able to materialize Hegel's idealist concept of contradiction. Under capitalism, exploitation is simultaneously a central source and expression of contradiction as "the worker is both an abstract unit of labour power...and a concrete individual with specific skills, knowledge, and creativity" (Jessop 2003, 4).

However contradiction should not be understood to work itself out in a predictable teleological fashion. Contradiction necessarily implies "overdetermination" meaning that "an individual, an event, a social movement, and so on – is constituted by all the other aspects of the social and natural totality within which it occurs" (Resnick and Wolff 2006, 80). Every entity, every aspect of history is contradictory in that it is constantly being pushed and pulled in multiple different directions by all its overdeterminants. Indeed history can be conceived of as "a dense network of overdeterminations" or in Althusser's famous phrase, "a process without a subject" (ibid).

Resnick and Wolff (2006) develop Althusser's concept of "overdetermination" to highlight the role contradiction plays in Marx's process-relational ontology. The "contradictoriness of any existent impels it to change (i.e. makes every existent a process), which thereby alters how it overdetermines all existents" (ibid.). Marx's conceptualization of process thus achieves its dynamism through the contradictions inherent within and between internal relations. Leaving behind the language of 'cause' and 'effect' we thus enter the "logic of overdetermined constitutivity" (ibid.).

Hardt and Negri, with their invocation of the network metaphor to describe the constitution of the 'multitude' and 'Empire', do recognize that "[i]nformational networks aggravate the capitalist contradiction between the collective production and the individual appropriation of goods" (Fuchs and Zimmerman 2009, 107). Indeed this contradiction forms the core of the antagonistic relationship between 'Empire' and the 'multitude'. But while this may be a central contradiction at the heart of informational capitalism, it can also be considered an '*under*determined' contradiction. This is because Hardt and Negri fail to interrogate the complex class dynamics and contradictions within both capital understood as 'Empire' and labour understood as the 'multitude'. When critics point out the subjectivist and overly optimistic tone of Hardt and Negri's work, they are really pointing out the absence of overdetermination.

Certainly, as I've repeated throughout this paper, capital is a relation that through exploitation "both presupposes and reproduces the mutual interdependence of capital and wage-labour" (Callinicos 2006, 200f.). But, as Alex Callinicos points out "the capital-relation also necessarily includes 'many capitals' because it is through the competitive struggle among rival firms that the characteristic tendencies of the capitalist mode become operative" (Callinicos 2006, 201). Following Robert Brenner, Callinicos argues that we can understand the capitalist mode of production as constituted by two contradictory relations: the 'vertical relationship' between capitalists and labour and the 'horizontal relationship' between 'many capitals'.

Pointing this out serves to reintroduce contradiction into the flattened category of 'Empire'. The same must be done for the 'multitude'. For instance, the exploited multitude, as Fuchs and Zimmerman (2009, 93) remind us, "is itself antagonistically constituted by exploiting and exploited classes and class fractions." What is needed is an accounting of the myriad transnational networks of production and the "contradictory class positions" (Wright 1985) that make up the 'multitude'.[23] By ignoring the exploitative relations that operate *within* the multitude the network metaphor's flattening trick is allowed to work its magic once again.

A better, more "overdetermined", approach may be visualized through a diagram David Harvey uses to explain Marx's dialectical method (see figure 1). Each of these 'hubs' in Harvey's diagram

[23] Of course contradictions between differentially situated workers do not necessarily have to provoke division and antagonism. However unity is also not automatic. It must be worked at. For example, in their study of the trends in the trade union movement in both the developed and developing world Catherine McKercher and Vincent Mosco describe "the consolidation of small and narrowly-focused unions into larger and more diverse organisations, representing not simply workers in a specific trade, or even within a single industry but in a broad sector of the economy, such as the converging communications, culture, and information sector" (McKercher and Mosco 2010, 3).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

can be isolated as the determining force in social change but in order to get the full picture all must be taken into consideration - relationally, dialectically – as dynamic moments within an "ecological totality" (Harvey 2010, 196). This process of explanation is ongoing; there is no completion, closure or final destination.

It is with the recognition that all internal relations are contradictory, and in turn overdetermined, that we can finally see how Marx's process-relational ontology achieves its dynamic form. In turn, such a process-relational approach breathes new life into Marx's theory of exploitation, permitting us to understand its contemporary relevance.

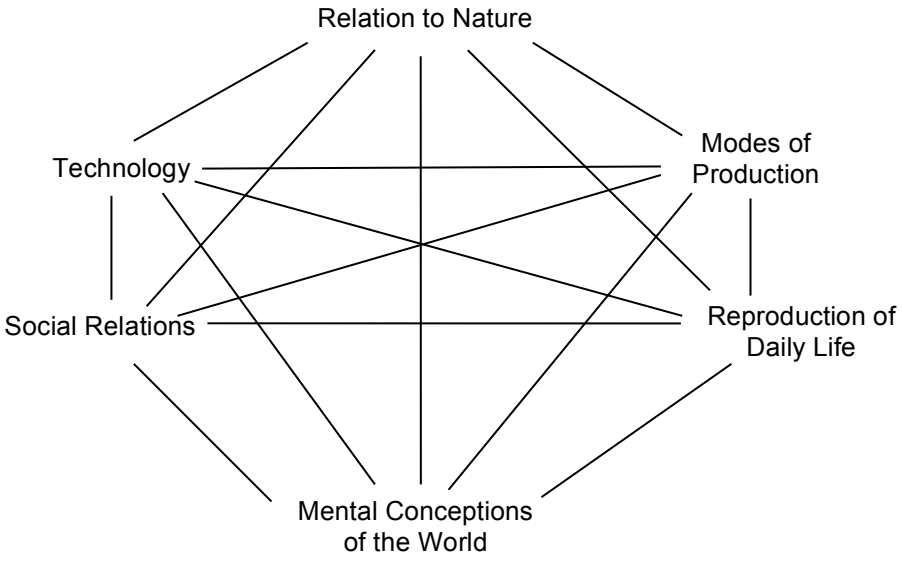


Figure 1 (Harvey 2010, 195)

4. Global Informational Capitalism and Exploitation

Our discussion thus far has concerned itself with explicating Marx's process-relational ontology and the question of why it leads us not into an inclusion/exclusion cul-de-sac but rather to a critique of exploitation. We can understand why this is so now that we have considered the role contradiction, internal relations, and production as the materialization of process play in Marx's ontology.

In the limited space that remains I will briefly touch upon what I will refer to as the *intensification* and *extensification* of exploitation under informational capitalism. In doing so I hope to make clear that the theory of exploitation that emerges from Marx's process-relational ontology is well suited to addressing issues of concern in contemporary communication and media studies.

4.1. Intensification

The "official" version of Marx's conception of exploitation – derived from *Capital Vol. 1* – concerns the unequal exchange of labour. Exploitation involves the worker's surrender of control over his/her creative power, which the capitalist buys the rights to for a specified period of time in order to capture the surplus value produced.[24] Marx's famous claim that "moments are the elements of profit" is still important for understanding and critiquing the exploitation of all paid labour, including labour in the communication and media sector. Recent critical scholarship on labour in communication in-

[24] Any given stretch of life activity includes both reproductive and productive time, "time for reenactment of pattern and time for creativity beyond mere physical reproduction" (Pomeroy 2004, 112). During the time period when the worker has sold his labour power to the capitalist, "reproductive" and "productive" time are represented through Marx's categories of necessary labour time (that part of the working day that the worker needs to produce value equal to the wage he or she is paid) and surplus labour time (that part of the day that extends beyond this time). As Pomeroy puts it concisely, "the capitalist pays for reproduction and gains production." (Pomeroy 2004, 100)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

dustries demonstrates this in great detail (see Mosco and McKercher 2008; Ross 2009; McKercher, Mosco, and Huws 2010). In particular, the perceived glamour and desirability of many jobs in the media industry often permit employers to resort to 19th century levels of 'absolute exploitation'. For example, research on the video game industry by Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2006) reveals the extent of overwork that exists; with seven-day, 85-hour work weeks, uncompensated either by overtime pay or time off, considered routine.

Yet, it would be wrong to assume that for Marx exploitation is a concept trapped within the factory walls. Building off of Marx's category of production discussed earlier it is not difficult to imagine a more general conception of exploitation in Marx's writings, one that transcends a particular production process (Buchanan 1979). Remember that Marx argues that we *all* produce *all the time*. Production is thus the foundational process of life.[25] Production "not only creates an object for the subject but also a subject for the object" (Marx 1973, 92). Under capitalism, this circular, continuous process of production is intersected by the process of commodification which transforms use values into exchange values. Often this occurs under relations of wage labour but just as often it occurs outside of what Marx called "real subsumption". This appears to be a growing phenomenon given the increased reliance upon, commodification of, and control over knowledge and information under contemporary capitalism, particularly on the Internet. This trend exacerbates what Marx recognized as the fundamental contradiction within the capitalist mode of production: the contradiction between the increasing socialization of productive forces and the private control of the means of production.[26] As Fuchs and Zimmerman explain:

> "[...] knowledge is not only produced in corporations in the form of knowledge goods, but also in everyday life by e.g. parents who educate their children, citizens who engage in everyday politics, consumers of media who produce social meaning and hence are prosumers, users of MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, etc. who produce informational content that is appropriated by capital, radio listeners and television viewers who call in live on air in order to discuss with studio guests and convey their ideas that are instantly commodified in the real-time economy, etc. *Hence the production of knowledge is a social, common process, but knowledge is appropriated by capital, and by this appropriation the producers of knowledge become just like traditional industrial labour an exploited class*." (Fuchs and Zimmerman 2009, 95)

To follow this argument requires one to abolish any meaningful distinction between work and leisure, production and reproduction. In effect, as Max Henninger puts it "life time and production time fully coincide" (Max Henninger 2007, 170). While this is a radical claim it is not entirely new for communication and media studies scholars who remember Dallas Smythe's "audience commodity" thesis. Smythe's thesis provides a good example of how Marx's process-relational theory of exploitation can be extended into the realm of contemporary communication. As Vincent Mosco explains, for Smythe the media commodification process:

> "[...] brought together a triad that linked media companies, audiences, and advertisers in a set of *reciprocal relationships*. Media firms use their programming to construct audiences; advertisers pay media companies for access to these audiences; audiences are thereby delivered to advertisers. Such an argument broadens the space within which media commodification takes place beyond the immediate process whereby media companies produce newspapers, radio broadcasts, television programs and films, and websites to include advertisers or capital in general. The process of commodification thoroughly integrates the media industries into the total capitalist economy...by producing audiences, *en masse* and in specific demographically desirable forms, for advertisers." (Mosco 2009, 137)

Smythe's "audience commodity" contribution is a productive and dynamic metaphor because it "offers a way to think about the triad of media company-audience-advertiser without submitting to the mechanistic thinking that such a structural argument invites" (Mosco 2009, 137). It instead pro-

[25] Marx's idea that production is a process renders incoherent arguments that the term "production" doesn't capture the ongoing process of creation in the online world because it signifies finality and thus should be replaced, for example, with the term "produsage" (Bruns 2008).

[26] This contradiction is increasingly played out in attempts to claim and protect intellectual property rights over what are inherently 'leaky' knowledge and information commodities on the Internet.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

vides a process-relational understanding of exploitation, one example of Vincent Mosco's call for media and communication studies to "plac(e) social processes and social relations in the foreground" (Mosco 2009, 129). What this necessitates is the choice of different entry points in order to emphasize, for example, the processes of commodification that congeal in the capturing of popular stories by private entities, instead of simply beginning and ending study with media institutions.

Indeed Smythe's argument appears to be even more suggestive today with 'Web 2.0' and the rise of what can be called the "prosumer commodity" (Manzerolle 2010). 'Web 2.0' has provided a whole new shift of workers for what autonomist Marxists call the "social factory" – the "total subsumption of society" (Negri 1996, 150). As Erin Fisher writes in his recent book:

> "An increasingly large chunk of the new economy…is built—indeed conditioned—on labor that is not compensated or […] involves new, more precarious, and partial modes of compensation […] these new relations between capital and labor […] have been a trend ever since the introduction of network technology, with companies getting ever more sophisticated at extracting profit with minimal or no monetary return to workers." (Fisher 2010, 118)

Thus, it could be said that 'Web 2.0' and network technology in general facilitate new relations of production in order to open up new avenues for exploitation. This 'intensification' of exploitation can be most clearly seen with the continuous refinement of practices of 'crowdsourcing' and other means of exploiting value from 'free time'. Fisher points to the cover of one *Wired* magazine issue which reads "Crowdsourcing: A Billion Amateurs Want Your Job". As Fisher notes: "[t]he threat is clear: one's position in the work force is threatened not so much by other workers but by a new class of workers: a new reserve army of […] amateurs" (Fisher 2010, 117).

However, what autonomist Marxists call the "social factory" does not only refer to a quantitative extension of value extraction beyond the factory gates and normal working hours but to a qualitative state of capitalist intensification whereby the very 'soul' of the worker is mobilized in the circuit of production (Berardi 2009). This is a very radical claim: the human being is not only rendered productive for the entire duration of their life, but capitalism is said to "invade our lives" by producing "subjectivity and economic value at the same time" (Lazzarato 1996). Radical yes, but also a retrieval and reinterpretation of Marx's claim that production "not only creates an object for the subject but also a subject for the object" (Marx 1973, 92).

Thus, the continued vitality of Marx's theory of exploitation for contemporary communication and media scholarship requires an understanding of how production for Marx is *both* a particular activity under the capitalist mode of production (Marx 1990) and a general processive activity of human 'species-being' (Marx 1973, 1988). Latent in Marx's general conception of production, we can find inspiration for communication research that critiques the exploitation of so-called "produsers" or "prosumers" (Fuchs 2010; 2011), "double exploitation"[27] (Murdock 2011), and the exploitation of sociability - what Mark Andrejevic (2009) refers to as "exploitation 2.0" – all examples of the intensification of exploitation under contemporary informational capitalism. Critical scholarship of this type helps render moot the argument that exploitation resides in the boiler rooms of industrial capitalism, not in our shiny new world of networked informational capitalism.

4.2. Extensification

The 'intensification' of exploitation through attempts to make daily life more generative of value exists side-by-side its 'extensification'– the spatial expansion of relations of exploitation. Indeed there is a dialectical relationship between the two. Since the degree of exploitation is always a result of the state of struggle against exploitation, the greater the resistance to intensification the more important extensification becomes for sustaining value accumulation, and vice versa.

Capitalism has always moved by necessity towards the creation of what Marx called "the world market" in order to resolve – always partially and provisionally at best - its contradictions. While communication has long been important in this regard it has become increasingly so since the computer was transformed from a computational device into a "coordination technology" across space (Malone and Rockart 1991).

Network theorists such as Castells have been deeply involved in studying how global networks have emerged and transformed the process of production. According to Castells "the network en-

[27] Murdock (2011, 33) discusses the "double exploitation" that occurs when those 'prosumers' who contribute their free labour then have to pay a "price premium" as customers for the "fruits of their labor" since co-created products often cost more than those products created by traditional production systems.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

terprise" (Castells 2000a, 163-215) is the new organizational form that has arisen as a response to the more general consolidation of networking logic and technology. Castells' global production system is reliant on "a combination of strategic alliances and *ad hoc* cooperation projects between corporations, decentralized units of each major corporation, and networks of small and medium enterprises connecting among themselves and/or with large corporations or networks of corporations" (Castells 2000a, 123).

However, Castells' global production networks are not co-extensive with all those involved in the totality of the production process. Here the network metaphor seems to preclude an analysis of what lies outside of direct production chains. This is likely due to the fact that Castells' focus is on "how business is organized (*mode of development*), rather than on the social character of this organization (*mode of production*)" (Stadler 2006, 56). But what is 'inside' these production chains and what lies 'outside' are mutually constituted, or *internally* related. As with the 'intensification' of exploitation discussed above, reproduction time and the value it generates figures prominently in the 'extensification' of exploitation. In other words there is an internal relationship between the costs of reproduction and production across the differentiated spaces of the global economy. In contemporary global capitalism, Massimo De Angelis writes:

> "[...] the most abhorrent human practices are not simply 'still' present in some distant land, the heritage of archaic times, but become instead *constituent moments* of contemporary capitalist relations. Thus, for example, modern slavery...*trickles up* in the global production chain by allowing cheaper food and cheaper generic conditions of reproduction, thus lowering the value of labour power, say, for skilled Indian programmers connected by instant communications to their America clients." (De Angelis 2007, 72f.)

The concept of "trickle up" allows us to incorporate Marx's most general category of production – production-as-life – into the equation. As such, it is a helpful way to understand exploitation in a process-relational manner because it forces us to consider production as a process that is internally related in its totality.

Even when we shift from an analysis of the 'extra-economic' process and step into the standard wage-labour model of production we cannot afford to lose track of the internal relations. It is all too easy to do so. The attention paid to "immaterial" work done at 'high-tech', knowledge-intensive firms often distracts us from the reality that these jobs coincide and are indeed underwritten by 'low-tech' labour-intensive work in developing countries around the world. As George Caffentzis explains:

> "In order for there to be an average rate of profit throughout the capitalist system, branches of industry that employ very little labour but a lot of machinery must be able to have the right to call on the pool of value that high-labour, low-tech branches create. If there were no such branches or no such right, then the average rate of profit would be so low in the high-tech, low-labour industries that all investment would stop and the system would terminate... the computer requires the sweatshop, the cyborg's existence is premised on the slave." (Caffentzis 2005b, 34)

Or as Caffentzis put it in an earlier article, "as always in capitalism's history, a leap in technology is financed out of the skins of the most technologically starved workers" (cited in Henninger 2007, 163). This means, in Marx's terminology, that 'real subsumption' and 'formal subsumption' not only coexist but they are co-implicated. Real subsumption can never completely replace formal subsumption due to the tendency of capitalism to experience a falling rate of profit. As Caffentzis explains "if the branches of high organic composition increase without limit, the rate of profit will fall to zero [...] unless there are countervailing forces that shift the weight back to the column of formal subsumption" (Caffentzis 2005a, 107).

The "global worker" was the evocative way Marx referred to "all those whose labour is indispensable to produce the final product" (Mandell 1990, 945); whose individual jobs have become part of the "*co-operative totality*" (ibid., 946). Thus, we cannot talk about 'knowledge work' without including women migrant labourers who assemble computers in China (see McKercher, Mosco and Huws 2010). In other words our definition of "the knowledge worker" must be expansive enough to include those (often gendered and racialized) workers at the other end of the spectrum whose labour is essential to the 'networks' and value chains that privilege the so-called "creative class" and its products/services in the West.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The implication of Castells' dualistic (mode of production/mode of development) approach is that the network society is seen to prioritize these highly skilled workers who can add knowledge to the network and keep up with rapid developments in technology. The corollary of course is that lower skilled workers risk being excluded as they have less knowledge to exchange, and are thus of less value to the network. Exploitation is thus a blind spot when exclusion becomes the only concern. This is why it is crucial that transformations in the mode of development be understood *internally*, within the overall mode of production - the operating logic of which remains the exploitation of the surplus value produced by the "global worker".

Clearly if we want to understand the operation of power under contemporary capitalism we should not heed the calls of Castells, Lash and other network theorists to shift our attention away from exploitation to exclusion. Castells (2009, 33) argues "[t]he primary concern for much of the world's population is to avoid irrelevance, and instead engage in a meaningful relationship, such as that which we call exploitation – because exploitation does have a meaning for the exploited". It is imperative that we reject such facile and fatalistic arguments. Contemporary capitalism, its contradictions and crises, cannot even begin to be understood without a theory of exploitation. This becomes even more obvious when we start to see the relationship between 'network' technology, 'network' production and the 'intensification' and 'extensification' of exploitation.

As Marx recognized, one of the defining characteristics of capitalism in comparison to previous systems of exploitation such as slavery or serfdom is its ability to mask exploitation by passing it through a complicated series of detours. Certainly exploitation is even more difficult to trace and measure through contemporary global production chains. Exclusion on the contrary is much more visible and easily identifiable. The street cleaner in Nairobi is – however difficult it may be to trace and measure – the nth node in a chain of exploitation; less 'excluded' from networks as excluded from the value produced. This is a process of shifting certain actors to less desirable positions in the value chain rather than removing them from the chain altogether. In short, more an issue of 'marginalization' than 'exclusion'.

Of course, one should not have to choose between critiquing either exploitation or exclusion. There is an intimate relationship between exclusion and exploitation that is itself process-relational. Most obviously, the exploitation of labour is, and has always been, dependent on the existence of a structurally unemployed surplus labour force which exists in large part in order to drive down the wages of the employed. At the same time, as Boltanski and Chiapello recognize, "[e]xclusion outside the firm often begins with exploitation inside it, particularly of poorly qualified workers or irregular workers" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 404). What is more, exclusion from the firm is sometimes a direct result of the degree of exploitation within it. For example in their study of the videogame industry Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter recognize that "[...] the insane hours of work [...] extracted from this male-dominated cultural activity and workplace in turn become a barrier to the participation of women, who will often carry the burden of a 'second shift'...of childcare and domesticity awaiting them at home." (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2006, 607)

The concept of the 'social factory' alerts us to what promises to become an increasing concern - that exclusion from the workforce will follow an increase in the ability to perfect exploitation outside of it. While this may be a new trend it builds on an old practice, most famously described in Marx's discussion of "so-called primitive accumulation". For the exploitation of the commons always first requires the exclusion (dispossession) of those populations who may legitimately make a claim to it. Only after exclusionary barriers are enacted can rent be extracted. Thus exclusion is both the symptom *and* the defining act of this form of exploitation.[28] In other words, exclusion and exploitation are themselves internally related**.**

5. Conclusion: Networks and Exploitation

This paper has attempted to accomplish two main tasks. The first task was to demonstrate that the overwhelming popularity of the network metaphor, like all metaphors, is useful as a heuristic device but not innocent of power effects. How we choose to describe the world we inhabit has direct political implications. I argue that while the network metaphor may illuminate new organizational forms throughout contemporary society it also serves to focus social critique on the problem of exclusion to the neglect of processes of exploitation.[29] While exclusion is an important and obvious injustice,

[28] David Harvey (2005) provides us with a dialectical understanding of this process, a continuous unfolding of 'primitive accumulation', that he calls "accumulation by dispossession*"*.

[29] While I critique the network metaphor for its 'blindspot', I am mostly in agreement with Felix Stalder's assessment that the network society thesis signals "the return of sociological macrotheory after years of postmodern pessimism about the possibility, or even desirability, of such a project" (Stalder 2006, 1). This is generally something to be welcomed but I attribute it largely to the process-relational ontology that guides this thesis, which brings our attention back to structural

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

it is not, as Castells (2009, 33) and others (ie. Lash 2002, 4) argue, the preeminent mode of injustice in 'the network society', nor is exploitation a derivative form of exclusion (Murphy 1985). At the same time, while the purpose of this essay has been to highlight exploitation - the network's 'blindspot' - this should not be taken to mean that 'exclusion' is a mirage. Instead, what we need is a better understanding of the internal relations between processes of exclusion and exploitation.

'Exclusion' though, as I argued, leaves much to be desired as the central theme of social critique. 'Exploitation' in fact seems to do a better job of reminding us of the shared and dynamic basis of social reality. However, instead of following Boltanski and Chiapello's lead and generating a new theory of exploitation more suitable for a 'connexionist' world this paper argues that we already have a theory of exploitation for such a world – Marx's theory of exploitation.

The second major task of this paper was to demonstrate why Marx's theory of exploitation is still relevant for critiquing power within contemporary 'informational capitalism'. I first reveal how network theories are rooted in a process-relational ontology that shares much with Marx's ontology. Marx's particular understanding of *process* and *relation*, and his recognition of *contradiction*, is contrasted with that of contemporary network theorists, particularly Manuel Castells but also Hardt and Negri. It is this common *process-relational* perspective that allows us to understand Marx's contemporary relevance, but it is these key distinctions – differences that make a difference – which promise to reinvigorate critique.

Peter Marcuse critiques Castells for presenting "the excluded without the excluders" (cited in Stalder, 2006 140). However my argument is that this is not a criticism that can be limited to Castells. Rather, it appears to be inherent to all social critique built around the network metaphor. This is because network theorists conceive of power as a de-centered 'flow', operating through the protocols that set the network's "rules of engagement". This Foucaultian conception of power - whereby power is seen to permeate society in constantly morphing formations of interlinked networks - is often contrasted with a supposed Marxist idea of power as a 'resource', emanating from a fixed external location. However, I hope that this paper's explication of Marx's process-relational ontology and his concomitant theory of exploitation makes it clear that such an interpretation is wrong-headed. I argue that Marx's philosophy of *internal* relations, his materialization of process through the category of 'production', and the unifying role that contradiction plays, allow Marx to develop a theory of exploitation *writ large*. In turn, I make an initial attempt to demonstrate how a process-relational reading of Marx's theory of exploitation reveals its continued relevance and potential for contemporary communication and media scholars interested in critiquing exploitation within contemporary informational capitalism.

In conclusion, Bertell Ollman neatly summarizes the purpose behind Marx's process-relational ontology:

> "Marx's quest […] is never for why something starts to change (as if it were not already changing) but for the various forms this change assumes and why it may *appear* to have stopped. Likewise, it is never for how a relation gets established (as if there were no relation there before), but again for the different forms it takes and why aspects of an already existing relation may *appear* to be independent." (Ollman 2003, 14)

As we look out of our windows, at a world that appears to be both ever more in flux and ever more interconnected, the task we are faced with is to not get carried away by these appearances. Instead we must ask how these appearances assume particular forms and why they reveal themselves to us in particular ways. By doing so we allow ourselves the ability to realize that Marx's theory of exploitation, contrary to popular perception, is no relic of a hierarchical world of industrial capitalism but rather a theory of social relations that is highly suited to critiquing power within contemporary informational capitalism.

References

Andrejevic, Mark. 2009. Critical Media Studies 2.0: An Interactive Upgrade. *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 1 (1): 35-51.

Barabási, Albert-László. 2003. Linked: The New Science of Networks. *American Journal of Physics* 71 (4): 409-410.

Barney, Darin. 2004**.** *The Network Society*. Cambridge**:** Polity Press.

Barzilai-Nahon, Karine. 2008. Towards a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59 (9): 1493-1512.

forms and the relational processes that enact these forms.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Béland, Daniel. 2007. *The Social Exclusion Discourse: Ideas and Policy Change*. *Policy & Politics* 35 (1): 123-139.
Berardi, Franco (Bifo). 2009. *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello. 2006. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.
Bruns, Axel. 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*. New York: Peter Lang.
Buchanan, Allen. 1979. Exploitation, Alienation, and Injustice. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 9 (1): 121-139.
Caffentzis, George. 2005a. Immeasurable Value: An Essay on Marx's legacy. *The Commoner* 10: 88-114.
Caffentzis, George. 2005b. The End of Work or the Renaissance of Slavery? A Critique of Rifkin and Negri. *Common Sense*, no. 24. Accessed March 15, 2007. http://commonsensejournal.org.uk/files/2010/08/CommonSense24.pdf#page=22.
Callinicos, Alex. 2006. *The Resources of Critique*. Cambridge: Polity.
Capra, Fritjof. 2004**.** *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living*. New York**:** Anchor Books.
Castells, Manuel. 2000a. *The Rise of the Network Society, the Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I*. Second Edition, Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
Castells, Manuel. 2000b. Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Network Society". *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (1): 5-24.
Castells, Manuel. 2000c. *End of Millennium, the Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. III*. Second Edition, Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
Castells, Manuel. 2009. *Communication Power.* Oxford University Press, USA.
Castells, Manuel. 2011a. A Network Theory of Power. *International Journal of Communication 5:* 773-787.
Castells, Manuel. 2011b. Introduction to the Workshop: The Promise of Network Theory. *International Journal of Communication* 5. 794-795.
Cavanagh, Allison. 2007. *Sociology in the Age of the Internet*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill International.
De Angelis, Massimo. 2007. *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital*. London: Pluto Press.
Dyer-Witheford Nick and Greig de Peuter. 2006. 'EA Spouse' and the Crisis of Video Game Labour: Enjoyment, Exclusion, Exploitation, and Exodus, *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31: 599-617.
Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. *Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. The American Journal of Sociology* 103 (2): 281-317.
Fisher, Eran. 2010. *Media and New Capitalism in the Digital Age: The Spirit of Networks*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
Foucault, Michel. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
Fuchs, Christian. 2007. Transnational Space and the "Network Society". *21st Century Society* 2 (1): 49-78.
Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Reflections on Manuel Castells' Book Communication Power. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable* Information *Society* 7 (1): 94-108. Accessed November 3, 2011. http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/viewFile/136/90
Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.
Fuchs, Christian. 2011. The Contemporary World Wide Web: Social Medium or New Space of Accumulation? In *The Political Economies of Media. The Transformation of the Global Media Industries*, edited by Dwayne Winseck and Dal Yong Jin, 201-220. London: Bloomsbury.
Galloway, Alexander. 2004. *Protocol, or, How Control Exists after Decentralization*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
Gane, Nicholas and David Beer. 2008. *New Media: The Key Concepts.* Oxford: Berg.
Garnham, Nicholas. 2004. Information Society Theory as Ideology. In *The Information Society Reader*, edited by Frank Webster, 165-184. London: Routledge.
Gould, Carol C. 1978. *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press.
Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2009. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Hearn, Alison. 2010. Reality Television, The Hills, and the Limits of the Immaterial Labour Thesis. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable* Information *Society*, *8* (1): 60-76.
Henninger, Max. 2007. Doing the Math: Reflections on the Alleged Obsolescence of the Law of Value under Post-Fordism. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 7 (1): 158-177.
Hepp, Andreas, Friedrich Krotz, Shaun Moores and Carsten Winter, eds. 2008. *Connectivity, Networks and Flows: Conceptualizing Contemporary Communications*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc.
Jessop, Bob. 2001. The State and the Contradictions of the Knowledge-Driven Economy. Published by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YN. Accessed March 25, 2012. http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Jessop-State-and-Contradictions.pdf
Lash, Scott. 2002. *Critique of Information*, London: Sage.
Law, John. 2003. Networks, Relations, Cyborgs: On the Social Study of Technology. Published by the Centre for Science Studies, Lancaster University: Lancaster. Accessed December 30, 2011. http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Law-Networks-Relations-Cyborgs.pdf
Lazzarato, Maurizio. 1996. Immaterial Labor. In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 133–147. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
Malone, T. and Rockart, J. 1991. Computers, Networks and the Corporation. *Scientific American,* Vol. 265, No. 3.128-136.
Mandel, Ernest. 1990. Introduction to "Appendix: Results of the Immediate Process of Production." In *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*. London: Penguin.
Manzerolle, Vincent. 2010. "Mobilizing the Audience Commodity: Digital Labour in a Wireless World. *Ephemera* 10 (3/4): 455-69.
Marcuse, Peter. 2002. Depoliticizing Globalization: The Information Age and the Network Society of Manuel Castells. In *Investigating the City: Contemporary and Future Perspectives,* edited by John Eade and Christopher Mele, 131-158. Oxford: Blackwell.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl. 1972. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844.* New York: International Publishers.
Marx, Karl. 1973. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy.* Translated by Martin Nicolaus. London and New York: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*. London: Penguin.
Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1974. *The German Ideology*, edited by Chris J. Arthur. New York: International Publishers.
Mattelart, Armand and Michèle Mattelart. 1998. *Theories of Communication. An Introduction*. London: Sage Publications.
McKercher, Catherine and Vincent Mosco. 2010. Getting the Message: Communications Workers and Global Value Chains. *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*. 4 (2): 1-9.
Mosco, Vincent and Catherine McKercher. 2008. *The Laboring of Communication*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.
Murphy, Raymond. 1985. Exploitation or Exclusion? *Sociology* 19 (2): 225-243.
Murdock, Graham. 2011. Political Economies as Moral Economies: Commodities, Gifts, and Public Goods. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, 11-40. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Negri, Antonio. 1996. Twenty Theses on Marx, Interpretation of the Class Situation Today, In *Marxism beyond Marxism*. edited by Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino and Rebecca E. Karl, 149-180. New York: Routledge.
Ollman, Bertell. 2003. *Dance of the Dialectic*: *Steps in Marx's Method.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Pomeroy, *Anne* Fairchild. 2004 *Marx and Whitehead: Process, Dialectics, and the Critique of Capitalism*. Albany: State University of New York.
Quandt, Thorsten. 2008. Network Theory and Human Action: Theoretical Concepts and Empirical Applications. In *Connetivity, Networks and Flows: Conceptualizing Contemporary Communications*, edited by Andreas Hepp, Friedrich Krotz, Shaun Moores, and Carsten Winter, 111-133. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc.
Ross, Andrew. 2009. *Nice Work if You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*. New York: New York University Press.
Stalder, Felix. 2006. *Manuel Castells and the Theory of the Network Society.* Oxford: Polity Press.
Thrift, Nigel. 2002. A Hyperactive World. In *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World,* edited by R.J. Johnston, Peter J. Taylor, and Michael J. Watts, 29-42. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
Urry, John. 2003. *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Van Dijk, Jan A.G.M. 2006. *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media.* 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
Watts, D.J. 2003. *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age.* New York: Norton.
Watts, D.J. 2004. The New Science of Networks. *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 243-270.
Webster, Frank.1995. *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.
Wayne, Mike. 2004. Mode of Production: New Media Technology and the Napster File. *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society*. 16 (2) 137-154.
Wildman, Wesley J. 2010. An Introduction to Relational Ontology. In *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology*, edited by John Polkinghorne and John Zizioulas, 55-73. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

About the Author

Robert Prey
Robert Prey is a doctoral candidate in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. His research interests include the political economy of communication, international communication, and immaterial and migrant labour. From 2006-2008 he worked with Migrant World Television (MWTV) in South Korea and from 2007-2008 he was a visiting researcher in the Department of Sociology at Sungkonghoe University in Seoul, South Korea.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 274-301, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

A Note on the Ongoing Processes of Commodification: From the Audience Commodity to the Social Factory

Jernej Prodnik

Faculty of Social Sciences, Social Communication Research Centre, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia jernej.prodnik@fdv.uni-lj.si

Abstract: The commodity-form played an important, if often overlooked, role in the studies of capitalism. Processes of transforming literally anything into a privatized form of (fictitious) commodity that is exchanged in the circulation process are of fundamental importance for the rise and reproduction of capitalism. At the same time the commodity, as the "cell-form of capitalism", has played a crucial role throughout Marx's *oeuvre*. The central aim of the paper is to demonstrate how the commodity-form develops in his works (both as a part of his "global" argument and in the context of historical changes) and what role it plays in some of the key works of critical theory. Furthermore, the aim is to show how this topic was approached in critical communication studies and has been analysed in the political economy of communication. The latter is done principally through a reappraisal of the "blind spot debate" initiated by Dallas W. Smythe and the audience commodity thesis, in which it was raised. This long-lasting debate, which at least indirectly continues to date, can be seen as an invaluable source for practices and ideas connected to both Marxian-inspired critical communication studies and to a serious analysis of the continuing commodification of different spheres of society and its increasing pervasiveness in contemporary life. In the last section, these findings are connected to some of the recent neo-Marxist approaches, especially to the findings of the authors coming from the autonomist (post-operaist) movement. Insights into this intellectual strand can provide an understanding of the ongoing commodification processes, while also offering possibilities of convergence with Smythe's approach.

Keywords: Commodity-form, Commodification, Abstraction, Political economy of communication, Critique of political economy, Social factory, Audience commodity, Internet, Communication capitalism, Capitalism, Critical communication studies.

1. Introduction

Commodity-form and commodification have played an important, if often overlooked, role in critical studies of capitalist societies. Authors such as Adorno (2001/1991), Debord (1970, ch.2), Lukács (1971), Sohn-Rethel (1972; 1978), Cleaver (2000/1979), Wallerstein (1983, ch.1), Huws (2003), and Postone (2003/1993) have focused their attention on this so-called "cell-form of capitalism", as the commodity has been characterised in Marx's writing. Commodity-form[1] was a key category in Marx's work and it played a crucial role throughout his whole *oeuvre*, from his early writings on political economy to his latter conceptualisations that included full development of the role it carries in constitution and reproduction of the capitalist societies (Marx and Engels 1976; 1987; Marx 1993/1858; 1990/1867; see also Murdock 2006; Barbalet 1983, 90f.). Even in post-modernity, commodification processes can be seen as being amongst crucial preconditions for the general preservation of capitalist social relations and continuing expansion of capital. Historically speaking, processes of transforming literally *anything* into a privatized form of (fictitious) commodity that can be exchanged in the market are thus of critical importance for both the rise and continuing reproduction of capitalism. It is only via the production of commodities for exchange that capitalists can extract surplus value from labour (Huws 2003, 61).

The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate how the role of commodity-form and commodification were analysed in the key works of heterodox critical theory (both in Marx's work and in the writings of his successors) and what the main consequences are of the global universalisation of the commodity-form for society and social relations according to these authors. This will be done in the following three sections of this paper, where I will look closely at how the commodity-form was analysed by Marx throughout his *oeuvre* (Section 2) and how this corresponds to the wider historical transformations and the constitution of capitalist society. In Section 3, a closer look at how different critical authors following Marx analysed these processes will help to clarify the role commodification plays in the emergence of commodity fetishism and how corresponding exchange contributes to human individualisation (Section 3). In Section 4, this argument will be further extended by

[1] Sohn-Rethel takes a close look at the term "form", which he defines as being time-bound: "It originates, dies and changes with time" (1978, 17). This supposedly distinguishes Marx and his dialectical thought from all other schools of thinking. For Jameson (2011, 35) the word "form" prevents "thingification" or reification of money, exchange-value etc., that are first and foremost social relations.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

demonstrating that there is now an enduring global commodification of everything, including culture, creativity, information, and diverging types of communication; these categories are becoming fundamental in what could also be called capitalist informational societies. Furthermore, I will be interested in how this topic was approached in critical communication studies, especially in the (critique of) political economy of communication (see Mosco 2009, ch.7). The latter will first and foremost be done through a reappraisal of the "blind spot debate" (and the concurring "audience commodity" thesis), which also played a crucial role in the development of political economy of communication as such[2]. Section 5 will help to clarify how commodification, with the help of digitalisation, is able to penetrate into communication processes and thus construct new commodities. In the last part of the text, in Section 6, these findings will be connected to some of the recent neo-Marxist approaches, especially to the findings of the authors coming from the autonomist/post-operaist movement. I will try to show how insights into this intellectual strand can provide an understanding of the ongoing commodification processes through concepts such as communicative, bio-linguistic capitalism, and social factory, and how it therefore offers several convergence points with political economy of communication.

The main presupposition of this text will be that there is an increasing significance of communication in post-Fordist capitalism. Communication spreads into, and emanates from, all nooks of the social fabric; this notion, however, seems especially crucial in the current historical epoch, which seems to be completely permeated by communication on all levels of human and social life (i.e. notions regarding the mediatisation of society). At the same time, however, communication is also becoming almost fully commodified. Post-operaist thought claims that communication, or even language-capacity as such, gained hegemonic primacy in contemporary society, while also constituting a new source of capitalist accumulation. Several of the assertions pointed out by Marx, his early successors, and authors contributing to the "blind-sport debate" therefore need to be raised again because of the significantly (but not fundamentally) changed social context and technological changes that are enabling further expansion of commodification.

2. The Role of the Commodity-Form in the Writings of Karl Marx

According to Lukács (1971), it was not a coincidence that Marx began his major works with an analysis of the commodity when he decided to lay out the totality of capitalist society. The problem of commodities should, according to Lukács, in fact be regarded "as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects" (Lukács 1971, 83). It should therefore not be seen either in isolation or even as a central problem of only economics, which consequently means it is difficult to ignore this issue when providing a critique of the *really existing* social relations. For Marx (1990/1976, 90), the commodity-form, which is the product of abstract human labour (both being historical categories bound to capitalist societies), is one of the economic cell-forms of the current historical epoch. These categories enabled Marx to analyse capitalism in its most abstract form, but also at its most fundamental level. It is worth mentioning that he saw abstraction as a chief (and perhaps only possible) means of a scientific analysis of society, which, together with dialectics, enables the enquirer to go beyond mere appearances of things[3].

This crucial role of the commodity can be seen from Marx's earliest writings on political economy to his later conceptualisations, and many authors believed this to be the pre-eminent starting point for any analysis of society under capitalism (e.g. Lukács 1971; Sohn-Rethel 1978; Postone 2003/1993). In Marx's early writings, for example in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, published in French in 1847 (Marx and Engels 1976, 105-212), he dealt with the use and especially exchange-value of

[2] Dallas W. Smythe initiated this debate in 1977 with his article *Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism*, which was followed by several replies and corrections, most notably by Murdock (1978) a year later and Smythe's (1978) rejoinder to Murdock in the same year.

[3] Experiments in natural sciences are replaced by the power of abstraction in social sciences. Theory is, for example, always an abstraction from empirical reality, even if it must inevitably build on this same reality. Marx furthermore pointed out that "all science would be superfluous if the form of appearance of things directly coincided with their essence" (Marx 1991/1981, 956). It is precisely here, according to him, that "vulgar economics feels completely at home, these relationships appearing all the more self-evident to it, the more their inner connections remain hidden". (ibid.) According to Eagleton (1996, 6), there is always a hiatus between how things actually are and how they seem; there is, so to say, a difference between essence and appearance, because the latter needs to be penetrated or bypassed to understand reality (see Barbalet 1983, 23f.; Postone 2003/1993). It could therefore be claimed that one of the central goals of both dialectics and abstraction is to take analysis beyond sole appearances of things, which is impossible with a mere analysis of concrete reality (where several mechanisms operate at the same time). In most cases, things are not simply opaque or what they seem on the surface. Barbalet (1983, 24) points out it is exactly the role commodity fetishism (which is dealt with later in this text) plays in society that demonstrates this point in its entirety. For a more detailed analysis of contradictions between appearances and reality (and questions concerning transphenomenality and counter-phenomenality) see also Collier's (1994, 6f.) interpretation of the meta-theoretical position of critical realism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

commodities, the latter being an inexorable part of commodity production in the societies of producers who exchange their commodities. It is around this time that he defined the law of value of commodities as being determined by the labour time inherent in them (he still wrote of labour and not labour power, which is a more precise conceptualisation also present in his later writings). Labour time is therefore the measure of value, and labour, as Marx pointed out (Marx and Engels 1976, 130), was itself a commodity: labour-commodity, bought and sold in the market. If there is an exchange of two products (commodities), there is an exchange of equal quantities of labour, or more precisely, exchange of labour time (Marx and Engels 1976, 126). As he famously put it: "Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcase. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything; hour for hour, day for day" (Marx and Engels 1976, 127). This, of course, is a historical specificity of capitalist societies and not some eternal justice, as Proudhon at the time thought it was.

According to Murdock, it was already in the time when Marx wrote *The Poverty of Pjhilosophy* that he identified "commodification as the central driving force propelling capitalism's expansion" (Murdock 2006, 3). It was consequently only a matter of time before all things, from physical to moral, that might never have been sold or acquired before in the history of humankind, are brought to the market and exchanged (ibid.; see also Marx and Engels 1976, 113). The role of the commodity-form in the Marxian critique of political economy can therefore hardly be overstated even in Marx's earliest writings. It can be regarded as an indispensable part of capitalism, the blood in its cycle of accumulation, which is essential for its continuing reproduction[4]. This also demonstrates that the commodity-form is an unavoidable part of a serious critique of capitalism, the line of thinking which was considerably extended by critical communication studies, especially by authors following Smythe's path. For Mosco, for example, the commodification process, defined as "the process of transforming use-values into exchange-values" (Mosco 2009, 129, ch. 7), is one of the central processes that make up the starting point for the political economy of communication.

Even though Marx had already analysed the commodity-form in his earliest writings, it is especially in his later works that he provided a detailed overview of the role it has, not only in the reproduction of capitalism, but also in social life as such. His perhaps most detailed account was in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (see Marx and Engels 1987, 257-417), which was written between 1858 and 1859, and served as a basis for his elaboration of the commodity in the first volume of *Capital* (Marx 1990/1867). In these two works, all of the so-called cell-forms of capitalist economy are fully laid out, including the difference between abstract labour, which is the source of exchange-value, and concrete labour, which can produce an infinite variety of different use-values and is the source of actual material wealth. Both exchange-value, or simply value, and abstract labour, can be seen as such historical cell-forms, and both are indispensable parts of commodity-form[5]. All of these categories form the basis of the capitalist economy in the most abstract sense. According to Marx, the key difference between abstract and concrete labour is that "labour positing exchange-value is a*bstract universal* and *uniform* labour", whereas "labour positing use-value is concrete and distinctive labour, comprising infinitely varying kinds of labour as regards its form and the material to which it is applied". (Marx and Engels 1987, 277) Abstract labour is, so to say, socially useful labour, but one which is without particular use-value to an individual. According to Marx, "universal labour is consequently not a ready-made prerequisite but an emerging result" (Marx and Engels 1987, 286); it exists in commodities in a latent state and only becomes universal as the result of the exchange process. The subject matter of political economy is only the abstract labour and (exchange-) value, while all commodities, regarded as exchange-values, "are merely definite quantities of *congealed labour time*" (Marx and Engels 1987, 272). This later led Marx to state quite famously that "moments are the elements of profit" (Marx 1990/1867, 352), something that the Taylorist management doctrine developed to the full in the production process.

What seems important here is that even though "exchange-value is a relation between persons; it is however necessary to add that it is a relation hidden by a material veil" (Marx and Engels 1987, 276). This enduring mystification can be seen as one of the most important premises pointed out by Marx and it was later on fully developed through the concept of fetishism. The core ideas of this important presupposition have been developed much earlier though:

[4] Seeing commodities as being the blood cells in capitalist accumulation cycle is not only an analogy or a metaphor. In his analysis of the primitive accumulation, Marx in fact points out that "a great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any birth-certificate, was yesterday, in England, the capitalized blood of children" (Marx 1990/1976, 920). This, at least implicitly, touches on another important part of his analysis of the commodity-form, namely commodity fetishism. I deal with this issue later in the text (especially in the Section 3.4).

[5] The fact that this particular type of labour is specific only for capitalism and at the same time also fundamental for its functioning, led both Marcuse (1955, 287-295) and Postone (2003/1993) to call for abolition of labour (as known in capitalist societies).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "It is a characteristic feature of labour which posits exchange-value that it causes the social relations of individuals to appear in the perverted form of a social relation between things. [...] Only the conventions of everyday life make it appear commonplace and ordinary that social relations of production should assume the shape of things, so that the relations into which people enter in the course of their work appear as the relations of things to one another and of things to people. This mystification is still a very simple one in the case of a commodity. Everybody understands more or less clearly that the relations of commodities as exchange-values are really the relations of people to the productive activities of one another. The semblance of simplicity disappears in more advanced relations of production. All the illusions of the monetary system arise from the failure to perceive that money, though a physical object with distinct properties, represents a social relation of production" (Marx and Engels 1987, 275f.).

There are several important consequences arising from these findings, perhaps most notably the following: While Marx's approach presupposes a need for abstraction to understand how capitalism works (as already pointed out), there is also a real abstraction going on all the time in the existing historical epoch dominated by commodity exchange. "An abstraction is made every day in the social process of production", Marx stresses (Marx and Engels 1987, 272). It is a prerequisite for the constitution of equivalents between factually unequal things. For example, a reduction of different kinds of useful labour into homogeneous abstract labour is unavoidable, because it makes possible monetary exchange between different use-values, which are inherent in commodities. Secondly, these findings have enormous consequences for how social life is constituted in existing societies. Most notably, what is the wider social role of the commodity-form in the concept of commodity fetishism, but also what role does exchange of commodities play in the individualisation of human beings and what types of instrumental rationalisation are developed? These issues will be more thoroughly analysed in the next section.

3. Commodification and Individualisation: On the Historical Transformations and Commodity Fetishism

Commodities, as the products of abstract labour and the worldwide division of labour, obtain definite social character and mediate between individuals and their private labour through the market. As already pointed out, it is not the physical nature of the commodity that matters when it comes to exchanging it, but its social character: what is central is its relation to the other commodities available for exchange (as products of various kinds of useful labour). This relationship between commodities and consequent equivalence between different kinds of labour is constituted through the market. Not only is there a unity of use-value and exchange-value in every commodity, but a commodity can only exist in relation to other commodities through a *series of equations*. "The *exchange process* of commodities is the *real* relation that exists between them. This is a social process which is carried on by individuals independently of one another" (Marx and Engels 1987, 282). As Marx so famously puts it in *Capital*, this creates a very special social relation that is established through things and forms the basis for commodity fetishism:

> "It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves, which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. [...] In other words, the labour of the private individual manifests itself as an element of the total labour of society only through the relations which the act of exchange establishes between products, and, through mediation, between the producers. To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material [dinglich] relations between persons and social relations between things". *(*Marx 1990/1867, 165f.)

It is thus social relations between things that mediate between people, consequently producing the key mystification of contemporary social life. Social relations between people are displaced by (and to) something else, in this case, into relations between commodities, simultaneously creating a material veil (which will lead us directly to the questions of individualisation later in the text). The general idea behind both this displacement and commodity fetishism as a whole is relatively simple, but at the same time, it is notoriously difficult (Balibar 2007, 57). This is especially so because

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

this concept produces such immensely far-reaching consequences on how we live our lives in (post) modern societies.

3.1. Historical Changes and the Social Relations in Capitalist Societies

The key abstract historical arguments made by Marx, which are of crucial importance for the analysis of these consequences for society, have been succinctly presented by Hobsbawm (2011, 130-132). He points out that Marx's theory of social and economic evolution is based on his analysis of (wo)man as a social animal[6]. This can be seen as Marx's fundamental ontological position regarding human nature. Marx's quite abstract account of particular phases of social-economic formations, as depicted in Grundrisse, starts with human beings that labour in nature, changing it and taking from it. This is the basis and natural condition for creation and reproduction of their existence. Taking and changing a part of nature can be seen as perhaps the first kind of appropriation. This type of appropriation, however, is merely an aspect of human labour, a material interchange between nature and human beings, which is necessary for their survival. Appropriation is also expressed in the concept of property, but one that is very much different from historically specific *private* property, which is distinctive of capitalist societies (see Hobsbawm 2011, 130; May 2010). As social animals, human beings develop both co-operation and social division of labour, the latter being nothing else than specialisation of functions, enabling people to produce a *surplus* over what is needed to maintain and reproduce the individual and the community. Furthermore, "the existence of both the surplus and the social division of labour makes possible *exchange*. But initially, both production and exchange have as their object merely *use*" (Hobsbawm 2011, 131). As human beings emancipate themselves from nature and start to "control" it (simultaneously also changing the relations of production), significant changes happen to the social relations into which they enter. A more detailed account of these changes will be looked at later and was partially already pointed out. In a historical sense, however, these changes are a result of both the aforementioned specialisation of labour, and furthermore, of the invention of the money form, and, with it, of the commodity production and market exchange. This provides "a basis for procedures unimaginable before, including capital accumulation" (Hobsbawm 2011, 131). In the latest phase, which occurred under capitalism, the worker was consequently reduced to nothing more than labour power. In the production process a total separation is made between use-value, exchange-value, and accumulation, which can be seen as a very distinct feature of this epoch. Reproduction is in fact separated from – or even opposes – production (of commodities), where unity used to exist in the pre-capitalist social formations (Fortunati 1989, 8). The economic aims of capitalism, as one can see, are radically different from those of preceding modes of production that focused on the production of use-values in relation to the reproduction of human lives. For Fortunati, this means that commodity production can be posited as "*the* fundamental point of capitalist production, and the laws that govern it as the laws that characterise capitalism itself" (Fortunati 1989, 8). The main goal becomes an endless accumulation of still more capital, an accumulation for accumulation's sake – this rational intent to maximise accumulation is a "law" that governs all economic activity in capitalism (Wallerstein 1983).

It can be claimed that there is a whole complex of different categories, which need to be developed (producing a qualitative social change) to make capitalist society what it is: from abstract labour, commodity-form and commodification, which presuppose production with the sole intent of exchange (and consequently dominance of exchange-value) (see Marx 1990/1867, 733), to the expropriation of surplus-value in the production process, the social (and finally worldwide) division of labour, accumulation for accumulation's sake and also a historically novel possibility of an endless accumulation. And for the latter to be possible, accumulation of a capitalist presupposes valorisation, constant increasing of the value of the commodities bought, which is done through the production process (see Marx 1990/1867, 711). This complex also needs a specific capital relation and its reproduction, namely the capitalist on the one hand and the wage-labourer on the other (Marx 1990/1867, 724).

I will focus on these changes in more detail in the next (sub) sections. For a more detailed analysis of the historically specific capitalist epoch, as delineated by Marx, we are first bound to turn to the first volume of *Capital* (Marx 1990/1867). Looking at capitalism on its surface, one is quickly able to see there is an apparent rupture between the capitalist class and the proletariat, the latter being defined as those who do not own the means of production or are prevented direct access to (and thus divorced from) them. This crucial separation is constituted especially through the so-called primitive (or primary) accumulation, which can be seen as being an inherently extra-

[6] See also Barbalet (1983).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

economic process and thereby has little to do with how the economy is supposed to reproduce itself "normally".[7] It is exactly primitive accumulation that historically and momentarily enables enclosures of the common lands, expropriation of the commoners, expulsion of peasants from their lands, incorporation of different activities and spheres into exchange relations, and finally, also incorporating these spheres into capitalist social relations (in the words of Sohn-Rethel, society of private appropriation in contrast to the previous societies of production). Amongst others – and one which is of indispensable importance for the existence of capitalist production – this process crucially contributes to the production of labour power as a commodity. It effectively prevents people from accessing the means of production and therefore also the means of their own subsistence, consequently pushing them into waged-labour (at the same time producing a very much changed constitution of society). Murdock (2011, 18-20) was one of the authors from the field of political economy of communication that constantly stressed the historical role of enclosures and processes of accumulation as dispossession for the march of commodification, which also forced people to start selling their labour power for a wage.

This factual inability to access the means of production is the key characteristic of the proletariat and its development in time contributes to ever larger proletarianisation of the labour force in capitalism as a historical system (see Wallerstein 1983, ch.1). As people are (often quite forcefully) rejected access to the means of production, they need to sell their labour-power on the labour market to survive, which is a historical novelty of capitalist societies (and took a long time to actually develop, initially pushing many people into extreme pauperism) (see Polanyi 2001/1944). People sell their labour-power on the market in a free and apparently fair exchange between the buyers (capitalists) and sellers (labourers) of this commodity. In most cases, this is in fact the only commodity proletarians own: their own body and capacities inherent in it, which can (or rather must) now be exchanged as a commodity on the market. The capitalist, as the buyer of the labour-power commodity, is only able to "hire" the labourer, or to be more precise, his capacity to labour, for a particular period of time[8]. The latter can be seen as one of the key tenets of both the liberal political economy and liberal take on human freedom in society. It enables both apparently free exchange between two consenting parties, which is carried out in the market, and development of the labour market itself. But as Marcuse pointed out, the fact that an individual is free to sell his labour-power is actually the prerequisite for labour-power to even become a commodity. The labour contract thus "epitomizes this freedom, equality and justice" (Marcuse 1955, 308) (and of course also necessity to be exploited) in the context of liberal capitalism. As Marx himself puts it, "labour-power can appear on the market as a commodity only if, and in so far as, its possessor, the individual whose labour-power it is, offers it for sale or sells it as a commodity. In order that its possessor may sell it as a commodity, he must have it at his disposal, he must be the free proprietor of his own labour-capacity, hence of his person". (Marx 1990/1867, 271) As the capitalist temporarily buys the labourer's labour power, he (or she) is able to employ him (or her) in the production process, where he (or she) can directly control him (or her), making sure the work he (or she) was hired for is done. Finally, in the production process, the labourer produces both (exchange-) value and surplus-value, the latter being the source of capitalist exploitation[9].

[7] Primitive accumulation has (in most cases) been also an extremely violent process. There has been an increased interest into the problems of primary (or primitive) accumulation in recent years, demonstrating this is still a very much contested topic in the critique of political economy. It also demonstrates that this topic is gaining relevance in the existing historical epoch. One of the key arguments made in the reinterpretations of this concept has been that primitive accumulation is not a historically limited process, which would be significant only as a starting point of the capitalist accumulation. It is in fact constantly reproduced and therefore a permanent part of capitalism, helping both to constitute and expand capitalist social relations. On these issues see writings of Perelman (2000), Bonefeld (2001), De Angelis (2007, ch.10), Prodnik (2011), or Mezzadra (2011). Harvey (2003, 144-152) coined the term *accumulation by dispossession* to clearly denote permanence of this process in capitalist societies. On the privatization of the commons, which is connected to these same issues, see Bollier (2002) and Boyle (2008).

[8] It has not been stressed often enough, but individuals as such have no (exchange) value whatsoever in capitalist society and cannot have it. It is a commodity that is contained within the individual that potentially holds value: their capacity for production – labour-power. Capitalist therefore does not appropriate labourer as such, but *his labour*, and in concrete reality this exchange cannot happen in any other way but between the *individual-as-capacity-for-production* and capital (see Fortunati 1989).

[9] This can be seen as one of the key findings that Marx successfully proved in the first volume of *Capital* on an abstract level (Marx 1990/1867, 293-306): exchange between buyers and sellers of the labour-power commodity is, in fact, *not* fair. But not on the market, which is the surface of capitalist social order. This inequality develops in the production process, where labourer as a rule produces more value with his labour-power than he gets paid for: "The value of labour-power, and the value which that labour-power valorizes [*verwertet*] in the labour-process, are two entirely different magnitudes; and this difference was what the capitalist had in mind when he was purchasing the labour-power" (Ibid., 300). This is called surplus-value and, in the first instance, it should be seen as a technical and not a moral term (as it is often both interpreted and used). Labour-power is also the only commodity from which more value can be extracted than it has been paid for in the market. According to Negri (1991/1984, 79), behind the appearance of exchange, a theft is thereby taking place. Further-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

3.2. The exchange of Commodities and Social Totality

This short summary might seem superfluous to those who are sufficiently acquainted with Marx, but it is crucial for the understanding of the roles that exchange, equivalence, and commodity have in his total argument. Products made in the capitalist production process are necessarily commodities. And they are also necessarily put into an exchange relation with other commodities, which can only be done through the market. This is, after all, what makes them commodities: their social character, their ability to be exchangeable because of their social desirability, and the market is the only way to compare these commodities. If this was not the case, they would be just some useful products for their actual producer, while the focus in the production process would simply be on the use-value of the products for their actual producer[10]. But the whole importance for the capitalist selling these products in fact lies in the production of exchange-value, which is, in most cases, expressed in the form of price on the market (i.e. through the money form, which is the universal equivalent and the measure of exchange-value). The ability to exchange these articles for the universal equivalent, which also makes extraction of surplus value fairly simple, is the sole reason the capitalist is employing labourers who produce these commodities. If something might be very useful for the society, but would at the same time (directly or indirectly) lack exchange-value, it, as a rule, could not be of any particular importance for the capitalists[11]. In the best-case scenario, it will be different *support systems* in the capitalist society (e.g. welfare state) that will take care of this – or not.

Furthermore, because it is the capitalist class that sells products (commodities) on the market, it is incidentally (also) the labourer that needs to buy these products as the means of his subsistence. Doing so, he inadvertently assists with the reproduction of the capitalist accumulation cycle and capitalist system as a whole; the labourer consequently inadvertently perpetuates his own exploitation (see Marcuse 1955, 309; Hobsbawm 2011). The labourer thus unintentionally helps with the preservation of the existing class relations, because he is reaffirming labour's separation from the means of production. The working class (i.e. proletariat) is therefore integral to capitalism, its unavoidable part (Postone 2003/1993, *cf.* Marx 1990/1867, 716, 724), which is based on the property relation of private ownership of the means of production. What is of crucial importance here is that even though the history of modern society and capital is of course socially constituted, it nevertheless "possesses a quasi-autonomous developmental logic" (Postone 2003/1993, 31). How the capitalist system actually works is therefore more or less independent and automated, as it generates a dynamic that is beyond the control of any individual actor constituting it (but not necessarily of the coalition of subjectivities, multitude or a whole social class, which can collectively resist its domination, but these questions will not occupy us in the present text). This becomes especially clear when Marx talks about (exchange-) value, which is an "immaterial" appendage to the commodity. Even if it is immaterial, that does not make it subjective: it is both (socially) objective and at the

---

more, because labourer temporarily sold his labour-power to the capitalist before he entered the production process, the products he produced are alienated from him by the capitalist at the end of the working day (alienation is another concept that had vast influence in Marxism, but its conceptualization went through drastic changes even in Marx's own writings when his thought was developing). Final products of the labour process are therefore a property of the capitalist and not of its immediate producer, the labourer. Labourer waived away his right to the products when he temporarily sold his labour-power to the capitalist. Instead of retaining these products, he gets paid wages for his labour, which are of lower value than what he actually produced (hence, exploitation). The exchange between the worker and capital is therefore only formally an exchange of equivalents between equals. As Fortunati (1989, 9) points out, it is in fact an exchange of non-equivalents between unequals. The abstract argument made by Marx also presupposes that wage that labourer receives is no higher than living wages. He already came to this finding in 1847, saying that "labour, being itself a commodity, is measured as such by the labour time needed to produce the labour-commodity. And what is needed to produce this labour-commodity? Just enough labour time to produce the objects indispensable to the constant maintenance of labour, that is, to keep the worker alive and in a condition to propagate his race" (Marx and Engels 1976, 125). Several authors claimed this was a nice example of how Marx was historically completely wrong. But they (perhaps intentionally) forgot this was an abstract argument, building on a rational *tendency* of how a capitalist will operate. There are, of course, several other tendencies and mechanisms at work in a concrete and complex social reality, amongst others political interventions made by the state (regulation of working hours, minimal wage), which are often a result of class antagonisms and power relations in a specific society.

[10] Again, it is exactly this social character that is the main characteristic of the commodity. The commodity *must* be exchanged on the market. It is paradoxical that a specific commodity would in fact not be a commodity, if it were a mere use-value for its owner. "For its owner it is on the contrary a *non-use-value"*, Marx (Marx and Engels 1987, 283) writes in the *Critique*. Commodity is "merely the physical depository of exchange-value, or simply a *means of exchange*. [...] The commodity is a use-value for its owner only so far as it is an exchange-value. The commodity therefore has still to *become* a use-value, in the first place a use-value for others". (ibid.)

[11] This is not because capitalist is somehow morally corrupt (even though he might be), but because in competitive market system he is pressured by the *coercive laws of competition*. If every individual capitalist did not follow his own self-interest he would quickly go bankrupt. Capitalists therefore cannot set boundaries to their own activities in a competitive system. This is, for example, a very significant notion when ecological issues are debated.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

same time constantly changeable in space and time, because a commodity is a result of a socially useful (and also socially necessary) labour, which varies between specific types of society (e.g. because of rise and fall of productivity connected to technological developments, natural circumstances etc.)[12]. As Marx puts it, "exchange-value appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value, i.e. an exchange-value that is inseparably connected with the commodity, inherent in it, seems a contradiction in terms" (Marx 1990/1867, 126). But as he develops his argument further, one can see that this is an argumentation distinctive of vulgar economics. The price of commodities indeed fluctuates, but neither value nor its market representation (via price and money) can be seen as arbitrary. Their common denominator is quantity of objectified (abstract) labour, put in the context of the whole capitalist economy. The labour time, "objectified in the use-values of commodities is both the substance that turns them into exchange-values and therefore into commodities, and the standard by which the precise magnitude of their value is measured" (Marx and Engels 1987, 272). Nevertheless, labourers themselves have little actual influence regarding how much labour time is socially necessary to produce a certain commodity – it is market forces that govern these relations in the world of commodities – and neither do they, of course, necessarily enter into direct personal relations with other labourers in the market. All these relations appear as objective quantitative relations between commodities (usually represented via the money form) and only by looking behind this material veil is it possible to see that they are in fact antagonistic relations of production, where a conflict can emerge.

Marx's argumentation here is very complex and it can be argued that a coherently dialectical approach needs to be employed to sufficiently encompass it in its entirety. This would make it possible not to overlook any of the aspects of the capitalist order as a whole. What I have in mind here is a need to look at the social totality to adequately comprehend even the most abstract categories such as the commodity, value, or abstract labour. They are all constitutive cell parts of the system that influences and conditions them, meaning they cannot be adequately analysed when taken in isolation from one another or from the wider economic and social system. This need for totality is also one of the demands of dialectics; in this sense Marx's argument can be seen as a *global* and an all-encompassing one (see Lefebvre 1968; Harvey 1996, 48-57; Jameson 2009, ch.1; Harvey 2010, 195f.). What seems important to note at this point is that looking at the commodity-form by itself would indeed be missing what it actually stands for: it is in fact an objective social relation. Not only does it make sense when it enters into exchange relations with other commodities and becomes a part of the *world of commodities*, thus presupposing a fully developed social division of labour[13], other parts of the accumulation process also need to be taken into account: the circulation sphere, where exchange-value of these commodities is both realised and "measured" (it cannot be measured "directly" because, again, it needs to be put into a relation with other commodities; there is no way of knowing what the socially necessary labour time to produce a certain commodity is before they enter into this relation), while the sphere of production is where waged labour produces these commodities. As we are able to see, there is a certain societal structure that needs to be in place and functioning for a fully commodified society, where exchange of commodities takes place in a very automated fashion. In the words of Balibar: "The structure of production and circulation which confers an exchange-value on the products of labour [i.e. commodities] forms a single whole, and the existence of money, a 'developed' form of the general equivalent of commodities, is one of the necessary functions of that structure" (Balibar 2007, 61). All these categories and relations must be developed and functionally in place.

3.3. Equivalence and the Real Abstraction

The appearance of the commodity-form in pre-capitalist societies is essentially episodic. As Lukács (1971, 84) pointed out, this is when exchange-value does not yet have a form of its own and is directly bound to the use-value. The purpose of production in this context is to create use-values and they become means of exchange merely when supply exceeds the needs. It is only after the

[12] It is sensible to quote Marx here at length, because this is an important and often misunderstood presupposition: "The labour time expressed in and exchange-value is the labour time of an individual, but of an individual in no way differing [...] from all other individuals in so far as the perform equal labour; the labour time, therefore, which one person requires for the production of a given commodity is the *necessary* labour time which any other person would require to produce the same commodity. It is the labour time of an individual, his labour time, but only as labour time common to all; consequently it is quite immaterial *whose* individual labour time this is. This universal labour time finds its expression in a universal product, a universal equivalent [...] Only as such a *universal* magnitude does it represent a *social* magnitude. [...] The labour time of the individual is thus, in fact, the labour time required by society to produce a particular use-value, that is to satisfy a particular want" (Marx and Engels 1987, 272).

[13] "But though it is correct to say that private exchange presupposes division of labour, it is wrong to maintain that division of labour presupposes private exchange" (Marx and Engels 1987, 299).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

commodity successfully penetrates society to the extent that it becomes dominant that the qualitative change occurs and the endless (capitalist) accumulation becomes possible. This is why, for Lukács, "the commodity can only be understood in its undistorted essence when it becomes the universal category of society as a whole" (Lukács 1971, 86). This development does not take place before the advent of modern capitalism, when (wo)man's own activity and labour become objective and fully independent of him (her) and his (her) wants, "something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to man" (Lukács 1971, 87). The necessary abstraction of human labour is at this point incorporated in commodities and the process of abstraction in the economy is completed. While in the previous modes of production the aim was the production of use-values, which would serve the reproduction of the individual within specific communal relations, under capitalism the sole aim thus becomes "the production of exchange-values, i.e. the creation of value for value" (Fortunati 1989, 7). According to Fortunati , this leads directly "to the *commodity*, to *exchange-value*, taking precedence over the-individual-as-use-value, despite the fact that the individual is still the only source of the creation of value" (Fortunati 1989, 7).

This development needs a specific kind of rationalisation, which, according to Lukács (1971, 88), is based on *what is and can be calculated*, so to say on instrumentally rationalistic measuring, which is the only way to enable equivalence (exchange-value) between factually unequal things (use-values). Sohn-Rethel (1972, 54) saw this as a type of mathematical reasoning, which can be traced also to the exchange abstraction (while he also connected it to objective knowledge and "exact" sciences). A consequence of this finding is that if the exchange process is to work effectively and reproduce itself in a society, it is obvious that a full-blown universalisation of equivalence needs to be carried out. A fully developed equivalence in fact has to be established between unequal things, making them measurable and thus comparable via some basic characteristic (in the case of Marx's labour theory of value these are abstract labour and labour time), if they are to be exchanged on the market. This leads us back to the cell-forms of capitalism, to the fundamental and most abstract categories in Marx's analysis, namely the commodity, abstract labour, and value, all being inherent parts of capital. All three categories are inexorable parts of capitalist societies in the most abstract sense.

It is quite clear that an abstraction is not only a thought process for social analysis, but is also a real, factual abstraction, "abstraction not by thought but by action and operating in time and space" (Sohn-Rethel 1972, 51). It is an abstraction developing through several fundamental categories: exchange abstraction, commodity abstraction, labour abstraction, time abstraction etc. (see Sohn-Rethel 1972; 1978). As Marx points out, "equality in the full sense between different kinds of labour can be arrived at only if we abstract from their real inequality, if we reduce them to the characteristics they have in common, that of being the expenditure of human labour-power, of human labour in the abstract" (Marx 1990/1867, 166). This argument can of course be extended further on to other categories, beyond only abstract labour. According to Marcuse:

> "[Abstraction] is imposed upon the dialectical method by the structure of its subject matter, capitalist society. We may even say that the abstraction is capitalism's own work, and that the Marxian method only follows this process. Marx's analysis has shown that capitalist economy is built upon and perpetuated by the constant reduction of the concrete to the abstract labour. This economy step by step retreats from the concrete of human activity and needs, and achieves the integration of individual activities and needs only through complex of abstract relations in which individual work counts merely in so far as it represents socially necessary labor-time, and in which the relations among men appear as relations of things (commodities). The commodity world is a 'falsified' and 'mystified' world, and its critical analysis must first follow the abstractions which make up this world, and must then take its departure from these abstract relations in order to arrive at their real content. The second step is thus the abstraction from the abstraction, or the abandonment of a false concreteness, so that the true concreteness might be restored". (Marcuse 1955, 313)

This notion was further developed by some of the aforementioned authors, amongst others such as Sohn-Rethel, who points out that abstractness takes shape in different social institutions, primarily in that of money form. Sohn-Rethel also stresses that "at the time and place where it happens the abstraction passes unnoticed" (Sohn-Rethel 1972, 51-52), not least because in most cases transactions involve physical objects, while the commodity exchange is no less real than anything else; but abstraction still has a form of thought, even if it does not spring from thought, but from actual

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

practical activities (check, for example, the abstraction developing in exchange process: no actual material change to the commodity happens, physical events are at absolute minimum, no quantitative differentiation to the exchanged commodity is allowed etc.; what changes is the social status of ownership of the commodity). The sole fact that abstraction passes unnoticed is perhaps the most important practical outcome of what develops in everyday life activities.

3.4. The Fetishism of the Commodity

Marx's notion of fetishism[14] is a culmination of the processes mentioned in previous subchapters. His conceptualisation was fully expanded in the chapter Fetishism of commodities in the first volume of *Capital* (Marx 1990/1867, 163-177). Harvey believes the concept of fetishism is an "essential tool for unravelling the mysteries of capitalist political economy" (Harvey 2010, 38). Several fundamental arguments, which are crucial for this conceptualisation, have already been implicitly noted earlier in the text and one is able to see what an immensely complex issue this is. It is thus not surprising when Marx notes that fetishism is inseparable from the production of commodities, while commodity is full of "metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties", transcending sensuousness as soon as it emerges; it can be both a sensuous and a suprasensible or social thing (Marx 1990/1867, 163, 165).

As stressed by Jhally (1983, 29), there are two major reasons for how and why fetishism arises: firstly, because of exchange of commodities; and secondly, because of the relationship between capital and labour (or to be more precise, between capitalists as a social class and the proletariat), which centres around waged labour and is constitutive of wider capitalist social relations. Both of these reasons have been thoroughly analysed already.

Several critical communication scholars have dealt with commodity fetishism in their work (e.g. Jhally 1987; Maxwell 1991; Murdock 2006; 2011; Fuchs 2011, 152-154). Jhally wrote about fetishism:

> "In short, fetishism consists of seeing the meaning of things as an inherent part of their physical existence when in fact that meaning is created by their integration into a system of meaning. [...] For Marx, commodity fetishism consists of things seeming to have value inherent in them when in fact value is produced by humans: it is to naturalise a social process. Thus things appear to have value inherent in them. The essence however is that humans produce value. [...] It is quite clear that, for Marx, commodity fetishism and the mystery of the commodity concerns the false appearance of the commodity as possessing value in itself rather than as the result of labour. The theory of fetishism is indeed a theory of mystification." (Jhally 1987, 29, 39)

With universalisation of the commodity-form in society, production of commodities is performed by individuals or groups that labour independently of each other because of the social division of labour. This means that the inherently social relations of production are only manifested in exchange (Jhally 1987, 29, 39); but, as already stressed, these relations are in fact hidden behind a material veil, behind the commodity itself. This material veil not only hides the social relations, but also abstract labour, which produces commodities in the production process (which is the site of an antagonistic relation between the owners and the expropriated labourers. Murdock (2011, 19) believes it is a crucial characteristic of the fetishism that people (understood as consumers of commodities) forget where commodities came from, instead thinking these issues away and enjoying the convenience and pleasure these commodities are supposed to bring. The final effect is abolishment of any talk of exploitative working conditions, of the labour process or of the environmental degradation. All attention when buying commodities and consuming them is focused solely on the commodity as the object of pleasure.

Commodity fetishism is therefore a prime example of what is usually defined as ideology (see also subchapter Media and ideology by Fuchs (2011, 152-154), but it is an actually existing ideolo-

[14] Balibar (2007, 63) points out how Marx realized that the money (as the general equivalent or universal commodity that can be exchanged for any other commodity) fetish is in fact nothing else than commodity fetish. This was only possible with a careful analysis of the commodity form and the role of exchange-value in it, which was not present in Marx's earlier works. In these earlier works this particular social role, which he later ascribes to commodity, is in fact often attributed directly to money: "The complete domination of the estranged thing *over* man has become evident in *money*, which is completely indifferent both to the nature of the material, i.e., to the specific nature of the private property, and to the personality o the property owner. What was the domination of person over person is not the general domination of *thing* over the *person*, of the product over the producer. Just as the concept of the *equivalent*, the value, already implied the *alienation* of private property, so *money* is the sensuous, even objective existence of this *alienation*" (Marx and Engels 1975, 221).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

gy that cannot simply be ignored or thought away, not an illusion. Commodity fetishism has an objective reality that is inevitable in capitalist societies, because it attaches itself to the commodity in the moment it is produced (Marx 1990/1867, 165). This is so, especially in the present context of the world division of labour and the global market. This *material* fetishistic construct veils what is in fact happening behind the market: specific social relations of labour exploitation. The aforementioned difference between appearance (the world of commodities) and essence (social relations of production) develops here in its entirety. It is thus especially through the fetish character of commodities that Marx's claim of the power of abstraction and dialectics is able to demonstrate its strength: He claimed their crucial characteristic is an ability to go beyond mere appearances of things.

An important consequence of commodity fetishism is that commodities thus exist independently of human beings, of those that in fact produce them, and assume a life of their own. But not only do they acquire independence from human beings, they become active and objective agents of their oppression (see Marx 1990/1867, 175; Barbalet 1983; Postone 2003/1993). As Harvey stresses, it is "market forces, which none of us individually control, [that] regulate us" in capitalist society. (Harvey 2010, 42)

The issue of commodity fetishism is in fact an "alternative" approach to the enduring problem of ideology. At least two diverging (to an extent, even conflicting) strands of critical analysis of ideology have developed in twentieth century Marxism. One is taking as a starting point commodity fetishism, taking commodity-form as an actually existing material veil that develops at the material level (in the base-superstructure model of society schemata) and amongst others includes theoreticians such as Lukács, Adorno, Sohn-Rethel or Postone (some of these authors developing from this point of departure concepts like reification or alienation). In critical communication studies such an approach to the base-superstructure formula has been taken especially by Smythe (1977; see Meehan 1993) and the authors participating in the audience commodity debate. In the other strand, in which one could include, for example Althusser or Žižek, the focus has been almost solely on the ideological level and apparatuses that produce ideology. It presides and develops through the level of superstructure, while being determined by the base, but in a different sense of the ownership of the means of production (i.e. the class in power is able to define ideology at the level of superstructure). Let us remember, Marx (see Marx and Engels 1987, 263) includes in the superstructure "the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms" of life. Even though there is a relational approach between base and superstructure, in the latter approach, it is very much different from the former and leaves out questions concerning commodity fetishism. While for the latter ideology, it is solely a question of superstructure, the former sees ideology as the material veil produced by exchange of commodities; it is therefore a constitutive part of the material base from which it emerges (it can thus be seen as an immanent approach).

It is not the purpose of this paper to present a detailed overview of these two approaches, but the former approach seems much closer, for example to Williams' (1973) reinterpretation of base and superstructure models or to Gramscian's (1971) concept of hegemony, which offers a viable alternative to the concept of ideology (both are close to Fuchs's (2011, 48-53) reconsideration of base and superstructure). In a Gramscian sense, one could claim that commodity fetishism is reproduced through everyday activities of human beings whether they want to or not, but it also demonstrates how the base is far from being static and without conflicts[15]. This approach largely encompasses material base, so to say production forces, production relations and conflicts and antagonisms emerging from this level of society. This is so, because the base is a precondition of the superstructure and also more fundamental than superstructure (to a large extent, base also restricts how superstructure functions, but it cannot determine it). This material level therefore in a significant sense forms and influences consciousness at the level of superstructure, which arises on this "real foundation", the material base; this seems to be much closer to what Marx himself claimed is actually happening in society, at least in comparison to where Althusser puts his focus. In his famous definition, given in the preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx points out that "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life", and furthermore, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx and Engels 1987, 263).

Significantly, Sohn-Rethel's goal is precisely to research this relationship between base and superstructure and to build a staircase between "productive forces and production relations which together form the material basis for consciousness as superstructure [...] The staircase must be

[15] This was most forcefully pointed out by Williams (1973) in his critique of mechanistic interpretations of the (often contradictory) relation between base and superstructure.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

given a firm anchorage in the basement, and this, for commodity-producing societies, can only be found in the formal analysis of commodity itself" (Sohn-Rethel 1978, xi). For the former approach, it is the material veil that is crucial to understand mystification in society and this material veil in fact exists (it cannot not exist in capitalist societies, not least because social relations can never be direct, unmediated (see Postone 2003/1993, 167)). It is obvious that people might become conscious of class antagonisms at the level of ideology and fight out this conflict by overtaking apparatuses in the superstructure, but this might not change much if some of the basic categories at the material level stay the same (for example dominance of the commodity-form and private ownership of the means of production). This is also significant in the context of the really existing socialisms.

3.5. Exchange as the Key Agent of Individualisation

Even though Marx's fundamental ontological position was that human beings were social animals[16], he was not naïve. In his time, a full-blown individualisation already took place and he acknowledged this was a society of free competition, where individuals seem detached from the natural bonds and are emancipated from nature (in words, "the dissolution of the bondage relations which fetter the worker to land and soil and to the lord of land and soil" (Marx's 1993/1858, 502)). Social relations already changed significantly and individuals were largely independent from each other, at least in comparison to the earlier historical periods, when they were a *part of a definite and limited human conglomerate* (Marx's 1993/1858, 83-85; see also Barbalet 1983, ch.3).

However, according to Marx, individualisation was not a natural condition of human beings emerging from their human nature, which seemed to be a predominant philosophical position since the seventeenth century. It was a result of a definite historical process. According to him, a human being is, paradoxically, "an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside society [...] is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other" (Ibid., 84). For Hobsbawm, "this process of the emancipation of man from his original natural conditions of production" can thus be seen as "one of human *individualisation*", exchange being one of its crucial agents (Hobsbawm 2010, 132). Human beings can thereby individualise themselves only through the process of history and this is a self-reinforcing process.

As demonstrated by Barbalet (1983, 69f.; 89f.), Marx's claim in his earlier writings was that relations of human beings in capitalist societies were in fact unsocial; he claimed that in the capitalist epoch, they become external relations of independent and unsocial beings (which was a presupposition that was not far from that of liberal individualism)[17]. When Marx's thought developed further, however, he changed his opinion, stating these relations "are merely a particular form of social relation, different in content from the relations of feudal society" (Barbalet 1983, 89). The capitalist historical epoch can in fact be seen as still having the most highly developed social relations, especially because of the nature of exchange and the role commodity plays in society (as mentioned earlier). It does however produce spatial rather than direct relations, while also functioning completely beyond the will or control of actors themselves (Barbalet 1983, 90f.).

Commodity transactions of course carry no particular social or reciprocal obligations, as was the case with preceding divergent types of moral economies that were dominant before the rise of political economy (see Thompson 1991, ch.4; ch.5; Murdock 2011). Crucially then, the commodity-form is "not only the basis of individualised society, it is also the root of the view that the individual is without social relations" (Barbalet 1983, 92), a predominant ontological presupposition especially in liberal, libertarian and other individualist outlooks on the world.

4. The Global Commodification of Everything: The Long History

The capitalist system can only have one objective when operating, i.e. to accumulate capital (and even more capital). This is done by the holders of capital. A specific type of society with certain relations between people had to be established for this to be possible. Even though capitalism has

[16] Marx (1973/1993, 84) in fact speaks of a *political animal* (zoon politikon, πολιτικόν ζῷον). Hannah Arendt (1998/1958) was correct when she pointed out that Marx in fact conflated social with political realm, reducing Aristotles's notion of zoon politikon simply to social animal (for Arendt, there was a complete victory of society over political realm and public action in modern societies). Even though differences between these two conceptualizations are important, they are not central for this text.

[17] In his *Comments on James Mill* Marx (1975, 220) for example claims that "the greater and the more developed the social power appears to be within the private property relationship, the more *egoistic*, asocial and estranged from his own nature does man become. Just as the mutual exchange of the products of *human activity* appears as *barter*, as trade, so the mutual completion and exchange of the activity itself appears as *division of labour*, which turns man as far as possible into an abstract being, a machine tool, etc., and transforms him into a spiritual and physical monster".

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

been naturalised and one usually finds it difficult to think of alternatives, especially as this system has been fully embedded for so long, its development was difficult and full of obstacles[18]. In his attempt to explain why capitalism emerged as a social system, Wallerstein (1983, 40) writes that it is not so easy to provide answers to this question, as it might seem at first. Far from being a natural system, as its apologists claim, it is in fact a patently absurd one: "One accumulates capital in order to accumulate more capital. Capitalists are like white mice on a treadmill, running ever faster in order to run still faster" (Wallerstein 1983, 40). As he stresses (Wallerstein 1983, 15), the whole circuit of capital was only seldom completed before modern times; several links were missing, meaning several processes were not yet transacted through the market, which means they were not yet commodified. For Wallerstein (1983, ch.1), historical capitalism thus, first and foremost, presents itself as a process of a widespread commodification of different social processes, with it forming complex commodity chains (that in time become global). It is not merely a question of exchange processes, but also of commodification of production, distribution, and investment processes[19].

As Jameson (2011) lately pointed out, commodity is not only a prerequisite to capitalist processes of accumulation, it actually constitutes "pre-history" of capital and is therefore strictly speaking "not yet about capital". Even though Jameson's contribution is an important one, this statement seems at least partially problematic. The commodity-form is not only an enduring prerequisite of capitalist accumulation, but also its ever-present and constitutive part (similarly to primitive accumulation), which on the most fundamental level enables extraction of surplus value. Looking at the process of capitalist accumulation from a dialectical point of view, which Jameson himself strongly supports, it is impossible to separate the commodity from exchange and surplus value (historically speaking, they ought to develop simultaneously). The commodity-form is a crucial cell-form in every sphere of the cycle of capital accumulation (for a good overview of the expanded reproduction of capital and cycle of capitalist accumulation see Fuchs's overview (2011, 137-141)) and even though the production process, for example, might seem primary, capitalism cannot exist without reproducing itself via commodification, which enables its further expansion, and without commodity-form as one of its integral parts.

Whether one agrees with him on the mentioned issue or not, Jameson also acknowledges that in a social period, which is dominated by commodification, this process plays a crucial political role for an enduring critique of existing society. While Murdock (2006) wrote about the c*ommodification of almost everything*, both Wallerstein and Jameson went further, stating it is in fact *everything* that can be commodified. According to Jameson (2011, 16, 26), in a capitalist society, commodification becomes tendentially universal and one can speak of the tendential dominion of the commodity-form. Similarly, Wallerstein points out that "the process of global accumulation is developing via the commodification of everything" (Wallerstein 2001/1991, 24f.).

Murdock explains how "only in a fully developed capitalist system is the production and marketing of commodities the central driving force of growth and profit" (Murdock 2011, 18). The world market is thereby a crucial development in capitalism (Hobsbawm 2011, 145) and we can claim that in the last decades it finally developed in its entirety, constructing a universalised totality where everything can become subsumed under the rule of capital (Hardt and Negri 2001). Processes of commodification are crucial for this expansion of capitalism together with primitive accumulation (or *accumulation as dispossession*). This constant expansion is also one of its unavoidable necessities, because without constant expansion, a capitalist system is in crisis. It is thus fair to say that commodification is reshaping the world in its own image. This led Huws to state that this process can be seen as central in understanding social changes. With commodification, she has in mind "the tendency of capitalist economies to generate new and increasingly standardised products for

[18] Wallerstein (1983, 18) writes how an endless accumulation of capital has been the sole objective that prevailed in economic activities, but as penetration of these processes entered the social fabric, so did the opposition to these processes grow greater and louder.

[19] It might be appropriate to distinguish between commercialization, commodification and objectification, three processes that are, as pointed out by Mosco (2009, 132f.), usually associated. Commercialization could also be called marketization and it is the narrowest of the three processes. It refers to what is happening on the surface of the capitalist economy, so to say, on the transparently visible market: in the exchange process, the sphere of circulation. In communication studies commercialization/marketization would for example refer to the relationship created between audiences and advertisers (ibid.). Capitalist market necessarily encompasses a lot more that just exchange relations of this kind; as already pointed out, it for example presupposes commodification of labour that produces commodities and should therefore also encompass the production process. In this sense commodification, which is the main focus of political economy of communication, is a much broader notion. Lastly, objectification refers especially to specific process of dehumanisation. Lukács (ibid.; 1971) for example used the word reification to denote how human beings and personal relations become *thing-like* (ibid.). Not everything that is objectified is necessarily a commodity of course.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

sale in the market whose sale will generate profits that increase in proportion to the scale of production" (Huws 2003, 17).

As stressed by Polanyi (2001/1944, ch.6), there is, however, also a constant need for *commodity fiction* to legitimise the selling of different types of commodities on the market, which can serve as a constant reminder of the extreme artificiality of the capitalist market economy. This is especially obvious when market relations in certain spheres are still in the process of being established and have not been subordinated to commodity exchange beforehand. The great transformation from a feudalist to a capitalist society, as Polanyi called it, required new fictitious commodities for the successful functioning of new economic relations, most evidently labour force, money, and land. In an ongoing transformation to postmodernity, one can, on the other hand, establish that we are experiencing a historical epoch that is increasingly void of non-commodified products, processes, or activities, which can all be willy-nilly subsumed and subdued under *economistic* rationalisation.[20] In their chapter on culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002/1947, ch.4) anticipated such a development of capitalist societies, pointing at the commodifying processes taking place. But even their analysis could hardly be ascribed with the prediction that capital will be able to colonise almost all spheres of society, meaning that nearly all aspects of human life can be comprehended as a possible investment or a market opportunity. Capitalism has therefore not incorporated only cultural production, public places and creativity, or, more widely speaking, social symbols, into its accumulation cycle. At first, it really made an industry out of culture and human artistic creativity (Adorno 2001/1991; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002/1947, ch.4). But in time, it was not only symbols, public expression and ideas that were (as today) constantly being commodified, but also knowledge and information as such, while both categories are becoming an integral part of capitalism in postmodern societies (see Schiller 1989, Parker 1994, Fleissner 2009, May 2010). And as Marazzi (2008) points out, information and communication are not only raw materials, but also a labour instrument (*cf.* Williams 2005/1980, ch.2). Information and knowledge became commodities as any other, bought and sold, producing aggregation of resources in the cultural and information sphere. Herbert Schiller called this the *consciousness industry*, while indicating "the entrance of the profit motive into fields, which for different reasons, historically had escaped this now pervasive force" (Schiller 1989, 91). Entirely new private industries have been developed and, in most cases, these same industries are exerting vast influence on how we think and act in our everyday lives (see also Jhally 1987, Hardt 2004). These privatisation and commodification processes on the other hand also constitute new monopolies of knowledge that have historically been typical of all human societies (see Innis, 2008/1951).

Debord's (1978, ch.2) account of the role played by commodity-form in postmodern societies, fully submerged in the spectacle, remains one of the most powerful accounts of the world, in which we live, ever written. He touches on the domination of the commodity over the totality of human living and presents spectacle as a permanent opium war, which feeds itself in, and through, the world of commodities. Everything is incorporated into the world market and changed in the way it satisfies the rules made by the capitalist type of economy and its instrumental rationalisation. Because commodity is independent of anything, it can autonomously rule over both the entire economy and society; social life thereby becomes completely colonised. The spectacle is, for Debord in fact "the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life. The relation to the commodity is not only visible, but one no longer sees anything but it: the world one sees is its world". (Debord's 1978, ch.2, par.42) Everything is submerged in the spectacle and the complete rule of the world of commodities fulfils itself through the spectacle. Debord's focus was at least indirectly pointed towards the mass media and a society flushed with images – and it is only after decades that most theoreticians admit that we live in fully mediatised societies. To put it in Debord's words, yet again, we have to recognise in these symptoms "our old enemy: the commodity". (Debord's 1978, ch.2, par.35)

It is quite possible that Debord's critique of contemporary life was (perhaps even rightly so) seen as an exaggeration when it was written almost five decades ago. But most of Debord's observations look increasingly obvious in the fully developed postmodern society where human sociability, affects and communication as such are transformed into commodities and exchanged. This expansion of commodification to communication therefore also means that these issues must be-

[20] What Polanyi failed to notice was that it was not only land, labour, and money that were fictitious commodities. *All* commodities are fictitious. There is no such thing as a "natural" commodity. The simple difference is that some commodities quite obviously need some sort of an ideological underpinning (or an underlying fiction) to socially legitimize them as commodities that are bought and sold, while commodity-status of others is rarely questioned, especially when they are already successfully legitimized as commodities in a specific society.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

come central topics of the political economy of communication, which simultaneously also needs to widen its scope of inquiry as much as possible and provide a critique of these invasive processes.

5. The Political Economy of Communication and the Audience Commodity Thesis

Global expansion of capital into previously non-commodified spheres indicates that political economy of communication in many ways started to overlap with inquiries made by other fields originating in the critical theory of society. The critical (e.g. neo-Marxist) approach to political economy (and critical theory of society more generally) has of course been regarded as essential for media and communication research from its beginnings. Even though Smythe (1960) is usually considered as the founder of the political economy of communication, deeper origins of the critical approach toward media and communication can be found much earlier; at least as early as in Adorno and Horkheimer (2002/1947; Adorno 2001/1991) on the one hand, or Innis (2008/1951) on the other. Both cultural studies and political economy in fact shared similar origins that can be derived from these authors, while also sharing basic agreement regarding the critical analysis of capitalism and the cultural processes therein (see Babe 2009, ch.1; Wasko 2005, 42f.). The increasingly important role of communication in postmodern societies produced several new convergence points between critical theory and the political economy of communication (e.g. Fuchs 2010).

Focusing on how the commodification process is considered in the political economy of communication, we can see that there are at least two general aspects significant for this relationship (Mosco 2009, 12f., 130). On the one hand, both communication and technology support commodification processes in the economy and throughout society. The role of technology in instrumental rationalisation that is necessary for commodification is becoming particularly transparent with digitalisation. On the other hand, however, commodification also penetrates institutions related to communication and starts to encroach on everyday social practices that have their foundations in communication. Both aspects are also stressed by Fuchs, who gives a close reading of Marx's thoughts on communication and media (Fuchs 2011, ch.4). According to Fuchs, Marx establishes that communication media are, on the most basic level, important in co-ordinating production across distances, accelerating transmission of messages and co-ordinating the transport of commodities between different establishments. They are furthermore crucial also in a more fundamental sense, helping to widen the expansion of capital into non-commodified spheres where accumulation and consumption could be developed (but were not yet). This process therefore supports the whole circulation process of capital. Mosco (2009, ch.8) terms this process "spatialization", which denotes overcoming of the constraints of space. As we are able to see, the spatialisation process is directly connected to commodification. In a more narrow sense of the media infrastructure and media contents, Fuchs also points out that for Marx, transmission technologies are operated by corporations. This means not only that the media themselves are commodities (and so is the infrastructure), but they consequently also transmit commodities. Media can be seen "as carriers of advertising messages that advance commodity sales" (Mosco 2009, 149), consequently accelerating the circulation of commodities.

Two other categories crucial for the political economy of communication and critical communication studies have been labour and audiences. As noted earlier in the text, selling labour power on the labour market is one of many important preconditions of the capitalist economy. A significant novelty is that in the information society, knowledge and information became fully commodified, which created a need for new types of labour that would be able to satisfy this "social" need. In the political economy of communication, labour has thus been analysed especially in its varying communicative-forms (as knowledge labour, information labour, labour of journalists etc.) and most of the work was done by Mosco and McKercher (2008). However, my focus in the text will be especially on the second category, audiences. Their commodification is also a relative novelty in the capitalist economy, while the conceptualisation of audiences as commodities raises several important questions regarding the pervasiveness of commodification in society.

5.1. Audiences in the (Critique of the) Political Economy of Communication

The critical political-economic approach toward audiences is a heterodox and alternative approach that is in most cases overlooked in mainstream and celebratory communication studies focusing on this topic[21]. This is so despite the fact that the so-called "blind spot debate" was one of the most

[21] Perhaps most striking is the fact that "representative" literature neglects critique of political economy when it comes to audiences. A four-volume collection on audiences released by Sage in 2009, entitled *Media Audiences*, offers no valuable

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

heated debates in the historical development of the political economy of communication and provided several useful insights that seem crucial in understanding how audiences are instrumentalised by capital. This long-lasting debate, which at least indirectly continues in a much different technological and social context of today's society (see Bermejo 2009; Napoli 2010; Fuchs 2010; Caraway 2011; Biltereyst and Meers 2011; Kang and McAllister 2011), is an invaluable source for practices and ideas connected to Marxian-inspired critical communication studies. Perhaps even more importantly, it also provides several insights into how commodification spreads throughout the social fabric and how we are able to analyse these processes in postmodern society, which is completely permeated with communication. Insights provided by (the critique of) political economy in communication studies can thus offer a wide reflection on the current historical epoch by going beyond narrow affirmative approaches.

With the "blind spot debate", the issue of commodification in the media and communication has been extended beyond content and media labour to audiences. Audiences became the key media "goods" towards which scholarly attention could and should be aimed. Before this debate, media content has commonly been viewed as the vital commodity sold by the media to its readership. The recognition that "the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations which produce and distribute commodities" (Murdoch and Golding 1973, 205f.), has already been widely accepted amongst critically engaged theorists. This important rethinking of the role of critical communication studies was initiated by Smythe (1977). Both Mosco (2009, 12) and Meehan (1993) have pointed out that Smythe's article, in which the audience commodity thesis was first proposed, has produced a fundamental shift in critical communication research. It could now include in its scope all communication companies that advertise, not only the media themselves. This can in fact be interpreted as an early and radical widening of the possible areas for analysis that can be carried out by the political economy of communication and this scope was, furthermore, extended by Smythe's belief that political economy can, in its widest meaning, be defined as "the study of control and survival in social life" (Mosco 2009, 3). According to this interpretation, political economy can be seen as the most holistic, and all-encompassing approach, while in many ways resembling the critical role it should in fact provide in its analysis of society.

In many ways Smythe's findings almost prophetically predicted some of the topics that would later become important in the framework of changes concerning immaterial work and post-Fordist production, which are well demonstrated by Gorz (2010) (in this text they are dealt with in Section 5). It is thus of the utmost importance to assess some of Smythe's key provocative statements and their continuing (in)validity in light of the rise of new media technologies, especially the Internet.

5.2. Smythe's Audience Commodity Thesis and Technological Changes

It is possible to derive a few key theses from Smythe's (1977) original article that initiated the audience commodity debate. His theses are not only still pertinent, they have been in fact reinforced by the technological and social changes ever since they were first proposed[22].

insights from the political-economic point of view, even though it contains many texts on this topic, encompassing 1320 pages (see: www.uk.sagepub.com/books/Book233064). The same, for example, holds true for the journal *Participations: International Journal of Audience Research*, now renamed into *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, that "welcomes contributions from different fields", like "sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, folkloristics, cultural and media studies" (see: www.participations.org). As it can be seen, the journal states basically every possible approach, perspective, and discipline, one of the rare exceptions being political economy. The same thing can be observed in respect to the recently published *Handbook of Media Audiences*, edited by Virginia Nightingale (2011), which almost completely avoids political economy (with perhaps an exception of Napoli's contribution) and only by a mere coincidence (if at all) touches at questions such as power relations, private ownership, exploitation, or class relations. Political economy, and especially its critique, is often neglected and concealed when it comes to audiences; they are often seen as proactive and empowered "consumer-citizens". Little to none reflection is given to the vast discrepancies between the owners of the means of production and the "consumers". This means questions concerning wider structural issues and social totality are quite possibly completely overlooked and taken for granted. To state it differently: in these approaches, capitalism is something that stays in the background as an irrelevant or presupposed factor, its influence not being worthy of any deeper analysis. When Marx and critique of political economy are used, they are often seen as outdated and reductionist or even deliberately misinterpreted (I thank the reviewer of this paper for his comments on this issue, see also the critique provided by Biltereyst and Meers 2011). This is for example quite obvious in Fiske's influential book *Introduction to communication studies* (1990), which describes Marx's theory as "economistic". It also reduces it to the issues concerning ideology and gives very simplistic accounts of complex Marxist arguments.

[22] One of the initial claims by Smythe (1977) was that critical theory, for example Western Marxism, had more or less ignored communication (hence "the blindspot"). One could claim so forty years ago, but it is hardly the case today. And it was a problematic thesis even then (both in the case of Austro-Marxism and some of the authors working in SFR Yugoslavia), which Murdock (1978) sufficiently pointed out in his reply to Smythe. Nowadays we have a developed field of study in political economy of communication, while some of the radical neo-Marxist positions, for example autonomism, presuppose it is basically communication that is the main category in post-Fordist capitalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Firstly, audiences are crucial commodities, which are manufactured and sold on the market. And not only this, audiences in fact labour! These were the main starting-points of the debate on the "audience as commodity". Smythe argued that the most important commodity produced by the media industry is the audience itself, which is constructed and then sold to the advertisers. This thesis not only survived the test of time, but has escalated in importance since it was proposed, which is demonstrated by several other critical approaches dealing with similar issues (one of them is dealt with in chapter 5). This seems especially interesting because when Smythe wrote the article, his notion of audiences as commodities was often dismissed as a return to vulgar Marxism and he was accused of reductionist *economism* by his critics (Meehan 1993). The resurrection of the idea of media as a business, bound by the logic of profitability, even seemed old-fashioned at the time when Cultural Studies reigned supreme. In the early nineties, Meehan (1993) argued that Smythe could have in fact even been more radical in his analysis and subsequent claims. According to her, the validity of the theses he proposed were proven to be completely correct by history and actual practice[23]. Indeed, according to Biltereyst and Meers (2011), who recently took a fresh look at this debate, media content becomes secondary, a *free lunch* at best. Media in fact first and foremost produces audiences, not programmes or content! This means media as tendency become mere *hunter-gatherers of the audience*, while leisure time becomes an increasingly important component of capitalism, which is able to expand and commodify previously unknown territories. What is comprehended as leisure time, non-work time, is subsumed under capital, monetised and valorised.

Interestingly, Adorno (2001/1991, ch.8) indicated these processes as already happening in the year 1969, when the essay Free time [*Freizeit*] was published. He states that free time is becoming its own opposite, a parody of itself, because it is only a continuation of profit-oriented life; it becomes subjugated to similar norms and unfreedom distinctive of the production process. He demonstrates this through the hobby ideology. Everyone must have a hobby now, possibly one that can be supplied by the "show business" or "leisure industry" (both terms losing all of their irony). Free time is thus subject to much social control. It was therefore only a matter of time, before all of the living time became commodified in its entirety. Similarly to Adorno, Williams (2005/1980) pointed out a decade later how the means of communication must be seen as a means of production, and this is especially so in modern societies, where communication significantly develops and becomes an important (both direct and indirect) productive force.

Secondly, an even more important and radical thesis was derived by Smythe on the basis of these initial findings. As if he simply continued Adorno's and Williams' line of thought, he claimed that today, "work time for most people is twenty-four hours a day" (Smythe 1981a, 121). Consequences of these findings are radical and wide-ranging and even more importantly, Smythe's observations are proven day-by-day. Even if one disagrees with Smythe's observation of how labour should be defined, which is indeed a complex issue, his thesis in its fundamental demonstrates the radical expansion of commodification throughout new spheres of society.

Both of Smythe's theses suggest that what can be considered as labour time has been radically extended into non-work time, when labour power is usually reproduced. Jhally and Livant (in Jhally 1987, 83-90) extended this notion further, while firmly basing their view in the critique of political economy as outlined by Marx. They pointed out that watching (as a form of labour) is in fact just an extension of factory labour and this should not be seen as a metaphor. It is a specific form of labour that is vital in the whole media economics process; similarly to how labourers sell their labour power to capitalists, so audiences sell their *watching power* to media owners. Leisure thereby becomes an increasingly important component in the workings of contemporary capitalism; it is subsumed under capital, monetised, and valorised, while audiences are viewed instrumentally, with the sole goal of (surplus) value extraction. Activities of audiences (listening, watching, browsing, "clicking") produce value, which is appropriated by the capitalist, which in exchange offer an apparently *free lunch* (various types of content).

Smythe's theses, as already pointed out, also indicate that all aspects of social and individual human life can be fully commodified and be drawn into the capitalist accumulation cycle, whether one wants and knows this or (preferably) not. There are basically no human activities left, from which a certain magnitude of exchange value could not be extracted and appropriated. This is possible also because of the rise of digital technologies that started to play a crucial role in these very processes, providing unprecedented detail and further rationalisation of measuring, quantification, and control (see Napoli 2010; 2011). Napoli (2011, 10) even goes as far as to claim that a broad array of options for data gathering, which the media corporations are able to use today, make the

[23] It is the contradictory (almost antagonistic) three-folded relationship between audiences (living beings that are again being reduced to commodities), content in the media, and advertisers (representing capital), that is crucial here.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Internet almost too measurable. These techniques make it possible to record an unprecedented level of detail of its users (or in the discourse of marketers: individual consumers). In this sense, Castells's notion that the Internet is *the fabric of our lives*, could hardly be taken more seriously, when it comes to the encroachment upon people's privacy.

The key changes brought by new digital technologies that offer new ways of controlling and measuring the audiences are: a) fragmentation; b) formally increased autonomy, participation and engagement of audiences; c) unprecedented control over consumption; and d) unprecedented detail of measuring users and audiences (Napoli 2011). Fragmentation of the media environment and consequently audiences brings an increasing prominence of the "long tail" scenarios, which break audiences into smaller and smaller pieces. There is a historical development from broadcasting, distinctive of the early mass media, to "narrowcasting", which was enabled by satellite TV and infrastructure privatisation and deregulation, and finally to "pointcasting", which is made possible by digitalisation and the Internet. The latter enables a radical "rationalisation of measuring" and full quantification of every activity that potentially becomes monetisable through several different techniques and methods (e.g. via data mining, see Gandy 2012, Andrejevic 2012, Fuchs *et al* 2012, Prodnik 2012). It is true that Internet users (also called "cybernauts") can be more engaged and have more influence over how they use the new media than before, but from the perspective of the political economy of the Internet, this enables the owner of the platform they are using an even more detailed measurement of their activities and preferences, possibly also their social status and other personal information. It is an idealist notion to speculate blindly on the revolutionary possibilities that have supposedly been opened up by the Internet. A more materialist approach should take into account the wider social context and recognise that the asymmetries have been growing in the last couple of decades and the Internet unfortunately did little to mitigate this. On the contrary, it could even be claimed that digitalisation to some extent helped to widen these gaps and intensify concentration and discrepancies between those in power and the disempowered many (see Hindman 2009, Bellamy Foster and McChesney 2011).

An exemplary case of the mentioned characteristics is, without any doubt, Google (see Kang and McAllister 2011). This corporation derives most of its profit from advertising (especially its main advertising product Google AdWords), by extensively commodifying its users, fragmenting them into niche audiences and then selling them to prospective advertisers that offer specific types of commodity that relate to these audiences. One of the theses, regarding the post-Fordist economy, proposed by Marazzi (2008), points precisely at such key duties of corporations: differentiation of products becomes one of the ways of getting the attention of the consumers. Production, in this light, steps into the background, at least to a certain extent, while the previously less noteworthy *attention economy* increases in importance. In fact, Google's yearly profit is levelled with annual budgets of some smaller nation-states (e.g. Slovenia, with a population of 2 million people), while (formally!) employing 30 000 people. This is only possible by severe infringement into the privacy of the users, a process in most cases denoted as economic surveillance (see Fuchs *et al* 2012; Prodnik 2012). Several authors, amongst them Pasquinelli (2009) and Fuchs (2012), point out that one of the most important sources in the process of capital accumulation by Google is the unpaid labour of the people using its platform, with the World Wide Web content-producers being the other. Both can consequently be exploited, because Google Corporation is able to extract surplus value from their activity. This brings us directly to the definitions of the social factory and general intellect provided by the autonomia (post-operaist) movement, which are discussed in Section 6.

5.3. Caraway's Critique of Smythe and the Subject Matter of Political Economy

One of the more forceful recent critiques of Smythe's findings came from Caraway (2011), who quite vigorously argued against several of the basic presuppositions which Smythe put forward in his seminal study. While his critique is in no way representative for a quite long series of different rebuttals – they came especially from the field of Cultural Studies and were often directed against political economy in general (for an overview see Biltereyst and Meers 2011, especially 417-424) – it does offer a fruitful ground in the context of this text. This is especially so, because Caraway claims he is giving a Marxian revisiting of this issue. His text thereby deserves a short excursus that will fit well into the problems and issues that have already been raised.

One can wholeheartedly agree with Caraway on several points raised against the scholars dealing with the audience commodity. Firstly, he claims this approach overstates the degree to which co-optation of audiences as a source of value and free labour is in fact realised, because the activities of audiences are not under the direct control of the capitalist (the audience commodity transaction). His second notion is connected to the first, namely that this approach and especially Smythe himself, completely lacks focus on subjectivities and their agency (theses of audience power and of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

media content as free lunch). Thirdly, there is a lack of focus on use-value. It is, however, crucial to ask, what is the epistemological approach of political economy and what is the subject matter these authors employ? – answers to which might clarify some of the dilemmas. Let us look at his arguments more closely, starting with the last one.

Caraway claims that "an exploration of the use-values derived by audiences from media products would have demonstrated the limits to capitalist domination in the sphere of production" (Caraway 2011, 700). As mentioned earlier in this text, there are hardly any observations of use-value in the first volume of *Capital*. On the contrary, Marx focuses almost solely on exchange-value. He finds use-value as an almost irrelevant appendage, even talking about exchange-value simply as value. This is not because he *personally* feels use-value is irrelevant, but because this is how the capitalist economy operates. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* Marx even goes as far as to simply state that "use-value as such, lies outside the sphere of investigation of political economy", mainly because it is "a necessary prerequisite of the commodity" (Marx and Engels 1987, 270). And "since the use-value of the commodity is postulated, the specific utility and the definite usefulness of the labour expended on it is also postulated; but this is the only aspect of labour as useful labour which is relevant to the study of commodities" (Marx and Engels 1987, 277). Commodity must always posses some socially useful value, but its actual content is absolutely indifferent (Jameson 2011, 35-37)[24]. It is exactly this *social* (or socially relevant) character of use-value of a certain commodity that makes it an exchangeable commodity, while at the same time, this characteristic also makes its actual content quite irrelevant as long as it has its consumers; basically anything can become commodified, as far as it has some use-value and as long as other people want it. Use-values provide commodities with commercial content, which makes them "material bearers of exchange-value". But "clearly, the exchange relation of commodities is characterised precisely by its abstraction from their use-values. Within the exchange relation, one use-value is worth just as much as another, provided only that it is present in the appropriate quantity" (Marx 1990/1867, 126f.). Exchange-value is a quantitative relation based in proportions and measurement, and for all we care, this can also be gossip on Lady Gaga's latest extravagance ... So far as society deems such use-values relevant enough to consume them.

Other authors, most notably Jhally (1987), have focused on the role of use-value in relation to commodity fetishism and the social construction of symbolic code (thus how meaning is produced for commodities), even though retaining a firmly materialist epistemological paradigm. Just because Smythe himself does not focus on this aspect (neither did Marx, for that matter), does not mean that his approach is not correct (he is just giving a certain perspective) or even that he saw no value in other perspectives, such as Jhally's. There were quite a number of attacks directed at Marx, claiming that he naturalised use-value and produced a fetishism of exchange. Such critiques are nothing new (for an overview and a defence of Marx, see, for example, Jhally 1987, 35), but could hardly be more unfair. Just because political economy does not concern itself with use-value does not mean use-value is socially irrelevant (quite the contrary).

Let us now turn to Caraway's two other points of critique: to what degree subjugation of audiences under capital is actually possible and what the role of agency is. He claims that neither in Smythe's nor in Jhally's and Livant's analysis can one find any "demonstration that the labour process described here [audience-labour] is under the control of the capitalist; nor is there any attempt to show that the use value is alienated from the audience" (Caraway 2011, 697). He then presents new technologies of surveillance, but stresses it is necessary "to continually reassess the degree to which capital is able to bring these activities within the logic of accumulation. [...] The effectiveness of those efforts should be treated with a high degree of scepticism" (Caraway 2011, 698). He goes on to say that "the exact and dispassionate measurement of audiences is fiction" (Caraway 2011, 699).

It seems to me that Caraway is wrong in most of the issues raised. He is to an extent correct in saying that in the media relation, the capitalist does not directly control the labourer. That is of course true, but *neither* is the capitalist in the traditional production process able to fully control the labourer; the media owner is able to "buy" the interest of audiences with content and in both cases the labourer does not have that much of a choice if he wants to consume (there is of course always an option to turn off the TV, but it is an idealistic presumption that this somehow magically increases the power of audiences). In comparison to the labour process, the relationship here is definitely not so different. Labourers, much like audiences, can formally choose who they will work for; in reality however, their options are very limited in both cases. And owners in the media industry, much like traditional capitalists, know very well what they will be able to sell and how much they are

[24] Or to put it in Sohn-Rethel's words: "Commodity exchange requires, as a condition of its possibility, that the use of the commodities be suspended while they are subject to a transaction of exchange". (Sohn-Rethel's 1972, 51)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

able to spend so they remain profitable. If that was not the case, they would go out of business. The calculation is a pretty simple one and if it does not work out, the business cannot survive. No mystification is needed here; a capitalist will adapt his operation to the circumstances in which he has to operate. It is also leading readers astray by saying that in Smythe's formulation, "the audience does not appear as a seller of a commodity" (ibid., 697). Their commodity is the abstract time they are "selling" to the media owner in exchange for the content they receive, so to say their "free-time", leisure time. The use-value involved in this transaction is in fact irrelevant, but to go into detail, the use-values in the digitalised era are the personal characteristics (social status, interests, etc.) of the audiences that the media owner is able to sell to the advertiser (or quite simply, he sells their attention if these audiences are less differentiated) and most notably the content produced by audiences in digital environments. There is nothing unusual here that would not correspond to the Marxian analysis, neither is it completely true that "there is no formal contract, negotiation or discussion of terms between audience and advertiser" (Ibid.), which Caraway seems to feel is the crucial aspect of labour to appear as commodity (which is not the case; the sole precondition is the ability of the labourer to choose freely his exploiter when he puts his labour power in the labour-market). Everything Caraway mentions in fact does happen, mostly informally, true, but on the Internet often also formally; for example via terms of use and privacy statements (see Sandoval 2012), while the negotiations are happening with mouse clicks or on the remote control. The consumer of the media content is able to change his "employer", and on the Internet, a person can easily self-employ himself by building his own website that will in real-life circumstances of course have immense difficulties of surviving against dominant actors such as Google or Facebook (just like it happens in the real-world economy).

Caraway's major problem throughout the text is that he fails to distinguish between two very different levels of argumentation: the abstract level and the concrete level. Both levels are of course of immense importance and the abstract argumentation, with its focus on tendencies, is built with the sole purpose of explaining the movement of concrete reality. The abstract argumentation however, which abstracts away particular cases and several mechanisms that operate in actually existing everyday life, can never fully explain concrete reality and particular cases, because its insight is limited (intentionally so). Causes for Marx's use of abstraction have been laid out earlier in this text, but one perhaps most obvious reason is that there is no way of analysing *everything*, dropping to the level of concrete reality, because this leaves the analyst with the sole focus on particular cases (such an analysis can bring a lot of new knowledge, but then again, also very little). As Collier (1994, 255-259) points out, apprehending the concrete whole is impossible and failing to realise this often makes us overlook crucial mechanisms and determinations (or we, at best, construct generalisations with little explanatory power)[25].

Caraway's inability to comprehend that political economy necessitates abstraction (together with focus on tendencies) is seen through his statement that "advertisers are not buying audience power but a fabricated image of an audience – and it is this fabrication which needs to be challenged by critical scholarship". Does he really believe advertisers do not know that? They are buying an approximation, an abstraction, a statistical construct of an audience and not "real" audiences: there is a relevant tendency (because of all the data they have) that the fabricated construct of an audience they bought will in large part behave in a way they planned that they will. In the abstract argument, they *have to* behave like that, otherwise the advertiser goes bankrupt; in the abstract reasoning this approximation *must* be close enough to reality in the long run to make it a reasonable purchase (it is not critical scholarship that factually risks its money by buying these fabrications; if this was not an economic practice that enhanced capitalists profitability, they would quite simply abandon it). It is very similar to a capitalist that is never able to know *in advance* whether he will be able to extract enough surplus value from the labour power he bought, so he is able to succeed on the market with the commodities which he plans to produce (the capitalist needs to *speculate* that he will be wily enough to control the labourer and extract enough surplus value). Similarly, looking at concrete examples, a capitalist in the production process *never* has complete control over the labourers he hired; in the worst case scenario (for him), labourers will go on strike. Or in the worst case scenario for the media owner, audiences will stop watching the content he is producing (which means he will either: put something else on-air, reduce costs so they correspond to the money brought in by the advertising, or go out of business). The abstract approach, of course, de-subjectivises, but this is what capitalism in fact does: rationalising, objectifying, abstracting (see section 3.3).

[25] While it is true that the further away theory gets from the concrete toward the abstract, more prone to error it is, it should be noted that "in order to explain the concrete conjuncture we have to unravel by analysis (in thought) the multiple mechanisms and tendencies which make it what it is" (Collier 1994, 255).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

It is worth asking ourselves whether anyone, besides now mostly deceased Stalinist dialectical materialists, genuinely believes that Marx's quite apparent lack of interest in subjectivities and working-class power in some of his later writings, point at his disinterest in progressive changes in the world by these subjects? This would contradict much of his actual conduct throughout his whole life. It is, on the contrary, exactly because of his lack of attention toward subjectivities that he was able to analyse abstractly how the capitalist system in fact works (again, only at the abstract, not necessarily concrete level, where several other tendencies come into play, most importantly human agency that can resist this subjugation). He had to abstract from other aspects of concrete reality that are of prime importance to fight capitalism, to demonstrate how the capitalist exploits the worker in the production process if one accepts the ideal typology of the capitalist market constructed by classical political economists[26]. Abstraction offers both Marx and Smythe a specific perspective on how capitalism operates in an abstract form and it is obvious that this perspective is not complete; it leaves out vast parts of social life. It is an abstraction, a very important one, but still it is limited in its scope, which is a characteristic of any abstraction. Still, as Fuchs, for example, points out, Smythe in fact *does not* neglect agency, even if he finds no *automatic* resistance[27]. As Smythe points out in *Dependency Road*:

> "True, people are subject to relentless pressures from Consciousness Industry; they are besieged with an avalanche of consumer goods and services; they are themselves produced as (audience) commodities; they reproduce their own lives and energies as damaged and in commodity form. But people are by no means passive or powerless. People do resist the powerful and manifold pressures of capital as best as they can. There is a dependable quantum of individual and group resistance, reproduced every day, arising out of people's innate capacity and need for love, respect, communal relations, and creativity. That is, the principal contradiction in the core area (as in the whole world) is that between people and capital. And presently people are the principal aspect of that contradiction"[28]. (Smythe 1981b, 270f.)

Caraway's notion on Smythe's purported ignorance of agency therefore does not seem valid. But even if it was, criticising an author who is deriving his research from a political economic perspective (consequently adopting a specific epistemological position) for not focusing on subjectivities, would seem similar to criticising a physician on the ground that he is not a chemist (or a carpenter, because he is not a plumber). One *could* give additional perspectives, but if he does not, why *blame* him because of it? Even though social sciences necessarily include several different perspectives, especially if they are critical, and must be aware of diverging analyses from different disciplines, distinction between different approaches and their subject matter is still important; in my opinion, it would be a mistake to simply conflate one approach with another, even if their contributions to the analysis of society may vary significantly.

Many authors – and Marx would probably be one of them, especially if one accepts Jameson's (2011, 37f.) central observation that Capital is in fact *not* a work of political action – would probably concur that focus on agency (e.g. resistance by differing subjectivities and possibilities of (counter) power produced by social movements) is simply not a subject matter of political economy (or its critique). In any case, political economy *can* or even *must*, however, be seen as one of the central preconditions for successful political action, touching on the need for redistribution of wealth and providing foundation to see clearly where wealth in fact originates from (human labour)[29]. There is no reason not to complement such a political-economic perspective with radical political theory if

[26] Let us take an obvious example, that of Adam Smith and his construction of social reality in *The Wealth of Nations*. The sheer fact his arguments are mostly abstractions tells us they cannot be refuted with practical examples (e.g. of the reputed failings of his theory when they are applied to concrete reality); even though we are yet to see such a perfectly competitive market, which is at the fundaments of his theory (arguably, there has never been such an example, especially not in the last century or so). (see also Harvey 2010)

[27] This thesis was raised in his plenary talk entitled *Critique of the Political Economy of Social Media*, which was given on 3rd of May 2012 at the *Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21st Century Information Society* conference in Uppsala (Sweden). As he also pointed out in a private debate, Smythe's focus is, amongst others, on labour – and *labour is an activity*, it is inherently a place where *active human subject comes in*.

[28] This Smythe quote about agency was presented Fuchs in this talk at the Uppsala conference and taken from his presentation, see: http://www.scribd.com/doc/92818866/Christian-Fuchs-Critique-of-the-Political-Economy-of-Social-Media-and-Informational-Capitalism. See also a forthcoming long contribution of Fuchs in tripleC (title: Reloading Dallas Smythe: The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy, and Critical Theory Today).

[29] Barbalet (1983, 29-30) stresses that for Marx, abolition of social forms (such as commodity fetishism) requires social and political action, not scientific enquiry. Critical science is however an integral part of a wider revolutionary framework.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

one wishes (without seeking straw-man arguments or simple failings that are a consequence of abstraction). This is an approach of Negri and Hardt (2001; 2005; 2009) and the whole autonomist line of thought (see Section 6). But agency and subjectivities are not a subject matter *par excellence* of political economy and in fact never were. They are a subject matter of (radical) political theory. Personally, I find it confusing when people for example claim Negri and Hardt have taken an easy path by ignoring the proletariat, instead focusing on the multitude, like it is an either-either choice. That is not the case. Similarly to the political-economic writings of Marx, in Negri and Hardt's works, the proletariat can be seen as a technical concept (just like several other concepts in Marx's writings are, for example commodity fetishism or exploitation, see also Harvey 2010). It is the type of reading that transforms them into political concepts. Autonomism for example offered a political reading of the concepts that were technical and constructed at the level of political economy (ibid.; Negri 1991/1984; Cleaver 2000/1979). Multitude (see Virno 2004; Hardt and Negri 2005) can on the other hand be seen as a concept derived from radical political theory that not by any chance contradicts or opposes the proletariat, but simply compliments one concept (derived from a certain field of study) with another. And neither does it exclude the other. My goal here is of course not to blindly defend the approach of political economy as the only correct one. On the contrary, I feel in many cases it has in fact been highly detrimental, providing only an "objectivistic" account by focusing on tendencies and mechanisms. Its basic premises should, however, be accepted as being valuable and credit should be given where credit is due: political readings of the central concepts in political economy would for example be impossible if Marx would not first provide us with a stringently technical, abstract, non-subjectivist and non-political reading.

6. Communicative Capitalism and the Social Factory

The key difference between the presented strands of the political economy of communication and post-operaist/autonomist neo-Marxism is that the latter expands its scope beyond media and communication (even if in some cases it takes examples from the Internet as case-studies). It also puts a much larger focus on the subjective agency; it is individual subjects that produce value and because value production has spread into wider society (e.g. the "social factory"), this offers a radical expansion for the political possibilities and human resistance against these processes.

Several findings and ideas on audience as commodity can be directly connected to this line of thought and we are able to see several convergence points between this critical theoretic approach and political economy of communication. Authors connected to this neo-Marxist "school" claim that communication, or even language-capacity as such, gained hegemonic primacy in contemporary society, therefore providing only one of the several possible links to political economy of communication. The concept of "social factory", which discloses how work has expanded beyond places commonly intended to host the production process (i.e., factory, manufacture …) into wider society (see Negri 1984/1991; Negri 1992; Terranova 2004 etc.), also indirectly points at a full-fledged commodification of society, a thesis quite similar to those of Smythe and authors participating in the audience commodity debate.

Several authors such as Agamben (2000, 109-120), Virno (2004), Terranova (2004), Marazzi (2008), Negri (1991/1984; 1992; 1999) Negri and Hardt (2001; 2004; 2009), Dean (2008), Pasquinelli (2009), Gorz (2010), Fumagalli and Mezzadra (2010), Moulier Boutang (2011) and others have recently been writing on variations of communicative, cognitive or even semio and bio-linguistic capitalism, where communication and language capacity are gaining in importance. They can even be seen as a *deeper*, ontological proposition on the species-being of human beings (see Dyer-Witheford 2004). Similar findings were applied before that by Lazzarato (1996), who wrote of immaterial labour. Later-on this type of labour was most carefully analysed by Gorz (2010). Gorz demonstrated how immaterial work has become the hegemonic form of work and the source for value creation in contemporary societies. Because of this transformation, people are totally subsumed under capital, where they must become the *enterprises that they are*, self-entrepreneurs, and must hold as much human capital as possible. "With self-entrepreneurship, whole persons and entire lives can, at last, be put to work and exploited. Life becomes 'the most precious capital'. The boundary between work and non-work fades, not because work and non-work activities mobilise the same skills, but because time for living falls, in its entirety, into the clutches of value" (Gorz 2010, 22; for an overview see Brophy and de Peuter 2007).

This is quite peculiar. It is important to note such an intertwinement between the time of labouring and non-labouring is very far from being common to capitalist societies. Quite on the contrary, with the rise of capitalism there was a radical separation between what was deemed productive (by capital), and what was unproductive, merely adequate for reproduction of human life. As Thompson (1967, 59f.; 1991, ch.6) demonstrates, task-orientated work and a hardly noticeable demarcation

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

between “work” and “life” is distinctive of pre-capitalist communities, “where social intercourse and labour are intermingled – the working-day lengthens or contracts according to the task – and there is no great sense of conflict between labour and ‘passing the time of day’” (ibid., 60). Labour in capitalist societies, on the other hand, has historically always been stringently measured and timed by the clock (with far-reaching consequences). Thompson not only demonstrated that apprehension of time is socially constructed, but that linear measurement of time is crucial for capitalism. One of the pre-requisites of Marxian labour theory of value, which is constitutive for capitalist and exploitation of labour, is therefore being able to measure the labourers work. This is what abstract time is all about – even though capitalists have developed several new techniques of measuring, leading some authors to write about neo-Taylorism or digital Taylorism (e.g. Brown et al. 2011, ch.5). Nevertheless, this has important consequences, especially if we acknowledge there is an increasing number of jobs, where labour cannot be easily measured (see Gorz 1989). This often means neo-Taylorist practices are close to a mere façade, because they fail to measure anything of particular relevance. They are, however, effective means of surveillance and control over the workforce, as they were in the past. This difficulty is of course furthermore accentuated with the increasing blurring between time of labour and free-time. As noted by Postone (2003/1993, 26f.), “in the course of development of capitalist industrial production, value becomes less and less adequate as a measure of the ‘real wealth’ produced. [...] Value becomes anachronistic in terms of the potential of the system of production to which it gives rise; the realisation of that potential would entail the abolition of value”. This means that “the abolition of value would signify that labour time no longer would serve as the measure of wealth and that the production of wealth no longer would be effected primarily by direct human labour in the process of production”. For Postone it is therefore clear that “overcoming capitalism, according to Marx, entails a fundamental transformation of the material form of production, of the way people work”.

It is not a historical novelty that much labour is done outside the production process or the places traditionally denoted as places for production (e.g. factory, manufacture). Such labour is however considered unproductive by capital and was often denoted as such also by “progressive” socialist movements, which excluded all but the “real proletariat”, which was constituted by white men (see Huws 2003). These places were however at the same time crucial for reproduction of the lives of the labourers. This was especially the case with the unproductive labour done by women in the household, where this division was based on gender (for the role of this labour in the wider accumulation process see Wallerstein 1983, 22-28; Fortunati 1989; Huws 2003). According to Fortunati (1989, 9) the capitalist mode of production has a dual character, divided between production and reproduction. While the latter is deemed as a non-value (it is also non-waged and carried out in the home), the former supposedly produces value in the production process. Fortunati however twists this logic and demonstrates that reproduction is an integral part of the production process; in fact, “it clearly contributes to the creation of value as a crucial, integral part of the capitalist cycle” (Fortunati 1989, 8). It is an indirectly waged labour that is engaged in the reproduction of labour power, which is crucial for the production as such and simultaneously enables that two workers are exploited with one wage. This notion is today extended even further. Huws (2003, 27; 45f.; 68f.) for example uses terms “unpaid consumption labour” and “consumption workers” to denote many unprofitable tasks that are forced back on the consumer, adding to the unpaid labour common people must do to reproduce their labour power (and consequently their lives). This type of work has usually been done by women, who are disproportionately affected by these demands, reproducing the gender relations. The key novelty is that capital has been able to include this type of (what is known as) “economic externalities” into its accumulation cycle.

What is of particular interest to me here is not so much through what changes the conceptualisation of labour has gone and what the category of labour even means today. These can be indeed seen as crucial difficulties that political economy must face today. Neither do we want to focus on the structural transformations of capitalism in perhaps an entirely new phase of capitalism. What we want to consider here seems to be an equally important question, namely, “how far” commodification has been able to spread into lives of human beings, where and what it is able to colonise and under what conditions. We are able to see striking convergence points between early findings of Smythe and observations made by several strands of neo-Marxist critique of political economy when analysing not only the role of commodification in present historical moment, but also where capital is able to extract surplus value. There is no limit to the commodification process according to these two strands of thought and it is not a coincidence many critical communication scholars have integrated Autonomist perspective in their theoretical apparatus. It seems both strands fully demonstrate the real value of George Gerbner’s statement from 1983 that “if Marx were alive to-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

day, his principal work would be entitled Communications rather than Capital" (cited in: Nordenstreng 2004, 13).

What is presently novel in contemporary societies is, as claimed by Autonomist authors, that capital is attempting to include in the capitalist accumulation circuit the sole human capabilities to produce knowledge, communicate, quickly adapt to changed conditions (flexibility), participate, or cooperate. These are capabilities that are specific to human beings, who, as open animals, are capable of constructing political and social institutions. These characteristics are being directly "employed" by contemporary capital through different techniques and apparatuses, which serve to extract value from living labour. This claim could even be seen as a naturally tendential development of capitalism, which cannot set itself any limits when colonising different spheres from which value can be extracted.

This is directly applicable to Virno's (1996; 2004) reinterpretation of the concept of *general intellect*, derived from the "Fragment on the machines" in Marx's Grundrisse. Virno argues that post-Fordist capitalism mobilises all the faculties that characterise our species (i.e. language, abstract thinking, plasticity), a thesis that is derived from his social ontology. For Virno, for example, these capabilities can be seen as generically human: "post-Fordism mobilises all the faculties that characterise our species: language, abstract thinking, disposition toward learning, plasticity, the habit of not having solid habits" (Virno 2005, 29f.). It is these characteristics that are probably used in all professions and occupations (in the sense of the given definition communication is a necessary social manifestation of human language-capacity). Pasquinelli (2009) instead uses the term "common intellect", which demonstrates how capital is in fact exploiting human capabilities common to all people, while at the same time appropriating our common social production without paying for it (see also Hardt and Negri 2009).

As pointed out by Chicchi (2010), Marazzi (2010), or Vercelone (2010) financial capitalism has been able spread over the entirety of the economic accumulation cycle. In its fundamentals this means that finance is now present in all of the phases of economic cycle, from its start (production), to its end (consumption). This is the main reason why finance capitalism is able to extract value beyond areas that were traditionally meant for producing value (i.e. production of exchange value behind the borders of a factory). This simultaneously means commodification has been able to spread into all areas of life.

7. Conclusion

Several unresolved dilemmas have been posed throughout the text and more questions have been raised than answered. One of these is certainly in the category of labour: what does it encompass in the current historical context? It might be difficult for many to contemplate the idea that what is commonly considered as 'leisure time' can today be defined as a specific type of labour. My goal here was not to seek transhistorical, anthropological or essentialist definitions of a necessarily historical phenomenon – namely, labour in the context of a capitalist society. What should interest us is *what capital deems as labour*, no matter how implausible that particular type of labour or its products might seem to us personally (or even how superfluous one might feel these produced use-values are, because there is no real need to prove any of that, we just have to look at the most popular TV shows). Both political economy and its critique need, first and foremost, technical rather than moral definitions, which can enable a radical political resistance against capitalist subjugation. Can one go so far as to claim that any activity producing additional exchange-value for the owner of the commodity could be considered as some sort of labour (no matter what the magnitude of this added value might be)? This is not far from Marcuse's definition, which he derives from Marx's writings. He is defining the term labour "to mean what capitalism actually understands by it in the last analysis, that activity which creates surplus value in commodity production, or, which 'produces capital'" (Marcuse 1955, 293). Productivity in this sense is always something that is defined by the capital alone.

More detailed answers will have to wait for now, but what is important here is to acknowledge that big shifts, both at the social and at the economic level, have happened in the last decades and we lack acceptable answers and thorough analyses for many of them. Some indicators of these transformations have been given, through the problems and dilemmas raised in this text. We might therefore be able to provide a working thesis with regard to the all-encompassing commodification. This thesis needs to be further substantiated, but could offer a solid ground for a continuation of several ideas already raised regarding this issue:

> The structural tendency of capitalism, which has developed into a world-integrated economic system, is not only to commodify and valorise all material and social as-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> pects of life, but also to incorporate human life as such (i.e. species-being) into its accumulation cycle: not only speech, but our ability to speak [logos], not only our feelings and emotions, but our generic human abilities for these activities. This tendency dictates that not a second of human life should be wasted by falling out of this economistic circuit of instrumental rationalisation and detailed calculation; every human act must be encompassed and every aspect of social life carefully measured.

Marx has been able to demonstrate the importance of the commodity-form and exchange for our social lives and individualisation. But the current phase of commodification goes much further than this; it starts to erode and change almost all human contacts and relations. It not only instrumentalises communication in the media, but could also infringe interpersonal communication, transforming humans into automatons. Where commodity starts to reign supreme over society, any possible independence of use-value is eradicated; anything socially useful that lacks exchange-value becomes worthless, dispensable, and irrelevant (what else is the *real* meaning of the draconian austerity cuts throughout the European Union?). What should worry us is not only social communication, which is possibly a somewhat abstract notion, but also the fundamental categories of democratic life. Information and communication cannot, without blinking, be seen just as *one of the many types of commodities*. They are crucial components of what we deem as free and democratic societies based on freedom from oppression and freedom of expression.

As Hanno Hardt (2004, 74) stressed, communication is central in most of the definitions of democracy with cogent reason. But can we really claim there is a freedom of expression if the whole communication process is turning into a big, interrelated and world-wide commodity chain, which has to play under "the coercive laws of competition" (Marx 1990/1867, 433): from the production (knowledge labour), to the content, infrastructure, and finally audiences – human beings? Is there any freedom when "creative, intellectual work turns into mass production, while individual ideas undergo ideological scrutiny to fit the demands of the market, where predictability and repetition are the key to commercial success" (Hardt 2004, 34)? In a time when the key communication channels and freedom of expression are in fact monopolised (or at best oligopolised) and owned by the smallest elite possible (McChesney 2008)[30]?

It is possible to claim that from its outset, critical theory has fought against instrumental reasoning and against positivist outlook on the world that does not reflect or critique this instrumentalisation of human beings and their relations (see Fuchs 2011, 11-26). Our task as critical theorists is to continuously provide a cogent critique of these processes. This is so especially because of the enduring instrumentalisation and economistic rationalisation, which is a consequence of total and seemingly unprecedented commodification in the history of capitalism. If we believe Wallerstein, however, there is at least one positive consequence of these processes: "Total commodification eventually removes the veils of the market". (Wallerstein 2001/1991, 25)

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 2001/1991. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London, New York: Routledge.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2000. *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2012. Exploitation in the Data Mine. In *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media,* edited by Christian Fuchs, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, and Marisol Sandoval, 71-88. New York: Routledge.

Arendt, Hannah. 1998/1958. *The Human Condition.* 2nd ed. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

Babe, Robert E. 2009. *Cultural Studies and Political Economy: Toward a New Integration*. Lanham, Boulder, New York: Lexington Books.

Balibar, Étienne. 2007. *The Philosphy of Marx.* London, New York: Verso.

Barbalet, Jack M. 1983. *Marx's Construction of Social Theory*. London, Boston [...]: Routledge and Keegan Paul.

Bellamy Foster, John and Robert McChesney. 2011. The Internet's Unholy Marriage to Capitalism. *MRZine* 62 (10). Available via: http://monthlyreview.org/2011/03/01/the-internets-unholy-marriage-to-capitalism (March 17, 2012).

Bermejo, Fernando. 2009. Audience Manufacture in Historical Perspective: from Broadcasting to Google. *New Media and Society* 11 (1-2): 133-154.

Biltereyst, Daniel and Philippe Meers. 2011. The Political Economy of Audiences. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock and Helena Sousa, 415-435. Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

[30] McChesney goes even further, stressing that "the media have become a significant antidemocratic force in the United States. The wealthier and more powerful the corporate media giants have become, the poorer the prospects for participatory democracy". (McChesney 2008, 426) For Hardt, similarly, "the media have become part of the corporate domain of the American society which converts economic domination into political power. Thus, the media shape consciousness and help reinforce the dominant corporate ideology, which becomes the reigning political ideology". (Hardt 2004, 48)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Bollier, David. 2002. *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth*. New York, London: Pluto Press.
Bonefeld, Werner. 2001. The Permanence of Primitive Accumulation: Commodity Fetishism and Social Constitution. *The Commoner* 2: 1-15.
Boyle, James. 2008. *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press.
Brophy, Enda and Greig de Peuter. 2007. Immaterial Labour, Precarity, and Recomposition. In *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*, edited by Catherine McKercher and Vincent Mosco, 177-192. Lanham: Lexington Books.
Brown, Phillip, Hugh Lauder, and David Ashton. 2011. *The Global Auction: The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs and Incomes.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
Caraway, Brett. 2011. Audience Labor in the New Media Environment: A Marxian Revisiting of the Audience Commodity. *Media, Culture & Society* 33 (5): 693-708.
Chicchi, Federico. 2010. On the Threshold of Capital, At the Thresholds of the Common. In *Crisis in the Global Economy* edited by Andrea Fumagalli Sandro Mezzadra, 139-152. New York: Autonomedia.
Cleaver, Harry. 2000/1979. *Reading Capital Politically*. Leeds: Anti/Theses.
Collier, Andrew. 1994. *Critical Realism.* London, New York: Verso.
De Angelis, Massimo. 2007. *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital*. London: Pluto Press.
Dean, Jodi. 2008. Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics. In *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, edited by Megan Boler, 101-121. Cambridge, London: MIT Press.
Debord, Guy. 1970. *Society of Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red Press.
Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 2004. 1844/2004/2044: The Return of Species-Being. *Historical Materialism* 12 (4): 3-26.
Eagleton, Terry. 1996. *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Malden, Oxford: Blackwell.
Fiske, John. 1990. *Introduction to Communication Studies*. 2nd edition. London, New York: Routledge.
Fleissner, Peter. 2009. The "Commodification" of Knowledge in the Global Information Society. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 7 (2): 228-238.
Fortunati, Leopoldina. 1989. *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labour and Capital.* New York: Autonomedia.
Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.
Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies.* London, New York: Routledge.
Fuchs, Christian. 2012. Google Capitalism. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 10 (1): 42-48.
Fuchs, Christian, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, and Marisol Sandoval, eds. 2012. *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media*. New York: Routledge.
Fumagalli, Andrea and Sandro Mezzadra, eds. 2010. *Crisis in the Global Economy.* New York: Autonomedia.
Gandy, Oscar H. Jr. 2012. Matrix Multiplication and the Digital Divide. In *Race After the Internet*, edited by Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White, 128-145. New York, London: Routledge.
Gorz, André. 1989. *Critique of Economic Reason.* London, New York: Verso.
Gorz. André. 2010. *The Immaterial.* London: Seagull Books.
Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
Hardt, Hanno. 2004. *Myths for the Masses: An Essay on Mass Communication.* Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing.
Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2001. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.
Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire.* New York: The Penguin Press.
Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2009. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
Harvey, David. 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
Harvey, David. 2010. *A Companion to Marx's Capital*. London, New York: Verso.
Hindman, Matthew. 2009. *The Myth of Digital Democracy.* Princeton in Oxford: Princeton Press.
Hobsbawm, Eric. 2011. *How to Change the World: Reflections of Marx and Marxism.* New Haven, London: Yale University Press.
Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. 2002/1947. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
Huws, Ursula. 2003. *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World.* New York: MR Press.
Innis, Harold Adams. 2008/1951. *The Bias of Communication.* 2nd ed. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
Jameson, Fredric. 2009. *Valences of the Dialectic*. London, New York: Verso.
Jameson, Fredric. 2011. *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One.* London, New York: Verso.
Jhally, Sut. 1987. *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society.* New York: Routledge.
Kang, Hyunjin and Matthew P. McAllister. 2011. Selling You and Your Clicks: Examining the Audience Commodification of Google. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Co-operation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 9 (2): 141-153.
Lazzarato, Maurizio. 1996. Immaterial Labour. In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 133-147. Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press.
Lefebvre, Henri. 1968. *The Sociology of Marx.* New York: Pantheon Books.
Lukács, Georg. 1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics. Cambridge*, Massachusets: The MIT Press.
Marazzi, Christian. 2008. *Capital and Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
Marazzi, Christian. 2010. *The Violence of Financial Capitalism.* Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
Marcuse, Herbert. 1955. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory.* 2nd ed. London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd.
Marx, Karl. 1993/1858. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft).* London: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1990/1867. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*. London: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1991/1894. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume Three*. London: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1975. *Collected Works, Volume 3 (1843-1844)*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1976. *Collected Works, Volume 6 (1845-1848)*. New York: International Publishers.
Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1987. *Collected Works, Volume 29 (1857-1861)*. New York: International Publishers.
Maxwell, Rick. 1991. The Image is Gold: Value, The Audience Commodity, and Fetishism. *Journal of Film and Video* 43 (1-2): 29-45.
May, Christopher. 2010. *The Global Political Economy of Intellectual Property Rights: The New Enclosures.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
McChesney, Robert W. 2008. *The Political Economy of Media.* New York: Monthly Review Press.
Meehan, Eileen. 1993. Commodity Audience, Actual Audience: The Blindspot Debate. In *Illuminating the Blindspots: Essays Honoring Dallas W. Smythe*, edited by Janet Wasko, Vincent Mosco, and Manjunath Pendakur, 378-400. New Jersey: Ablex.
Mezzadra, Sandro. 2011. The Topicality of Prehistory: A New Reading of Marx's Analysis of "So-Called Primitive Accumulation". *Rethinking Marxism* 22 (3): 302-321.
Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication.* 2nd edition. Los Angeles, London: Sage.
Mosco, Vincent and Catherine McKercher. 2008. *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* Lanham, Boulder, New York: Lexington Books.
Moulier Boutang, Yann. 2011. *Cognitive Capitalism.* Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.
Murdock, Graham. 1978. Blindspots about Western Marxism: A Reply to Dallas Smythe. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2 (2): 109-119.
Murdock, Graham. 2006. Marx on Commodities, Contradictions and Globalisations Resources for a Critique of Marketised Culture. *E-Compós* 7: 1-23.
Murdock, Graham. 2011. Political Economies as Moral Economies: Commodities, Gifts, and Public Goods. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, 13-40. Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 1973. For a Political Economy of Mass Communications. *The Socialist Register* 10: 205-234
Napoli, Philip M. 2010. Revisiting 'Mass Communication' and the 'Work' of Audience in the New Media Environment. *Media, Culture and Society*, 32 (3): 505-516.
Napoli, Philip M. 2011. *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences.* New York: Columbia University Press.
Negri, Antonio. 1991/1984. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. London: Pluto Press.
Negri, Antonio. 1992. Interpretation of the Class Situation Today: Methodological Aspects. In *Open Marxism, Volume 2: Theory and Practice*, edited by Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, and Kosmas Psychopedis, 69-105. London: Pluto Press.
Negri, Antonio. 1999. Value and Affect. *Boundary 2* 26 (2): 77-88.
Nightingale, Virginia, ed. 2011. *The Handbook of Media Audiences*. Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Nordenstreng, Kaarle. 2004. Ferment in the Field: Notes on the Evolution of Communication Studies and its Disciplinary Nature. *The Public - Javnost* 11 (3): 5-18.
Parker, Ian. 1994. Commodities as Sign-Systems. In *Information and Communication in Economics*, edited by Robert E. Babe, 69-91. Boston Dordrecth, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
Pasquinelli, Matteo. 2009. Google's PageRank Algorithm: A Diagram of Cognitive Capitalism and the Rentier of the Common Intellect. In *Deep Search: The Politics of Search Beyond Google*, edited by Konrad Becker and Felix Stalder. London: Transaction Publishers. Available via: http://matteopasquinelli.com/docs/Pasquinelli_PageRank.pdf (April 1, 2012)
Perelman, Michael. 2000. *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.
Polanyi, Karl. 2001/1944. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Times*. Boston: Beacon Press.
Postone, Moishe. 2003/1993. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Social Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univesity Press.
Prodnik, Jernej. 2011. Permanentnost primitivne akumulacije, ali: o privatni lastnini, komodifikaciji in povratku rente [eng.: The Permanence of Primitive Accumulation, or: On the Private Property, Commodification and Return of the Rent]. *Casopis za kritiko znanosti* 244: 89-109.
Prodnik, Jernej. 2012. Toward a Critique of Surveillance in the Age of the Internet: A Reflection on the "Internet and Surveillance" Volume Edited by Fuchs, Boersma, Albrechtslund, and Sandoval. *tripleC – Cognition, Communication, Cooperation: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 10 (1): 92-99.
Sandoval, Marisol. 2012. A Critical Empirical Case Study of Consumer Surveillance on Web 2.0. In *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media,* edited by Christian Fuchs, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, and Marisol Sandoval, 147-169. New York: Routledge.
Schiller, Herbert I. 1989. *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Smythe, Dallas W. 1960. On the Political Economy Of Communications. *Journalism Quarterly* (Fall), 563-572.
Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. In *Counterclockwise: Perspectives on Communication*, edited by Thomas Guback, 266-291. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press.
Smythe, Dallas W. 1978. Rejoinder to Graham Murdock. In *Counterclockwise: Perspectives on Communication*, edited by Thomas Guback, 292-301. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press.
Smythe, Dallas W. 1981a. Communications: Blindspot of Economics. In *Culture, Communication, and Dependency: The Tradition of H.A. Innis*, edited by William H. Melody, Liora Salter and Paul Heyer, 111-126. New Jersey: Ablex.
Smythe, Dallas W. 1981b. *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing.
Sohn-Rethel, Alfred. 1972. Mental and Manual Labour in Marxism. In *Situating Marx*, edited by Paul Walton and Stuart Hall, 44-71. London: Human Context Books.
Sohn-Rethel, Alfred. 1978. *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology.* London, Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd.
Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network culture: Politics for the information age*. London: Pluto Press.
Thompson, Edward Palmer. 1967. Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism. *Past and Present* 38: 56-97.
Thompson, Edward Palmer. 1991. *Customs in Common*. London: Merlin Press.
Huws, Ursula. 2003. *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in Real World*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Vercellone, Carlo. 2010. The Crisis of the Law of Value and the Becoming-Rent of Profit. In *Crisis in the Global Economy* edited by Andrea Fumagalli Sandro Mezzadra, 85-118. New York: Autonomedia.
Virno, Paolo. 1996. Notes on the "General Intellect". In *Marxism beyond Marxism*, edited by Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino and Rebecca E. Karl, 265- 272. New York, London: Routledge.
Virno, Paolo. 2004. *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Semiotext(e), Los Angeles and New York.
Virno, Paolo. 2005. Interview with Paolo Virno (by Branden W. Joseph). *Grey Room* 21: 26-37.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1983. *Historical Capitalism*. London: Verso.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2001/1991. *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms.* 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Wasko, Janet. 2005. Studying the Political Economy of Media and Information. *Communicaçao e Sociedade* 7: 25-48.
Wasko, Janet, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, eds. 2011. *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications.* Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Williams, Raymond. 1973. Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory. *New Left Review* 82: 3-16.
Williams, Raymond. 2005/1980. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso.

About the Author

Jernej Prodnik
is a Researcher at the Social Communication Research Centre and Assistant to the Teaching Process at the Media Studies department (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia). His main research interests include structural transformations of post-Fordist capitalist societies, critique of political economy (focusing especially on communication), and wider social context of technological changes and democratic potentials brought by new technologies (including e-democracy and e-participation).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 302-312, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Internet and "Frictionless Capitalism"

Jens Schröter

Universität Siegen. Siegen, Germany. schroeter@medienwissenschaft.uni-siegen.de
http://www.multimediale-systeme.de

Abstract: *Since 1994 when the first browsers made their appearance the internet became the ‚new medium' par excellence. As is always the case with new media, there was an intense discussion about the future usage and effects of the new technology. One of the central arguments of this discussion was that the new medium might solve the problems of capitalism – Bill Gates coined the phrase ‚frictionless capitalism'. In the first part of my paper some of these discourses are analyzed. These discourses, often publicly uttered by conservative and liberal politicians, try to construct the internet as commercial medium solving problems of late capitalism. But already the dotcom-crash 2001 hinted at problems with that construction. In the second part there is a discussion of a special interpretation of Marx' theory of capitalist crisis. It is argued – also with recourse to Norbert Wiener – that the internet is part of the third industrial revolution which might lead to a very deep and even terminal crisis of capitalism. Instead of solving the problems of capitalism the internet might deepen them. We are witnessing since 2008 a chain of ever increasing symptoms of a deep crisis. By using Marx' approach some of the important effects of the new medium can be described far more accurately than does the unreflected euphoria of Gates and others.*

Keywords: Commercialization, Crisis, Gates, Internet, Marx, Gates, Productive Forces, Relations of Production

1. Introduction

Following 1989/90, hardly any "new media" gained as much importance as the internet did – on two parallel levels simultaneously: firstly, the internet became and remains the central vehicle of transnational economy, and secondly, the new technology became the focus of practically mythic tales: "Hardly had the social utopia been banished than the bourgeois media began to revel in unsocial technical utopias" (Haug 2003, 68; cf. Mosco 2004; Schröter 2004a; Flichy 2007). After the Cold War between Eastern Stalinism and Western capitalism, it seemed the next stage of history would be the solution to all problems, a capitalism rendered "frictionless" (Bill Gates) by the internet – for capitalism up to that point was apparently still full of friction, despite all assertions to the contrary.

As early as 1981, Lyotard had observed that "[e]ven capitalism, the liberal or neo-liberal discourse [...] ha[s] little credibility in the contemporary situation", for "it no longer knows how to legitimate itself." However, capitalism can exploit "information technologies" in order to achieve "the computerization of all of society [...]. That is today's capitalist horizon; and it is clear this will be what brings capitalism out of the crisis" (Lyotard 1986, 210). Lyotard takes completely for granted that information technologies will be able to solve the diagnosed crisis – rather than exacerbating it.

However, at this time "the internet" as such did not yet exist, only some of its predecessor networks which were hardly used by corporations. The *Arpanet*, the Internet's predecessor, resulted from the overlapping of military (communication that would still function in case of a thermonuclear war) and academic (sharing computer resources, which were scant at this time) discursive practices. For a long time, it was seen emphatically as a non-commercial, non-economic medium (cf. Abbate 1999; Schröter 2004a, 20-148). Only in the 1990s did the net become more widely used, particularly following the 1991 lifting of the ban on commercial activity and opening of the WWW in 1994. And today, in 2011, it literally seems to have become the "net of the world market" (Marx 1991, p929).

The Internet is a prime example of how technologies do not automatically bring about social change on their own, but how they are "redesignated" by hegemonic discursive practices[1] – a capitalism dominated by "neoliberalism" from 1973 onwards, but especially so since 1989/90. Hence,

[1] On the concept of hegemony, cf. Laclau & Mouffe (1985).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

neither the conditions of production nor the forces of production can be considered the individual cause; rather, the cause is always to be found in their complex interaction. Thus "transnational business", the growing trend to outsource whole sections of companies, was accelerated or indeed only made possible by the net, itself increasingly incorporated into hegemonic capitalist discourse: "The local, organisational, institutional and legal *unity* hitherto covered by the term 'business' is now *disintegrated*, *dismantled* and *dispersed*. Business is now only a virtual entity [...]" (Kurz 2005, 88). Precisely this "molecularisation" of business units can only function due to an "immediate global flow of information in real time" (ibid., 89). It is possible to enumerate many further levels on which the internet slotted into the structures of neoliberalist capitalism, thus enabling its global dislocation in the first place: for example, how email communication renders individuals permanently available, how new forms of teleworking and ostensible self-employment are made possible, how new distribution channels are opened up, and above all, how the gigantic and de-substantialised finance sector was only able to grow to this extent because of data networks (cf. ibid., 220-298). This complex process is of course not without its contradictions, but its various aspects cannot be considered in detail here (cf. Dyer-Witheford 1999; Haug 2003, 67-96).

Rather, the question arises of whether the net does not paradoxically *also constitute* the prime example of the "revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production" (Engels and Marx 2009, 10). To put this another way: the internet could be an example of how hegemonic capitalist discourse attempts to transform a new, initially underdetermined technology into a hegemonic operational technology, but finds itself limited precisely by this attempt, for the "true barrier to capitalist production is capital itself" (Marx 2006, 358). To put this yet another way: the initial euphoria over the web's potential – still present in the capitalist periphery where the internet is still spreading, as Alzouma (2011) shows using the example of Niger – and the related (attempted) sedimentation of hegemonic structures in it can also be frustrated by the net. And this is not due to the fact that there are "resistant" subcultures on the web, as will be shown later, but precisely because of the web's "success". There are hegemonic "adjustments" ("Zurechtmachungen", in Nietzsche's original German) of new media, but there is no guarantee that they will develop as originally anticipated.

The following section will outline some parts of the discourse on the Internet that developed during the 1990s. We are concerned in particular with those arguments that, hardly had the "user-friendly" *World Wide Web* platform become popular, sought to transform the Internet into a medium of the global neoliberal economy.

2. Frictionless Capitalism

The Internet was only cleared for commercial activity in 1991, and soon afterwards began to expand rapidly due to the spread of the WWW and browsers after 1994. Politics reacted quickly. As early as 1994, the U.S. Vice-President Al Gore gave his speech *Building the Information Superhighway*, in which he coined the metaphor of the *information superhighway*. Gore invokes the utopian model of the "universal archive" that developed alongside the earliest forms of the internet: "We now have a huge quantity of information available with respect to any conceivable problem that is presented" (1994). And as the Vice-President makes abundantly clear, this information should be placed primarily at the disposal of "business people" so that they can succeed in their tasks. However, the problem is how to find one's way around this vast mass of information: "As we confront this huge quantity of information, we see the appearance of these new devices that can sort through it quickly, organize it, and apply it". These "new devices" are of course none other than the personal computers that spread rapidly from the beginning of the 90s. They are able to provide valuable services in economic problem-solving, as they do in politics: "Probably 90 percent of the work I do when I'm in my office in the West Wing of the White House is on a computer terminal." But in order for all of this information to be available, the machines need to be connected. Gore stresses that the development of the *National Information Infrastructure* is mainly the task of private

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

enterprise – despite the fact that the development of data networks was primarily supported by the military and universities, and thus at least partly by public funds.

Naturally, Europe did not want to lag behind the USA. The "Bangemann Report" titled *Europe and the Global Information Society* hurriedly composed by the EU Commission only refers back to Gore's transport metaphor in passing, but sounds even more optimistic: "The information society has the potential to improve the quality of life of Europe's citizens, the efficiency of our social and economic organisation and to reinforce cohesion" (Bangemann et al. 1998, 7). Five years after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, against which the West always *held together*, networks are perceived not only as a new means of creating social cohesion, but also as a way of increasing productivity. However: "There is a danger that individuals will reject the new information culture and its instruments" (ibid., 7). Despite frequently invoking "pluralism" (ibid., 19), the report appears to consider dissenters prone to "rigidity, inertia and compartmentalisation [sic!]" unacceptable – a "great deal of effort must be put into securing widespread public acceptance and actual use of the new technology" (ibid., 7). For the "market-driven revolution" – similarly to Al Gore, a market-ideological repression of the highly subsidised nature of data network development by universities and the military is conspicuous here – demands and encourages "full competition", from which the tautological inference follows: "Since information infrastructures are borderless in an open market environment, the information society has an essentially global dimension" (ibid., 12, 16). The a priori assumption is a global market, which the new medium is to cosy up to and serve. And so these programmatic statements continued – and indeed consequently so for programmable machines such as networked computers.[2]

The *Magna Charta for the Knowledge Age* was published in 1994. This manifesto of the conservative thinkers centred around Newt Gingrich repeatedly demands "universal access" to cyberspace, the "bioelectric environment that is literally universal" (Dyson et al. 1994, 27). Although – with blatant disregard for large parts of the earth – it proclaims that "[t]oday we have, in effect, universal access to personal computing" (ibid., 33-34), on the other hand it states: "Creating the conditions for universal access to interactive multimedia will require a fundamental rethinking of government policy" (ibid., 34). It is evident from the contradiction between the statement that everyone is already networked and the demand that everyone should be networked that the *Charta* has no clear concept of or policy on the information society. Rather, this manifesto – in line with the changing role of the state in the transition to neoliberal capitalism (cf. Kurz 1999, 642-667) – is full of classical liberalism simply dressed up in new costumes. The mantra-like demand is for a "cyberspace marketplace" (Dyson et al. 1994, 31), free from all (social) state constraints, that everyone will supposedly have access to: due to their scepticism towards government, the authors reject the metaphor of the information superhighway - the building of highways frequently being a state matter. The utopia of universal accessibility implied in the *Magna Charta* by no means refers to information as such, but to marketable information.

The manifesto states: "The meaning of freedom, structures of self-government, definition of property, nature of competition, conditions for cooperation, sense of community and nature of progress will each be redefined for the Knowledge Age" (ibid., 26-27). Due to pressure from digital media, these terms require redefinition: phenomena such as the (former) music file sharing service *Napster* or even the simple copying of music CDs with commercially available CD burners show that the traditional notion of intellectual property or copyright ("definition of property") is in danger of being undermined by the digital code and its potentials for reproduction. As the authors themselves write: "Information [...] can be replicated at almost no cost – so every individual can (in theory) con-

[2] Discussing the question of whether and how hegemonic discursive practices are inscribed in technologies and thus try to operationalise them is particularly relevant in the case of computers, as this technology is by definition open and programmable, waiting like a sponge to soak up discursive practices in the form of programmes; cf. Schröter (2004a, 7-17, 279-292; 2005). This pro-gramming process has nothing in common with the simple, unsustainable instrumentalism advocated by Kellner (2004) in regard to the "information superhighway".

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

sume society's entire output" (ibid., p. 28). However, in order to prevent this theory becoming reality, the authors of the *Magna Charta* fall back upon a more traditional definition of property and demand decisive action on the part of the state that is otherwise much maligned in neoliberal discourse: "Clear and enforceable property rights are essential for markets to work. Defining them is a central function of government" (ibid., 29). The use of digital Internet technology on file sharing sites such as *Napster* has since been curtailed by policing so that compatibility with the imperatives of the music industry ("clear and enforceable property rights") is ensured[3]. This example in particular shows clearly that effort at least is always made to shape new media and the new ways they are used to existing social structures – with police force if needs be[4]. In this sense it is simply absurd and cynical to persist in talking of a "digital revolution"[5] – for the term "revolution", whether for better or for worse, has always been historically connected to the idea of changing existing social structures.

In any case, proclamations of the new perspectives of the Knowledge Age and the supposedly upcoming "knowledge society" that have proliferated since the 1990s simply repeat familiar neoliberal demands: withdrawal of the state, expansion of a market "characterized by dynamic competition consisting of easy access and low barriers to entry" (ibid., 30) resulting – as the constant insistence on "universal access" suggests – in *compulsory* participation in the market. The point however is that cyberspace (only four years after having been opened up to commercial exchange) is seen as the "prototypical competitive market" (ibid., 34) ultimately promising one thing: "the renaissance of American business and technological leadership" (ibid., 30). This kind of cyber-libertarianism with its concurrent anti-state impulses has also become known under the catchphrase "Californian ideology" (cf. Barbrook and Cameron 1995). John Perry Barlow's *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* (cf. Barlow 1996) is informed by the same ideology. It is based on Jefferson's Declaration of Independence of the USA and similarly rejects any state interference in cyberspace – even though without explicit reference to a liberal understanding of the market[6].

Nearly all of the texts mentioned here demand a reduction of monopolies, which seems absurd considering the role played by *Intel* and particularly *Microsoft* in today's computer market. Bill Gates, the founder and former CEO of *Microsoft*, rejects the metaphor of the information superhighway, as the "real problem of the highway metaphor is that is emphasizes the infrastructure rather than its applications" (Gates 1996, 6). However, the reference to applications shows that presumably Gates rejects the metaphor mainly because it is not commercial enough. Gates's writing reveals a notion that can only be termed utopian: "The interactive network will be the ultimate market" (ibid.). He goes on to explain:

> *[I]f every buyer knew every seller's price and every seller knew what every buyer was willing to pay, then everyone in the 'market' would be able to make fully informed decisions and society's resources would be distributed evenly. To date we haven't achieved Smith's[7] ideal because would-be buyers and would-be sellers hardly ever have complete information [...] The Internet will extend the electronic marketplace and become the ultimate go-between, the universal middleman [...] It will be a shopper's heaven* (ibid., 180-181).

That is to say that the universal communication between buyers and sellers made possible by the internet and the universal access that home PCs give to all ranges of goods will prevent that partic-

[3] The portal still exists (www.napster.com), but the free sharing of music files is no longer possible.

[4] Or with massive threats and intimidation – as evident in the respective poster, cinema and television campaigns. These function like instruction manuals, driving home a conservative usage of data networks, that is to say a usage compatible with capitalism.

[5] As, for example, in pseudo-futurological works of propaganda such as Tapscott (1996).

[6] With the exception that "the wealth of our marketplaces" in cyberspace is referred to, which appears to assume an understanding of the internet as a market.

[7] Gates is here referring to Adam Smith, one of the masterminds of market economy.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ipants in the market have only "imperfect and limited information" (ibid., 180). Universal communication and access results in "broad, efficient competition" (ibid., 205; on the history of the fantasy of "universal communication" and "universal access", cf. Schröter 2004a). This is how the market can finally develop fully (Gates's real-life models are the stock markets as "healthy [...] electronic markets" – as if there were no such things as crashes...). This universal competition has several components: thus Gates repeatedly mentions the attention (cf. ibid., 197, 211, 216, 224 etc.) a product must be able to command from potential customers on the internet. Then Gates emphasises the possibilities for radically individualised advertising and production opened up by the net: besides a (somewhat oxymoronic) individual newspaper, it is the individual tailoring of clothes that seems to hold particular appeal for him. If everyone could "indicate [their] measurements" (ibid., 189) electronically, customised tailoring via the internet would become possible. His shopper's heaven is defined more clearly:

> *At a growing number of [Levi Strauss & Co.] outlets, customers pay about $10 extra to have jeans made to their exact specification – any of 8,448 different combinations of hip, waist, inseam, and rise measurements and styles.* (ibid., 189)

It is a strange idea of "freedom" that consists of a choice between 8,448 nearly identical alternatives, without it being clear how an overview of this amount of choice is to be achieved (cf. Schröter 2004b). This kind of concept is a perfect "fit" for the WWW, the main problem of which lies precisely in its lack of link directories and compacting mechanisms, presenting the user with a vast quantity of possible information, a quantity often lauded as proof of its plurality of opinions and wealth of information. However, "a search that brings up 12,000 results has delivered not wealth, but white noise" (Winkler, 1997, p. 176). As is well known, search engines provided a historical solution to this problem (cf. Haigh 2008; see Mager 2011 for an analysis that shows the capitalist construction of search engines).

Moreover, Gates's text reveals a disconcerting shift. The main focus is no longer upon how users can access market-based information, but how advertising and production can access customers in their turn. Consumers are not only supposed to register their measurements electronically – rather, Gates formulates the long-term objective that "software agents" will be able to commercialise the subconscious also:

> *The questionnaire might include all sorts of images in an effort to draw subtle reactions out of you. Your agent might make the process fun by giving you feedback on how you compare with other people* (Gates 1996, 191).

This totalitarian order – including driving home "how you compare" with others, i.e. what counts as standard – enables a huge rise in consumption efficiency; the PC serves as an efficiency machine not just in terms of Al Gore's work, but also in terms of buying – indeed, it seems possible to suggest products to consumers that they themselves do not (yet) know they want.

This "techno-eschatology" combines "free-market visions of endless expansion, and an abiding faith in technology" (Dery 1996, 8, 10). It is possible to enumerate countless further similar web manifestos: thus Dertouzos (1997, 9) also writes: "It seemed natural and inevitable to me that the future world of computers and networks would be just like the Athens flea market – only instead of physical goods, the commodities would be information goods".

In all of the texts discussed here, barriers are broken, global expansion (of markets) is predicted, and limitless, universal competition and concurrent unlimited access to the internet is not only demanded, but more or less commanded – often in the name of an anonymous "we" or "us". This seems to blend in perfectly with the structure of the WWW: "Internet protocol enables almost unlimited expansion and thus accommodates the pressure of capital to accumulate and expand" (Altvater 1998, 60; cf. Schiller 1999).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

And thus, around 1999, a new magic word dreamed up around the mid-1990s began to circulate: *New Economy*. The constant conjuration of the Internet as the medium of a new capitalism seemed to have reached its goal. As if from nowhere, the shares of dot.com start-ups shot sky high, and the internet seemed to have become a veritable money-making machine. However, as it is well known, this bubble soon burst with a loud bang.

3. The Productive Force of the Internet and the Conditions of Production

Discussions dating from the 1990s (of which there are only few examples) reveal the programme for programmable machines and the way they are networked. They are to serve the complete and utter expansion of capitalism to every corner of the world, including individual subjects' inner selves. With the advent of *eBay*, every flat becomes part of the global market, and every private homepage creates a shop window for marketing one's own self. Paul Treanor remarked quite early on that the neoliberal discourse on the internet proliferating during the 1990s had totalitarian characteristics:

> *This logic says in effect: 'no one is free to stay outside the free market'. [...] Net-ism does not want a choice: it wants the Net, one Net, one global Net, one Net everywhere, one universal cyberspace, and nothing less. It seems that, as with the ideology of the free market (and as with liberalism in general), no co-existence is possible with the Net* (Treanor 1996).

But as has already been suggested several times, there are reasons to doubt – following Marx – whether this rededication and readjustment of the internet is in fact really *frictionless*. The burst of the *New Economy* bubble already indicates this.

It appears as if the spread of digital media, the "third industrial revolution", is actually conflicting with capitalism – as suggested by the legal and police disputes over file sharing sites such as *Napster* and other phenomena such as CD burning, illegal sharing of films etc.[8] Intimations of this sort are already to be found in one of the sources of today's digital media culture. In his 1948 book on cybernetics, Norbert Wiener wrote of the coming potential of the "ultra-rapid computing machines":

> *The automatic factory and the assembly line without human agents are only so far ahead of us as is limited by our willingness to put such a degree of effort into their engineering as was spent, for example, in the development of the technique of radar in the Second World War. [...] It may very well be a good thing for humanity to have the machine remove from it the need of menial and disagreeable tasks, or it may not. [...] It cannot be good for these new potentialities to be assessed in the terms of the open market [...] There is no rate of pay at which a United States pick-and-shovel laborer can live which is low enough to compete with the work of a steam shovel as an excavator. The modern industrial revolution is similarly bound to devalue the human brain, at least in its simpler and more routine decisions. [...] [T]aking the second [industrial] revolution as accomplished, the average human of mediocre attainments or less has nothing to sell that is worth anyone's money to buy* (Wiener 1961, 26-28).

In his 1964 classic of media theory *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan complained of the "folly of alarm about unemployment" (McLuhan 2003, 464). Sixteen years earlier, Wiener apparently already was aware that the third (he calls it the second) industrial revolution would result in a large-scale rationalisation of workplaces due to cost-cutting competition – McLuhan himself calls it "intensity and competition" (McLuhan 2003, 136). And one hundred years earlier than McLuhan, Marx also knew this: for when a person only behaves as "a watchman and regulator to the production process", then (for most people at least) "labour [...] cease[s] to be the great well-spring of

[8] Cf. Hartmut Winkler, who states: "One is almost reminded of the Marxist contradiction between productive forces and the conditions of production: the technical potential of technical reproduction and its societal constitution – copyright – are directly opposed to one another" (Winkler 2004, 29). See also Kurz (2007) for a polemic, but detailed discussion if digital products disrupt the commodity form.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

wealth". The less production depends on "direct labour time spent" than on "the general state of science and on the progress of technology", the more "production based on exchange value breaks down" (Marx 2005, 705). This goes for example for industrial robots that have made millions of workers redundant, from the car industry to the fully automated video rental store. The current much lamented mass unemployment, which is still growing in spite of continually sinking real wages and has resulted in a sluggish domestic market, is a direct consequence of this. Even the supposedly up and coming "service society", "information society" or "knowledge society"[9] cannot be the solution, for it is in this sector in particular – and here we return to the internet – that work can be made redundant by digital technology: *online*, one can buy train and plane tickets, books, CDs, clothing, wallpaper, wardrobes (see *eBay*) and so forth; one can bank, search through numerous archives and even get hold of the wine tasted in the shop round the corner at a cheaper price. Countless salespeople and advisors thus also become superfluous:

> *In the same way that production work was thinned out or completely abolished by industrial robots, office work and services are now being thinned out or abolished by the internet. The first wave or stage of the microelectronic revolution had already made far more of the workforce redundant than the capitalist exploitation process could reabsorb by lowering the cost of products and the market expansion thus made possible. If the compensatory mechanism in the capitalist development of productive forces of earlier [industrial] revolutions was no longer effective during the first stage of the microelectronic revolution, it is even less so during its second, internet-determined stage. The result can only be further, significant growth in structural mass unemployment: in the Federal Republic of Germany, there will simply then be eight or ten million unemployed instead of four million* (Kurz 2000).

And when the RFID chips currently hailed as the newest great achievement network products in supermarkets, warehouses and so on, then most warehouse and supermarket workers will end up on the street (and this, rather than data protection, is the new chip's real problem).[10] Around 2005, the world's largest 200 businesses encompassed more than 25% of global economic activity, but were only able to employ 0.75% of humanity (cf. Kurz 2005, 81). Even though simulation, automatisation and networking cause productive forces' potential to soar, more and more people seem to be excluded from the cycle of work[11] – earning money – consumption, which in the end plunges the entire structure of the market economy into crisis. For those who do not work do not consume and do not pay taxes[12], meaning that neither can the products generated be sold (leading to a crisis of

[9] Marx already knew that science and technology have caused "general social knowledge [to] become a *direct force of production*" (Marx 2005, 706) – however, this debate is in precisely that section of the *Grundrisse* concerned with the "contradiction between the foundation of bourgeois production (value as measure) and its development. Machines etc." (ibid., 704).

[10] Cf. the online RFID journal as the richest source of information: http://www.rfidjournal.com, retrieved November 9, 2011. The best introduction to this technology and the possibilities it offers is an article under the following link: http://www.rfidjournal.com/article/articleview/1339/1/129/, retrieved November 9, 2011. Here it states explicitly: "Some auto-ID technologies, such as bar code systems, often require a person to manually scan a label or tag to capture the data. RFID is designed to enable readers to capture data on tags and transmit it to a computer system – without needing a person to be involved". Another job lost!

[11] This argument has been criticized. There has been a discussion around the so-called ‚productivity paradox' (f.E. Brynjolfsson 1992): It seemed as if the increasing use of computers didn't increase productivity and so didn't erase work (for critiques of this position see some of the contributions in Wilcocks AND Lester 1999 and Trenkle 2011). But even some of the most passionate advocates of this argument, f.E. Erik Brynjolfsson, have to admit in a recent publication with the telling title 'Race against the Machine' (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2011) that digital technology is erasing work and therefore leads to serious problems for economic reproduction. Of course affirmative writers like Brynjolfsson come not even close to the insight that capitalism and digital technology might not be compatible – and it's absurd that he and his co-author praise their insight that digital technology might erase work as a new discovery (see the quote in Brokaw 2011: "But there has been relatively little talk about role of acceleration of technology"), as if there hadn't been the whole Marxian discussion or at the least the work of Jeremy Rifkin (1995).

[12] Not to mention the transnational molecularised businesses granted tax cuts due to frantic location competition (cf. Kurz 2005, 135-144). When speaking about global economy one point has to be made: One reviewer of this text asked: "How

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the domestic market), nor can the state responsible for the legal, education-political etc. framework of the market continue to function – the ever deeper debt of a lots of European states are common knowledge. Consumers, who lose their jobs or have to do mini-jobs, take credits to maintain their standard of living. At the same time businesses are forced to go into debt in order to keep up with increasingly rapid leaps in productivity. The consumers, the state and the businesses need credits. The parallelism between the spread of digital technology, increasing structural mass unemployment and the inflation of the (credit-based) financial markets is surely no coincidence – rather, it is a sure sign of the conflict between capitalist conditions of production and digital or networked forces of production.

The obvious counterargument that new technologies create new industries and new jobs (if only for the people delivering the products ordered on *eBay*) unfortunately does not hold water. At present, far fewer new jobs are being created (and if so, they are often only in the precarious low-pay sector) than are being cut.

Thus digital technologies by no means lead to "frictionless capitalism" and the "ultimate market" (Bill Gates); rather, they cause the market economy currently considered our only option to function less and less efficiently (Kurz takes a particularly strong position on this, cf. Kurz 1999, 602-780; see also Ortlieb 2008; Haug 2003, 293 is slightly more cautious when stating that "high-technology with the computer as its leading productive force has pushed [capitalism] to its limits"; cf. also Rifkin 1995). Thus it may come to a "conflict [...] between the material development of production and its social form" (Marx 2006, 1024). This shows that Marx speaks neither of technological[13] nor social determinism – instead, he is concerned with the relationship between the technological forces of production and social form:

> *At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production [...] From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution.* (Marx 1904, 12)[14].

This is the real meaning of the catchphrase "digital revolution", one that usually remains unconscious. The leading thinker on cybernetics Norbert Wiener seems already to have anticipated this:

---

does uneven development fit the conclusions drawn from the work of Wiener and Marx?" If I understand correctly the question was directed at the Chinese growth, without which the global crisis would be even deeper. This implies that China proves that capitalism is still working well, at least in some parts of the world. Doesn't the growth rate of Chine prove this? This question is interesting, but to answer it in detail there is not enough space here (especially because this is not the central topic of this essay). But to give a short answer: Chinas seeming "successes" are in no way a counterargument to the diagnosis of (perhaps terminal) capitalist crisis (see Kurz 2005, 180-186; see the short comments on China in Kurz 2010). On the contrary: Chinas growth is completely dependent on the fictive capital generated by credits (mostly) in the US. The Chinese economy is completely oriented on export (mostly) in the US. When the credit-chains in the US collapse the Chinese growth will end – not to mention the disruptive social problems. We will witness the end of Chinese growth, the contraction of their economy and the following serious problems just in a few years from now. The first symptoms are already visible.

[13] Even though it occasionally sounds like this in Marx's writing, for example when he writes: "Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In gaining new productive forces, human beings change their methods of production, and by changing their methods of production, the way they earn their living, they change all of their social conditions. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist" (Marx 2009, pp. 48-49).

[14] In Castoriadis' brilliant discussion of Marx, this particular aspect of Marxian analysis appears to have been misinterpreted. Castoriadis states that Marx accuses the capitalist conditions of production of "a slow-down in the development of the productive forces", while this has actually "instead accelerated in proportions that were unimaginable in an earlier time" (Castoriadis 1998, 15). While the ideological whips of the overdue modernisation in the former Eastern Bloc did in fact assert that their so-called "socialism" liberated the development of the productive forces, Marx's point – particularly in the *Grundrisse* – is that capitalism develops the forces of production to an inconceivable extent and that *precisely that* limits it – for this development does away with the work that accumulation of value is based upon. The *Communist Manifesto* states: "Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells" (Marx and Engels 2009, 10). This does not sound like a slowing down of productive forces by the conditions of production, rather the latter have been forced into a tight spot by the former.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

"The answer, of course, is to have a society based on human values other than buying and selling" (Wiener 1961, 28).

It is surprising that the conflict Wiener anticipates between the potential of computer technology and the capitalist social form of reproduction makes no appearance at all in the current debate on cybernetics in media studies (cf. Bergermann 2004) – despite the fact that this conflict is the *crucial* effect of the programmable technologies connected to the science of cybernetics. It seems as if the analysis of media and communication would benefit a lot from re-reading Marx (see Mosco 2009). For example, Claus Pias writes:

> *For the – definitely problematic – theory of non-deterministic teleology carries huge political implications that impinge not only upon ideas of how a society where cybernetic technologies have been installed is able to bring itself into the desired form more or less on its own (though by which means is unclear) and stabilise itself in that form. [...] Cybernetic compositions are able to capture every aberration and render deviant unrest productive for their purposes. Cybernetics is a government that thrives on disturbance and permanent crisis, for this is how it stabilises itself* (Pias 2004, 323, 325).

The possibility that cybernetic compositions, their knowledge and the digital media connected to them could actually have a *destabilising* effect on the market-based form of Pias's underdetermined notion of 'society' is not taken into consideration, similarly to Lyotard's *grand récit* of 1981.[15] In contradiction to Wiener, the "redundancy of utopia" (Pias, 2004, p. 325) can only be diagnosed if one is not yet affected by this destabilisation. Since 2008, we seem to have been experiencing it more clearly than ever.

4. Short Conclusion

It is interesting that after the year 2000 we witnessed a little bit of history repeating. At the end of the 1990s Gates' optimistic notion of 'frictionless capitalism' was ridiculed by the subsequent collapse of the dot-com-crash. Before the crisis beginning of 2008 there was a similar optimistic discourse, this time on the 'Web 2.0' (see Leister and Röhle 2011 for critical analyses of the optimistic discourses around *Facebook*). Again it seemed that the new internet applications, the 'social media', could be the source of new kinds of work, value and wealth. But this didn't work – despite all the usages of social media as new technologies of control, discipline and the commercialization of the unconscious (see Fuchs 2010a; 2010b; 2011). Perhaps this shows again that digital media are not compatible with capitalism and that there is no way to make them compatible. Perhaps they are simply – with Marx – the productive forces that clash with the relations of production. This does of course not lead by itself to a new post-capitalist form of society, but it seems to heighten the awareness that something has to be done.

References

Abbate, Janet. 1999. *Inventing the Internet*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Altvater, Elmar 1998. Kehrseiten der Globalisierung. *Telepolis. Die Zeitschrift der Netzkultur* 4 (5): 54-61.

Alzouma, Gado. 2011. Young People, Computers and the Internet in Niger. *Journal of African Media Studies* 3 (2): 277-292.

Bangemann, Martin et al. 1994. Europe and the Global Information Society. Retrieved November 5, 2011, from http://www.umic.pt/images/stories/publicacoes200801/raport_Bangemanna_1994.pdf

Barbrook, Richard and Andy Cameron. 1995. The Californian Ideology. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/theory-californianideology-main.html

Barlow, John Perry 1996. A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from https://projects.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html

[15] Pias does admit, however, that cybermetics might be "definitely problematic". Pircher only mentions that "in Western market economies automatisation was perceived as a threat" (2004, 93) – even though it was not just "perceived" as such, but actually was and is a threat to many jobs.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Bergermann, Ulrike. 2004. Von Schiffen und Schotten: Der Auftritt der Kybernetik in der Medienwissenschaft. *Medienwissenschaft Rezensionen* 1: 28-40.

Brokaw, Leslie. 2011. How the Digital Revolution is Affecting Employment. Retrieved March 6, 2012 from http://sloanreview.mit.edu/improvisations/2011/10/26/brynjolfsson-and-mcafee-book-looks-at-digital-revolution-and-its-transformation-of-employment/#.T1imVpi9Zd0

Brynjolfsson, Erik. 1992. The Productivity Paradox of Information Technology: Review and Assessment. Retrieved March 6, 2012 from http://ccs.mit.edu/papers/CCSWP130/ccswp130.html

Brynjolfsson, Erik and Andrew McAfee. 2011. *Race Against The Machine: How the Digital Revolution is Accelerating Innovation*, *Driving Productivity, and Irreversibly Transforming Employment and the Economy* (Kindle-Book).

Castoriadis, Cornelius. 1998. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Dertouzos, Michael. 1997. *What Will Be. How the New World of Information Will Change our Lives*. New York: Harper.

Dery, Mark. 1996. *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*. New York: Grove.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx. Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Dyson, Esther et al. 1994. A Magna Charta for the Knowledge Age. *New Perspectives Quarterly* 11 (4): 26-37.

Engels, Friedrich and Karl Marx. 2009. *The Communist Manifesto*. Teddington: Echo.

Flichy, Patrice. 2007. *The Internet Imaginaire*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010a. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010b. Facebook, Web 2.0 und ökonomische Überwachung. Datenschutz und Datensicherheit 7: 453-458.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. The Contemporary World Wide Web. Social Medium of New Space of Accumulation? In *The Political Economies of Media. The Transformation of the Global Media Industries*, edited by Dwayne Winseck and Dal Yong Jin, 201-220. London: Bloomsbury.

Gates, Bill. 1996. *The Road Ahead*. Rev. ed. London: Penguin.

Gore, Al. 1994. Building the Information Superhighway. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from http://s93894098.onlinehome.us/Mine/WilliamGibson/Source/gorespeech.html

Haigh, Thomas. 2008. The Web's Missing Links: Search Engines and Portals. In *The Internet and American Business*, edited by William Aspray and Paul E. Ceruzzi, 159-199. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 2003. *High-Tech-Kapitalismus. Analysen zu Produktionsweise, Arbeit, Sexualität, Krieg und Hegemonie*. Hamburg: Argument.

Kellner, Douglas. 2004. Marxism and the Information Superhighway. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/marxisminformationsuperhighway.pdf

Kurz, Robert. 1999. *Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus: Ein Abgesang auf die Marktwirtschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn.

Kurz, Robert. 2000. Euphorie um die New Economy: Das Internet als Traumfabrik des neuen Marktes. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from http://www.exit-online.org/html/link.php?tab=schwerpunkte&kat=Kritik+%40+Krise+des+Werts+und+des+Geldes&ktext=Euphorie+um+die+New+Economy

Kurz, Robert. 2005. *Das Weltkapital. Globalisierung und innere Schranken des modernen warenproduzierenden Systems*. Berlin: Bittermann.

Kurz, Robert. 2007. Der Unwert des Unwissens. Verkürzte 'Wertkritik' als Legitimationsideologie eines digitalen Neo-Kleinbürgertums. Retrieved March 6, 2012, from http://www.exit-online.org/link.php?tabelle=aktuelles&posnr=264

Kurz, Robert. 2010. Interview, conducted by Peter Jellen. *Telepolis*. Retrieved March 6, 2012, from: http://www.exit-online.org/link.php?tabelle=schwerpunkte&posnr=204

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantalle Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Toward a Radical Democratic Politics*. London Verso.

Leistert, Oliver and Theo Röhle, 2011. *Generation Facebook. Über das Leben im Social Net*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1986. Rules and Paradoxes and Svelte Appendix. *Cultural Critique, 5*, 209-219.

Mager, Astrid. 2011. Algorithmic Ideology. How Capitalist Society Shapes Search Engines. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1926244

Marx, Karl. 1904. *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago: International Library Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1992. *Capital* (Vol. 1). London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 2005. *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 2006. *Capital* (Vol. 3). London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 2009. The Poverty of Philosophy. Retrieved November 9, 2011, from http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Poverty-Philosophy.pdf

McLuhan, Marshall. 2003. *Understanding Media*. Berkeley: Gingko.

Mosco, Vincent. 2004. *The Digital Sublime. Myth, Power and Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: SAGE. 2nd Edition.

Ortlieb, Claus Peter. 2008. Ein Widerspruch von Stoff und Form. Zur Bedeutung der Produktion des relativen Mehrwerts für die finale Krisendynamik. Retrieved March 6, 2012, from http://www.math.uni-hamburg.de/home/ortlieb/WiderspruchStoffFormPreprint.pdf

Pias, Claus. 2004. Unruhe und Steuerung. Zum utopischen Potential der Kybernetik. In *Die Unruhe der Kultur. Potentiale des Utopischen*, edited by Jörn Rüsen, 301-325. Weilerswist: Velbrück.

Pircher, Wolfgang. 2004). Markt oder Plan? Zum Verhältnis von Kybernetik und Ökonomie. In *Cybernetics – Kybernetik. The Macy Conferences 1946-1953, Vol. 2, Essays und Dokumente,* edited by Claus Pias, 81-96. Berlin: diaphanes.

Rifkin, Jeremey 1995. *The End of Work*. New York: Putnam.

Schiller, Dan. 1999. *Digital Capitalism. Networking the Global Market System*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Schröter, Jens. 2004a. *Das Netz und die Virtuelle Realität. Zur Selbstprogrammierung der Gesellschaft durch die universelle Maschine*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Schröter, Jens. 2004b). 8448 verschiedene Jeans. Zu Wahl und Selektion im Internet. In *Paradoxien der Entscheidung*, edited by Friedrich Balke, Gregor Schwering and Urs Stäheli, 117-138. Bielefeld: transcript.

Schröter, Jens. 2005. World Brain – Electronic Brain – Global Brain. Plädoyer für De-Sedimentierung statt Organizismus. *Paragrana. Zeitschrift für historische Anthropologie* 14 (2): 283-303.

Tapscott, Don. 1996. *The Digital Economy*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Treanor, Paul. 1996. Internet as Hyper-Liberalism. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/net.hyperliberal.html .

Trenkle, Norbert. 2011. Massenausfall. Wie der Kapitalismus an seiner eigenen Produktivität erstickt. Retrieved March 6, 2012 from http://www.streifzuege.org/2011/massenausfall/print/

Wiener, Norbert. 1961. *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Willcocks, Leslie P. and Stephanie Lester, eds. 1999. *Beyond the IT Productivity Paradox*. Chichester: Wiley.

Winkler, Hartmut. 1997. *Docuverse. Zur Medientheorie der Computer*. München: Boer.

Winkler, Hartmut. 2004. *Diskursökonomie. Versuch über die innere Ökonomie der Medien*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

About the Author

Jens Schröter

Jens Schröter, Prof. Dr. phil., is professor for the theory and practice of multimedial systems at the University of Siegen. He is director of the graduate school “Locating Media”, see: http://www.uni-siegen.de/locatingmedia/. He is (together with Prof. Dr. Lorenz Engell, Weimar) director of the research project “TV Series as Reflection and Projection of Change”, see: http://www.mediatisiertewelten.de/en/projects/tv-series-as-reflection-and-projection-of-change/. Main research topics are: Theory and history of digital media, theory and history of photography, theory and history of three-dimensional images, intermediality, copy protection. Recent publications: Editor [with Joachim Paech]: *Intermedialität analog/digital. Theorien, Methoden, Analysen*, München: Fink 2008; Editor [with Albert Kümmel]: *Äther. Ein Medium der Moderne*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2008; Editor [with Manfred Bogen und Roland Kuck]: *Virtuelle Welten als Basistechnologie von Kunst und Kultur? Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2009; Editor [with Gundolf Winter und Joanna Barck]: *Das Raumbild. Bilder jenseits ihrer Flächen*, München: Fink 2009; Editor [with Stefan Rieger]: *Das holographische Wissen*, Berlin: diaphanes 2009. Editor [with a master project group]: *Kulturen des Kopierschutzes* I + II, Siegen: universi 2010. New monograph: *3D. Geschichte, Theorie und Medienästhetik des technisch-transplanen Bildes*, München: Fink 2009. Visit www.multimediale-systeme.de. Visit www.theorie-der-medien.de. email: schroeter@medienwissenschaft.uni-siegen.de

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 313-333, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Digital Marx: Toward a Political Economy of Distributed Media

Andreas Wittel

Nottingham Trent University, School of Arts and Humanities, Nottingham, United Kingdom,
andreas.wittel@gmail.com,
http://www.ntu.ac.uk/apps/Profiles/70220-2-2/Dr_Andreas_Wittel.aspx

Abstract: *This is the claim: In the age of mass media the political economy of media has engaged with Marxist concepts in a rather limited way. In the age of digital media Marxist theory could and should be applied in a much broader sense to this field of research. The article will provide a rationale for this claim with a two step approach. The first step is to produce evidence for the claim that political economy of mass media engaged with Marxist theory in a rather limited way. It is also to explain the logic behind this limited engagement. The second step – which really is the core objective of this article – is an exploration of key concepts of Marx's political economy - such as labour, value, property and struggle - and a brief outline of their relevance for a critical analysis of digital media. These concepts are particularly relevant for a deeper understanding of phenomena such as non-market production, peer production, and the digital commons, and for interventions in debates on free culture, intellectual property, and free labour.*

Keywords: *Marx, labour, value, property, struggle, political economy of media, digital, distributed media, mass media, internet, network*

1. Introduction

This is the claim: In the age of *mass media* the political economy of media has engaged with Marxist concepts in a rather limited way. In the age of *digital media* Marxist theory could and should be applied in a much broader sense to this field of research. For Marxist theorists this development is to be applauded, as it allows a broader inclusion and appropriation of his concepts. The article will provide a rationale for this claim with a two step approach.

The first step is to produce evidence for the claim that political economy of mass media engaged with Marxist theory in a rather limited way. It is also to explain the logic behind this limited engagement and to explain why digital media – or better: digital things – open up new and promising possibilities to incorporate a broader range of central Marxist concepts for an analysis of both, digital media (specifically) and (more generally) capitalism in the information age.

The second step – which really is the core objective of this article – is an exploration of key concepts of Marx's political economy – such as *labour, value, property and struggle* – and a brief outline of their relevance for a critical analysis of digital media or digital things. These key concepts are particularly relevant for a deeper understanding of phenomena such as non-market production, peer production, and the digital commons, and for interventions in debates on free culture, intellectual property, and free labour.

Part of this article is a critical inspection of the *free labour* concept, which was highly productive for an illumination of new developments in the social web but which suffers from a lack of analytical rigour and conflates a number of rather different practices. One of the key challenges in digital capitalism is the need to rethink labour for those human activities that blossom outside wage-based relations and other forms of commodified labour. In order to take the debate on free labour forward, I want to argue that we need to discuss labour. In order to think about labour we need to think about property, value and the value theory of labour.

Many of the conclusions I draw on in this article can only be achieved through struggle. A very brief remark on struggle points towards the relationship between digital media and social movements. In the digital age the political economy of media can occupy new territory with an inspection of direct action and its various forms of mediation.

2. The Political Economy of Mass Media

The political economy of media has been constituted as an academic field in the age of *mass media*, which are characterised by linear forms and one-way flows of communication, where content is being distributed from a small number of producers to a large number of recipients.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Outlining the key issues, questions, debates and findings of an academic field in a few paragraphs is always a difficult undertaking that leads to oversimplifications, questionable generalisations, and the privileging of a coherent narrative at the expense of a more nuanced perspective. This is also true for the field of political economy of media and communication. It is quite surprising however that there does exist a rather broad consensus of what this field is about. Comparing a number of introductions to this field (Mosco 1996; Devereux 2003; McQuail 2005; Durham and Kellner 2006; Laughey 2009; Burton 2010) it becomes rather obvious that there is not much disagreement about key issues, questions and findings that have been produced in the political economy of media and communication.

It starts with the observation that media institutions have increasingly become privatised and turned into businesses. This is seen as problematic as media industries are seen as not just any industry. To understand the unusual character of the media industries one has to examine the dual nature of the content being produced, which is simultaneously a commodity and a public good. It is a private good – a commodity – as media industries are using their products for the accumulation of profit. At the same time this content is a public good as it constitutes to some degree the public sphere. So on the one hand media institutions have a social, cultural, and political function, on the other hand they are driven by economic interests. It is this dual nature of media content which makes the assumption that media are an independent force, naturally safeguarding democracy and the public interest rather questionable. Equally doubtful is the assumption that mass media just mirror public opinion.

The political economy of media is based on the premise that media are powerful, that they are able to influence public opinion and shape public discourse. Therefore it is crucial to focus on the production of media content within a wider political and economic context. It is this focus on materiality and the political, economical, and technological conditions in which media content is being produced that distinguishes the political economy of media from other academic fields such as the more affirmative strands within cultural studies and audience studies, which generally locate power and control not with media institutions but with an active audience as the true producer of meaning.[1] The political economy of media is as much social analysis as media and communication analysis.

This field is mainly concerned with the following issues: Firstly with an understanding of the media market. How do media companies produce income and generate profits? Secondly with an inspection of questions of ownership of media organisations (public, commercial, and private non-profit organisations) and an analysis of the implications of ownership structures with respect to media products (obviously this is especially relevant for the production of news). Thirdly the field is concerned with changing dynamics of the media sector, in particular with developments such as internationalisation of media industries, concentration and conglomeration of media organisations, and diversification of media products. This leads into debates on cultural imperialism and media imperialism. The fourth issue is about media regulation, media policy, and media governance, originally on a national level but increasingly with a global perspective. It is important to note that these areas of inquiry are closely connected, in fact they overlap considerably.

In order to introduce the key claims of political economy of media in the shortest possible way, I will refer to a summary box in Denis McQuail (2005,100). According to him, these are the core findings:

- Economic control and logic are determinant
- Media structure tends towards concentration
- Global integration of media develops
- Contents and audiences are commodified
- Diversity decreases
- Opposition and alternative voices are marginalised
- Public interest in communication is subordinate to private interests

Raymond Williams who is usually not portrayed as someone who is part of the inner circle of political economy of media was in fact among the first to develop such an approach. In an essay on the growth of the newspaper industry in England he starts with the observation that “there is still a quite

[1] For an analysis of the tensions between cultural studies and political economy see Kellner 1995 and Wittel 2004, for an analysis of the disagreements between political economy of media and active audience studies see Schiller 1989, 135-157).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

widespread failure to co-ordinate the history of the press with the economic and social history within which it must necessarily be interpreted" (Williams 1961, 194). He sets out to develop such a perspective, studying empirically a period of 170 years. His findings are highly sceptical:

> "These figures do not support the idea of a steady if slow development of a better press. The market is being steadily specialised, in direct relation to advertising income, and the popular magazine for all kinds of reader is being steadily driven This does not even begin to look like the developing press of an educated democracy. Instead it looks like an increasingly organised market in communications, with the 'masses' formula as the dominant social principle and with the varied functions of the press increasingly limited to finding a 'selling point'." (Williams 1961, 234)

If we juxtapose this passage with the key claims in McQuail's summary box it becomes clear that Williams anticipated many of the themes and results that will be debated within this field over the next five decades. The quoted summary in his study is like a microcosm of the field.

3. Marx and the Political Economy of Mass Media

The theoretical roots of political economy of media – at least their critical tradition (which is all I am concerned with) – are usually located in Marxism. After all and as the name already indicates, this field within media studies explores communication from a political economy perspective. So how much engagement with Marx do we get in this academic field? The short answer: there is some engagement but it is fairly limited. In order to support this claim with some evidence I will check a number of texts that are generally considered to be important contributions.[2]

The first and rather surprising insight is that a considerable number of books (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Schiller 1989; Curran 1991; Herman and McChesney 1997; Curran and Seaton 1997; Grossberg et al 1998; Curran 2000, Nicols and McChesney 2006) have either no reference at all or less than a handful of references to Marx or Marxism. In the latter case these references function usually as signposts (such as to distinguish Marxists from liberal traditions of political economy). They do not engage with Marxist theory in a more profound manner.

Nevertheless they are all rooted in Marxist theory, or to be more precise, in one particular part of Marxist theory. They are all directly linked to the base and superstructure model. According to Marx human society consists of two parts, a base and a superstructure. The material base consists of the forces and relations of production, the superstructure refers to the non-material realm, to culture, religion, ideas, values and norms. The relationship between base and superstructure is reciprocal, however in the last instance the base determines the superstructure. This model has been developed in various writings of Marx and Engels, perhaps most famously in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Marx 1977) and in the *German Ideology* (Marx and Engels 1974).

> "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." (Marx 1977)

> "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance […] Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the

[2] To keep this analysis simple, I will ignore here German Marxist media theory (Brecht, Krakauer, Benjamin, Adorno, Enzensberger) at the beginning of the mass media age, a line of thought which – perhaps wrongly – is usually not included in the field of political economy of media. The texts I have chosen to consider are certainly not extensive, they are also not representative in any way, but they do provide a solid indication on the relation between this field and Marxist theory.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch." (Marx and Engels 1974, 64f.).

The texts mentioned above directly or indirectly apply the base and superstructure model to the media industry, which like no other industrial sector contributes to the production of the superstructure. However they apply this model in various ways and there is considerable disagreement about what some see as a deterministic model with a linear, non-dialectical, and reductionist perspective.

Durham and Kellner observe that "the focus in US-based political economy of communication tends to emphasize the economic side of the equation with focus on ownership, corporatization, and consumption, while in Britain there has been a spotlighting of the political dimension, with emphasis on public sector broadcasting, the importance of state-supported and regulated communication, and the politics of broadcasting." (Durham and Kellner 2006, 197) I would take this observation one step further: The US-based work on political economy of media is generally more in line with the base and superstructure model, whereas the research in Britain is slightly more critical of a material or economic reductionism. I would also suggest that these different positions are related to the media landscape in both countries, a free-market media landscape in the US and Britain still relying on a strong representation of public-sector broadcasting. It is no coincidence that the propaganda model (Herman and Chomsky 1988) has been developed in the US. Neither is it surprising that it is a US study that diagnoses a complete and systematic failure of critical journalism on the reporting of the Iraq war, and claims that the US media bring about a "destruction of democracy" that "a highly concentrated profit-driven media system...makes it rational to gut journalism and irrational to provide the content a free society so desperately requires." (Nichols and McChesney 2005, ix) Similar claims could not be found in British research with its rather critical position towards the base and superstructure model. Curran for example observes that "a sea change has occurred in the field", which is mostly about the "repudiation of the totalising explanatory frameworks of Marxism" (Curran 1990, 157f.).

So far I have only referred to those texts with either no reference at all to Marxist theory or with only few references which then usually function like signposts. There are however texts that engage with Marx and in particular with his base and superstructure model in a more profound way. Mosco (1996) who provides perhaps the most detailed analysis of the literature in this field starts his books with an introduction to Marxist political economy. Murdock (1982) focuses in particular on the base and superstructure model and compares it with a more praxis-oriented perspective. Williams (1958, 265-284) engages in great detail with this model and argues that it is more complex than usually acknowledged (e.g. that this relation is reciprocal rather than a one way street). "The basic question, as it has normally been put, is whether the economic element is in fact determining. I have followed the controversies on this, but it seems to me that it is, ultimately, an unanswerable question." (Williams 1958, 280). Like Williams, Nicholas Garnham (1990) also counters charges of economic reductionism. He insists that Marx's model offers an adequate foundation for an understanding of the political economy of mass media. He moves away from a deterministic view of the relation between base and superstructure towards a model that is more anchored in reciprocity and a dialectic relation.

Let us conclude: Apart from some rare exceptions – most notably Dallas Smythe who will be discussed later – political economy of *mass media* incorporates Marxist theory in a rather limited way. This academic field refers predominantly to Marx's concept of base and superstructure (either directly or indirectly) to make claims about the relationship between ownership of means of production (and concentration of ownership, media conglomerates etc.) and questions of media content, ideology, manipulation, power and democracy.

To avoid any misunderstandings: This is not meant as a critique of political economists of *mass* media. I do not see this limited appropriation of Marxist concepts as a failure of this academic field. My point is very different. I want to argue that this limited appropriation made complete sense in the age of mass media. It has a logic to it that lies very much in mass media technologies. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section. It should also be noted, very much in line with my argument, that over the last decade, which marks the transition from mass media to distributed media, Marx has been rediscovered by political economists. Even more so, he has been

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

rediscovered in ways that are not just rehearsals of the base and superstructure debate.[3]

4. Digital Technologies

What is the logic behind this rather restricted appropriation of Marxist theory? One might point out – referring again to the base and superstructure argument – that Marx was obviously more interested in the former and has thus neglected an analysis of the latter; that Marx did not have a lot to say about media and communication. No doubt this is a persuasive argument. However this would not explain why in the age of digital media, so my claim, Marxist concepts could and should be applied in a much broader sense by political economists of communication.

We will probably get closer to an answer if we turn our attention to *media technologies*. In the age of mass media these technologies – the means of production – were expensive. Most people could not afford the ownership of all those assets necessary for print media or broadcast media. As a consequence there were only a limited number of media organisations which produced and disseminated media content to a huge number of consumers/recipients. Thus *mass media* are characterised by a small number of content producers and a large audience. For societies that perceive themselves as liberal democracies this is a rather problematic starting point. In fact no other issue about mass media is as problematic as the ownership of means of production and processes of media concentration, the ownership of media technologies and media organisations in the hands of increasingly fewer 'media moguls'. The limited appropriation of Marxist theory in the age of mass media results from a very specific *historic reality*, from historically unique concerns that were generated by *mass media technologies*.

Digital technologies have brought about a fundamentally different media landscape, where mass media are not the only show in town any more. They have been given company by *distributed media* and increasingly they seem to be replaced by this new kid on the block. Distributed media operate with a very different organisational logic. Whereas mass media are hierarchical, linear, with a control centre and one-way flow of media content from few producers to many recipients, distributed media are networked, non-linear, with multi-directional and reciprocal flows of media content from many producers to many consumers.

The terms *distributed* media and *digital* media are similar but not identical. I use the term *distributed media* to put an emphasis on the *social organisation* of media (even though this term also refers to Internet technologies), while the term *digital media* is used to refer to *technology only.* It is important to stress however that the social can never be fully separated from the technological. Every medium is simultaneously technological and social. Technological structures and relations between human beings are interlocked and mutually constitutive.

The logic of distributed media is profoundly shaped by the qualities and capabilities of digital technologies, which are superior to mass media technologies (say the printing press) in that they are much cheaper and much more efficient in a number of ways: (1) They can re-mediate older media forms such as text, sound, image and moving images as digital code; (2) they can integrate communication and information, or communication media (the letter, the telephone) with mass media (radio, television, newspaper); (3) digital objects can endlessly be reproduced at minimum costs; (4) they don't carry any weight, thus they can be distributed at the speed of light.

These phenomenological qualities of digital technologies, which rely largely on a distinction between bits and atoms, I want to argue, have profound implications for the social. Firstly the number of media producers increases dramatically in the digital age. Now everybody with access to a mobile phone or a laptop and access to a network is a potential producer of media content. Secondly digital technologies enable new social forms of media production and media distribution, for example large scale 'sharing' of media content[4] and large scale forms of collaboration and peer production such as open source code. Thirdly, as the number of media producers increases media themselves are becoming ubiquitous in that all aspects of the social world and our lives become mediated, from the global and public to the most intimate aspects of our existence (Livingstone 2009). Fourthly and perhaps most importantly digital technologies are not just media technologies. They are built into all productive processes (Castells 1996). The digital economy now is not just the

[3] Perhaps the first thorough appropriation of Marx's concepts for *distributed* media has been produced by Nick Dyer-Witheford (1999). He analyses how the information age, "far from transcending the historic conflict between capital and its laboring subjects constitutes the latest battleground in their encounter" (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 2). Since then other books have emerged with an explicit Marxist approach to theorise the internet, e.g. Wayne 2003; Huws and Leys 2003; Stallabrass 2003; Wark 2004; Terranova 2004; Artz, Macek and Cloud 2006; Jhally 2006; Fuchs 2008; Mosco, McKercher, and Huws 2010; Kleiner 2010; Fuchs 2011, Fuchs et al. 2012).

[4] For a critical analysis of sharing in the digital age see Wittel 2011.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ITC economy any more, it is simply the economy full stop. As a consequence of this process the digital does not just refer to the realm of media, but to new forms of production based on ICTs, and possibly (depending on the success of future struggles) to a new mode of production, to a 'commons-based peer production' (Benkler 2006). For this reason a political economy of digital media really is a political economy of digital things. It is this opening up of media from few professionals to many amateurs and from the state and markets to non-markets, and the blurring of boundaries between media industries and other industrial sectors, that suggest the possibility of a broader engagement with Marxist theory. In the digital age indeed all aspects of Marx's political economy become relevant for critical media theory.

A quick comment on *technological determinism*. This phenomenological analysis of digital things and their implications is not, in my view, an example of technological determinism. I do not want to suggest that all explanatory power lies with technologies and people are mere bystanders reacting to them. However I am also not very sympathetic to arguments on the opposite end that position all aspects of agency with people. Social determinism is as dangerous as technological determinism. My argument, which is broadly in line with Marx's thinking, is that technologies open up new possibilities for social production and social organisation. They do not determine in any way the future of capitalism, which of course will solely be shaped by the struggles of the oppressed.

It is perhaps due to a rather strong aversion against technological determinism within the field of political economy of mass media that commentators have been a bit slow to acknowledge the profound difference between mass media and distributed media. Different responses and strategies have been employed to demonstrate that the new – meaning the so-called digital revolution – is highly overvalued. The first type of response (e.g. Murdock 2004) rejects any re-evaluation and argues that the digital age is not significantly different from the age of mass media and that historical continuities are more important than differences. Rather than falling for 'digital possibilities' political economists should study 'market realities'. The information society does not really exist, it is only 'presumed'. (Murdock and Golding 2001). The second type of response, the sitting-on-the fence approach (e.g. Curran and Seaton 2003, 235-293), is more cautious. It consists of a hesitation to take position and to make claims about changes with respect to digital technologies. A third type of response (e.g. Mosco 2004) consists of the deconstruction of this discourse, in particular of claims made by Internet-philiacs.

Indeed it would be naïve to ignore continuities. Equally dangerous however is a position that argues for business as usual. Let us explain this with an example. The issue of ownership of means of production, which largely dominated the discourse of political economy of mass media, will not lose any relevance in the age of distributed media. On the contrary, it will become an even more important topic as new concerns are emerging. However this issue needs to be re-conceptualised in two significant ways. *Firstly*: In the age of mass media the issue of ownership of means of production was only relevant with respect to media content. In the age of distributed media the issue of ownership of means of production is relevant with respect to media content, but also with respect to connectivity. This is not just about ideology and the manipulation of messages any more (base and superstructure), but also about the ownership of infrastructures, of networks and platforms that allow users to socialise, communicate, and collaborate. This is not just about meaning and representation, it is about the control of people's online interactions, it is ultimately about privileging certain forms of sociality and subjectivity. The *second* reason for a re-conceptualisation lies in the notion of 'means of production'. In the age of distributed media the means of production have become more democratic. Users with access to a computer and access to the Internet (which is more than one billion people) and some basic computer skills have the means necessary to produce media content. What they don not have however are the *means of distribution* and the *means of online storage* of media content. The means of distribution and the means of storage lie in the hands of few media conglomerates. They control the flows of information. They belong to what Wark describes as the vectoral class. "The vectoral class is driving the world to the brink of disaster, but it also opens up the world to the resources for overcoming its own destructive tendencies." (Wark 2004, 025) The analysis of this class struggle between capital and labouring subjects about the future framing of the Internet is also one of the key objectives of Dyer-Witheford (1999). To summarise this paragraph: With respect to means of production we can see important historical continuities but also some remarkable shifts.

Dmytri Kleiner starts his book with a bang: "What is possible in the information age is in direct conflict with what is permissible […] The non-hierarchical relations made possible by a peer network such as the internet are contradictory with capitalism's need for enclosure and control. It is a battle to the death; either the Internet as we know it must go, or capitalism as we know it must

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

go." (Kleiner 2010, 7)

Of course this is a mildly exaggerated view. There is not just war going on, we can also see the development of new forms of co-operation and new models and arrangements between both sides. Still, I like this quote a lot as it is a pointed and condensed outline of the responsibility of political economy in the age of digital media and distributed networks. There is a technology that opens up new productive forces; there is a political-economic system with established relations of production. There is struggle between those who want to conserve existing relations of production and those who attempt to overcome them. And there is an indication of how to create a better world. Could the Internet in its more uncontrolled form teach us how to think about society at large?

We are already in the middle of Marx's political economy. In the following parts I want to discuss how some core concepts of his political economy become relevant for an analysis of media in the digital age. I will focus on four central terms, on *labour, value, property, and struggle*. Among these four concepts the notion of labour will be explored in more detail.

5. Labour

Throughout the last century labour has been analysed in the western hemisphere as wage labour only. Apart from the writings of very few Marxist theorists such as André Gorz (1999), alternatives to wage labour have hardly entered public discourse. It was a common perception that there was just no alternative to wage labour. Obviously this theoretical orientation was a reflection of an economic reality characterised largely by wage labour as the dominant form of production. This is how media production was organised in the age of mass media. No matter whether media institutions were public institutions or private companies, these institutions had employees who have received a wage in return for their work.

The contemporary media ecosystem looks profoundly different. Media content now is not only produced by employees working in and for companies, it is also created by the free labour of those who engage in peer production (the dissemination of content) and 'commons-based peer production', a term coined by Yochai Benkler (2002) to describe a new model of socio-economic production, in which large numbers of people work towards common goals without financial compensation for contributors. Media content now is not just produced for markets and paying audiences, there is also a rather significant non-market dimension to media production. This is a new situation. In fact the media and creative industries are at the moment the only industrial sector that is confronted with competition from free labour and non-market production.

The emergence of non-market production started in the 1980s with the open-source movement but has accelerated on an astonishing scale during the last decade with the social web. It has spread from the peer production of software and code to text, sound, images, and moving images. These digital commons are software commons, news commons, information commons, knowledge commons, education commons, art commons, and cultural commons.

Undeniably the digital whirlwind has created havoc in the creative industries. Newspaper journalism is in decline and struggling to find new business models. The title of a collection of essays on the collapse of journalism in the United States – "Will the last reporter please turn out the lights" (McChesney and Pickard 2011) – is an indication of the severity of this development. The music, film and publishing industries are also hit hard and are turning increasingly to legal enforcements of copyright infringement and to political lobbying for tighter regulations of the Internet (e.g. ACTA, SOPA, PIPA).

Many of the implications of this new media ecosystem however are not clear at all. Will this co-existence of corporate labour and free labour in the digital commons remain exclusively in the media industries and creative industries or will it spread to other industrial sectors as well? What are the relations between the media and creative industries and the digital commons? Are we in the middle of an 'immaterial civil war' (Pasquinelli 2007)? Or is such a perspective too one-dimensional as we can also see a number of collaborations between both sides, for example the corporate funding of open source software production? What are the long-term implications of this for the labour market in the media industries? It is likely that the rationalisation of media and cultural production due to digital technologies will lead to a shrinking of the market. But if it does, how dramatically will it shrink? Finally what does this mean for the rate of productivity in the media industries? Does capital profit from an exploitation of free labour or will the competition from the new kid on the block lead to a decline of productivity in the industry?

In order to better understand this new media ecology we need to focus on the concept of free labour. The first thing to note is that, while this term has recently been employed by Marxist

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

theorists, Marx himself does not use the term free labour. Marx, partly in the tradition of classical political economy in the 18th and 19th century, partly developing a critique of this tradition, distinguishes between productive and unproductive labour. These are not neutral terms, they depend on class positions and they depend on specific types of society (feudal, capitalist etc.) and their specific relations of production. In capitalism productive labour is labour that is productive for capital. It produces commodities, exchange value, and profit (surplus value). Unproductive labour does not produce surplus value. To give an example: A person employed in a private household to perform tasks such as cooking and cleaning does not produce a commodity. While his or her labour-power is sold as a commodity, the product of this labour-power is not. Therefore this is unproductive labour. A cook working in as an employee in a restaurant however produces commodities, he or she produces meals that are sold to customers. Therefore this is productive labour. So productive and unproductive labour are not distinguished with respect to what people do (in both cases they cook), but with respect to their relation to capital and the commodity form. Applying the free labour of digital commoners to this concept it is obvious that according to Marx free labour is unproductive. Not very surprising this concept has received much criticism from Marxist feminists in the 1980s who argued that domestic labour, usually performed by women, would indeed create surplus value as this arrangement makes it possible to reduce wages even more for those who do not perform domestic labour. In my view this is a strong argument. Even more so it poses a real challenge to Marx's theory of surplus value.

Also relevant for the free labour concept is Marx distinction between labour and labour-process. Let us begin with labour:

> "Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature." (Capital Vol. 1, 177).

Labour is not merely an economic but a human activity. It is a universal category of human existence and it is independent of any specific economic or social forms. Labour is what keeps us alive and what makes us develop. This is a rather broad concept. Labour can be equated with action or with praxis. Labour is what we do.

In stark contrast to labour, his concept of labour-process refers to specific historic modes of production and to specific historic societies and economies. With this historical approach he wants to demonstrate that the labour-process, the specific organisation of work, is not inevitable. Existing labour-processes can always be overcome. Marx is particularly interested in the difference between a feudal and a capitalist labour-process. In capitalism the labour-process is based on wage-labour, on the fact that the worker sells his labour-power as a commodity to the capitalist. Comparing the feudal labour-process with the capitalist labour-process Marx highlights two things:

> "First, the labourer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs; the capitalist taking good care that the work is done in a proper manner, and that the means of production are used with intelligence, so that there is no unnecessary waste of raw material, and no wear and tear of the implements beyond what is necessarily caused by the work. Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer. Suppose that a capitalist pays for a day's labour-power at its value; then the right to use that power for a day belongs to him, just as much as the right to use any other commodity, such as a horse that he has hired for the day […] The labour-process is a process between things that the capitalist has purchased, things that have become his property." (Capital Vol. 1, 184f.)

Here Marx has identified two forms of alienation that did not exist in feudalism or in any other mode of production before capitalism. The first form of alienation refers to the product of the worker's own work and the inability to use the product of this own work for his or her living. The second form of alienation refers to the inability to organise the process of work, which lies exclusively in the hands of the capitalist who owns the means of production. Let us apply again the concept of free labour to

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx distinction between labour and labour-process. Free labour then is always labour in the general sense of Marx concept. However the term does not refer to a specific historical labour-process. In a strictly Marxist framework the concept of free labour would only make sense if it would become the dominant mode of production and supersede wage labour the same way that wage labour has superseded the labour of feudal serfs and pre-feudal slaves. We will revisit this issue in more detail.

The free labour debate is mostly initiated by autonomist Marxists close to the Italian operaismo school. It is connected to the writings of Maurizio Lazzarato and Michael Hart and Antonio Negri on immaterial labour, which is situated with the turn towards a Postfordist mode of production and its related processes such as the transformations in the organisation of work (the organisation of the labour process), the production of subjectivity and social relations in work environments, and bio-political capitalism where capital ultimately captures life. This means that immaterial labour, which is both intellectual labour and affective labour, involves a number of activities that would not be considered work in Fordist work environments.

> "It is not simply that intellectual labor has become subjected to the norms of capitalist production. What has happened is that a new 'mass intellectuality' has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of 'self-valorization' that the struggle against work has produced." (Lazzarato 1998)

The concept of immaterial labour is inspired by a few pages in the *Grundrisse*, where Marx (1973) writes about wealth creation and the production of value which is increasingly independent of labour.

> "(T)he creation of wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed […] but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology […] Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself […] He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth." (Marx 1973, 704f.).

As Gorz has pointed out, Marx's language is a bit unstable and fluctuates between a number of terms. What comes to replace labour is variably 'the general intellect', 'the general state of science and technology', 'general social knowledge', 'the social individual', and the 'general powers of the human head' (Gorz 2010, 2). The core claim made by Marx is very clear however: At some stage in the development of capitalism knowledge, technology, and the general intellect firstly become somehow decoupled from labour and secondly replace labour as the source for the creation of value. It is not hard to see why these pages in the *Grundrisse* become so crucial for the concept of immaterial labour. However these observations in the *Grundrisse* sit uneasy with the Marx of *Capital Vol. 1,* who develops the labour theory of value and categorically insists that labour is the only source for the creation of exchange value.

Tiziana Terranova (2004) is perhaps the first theorist who thoroughly engaged with the concept of free labour. In an essay, which was first published in 2000, before the arrival of the social web, before Wikipedia and social media platforms, she conceptualises free labour as the "excessive activity that makes the Internet a thriving and hyperactive medium" (Terranova 2004, 73). This includes "the activity of building web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists and building virtual spaces" (Terranova 2004, 74). Consistent with the operaismo discourse on immaterial labour, she situates the emergence of free labour with Postfordism. "Free labour is the moment where this knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into excess productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamefully exploited" (Terranova 2004, 78).

With this definition we have three features of free labour that are characteristic for most

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

commentators in this debate. Free labour is firstly unpaid labour. It is free in the sense of free beer; it is voluntarily given. Secondly it is free in the sense of freedom. It is more autonomous and less alienating than wage labour. It is not a factory but a playground. Thus it can be enjoyed. Thirdly it is exploited by capital.

This dialectic between autonomy and exploitation is reflected in most accounts of free labour, however with different interpretation of this tension. Terranova is careful to avoid strong judgements and speaks of a 'complex relation to labour' (Terranova 2004, 73). Mark Andrejevic has explored the notion of free labour in a number of studies on reality TV (Andrejevic 2008), YouTube (Andrejevic 2009) and Facebook (Andrejevic 2011). These are all commodified spaces and the core argument in each of these cases is a critique of accounts within media studies that celebrate participation and user generated content as an indication of a process of democratisation and an empowerment of users. He argues instead that the free labour invested in these commodified spaces is being exploited by capital. In his studies, the liberating, empowering and emancipatory potentials are clearly overshadowed by the negative dimensions of monetised communities. Matteo Pasquinelli (2008) goes one step further and critically engages with free labour and the commons. Obviously the commons is not captured or enclosed by capital, otherwise it would cease to be a commons. The various digital commons are not commodified spaces. Still Pasquinelli does not see any positive aspects about the digital commons. They are bad and dark spaces, as they are exploited by capital. This is a deeply asymmetrical relationship. Using Michel Serres' conceptual figure of the parasite and George Bataille's thoughts on excess, he writes about the 'bestiary of the commons', where capital behaves like vampires and sucks all the blood of the surplus energies of free labourers who seem to be too naïve to understand what is going on.

I have noted earlier that Dallas Smythe, one of the founding fathers of Canadian political economy of media, is one of the very few theorists in this field who does not merely engage with the base and superstructure concept but with other aspects of Marx's work. In fact he employs Marx's concept of labour-power. Smythe argues that media audiences are a commodity. They are made a commodity by media producers. The activity of watching television connects media audiences to advertisers. Thus media audiences perform labour. Even though Smythe did not use the term free labour he could be described as the founding father of the free labour debate. Like Andrejevic, Smythe studies media audiences in commodified environments. For Smythe this is a tragedy with three players: the two bad guys are media producers and advertisers; the victims are audiences. Media producers construct audiences. They also sell time to advertisers. Therefore they deliver audiences for advertisers. His argument why audiences perform labour is developed as follows: In modern capitalism there is no time left that it not work time. Capitalism makes "a mockery of free time and leisure" (Smythe 1977, 47). He explains how this observation relates to Marx's theory of labour power (labour power refers to the capacity to work).

> "Under capitalism your labor power becomes a personal possession. It seems that you can do what you want with it. If you work at a job where you are paid, you sell it. Away from the job, it seems that your work is something you do not sell. But there is a common misunderstanding at this point. At the job you are not paid for all the labor time you do sell (otherwise interest, profits, and management salaries could not be paid). And away from the job your labor time is sold (through the audience commodity), although you do not sell it. What is produced at the job where you are paid are commodities...What is produced by you away from the job is your labor power for tomorrow and for the next generation: ability to work and to live." (Smythe 1977, 48)

This is certainly an innovative argument and Smythe deserves much credit for what was in the 1970s a rather unusual approach to media audiences. For two reasons however his argument is rather problematic. Firstly it is totalising as all time in the life of humans is work for a capitalist system, sometimes paid ('at the job') and sometimes unpaid ('away from the job'). This means that all reproductive time is time spent for work ('24 hours a day'). This is a much bigger claim than the claim of audience labour. For Smythe every single activity in our life becomes work for the capitalist system. This is maximum alienation and there is no way out. The second problem with this perspective is that it is based on a misinterpretation of Marx's concept of labour. Marx's distinction between concrete and abstract labour, between labour in productive use and labour power (the capacity to work) refers only to wage-based labour. It does not make much sense to use the concept of labour power for reproductive activities. The concept of labour power makes only sense

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

in a context where labour power can be sold by the worker. This is precisely what distinguishes capitalism from other economic systems such as slavery or feudalism. Smythe's attempt to circumvent this problem by declaring that "away from the job your labor time is sold...although you do not sell it" is in my view an 'interpretation' of Marxist analysis that really goes against the fundamental ideas of Marx's theory of labour power.

David Hesmondhalgh has recently developed a critique of the free labour concept. He points out two things. Firstly he critically interrogates "the frequent pairing of the term with the concept of exploitation" which he sees as both, "unconvincing and rather incoherent" (Hesmondhalgh 2010, 276). Sometimes exploitation would refer to alienation, sometimes to ideology and manipulation, and in other cases to the fact that free labour is being captured and used by capital. However none of these things would really be about exploitation. I fully agree with this critique and would only add that according to the Marx of *Capital vol. 1* the exploitation of free labour is impossible. Exploitation refers to the surplus value that capitalists make from wage labour. Surplus value is the value created by workers in excess of their own labour-cost. It is the basis for profit and capital accumulation. For Marx of *Capital vol. 1* the idea that surplus value can be created outside the wage-relationship is nonsensical.

Secondly, Hesmondhalgh asks what political demands might flow from critiques of free labour. He points out that unpaid labour has always existed, using examples such as domestic labour and voluntary community labour (coaching football), and insists on the importance of prioritisation. Under what conditions, he asks, might we object to such unpaid labour, and on what grounds? Which forms of labour are particularly unjust? He also argues that throughout history most cultural production has been unpaid. Finally he points to the fact that those who undertake unpaid digital labour might gain other rewards, such as job satisfaction and recognition by peers.

It is indeed very important to question the claim that the emergence of free labour is somehow linked to Postfordism and to point out that unpaid labour has existed throughout the history of capitalism. It has existed as subsistence work (or domestic labour) and in the form of non-monetised activities, for example voluntary community work or mutual babysitting in the neighbourhood. However Hesmondhalgh is conflating the labour of an unpaid community football coach with the labour of users of profit-driven social media platforms. The former unpaid labour is labour in a non-commercial and thus non-profit environment. The latter is labour in a commercial environment that sells virtual or immaterial spaces to advertisers. This is an important distinction. Interestingly this is a distinction which remains rather nebulous within the free labour debate. Let us go back to the three authors I discussed earlier. For Terranova free labour refers to "the activity of building web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists and building virtual spaces"; she does not make a distinction between the commercial and the non-commercial, between capital and commons (Terranova 2004, 74). Andrejevic writes only about free labour with respect to advertising spaces and profit-making. Pasquinelli writes only about free-labour and the exploitation of free labour with respect to the commons, with respect to digital sites that are non-profit sites.

All this is rather confusing. It is as confusing as Smythe's contradictory position: On the one hand he claims that exploitation happens 24 hours a day, that there is no time in our life that is not being exploited by capital, on the other hand he refers merely to those moments and spaces outside work that are advertised spaces and moments. All this is not just confusing, it is highly unsatisfactory with respect to exploitation, profit, and surplus-value, in short: with respect to the question of value. Clearly value can come from both, unpaid and paid labour. What is not clear at all however is the origin of exchange value and thus surplus value. Even Marx is sending different messages. In *Capital vol. 1* surplus value can only derive from wage labour, in *Grundrisse* Marx suggests that technology and the general intellect can also be exploited by capital. I find it difficult too to come up with a clear position how surplus value is being generated. In the next sub-chapter on value I will argue that what is valuable and why certain things are valuable is always a subjective category. Therefore it is impossible to decide where objectified value (exchange value, surplus value) really comes from.

Hesmondhalgh also addresses the question of political demands that could emerge in an age where wage labour co-exists with free labour. Again this is a very important point. However I would formulate this task in a different way. Let us go back to Marx's distinction between capitalist wage-based labour and his general take on labour (meaning: independent of particular historic economic modes of production) as a "process in which both man and Nature participate", as something that transforms both the environment and human beings, as an activity that is not just an economic but a human activity. Labour in this sense can broadly be equated with practice or activity. It seems

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

that this is a very contemporary definition of labour. Marx's general definition of labour corresponds very much with the points made by Lazzarato, Hardt and Negri, and other scholars associated with the operaismo school. All we need to do is to exchange the term practice for life. In bio-political capitalism work is life, work is our thoughts, our affects, our relationships, our subjectivities. It is becoming increasingly futile to distinguish work from leisure, communication, creativity, and play.

What does this mean politically? In the digital age free labour and wage-based labour co-exist. This could be seen either as a broadly acceptable situation or it could be perceived, as I do, as utterly unjust and ultimately intolerable. This opens up two paths for critique. The first path is a critique of free labour and the political demand, as Hesmondhalgh indicates, would result in calls to integrate free labour in the wage-based system. However this is a dangerous road, as it would lead to an even more commodified world where every single human activity becomes measured in terms of exchange value. It should not become a political project to make the wage-based system and its insane measurements of value even stronger. The second path of critique would turn in the opposite direction. This would be a critique of the wage-labour economy itself. The search for alternatives to wage-labour has recently gained momentum. Demands for a minimum wage for every citizen are probably the most prominent model being discussed which could replace wage labour. The work of André Gorz is perhaps the most developed contribution to an outline of work "beyond the wage-based society" (Gorz 1999). Needless to say this is a radical approach, even utopian, with not much hope for realisation. On the other hand these are times that might need some radical rethinking of how we work, relate, create and live.

Undoubtedly the 'free labour' concept has proven to be highly productive for an illumination of new developments in the social web. It is one of the key challenges in digital capitalism to rethink labour for those human activities that blossom outside wage-based relations. However the concept of labour in 'free labour' suffers from a severe lack of analytical rigour. It conflates a number of rather different practices. Is the downloading of a song comparable with chatting to friends on a social networking platform? Are both activities comparable to either the reading of a mailing list post or the production of a Wikipedia entry? All these activities come under the label of free labour but surely they are very different things. Is watching a television series on a private channel the same as watching a series on a public TV channel that does not run commercials? Is there a difference between the free labour of commercial networking sites such as Twitter, Google+, and Facebook and users of open-source networking sites such as Diaspora? Why do we talk about free labour with respect to a post on a mailing list but not with respect to a material letter in an envelope and a stamp on it, that we send to friend? Would we, communicating on the phone, provide free labour for telecom companies? After all, the only difference between telecom companies and social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter lies in a slightly different business model. Telecom companies so not use advertisers, so they need to charge customers for their service, whereas social media platform providers get their revenue from advertisers and are therefore able to offer their services for free.

Even more problematic is perhaps the use of the free labour concept for activities that are in fact not really based on free labour in the first place. It is usually assumed that free labour is labour which is not financially compensated. Things are more complicated however. The digital commons is created through a variety of forms of labour with respect to financial compensation. Let us look at the production of open source code. There is a growing tendency towards the funding of open-source projects by companies. Furthermore it is important to point out that an open-source software developer is usually not a shopkeeper during the day who starts producing code in her spare time. The overwhelming majority of open-source programmers are employed programmers, they are working for software companies. Often open source code is produced anyway but then made available to the open source community (Weber 2004). So the labour that goes into the development of open source software is often indirectly paid for. A similar argument could be made for the knowledge commons. A Wikipedia entry on, say 'modernity' is likely to be written by a specialist on this topic, a philosopher perhaps, likely by someone who is employed by a university.

This is the reason why some areas within the digital commons have developed with mind-blowing speed, whereas other areas remain largely underdeveloped. The open-source commons and the knowledge commons are spearheading the digital commons for a good reason, as those who invest in building it often do get an income for their work. Other areas, for example the education commons[5] and the arts commons stand in rather stark contrast to open-source and the

[5] I have written elsewhere (Wittel 2012) about contemporary attempts to create, as a result of the neo-liberal destruction of public universities and as a response to this, autonomous universities and autonomous cells of higher education. For this analysis I have made a conceptual distinction between a knowledge commons (e.g. sites such as

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

knowledge commons. They remain largely underdeveloped as labour invested here is not paid for by other parties. These commons grow indeed with unpaid labour only, they rely on the passion, the love, and the enthusiasm by those who contribute and invest in it without any financial compensation.

Postscript: A critique of free labour is important. A critique of the critique of free labour is equally important. However let us not get anal about this. If labour is life and labour is practice it will be difficult to develop a concept of free labour that is less nebulous than the concept of labour itself. This would turn out to be a futile enterprise, directing energies towards a project that is bound to fail. The true value of the free labour debate lies in the articulation not of a conceptual but a social problem. This social problem will only cease to exist when both, wage-based labour and free labour become just labour again, which will only be decided by the outcome of class struggle.

6. Value

In order to understand labour in its full complexity we have to turn towards value. Like labour, value is a vast area of social research. It is a term with many meanings and perspectives, a term that triggered numerous debates and it is easy to get distracted and lose sight of what matters most. So, what is valuable about value for the political economy of media? This is the first question that needs to be addressed. The second question refers to Marx and to the value that his concept of value has to offer for a better understanding of our contemporary media and communications ecosystem.

Economic anthropologist David Graeber (2001) distinguishes between three streams of thought with respect to value. Firstly there are values in the sociological sense. These are conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life. Secondly there is value in the economic sense. This is the degree to which objects are desired and how this desire is measured in quantitative terms. Thirdly there is value in the linguistic sense, which goes back to de Saussure's structural linguistics, where value is seen as meaningful difference. This is a concept that puts words (or things) in relation to other things. The value of some things can only be established in contrast to or in comparison with other things.

Within political economy of *mass* media the concept of value has received the same marginal attention as the concept of labour. In fact, as labour and value are so closely interrelated in Marxist theory, the same body of literature that is interested in labour is also interested in value.[6] One can only speculate why explorations on value have been largely ignored. My own explanation for this omission is rather simple: In a very general way and as a starting point mass media were perceived as valuable as a public good, as an independent force to safeguard democracy. However due to the increasing privatisation of mass media organisations and the economic interests of their owners the value of mass media as public good was under constant threat. Thus political economy of *mass* media never focuses on the potential value of mass media but on its opposite, on the dangers that economic interests and political regulation pose for democratic societies. Such a perspective made perfect sense. After all, political economy of mass media stands in the tradition of critical theory. It would have been odd indeed to praise media conglomerates and media moguls for their contributions to a shining public sphere.

If we apply Graeber's typology of value to the political economy of *mass* media we get a result that is very similar to the claim just made, but it is also a bit more nuanced. It is safe to say that there never was a concern about value in the economic sense; there were no attempts to measure the value of media products or media organisations in a quantitative way. It is also safe to say that the sociological dimension of value as values has not been explored in any meaningful way. This would have meant an engagement with the socially desirable values of media and communication. This would have been a debate about the utopian aspects of media and communication, how media should be organised, how they should work, what they should be. However an argument

Wikipedia) and an education commons. This distinction is much about labour and free labour. The knowledge commons grows with the growth of knowledge. It grows naturally; it just has to be uploaded to the Internet. In stark contrast, an education commons requires extra labour (real voluntary labour) that is not financially supported.

[6] It is not a coincidence that literature which incorporates concepts of labour and value is usually concerned with advertising. It is advertising which has inspired Smythe (1977) to develop the concept of the audience commodity. Most notably we find debates on value in the so called 'blindspot' debate (Murdock 1978; Smythe 1978; Livant 1979), which was triggered by Smythe's (1977) claim that TV audiences provide free labour for advertisers and for media producers. Value is also central to the work of Sut Jhally (1990), who makes a very similar argument about the advertising industry and about the labour of media audiences as Smythe (1977).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

could be made that the political economy of *mass* media has something to say about value in the linguistic sense of de Saussure's structuralism, about the meaningful difference between comparable forms of media production and media organisation, notably about the difference between publicly and privately owned media organisation. Without referring to the notion of value explicitly, the British tradition of political economy of *mass* media does compare public media organisations with commercial media organisations and the result of this comparison is a positive assessment of state owned media organisations such as the BBC.

What is the relevance of these streams of thought for the age of *distributed* media? So far there are no signs that *value in the economic sense* is becoming an issue for intense debate. Indeed the measurement of value in calculable and quantifiable units would always have been a rather questionable objective for political economists of media in the first place. With the growing importance of immaterial labour this would turn into more than just a questionable objective – it would be a mad and utterly futile project. It has become increasingly obvious that the value of intellectual and affective things is beyond measure. "What has irreversibly changed however, from the times of the predominance of the classical theory of value, involves the possibility of developing the theory of value in terms of economic order, or rather, the possibility of considering value as a measure of concrete labor." (Negri 1999, 77f.) Negri suggests instead to transform the theory of value from above to a theory of value "from below, from the basis of life" (Negri 1999, 78). Drawing on the work of Spinoza, Negri sees value as the power to act. We could add this to Graeber's typology as a fourth way to think about value: value is what empowers people to act.

In the age of distributed media, I would argue, debates on *value in the sociological sense* are blossoming. These are debates about the digital commons, about free labour and free culture, about openness, contribution, and sharing, about attention, about scarcity and abundance, about the gift economy, about property and access, about co-operation and collaboration as opposed to competition, about anonymous speech and anonymous action, about surveillance, privacy and transparency, about the value of experts and amateurs, about the internet and democracy, about people and technology, about media and political action, about capitalism and exit strategies. These are attempts to make judgements about what is good and desirable.

I hope my argument comes across: In the age of *mass media* the value of media to safeguard democracy was under threat. In the age of *distributed* media this value is still under threat. But this is not the end of the story. Now questions on power, ideology, and manipulation (which of course will remain highly relevant) are being supplemented by new questions on agency, empowerment, potency, and possibilities. In the age of *mass* media there was not much discussion that connected media and inquiries on what is important about life. In the age of *distributed* media these debates are in full swing.

Can Marx's concept of value contribute to these debates? Let us rehearse quickly: In the labour theory of value (as outlined in *Capital vol. 1*) Marx rejects claims by liberal political economists that the value of commodities should be defined by markets, by people exchanging money and commodities. This liberal perspective oscillates between a position where value is either somehow intrinsic to commodities or it is defined by the desire of those who want to purchase a commodity. Marx argues that value emerges from the amount of labour (and the amount of time) that has been invested in the production of a commodity. The exchange of money and commodities hides the fact that it is the production of the commodity that gives it its value. From this dictum that value is the socially necessary labour-time embodied in a commodity Marx develops his concept of surplus value. Surplus value then refers to the difference between the cost of the labour power (the wages) and the value of labour that is congealed in commodities. Surplus value or profit is the difference between what the worker creates and what he or she receives in return. If value is created through labour, surplus value is created through the exploitation of labour.

Even within Marxist theory his labour theory of value has been subject to much controversy. For Slavoj Žižek it is "usually considered the weakest link in the chain of Marx's theory" (Žižek 2011, 205). Drawing on the work of Moishe Postone, Žižek argues that Marx's labour theory of value is not a trans-historical theory, but a theory of value in a capitalist society only. This poses an important question. How relevant is Marx's theory for our contemporary media ecosystem that is partly capitalist, partly publicly funded, and partly a digital commons? Does it make sense to apply his theory to what is sometimes called a 'gift economy' (Barbrook 1999) and sometimes an 'economy of contributions' (Siefkes 2007). And if so, how would this be possible? Let us consider for example a gift economy. Does it really help in a gift economy to locate the source of value specific objects in the production of these objects at the expense of the relationship between those who exchange objects as gifts? Such an approach would not make much sense. There is a need to

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

broaden the horizon for theories of value that are exclusively developed for an understanding of capitalist economies only. The obvious place to find inspiration is the anthropological literature on value.

Graeber has produced an excellent review of the anthropological literature on value. He is searching for a concept that could overcome the dichotomy of gifts and commodities that could bridge a Maussean approach and a Marxist approach to value. He is especially impressed with the concept of value developed by Nancy Munn who has done extensive fieldwork in Melanesia. For Munn, value emerges in action. It is the process by which a person's capacity to act is transformed into concrete activity. Value is ultimately about the power to create social relationships.

> "Rather than having to choose between the desirability of objects and the importance of human relations one can now see both as refractions of the same thing. Commodities have to be produced (and yes, they have to be moved around, exchanged, consumed...), social relations have to be created and maintained; all of this requires an investment of human time and energy, intelligence, concern […] Framing things this way of course evokes the specter of Marx […] We are clearly dealing with something along the lines of a labor theory of value. But only if we define 'labor' much more broadly." (Graeber 2001, 45)

One might add that such a concept of labour is pretty much identical with Marx general definition of labour as practice. And it is identical with what Negri and Spinoza describe as the power to act.

All this is theory and it might be hard to come up with a rationale as to why political economy of media needs to engage with value theory in the first place. In fact this is not the point I want to make. I do think however, that Marx's labour theory of value (understanding labour in this broad meaning of the term) would open up new paths for empirical research. If it makes sense to see *value as the power to act* and to see it as the power to create social relations, if value is about how people give meaning to their own actions, then a political economy of communication, a political economy of distributed media would be in a perfect position to redefine what political economy means and to establish what Negri (1999) calls a political economy from below. This would be research on value that is focused not on structures but on *subjectivities* and their desires to create, to connect, to communicate, to share, to work together and to give meaning to all these things.

7. Property

In the age of *mass media* property has always been significant with respect to the ownership of the means of production. However an interest on property in terms of media content was rather limited. Ronald Bettig (1996) is perhaps overly careful to say that the area of intellectual property and copyright in particular has been "relatively unexplored". He is one of very few political economists who examined the property of media content. Interestingly this is a study just at the beginning of the digital turn.

Bettig is interested in the difference between the normative principles of intellectual property and the actually existing system. The central normative justification for intellectual property is built on the assumption that the creators of intellectual and artistic work need an incentive to be creative. The copyright is meant to give the creator exclusive rights to exploit their work, which in turn will provide an income for the creator and motivate her to produce new work. However the actual copyright system does not operate according to this ideal. Most artistic and intellectual work relies on a process of production, reproduction, and distribution that involves many people and expensive technology. According to Bettig "ownership of copyright increasingly rests with the capitalists who have the machinery and capital to manufacture and distribute" (Bettig 1996, 8) the works.

> "Precisely because the capitalist class owns the means of communication, it is able to extract the artistic and intellectual labor of actual creators of media messages. For to get 'published', in the broad sense, actual creators must transfer their rights to ownership in their work to those who have the means of disseminating it." (Bettig 1996, 35)

This is a very correct analysis for the age of *mass media* that does not leave much room for hope. Still he states with astonishing foresight that "the enclosure of the intellectual and artistic commons

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

is not inevitable or necessary, even though the emphasis on the logic of capital makes it seem as if it is." (Bettig 1996, 5). Bettig must have felt that times they are changing. In the mid 1990s when his book was published sharing cultures and the digital commons were largely restricted to the open source movement. There was no file-sharing software such as Napster, no legal experiments with copyright such as the Creative Commons, there was no social web. In the age of mass media the expansionary logic of capital has not left much room for an intellectual and artistic commons. An overwhelming part of media content was not common property but captured by capital. In this respect Bettig's statement has some prophetic qualities. By now it has become very clear that the enclosure of the intellectual and artistic commons is not inevitable at all. In fact this is the "battle to the death" which Kleiner refers to, the battle between artistic and intellectual labour and those who want to rescue the digital commons on one side of the battlefield and capital and those who aim for enclosure on the other side.

Bettig has developed a convincing argument with much empirical backup as to why the copyright arrangements – as legitimate as they are in an ideal normative sense – have not really supported the creators of intellectual and artistic work, but those who control the communication flows. With the digital turn this rather problematic arrangement is becoming even worse. As all digital objects can be reproduced endlessly and distributed with minimum additional costs they count as non-rival goods. In fact most intellectual property is non-rival, meaning they can be used by one person without preventing other people from using the same goods. Digital objects however are not only non-rival; they are also abundant by nature. Therefore all attempts to rescue the idea of copyright via digital rights are absurd in the sense that they create artificial scarcity. They turn objects that are abundant into legally scarce goods. To put it ironically: In the digital age only the creation of artificial scarcity can feed capitalist accumulation. It is exactly because digital things are not just non-rival but also abundant that the issue of intellectual property has moved from a sideshow to centre stage.

It is impossible to summarise the free culture debate in a few lines. I still want to make a few remarks, only to situate the key positions with respect to Marx. The first thing to note is that there is a relatively straightforward line between critical political economists and liberal political economists such as Yochai Benkler (2006) and Lawrence Lessig (2004). The latter celebrate free culture without giving up on the legitimacy of intellectual property. They merely suggest modifications to copyright law. They also applaud the digital commons as a progressive development without being overly concerned about the free labour that goes into the building of the digital commons. For Benkler (2006, 3) commons-based peer production enhances individual freedom and autonomy. This is where critical political economists take a different position. For them free labour is a problem that needs to be addressed.

The debates within the camp of critical political economists of digital media are not so clear-cut. While both positions exist, a passionate defence of free culture (e.g. Cory Doctorow 2008 or Kevin Carson 2011) and a passionate concern about free labour and the exploitation of this free labour by capital (Pasquinelli 2008; Kleiner 2010), in most accounts we find a general acknowledgement of this dilemma, a dilemma that is hard to crack, with many commentators sitting on the fence. One way out of the free culture dilemma resulted in the search for new models to guarantee the creators of artistic or intellectual work some income (e.g. Peter Sunde's 'Flattr' or Dmytri Kleiner's 'copyfarleft' and 'venture communism' suggestions).

Apart from some rare exceptions (notably Wark 2004 and Kleiner 2010), these debates circumvent however a discussion on property itself. Even those who passionately defend free culture support their position with rather pragmatic arguments, for example with the claim that free culture ultimately stimulates creative production and innovation, whereas copyright brings about a reduction of creative and innovative work. While these are important arguments I do find it astonishing that a fundamental critique of intellectual property itself has so far not been put on the table. Badiou asks a good rhetorical question: Why do we "keep tight controls on all forms of property in order to ensure the survival of the powerful?" (Badiou 2010, 5)

This is where Marx could come in rather handy. The first thing we can learn from Marx is that property is not a natural right. It is a historic product. Property relations are subject to specific historic conditions.

> "The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeois property. The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonism, on the exploitation of the many by the few. In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property." (Communist Manifesto, 68)

The second thing to note is that Marx's perspective on property is innovative and very distinct from liberal political theorists, as he does not focus on the relationship between a person and an object. Instead Marx conceptualises property as a relation that one person establishes to other people with respect to commodities. So fundamentally property relations are an expression of social relations. In capitalism property is based on the antagonism between capital and wage-labour. Is it is based on the accumulation of profit on the side of those who own the means of production.

> "Self-earned private property, that is based, so to say, on the fusing together of the isolated, independent laboring-individual with the conditions of his labor, is supplanted by capitalistic private property, which rests on exploitation of the nominally free labor of others, i.e., on wage-labor. The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property." (Capital vol. 1, 762-63)

As such capitalist private property is not so much about the ownership of things, but about the right to exclude others from using them. Dismantling the widespread myth that private property is justly earned by those who are intelligent and willing to work hard while the rest are 'lazy rascals', Marx comes up with an alternative explanation on the origin of property:

> "Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in defence of property […] In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the greater part." (Capital vol. 1, 713-14).

Why does this quote resonate so well in a time when capitalism is facing its first global crisis?The third and for our purposes more important observation is Marx's distinction between *private and personal property*. In capitalism, *private* property is bad, it is not only the result of alienated labour (wage-labour) but worse, is it also the means that makes alienated labour possible in the first place and the means to maintain this unjust relation between capital and labour. Private property is productive property. It is property that is crucial for capitalist production. It is property that can be used for the creation of surplus value. It might be a bit simplistic but in general Marx equates private property with privately owned means of production. This is very different from *personal* property or property for consumption (for reproduction, for subsistence), which should not be socialised as there is no need for doing so. Unproductive property or property based on needs is rather harmless after all.

> "When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character […] The average price of wage-labour is the minimum wage, i.e. that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in bare existence as a labourer […] We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labour, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labour of others." (Communist Manifesto, 68f.)

No doubt intellectual property is not personal but *private* property. No doubt these are productive commodities. They produce surplus value and also lay the foundation for future commodities that produce even more surplus value. Information produces more information, news produces more news, knowledge produces more knowledge, and art produces more art. Therefore intellectual property is an invention that in capitalism does not protect the creators of these immaterial objects. Instead it helps capitalist accumulation. Bettig has supported this claim in great detail with rich empirical evidence.

In my view the debate between those who support free culture and those who are concerned about the exploitative nature of free labour got stuck. Both positions should be supported from a

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marxist point of view. They contradict each other but they do so in perfect harmony with what Marx sees as internal contradictions of capitalism. Furthermore, the development of new business models for intellectual and artistic workers does not look promising, neither theoretically nor practically. It all boils down to the simple fact that capitalists are not willing to support free labour for altruistic reasons and those who are exploited earn just enough to maintain their own subsistence.

The only way out of this dilemma is a debate on the legitimacy of private property itself. Property relations reflect social relations. Now we can close the circle. It will bring us back to value, to value in the sociological sense (what we appreciate about life) and to the fourth approach to value, the one that builds on Spinoza's theory of affect, to value as the power to act. It will also bring us back to labour. If free culture is good for society (which is a claim that never has been seriously contested) then society must find a way to support the creators of free culture. Society must find a way to support their unpaid contributions, their gifts to humanity. It is as simple as that. A global basic income is not the only possible solution to this problem, but it could be a good starting point.

A related debate that should be triggered from the free-labour-free-culture-dilemma refers to the division of labour. In a communist society "there are no painters; at most there are people who, among other things, also paint." (*Literature and Art*, 76)

If people use their power to act against the capitalist property regime, they will engage in struggle:

> "The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labour, into capitalist private property is, naturally, a process, incomparably more protracted, violent, and difficult, than the transformation of capitalistic private property, already practically resting on socialised production, into socialised property. In the former case, we had the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers, in the latter we have the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people." (Capital vol. 1: 764)

Marx was perhaps a bit overly optimistic about this struggle. Then again, this optimism and the hope that goes with it are very much needed.

8. Struggle

> *There's class warfare*, all right, but it's *my class, the rich* class, that's *making* war, and *we*'re *winning*. (Warren Buffett 2011)

In the age of *mass* media political economists of communication have applied Marxist theory in a rather limited way. In the age of *digital and distributed* media, so my main argument, political economy of communication can apply Marx's concepts in a broader way. I have used some key concepts of his political economy – in particular the concepts of labour, value, and property, which are all interlinked – to demonstrate their relevance for an analysis of our contemporary media ecology, which consists of an interesting mix of the state, the market, and the commons. Another concept which is obviously at the very heart of Marx's political economy is class struggle. Digital and distributed media have opened up new possibilities for resistance and for the construction of alternatives to capitalism. None of these possibilities can be achieved without more fundamental changes enforced by the struggle of the oppressed.

Like labour, value and property, the concept of class struggle has featured within the political economy of *mass* media, but only at the margins (e.g. Mattelart and Siegelaub 1979). It never has been a key concept. Moreover, Dyer-Witheford is right to state that "while there are some studies of working class battles over digital machines and electronic media from a class struggle position, these have usually not offered any theoretical perspectives beyond...neo-Luddism." (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 64)

A theorisation of media and struggle is among the most important tasks for political economists of distributed media. How can we conceptualise class struggle in the 21st century, as there are so many practices associated with it? These are practices which refer to the agency of workers who resist exploitation at each point in the value chain, something political economists have recently addressed in detailed accounts (Huws and Leys 2003; Qui 2009; Mosco, McKercher and Huws 2010). Struggle in the information age also refers to hacktivism and forms of resistance employed by loosely connected cyber 'groups' such as 'Anonymous'. Thirdly struggle refers to all those

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

energies that are invested in the digital commons and the building of alternative goods and structures. Finally it refers to social movements. 2011 was the year of the first global uprising. While the specific relationship between social media and social movements does need to be studied in more detail, we can safely claim that social media can empower social movements and political activists. In the digital age the connection between media and struggle is complex but strong. Political economists of distributed media are expanding their research beyond a focus on media organisations or media industries; they are also studying what is happening in cyberspace; and they are studying what is happening in the real streets and squares.

Marx is back indeed and this time it's personal.

References

Andrejevic, Mark. 2008. Watching Television Without Pity. *Television & New Media* 9 (1): 24-46.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2011. Facebook als Neue Produktionsweise. In *Generation Facebook: Über das Leben im Social Net*, edited by Oliver Leistert and Theo Röhle, 31–50. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Andrejevic, Mark. Exploiting YouTube: Contradictions of User-generated Labour. In *The YouTube Reader*, edited by Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, Stockholm: National Library of Sweden.

Artz, Lee, Steve Macek, and Dana Cloud (eds). 2006. *Marxism and Communications Studies: The Point is to Change It*. New York: Peter Lang.

Badiou, Alain. 2010. *The Communist Hypothesis*. London: Verso.

Barbrook, Richard. 1999. The High-Tech Gift Economy. In *Readme! Filtered by Nettime: ASCII Culture and the Revenge of Knowledge*, edited by Josephine Bosma, Pauline van Mourik Broekman, Ted Byfield Matthew Fuller, Geert Lovink, Diana McCarty, Pit Schultz Felix Stalder, McKenzie Wark, and Faith Wilding, 132-138. New York: Autonomedia.

Benkler, Yochai. 2002. Coase's Penguin, or, Linux and the Nature of the Firm. *The Yale Law Journal* 112 (3): 369-446.

Benkler, Yochai. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks. How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Bettig, Ronald V. 1996. *Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy of Intellectual Property*, Oxford: Westview.

Burton, Graeme. 2010. *Media and Society: Critical Perspectives*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Carson, Kevin. 2011. How 'Intellectual Property' Imedes Competition. In *Markets Not Capitalism: Individualist Anarchism Against Bosses, Inequality, Corporate Power, and Structural Poverty*, edited by Gary Chartier & Charles W. Johnson, 325-334. London, New York: Minor Compositions and Autonomedia.

Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Maldan, MA and Oxford: Blackwell.

Curran, James. 1990. The New Revisionism in Mass Communication Research: A Reappraisal. *European Journal of Communication* 5 (2): 135-164.

Curran, James. 2000. *Media Organisations in Society*. London: Arnold.

Curran, James. 2010. *Media and Society*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Curran, James and Jean Seaton. 1997. *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain*. London: Routledge.

Curran, James. 2003. *Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting and New Media in Britain*. London: Routledge.

Devereux, Eoin. 2003. *Understanding the Media*. London: Sage.

Doctorow, Cory. 2008. *Content*. San Francisco: Tachyon Books.

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas Kellner. 2006. *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Internet Age*. London: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, and Marisol Sandoval (eds.). 2012. *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media*. New York: Routledge

Garnham, Nicholas. 1986. Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication. In *Media, Culture & Society: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard E. Collins, James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Paddy Scannell, Philip Schlesinger, and Colin Sparks, 9-32. London: Sage.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1990. *Capitalism and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information*. London: Sage.

Garnham, Nicholas. 2000. *Emancipation, the Media, and Modernity: Arguments About the Media and Social Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Golding, Peter, Graham Murdock, and Philip Schlesinger. 1986. *Communicating Politics: Mass Communications and the Political Process*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

Gorz, André. 1999. *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-based Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gorz, André. 2010. *The Immaterial*. Calcutta: Seagull Books.

Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value. The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave.

Grossberg, Lawrence, Ellen Wartella, and Charles Whitney. 1998. *Mediamaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hardy, Jonathan. 2010. The Contribution of Critical Political Economy. In *Media and Society*, edited by James Curran, 186-209. London: Bloomsbury.

Herman, Edward and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: Vintage.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Herman, Edward and Robert McChesney. 1997. *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*. London: Cassell.
Hesmondhalgh, David. 2010. User-generated Content, Free Labour and the Cultural Industries. *Ephemera* 10 (3/4): 267-284.
Huws, Ursula and Colin Leys. 2003. *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
Jhally, Sut. 1990. *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning*. New York: Routledge.
Jhally, Sut. 2006. *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Culture, Media, & Politics*. New York: Peter Lang.
Kellner, Douglas. 1995. Media Communications vs. Cultural Studies: Overcoming the Divide. *Communication Theory* 5 (2): 162-177.
Kleiner, Dmytri. 2010. *The Telekommunist Manifesto*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
Laughey, Dan. 2009. *Media Studies: Theories and Approaches*. Harpenden: Kamera.
Lazzarato, Maurizio. 1998. Immaterial Labor. Accessed February 29, 2012. http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm.
Lessig, Lawrence. 2004. *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*. New York: Penguin Books.
Livant, William. 1979. The Audience Commodity: On the "Blindspot" Debate. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3 (1): 91-106.
Livingstone, Sonia. 2009. On the Mediation of Everything. *Journal of Communication* 59 (1): 1-18.
Marx, Karl. 1973. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1977. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
Marx, Karl. 1988. *The Communist Manifesto*, edited by Frederic Bender, New York: W. W. Norton.
Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1974. *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1996. *Karl Marx Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 35: Karl Marx ; Capital, Vol. 1*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *Literature and Art*. New York: International Publishers.
Mattelart, Armand and Seth Siegelaub. 1979. *Communication and Class Struggle. An Anthology in 2 Volumes*. New York: Bagnolet.
McChesney, Robert and Victor Pickard, eds. 2011. *Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights: The Collapse of Journalism and What Can Be Done to Fix It*. New York and London: The New Press.
McQuail, Denis. 2005. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage Publications.
Mosco, Vincent. 1996. *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*. London: Sage.
Mosco, Vincent. *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Mosco, Vincent, Catherine McKercher, and Ursula Huws. 2010. *Getting the Message: Communications Workers and Global Value Chains*. London: The Merlin Press LTD.
Murdock, Graham. 1982. Large Corporations and the Control of the Communications Industries In *Culture, Society and the Media*, edited by Michael Gurevitch, 118-150. London: Methuen.
Murdock, Graham. 1978. Blindspots About Western Marxism: A Reply to Dallas Smythe. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2 (2): 109-119.
Murdock, Graham. 2004. Past the Posts: Rethinking Change, Retrieving Critique. *European Journal of Communication* 19 (1): 19-38.
Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 2001. Digital Possibilities, Market Realities: The Contradictions of Communications Convergence. In *Socialist Register 2002: A World of Contradictions*, edited by Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, 111-129. London: Merlin Press.
Negri, Antonio. 1999. "Value and Affect." *Boundary 2* 26 (2): 77-88.
Nichols, John and Robert McChesney. 2006. *Tragedy and Farce: How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections and Destroy Democracy*. New York: New Press.
Pasquinelli, Matteo. 2007. ICW – Immaterial Civil War: Prototypes of Conflict Within Cognitive Capitalism. In *MyCreativity Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries*, edited by Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter, 69-80. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
Pasquinelli, Matteo. 2008. *Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons*. Amsterdam: NAi Publishers and Institute of Network Cultures.
Qui, Jack Linchuan. 2009. *Working-Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
Schiller, Herbert. 1989. *Culture, Inc: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*. N.Y.: Oxford U.P.
Siefkes, Christian. 2007. *From Exchange to Contributions: Generalizing Peer Production into the Physical World*. Berlin: Edition C. Siefkes.
Smythe, Dallas. 1977. *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada*. Norwood: Ablex.
Smythe, Dallas. 1978. Rejoinder to Graham Murdock. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2 (2): 120-127.
Stallabrass, Julian. 2003. *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*. London: Tate Publishing.
Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture: Politics For the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press.
Wark, McKenzie. 2004. *A Hacker Manifesto*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Wayne, Mike. 2003. *Marxism and Media Studies: Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends*. London: Pluto.
Weber, Steven. 2004. *The Success of Open Source*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
Williams, Raymond. 1958. *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. London: Chatto & Windus.
Williams, Raymond. 1961. *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto & Windus.
Wittel, Andreas. 2004. Culture, Labour and Subjectivity: For a Political Economy from Below. *Capital & Class* 84 (Special Issue): 11-30.
Wittel, Andreas. 2011. Qualities of Sharing and Their Transformations in the Digital Age. *International Review of Information Ethics* 15.
Wittel, Andreas. Forthcoming 2012. Hochschulbildung als Gut: Vom öffentlichen Gut zur Ware zum Gemeingut? In *Wissensarbeit Und Arbeitswissen. Zur Ethnographie Des Kognitiven Kapitalismus*, edited by Gertraud Koch and Bernd

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Juergen Warneken, Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2011. *Living in the End Times*. London, New York: Verso.

About the Author

Andreas Wittel
is a Senior Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University (UK) and is currently interested in the interface between digital media and critical theory.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 334-348, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Marxist Theory in Critical Transitions: The Democratization of the Media in Post-Neoliberal Argentina

Pablo Castagno

Universidad Nacional de La Matanza, San Justo, Argentina, pcastagno@unlam.edu.ar

Abstract: *This article contends that for socialist emancipation to advance it is crucial to investigate how political cadres conceal, regulate or displace the demands of citizens and workers in the context of the calamitous effects of global capitalism. Analyzing the constitutive relationship between politics and the media is an essential component in researching those practices of state ideological production. Specifically looking into the transformation of media policy in the case of Argentina, this article problematizes the different political forms through which the state has cloaked its fundamental contradiction: alleged representation of the general interests of citizens, when explored in critical depth, reveals the state's actual adjustment to a process of capitalist transnationalization that increases irrationality, social inequality and misery. Through this lens, the article emphasizes the value of Marxist dialectic method and theory in imagining a true democratic future.*

Keywords: *Critical Political Economy, Global Crisis, Hegemony, Media Policy, Marxist Political Theory, Neoliberalism, Populism, Kirchnerismo*

1. Introduction

Examining Argentina, my purpose is to explore how state and political cadres endeavor to contain the social tensions spanning from states' essential contradiction as institutions that claim to represent the general and national interests of citizens while reproducing the transnational class domination in which global capitalism is based.[1] Specifically, I argue the media constitutes a key field of state ideological regulation and political struggle. By ideology I mean the goal of dominant political groups and classes to disseminate their own ideas throughout a society such that these ideas become dominant (Marx and Engels 1998/1846), cohering social formation in a process of cultural and political leadership (Gramsci 2000, 200-210) and absorbing or articulating in this way the discourses of other groups and classes in order to nullify their potential antagonism (Laclau 1978, 187-189). Further, I understand those symbolic practices as having an objective role in hiding the real nature of society, built as it is on antagonisms (Marx and Engels 1998/1848; Marx 1978/1867, 319-328; Horkheimer 1989/1932, 55). I use regulation here to connote the institutionalization of ideologies throughout the state in the form of legal instruments, state policies, discursive practices, and so on.

Conceptualizing ideological regulation in this way, I engage with views maintaining that Karl Marx's work and subsequent interpretations of Marxist thought facilitate analysis of the media as an unfixed object integrated into the general political-economic process through which structural contradictions in capitalism are played out, reproduced, contested or transformed (Murdock and Golding 1973; Garnham 1979; Wayne 2003; Artz, Macek and Cloud 2006; McChesney 2007; Mosco 2010; Fuchs 2011). These works' shared critical theoretical and methodological approach situates the study of the media within the totality of the social relationships constituting a given historical moment. In concrete terms, my task is to investigate how political cadres respond to corporations' pressures to increase profits, aim to legitimate the state apparatus, and cope with the democratic demands of citizens and workers in the context of capitalist crises and political turmoil.[2] Following Marx, I understand capital crises to be phases of rupture in the realization of profits through the exchange of commodities (Marx 1978, 433-465). These crises include different episodes, such as the 2008 financial crisis, and are characterized by attempts from the dominant class to ensure capitalist profits.

At the empirical level, Argentina constitutes an interesting and relevant political field of analysis due to its profound capitalist slump in 2001-2002, its previous crises and its periodic shifts in state ideology. I argue that the contemporary history of media transformation in Argentina has three political epicenters: the implementation of new media legislation (Law 22,285, 1980) by the military junta dictatorship (1976-1983),[3] the modifications that the democratic and neoliberal government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999)

[1] Following Manuel Castells' work, by global capitalism I mean an economy whose core components have the potential to work as a unit in real time and on a planetary scale (2000, 105).

[2] Following Nicos Poulantzas, I understand that political cadres constitute a social category, not a class (1969, 72). Their function is to reproduce the state, which is also essential for the dominant economic class and capitalism as a whole.

[3] The Executive Power was in charge of three chief commanders from the army, the navy and the air force.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

introduced to that legislation, and the approval of a law on media democratization by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government (2007-present) in 2009. In terms of political orientation, the current government represents a continuation of Néstor Kirchner's period (2003-2007). Néstor Kirchner was the president elected following the devastating financial collapse of the neoliberal project in 2001-2002. This slump pushed forty percent of the total population into unemployment and sub-employment and half of the total population under the line of poverty (Oficina de la CEPAL 2010; Lozano 2005, 4),[4] deeply eroding state legitimacy. Both Menem and Kirchner belonged to the Partido Peronista, a former national-populist party that emerged in the 1940s. Yet while Menem implemented thorough neoliberal reforms targeted at assuring the state's link to global capitalism (Castagno 2010, 119-176), so-called *Kirchnerismo* has constituted a complex case of state continuity and change.

Exploring these periods of contemporary history, my central question is how media policy is related to the various state projects aimed at resolving the capitalist collapses, and responding to the political contestation by workers and citizens in the mid-1970s, the late 1980s and 2001-2002. Drawing from Marxist theory on political-economic crises and Marxist method, my historical approach to this research question seeks to explain the contradictory relationships among the state, the media and citizens. My general objective is to determine and explain the ideological variations in media policy across the various political regimes and governments, and my specific objective is to analyze Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's reform of class and ideological relationships within the audiovisual media system. For this research, my qualitative investigation examines media legislation on broadcasting and audiovisual communication services as part of the various state political economy projects. I define media legislation as a field of power in which citizens, political cadres and the dominant economic class struggle to establish state parameters according to which media resources are distributed and public communication delimited.[5] This field simultaneously contains, reflects and constitutes the social totality in which it is immersed. My principal argument is that *Kirchnerismo* has perpetuated a bourgeois state project of capitalist transnationalization, initially enforced by the military dictatorships between 1955 and 1983 and later pushed forward by Menem's government (Portantiero 1974, 1977; Castagno 2010) but that, as the project's current iteration, *Kirchnerismo* has relied on state populist forms of media-ideological regulation different from the previous nationalist-authoritarian and neoliberal ideological regulations. Focusing on media policy, I seek to critically highlight the rift between social reality and state claims.

1.1. Situating the Media: Capitalist Crises and State Transformations

Marx's work is crucial for thinking realistically about the state and the capitalist system. Distinct from other perspectives in the social sciences and political economy, Marx's historical-materialist method analyzes the contradictions and class conflicts that constitute the historical process under capitalism. Marx demonstrates that modern history is shaped by fundamental antagonisms between capital and wage labor, and between the socio-economic dynamics and the political life of societies. For Marx, apprehending and representing the concrete reality is part of the revolutionary practice of building an equal and free society (Lukács 2000/1923, 3). His research method is grounded in critical theoretical approaches, and is aimed both at grasping the distance between social reality and current social values and overcoming dialectically the distinction between social research and practical-critical activity (Marx 1998/1845, 572-574).

Marx observes that capitalism is characterized by cycles of capital accumulation and crises. As noted above, by crises he means phases of interruption in the process of reproduction of capital (Marx 1978, 446). He demonstrates that this reproduction is based on firms' exploitation of wage labor for the production of commodities (exchange value) to be exchanged in the market for sums of money: capitalism pays the labor class only the socially necessary amount of money for its reproduction and obtains its force for the production of surplus-value, which takes a commodity-form. According to Marx, capital is the accumulation of exchange value and requires the constant circulation of capital and commodities (1978/1867, 302-336). For any enterprise to obtain profits, capital accumulation is necessary to guarantee an expansion of the workforce, employ more technology in production, increase the relative exploitation of labor per unit of time and produce more and cheaper commodities to compete on the market. Marx explains that capitalism in consequence needs to balance capital investment and the means of consumption, or consumer commodities (Marx 1992/1885). He highlights that crises occur due to the propensity of the capitalist system "to exploit the maximum amount of labor without any consideration for the actual limits of the market or the needs backed by the ability to pay; and this is carried out through the continuous expansion of reproduction and accumulation, and therefore constant conversion of revenue into capital" (Marx 1978, 465). He also notes that the bourgeoisie — the dominant economic class — endeavors to resolve crises through the enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces, the con-

[4] Sub-employment refers to workers that work less than 35 hours per week although they wish to work more hours.

[5] I thus analyze thematic issues such as state regulation of media ownership, administration of broadcast licenses, capital accumulation in the media sector, and democratization of the media.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

quest of new markets and the more thorough exploitation of old ones (Marx and Engels 1978/1848, 478).

Applying this theoretical perspective we can discern two central turning points in contemporary global capitalism. The first is located during the early 1970s. As David Harvey and other authors demonstrate, it was in this period that the cycle of capital accumulation that spanning from the end of World War II encountered serious difficulties in the United States and elsewhere (Harvey 1991, 140-147). Political cadres and the transnational bourgeoisie responded to that crisis in capitalist profitability by dismantling mechanisms of state economic interventionism and establishing a neoliberal agenda (Smith 1997; Duménil and Lévy 2004). Since then we have seen how state cadres privatized state-owned companies, eliminated labor rights, contributed to the displacement of commodity production to cheaper regions, liberalized international trade, eliminated rules restricting the concentration and centralization of capital, warranted the independence of finance capital from the state, attempted to resolve the crisis in industrial profitability by intensifying the production of financial commodities — for instance, through the privatization of state pension systems — and expanded the commodification of culture by stimulating the production of new media, tourist, leisure and sports commodities.[6] Today it is evident that this neoliberal project has run up against obstacles and a global capitalist crisis is emerging. This is revealed in the stagnation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the European Union and the United States during the last five years. Indeed, before this rise of the current crisis in the North, the neoliberal project had collapsed in many Southern states.

My contention is that media research needs to be situated in that historical process. To put it in Gramscian terms, we need to investigate how contradictions in the economic structure have repercussions on political, ideological and cultural formations (Gramsci 2000, 427). At the same time, we must examine how political and cultural practices transform the economic structure – i.e. the manner by which dialectically active cultural, political and economic processes constitute and transform one another. For example, inspired by Marx's study of the processes of revolution and counter-revolution altering the state and private property (1978/1852), Antonio Gramsci employs the category of organic crisis for explaining the periods of disturbance in commodity exchange and state formation. For Gramsci, one of the principal signs of an organic crisis is when the traditional forms of political representation are no longer recognized as adequate by the dominant economic class, and are resisted by the subaltern classes (2000, 217-221). In these historical situations, the subaltern classes pass to a state of political activity, ruling class's hegemony is delegitimized, the rule of the ruling class is only sustained by coercion, the economy is paralyzed, and a crisis of the state as a whole emerges (Gramsci 2000, 218).

In that light, I contend the media is one of the state spheres in which political groups and classes establish new ideological articulations, alliances and hegemonies to cope with an organic crisis. In Gramsci's terms, hegemony refers to the political, cultural and moral directions consented to by citizens and workers (2000, 194). The importance of this function of the media increases concurrently as the organic crisis erodes the contracts among institutional actors (governments, trade unions, business associations) and the relationship of citizens to political parties. Further, since the media is a cardinal medium smoothing the general process of commodification and capital accumulation (Mosco 2010, 130; Fuchs 2009; 2011, 135-160), the media sphere is an essential space in which the dominant economic class can intensify commodity exchange after any capitalist collapse. Briefly, considering the media from a Marxist standpoint I examine the class and political struggles to reproduce capital accumulation and state legitimacy, or to create alternative media, political and economic systems. This kind of investigation is essential for a dialectic view of the state as an unstable formation that needs both to reproduce the domination of the transnational bourgeoisie and of listening citizens. In other words, the analysis of media policy allows for the application of two Marxist views to the state (Held 1991, 144): the state as the organ of the ruling class (Marx and Engels 1978/1848, 475), and the state as an institution that has some relative autonomy despite its reproduction of dominant bourgeois interests (Marx 1978/1852; Poulantzas 1969). While Marxist studies have tended to stress the capitalist reproductive role of the media as an institution of ideological control (Althusser 2001/1970, 95), it is also important to grasp the state's imbalance between reproduction and hegemony.

2. Ideological Instability in Argentine Media Policy

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's media reform represents part of the progressive political debate around the collapse of the neoliberal project in 2001-2002, when the state defaulted on its government bonds and sharply devalued its currency after three years of economic recession. This discussion centers on the nature of the state established by the neoliberal government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999) and the military dictatorship (1976-1983). *Kirchnerismo* proponents' argument is that the military junta introduced the neoliberal shift and Menem deepened it. This is a convincing interpretation with which

[6] In Marxist terms commodification refers to the transformation of use-values into exchange products (Mosco 2010, 127).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

political cadres can appeal to the citizenry because the dictatorship implemented a structural capitalist adjustment program that repressed workers and citizens. The military junta aimed to eliminate the dissent of citizens to the state and to forcibly subjugate workers through state terrorism and economic policies. The regime kidnapped, murdered and "disappeared" thousands of workers, students and political activists (CONADEP 2003, 296);[7] reduced wages; liberalized foreign trade for corporations to import technology, boost so-called labor productivity and increase exports; and interwove the economy with Northern finance capital — raising state debts and absorbing corporations' debts.[8]

Yet what is missed in the narrative of *Kirchnerismo* is that the state had been pursuing its policy of subduing labor and assuring the state's link to Northern capitalism since the armed forces' *coup d'état* against the democratic government of Juan Domingo Perón in 1955, who had implemented a project of national capitalism (Portantiero 1974; 1977; Castagno 2010).[9] Following a cycle of military dictatorships (1955-1958, 1966-1973), the military junta intensified both state coercion and the economy's interdependence with Northern capitalism. This assault came after a period in which workers were seriously counteracting the hegemony of the state and capital through labor organization on the shop floor, in new trade unions, and through general strikes and political mobilization (Werner and Aguirre 2009, 167-260). This organic crisis in state authority coincided with a deepening of the economic recession and a hyperinflationary crisis in 1975,[10] along with the pressures from advanced capitalist countries — what I term Northern capitalism — to displace capital to new geographical zones (Harvey 1991, 185).

I posit that adopting a longer historical perspective reveals that what varies in the interlocking of the Argentine state with Northern capitalism are the regulatory frameworks, coercive mechanisms and ideological forms through which the state and political cadres demand the compliance of citizens to the state and capital. Continuity in the state strategy of capitalist transnationalization is seen in its promotion of foreign investments, its consolidation of the export-led dimension of the economy, its facilities for multinational corporations to export capital and its periodic adjustments to discipline so-called labor productivity according to global standards. The various regulatory and ideological tactics are observed clearly in the establishment of either dictatorial or democratic regimes, and in the political cadres' appropriation of center-left or popular-democratic, *Peronistas*, ideologies. Thus, in terms of ideological tactics, the dictatorships implanted repressive nationalism to counter the demands of workers, trade unions, the Partido Peronista and national-leftist parties. They accused resistant Peronist workers, national-leftist sectors of the Partido Peronista and armed national-leftist groups of demagogy, corruption and international terrorism under the influence of international socialism. The military junta's Law 22,285 on broadcasting (1980), synthesizing the so-called national security doctrine, is a case in point.

For example, the military junta set the regulation of broadcasting under the control of the Executive Power (the chief commanders of the Junta). It also established that representatives from the army, the navy, the air force, the Secretary of Public Information, the State Secretary of Communication, along with two representatives of the private media associations, must administer the institution regulating the media (Comité Federal de Radiodifusión, COMFER).[11] Moreover, the law 22,285 demanded that media content had to be in accordance with the institutions of the "Republic," the national tradition and the moral norms of Christianity. The law required broadcasters to "disseminate information and collaborate [with the Executive] to satisfy the needs of national security."[12] State and commercial broadcasters were requested to avoid content that would diminish patriotism and to eliminate content that would exalt ways of life or ideologies contradictory with the moral, social and political norms of the country (art. 5 and decree 286/81). This ideological coercion included the ban of not-for-profit media.[13] The *de facto* legislation on broadcasting was thus a condensation of nationalist authoritarianism and commercial media's

[7] National Commission on the Disappearance of People. The democratic government of Raúl Alfonsín established CONADEP.

[8] For non-Marxist approaches that consider these facts see, for example, Calcagno (1988) and Rapoport (2003). The official state narrative today tends basically to highlight the military junta's disappearance of citizens and the military junta's corruption in indebting the state. In other words, it does not situate those crimes within the capitalist conditions of the state.

[9] For instance, while by 1957, 64 of the top 100 companies were national corporations and the rest Northern corporations, by 1971, 72 of the top 100 companies were foreign multinational corporations and the rest national corporations, usually linked the latter (Sourrouille 1985, 51). As Juan Carlos Portantiero critically puts it, "Two basic alternatives were open [in the mid 1950s]. One was to force the course of development directed until then by Peronism toward a model of development based on a solid alliance between the state and national capital. The other was to create conditions for a new stage of capitalist development by means of the implementation of a politics that, emphasizing dependence, would be able to guarantee the control of the economy to the most concentrated sectors" (Portantiero 1974, 102). For non-Marxists views on capitalist transnationalization during the 1960s see Juan Vital Sourrouille (1985) and Guillermo O'Donnell (1988).

[10] By 1975 the symptoms of the capitalist crisis were evident in Argentina: annual inflation climbed to 444 percent, the GDP and investments stagnated, fiscal deficit skyrocketed to 16 percent, foreign debt rose, foreign trade deteriorated and trade unions finally rejected a drastic currency devaluation and wage freeze in 1975 (Rapoport 2003, 651-694).

[11] Federal Broadcasting Committee.

[12] Art. 7.

[13] Art. 45.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

interests. However, the dictatorship's achievement of its desire for capitalist growth through repressive nationalism was contradictory.

State authoritarianism supported capitalism by suppressing labor and cultural dissent but at the same time set barriers to capital circulation and accumulation. For instance, besides the nationalist constraints, the media legislation restricted the production of media commodities by establishing moral limits on the broadcasting of content. It required broadcasters to abstain from delivering "sordid, corruptive or repulsive news," "obscene gestures," "sexual perversions," "the triumph of evil" or "public commotion."[14] Law 22,285 demanded media companies to broadcast mainly national content, established Spanish as the only media language, requested the COMFER to authorize the information circulated by FM radios, and forbade the formation of private broadcasting networks.[15] It also prohibited the broadcasting of game shows, media ratings and the use of telephone calls in broadcasting content.[16] These regulations restricted capital accumulation not because corporations could not commodify nationalist or moral products, but because they limited the range of use-values that corporations could commodify.

Such legislation also limited capital accumulation by restraining capital centralization, concentration and commercialization.[17] It stipulated that commercial broadcasters could not own press companies, administer public services or manage more than four broadcasting licenses.[18] It also impeded broadcasters from becoming subsidiaries of foreign corporations, selling licenses and commercializing shares for the first five years in operation.[19] On commercialization — that is, on the establishment of relationships between audiences and advertisers (Mosco 2010, 132) — Law 22,285 forbade advertising during programs, restricted advertising production to national firms and prohibited advertisements offensive to "the integrity of the family and Christian morality."[20] In short, while the military junta aimed to resolve the organic crisis of the 1970s and consolidate transnational capitalism, at least in the media market it restrained capital accumulation via the form of moral coercion and cultural control it assumed. In this sense, it is illustrative that the dictatorship controlled the state-owned television channels, and privatized the television channels Canal 9 and Canal 2 just before leaving power in hands of the democratic government of Raúl Alfonsín.[21]

After the impasse of Alfonsín's government — in which neither the dominant economic class nor workers could resolve the long-lasting stagnation — the democratic government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999) removed the dictatorship's restrictions on the media market. Menem promised workers that he would end the crisis and increase social equality, yet he established wide-ranging neoliberal reforms to favor capital. In the media field, Menem eliminated former moral prescriptions and authorized companies to broadcast game shows, content in other languages, advertisements during programs, telephone calls integral to the shows,[22] or brands' catalogues.[23] His new legislation first permitted the state-owned television channel to broadcast advertising and then increased advertising time,[24] while also authorizing broadcasters to deliver ratings statistics — a procedure communicating the idea that within society specific audiences exist for advertisers to entice.[25] Those regulatory changes increased the commodification and commercialization of media content, allowing the emergence of programs previously unimaginable: talk shows, political scandals, news on crimes, cheap humor programs with hosts promoting a battery of brands, all kind of contests and porn cable television channels. In short, Menem's media policy rendered evident what Marx highlights: capitalism is indifferent to the actual content of the commodity. In Marx's words, "Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is not part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange-values" (1978/1867, 328).

[14] Law 22,285 (art. 18) and decree 286/81 (art. 1). On the dictatorship's repression of cultural life see also Guillermo O'Donnell (1984).

[15] Art. 15, 19, 58 and 68. Decree 286/81. Forty percent of the total content broadcast had to be national content.

[16] Art. 24 and 25.

[17] In Marxist terms, concentration refers to the accumulation of capital *vis-à-vis* the labor process (capital concentrates all the means of production in many firms), and centralization refers to the command and ownership of different economic sectors or sub-sectors by a firm or capital (Shaikh 1991, 76-77).

[18] Art. 43.

[19] Art. 45 and 46.

[20] Art. 23.

[21] The dictatorship returned those television channels to their original owners. In 1974 Perón's government had nationalized them.

[22] The most successful show of the 1990s (*Hola Susana*) broadcast game shows where the audience had to call the show to participate.

[23] Decrees 1062/98, 1005/99, and 1065/99.

[24] Decrees 1652/96 and 1005/99.

[25] Decree 1062/98. The constitution of audiences is fundamental for the process of commodification. As Dallas Smythe observes (1977), the capitalist media needs to produce audiences for advertisers. For a critical review see Vicent Mosco (2010, 136-138).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Menem's government also nourished capitalism by altering rules on media ownership. It privatized the state-owned television channels Canal 13 and Canal 11, authorized press and telephone companies to own television and cable channels,[26] expanded from four to twenty four the number of licenses that media corporations could administer,[27] removed time limits on selling media corporations' shares,[28] allowed the formation of broadcasting networks and removed restrictions on the transference of licenses.[29] In addition, Menem's legislation on foreign investments pampered the movement of capital in and out of the media market. The law 21,382 (1993) and fifty-three new treaties on foreign investments — which have pre-eminence over the national laws[30] — established the state's equal treatment of foreign and national capital as well as authorized international investors to repatriate profits and capital without barriers. Menem's neoliberal policy thus facilitated media centralization and concentration, and on a transnational basis no less. For example, the press company Grupo Clarín became the largest multimedia group:[31] in particular, its company Cablevisión bought cable television networks throughout the country, administering about 260 cable television licenses.[32] At the same time, new global capital flowed into the market: for instance, Telefónica International — a company that emerged out of the privatization process in Spain — acquired Canal 11 and went on to administer nine other television licenses, Liberty Media Corporation bought a quarter of the shares of Cablevisión and Goldman Sachs purchased eighteen percent of the shares of Grupo Clarín (CEPAL 2002, 97).

Thus we see that Menem's media policy was integrated to his neoliberal state machinery. This policy implemented new pro-capitalist labor legislation, liberalized trade, privatized all state-owned companies, swapped the foreign debt incurred by the former regime for global government bonds, partially privatized the state pension system, promoted transnational capital investments and enforced a monetary regime based on the automatic convertibility of Argentine pesos into dollars at a parity exchange level (Castagno 2010, 119-176).[33] In sum, according to the Menem administration the market would deliver all the material and symbolic goods that the government believed the state could no longer distribute, but in effect neoliberalism dramatically increased social inequality. As cultural critic Beatriz Sarlo describes in the early 1990s, with Menem in power "Argentina lives in the cultural climate of what is considered 'postmodernity' in the frame of a nation fractured and impoverished. Twenty hours of daily television, on fifty channels, and the public school without any symbolic or material resources" (Sarlo 1994, 7). This systemic social inequality rose throughout the 1990s and became politically unsustainable for the state. By the late 1990s unemployed reached eighteen percent and poverty thirty percent (Lozano 2005, 4).

In that context of inequality, the commercial media outlets circulated messages tempting consumers to join the so-called First World (e.g., Miami's shopping malls, European sports events) while — not in structural but in moral and individualistic terms — blaming corrupt politicians for Argentina's neoliberal economic woes (Castagno 2010, 226-231). These problems intensified in early 1999, when Brazil — a major Argentine trade partner — devalued its currency. Under these conditions, Argentines elected the center-right coalition ALIANZA,[34] which promised to prosecute political corruption — a practice intimately linked to the privatization of state-owned companies (Verbitsky 1990). Despite this promise, the ensuing government only strove to preserve the neoliberal macroeconomic framework, increasing working-class austerity and honoring government bonds' payments.[35] This assault provoked a reversal in citizens' expectations. In turn, workers and citizens resisted the rounds of neoliberal austerity. For example, the

[26] Law 23,696/89 (art. 65). The law 26,053/99 (art. 1) forbade public service companies to administer broadcasting licenses, but this restriction was removed through the legislation that authorizes foreign firms the same rights that their countries give to Argentine capital. See afterwards.

[27] Law 23,696/89 (art. 65).

[28] Decree 1062/98.

[29] Decree 1771/91 and 1005/99.

[30] National Constitution (art. 75).

[31] According to press information from La Nación on December 20, 2011 (http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1434200-grupo-clarin-y-vila-manzano-dos-de-los-mayores-multimedios-del-pais, accessed on February 15, 2012), by 2011 Grupo Clarín controlled the 47 percent of the total cable television market, nine television channels (owned and represented), five cable television channels, the second most listened-to radio (Radio Mitre) and numerous radio licenses, the most widely read newspaper (Clarín) and other ten newspapers and magazines, 37 percent of the shares of the firm controlling paper commercialization for newspapers, and shares in top audiovisual companies. See also Grupo Clarín's website (http://www.grupoclarin.com/areas_y_empresas/clarin, accessed on February 15, 2012).

[32] See, for instance, the report of newspaper Perfil on April 5, 2009: "En guerra con Clarín, el gobierno decidió frenar la fusión de cables," (http://www.diarioperfil.com.ar/edimp/0353/articulo.php?art=13669&ed=0353, accessed on January 15, 2012).

[33] Menem's government established an ad-hoc 'Euro': as the Euro replaced former national currencies in the European Union, in Argentina the dollar (i.e., the currency that works as universal monetary equivalent in Marxist terms) became a state tool with which to discipline the economy, pressuring labor to adapt to the competitive strength of the dollar in the global economy.

[34] Alianza para la Educación, la Salud y el Empleo (Coalition for Education, Health and Employment) formed by the traditional party UCR and the center-left coalition FREPASO.

[35] ALIANZA approved a labor law that removed collective bargaining; reduced state workers' wages; aimed to privatize trade unions' health funds; and swapped junk government bonds, passing them to national and global pensioners (Castagno 2010, 287-289).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

two confederations of trade unions carried out eight general strikes, the social movement of unemployed workers gained momentum, and in key districts blank votes won the parliamentary elections of 2001.[36] In late 2001 citizens in major cities filled public squares, obligating President Fernando de la Rúa to resign. Citizens rejected the President and the main political parties under the motto: "They Must All Go!" (Solanas 2004; Pousadela 2008). Yet, despite those demonstrations, the traditional political parties remained, electing a new president through a parliamentary pact. In the name of the nation, President Eduardo Duhalde turned the slump into a capitalist exit: his government sharply devalued the currency and lowered wages,[37] cleared big corporations' banking debts at the expense of citizens' saving accounts and repressed the protest of unemployed workers (Castagno 2010, 317-338). This moment of crisis in state authority ended with the election of President Néstor Kirchner in 2003.

3. The Post-Neoliberal State and the Media

"Only when relationships have so far developed and conflicts of interest have reached such an intensity that even the average eye can penetrate beyond appearances to what is really going on, does a conscious ideological apparatus in the full sense usually make its appearance."

Max Horkheimer, *Notes on Science and the Crisis* (1989/1932, 55)

Despite its proponents' explicit disavowal of neoliberal policies and their professed national-popular political orientation, *Kirchnerismo* has sustained the long state capitalist project of embedding the economy in global capitalism and enforcing an unequal class structure. Firstly, in commodity production, currency devaluation and the hike in global commodity prices (agricultural goods, energy, mining) combined to intensify the export-led dimension of the Argentine economy and conquer new markets: between 2003 and 2010 exports rose from US$29.9 billion to US$68.1 billion, increased by the export of cars to Brazil, soy to Asia and mining products to the global market. Northern capital controls this backbone of capitalist reproduction (Chudnovsky 2001, 96).[38] Secondly, the governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner reduced foreign debt as percentage of GDP and nationalized the private pension system, yet foreign debt as percentage of GDP is now near pre-slump levels while the new state pension fund has a vast amount of government bonds in its portfolio.[39] In other words, *Kirchnerismo* has passed the debt burden along to pensioners, while it refuses to grant pensioners the 82 percent of the current wage corresponding to their former labor activities. Thirdly, *Kirchnerismo* re-established collective bargaining, but the percentage of workers outside the formal labor market (and thus collective bargaining) remains, at its lowest estimate, thirty-four percent of the total working population.[40] This is an important factor in explaining why the participation of wages in GDP has tended to remain stagnant since the 1970s (Graña and Kennedy 2008, 4), when the capitalist assault intensified. Next, *Kirchnerismo* claims to have reduced poverty to ten percent, but this figure is based on outdated statistics that establish in 1,423 pesos (US$326) the monthly sum an average family of four needs to live.[41] In short, the fact that *Kirchnerismo* keeps reproducing an unequal transnational class structure is revealed in Argentina's export of 70 billion dollars to Northern financial centers over the last four years (Damill and Frenkel 2009, 22; Cano 2011).

Yet *Kirchnerismo* has also contributed popular-democratic accretions to the pre-existing state formation. It annulled Menem's government decree that had pardoned former commanders for their crimes;

[36] In the cities of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, blank ballot papers and spoiled ballot papers won the election. In Buenos Aires province, blank ballot papers and spoiled ballot papers came in second. In Córdoba, they ended third. Argentina has a presidential system of government with an Executive Branch, a bicameral legislature formed by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (Congreso Nacional), and a Judicial Branch. I use the term parliament to refer to that bicameral legislature.

[37] Currency devaluation meant that even four years after the crisis, average wages were eleven percent below their level in 2001 (Graña and Kennedy 2008, 65). Devaluation changes the relative prices in the economy. Wages (set in the national currency) deteriorate in relation to commodities exported abroad (set in dollars).

[38] As result of the neoliberal reform of the 1990s, multinational corporations went on to control about 99 percent of total automobile exports, 99 percent of total mining exports and 62.4 percent of total agricultural exports—vegetal oils and grains (Chudnovsky 2001, 96).

[39] Foreign debt is currently about 46.3 percent of GDP (Ministerio de Economía 2011). By 2001 the private pension system had about 76 percent of workers' pension funds in government bonds, which the state then defaulted on and finally swapped (Castagno 2010, 159-176). A decade later, the state pension fund has 57.8 percent of its funds invested in government bonds (ANSES 2011). More than thirty-five percent of those bonds are invested in pesos, while the unofficial inflation rate is three times the official one. This means that future pensions are being devalued. Indeed, the government did not use the state pension fund to raise the pensions of workers that had contributed to the private pension system, and so in practice appropriated those funds.

[40] Report from the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Census, INDEC) on June, 2011 (http://www.argentina.ar/_es/economia-y-negocios/C8227-el-trabajo-en-negro-cayo-al-341-por-ciento.php, accessed on January 15, 2012).

[41] As newspaper La Nación informs on November 18, 2011(http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1424468-segun-la-iglesia-el-35-de-los-habitantes-del-area-metropolitana-es-pobre, accessed on February 3, 2012), according to the conservative Catholic Church poverty in the greater metropolitan area of Buenos Aires is four times higher than what official statistics contend.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

implemented a minimum subsistence payment for children of unemployed families; legalized same-sex marriage; and partially democratized the media. These policies answered citizens and workers' demands to a degree. As an activist from the community radio La Posta phrased it during the parliamentary discussion of the media reform, "We believe that the challenges that democracies face in this conjuncture, and in our country since the crisis of 2001-2002, has to do with answering the demands of large social sectors to participate in the administration, control and implementation of public policies" (FARCO 2009, 42).[42] My task is to evaluate the extent to which Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's media reform (Law 26,522) has grasped and addressed these popular-democratic demands to participate in the implementation and development of public policies.

At first glance these media reforms seem to have significantly addressed popular demand for participation. The new law (and the other progressive public policies of *Kirchnerismo*) has substantial consent from media activists, not-for-profit media organizations, community media, human rights organizations, trade unions and academics (Baranchuk and Usé 2011; Busso and Jaimes 2011). These civil society actors developed the progressive guidelines of Coalición para una Radiodifusión Democrática (Coalition for Democratic Broadcasting), which united those various sectors and pressured the *Kirchnerismo* government to change media legislation.[43] The coalition was a social movement consonant with international movements of media activists that struggle to define the media as an institution of public interest, establish communications as a human right and democratize the media (International Commission 1980; Hackett and Zhao 2005). Regardless of whether this perspective may in fact be compatible with the capitalist system, its advocacy helps to change political perceptions, establish legal instruments for democratic emancipation and destabilize the dominion of commercial media. That is, the struggle to build a new public sphere seems important for what Gramsci refers as a long "war of position" for cultural and political emancipation (2000, 225-228). As Vicent Mosco argues, one way to employ the concept of the public sphere effectively is to define it "as a set of social processes that carry out democracy, namely advancing equality and the fullest possible participation in the complete range of economic, political, social, and cultural decision-making" (2010, 152). I argue the results obtained by the Coalición must be read in that tactical way: the media reform opens new horizons for democratic and socialist emancipation.

Thus, the advancement of the law on Audiovisual Communication Services is its definition of audiovisual services as activities of public interest through which it is expressed the human right to communicate.[44] Indeed, the law stipulates the state must protect the right to information, participation and freedom of speech. It stresses that the goal of audiovisual services is the promotion of diversity, universal access and participation. Based on that voluntaristic perspective, the law nevertheless guarantees the right of not-for-profit media to enter the media sphere. Specifically, it requires the state to distribute broadcasting, cable television and digital platforms' licenses on equal terms among state media providers, commercial media providers and not-for-profit media providers: the latter are civil society institutions (foundations, civic associations, churches, trade unions) that provide media services to their communities. Further, the law automatically authorizes public universities, the Catholic Church and indigenous communities to administer audiovisual licenses.[45]

However, one important problem for developing that democratic agenda is that the law conflates public and state institutions, controlled by the federal government. In particular, despite including the participation of parliamentary political sectors and representatives from trade unions, public universities, indigenous communities and human rights organizations in debates over proposed legislative reform and in the new regulatory institutions, it is still the case that the Executive Power is in charge of implementing the law through the Autoridad Federal de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual (AFSCA, Federal Authority on Audiovisual Communication Services).[46] The Executive Power and the dominant national political party nominate most of the representatives of AFSCA: three out of seven, without considering their probable influence in nominating two additional representatives through the votes of the representatives of the provincial governors — in Argentina the political party that wins the national presidential election normally wins most of the provincial elections and has majority in the parliament (figure 1). Similarly, the law does not establish any mechanism through which the administration of state media may

[42] FARCO is the Argentine Forum of Community Radios, it represents about eighty community radios and promotes social solidarity, democracy, public transparency, diversity and pluralism.

[43] The Coalition reunited more than three hundred organizations from civil society (e.g., community media, trade unions, human rights organizations, public universities).

[44] The law overstates its scope. It claims to be about the development of information society but it fundamentally applies to broadcasting, cable television and satellite television; since it defines that audiovisual communication services are based on a programming timetable (art. 4). It neither regulates the Internet nor telecommunications, though in one occasion it refers to broadcasting to "mobile receivers" (art. 4). Similarly, it does not give specifications on digital television platforms (Televisión Digital Abierta, Open Digital Television), a recent state initiative. It simply states that current regulations, universal access and participation must be respected when digital platforms are established (art. 93). The law is also overcharged with notes detailing Northern legislations.

[45] It is too early to evaluate whether these measures have translated into substantive change in the media sphere.

[46] Art. 7.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

become independent from the state — and more importantly, the federal government;[47] the state company Radio y Televisión Argentina Sociedad del Estado (RTA S.E.) manages all the state's media and is mostly controlled by the Executive Power and the dominant national political party.[48]

- AFSCA is the state body in charge of applying the legislation, elaborating technical norms and controlling monopolistic practices.
- The Executive Power nominates two officials to AFSCA; a parliamentary commission nominates three officials belonging to the three largest political sectors in the parliament; the Consejo Federal de Comunicación Audiovisual (CFCA, Federal Council on Audiovisual Communication Services) nominates two officials (one has to belong to a public university that offers a communication degree).
- CFCA is constituted by the representatives of the provincial governments (23) and the government of Buenos Aires city; three representatives of the private media associations; three representatives of the associations of non-for-profit media producers; one representative of the state media; one representative of the broadcasting stations of public universities; three representatives of the trade unions within the media sector; one representative of human rights organizations; and one representative of all the indigenous ethnic groups.
- CFCA advises and proposes policies to AFSCA.
- The Executive Power can directly authorize (previous selection process) broadcasting licenses in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants.
- The Defense of the Public office receives denounces from citizens.

Figure 1: Regulatory Institutions (art. 12-16, 19, 32)

Another crux of discussion is the regulation of licenses. As I mentioned, the new legislation basically limits previous neoliberal reforms by dividing in equal terms the broadcasting spectrum and audiovisual space for distributing licenses among the commercial media, the state and not-for-profit media. It also reduces from twenty-four to ten the number of licenses a single broadcaster can hold, forbids audiovisual providers from transferring licenses, establishes twenty-four as the number of licenses a cable television company can administer and impedes cable television companies from owning broadcasting television channels (figure 2). Moreover, the law mandates that cable television and satellite television companies deliver Latin American, state, provincial and local channels.[49]

- The audiovisual space is divided among state, commercial and not-for-profit audiovisual providers in equal terms (thirty-three percent of every audiovisual space for each sector of providers).
- Licenses cannot be transferred.
- The provider of audiovisual services by satellite (one license for the whole territory) cannot hold any other audiovisual license. One provider of audiovisual services cannot administer more than ten broadcasting licenses. One provider of paid audiovisual services utilizing cable networks cannot administer more than twenty-four licenses.
- Any provider of audiovisual services cannot reach more than thirty-five percent of the national audience.
- In every locality one audiovisual provider cannot administer more than one AM radio, two FM radios, and one television or cable television license.
- Cable television companies cannot deliver more than one cable television signal of their own.
- All national public universities will receive one radio and one television license.
- All state institutions and the Catholic Church have the right to receive licenses.
- Every indigenous ethnic group has the right to one radio and one television license in each locality it is based.
- All city-states have the right to one FM radio license. Each province and Buenos Aires city has the right to one AM radio license, one FM radio license and one television license.

Figure 2: Administration of licenses (art. 2, 25, 29, 37, 38, 41, 45, 89)

Kirchnerismo thus claims the new law severely restricts media monopolies and increases diversity. Yet the peril is that the repetitive official discourse against media concentration would become akin to beating a dead horse. To put it differently, from a Marxist standpoint it is necessary to highlight that media concentration and centralization is a result of capitalist competition and of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Marx explains that as firms introduce more technology in production to produce more and

[47] In contrast, the Coalición por una Radiodifusión Democrática stated in its proposal that state media must be public (2011, 157).

[48] The institutional mechanism to nominate RTA S.E. directors is similar to the case of AFSCA (art. 119, 132).

[49] For instance, after the law 26,522 cable television companies had to deliver the Venezuelan television channel Telesur, the state movie channel IncaaTV (Argentine films), and the state channel for children Paka Paka, all this expanded media diversity.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cheaper commodities to compete on the market,[50] less human labor is exploited per commodity and mass of commodities, so in relative terms profits tend to fall. In Marx's account surplus-value and profits are a direct result of the exploitation of human labor.[51] In turn, to counteract this tendency, firms need to optimize the use of constant capital (fixed capital, technology), intensify the exploitation of labor and create new associations of production (Marx 1991/1894, 317-375). Briefly, while for bourgeois economics 'pure' competition is the antithesis of concentration, Marx demonstrates how the concentration and centralization of capital are dialectically related to market competition among firms (Shaikh 1991, 76; Fuchs, 381).

Thus, if media regulations are not carefully established they cannot restrict 'concentration', due to the need of media companies to accumulate capital. In this regard, the law is confusing: it is filled with references to the elimination of monopolies, but it also stipulates that AFSCA needs to promote competition and investment.[52] Lawmakers did not consider the contradiction between media competition and concentration because they did not have any intention of altering the capitalist foundations of the media: the regulation of concentration is simply part of a discursive and institutional project of adding popular-democratic accretions to the existing system. In effect, the new law maintains twenty-four licenses for cable television providers, authorizes satellite television companies (currently the American multinational Direct TV) to provide services to the whole territory with only one license, keeps authorizing cross-ownership between press and media companies, forbids telephone companies to enter the media market but authorizes cable television companies (e.g., Telecentro) to provide telephone services,[53] and ultimately allows any capitalist undertaking that the treaties on international investments signed by Argentina authorizes — even when the same law explicitly prohibits the foreign ownership of media companies in Argentina.[54] As noted above, in Argentina international treaties have supremacy over national laws.

The case of cable television licenses mentioned above is interesting to consider closely. The law authorizes twenty-four licenses for cable television companies in different localities; but it does not define what those localities are.[55] This signifies that cable television companies could exert political pressures to define those localities in their advantage. In this sense, a press declaration from Daniel Vila — the owner of the second largest cable television company, Grupo Uno — on the number of cable television licenses managed by his company is particularly revealing (De Santis 2012). Refusing the view that the company is administering more licenses than those authorized by the law, Vila sustains the issue was resolved with new administrative regulations. These regulations agglomerated all the licenses corresponding to the localities situated in the greater metropolitan area of Mendoza city, where Grupo Uno masters the cable television market. As result, Grupo Uno now administers the same audiovisual services than before the law 26,522 but with fewer licenses. The new law, then, has left judicial and administrative paths open for corporations. This is also seen in article 161, which gives one year for companies to adapt to the new legislation and make disinvestments if necessary. Grupo Clarín has rejected that stipulation through legal recourses that have stopped the implementation of the law.

Thus the probable scenario is that media concentration will ultimately depend on the desires of the Executive Power and the judiciary to favor certain media conglomerates at expense of others. This is evident if we consider the case of Grupo Clarín, which is currently required by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government to make disinvestments, while prior to the new law it was authorized by Kirchner's government to acquire the cable television company Multicanal and reach forty-seven percent of cable television consumers (Laboratorio de Industrias Culturales 2011). In sum, along with its partial democratization of the media, the spirit of *Kirchnerismo* would be to build state-commercial media associations. This is seen in article 153 on public policies, which establishes that the Executive Power "must adopt policies destined to promote the formation and development of national audiovisual conglomerates in all the formats and media platforms, facilitating the dialogue, cooperation and business organization among economic actors, public institutions, private institutions, and academic institutions, in benefit of competitiveness."[56] This state-capitalist convergence is resisted by a sector of not-for-profit media

[50] As I noted above, this increases the concentration and centralization of capital.

[51] The rate of surplus-value refers to the proportion of unpaid labor that workers transfer to the capitalist class over the necessary labor time that workers spend reproducing their needs, and is paid as wages — variable capital (Marx 1990/1867, 320-329). The rate of profit is the relationship of surplus-value to total capital (variable and constant capital) over a cycle of capital reproduction (Marx 1991, 132-140).

[52] Art. 12.

[53] The original project of *Kirchnerismo* authorized telephone companies to enter the cable television market. It is unclear whether the government deleted this article in order to attract the positive vote of center-left deputies to the project or due to power issues involving the main telephone company Telefónica International, which currently controls about the ninety percent of the Argentine telephone market.

[54] Foreign capital cannot control more than thirty percent of the shares of any audiovisual company (art. 29), but this limitation is removed in case of international treaties on investments.

[55] "The regulatory authority will determine the territorial and demographic limits of the licenses" (art. 45, c).

[56] This desire to reconcile media diversity and businesses is certainly not just seen in Argentina. Even UNESCO's declaration on cultural diversity is ambiguous (2002). It establishes that cultural goods — as vectors of identity, values and mean-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

activists and producers. For example, AFSCA has recently opened a bidding process to grant licenses on the new state digital platform (Televisión Digital Abierta). However, not-for-profit media organizations assert they cannot afford the price of the bidding specifications to participate in the selection process and the monthly sum required by the state to operate audiovisual services in the newly digital platform (Faro TV et al. 2011). They claim that the new media policy has in reality "enlarged the state but not the communities": the only not-for-profit media organizations that can benefit from the newly digital platform are those belonging to powerful civil society institutions (e.g., some conservative trade unions) entangled with the state (CoorDeCAAP 2011).[57]

4. Populism Revisited

"There are no contradictions between workers and capital, and between national and foreign capital."

National Deputy, A24 Televisión, 2011

For a Marxist approach is important to consider the theoretical implications we can draw from the case of *Kirchnerismo* and its media policy. My argument is that *Kirchnerismo* contributed popular-democratic accretions to the existing state formation by articulating demands for human rights, media democratization, collective bargaining and social security. This entailed a partial populist mobilization of citizens. As Ernesto Laclau argues, populism is a form of political construction characterized by the articulation and mobilization of popular demands against the institutional system that is not answering them. These demands are heterogeneous but they share mutual dissatisfaction with the institutional status quo (Laclau 2009, 97-103). According to Laclau, 'the people' of populism emerges when a *plebs* (the masses, the underprivileged) claims to be the whole community (*populus*), establishing a frontier in the political field against the supposed enemies of the people. The *populus* thus emerges as a political subject collectivizing or "hegemonizing" heterogeneous popular demands in a relation of equivalence (2009, 150-151). Crucially, the *populus* is not a pre-existing social group but the result of an act of nomination for which an affective leader who condenses the popular demands and mobilizes the *populus* against the previous institutional status quo is essential (Laclau 2009, 128-130). For instance, in Argentina Kirchner emerged as a leader that represented popular demands opposed to neoliberalism and to the residual elements of the dictatorial period. Yet, as Laclau maintains, populism as a form of political construction can appear in different political movements (2009, 29). In his early work it was thus important for Laclau to observe how populist constructions are ideologically articulated to the class projects of hegemonic political groups (Laclau 1978, 223).[58] Laclau's late work on populism tends to deemphasize this class articulation, but I contend consideration of the latter is crucial in developing a theory of populism from a Marxist perspective.

In this light, I argue it is important to observe how *Kirchnerismo* articulated its populist logic to its class project, which as I considered previously as consisting in reproducing capitalist transnationalization. In other words, *Kirchnerismo* needs to resolve the contradiction between its populist construction and its capitalist reproductive role. Its proponents may seek this resolution by rhetorically exaggerating its break with the status quo. For example, *Kirchnerismo* defended its media legislation by saying it eliminated the media law of the dictatorship and Grupo Clarín's monopoly. However, sooner rather than later assuaging structural cracks with rhetoric proved impossible. *Kirchnerismo* has therefore needed to find an institutional-ideological arrangement to accommodate its populist discourse within its capitalist aims. In the media sphere such an arrangement has consisted in the promotion of national media content. For instance, as noted previously, the new media legislation promotes state-commercial conglomerates. It also requires audiovisual providers to broadcast a minimum of Argentine national content, with the objective of both strengthening the national media industry and increasing jobs in the audiovisual field (figure 3).

- Radios must broadcast thirty percent of national music and seventy percent of national content out of the total music and content broadcast. Half of the national music broadcast has to be from Argentine musicians who own the rights to commercialize their music.
- Sixty percent of the total programs broadcast by television channels must be produced in Argentina. In the largest cities, so-called independent producers (i.e., with no ownership links to the channel) must produce thirty percent of the total programs of television channels.
- Television channels and radios must produce and broadcast thirty percent and fifty percent respectively of their total programming.

ing — must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods (art. 8). In other words, cultural goods are still partially seen as commodities.

[57] Coordinadora en Defensa de la Comunicación Comunitaria, Alternativa y Popular (Organization in Defense of Community, Alternative and Popular Communication). CoorDeCCAP unites about sixty not-for-profit media organizations.

[58] For instance, Perón linked his populism to the pre-existing project of national capitalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

- Cable television and satellite television must deliver the channels belonging to the state, the public universities, the provinces and Buenos Aires city.
- The principal television channels (reaching more than twenty percent of the population) are required to broadcast eight new national films or three produced television films per year.

Figure 3: Audiovisual Contents (art. 65, 67)

This promotion of the national media industry permits *Kirchnerismo* to ideologically adapt its populist discourse to the existing capitalist goals of the state.[59] Of course, this arrangement is progressive in the sense that it is a cultural force counteracting or at least parallel to the expansion of the North American and European commercial media.[60] But at the same time it integrates content from state media producers, not-for-profit media and small commercial producers into the capitalist media industry. In this way, the project of a national culture industry helps to reproduce capitalism by adding use-values to the commercial media — a procedure that is common in contemporary culture (Crawford 1992, 15). As a consequence, and in contrast, it would be desirable for a practical socialist agenda to take advantage of the promotion of national content in order to press the state to implement truly public cable television channels or public digital platforms in which those cultural productions could be further developed democratically.

If this does not occur, as suggested, the menace of *Kirchnerismo* is that, *pace* its populism, it would paradoxically be implementing what Marx observes as Bonapartist, authoritarian exits to the structural antagonism between private property and working-class demands.[61] In Marx's account, 'Bonapartism' appears as an authoritarian regime aimed at saving both the state and private property from socialist revolution, for which the state undermines bourgeois rights. While that kind of political regime is not analogous with *Kirchnerismo* — in 2011 for instance Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was re-elected with 54 percent of the votes — it is worth noting that some human rights organizations currently denounce coercive deviations in the national government.[62] Nevertheless, I do want to employ the term Bonapartism in a comparable way when considering the establishment of complex and confusing state ad-hoc arrangements that, despite altering private property contracts, allow the state to continue reproducing both state hegemony and capitalist development. This kind of Bonapartist *fuite en avant* consists in creating what I term grey zones of capitalist activity and state authority. These grey zones are exempt from the democratic control of citizens.

A case in point in the media field is the television program *Fútbol Para Todos* (Football for Everybody); football is the most popular sport in Argentina and a marker of national identity. In 2009 Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government suddenly agreed with the association of football clubs (AFA) to broadcast the football league in exchange for a significant sum, paid for by taxpayers. AFA broke its contract with TyC/Cablevisión and televised football events were put under state administration. As a result, the state television channel (TV Pública) now broadcasts free football media events to citizens, while previously TyC/Cablevisión only delivered them to its subscribers. *Fútbol Para Todos* has thus been an important populist-democratic move for *Kirchnerismo*, which claims to have recovered the goals that the private media had kidnapped — a pun on the military junta's crimes. And yet, behind the screen of the state television channel, a media company (La Corte), which competes to accumulate capital for entering the global media market, produces *Fútbol Para Todos*.[63] This kind of opaque business-state association is visible in other areas: for instance, in the government's manipulation of official statistics on inflation — which benefits some financial retributions on government bonds at the expense of others, in the government's support of Northern mining companies extracting natural resources through open-mining pits that are resisted by communities and ecological movements (Svampa and Antonelli 2009), in the facilities that corporations have had to export capital, in the subsidies that the state grants to inefficient railway companies, in the government's use of state pension funds to finance capital and the state treasury, in the government's directing state advertising toward media groups sharing an affinity with the

[59] It goes without saying that this national content is different from the nationalist-repressive culture industry of the military junta. For example, new state television channels Encuentro or IncaaTV broadcast documentaries on social protests or films that question the existing society.

[60] On the global expansion of the American and European media industry see, for instance, Herbert I. Schiller (1992/1969), Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (1979), and Lee Artz and Yahya R. Kamalipour (2003).

[61] In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1978/1852), Marx analyzes the rise to power of Louis Napoleón Bonaparte in France during 1848 and 1852. Marx observes that Bonaparte accumulated power in the Executive at expense of civil society and the political representatives of the bourgeoisie yet protected the material interests of the bourgeoisie in confusedly implementing capitalist development. See David Held (1991, 147-150).

[62] The most controversial issue is the government's newly approved legislation on terrorism. According to the Coordinadora Contra la Represión Policial e Institucional (CORREPI, Organization Against Police and Institutional Repression) the state could use the new legislation to repress social protests and labor strikes (CORREPI 2011).

[63] See, for example, the press report of El Cronista on January 13, 2012: "La productora preferida de la familia Kirchner desembarcó en Europa" (http://www.cronista.com/contenidos/2012/01/13/noticia_0037.html, accessed on February 1, 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

official political line, or in the emergence of new media groups formed by private companies selling infrastructures to the state.[64]

5. Conclusion

As Alex Callinicos observes in his reading of Lenin and Daniel Bensaïd (Lenin 1965; Bensaïd 2004), for Marxism it is crucial to consider the specificity of the political field as a play of transfigured powers, through which the totality of social antagonisms, contradictions and struggles are translated into new languages, displaced, condensed or revealed by slips of the tongue (Callinicos 2012). Marx refers to that political practice when, questioning state power, he mocks the self-deceiving costumes with which politicians wish to conceal from their own view the limitations of the contents of their practices (1978/1852, 598). Argentina is not an exemption: from time to time state actors change and the drama varies according to the political repertoires the state seems cyclically to repeat — nationalist authoritarianism, economic liberalism and populism. My argument is that those ideological forms are destined to conceal the central structural contradiction of the state as an institution that must represent the general and national interests of citizens while reproducing a transnational capitalist process that — centered on the global North — increases misery in Argentina and therefore the resistance of citizens and workers to the state and capital. This is rendered all the more evident in the periods that Gramsci terms organic crises, as in the 1970s and partially in the early 2000s. In this sense, *Kirchnerismo* has been successful until the present in countering the crisis in state hegemony that erupted in 2001-2002. This dialectic approach to the state is complementary to Marxist works that consider the subjective connections of the political cadres to the dominant economic class (Miliband 1969), or the structural role of the state in organizing capitalist reproduction (Poulantzas 1969; 1973) — a perspective I also employed.

Further, considering the state ideological forms mentioned above, I argue the media sphere is a basal field through which the state aims to cloak its central contradiction. This field is an arena of political struggle, except when dictatorial regimes completely substitute coercion for hegemony. That is, I emphasize that political regimes and governments in Argentina have attempted to deny, conceal or displace in different ways the social antagonisms connected to the capitalist crises and political convulsions of the 1970s and the late 1990s. As I demonstrated, the nationalist-authoritarian media regulations established by the military dictatorship, the neoliberal administration of the media by Menem's government and the idiosyncratic populist-capitalist project of *Kirchnerismo* are regulatory and ideologically distinct. I believe this approach allows us to avoid establishing mechanistic relationships between class domination, political life and media transformations. Indeed, it entails observing how every state ideological form is contradictory in particular ways: the dictatorship restrained capital forces in the media while repressing dissent to favor capitalist interests; Menem's government opened the way to mass dissatisfaction when its market allures of wealth were not translated into the daily-life of workers; and *Kirchnerismo* could see its own regulations evaporate if the popular-democratic demands it partially addressed surpass the letter of its media reform, its maneuvers to accommodate workers to transnational capital and its dubious, grey zones of business activities and state authority.

References

Althusser, Louis. 2001/1970. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus: Notes for an Investigation. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, edited by Louis Althusser, 85-126. New York: Monthly Review Press.

ANSES. 2011. *Fondo de Garantía de Sustentabilidad del Sistema Integrado Previsional Argentino*, *Informe Mensual Octubre*. Buenos Aires: ANSES. Accessed February 10, 2012. http://www.anses.gob.ar/FGS/politicastransparencia/archivos/informes/Boletin_FGS_11_2011.pdf

Artz, Lee and Yahya R. Kamalipour, eds. 2003. *The Globalization of Corporate Media Hegemony*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Artz, Lee, Macek, Steve, and Dana L. Cloud, eds. 2006. *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point is to Change It.* New York: Peter Lang.

Baranchuk, Mariana, and Javier Rodríguez Usé, eds. 2011. *Ley 26.522: Hacia un Nuevo Paradigma en Comunicación Audiovisual*. Buenos Aires: AFSCA and Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora.

Bensaïd, Daniel. 2004. *Une Lente Impatience*. Paris: Stock.

Busso, Néstor, and Diego Jaimes, eds. 2011. *La Cocina de la Ley: El Proceso de Incidencia en la Elaboración de la Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual en Argentina.* Buenos Aires: FARCO.

Calcagno, Alfredo Eric. 1988. *La Perversa Deuda*. Buenos Aires: Legasa.

[64] On the government's manipulation of state statistics see the declaration from the circumspect group of public university economists Plan Fénix on the right to information (Plan Fénix 2012). On the increase of subsidies to railway companies see Mario Damill and Roberto Frenkel (2009, 64). On the unequal distribution of governmental advertising among media groups see, for instance, the following information from newspaper Perfil on September 5, 2010: "Pauta oficial: aumenta la brecha entre medios oficialistas y críticos" (http://www.diarioperfil.com.ar/edimp/0501/articulo.php?art=24047&ed=0501, accessed on January 15, 2012). This report is based on official information. One provider of state infrastructures participating in the media sphere is the firm Electroingeniería.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Callinicos, Alex. 2012. The Crisis Wears On. *International Socialism*: *A Quarterly Journal of Socialist Theory* (133). Accessed February 1, 2012. http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=773&issue=133

Cano, Fernando. 2011. Dudas Argentinas. *El País*, October 30. Accessed February 27, 2012. http://elpais.com/diario/2011/10/30/negocio/1319979149_850215.html

Castagno, Pablo Andrés. 2010. *"The State Crisis in Argentina: Global Fantasies and National Containment."* PhD diss., George Mason University.

Castells, Manuel. 2000. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.

CEPAL. 2002. *La Inversión Extranjera en América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas.

Chudnovsky, Daniel, and Andrés López. 2001. *La Transnacionalización de la Economía Argentina*. Buenos Aires: EUDEBA/CENIT.

Coalición por una Radiodifusión Democrática. 2011. 21 Puntos Básicos por el Derecho a la Comunicación. *In La Cocina de la Ley: El Proceso de Incidencia en la Elaboración de la Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual en Argentina*, edited by Néstor Busso and Diego Jaimes, 155-161. Buenos Aires: FARCO.

CONADEP. 2003. *Nunca Más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas*. Buenos Aires: CONADEP.

COORDECAAP. 2011. Comunicado de Prensa ¿Qué Está Concursando AFSCA? Buenos Aires: CoorDeCAAP. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2011/11/799065.php

CORREPI. 2011. Comunicado de Prensa: Leyes Antiterroristas. Buenos Aires: CORREPI. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://correpi.lahaine.org/?p=1103

Crawford, Margaret. 1992. The World in a Shopping Mall. In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michael Sorkin, 3-30. New York: Hill and Wang.

Damill, Mario and Roberto Frenkel. 2009. Las Políticas Macroeconómicas en la Evolución Reciente de la Economía Argentina. *Seminarios de Economía Nº 112*. Banco Central de la República Argentina. Accessed February 28, 2012. http://www.bcra.gov.ar/pdfs/investigaciones/PaperFrenkel_Damill.pdf

De Santis, Juan Pablo. 2012. Daniel Vila: Los Medios Mensajeros de la Ideología Tienen Una Pauta Importante. *La Nación*, February 2. Accessed February 7, 2012. http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1444898-daniel-vila-queremos-un-desguace-de-cablevision-y-multicanal

Duménil, Gérard, and Dominique Lévy. 2004. *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

FARCO. 2009. *Nueva Ley de Medios Audiovisuales: Desafíos Para los Medios Comunitarios y Populares*. Buenos Aires: FARCO.

Faro TV et al. 2011. Carta a AFSCA: Televisión Digital ¿Para quién es la democratización? Accessed February 10, 2012. http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2011/07/788002.php

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Theoretical Foundations of Critical Media Studies: Karl Marx and the Media. *International Journal of Communication* 3: 369-402.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1979. Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication. *Media, Culture & Society* 1 (2): 122-146.

Gramsci, Antonio. 2000. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*. New York: New York University Press.

Graña, Juan M., and Damián Kennedy. 2008. Salario Real, Costo Laboral y Productividad, Argentina 1947-2006. *Documentos de Trabajo 12*. Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios sobre Población, Empleo y Desarrollo. Accessed January 10, 2012. http://www.econ.uba.ar/www/institutos/economia/Ceped/publicaciones/dts/DT%2012%20-%20Grana%20Kennedy.pdf

Hackett, Robert A. and Yuezhi Zhao, eds. 2005. *Democratizing Global Media: One World, Many Struggles*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Harvey, David. 1991. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Held, David. 1991. *Modelos de Democracia*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. 1980. *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order*. London: Kogan Page.

Horkheimer, Max. 1989/1932. Notes on Science and the Crisis. In *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader,* edited by Stephen E. Bronner and Douglas M. Kellner, 52-57. New York: Routledge.

Laboratorio de Industrias Culturales. 2011. *Una Aproximación a las Industrias Culturales*. Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Cultura. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://lic.cultura.gov.ar./investigaciones/industrias/index.php

Laclau, Ernesto. 1978. *Política e Ideología en la Teoría Marxista: Capitalismo, Fascismo, Populismo*. Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores. English version: Laclau, Ernesto. 1977/2012. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism.* London: Verso.

Laclau, Ernesto. 2009. *La Razón Populista*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica. English version: Laclau, Ernesto. 2005. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso.

Lenin, Vladimir I. 1965. *Collected Works, Volume 32*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

Lozano, Claudio. 2005. Los Problemas de la Distribución del Ingreso y el Crecimiento en la Argentina Actual. Buenos Aires: Instituto de Estudios y Formación de la Central de Trabajadores Argentinos.

Lukács, Georg. 2000/1923. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Marx, Karl. 1978/1852. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 594-617. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Marx, Karl. 1978/1867. Capital, Volume One. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 294-438. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Marx, Karl. 1978. Crisis Theory. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 443-465. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Marx, Karl. 1990/1867. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume I.* London: Penguin Books.

Marx, Karl. 1991/1894. *Capital Volume III*. London: Penguin Books.

Marx, Karl. 1992/1885. *Capital Volume II*. London: Penguin Books.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl. 1998/1845. Theses on Feuerbach. In *The German Ideology*, edited by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 572-574. Amherst: Prometheus.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1978/1848. Manifesto of the Communist Party. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 469-500. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1998/1846. *The German Ideology*. Amherst: Prometheus.

Mattelart, Armand and Seth Siegelaub, eds. 1979. *Communication and Class Struggle. Vol. 1: Capitalism, Imperialism*. New York: International General.

McChesney, Robert W. 2007. *Communication Revolution: Critical Junctures and the Future of Media*. New York: The New Press.

Miliband, Ralph. 1969. *The State in Capitalist Society*. New York: Basic Books.

Ministerio de Economía. 2011. *Deuda Pública del Estado Argentino*. Buenos Aires: MECON. Accessed February 24, 2012. http://www.mecon.gov.ar/finanzas/sfinan/documentos/informe_deuda_publica_31-03-11_espanol.pdf

Mosco, Vincent. 2010. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage Publications.

Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 1973. For a Political Economy of Mass Communications. *The Socialist Register* 10: 205-234.

O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1984. Democracia en la Argentina Micro y Macro. In *Proceso, Crisis y Transición Democrática*, edited by Oscar Oszlack, 13-30. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina.

O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1988. *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966–1973, in Comparative Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Oficina de la CEPAL en Buenos Aires. 2010. *Evolución de la Desocupación en Algunas Áreas Urbanas*. Buenos Aires: CEPAL. Accessed January 21, 2012. http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/argentina/noticias/paginas/9/9839/P9839.xml&xsl=/argentina/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/argentina/tpl/top-bottom.xsl

Plan Fénix. 2012. Derecho a la Información. *Página/12*, February 14. Accessed February 14, 2012. http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/economia/2-187536-2012-02-14.html

Portantiero, Juan Carlos. 1974. Dominant Classes and Political Crisis in Argentina Today. *Latin American Perspectives* 1 (3): 93-120.

Portantiero, Juan Carlos. 1977. Economía y Política en la Crisis Argentina: 1958-1973. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 39 (2): 531-565.

Poulantzas, Nicos. 1969. The Problem of the Capitalist State. *New Left Review* (58): 67-78.

Poulantzas, Nicos. 1973. *Political Power and Social Classes*. London: New Left Books.

Pousadela, Inés M. 2008. Participation Vs. Representation? The Experience of the Neighborhood Assemblies of Buenos Aires. In *Democratic Innovation in the South: Participation and Representation in Asia, Africa and Latin America,* edited by Ciska Raventós, 71-122. Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.

Rapoport, Mario. 2003. *Historia Económica, Politica, y Social de Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Macchi.

Sarlo, Beatriz. 1994. *Escenas de la Vida Postmoderna: Intelectuales, Arte, y Videocultura en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Ariel.

Schiller, Herbert I. 1992/1969. *Mass Communication and American Empire*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Shaikh, Anwar. 1991. Centralization and Concentration of Capital. In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore. 76-77. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Smith, Paul. 1997. *Millennial Dreams: Contemporary Culture and Capital in the North*. London: Verso.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-27.

Solanas, Fernando. 2004. *Memoria del Saqueo*. Directed by Fernando Solanas. Buenos Aires: Cinesur S.A., ADR Productions, Thelma Film AG.

Sourrouille, Juan Vital et al. 1985. *Transnacionalización y Política Económica en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: CET.

Svampa, Maristella, and Mirta A. Antonelli, eds. 2009. *Minería Transnacional, Narrativas del Desarrollo y Resistencias Sociales.* Buenos Aires: Biblos.

UNESCO. 2002. *Declaration Universelle de L'unesco sur la Diversite Culturelle*. Paris: UNESCO.

Wayne, Mike. 2003. *Marxism and Media Studies: Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends*. London: Pluto Press.

About the Author

Pablo Castagno
is professor of political science at Universidad Nacional de La Matanza's Departamento de Derecho y Ciencia Política, Argentina. He received a PhD in Cultural Studies from George Mason University. His doctoral dissertation is titled "*The State Crisis in Argentina: Global Fantasies and National Containment"* and his publications on culture and media include the essay From Provinces to National Television: Celebrity Culture and Collective Recognition in the New Spain, in *Mediations* 23 (2), Spring 2008. He is currently working on a comparative study of the political manifestations of the global capitalist crisis in Southern Europe and South America.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 349-391, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Missing Marx: The Place of Marx in Current Communication Research and the Place of Communication in Marx's Work

İrfan Erdogan

Faculty of Communication, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey, erdogan.irfan@gmail.com, http://www.irfanerdogan.com

Abstract: *This study was designed (1) to test Marx's theoretical statements on the nature of dominant ideas in a society by investigating the character of scholarly practices in academic publishing, and (2) to demonstrate the falseness of claims about Marx's disinterest in communication by presenting and evaluating his writings on communication. The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. It has two study populations and multiple samples. The first one includes the articles in communication journals cited by Thomson Reuters' Social Sciences Citation Index. The second one contains all writings of Marx on communication. The findings indicate that (1) the articles are mostly functional to the ruling interests, (2) they mostly exclude Marx and critical issues that question the ruling material and immaterial mode and relations in communication and society, (3) most alternative approaches are controlled alternatives and overtly or covertly directed against Marx's method and explanations. Regarding Marx's interest in communication, contrary to the claims that he had no or minimal interest, Marx provided invaluable explanations about communication. Hence communication scholars should pay close attention if they want to understand the nature and function of communication in society and social change.*

Keywords: Communication studies, communication theory, Marx, Marxism, Marxist communication studies, communication journals

Acknowledgement: This article is a part of an ongoing study on the current orientations in mass communication theory and research. The Higher Education Council of Turkey funded the collection of data for the project. The author thanks Secil Kentel and Hakan Ugurlu for proofreading the article.

1. Introduction: The Rationale and Subject of Study

The control of thought and production, distribution and use of mental products has been one of the main concerns and praxis of the ruling forces throughout human history. As organized life has become complex with deepening inequalities, oppression and unjust distribution of power and wealth, the quantity and scope of the control of thought and behaviour has been expanded to every facet of life. In the 21st century, such control became a nightmarish issue of sustainability in such a way that the management of what, why and how to think and not to think, to feel and not to feel, to believe and not to believe, and to do or not to do was extended to every instance of the daily life of every individual at any age. From the first ancient empires to the demise of feudalism, the mental production, distribution and use were controlled by the theological and political power centres that owned not only the body and souls of the masses, but also the material riches. Then came the "freedom" associated with the capitalist mode of production: The absolute serf or semi-serf found himself/herself free from the yoke of owners/masters and outside and on the street with no means to produce his/her life; his/her freedom turned to be the freedom of owners from responsibilities of keeping a slave; his/her freedom became a new slavery called wage-slavery: He/she had no guarantee of food, clothing and shelter anymore. Those who were doing mental production in the interest of theological and political forces within and outside the church and castles were luckier because new and expanded opportunities, like steadily increasing number of schools and universities and mass media, were emerging outside the traditional centres of mental production. Two basic centres of knowledge production proliferated and gained prominence: (1) corporate research departments and corporate research institutions, and (2) public and private universities. The political, economical and cultural forces gradually started feeling the necessity of complete control of knowledge production, dissemination and use. Capitalism had propagated and strongly stressed the freedom of thought and expression while waging war against feudalism. It turned into a limiter of freedom as soon as people demanded freedom, equality and justice under the capitalist system. Especially since the advent of neo-liberal policies, the control mechanisms were intensified all over the world by (1) the privatization of schools, (2) the marginalization of public education, (3) the revi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

sions of curricula and educational policies, (4) turning university education into a vocational school level to cater the interests of the corporate world, (5) establishing programs like the Bologna Accord for regional or global standardization that serves specific interests, (6) directing research orientations away from critical inquiry for human development towards the development of institutional and corporate interests, (7) luring scholars towards functional orientations by providing relatively substantial financial rewards via institutional, regional, national, regional and international structures, (8) making some theoretical and methodological approaches dominant and others marginal through reward and punishment mechanisms and through monopoly control of the production, distribution and promotion of academic products, including the promotion and wide distribution of controlled alternatives. In any case, current dominant scholarly orientations in communication are driven by at least three main goals: (1) to climb up the academic ladder, (2) to sustain the prevailing system of personal interest actualisation in the university environment, (3) to get accepted, acknowledged and supported by the established networks of beneficial relations in the university, state institutions, local, regional, national and international foundations, mass media and corporations. The present dominant structure with its controlled-alternatives is a historical condition of dominance and struggle. It is the context of the intensifying political, economic and intellectual crises in the structures, structural relations and institutions of knowledge production. While positivist, empirical and fact-producing quantitative orientations are continuing to stand in the service of industrial interests, newly emerged approaches with the "post" prefix in their names are taking part in the justification, legitimization and mystification of the dominant production mode and relations by emphasizing utmost relativity and particularistic interpretative accounts of micro-units and by ignoring or refusing the unity of the regularities of social relations, their structure, and change and their historical character.

There are many functionalist studies supporting the relationship between universities and industrial structures, we can however see an increasing number of critical analyses on the same subject too (e.g. Schiller 1974; Gans 1975; Gorz 1980; Berube 1995; Martin 1998; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Cerwonka 2009; Domenech 2009).

All these explanations indicate the existence of the control of mental production by means of numerous mechanisms that integrate private interests with the dominant interests. Furthermore, the control covers every sphere of life: It is actualized not only through the professional practices and professional ideologies, but also through the user choices that are influenced by the character of production, distribution and access. These historically structured mode of relations fall within Marx's theoretical explanation:

> "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expressions of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance" (Marx 1969, 39).

By using words like "generally speaking," "ruling" and "domination", Marx clearly excludes the one way causal relationship which eliminates the possibility of individual and class struggle via total control. If there was a one way determination and thus total control over minds and behaviour of people, not only the idea of struggle would be invalid but also revolutionary social change would be impossible. If the capitalist class was not interested in controlling the means and content of mental production, there would e.g. be no laws restricting the freedom of thought and expression, the journalists and intellectuals in Turkey would not be in jail waiting for trial more than 4 years, and intellectuals throughout the world would not be silent and apathetic in the face of such a "post-modern civil dictatorship"; the media would not be so acquiescent about oppressive measures and injustices all over the world; the large masses would not be quiet and accommodating; the journalists, intellectuals and academicians would not be talking about the existence of "participatory democracy" despite the obvious fact that they cannot have even a slight influence on the determination of their own salaries; and they would not align themselves with the ruling part of society. There would be no industries like advertising and public relations. Advertisers, agencies like CIA and foundations like Rockefeller and Ford would not spend billions of dollars for mind management.

Derived from the theoretical reasoning and statements above, it is expected that domination manifests itself in the nature of production, dissemination and use of mental products. In terms of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

journal articles, the formation and sustainability of domination includes heavy emphasis on certain theoretical orientations and issues, ample support of functional alternatives, and the elimination, marginalization or distortion of the real alternatives that Marx's approach poses. My study points out that the control of communication via the control of production and dissemination entails not a total control of the minds of people, but the existence of domination and struggle. All the ideas in a society are not and cannot be the ideas of the ruling class. Furthermore, every person carries dominant, conflicting or oppositional ideas to varying degrees. Not every bit of a dominant or oppositional idea can be right or wrong. The main point here is the nature of the connection of ideas to domination and struggle. It is argued that (1) the dominant theoretical and topic orientations of articles in the journals studied are functional for the capitalist mode of production, (2) Marx's theory and method and Marxist issues are mostly excluded from the communication field, (3) most alternatives are not alternatives to the interests of capitalism, but controlled and functional alternatives which are set against one another and especially against Marx and Marxism, and (4) Marx's thinking is represented in the form of false or forged assertions or downgraded by claiming that Marx did not say anything or said very little about communication[1].

There are three basic aims of the article. The first one is to test the assumption that there are certain dominant theoretical and topic orientations in academic articles in Media and Communication Studies despite the quantitative multitude. The existence of such orientations only means that there is a dominant intersubjectivity feeding certain material and immaterial interests: Even if everybody says that the earth is flat, it does not make the earth flat, but such a claim works only as functional justification.

The second aim is to demonstrate that Marx and issues of the Marxist approach are mostly excluded from Media and Communication studies, and that Marx is invalidated fully or partially, evaluated negatively or criticized for various reasons if he is mentioned in an article. The exclusion or marginalization of Marx in the articles does not mean that Marx's theoretical approach is false or has no value or merit; rather, it means that Marx's approach has thus far been successfully ignored and dismissed with the help of false claims. Such a marginalization and dismissal also indicates and proves the correctness of Marx's analysis of the general character of the ruling ideas. Therefore, the point is not that Marx is wrong, the point is rather that Marx and Marxist issues do not fit the structures of material and immaterial interests, relations and mindsets. They rather threaten the dominant practices. This reminds us of the motto of New York Times: "All the news that's fit to print".

The third aim is to show that the exclusion of Marx entails false justifications like claiming that Marx did not say anything about communication.

The structure of the article is as follow: The first part of the article examines (a) the statistical foundations of the studied topic, and (b) the presence of Marx and Marxism in the analysed articles published in communication journals that are cited in the Social Sciences Citation Index.

The second part of the article presents and discusses Marx's ideas on communication in order to demonstrate that Marx, contrary to prevailing assertions, said a lot about communication.

I used the phrase "missing Marx" in the title in order to indicate that (1) Marx is missing in articles in the "reputable" and the widely circulated journals and that (2) the communication field is missing (needs) Marx, because of (a) the value of his approach, (b) the prevailing domination of certain industry-oriented approaches that ignore or distort significant social and academic issues, (c) the increasing tendency of the usage of "supermarket books" by those who have limited mental comprehension capacities or are simply too lazy to spend time to read anything that forces him/her to think, and (d) the growing influence of popular gurus in communication schools. Unfortunately, "*academic fads come and go, the academy becomes complicit in such genuflection, and new gurus emerge and fade*" (Tomaselli and Shepperson 2010, 52), but their vestiges or bad copies remain. Being mystified by "body language" and "Neuro Linguistic Programming", and "*the unproblematic adoption of decontextualised ahistorical post-structuralist, post-disciplinary*" approaches are increasingly encroaching the communication field.[2]

[1] Fuchs (2010a) provides a unique answer to this baseless claim by analyzing Marx's writings on communication and systematically presenting them by focusing on the role of media production, circulation and consumption/reception in capitalism.

[2] In 1975, I had taken courses in communication, political science and research methods at Purdue University and the University of Pittsburgh since 1971. I had never heard of Marx's name in my communication classes and books. I had started searching and found the name of Dallas Smythe and I wrote to him telling him about the missing of Marx in communication courses in my schools and asked for his help in finding Marxist writings on communication. He called me and also gave me Herbert Schiller's name. It was the end of "missing Marx" for me, because Smythe and Schiller suggested to me readings that I had been looking for. Under the prevailing dominant sensitivities and interests, we all miss the "hearts and minds" like Marx, Che, Smythe, Schiller and all those who dedicate their life to the struggle for the freedom and dignity of all human beings.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

2. Theoretical Basis of the Study

Decent and honourable scholars, like Herbert Schiller, Dallas Smythe, Ariel Dorfman, George Murdock, Peter Golding, Nicholas Garnham and Armand Mattelart in the late 1960s and the following decades, and Dan Schiller, Vincent Mosco, McChesney, Christian Fuchs, Stuart Ewen, Lee Artz, Dyer-Witheford, Richard Maxwell and the like in recent years, have shown that Marx/Marxism is not dead and closely concerned with communication.

The production and distribution of Marx's writings and Marxist texts are also part of the struggle for a better world. Regarding Marx's interest in communication, Fetscher (1969) and Padover (1974) published a collection of Marx's writings on the Freedom of the Press and Censorship. The International Mass Media Research Centre's two books on Communication and Class Struggle, and a book about the Marx's writings on the means of communication are excellent pieces of work. It is not a coincidence that it is difficult to find these books in bookstores and libraries, but only in the personal libraries of people like me.

The present study bases its theoretical framework solely on Marx, thus it is not a classical Marxist, orthodox Marxist, neo-Marxist, autonomous Marxist, post-Marxist or any kind of Marxist study. It tries to clarify the dominant tradition and conscious marginalization of Marx and Marxist oriented studies in the production of knowledge in the leading journals of communication by employing an empirical design. It discusses Marx's approach on communication by presenting his writings that are associated with any aspect and/or type of communication. This presentation will also show the importance of Marx and his approach in the communication field, and will also demonstrate the invalidity, absurdity and ludicrousness of the ideological and propagandist nature of contemporary claims like the end of ideology-hypothesis, the meaninglessness of ideology, or that Marx's analysis was based on economic reductionism, monolithic relations between material conditions of production and mental conditions, the primacy of superstructure or basis, etc.

Marx, as we will see in the following paragraphs, lucidly points out that humans produce their own material and mental life, and they do so in a historical society organized by them. They produce their life conditions by reflecting their thoughts on material conditions and ideas, feelings, values and beliefs. They sustain or change their material and/or immaterial conditions by acting upon them. This theoretical reasoning brings along many conclusions. Some of the conclusions pertinent to the present study are:

(1) The claims about Marxist reflectivity are false explanations, because we could never establish, develop and change life, make history and engage in the struggle for liberation if our thoughts were mere reflections of our material life. Marx talks about the dominant mode of production and relations and reminds us about the lasting existence of remnants of the old material and especially immaterial relations. One of the best examples is that the capitalists who rule the world today support the governments of theological political parties that come to power exploiting the religious and irrational beliefs of people. Marx argues: "*the individuals composing the ruling class […] among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch*" (Marx 1969, 39). *[We go astray] "if […] we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence, if we confine ourselves to saying that in a particular age these or those ideas were dominant, without paying attention to the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas, and if we thus ignore the individuals and the world conditions which are the source of these ideas*" (1964, 79).

(2) The ideas of economic determinism, reductionism or technological determinism are not immanent in Marx's works. For instance, a statement like *"*the traditional Marxist approach postulates a mechanical relation between economic structure and socio-cultural superstructure*" (Grossberg, 1997, 22)* is nonsense and a classic cold-war ideological propaganda for mind management geared toward unaware readers, students and academicians. It knowingly or unknowingly distorts the basic theoretical structure of Marxism. Marx commented that his work merely attempted to describe the path that Western capitalism developed from feudalism, and that one should not *"transform his historical sketch of the development of Western European capitalism into historical-philosophical theory of universal development predetermined by fate for all nations, whatever their historic circumstances in which they find themselves may be. […that view] does me at the same time too much honour and too much insult' (Padover 1979, 321).* Engels provided a clear explanation for the same issue in a letter to Bloch in 1890:

> *"According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimate determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible) the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree" (Marx and Engels 1962, 488).

(3) Technological determinism is an immanent element of the approaches of popularized stars like Daniel Bell, Marshall McLuhan and new popular gurus, who claim that the Internet brings about an "information and knowledge society" and "democratization". Contrary to the currently popular technological determinist idea establishing a causal connection between the Internet and the so-called information and knowledge society, a society becomes a knowledge society (a) only if the Internet provides "information and knowledge" which is functional to general interests and goes beyond controlling the interests, minds and behaviours of the millions via capturing and imprisoning them in front of a monitor and beyond marketing material and mental end-products of capitalist enterprises and institutions, and (b) only if people use the Internet to make sound decisions on meeting their daily rational needs. Democratization requires not only participation in public discussions, but also, most importantly, affecting the political and economical decision making processes. In short, as scholars like Herbert Schiller, Dan Schiller, Christian Fuchs, Vincent Mosco, Peter Golding, Nicholas Garnham and Dyer-Witheford vividly demonstrate, the Internet represents a new sphere and an extension of ongoing domination and struggle. In any case, the so-called information society, knowledge society or service society is still a capitalist society and the claim of "democratization" via the Internet is the acknowledgement that capitalist society is not a democratic society and was waiting for the Internet to rescue capitalism from such burden.

(4) Marx neither ignores nor downgrades ideology in his explanations in *The German Ideology* and other writings and does not assign a determining or dependent position to it.

(5) Claims like the ones that we have reached an "end of ideology" and "of grand narratives/theories" are ideological and function as tools for justifying various policies, including the "war against terror" ideology that helps to evade and ignore the ongoing terrorism in the workplace and of industrial policies. Ideology primarily means two things: (a) the structure of ideas/thoughts and (b) the study of ideas (just as sociology is the study of the "social"). "No ideology" or the "end of ideology" simply means "no idea", "no thought", "end of thinking", or "end of ideas". But no human being and organized human life could exist, if there were no idea/thinking/thought and structure(s) of ideas. "The end of ideology" (or the end of history or the claim of discontinuity that postmodernism is not a continuation of modernism) is the ideology of the global capitalism that institutes functional ignorance as knowledge. The justifications by establishing connections with grand theories, disintegration of the Soviet System, modernist era or any other things are simply forged factoids.

3. The Method of the Study

The study was designed as a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The concept of method used here refers only to processes of data collection and analysis. The use of empirical data and statistical measures does not make a study a positivist-empirical research: A mainstream scholar designs a study based on a certain theoretical reasoning, collects and analyzes empirical data, and suggests that, for instance, it is necessary to establish water treatment plants to clean the polluted river. A Marxist scholar designs a study based on the Marxist theoretical framework, uses the same empirical process to collect data and even statistically analyze the data, and suggests that it is necessary to change the relations and processes of production in such a way that the river does not get polluted and we get clean water at any point of the river. We can prepare a survey questionnaire to analyse the attitudes, opinions and evaluations of workers in order to help a corporation's policies or in order to support whatever is right. Marx himself conducted critical empirical research when he e.g. prepared a survey questionnaire in 1880. It was distributed to 25,000 French workers to determine the working conditions and raise questions in the minds of workers about their working conditions and the issues presented in the questionnaire (Bodemann 1979; Babbie 2004, 243; Dei and Johal 2005).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

3.1. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers articles about Marx in the communication journals cited in the Social Sciences Citation Index and Marx's ideas about communication.

Studying the nature of communication research orientations requires examination of published journal articles, books, master and doctoral theses, and institutional and industrial study reports. This task takes substantial time, money and intellectual workforce. This pressing fact required limiting the study to journal articles.

There are most probably more than a thousand journals carrying at least one article concerned with communication issues from time to time. However, the present study defines its study population as journals cited in the Social Sciences Citation Index that are accepted as "core journals", the "nerves of the discipline", "the barometer of the substantive focus of scholarship and research methods" most important to the communication field (Potter and Riddle 2007), and a measure of academic scholarship by universities throughout the world. There are also journals with critical and historical/dialectical materialist theoretical orientations, but we can hardly find such journals in the dominant control centres of the production and distribution channels. The ones that exist are most probably either functional-critical or quasi-critical ones or they represent controlled alternatives that are used for the legitimization of the prevailing dominant practices and the de-legitimization of real alternative sources and of products that are based on Marx's approach. Sure, there is a high possibility that we can find, as Herbert Schiller pointed out once (Schiller and Pool 1981) "*one pearl in ten truckloads of garbage*", however, this only supports Marx's point and does not prove the existence of freedom of expression, equal opportunities and the like.

3.2. Determining Data and Information Sources

The first part of the study is designed to investigate the nature of the use of Marx. It requires an examination of published journal articles, books, master and doctoral theses, and institutional and industrial study reports. This task takes a lot of time, money and intellectual workforce. That is why the articles were selected by considering the fact that journal articles provide us with the most up-to-date knowledge about the subject in question.

There were over 800 journals in the Communication and Mass Media Complete Database Coverage List (EBSCO Publishing) [3], Proquest [4] and SSCI in 2011. However, there were only 85 journals classified as communication journals in the Social Sciences Citation Index[5]. Six non-English and two journals were excluded from the study (Circulo De Linguistica Aplicada A La Comunicacion, Comunicacion Y Sociedad, Comunicar, Estudios Sobre El Mensaje, Javnost-The Public, Tijdschrift Voor Communicatiewetenschap, Journal of the SMPTE, and Text and Performance Quarterly), and, thus, total 77 journals were selected for the investigation.

The second part of the study focuses on examining the relevance of Marx in the communication field by challenging the claim that Marx said nothing or very little about communication or that his works have no significance for discussing communication. In order to demonstrate that Marx provided significant explanations, all the available writings of Marx were used to find and evaluate Marx's statements concerning communication.

3.3. Population, Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

The study population includes articles published between January 2007 and June 2011 in the 77 selected journals (table 1).

More than one method was used for the data collection:

(1) In order to find out whether or not the articles used the Marx's name or Marxism in their main text, the whole population (10104 articles) was used in the data collection and analysis.

(2) In order to analyze the nature of use of Marx, all the articles that mentioned Marx's name in their full text were filtered out (210 articles out of 10104).

(3) In order to determine the general profile of the studied journals, the first article of the first issue of each year was selected in the study and, as a result, 385 articles from the 77 journals were coded and analyzed.

(4) In order to analyse topics of studies, the first article of the each issue was selected, which amounted in 1386 articles.

[3] http://www.ebscohost.com/academic/communication-mass-media-complete; http://www.ebscohost.com/titleLists/ufh-coverage.htm

[4] http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/commabs-set-c.shtml

[5] http://science.thomsonreuters.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jlresults.cgi?PC=J

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Only the research articles were used for the study. Editorials, editors' reports/comments, book reviews, articles labelled as "research in brief" or given similar designations and the like were excluded from the study.

Asian Journal of Communication	Journal of Communication Disorders
Augmentative and alternative Communication	Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication
Communication Monographs	Journal of Health Communication
Communications Research	Journal of Media Economics
Communication Theory	Journal of Mass Media Ethics
Continuum	Journal of Language and Social Psychology
Crime Media Culture	Journal of PR Research
Critical arts	Journal of Social and Personal Relationships
Critical Studies in Media Communications	Journalism and Mass communication Quarterly
Cyberpsychology and Behavior	Journalism Studies
Cultural Studies	Language and Communication
Discourse Studies	Language and Intercultural Communication
Discourse and Communication	Language and Speech
Discourse and Society	Management Communication Quarterly
Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies	Mass Communication and Society
Environmental Communication	Media Culture and Society
European Journal of Communication	Media International Australia
European Journal of Cultural Studies	Media Psychology
Health Communication	Multilingua
Human Communication Research	Narrative Inquiry
IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication	New Media and Society
Information Communication and Society	Political Communication
Interasia Cultural Studies	Public Understanding of Science
Interaction Studies	Public Culture
International Journal of Advertising	PR Review
International Journal of Cultural Studies	PO Quarterly
International Journal of Language and Communication	Quarterly Journal of Speech
Disorders	Personal Relationships
International Journal of Conflict Management	Research on Language & Social Interaction
International Journal of Mobile Communication	Rhetoric Society Quarterly
International Journal of Press/Politics	Science Communication
International Journal of Public Opinion research	Screen
Journal of Advertising Research	Technical Communication
Journal of Advertising	Telecommunications Policy
Journal of African Media Studies	Text and Talk
Journal of Applied Communication Research	Theory Culture and Society
Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media	Television and New Media
Journal of Business and Technical Communication	Visual Communication
Journal of Communication	Written Communication

Table 1: Journals included in the study

Indicators of variables were tentatively assigned and new indicators were added in the process of data collection and data coding.

Basic orientations: Basic orientations included the publisher, basic types of communication (technologically mediated or not), study objectives, basic methodological structures and levels of study.

The use of Marx and Marxism: Identified were (1) the distributional share of the use of Marx and Marxism in all the journals that contain 10104 articles and (2) the nature of use of Marx and Marx's writings in the articles.

Theoretical orientations: The analysis included the determination and analysis of the distribution and nature of theoretical orientations of articles.

Issues studied: This analysis focused on the discussed issues.

The analysis was conducted with the help of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative part dealt with the presentation and discussion of the distributional characteristics of data. Distributional characteristics were determined by frequency and dispersion analyses in order to test if Marx's statement holds true in the sense that the control of thoughts, beliefs and feelings are exercised through the nature of theoretical, issue and content orientations. The qualitative part was the logical evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from Marx's published materials.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4. Findings and Evaluations

4.1. Basic Orientations

Publishers

There were 25 publishers of the 77 journals. The leading ones are Routledge (Taylor & Francis) (29.9%) and Sage (28.6%). The rest follows far behind, ranging from 5.2% to 1.3%. This finding reflects the fact that Routledge and Sage dominate the international publishing business. Dominating the world's journal (and book) publishing market, Routledge publishes over 2878 journals (http://www.tandfonline.com). Sage is the world's 5th largest journal publisher and its publications include more than 645 journals spanning the Humanities, Social Sciences, as well as Science, Technology, and Medicine. More than 280 Sage journals are published on behalf of 225 learned societies and institutions (http://www.sagepub.com/journals.nav). The extent of the publishers' role in the ideological control of scientific production and dissemination in the communication field requires investigation. One claim is that the worldwide circulations of, e.g., books like "Four Theories of the Press" in the early 1960s and recent "critical" or "alternative" books are not produced primarily with ideological motives. The basic idea is that publishers do not care about the ideological content. Their main motive is material profit, and thus, they sell anything that helps them make money. This is certainly true. However, the historical experiences indicate that the ideological interest of the capitalist class (including feelings, religious beliefs and war against the "enemy") becomes a ruling concern when the sustainment of capitalism is at stake. Capitalists invest (and donate) a good deal of money for the sustainable development of their local, national and global domination.

The Forms of Communication (Technologically Mediated or Not)

Over half of the 1386 studies (59.4%) are about technologically mediated communication, while 17.0%% focus on technologically unmediated communication (mostly self-communication and interpersonal communication). 23.6% deal with no types of communication, but communication-related concepts, methods, theories, issues or processes. Traditional mass communication still occupies half (49.9%) of the articles focused on technologically mediated communication (table 2). Computer mediated communication follows far behind (13.6%).

Mediated communication	N	%
Mass communication in general	184	22.4
Newspapers/journalism	62	7.5
Radio	10	1.2
Television	82	10.0
Cinema/film	53	6.4
Magazines, journals	4	0.5
Books, novels	4	0.5
Music	6	0.7
Advertising and marketing communication	54	6.6
Public relations	21	2.6
Political communication via the media	7	0.9
Computer mediated communication	112	13.6
Mobile communication	22	2.7
Telecommunication	11	1.3
Human - robot communication	7	0.9
Others (technologically mediated): e.g., self, personal communication, interpersonal, group, organizational, technical, technology, professional communication	184	22.4
Total	**823**	**100.0**

Table 2: Distribution of technologically mediated communication

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Study Objectives

There are great varieties of objectives of the analysed articles. However, over half of them (55.8%) do not state their objectives. Furthermore, 15.6% of the statements of objectives are not objectives, but statements or restatements of methods. Hence, the study shows that only 28.6% of all studies have a valid objective. Most objectives are effect and individual/receiver related. Very few "alternative" studies set as an objective to question the industrial structure, whereas most of them come up with objectives that focus on various identity issues (except class identity) and stress the invalidity of class analysis and the euro-centrism of Marx's approach.

Methodological Structure

The findings show that 65.2% of the studies have mainstream orientations (23.5% are administrative research and 15.5% are primarily academic, but serving industrial or institutional interests). There are studies that question the dominant structures and relations (e.g., media portrayal, identity, identity politics), and Marx and Marxist approaches. Such studies (postmodern, post-positivist, post-constructivist, post-colonialist, post-structuralist, liberal-pluralist and the like) occupy a little more than one fourth of all studies (27.5%). Studies that use a Marxist methodology (excluding post-Marxism) account for only 7.3%.

A wide variety of qualitative designs dominates the studies (61.0%), followed by positivist-empiricist quantitative designs (39.0%).

About three quarters (73.5%) of the quantitative studies are quasi-experimental single survey research. Quasi-experimental lab/clinic design occupies 25.9%. True experimental design amounts for only 0.6%. There is no true experimental design (lab or clinical) in mass communication research. Qualitative mass communication studies are mostly either parametric or non-parametric survey designs. There is a tendency toward developing measurement devices and validating them. However, this tendency is at a marginal level, since most studies still use Likert-type measures.

The quantitative studies are mostly at the exploratory descriptive assessment level (39.0%), followed by a causal/inferential design (32.2%), and a bivariate relational design (23.2%).

Almost all descriptive studies break a basic scientific rule: A study design at this level requires that there should be no or insufficient accumulation of knowledge in the state of the art of the research topic or a need to question the existing knowledge. Generally, the bivariate studies have serious methodological problems: they just compare variables and state relationships without a correlation design that requires relational hypotheses. Inferential/causal studies employ multivariate or factor analysis, but most of them have no hypotheses that require multivariate or factorial analysis.

All of these are indeed serious methodological problems, in addition to the fact that most studies are focused on the analysis of audiences/consumers for marketing purposes.

4.2. The Use of Marx and Marxism

As specified in the introduction, it is expected that use of Marx and Marxism in the analysed articles is at a marginal level and that the nature of use is negative. The findings below support such assumptions.

Using Marx's Name

Marx and Marxism occupy extremely marginal space in the journals. Of the 10104 articles published between 2007 and mid 2011 in communication journals, only 210 (2.1%) include the name of Marx and 450 (4.5%) contain Marx's name or the word "Marxism" at least once in the main text.

39 journals and 210 articles mention Marx's name in their main text. The great majority of these 210 articles uses Marx's name once (57.6%), twice (14.8%) and 3-5 times (14.8%). Although 2.1% of 10104 articles mention Marx, most of them are mere usages of his name as a part of their narration.

Theory, Culture and Society published over one fourth of the 210 articles (26.7%), followed by Cultural Studies (11.0%), Interasia Cultural Studies (6.7%), Rhetoric Society Quarterly (3.8%), Media, Culture and Society (3.3%), Communication Theory (3.3%), Continuum (3.3%), and Public Culture (2.9%) respectively.

There are just 15 articles that deal completely or mostly with Marx, of which 8 were published in Theory, Culture and Society, and 2 in Cultural Studies.

The chart below (figure 1) clearly shows the highly skewed distribution based on 210 articles (2.1% of 10104) that use Marx's name.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

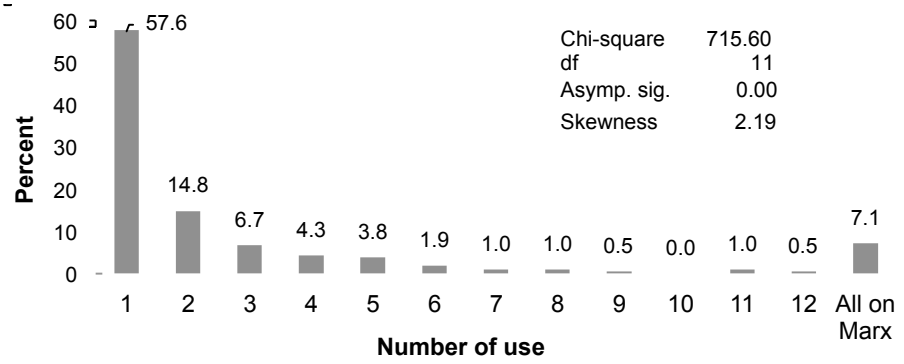


Figure 1: Number of time Marx's name was used in the main text

The findings above and the highly skewed distribution shown in figure 1 point out that the articles very rarely use or even mention Marx. However, the unexpected result is that Marx's name occupies a marginal place in the journals that feature mostly "critical articles". Table 3 shows that Marx appears at least once in 56 (22.7%) of 247 articles in Theory, Culture & Society and the great majority (47 of 56) merely mentions Marx's name 1-3 times. This rate decreases to 13.5% in Cultural Studies, 10.0% in Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 9.7% in Interasia Cultural Studies, 4.6% in Critical Studies in Media Communication, and 3.3% in Media, Culture and Society.

	Number of uses																
Journals	**1**	**2**	**3-5**	**6-12**	**a**	**b**	**c**	**d**	**e**	**f**	**g**	**h**	**i**	**Row total**	**Row %**	N of articles analyzed	% use Marx
Asian J of Communication	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.4	104	2.9
Communication Monographs	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	104	1.0
Communication Theory	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	3.3	96	7.3
Continuum	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	3.3	247	2.8
Crime Media Culture	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2.4	65	7.7
Critical arts	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	2.4	81	6.2
Critical Studies Media Communications	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2.4	110	4.6
Cultural Studies	9	3	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	23	11.0	171	13.5
Discourse studies	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	150	0.7
Discourse and Society	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1.9	124	3.2
Environmental Communication	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	80	1.3
European Journal of Communication	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	90	2.2
European Journal of Cultural Studies	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2.4	114	4.4
Transactions on Professional Communication	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	116	1.7
Information Communication & Society	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2.9	195	3.1
Interasia Cultural Studies	9	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	6.7	144	9.7
International Journal of Conflict Management	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	88	2.3
International Journal of Press/Politics	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	110	0.9

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

International Journal of Public Opinion research	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	71	1.4
Journal of Communication	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	163	1.2
Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	184	0.5
J of Mass Media Ethics	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	82	2.4
Journalism Studies	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2.9	219	2.7
Language & Intercultural Communication	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	88	2.3
Management Communication Quarterly	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1.9	76	5.3
Mass Communication and Society	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	107	0.9
Media Culture & Society	4	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	3.3	210	3.3
New Media and Society	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.4	231	1.3
Public Culture	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2.9	123	4.9
PR review	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	150	1.3
Quarterly J of Speech	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.4	85	3.5
Rhetoric Society Quarterly	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	3.8	80	10.0
Science Communication	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	92	1.1
Screen	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	74	2.7
Telecommunications Policy	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	258	0.8
Theory Culture & Society	29	9	9	1	1	2	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	56	26.7	247	22.7
Television and New Media	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.4	100	3.7
Visual Communication	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	82	2.4
Written Communication	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.0	68	2.9
Total	121	31	31	12	3	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	210	100.0	4979	
%	57.6	14.8	14.8	5.7	1.4	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	100.0			

Table 3: Distribution of the use of Marx's name in the main text of the articles

[a] Provides a discussion using Marx's ideas
[b] The whole article is dedicated to Marx/Marxism, Marxist view's, Marxist analysis or an evaluation of Marx or Marxism
[c] Uses Marx to provide a Marxist analysis of class, exploitation, media and the like
[d] The whole article uses a Marxist analysis of a topic
[e] The whole article is dedicated to discuss the view of a person on Marx and Marxism
[f] The whole article is about autonomous Marxism: the inadequacy of it or as alternative to classical Marxizm
[g] The whole article uses Marx and Marxism throughout the article while discussing a marxist intellectual
[h] The whole article uses Marx's ideas for the author's (Grossberg) revised theory of conjunctural analysis
[i] The whole article is a decolonialist invalidation and accusation of Marx without presenting a reading of Marx

Using Marx's Writings

Of 450 articles that mention Marx or Marxism at least once, 85.1% do not use any writing of Marx in their references, while 4.0% use *The Capital*, 1.5% *The German Ideology*, 1.1% *The Communist Manifesto*. Only seven articles use 2, three articles use 3, and two articles use more than 3 sources from Marx.

Such findings indicate the existence of an extremely low interest in reading Marx. It also shows that those who write something about Marx do not use Marx's own writings, but either secondary sources that support their stance or their own personal ideas of what Marx said, which implies the low and/or wrong knowledge communication scholars have of Marx's works.

While searching for sources, I also realized that there was a drastic drop in the use of Marx and Marxism since the beginning of 1the 990s (especially since 1992) in these journals.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Nature of the Use of Marx's Name

The nature of the use of Marx's name differs widely, ranging from a very strong anti-Marxist position to a Marxist evaluation of a topic.

Over half (50.9%) of the 210 articles that use Marx's name, use it merely as part of an explanation with no evaluative or normative statement. Most of these articles mention Marx's name once or twice. The rest of the articles has various orientations toward Marx (figure 2):

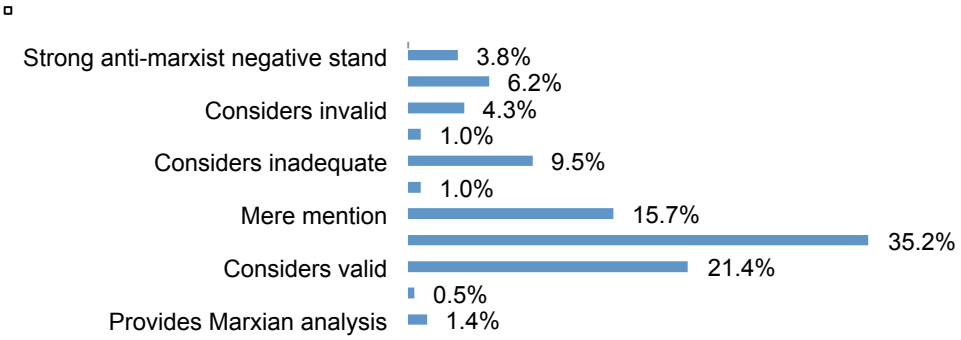


Figure 2: Distribution of the evaluation of Marx in the analysed articles

Negative stands (25.8%):

- 3.8% provide strong anti-Marx statements or negative evaluations (e.g., totalitarian, enemy of democracy, crude analysis; Eurocentric, utopian, pseudo-scientific).
- 10.5% provide a negative evaluation and consider Marx's ideas invalid (Marx's ideas about the base and superstructure; class; class conflict/struggle; ruling class and ruling ideas; the public sphere; theory of value; revolutionary change; the concept of labour; ideology; commodity fetishism; resistance).
- 1.0% consider Marx's ideas partially invalid.
- 10.5% consider Marx's thinking as waning and inadequate.

Positive stand/evaluation (23.3%)

- 21.4% use one or more concepts or theoretical approaches of Marx for explanation or analysis (for instance, men make history; aim is not only to understand, but to change society; the interplay of symbolic and material forces; creativity; humanism; labour; myth; ideology; slavery; technology; false consciousness; progress; proletariat; Asian modes of production; formal political equality; commodity, commodity production; fetishism; utopias; labour; class and exploitation; capitalist crisis; class struggle; press; freedom; historical materialism as basis of cultural studies; circulation and consumption; primitive accumulation).
- 1.4% provide some kind of Marxist analysis (the Internet, an issue, a historical explanation).

  These findings are very interesting because most of the negative evaluations and invalidations do not have mainstream orientations as background.

4.3. Theoretical Orientations

The sample for the analysis of theoretical orientations of communication journals included 385 articles out of a total of 10104. The study found that the 385 articles used 150 theoretical approaches. This finding supports the routine complaints of communication scholars that there are multitudes of theoretical orientations in communications. It is true that there are many theoretical approaches in communication, however, most of them, including sociology-based, qualitative, structural-functionalist ones, are based on social psychology.

60.8% of all studies have study designs with no theoretical reasoning, rationale or discussion at all (table 4). Similarly, Potter, Cooper and Dupagne (1993) found that 91.9% of their analysed articles had no theoretical foundations. A study by Potter and Riddle (2007) found the same result for 57.1%. The result reported in Riffe and Freitag's study (1997) was also high: 72.4%. Kamhawi and Weaver (2003) found no theory in 69.5% of the articles in their analysed sample.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Theoretical Content	N	%
Few theories/models are presented, but no theoretical framework is established for the study	7	1.8
No theory with theoretical reasoning/rationale/discussion is presented at all	219	56.9
A ready theoretical approach was used, but no theoretical framework was established for the studying questions/hypotheses	8	2.1
A theoretical structure exists to a varying degree	151	39.2
Total	**385**	**100.0**

Table 4: Distribution of the existence of a theoretical structure

Studies with theoretical structures that have a varying degree of proper theoretical construction make up only 39.2%. Indeed, there is a very limited number of studies that uses a theoretical framework for their study, provide theoretical assumptions or extract research questions or hypotheses, and construct conclusions based on proper synthesis of their study findings, theoretical rationale and accumulated knowledge.

All these results show that there is a widespread tendency that researchers do not use a theoretical reasoning in their design and that Media and Communication Studies lack epistemological validity beyond providing information for control purposes.

Although the majority of the articles in this study does not have a specified theoretical framework, I found that 56% of all articles use mainstream approaches that are mostly based on social-psychology, followed by 9.8% the employ neo-liberal pluralism, 9.9% that are focused on various types of critical approaches, 8.6% that use post-structuralism. 4.7% are liberal-democrat in orientation,%3.9% constructionist, 2.6% post-modern, 2.6% have no-theoretical structure at all (they emphasize the functionality of a tool, procedure or application), 0.5% are post-colonial, 0.3% post-positivist, 0.8% neo-Marxist, and 0.5% critical political economy.

The problems of macro-level power relations, material and immaterial interests of organized power structures are not present in almost all theoretical approaches and study designs. Power and power relations are typically conceptualized (1) in terms of freedom of individual choices (by dominant approaches) or (2) in terms of “the death of the author” (the powerlessness of producing and disseminating industrial structures) in the face of an empowered individual audience that deconstructs and re-constructs everything according to his/her own free will, or (3) in terms of the popularized identity politics which are set against the focus on class identity, the mode and relations of production.

It seems like the term “Marxist political economy” is a cursed word: I did not see any article using the term. However, those approaches with a “post” prefix show interest in using the terms political economy and economic determinism interchangeably. They mostly advocate the end of political economy, class and ideology, and claim that all of these categories belong to the past. Political economy or critical political economy is used in a few articles.

4.4. The Studied Topics

The sample for the analysis of communication topics included 1386 articles of a total of 10104.

The topics that were identified in the analysis are presented under three categories: topics related to technologically mediated communication (823; 59.4%), technologically unmediated communication (236; 17.0%), and others that include anything that falls outside the first two groups (327; 23.6%).

The studies about the mediated communication have a rich variety, but 49.8% of all articles focus on mass communication related issues (table 5).

Issues	N	%
Access	10	1.2
Accountability	2	0.2
Accuracy	1	0.1
Advertising, marketing	24	2.9
Attitude, perception and behaviour of media professionals	8	1.0
Audience reception, intertextuality, interpretation, evaluation, construction	6	0.7
Content: Media product analysis	31	3.8
Conversation (technologically mediated); managing impartiality	1	0.1
Culture, mediated multiculturalism; intercultural relations, cultural struggle	7	0.9
Development/history: media, communication education,	23	2.8

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Discourse (technologically mediated)	17	2.1
Effect: Attitude, perception, behaviour, motivation, commitment, preferences, beliefs, participation, trust, emotions and personality of individuals	66	8.0
Effects in general	135	16.4
Effectiveness	11	1.3
Environment	3	0.4
Ethics	8	1.0
Media analysis	21	2.6
Identity and identity politics	14	1.7
Mediated interaction (parasocial and human-robot)	16	1.9
Internet, web, online games, use of social media	29	3.5
Language use	4	0.5
Policy, politics, law, regulation, control and freedom of communication, censorship	57	6.9
Media constructions/meaning	14	1.7
Media coverage/portrayal/framing, representation	77	9.4
Media education communication education	1	0.1
Media economics, industry, industrial relations	20	2.4
Method: model, measurement, data analysis	35	4.3
Production mode/relations (media, music industry)	2	0.2
Product design	2	0.2
Professional culture, values, practices, production	34	4.1
Research/study	15	1.8
Role/function of media	44	5.3
Space, audience viewing space	5	0.6
Surveillance	3	0.4
Source credibility	1	0.1
System/structure of media (mainstream)	5	0.6
Technology	9	1.1
Theory (includes theories in organizational communication, media, public relations, advertising and cultural studies)	47	5.7
Use of media (nature/character of use)	15	1.8
Total	**823**	**100.0**

Table 5: Distribution of topics in technologically mediated communication

The classical effect studies in mass communication still reign over others and have been extended to the new media (especially to computer-mediated communication). The concentration on effects and an expanding interests in media effects has been documented in many studies, like the one conducted by Shaw, Ham and Knott (2000), who provide a concise evaluation of the theories and the effect (and other) interests in communication studies and indicate that "*we live in a post-mass media age, but studies of the effects of mass media remain our strongest research tradition*" (p. 72).

The most common types of studies topics are effect related issues dealing with attitude, perception, behaviour, motivation, commitment, preferences, beliefs, participation, trust, emotions and personality of individuals and media (24.4%). Studies focusing on media content, portrayal and representation represent 14.9%. Only 3.5% of the studies focus on Internet-related issues (web, online games, use of social media).

Conversely, there is little interest in studying critical issues relating to industrial production, distribution and relations and working conditions and relations at the workplace. Mostly liberal-pluralists and those who use theories with a "post"-prefix are interested in media portrayal and representation beyond effect issues. Only 2.4% of 823 articles study one or more aspects of the industry (media economics, industry, industrial relations). However, only 3 of them use the Marxist approach (two critical political economy and one the neo-Marxist critical school). Such findings indicate that very few academicians are interested in studying issues related to the structure or nature of the communication industry.

Studies on technologically unmediated communication concern the rich variety of unmediated communication. However over one third of them (36.9%) deals with issues in interpersonal communication, technologically unmediated (conversation; word of mouth talk), interpersonal communication or technologically unmediated speech/oral communication. Organizational communication follows with 15.5%. Studies on various issues of self-communication occupy 10.2% (table 6). None

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

of these studies investigates issues related to individual and/or interpersonal manifestations of the human condition in the economic, cultural and political organizations. They are mostly interested in (a) knowing psychological and behavioural/preferential characteristics of individuals, (b) the way individuals initiate and maintain personal relations, solve conflicts and end relations, and (c) ways and means for increasing employee's motivation, involvement and participation in their own exploitation at work.

Issues	N	%
Attitude, perception, behaviour, motivation, commitment, preferences, beliefs, participation, trust, emotions and personality of individuals	37	15.7
Conflict resolution/mediation, communicative strategy, risk reduction	3	1.3
Conversation, action, turn taking	3	1.3
Culture	2	0.8
Decision making	3	1.3
Discourse	5	2.1
Education	1	0.4
Effect	28	11.9
Effectiveness	8	3.4
Face management, relation maintenance, self-disclosure	7	3.0
Identity and identity politics	18	7.6
Individual's ability of thinking, memory, framing thoughts, expression, speaking, comprehension	7	3.0
Interaction: agency, conversation, listening, skills, natural occurrence	18	7.6
Intervention for children in the family environment	1	0.4
Language	7	3.0
Language learning	2	0.8
Language use	11	4.7
Method: model, measurement, data analysis	12	5.1
Narration: narrative, individual, life stories, refuge camps	10	4.2
Policy, politics, law, regulation, control and freedom of communication, censorship	1	0.4
Product (list, description)	1	0.4
Professionalism, professional practices	4	1.7
Racism, race talk	2	0.8
Reader's evaluation	1	0.4
Research/study	4	1.7
Rhetoric	3	1.3
Role of communication, talk, leadership	4	1.7
Situational and psychological factors of an individual's behaviour, speech	1	0.4
Speech	1	0.4
Surveillance	1	0.4
Technology (assistive, science, linguistic devices)	1	0.4
Theory	28	11.9
Vernacular science knowledge	1	0.4
Total	**236**	**100.0**

Table 6: Distribution of issues in technologically unmediated communication

Studies on other issues are concentrated on a multitude of issues (table 7). Here too, the majority of issues are related to the effect, individuals' dispositions and behaviour. Engaging with a critical issue or conducting a critical analysis of an issue is at a minimum level.

Issues	N	%
Attitude, perception, behaviour, cognition, motivation, commitment, preferences, beliefs, opinions, participation, trust, emotions, affect and personality of individuals	32	9.8
Auditory systems	1	0.3
Collaboration and creativity, democracy, diversity	1	0.3
Conversion: religious	1	0.3
Culture, intercultural competence, transcultural literacy, art	12	3.7
Decision making	1	0.3
Development of a discipline	1	0.3
Discourse	1	0.3
Dispute resolution, organizations	9	2.8
Economics, human capital (drug testing on humans)	1	0.3
Effect	26	8.0

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Effectiveness	5	1.5
Environment: protection	1	0.3
Ethics	2	0.6
Health: tanning and skin cancer	1	0.3
History, civil war; wine production	2	0.6
Identity and identity politics	19	5.8
Ideology, artefactual ideologies	2	0.6
Individual's adaptation to living environment	1	0.3
Individual's knowledge, memory, framing thoughts, expression	7	2.1
Individual's physical and mental health	1	0.3
Interaction: cooperation, cognitive processing, social relationship	19	5.8
Intervention for children in the family environment	1	0.3
Language learning, impairment	9	2.8
Language use, reading, learning	5	1.5
Language, type, semantics, history, development, structure, use	15	4.6
Leadership, multicultural	1	0.3
Method, learning, writing, training	7	2.1
Method: book design, explanation of a therapy	2	0.6
Method: model, measurement	22	6.7
Narration: transcultural narrative, trade, therapy	3	0.9
Nationalism, racialization, sexism, weapons promotion,	4	1.5
Organizational management, authority, cooperation, knowledge construction, change	4	1.5
Policy, politics, torture, participation, biopolitics, human rights, privacy	30	9.1
Pretend play: enacting hierarchical form of social organization	1	0.3
Public understanding of science	1	0.3
Research/study	14	4.3
Rhetoric: ethnicity, presidential	2	0.6
Simulation of nature: zoos	1	0.3
Space and time: global space, regionalization	3	0.9
Speech problems, symptoms, treatment, therapy, impairment, articulation	12	3.7
Surveillance, monitoring	1	0.3
Technology and technology use: imaging tools, devices, web applications	6	1.8
Theory (terrorism, colonialism, modernity, reality	34	10.4
Violence: acid violence	1	0.3
Voting	1	0.3
Total	**327**	**100.0**

Table 7: Distribution of other issues

Not only the present study but also almost all related studies found that there are vast varieties of issues, theoretical approaches and methods. According to Potter and Riddle (2007, 8), a wide range of effects and methods, and little overlap in research work "*could make it difficult for scholars to share definitions of key terms and a 'big picture' understanding of the overall field*". Potter's concern would be a valid one if the primary interest and concern of researchers were to understand the overall field.

All the findings clearly indicate that dominant orientations of scholarly interest in communication research are based on the need of the industrial and institutional structure to know more about individuals and to assess media effects. The obvious implication of such orientations validates Marx's statement about the relationship between the ruling class and ideas in class societies. Under the prevailing scholarly interests and the factors that lead and feed the researchers/academicians, it becomes ridiculous, illogical and dysfunctional to ask questions like (a) why many scholars do not study the attitudes, perceptions, values, feelings, psychological health, racism, sexism, militarism and discourse of individuals belonging to the ruling class, (b) do not analyze the effect of their psychological disposition on the nature of production and distribution, the working conditions, minimum wage policies and miserable human and environmental conditions, and (c) do not suggest, at the end of the study, that the ruling class and their highly educated managerial cadres (not the people) should be educated, should go through sensitivity and empathy training, and should feel the feelings of being powerless, exploited, abused and misused.

The theories and study topics that have dominant communication studies in the last 60 years are still dominant. Some formerly marginal topics (especially hermeneutics, semiotics, constructivism and structuralism) are supplementary and fashionable alternatives now. They are the preferred theoretical approaches not because they have better explanatory power and epistemological and methodological validity, but because they are integrated into the global and glocal marketing and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

business interests, and because they are extremely functional for the mind and behaviour management, and thus, for the ruling interest of our times.

Most articles that refer to Marxism/Marx provide handy statements on the classical, economic determinist, reductionist, mechanistic or orthodox Marxisms, and make cliché judgments about Marxist reflectivity, historicism, Euro-centricism, fundamentalism, class bias, overdetermination, grand narrative and the like.

5. Marx's Place in Understanding Communication

A message, a word, talking, conversation, a communicative action or sending and receiving messages are not communication. We should not confuse communication with tools, means, expressions, representations, verbal and nonverbal actions or content of communication. Communication is one of the necessary conditions of biological and social existence of human beings: We could not produce and reproduce ourselves physically, psychologically, socially, economically or any other ways if we were unable to communicate. No communication means dead people, a dead society and a dead world. Nothing humanly is possible without communication. Communication, means of communication, language, symbols and the like do not exist individually; we do whatever we do in relation to each other and ourselves through the ways and means of material and mental production and social relations.

Marx takes a central place in understanding the importance, nature and the study of communication because he provided us with the most meaningful ways of knowing about anything related to communication. We can find the varying influence of his theoretical and methodological orientation in all alternative and liberal-democratic studies of communication. The most significant and enduring communication literature is based on approaches influenced by Marx's understanding of every aspect of human life. Marx is not part of the supportive mechanisms of dominant ways of reproducing the ruling interests, structures and relations. That is why it is the normalized part of the abnormal modes of reproduction of domination to ignore, exclude, chastise or downgrade Marx in Media and Communication Studies. Yet, Marx always finds his place in communication in the praxis of demystifying the mystified, the analysis of and struggle against the unjust and oppressive modes and relations of production, including intellectual and professional relations and practices in communications. Marx's humane interest, theory and method are starting points for or continuation of meaningful communication inquiry. However, we know that Marx also provided explanations concerning communication.

Findings in a specific organized time and organized place and/or organized relations can or cannot be valid in another time, place or relations, because of the changing conditions of theoretical reasoning/construction. Changes in conditions are not the necessary or sufficient condition for revisions or invalidation of a theory. A theory or a part of a theory looses its validity if the methodological structure of inquiry and/or the theoretical reasoning is unable to provide valid explanations for new, varying or changing conditions. Marx's theory is not a theory of maintenance, equilibrium, balance and justification of any organized mode and relations. It is a theory based on the study and explanation of the formation, maintenance and change. His theory and method should occupy a central place in understanding communication, because understanding communication requires understanding human and organized life beyond finding or forging justifications for it.

Marx's approach in communication mainly focuses on (1) the study of the nature of material production (material modes and relations) of communication (organization and practices of reproduction of structured-selves and communication products and thus reproduction of the human condition), (2) the study of immaterial production (immaterial modes and relations) of communication (production, dissemination and use of ideas, feelings, sensitivities, beliefs, information, knowledge, ignorance as knowledge), and (3) interrelations in and between the material and immaterial production of communication, but not in terms of reproducing the propagandist ignorance of the question of (a) what comes first (egg or chicken; base or superstructure), (b) overdetermination, (c) the death of the producer, and (d) the empowered individuals who deconstruct and reconstruct meanings according to their free will and wage struggle in front of the television and/or in the virtual world of cyberspace.

5.1. Marx on Communication

5.1.1. The Concept of Communication: What is Communication for Marx?

We were educated in such a way that we have to know the definition, like the definition of communication. We cannot define communication with a single sentence. Communication (even an apple)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cannot be correctly defined by a single or a few common properties. Furthermore, the answer to the question of what communication is does not come in five choices and one right answer. A scientific definition requires a kind of detailed explanation that includes properties/indicators of communication in general and a historically specific context so that we can learn what it is, and also provides exclusionary explanations so that we can learn what it is not. There are many definitions of communication, but none of them explains what communication is, because they are definitions focusing on the mechanics/processes of encoding and decoding, the observable interactions like sending and receiving messages, exchanging ideas, elements, functions, roles, goals or structures. Nobody communicates in order to send or receive a message or to create, construct, consume or deconstruct meanings. Communicative action, message, writing, saying something, reading a book or watching television do not constitute communication. Verbal expressions or any kind of mental or relational manifestations are also not "communication".

Marx does not define communication; however, we find very important explanations about communication in his writings. The following itemized presentation of Marx's understanding of communication invalidates (1) the claims that Marx did not deal with communication, (2) the assessment that Marx only talked about means of communication and (3) the evaluations that Marx reduced communication to "transportation".

I extracted phrases or sentences from Marx's writings and provided brief explanations:

- "*Cheap and quick communications*" (Marx 1846): Existence of two indicators of two groups of the qualitative nature of communication.
- "*Is the Iliad possible at all when the printing press and even printing machines exist? Is it not inevitable that with the emergence of the press bar the singing and the telling and the muse cease, that is the conditions necessary for epic poetry disappear?"* (Marx 1857a): historically accumulated and determined nature of communication and production of communication.
- *"Conditions of Production and Communication; Political Forms and Forms of Cognition in Relation to the Conditions of Production and Communication"* (Marx 1857a): These are the titles in the main text. These titles indicate that Marx is interested in conditions of communication, and the relationship of communication to political structures and cognition.
- "*The relations between productive power and the conditions of communication*" (Marx 1857a): This self-exploratory phrase indicates the importance of the conditions of communication in influencing the productive power.
- "*there are certain independent branches of industry in which the product of the productive process is not a new material product, is not a commodity. Among these only the communications industry, whether engaged in transportation proper, of goods and passengers, or in the mere transmission of communications, letters, telegrams, etc., is economically important"* (Marx 1885, chapter 1, 17): Importance of the communication industry.
- "interfering with the British communications with Kurnaul and Meerut" (Marx 1857): Control of communication.
- "*English line of communication between Agra and Delhi"* (Marx 1857): Communication networks in the colonies.
- *"The Morning Chronicle, in its fourth edition, communicated a telegraphic despatch"* (Marx 1853): Communicating by sending a dispatch/content using the telegraph.
- *"The limited commerce and the scanty communication between the individual towns"* (Marx 1846): Quantitative nature of Communication and its outcome.
- *"The possibility of commercial communications transcending the immediate neighbourhood, a possibility, the realisation of which depended on the existing means of communication"* (Marx 1846): Acknowledging the existence of various forms of communication, like commercial communications; implying that communication is done via means of communication; emphasizing the determining role of means of communication.
- *"[...] public word* in all *its* forms – *in* spoken form, in *written* form, and in *printed* form, print *not yet censored* as well as that already *censored, [...] local press. (Marx 1843g):* Various forms of communication.
- *"Established means of communication"* (Marx 1846): Role of established means of communication.
- *"Influence of the means of communication"* (Marx 1857a): influence/outcome of communication.
- "Louis Napoleon has communicated a similar message to his Senate and Corps Législatif*"*. (1854): Communicating a message.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

- *"Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State"* (Marx 1848a): Monopoly in communication; political economy of communication.
- "This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land" (Marx 1848a): Development of communication and market influence on it.
- *"The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation"* (Marx 1848a): Role of development of the means of communication.
- *"This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry"* (Marx 1848a): Role of communication in society.
- *"An organised system of machines, to which motion is communicated by the transmitting mechanism from a central automaton"* (Marx 1867, chapter 15, 3): Technology, organizational communication; machine-to-machine communication.
- *"The means of communication and transport were so utterly inadequate to the productive requirements of the manufacturing period*" (Marx 1867): Influence of the condition of communication in production.
- "*The means of communication and transport became gradually adapted to the modes of production of mechanical industry"* (Marx 1867): Political economy of communication; industrial relations, technological control.
- *"The improved means of transport and communication furnish the weapons for conquering foreign markets"* (Marx 1867): Role of communication in colonisation; international political economy of communication; war communication.
- *"The development of ocean navigation and of the means of communication generally, has swept away the technical basis on which season-work was really supported"* (Marx 1867): Role of communication in industrial development and relations, work force and trade.
- *"At a given stage of development of technology and of the means of communication, the discovery of new territories containing gold or silver plays an important role"* (Marx 1859): Role of communication in development, colonization.
- *"It is clear that the progress of social production in general has, on the one hand, the effect of evening out differences arising from location as a cause of ground-rent, by creating local markets and improving locations by establishing communication and transportation facilities"* (Marx 1863-1883): Role of communication facilities; political economy of communication.
- *"Continental politicians, who imagine that in the London press they possess a thermometer for the temper of the English people, inevitably draw false conclusions at the present moment"* (Marx 1861): In this article, Marx focuses on political communication; the relationship among media, politicians and people; the role of the press in war; close material relations between top media professionals and ruling forces; the control of the press by politicians and corporate structures; the ownership of the press; interests that the London press upholds.

The short examples above also indicate that what Marx says in these short phrases is a lot more meaningful than, for instance, (a) millions of "effect analyses" that provide nothing more than distributional and relational information to serve the interests of marketing and/or political control and (b) some reception analyses that do talk about the nature of reception just like active audience theorists without using functionalist terminology and without analyzing receptors/individuals.

Marx said a lot more.

5.1.2. Location and Function/Role of Communication in Society and Social Development

Marx locates communication in every moment of the material and immaterial production of life. The explanations that Marx provides on ideas, the press, writing, means and roles of communication clearly indicate that communication for Marx is an essential factor for the existence of the societal production of life (that includes distribution, circulation and consumption). In addition to the ideas that are presented in the other sections of this article, the following explanation of Marx implies not only the relational aspect and role of communication, but also the necessity of communication in every sphere of social life:

> *"so soon as it (linen) comes into communication with another commodity, the coat. Only it betrays its thoughts in that language with which alone it is familiar, the language of commodities. In order to tell us that its own value is created by labour in its abstract character of human labour, it says that the coat, in so far as it is worth as much as the linen, and therefore is*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> *value, consists of the same labour as the linen. In order to inform us that its sublime reality as value is not the same as its buckram body, it says that value has the appearance of a coat, and consequently that so far as the linen is value, it and the coat are as like as two peas. We may here remark, that the language of commodities has, besides Hebrew, many other more or less correct dialects. […] the equating of commodity B to commodity A, is commodity A's own mode of expressing its value." (Marx 1867, chapter 1, 11) "The price […] of commodities is, […], a purely ideal or mental form. Although invisible, the value of iron, linen and corn has actual existence in these very articles: it is ideally made perceptible by their equality with gold, a relation that, so to say, exists only in their own heads. Their owner must, therefore, lend them his tongue, or hang a ticket on them, before their prices can be communicated to the outside world" (Marx 1867, chapter 3, 1).*

Marx presents his ideas about the role of communication in writings ranging from the role of the press in society and the role of the means of communication in social change. His newspaper articles are good examples of political communication that are not reduced down to political campaigns, parliamentary processes and voter attitudes and preferences. He evaluated every important political event all over the world and wrote about the role of communication in the press, politics and public tendencies.

For Marx, technology is not a collection of tools, but technology means society at a certain level of development. Then, means of communication are integral parts of the maintenance and change, and, e.g., played a crucial role in the transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode, and also within the capitalist mode. Means of communication are employed and used in order to bolster the meaning, limits and potentialities of possible social relations and change.

Marx does not consider means of communication as a mere tool with a specific function: "*A house can serve for production as well as for consumption; likewise all vehicles, a ship and a wagon, for pleasure outings as well as a means of transport; a street as a means of communication for production proper, as well as for taking walks" (Marx 1859a*).

Marx provided explanations on communication and the relationship of the means of communication with factors that include every aspect of social production, distribution and consumption, maintenance and control of the social formation. His explanations are not limited within the circulation or as merely a certain technological means. Furthermore, it is a grave mistake to expect that Marx would locate communication at the centre of production of life and base his analyses on it or give primacy to the development of communication technology in society and social change[6].

Development of the Means of Communication and Class Domination

"all the progress of civilization, or in other words every increase in the powers of social production, if you like, in the productive powers of labour itself – such as results from science, inventions, division and combination of labour, improved means of communication, creation of the world market, machinery etc. – enriches not the worker but rather capital; hence it only magnifies again the power dominating over labour; increases only the productive power of capital" (Marx 1857d, 8).

Communication Facilities and the Magnitude of Productive Supply

Stating that "*a definite quantity of potential productive capital must be available in some quantities for the purpose of entering by and by into the productive process*", Marx establishes causal relations that involve communication facilities: "*the magnitude of this productive supply depends on the greater or lesser difficulties of its renewal, the relative nearness of markets of supply, the development of transportation and communication facilities*" (Marx 1885, chapter 13, 5).

Development of the Means of communication and the Cost of Commodity Transportation

> *"The capitalist mode of production reduces the costs of transportation of the individual commodity by the development of the means of transportation and communication, as well as by concentration – increasing scale – of transportation" (Marx 1885, chapter 6, 13).*

[6] See Harold A. Innis for the powerful function of communication technology in maintenance and social change, Sut Jhally for evaluation of technological determinism, and Marshall McLuhan for effects of communication technology on the human sense organs and the transformation of the world to a global village.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Communication Facilities and the Speed/Time among Processes in Order to Ensure the Continuity of Production

Marx explains this relationship by the example of coal supply: *"the rapidity with which the product of one process may be transferred as means of production to another process depends on the development of the transport and communication facilities"* (Marx 1885, chapter 6, 8).

Developed means of Communication and the Density and the Condition of the Division of Labour in Society

> *"A relatively thinly populated country, with well-developed means of communication, has a denser population than a more numerously populated country, with badly-developed means of communication; and in this sense the Northern States of the American Union, for instance, are more thickly populated than India. […] In consequence of the great demand for cotton after 1861, the production of cotton, in some thickly populated districts of India, was extended at the expense of rice cultivation. In consequence there arose local famines, the defective means of communication not permitting the failure of rice in one district to be compensated by importation from another" (Marx 1867, chapter 14, 9).*

Development of the Means of Communication and Season-Work

> *"The development of ocean navigation and of the means of communication generally, has swept away the technical basis on which season-work was really supported" (Marx 1867, chapter 15, 30).*

Communication and Market Control

> *"The cheapness of the articles produced by machinery, and the improved means of transport and communication furnish the weapons for conquering foreign markets" (Marx 1867, chapter 15, 22).*

Communication and the Time of Commodity Circulation and Change in Locations of Production

Marx explains the role of means of communication in the reduction of commodity circulation time, the growth of social wealth, social relations and change such as the deterioration of old and the rise of new centres of production:

> *"whereas on the one hand the improvement of the means of transportation and communication brought about by the progress of capitalist production reduces the time of circulation of particular quantities of commodities, the same progress and the opportunities created by the development of transport and communication facilities make it imperative, conversely, to work for ever more remote markets, in a word – for the world-market. The mass of commodities in transit for distant places grows enormously, and with it therefore grows, both absolutely and relatively, that part of social capital that remains continually for long periods in the stage of commodity-capital, within the time of circulation. There is a simultaneous growth of that portion of social wealth which, instead of serving as direct means of production, is invested in means of transportation and communication and in the fixed and circulating capital required for their operation" (Marx 1885, chapter 14, 2).*

> *"the improvement of the means of communication and transportation cuts down absolutely the wandering period of the commodities but does not eliminate the relative difference in the time of circulation of different commodity-capitals arising from their peregrinations, nor that of different portions of the same commodity-capital which migrate to different markets. For instance the improved sailing vessels and steamships, which shorten travelling, do so equally for near and distant ports. The relative difference remains, although often diminished. But the relative difference may be shifted about by the development of the means of transportation and communication in a way that does not correspond to the geographical distances. For instance a railway which leads from a place of production to an inland centre of population may relatively or absolutely lengthen the distance to a nearer inland point not connected by rail, as compared to the one which geographically is more remote. In the same way the same circumstances may alter the relative distance of places of production from the larger*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

markets, which explains the deterioration of old and the rise of new centres of production because of changes in communication and transportation facilities. (To this must be added the circumstances that long hauls are relatively cheaper than short ones.) Moreover with the development of transport facilities not only is the velocity of movement in space accelerated and thereby the geographic distance shortened in terms of time. Not only is there a development of the mass of communication facilities so that for instance many vessels sail simultaneously for the same port, or several trains travel simultaneously on different railways between the same two points, but freight vessels may clear on consecutive days of the same week from Liverpool for New York, or goods trains may start at different hours of the same day from Manchester to London" (Marx 1885, chapter 14, 1).

5.1.3. Production of Life: Material Production and the Production of Ideas

The Production of Material Life

The nature of and change in the material production of anything, including material means of communication depends on the historical mode of production at a certain time and place. The study of the production of communication primarily includes positioning and analyzing the organized activities within the local, national and international modes, relations and conditions of general production, and the investigation of the history and development of media industries and prevailing practices and conditions of production, distribution and consumption.

For instance, studying the praxis of media production and human conditions as end-products of dominant practices, Marx gives us a striking example in the English letter-press printing trade:

"There existed formerly a system, corresponding to that in the old manufactures and handicrafts, of advancing the apprentices from easy to more and more difficult work. They went through a course of teaching till they were finished printers. To be able to read and write was for every one of them a requirement of their trade. All this was changed by the printing machine. It employs two sorts of labourers, one grown up, renters, the other, boys mostly from 11 to 17 years of age whose sole business is either to spread the sheets of paper under the machine, or to take from it the printed sheets. They perform this weary task, in London especially, for 14, 15, and 16 hours at a stretch, during several days in the week, and frequently for 36 hours, with only 2 hours' rest for meals and sleep. A great part of them cannot read, and they are, as a rule, utter savages and very extraordinary creatures. [...] As soon as they get too old for such child's work, that is about 17 at the latest, they are discharged from the printing establishments" (Marx 1867, chapter 15, 31).

Concerning the relationship between the revolution in the mode of production and the conditions of the means of communication, Marx points out the following connection:

"The revolution in the modes of production of industry and agriculture made necessary a revolution in the general conditions of the social process of production, i.e., in the means of communication and of transport. In a society whose pivot, to use an expression of Fourier, was agriculture on a small scale, with its subsidiary domestic industries, and the urban handicrafts, the means of communication and transport were so utterly inadequate to the productive requirements of the manufacturing period, with its extended division of social labour, its concentration of the instruments of labour, and of the workmen, and its colonial markets, that they became in fact revolutionized. In the same way the means of communication and transport handed down from the manufacturing period soon became unbearable trammels on modern industry, with its feverish haste of production, its enormous extent, its constant flinging of capital and labour from one sphere of production into another, and its newly-created connections with the markets of the whole world. Hence, apart from the radical changes introduced in the construction of sailing vessels, the means of communication and transport became gradually adapted to the modes of production of mechanical industry, by the creation of a system of river steamers, railways, ocean steamers, and telegraphs. But the huge masses of iron that had now to be forged, to be welded, to be cut, to be bored, and to be shaped, demanded, on their part, cyclopean machines, for the construction of which the methods of the manufacturing period were utterly inadequate" (Marx 1967, chapter 15, 4).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The Production of Ideas

According to Marx, the production (and distribution and use) of ideas should be free from any repressive measures. Marx does not consider material production and the production of ideas as two independent spheres. For him, for instance, newspaper production is a business that produces a material thing called the newspaper and sells it; but at the same time, newspaper production is a production of ideas on societal issues. For Marx, ideas are produced and dependent on the conditions of life:

> "*Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process*" (Marx 1969, 15).

The following statement explains his most important theoretical and methodological uniqueness that distinguishes him from the idealist philosophy and its new variants with the "post" prefix:

> "*Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness*" (Marx 1969, 15) .

5.2. Marx on Mass Communication

Marx wrote about every aspect of the press especially in his newspaper articles and personal letters. His interest in media continued until his death. The press was one of the substantial means of political struggle for him as well as the means of capitalist domination.

Marx can be considered a revolutionary political journalist who had the workers' emancipation in mind. Some of his articles in newspapers and letters to newspaper editors show his interest in mass communication and his understanding of communication, public opinion, public communication, press, freedom, freedom of the press, the nature of the relationship between newspapers and the governing power structure (censorship, professional participation in and justification of censorship, and struggle against censorship and participating journals).

His writings in the early 1840s are philosophical and journalistic pieces. They demonstrate Marx's interest in freedom of communication and the use of the press for promoting the ideas of freedom and struggle against censorship, injustice, political oppression, governmental and business corruption. He searched for truth, focused on the real conditions of the social, economic, and political environment and defended the work of journalists and the mission of the press against the pressures coming from the authorities. In his writings in the early 1840s, Marx defended freedom of thought and press and participated in the advancement of the bourgeois liberal revolution against the feudal structures and practices. However, he, after the second half of 1840s, considered press freedom as an emancipatory struggle of the working class and had no positive opinion about the law, press law and the bourgeois democratic parliamentary system. He was involved in the communist movement that struggled for democracy and freedom of the working class. For instance, the last issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was printed entirely in red and contained an editorial notice, thanking the workers of Köln for their participation. The editorial ended with the slogan: "*emancipation of the working class*". His articles in 1843 were mostly on important current issues, attitudes of other newspapers and government restrictions and sanctions. In 1848 and 1849, he was highly critical of German papers. After moving to England in 1849, he started working as London correspondent of the *New York Daily Tribune* between 1852-1862. He wrote mostly on politics, war, international relations and government policies.

Marx considered the press as the mythmaking machine and his evaluation holds true more than ever for all the dominant media in the world today:

> *"Up till now it has been thought that the emergence of the Christian myths during the Roman Empire was possible only because printing had not yet been invented. Precisely the contrary. The daily press and the telegraph, which in a moment spreads its inventions over the whole earth, fabricate more myths in one day (and the bourgeois cattle believe and propagate them still further), than could have previously been produced in a century" (Marx 1871).*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

5.2.1. The Structure of the Media

Marx does not have any detailed analysis of the media structure, however his articles (e.g., Marx 1861a, 1861b) show how he approaches media ownership, politics and media practices: He goes beyond a simple explanation of ownership. He establishes multiple connections among material interests, the nature of media production and content, and explains the meaning and outcomes of these multiple relational links. He provides information about ownership, explicates the relationship between ownership and politics, relationship between top press professionals and politicians and business interests, connects them with professional practices geared toward propagating and buttressing private and political interests, and clarifies the public's place in it. Here are few instructive excerpts (all from Marx, 1861):

> *"Continental politicians, who imagine that in the London press they possess a thermometer for the temper of the English people, inevitably draw false conclusions at the present moment. With the first news of the Trent case the English national pride flared up and the call for war with the United States resounded from almost all sections of society. [...] Hence, in the beginning, the peaceful and moderate tone of the London press in contrast to the warlike impatience of the people. So soon, however, as the Crown lawyers [...] had worked out a technical pretext for a quarrel with the United States, the relationship between the people and the press turned into its opposite. The war fever increased in the press in the same measure as the war fever abated in the people. [...]*
> *But now, consider the London press! At its head stands The Times, whose leading editor, Bob Lowe, [...] is a subordinate member of the Cabinet, a kind of minister for education, and a mere creature of Palmerston. [...] A principal editor of Punch was accommodated by Palmerston with a seat on the Board of Health and an annual salary of a thousand pounds sterling. [...]*
> *The Morning Post is in part Palmerston's private property. Another part of this singular institution is sold to the French Embassy. The rest belongs to the haute volée and supplies the most precise reports for court flunkeys and ladies' tailors. [...]*
> *The Morning Advertiser is the joint property of the "licensed victuallers", that is, of the public houses, which, besides beer, may also sell spirits. It is, further, the organ of the English Pietists and ditto of the sporting characters, that is, of the people who make a business of horseracing, betting, boxing and the like. The editor of this paper, Mr. Grant, previously employed as a stenographer by the newspapers and quite uneducated in a literary sense, has had the honour to get invited to Palmerston's private soirees. [...] It must be added that the pious patrons of this liquor-journal stand under the ruling rod of the Earl of Shaftesbury and that Shaftesbury is Palmerston's son-in-law. Shaftesbury is the pope of the Low Churchmen," who blend the spiritus sanctus with the profane spirit of the honest Advertiser. [...]*
> *The Morning Chronicle! [...] For well-nigh half a century the great organ of the Whig Party and the not unfortunate rival of The Times, its star paled after the Whig war. It went through metamorphoses of all sorts, turned itself into a penny paper and sought to live by "sensations", thus, for example, by taking the side of the poisoner, Palmer. It subsequently sold itself to the French Embassy, which, however, soon regretted throwing away its money. It then threw itself into anti-Bonapartism, but with no better success. Finally, it found the long missing buyer in Messrs. Yancey and Mann – the agents of the Southern Confederacy in London. [...]*
> *The Daily Telegraph is the private property of a certain Levy. His paper is stigmatised by the English press itself as Palmerston's mob paper. [...] In the dignity and moderation dictated to it, it seemed so strange to itself that since then it has published half-a-dozen articles about this instance of moderation and dignity displayed by it. As soon, however, as the order to change its line reached it, the Telegraph has sought to compensate itself for the constraint put upon it by outbawling all its comrades in howling loudly for war. [...]*
> *The Tory papers, The Morning Herald and The Evening Standard, both belonging to the same boutique, are governed by a double motive: on the one hand, hereditary hate for "the revolted English colonies"'; on the other band, a chronic ebb in their finances. They know that a war with America must shatter the present coalition Cabinet and pave the way for a Tory Cabinet. With the Tory Cabinet official subsidies for The Herald and The Standard would return. Accordingly, hungry wolves cannot howl louder for prey than these Tory papers for an American war with its ensuing shower of gold! [...]*
> *Of the London daily press, The Daily News and The Morning Star are the only papers left that are worth mentioning; both work counter to the trumpeters of war. The Daily News is re-*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

stricted in its movement by a connection with Lord John Russell; The Morning Star (the organ of Bright and Cobden) is diminished in its influence by its character as a "peace-at-any-price paper". [...] Most of the London weekly papers are mere echoes of the daily press, therefore overwhelmingly warlike. The Observer is in the ministry's pay. The Saturday Review strives for esprit and believes it has attained it by affecting a cynical elevation above "humanitarian" prejudices. To show "esprit", the corrupt lawyers, parsons and schoolmasters that write this paper have smirked their approbation of the slaveholders since the outbreak of the American Civil War. [...]
The Spectator, The Examiner and, particularly, MacMillan's Magazine must be mentioned as more or less respectable exceptions.
One sees: On the whole, the London press – with the exception of the cotton organs, the provincial papers form a commendable contrast – represents nothing but Palmerston and again Palmerston. Palmerston wants war; the English people don't want it. Imminent events will show who will win in this duel, Palmerston or the people. In any case, he is playing a more dangerous game than Louis Bonaparte at the beginning of 1859".

5.2.2. Freedom and the Media

The issue of freedom of human beings is the core concern of Marx in his theoretical orientation and all kinds of writings. His newspaper articles show his deep feelings for emancipation of individuals from every kind of oppression and slavery.

For Marx*, "freedom remains freedom whether it finds expression in printer's ink, in property, in the conscience, or in a political assembly*" (Marx 1842g). "*Freedom includes not only what my life is, but equally how I live, not only that I do what is free, but also that I do it freely. Otherwise what difference would there be between an architect and a beaver except that the beaver would be an architect with fur and the architect a beaver without fur?*" (Marx 1842f). "*Freedom is so much the essence of man that even its opponents implement it while combating its reality; they want to appropriate for, themselves as a most precious ornament what they have rejected as an ornament of human nature*" (Marx 1842e). Criticizing those who appropriate freedom for themselves and reject for others, Marx is very explicit:

"these gentlemen, because they want to regard freedom not as the natural gift of the universal sunlight of reason, but as the supernatural gift of a specially favourable constellation of the stars, because they regard freedom as merely an individual property of certain persons and social estates, are in consequence compelled to include universal reason and universal freedom among the bad ideas and phantoms of "logically constructed systems. In order to save the special freedoms of privilege, they proscribe the universal freedom of human nature. Since, however, the bad brood of the nineteenth century, and the very consciousness of the modern knights that has been infected by this century, cannot comprehend what is in itself incomprehensible, because devoid of idea, namely, how internal, essential, universal determinations prove to be linked with certain human individuals by external, fortuitous, particular features, without being connected with the human essence, with reason in general, and therefore common to all individuals -- because of this they necessarily have recourse to the miraculous and the mystical. Further, because the real position of these gentlemen in the modern state does not at all correspond to the notion they have of that position, because they live in a world beyond the real one, and because therefore imagination is their head and heart, being dissatisfied with their practical activity, they necessarily have recourse to theory, but to the theory of the other world, to religion, which in their hands, however, is given a polemical bitterness impregnated with political tendencies and becomes more or less consciously only a holy cloak for very secular, but at the same time fantastic desires" (Marx 1842d).

For Marx:
"every restriction of freedom is a factual, irrefutable proof that at one time those who held power were convinced that freedom must be restricted, and this conviction then serves as a guiding principle for later views" (Marx 1842c). "Whenever one form of freedom is rejected, freedom in general is rejected and henceforth can have only a semblance of existence, since the sphere in which absence of freedom is dominant becomes a matter of pure chance. Absence of freedom is the rule and freedom an exception, a fortuitous and arbitrary occurrence" (Marx 1842g).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

5.2.3. The Press: Censored and Free Press, Good and Bad Press

Marx's first interest was in the control of communication, mostly because of his journalistic endeavours starting in the early 1840s. He provided rich and striking discussions about freedom of the press and censorship in six articles written in May 1842. However, I also included other articles in the study.

Marx considers press as means of public communication and means of struggle for the truth and emancipation. According to him, *"the press is the most general way by which individuals can communicate their intellectual being. It knows no respect for persons but only respect for intelligence"* (Marx 1842g). He asks, "*do you want the ability for intellectual communication to be determined officially by special external signs?"* and explicates: "*what I cannot be for others, I am not and cannot be for myself. If I am not allowed to be a spiritual force for others, then I have no right to be a spiritual force for myself*". He refuses to give "*certain individuals the privilege of being spiritual forces*" and expounds that "*just as everyone learns to read and write, so everyone must have the right to read and write*" (Marx 1842g).

He divides the press into two basic groups: those who go along with the authorities and free press (or people's press). Then, he compares their characteristics:

> *"free press is the ever-present, vigilant eye of the people's spirit, the embodiment of a people's trust in itself, the communication link that binds the individual to state and world, the embodied culture that transforms material struggles into spiritual ones while idealising their crude material form. It is the people's outspoken self-confession, whose redeeming power is well known. It is the spiritual mirror, in which a people discover itself, and insight is the first prerequisite of wisdom. It is the public spirit, which may be delivered to every cottage cheaper than coal gas. It is multifarious, ubiquitous, and omniscient. It is the ideal world, which emerges from the real world only to return to it as an enriched spirit, newly charged"* (Marx 1842f).
>
> *"The censored press remains bad even when it turns out good products, for these products are good only insofar as they represent the free press within the censored press, and insofar as it is not in their character to be products of the censored press. The free press remains good even when it produces bad products, for the latter are deviations from the essential nature of the free press. The essence of the free press is the characterful, rational, moral essence of freedom. The character of the censored press is the characterless monster of unfreedom; it is a civilised monster, a perfumed abortion"* (Marx 1842e).

Marx's following depiction of the censored press reminds us some of the basic tenets of the mainstream popular media today:

> *"It is the censored press that has a demoralizing effect. Inseparable from it is the most powerful vice, hypocrisy, and from this, its basic vice, come all its other defects, which lack even the rudiments of virtue, and its vice of passivity, loathsome even from the aesthetic point of view. [...] the press lies continually and has to deny even any consciousness of lying, and must cast off all shame. [...] It is the malicious gloating which extracts tittle-tattle and personalities from the great life of the peoples, ignores historical reason and serves up to the public only the scandals of history; being quite incapable of judging the essence of a matter, it fastens on single aspects of a phenomenon and on individuals, and imperiously demands mystery so that every blot on public life will remain hidden. [...] For its part, therefore, the people sinks partly into political superstition, partly into political disbelief, or, completely turning away from political life, becomes a rabble of private individuals" (Marx 1842f).*

Marx does not accept the division of press as good press and bad press when the issue is censorship:

> *"If one wants to speak of two kinds of press, the distinction between them must be drawn from the nature of the press itself, not from considerations lying outside it. The censored press or the free press, one of these two must be the good or the bad press. The debate turns precisely on whether the censored press or the free press is good or bad, i.e., whether it is in the nature of the press to have a free or unfree existence. To make the bad press a refutation of the free press is to maintain that the free press is bad and the censored press good, which is precisely what had to be proved. Base frames of mind, personal intrigues, infamies, occur alike in the censored and the free press. Therefore the generic difference be-*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tween them is not that they produce individual products of this or that kind; flowers grow also in swamps. We are concerned here with the essence, the inner character, which distinguishes the censored from the free press. [...] A free press that is bad does not correspond to its essence. The censored press with its hypocrisy, its lack of character, its eunuch's language, its dog-like tail-wagging, merely realises the inner conditions of its essential nature" (Marx 1842e).

5.2.4. Freedom of Press, Censorship and Struggle

There should be material existences of organized entities in specific relationships in order to talk about freedom, domination and struggle. Two such entities are the press and the organized body of censorship. Post-Napoleonic Germany had been promised a constitutionally established string of provincial parliaments. In 1823, Prussia formed eight parliaments (assemblies of the estates). They embraced the heads of princely families, representatives of the knightly estate, i.e., the nobility, of towns and rural communities. It was a parliamentary feudal system under the attack of the liberal bourgeoisie. Marx was part of the revolutionary struggle of the working class and also of the struggle of the bourgeoisie for the advancement of capitalism. Marx fought for freedom and dignity and against the official practices of press control and the manipulation of the truth. Marx identified press practices with the right of freedom of expression that governs the relations between the press and public and private authorities. Marx's articles were occasioned by the censorship instruction of the Prussian Government in December 1841 and the freedom of the press debates in the Rheinland province of Prussia, and they further include a discussion of "the censorship decree in the Provisional Federal Act on the Press" for the German states adopted on September 20, 1819.

Marx considers freedom of the press and censorship as historical fact. For him, the "*literary period of strict censorship, is therefore clear historical proof that the censorship has undoubtedly influenced the development of the German spirit in a disastrous, irresponsible way"* (Marx 1842c).

The very first article addressing the freedom of the press, censorship and writers was titled "*Comments on the latest Prussian Censorship Instructions*" and was written between January 15 and February 10, 1842 and published in the *Anekdota zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publicistik*, in 1843 (Marx 1842a).

Distinguishing himself from those who exclaim "*Beware of Greeks bearing gifts*" (beware of Trojan horse) even before the appearance of the new Prussian censorship decree, Marx explains that censorship "*is official criticism; its standards are critical standards, hence they least of all can be exempted from criticism, being on the same plane as the latter", and the censor "is accuser, defender and judge in a single person; control of the mind is entrusted to the censor*" (Marx 1842a). And he continues:

"Censorship is criticism as a monopoly of the government. But does not criticism lose its rational character if it is not open but secret, if it is not theoretical but practical, if it is not above parties but itself a party, if it operates not with the sharp knife of reason but with the blunt scissors of arbitrariness, if it only exercises criticism but will not submit to it, if it disavows itself during its realisation, and, finally, if it is so uncritical as to mistake an individual person for universal wisdom, peremptory orders for rational statements, ink spots for patches of sunlight, the crooked deletions of the censor for mathematical constructions, and crude force for decisive arguments?" (Marx 1842e).

Addressing the nature of the decree, he reminds us that *"censorship is also to protect ruling forces from any kind of unwanted communication and criticism: The press is forbidden all control over officials as over such institutions that exist as a class of individuals" (Marx 1842a).* Marx declares that the censorship law is not a law: *"it is a police measure; but it is a bad police measure, for it does not achieve what it intends, and it does not intend what it achieves" (Marx 1842f).*

In his articles, Marx also invalidates each rationale (such as human immaturity, good and bad press, and bad people with bad ideas) given by the speaker of the Assembly in order to justify the censorship. For instance, Marx argues:

"If the immaturity of the human race is the mystical ground for opposing freedom of the press, then the censorship at any rate is a highly reasonable means against the maturity of the human race. Man, individually and in the mass, is imperfect by nature. [...] The arguments of our speaker are imperfect, governments are imperfect, assemblies are imperfect,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

freedom of the press is imperfect, every sphere of human existence is imperfect. Hence if one of these spheres ought not to exist because of this imperfection, none of them has the right to exist, man in general has no right to exist. Amid all these imperfections, why should precisely the free press be perfect? Why does an imperfect provincial estate demand a perfect press? If then, by its very existence, everything human is imperfect, ought we therefore to lump everything together, have the same respect for everything, good and evil, truth and falsehood?" (Marx 1842d).

Invalidating the rationale, Marx continues:

"in order really to justify censorship, the speaker would have had to prove that censorship is part of the essence of freedom of the press; instead he proves that freedom is not part of man's essence. He rejects the whole genus in order to obtain one good species, for is not freedom after all the generic essence of all spiritual existence, and therefore of the press as well? In order to abolish the possibility of evil, he abolishes the possibility of good and realises evil, for only that which is a realisation of freedom can be humanly good. We shall therefore continue to regard the censored press as a bad press so long as it has not been proved to us that censorship arises from the very essence of freedom of the press (Marx 1842d).

Marx also emphasizes that the press freedom has a different character: *"Freedom of the press has a justification quite different from that of censorship because it is itself an embodiment of the idea, an embodiment of freedom, a positive good, whereas censorship is an embodiment of unfreedom, the polemic of a world outlook of semblance against the world outlook of essence; it has a merely negative nature". (Marx 1842e).*

Marx addresses the repressive conditions in Germany by indicating that twenty two years (since the enactment of the censorship law at the end of 1819) "*illegal actions have been committed by an authority which has in its charge the highest interest of the citizens,* their minds*, by an authority which regulates, even more than the Roman censors did, not only the behaviour of individual citizens, but even the behaviour of the public mind*". He provides an excellent discussion on every futile approach to the problem (blaming the censors, individuals, defects in the law or in institutions, nature of the law, newspaper correspondents and public) and concludes: "*resentment against the thing itself becomes resentment against persons. It is believed that by a change of persons the thing itself has been changed. [...] The real,* radical cure for the censorship *would be its* abolition*; for the institution itself is a bad one, and institutions are more powerful than people*" (Marx 1842a).

For Marx, "*only struggle can convince both the government and the people, as well as the press itself, that the press has a real and necessary right to existence. Only struggle can show whether this right to existence is a concession or a necessity, an illusion or a truth*" (Marx 1843). *"Censorship does not abolish the struggle, it makes it one-sided, it converts an open struggle into a hidden one, it converts a struggle over principles into a struggle of principle without power against power without principle"* (Marx 1842a).

5.2.5. The Difference between Press Law and Censorship

Marx considers censorship law as a precautionary measure of the police against freedom. He compares it with press law in 1842:

"In the press law, freedom punishes. In the censorship law, freedom is punished. The censorship law is a law of suspicion against freedom. The press law is a vote of confidence which freedom gives itself. The press law punishes the abuse of freedom. The censorship law punishes freedom as an abuse. It treats freedom as a criminal, or is it not regarded in every sphere as a degrading punishment to be under police supervision? [...] The press law is a real law because it is the positive existence of freedom. It regards freedom as the normal state of the press, the press as the mode of existence of freedom, and hence only comes into conflict with a press offence as an exception that contravenes its own rules and therefore annuls itself. Freedom of the press asserts itself as a press law, against attacks on freedom of the press itself, i.e., against press offences. The press law declares freedom to be inherent in the nature of the criminal. Hence what he has done against freedom he has done against himself and this self-injury appears to him as a punishment in which he sees a recognition of his freedom. [...] Therefore the press law is the legal recognition of freedom of the press. It constitutes right, because it is the positive existence of freedom. It must therefore exist, even if it is never put into application" (Marx 1842d).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx's positive view of the law had changed within a few years. For instance, in 1848, he considered the Prussian Press Bill as "classic monuments of Napoleonic press despotism" (Padover 1974, 121). In 1849, he stated that the Prussian despotism was worse than the Napoleonic despotism:

> *"Prussian despotism, on the other hand, confronts me in the shape of an official with a superior, sacrosanct being. His official character is as integral part of his personality as consecration is of a Catholic priest. [...] To insult such a priest, even one who is not functioning, who is not present, and who is back in private life, remains a profanation of religion, a desecration" (Marx, 1849b).*

Marx refuses the claims about the preventive nature of a law. According to Marx, laws

> *"cannot prevent a man's actions, for they are indeed the inner laws of life of his action itself, the conscious reflections of his life. Hence law withdraws into the background in the face of man's life as a life of freedom, and only when his actual behaviour has shown that he has ceased to obey the natural law of freedom does law in the form of state law compel him to be free, just as the laws of physics confront me as something alien only when my life has ceased to be the life of these laws, when it has been struck by illness. Hence a preventive law is a meaningless contradiction" (Marx 1842d). "A preventive law, therefore, has within it no measure, no rational rule, for a rational rule can only result from the nature of a thing, in this instance of freedom (Marx 1842e).*

5.2.6. Freedom of Press and Freedom of Trade

Human beings produce and reproduce their material and immaterial life. In regard to the press, Marx clearly explains its role and nature of the relationship between the material and immaterial production in the following sentence: *"What makes the press the most powerful lever for promoting culture and the intellectual education of the people is precisely the fact that it transforms the material struggle into an ideological struggle, the struggle of flesh and blood into a struggle of minds, the struggle of need, desire, empiricism into a struggle of theory, of reason, of form"* (Marx 1842j). This explanation demonstrates the connection and distinction between the two, but also shows the simplicity and the invalidity of the assertion that Marx/Marxism is an economic reductionist approach and establishes wrong causal relationship between the base and superstructure.

Marx differentiates freedom of the press (journalists' right of free expression) from freedom of trade (right of business): "*If the press itself is regarded merely as a trade, then, as a trade carried on by means of the brain, it deserves greater freedom than a trade carried on by means of arms and legs. The emancipation of arms and legs only becomes humanly significant through the emancipation of the brain, for it is well known that arms and legs become human arms and legs only because of the head which they serve"* (Marx 1842g).

Marx does not accept the idea that freedom of the press is a part of freedom of trade:

> *"Freedom of trade, freedom of property, of conscience, of the press, of the courts, are all species of one and the same genus, of freedom without any specific name. But it is quite incorrect to forget the difference because of the unity and to go so far as to make a particular species the measure, the standard, the sphere of other species. This is an intolerance on the part of one species of freedom, which is only prepared to tolerate the existence of others if they renounce themselves and declare themselves to be its vassals. [...] Freedom of trade is precisely freedom of trade and no other freedom because within it the nature of the trade develops unhindered according to the inner rules of its life. [...] Every particular sphere of freedom is the freedom of a particular sphere, just as every particular mode of life is the mode of life of a particular nature. How wrong it would be to demand that the lion should adapt himself to the laws of life of the polyp!" (Marx 1842g).*

> *"To make freedom of the press a variety of freedom of trade is a defence that kills it before defending it, for do I not abolish the freedom of a particular character if I demand that it should be free in the manner of a different character? Your freedom is not my freedom, says the press to a trade. As you obey the laws of your sphere, so will I obey the laws of my sphere. To be free in your way is for me identical with being unfree, just as a cabinet-maker*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> *would hardly feel pleased if he demanded freedom for his craft and was given as equivalent the freedom of the philosopher" (Marx 1842g).*

Acknowledging that "*the press exists also as a trade, but then it is not the affair of writers, but of printers and booksellers",* Marx pinpoints the crucial difference by stating that "*we are concerned here not with the freedom of trade of printers and booksellers, but with freedom of the press. [...] The primary freedom of the press lies in not being a trade*" (Marx 1842g).

5.2.7. Public Rights and Freedom

Marx defended the public's right and freedom while defending freedom of the press against the control by the ruling powers. For Marx,

> *"The law against a frame of mind is not a law of the state promulgated for its citizens, but the law of one party against another party. The law which punishes tendency abolishes the equality of the citizens before the law. It is a law which divides, not one which unites, and all laws which divide are reactionary. It is not a law, but a privilege. One may do what another may not do, not because the latter lacks some objective quality, like a minor in regard to concluding contracts; no, because his good intentions and his frame of mind are under suspicion. The moral state assumes its members to have the frame of mind of the state, even if they act in opposition to an organ of the state, against the government. But in a society in which one organ imagines itself the sole, exclusive possessor of state reason and state morality, in a government which opposes the people in principle and hence regards its anti-state frame of mind as the general, normal frame of mind, the bad conscience of a faction invents laws against tendency, laws of revenge, laws against a frame of mind which has its seat only in the government members themselves. Laws against frame of mind are based on an unprincipled frame of mind on an immoral, material view of the state" (Marx 1842a).*

5.2.8. Writers, Professional Practices and Professional Ideologies

On Writers

Journalists (and academicians) in their professional practices have mainly one of two choices: The first one is to take the multiple risks and inconveniences and become an ardent follower of the truth. The second one is to run after a multitude of rewards, become a devoted follower and supporter of the status quo. In fact, an internal negotiation happens and the decision depends on mostly the degree of risk the journalist can take.

Marx was the first kind of journalist. For him, journalism is a tool for truth and of the struggle for emancipation. For Marx, "*truth is general, it does not belong to me alone, it belongs to all, it owns me, I do not own it. My property is the* form*, which is my spiritual individuality. [...] Truth includes not only the result but also the path to it. The investigation of truth must itself be true; true investigation is developed truth, the dispersed elements of which are brought together in the result*" (Marx 1842a). He despises any practice and law that prescribes the form, the spiritual individuality. Similarly, he also despises any professional practice that follows such a prescribed path.

The second type of journalist is not an honourable professional, even as much as the "dull bureaucrat" who censored Marx's articles. The journalist reproduces the same material and immaterial conditions, but he/she does it knowingly, consciously, premeditatedly and he/she mostly is aware of the fact that s/he is distorting, lying or fabricating factoids. However, he/she is not in the same material and mental condition as the dull bureaucrat or the servant-driver of Edward Bernays' Dum Jack (Ewen 1996). The dull bureaucrat named Lauenz Dolleschall would not let anyone "*making fun of divine things*", thus would censor everything that looks suspicious to him and would say, as Marx quotes: "*Now it's a matter of my bread and butter. Now I strike out everything*" (cited Quotations are from Padover 1974: xviii). However, the journalist's decisions are not based on his/her irrational or illogical beliefs, but his/her well calculated interest: he/she would edit, thus censor everything that does not fit in his/her interest and interests of his/her employers.

In the defence speech during his trial in 1849, Marx described the duty of the press and journalists:

> *"I prefer to follow the great events of the world, to analyze the course of history, than to occupy myself with local bosses, with the police and prosecuting magistrates. However great these gentlemen may imagine themselves in their own fancy, they are nothing, absolutely*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> *nothing, in the gigantic battles of the present time. I consider we are making a real sacrifice when we decide to break a lance with these opponents. But, firstly, it is the duty of the press to come forward on behalf of the oppressed in its immediate neighbourhood. And furthermore, gentlemen, the edifice of servitude has its most specific support in the subordinate political and social powers which directly confront the private life of an individual, of a living person. It is not sufficient to fight against general relationships and the highest authorities. The press must decide to enter the lists against a specific police officer, a specific Public Prosecutor, a specific Landrat. [...] The first duty of the press now is to undermine all the foundations of the existing political state of affairs (Marx 1849b).*

The statement above indicates that Marx attributes an important role to the press and journalists in the struggle for freedom. For him, "*the press in general is a realisation of human freedom. Consequently, where a press there is freedom of the press".* Then, for Marx the question of freedom of the press is not *"a question whether freedom of the press ought to exist, for it always exists. The question is whether freedom of the press is a privilege of particular individuals or whether it is a privilege of the human mind. The question is whether a right of one side ought to be a wrong for the other side. The question is whether freedom of the mind has more right than freedom against the mind*" (Marx 1842e).

His discussion and explanations on and defence of freedom of thought and communication and of the dignity of a writer are important lessons for certain media professionals (and academicians) who safely practice their daily money making business in shameless compliance with the interest of private and state powers, while other journalists (and academicians) are in jail more than five years without a proper trial for thinking and planning to overthrow the government in countries like Turkey, where a glocal civil dictatorship of global capitalism has been tested. Turkey has more journalists in prison than any other country in the world. More than 100 journalists are currently in prison. There are between 700 and 1,000 ongoing cases in Turkey that could result in more imprisonments and up to 3,000 years imprisonment (http://europe.ifj.org/en/articles?search=Turkey) Mustafa Balbay (a famous journalist and recently elected member of the parliament) and Prof. Dr. Mehmet Haberal (a worldwide famous medical doctor, president of Baskent University and recently elected member of the parliament) have been in jail for more than 3 years for planning a coup against the ruling government. Anyone who writes and says something about the situation is accused of "attempting to influence fair trial" and is put in jail (http://www.dha.com.tr/chp-leaders-immunity-in-danger-accused-of-attempting-to-influence-fair-trial-son-dakika-haberi_255874.html). Current dominant professionalism in the media (and academia) is a despicable kind of professionalism that Marx criticizes in his articles.

Marx also sets the basic professional standard for media professionals by differentiating a writer/journalist from a businessperson:

> *"the writer, of course, must earn in order to be able to live and write, but he must by no means live and write to earn. [...] The writer does not at all look on his work as a means. It is an end in itself, it is so little a means for him himself and for others that, if need be, he sacrifices his existence to its existence. [...] The writer who degrades the press into being a material means deserves as punishment for this internal unfreedom the external unfreedom of censorship, or rather his very existence is his punishment. (May 19, 1842g).*

Criticizing the division of authorised and unauthorised writers, Marx asks: "*for whom, then, is the division of writers into authorised and unauthorised intended?*" and he provides an answer and another question: *"Obviously not for the truly authorised, for they can make their influence felt without that. Is it therefore for the "unauthorised" who want to protect themselves and impress others by means of an external privilege?"* . He adds:

> *"If the German looks back on his history, he will find one of the main reasons for his slow political development, as also for the wretched state of literature prior to Lessing, in the existence of "authorised writers.". It was the unauthorised writers who created our literature. Gottsched and Lessing-there you have the choice between an "authorised" and "unauthorised" writer! [...] Freedom of the press will certainly not be achieved by a crowd of official writers being recruited by you from your ranks. The authorised authors would be the official authors, the struggle between censorship and freedom of the press would be converted into a struggle between authorised and unauthorised writers" (Marx 1842g).*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

On professional practices

Marx has many statements in articles and letters to editors on the general and daily press practices (e.g.; Marx, 1842h; 1842i; 1842k; 1843; 1843b; 1843c; 1848; 1849; 1860; 1861). They can be grouped as follows:

- Writings about the government persecution of press by imposing a ban on newspapers: Marx questions the legitimacy of such persecutions and the nature of the condition of the press.
- Writings about the reactions of other newspapers and writers on government persecution of the press: Marx criticizes those who have unfair or unjust approaches.
- Remarks, replies, evaluations and criticism of the writings of the other journalists' about an issue, claim, assertion or criticism: Here we see statements ranging from agreement to strong polemics and accusations.
- Evaluation of strategic and/or stylistic exercises of the press.
- Evaluation of the press coverage on politics, relationship between press and politicians, press and people; attitudes of the press on war.
- Evaluation of the press in general.

Observing the attitude of the press towards the official use of repression and censorship measures, Marx heavily criticizes the German press (his assessment fits also e.g. Turkish media today):

> *"The German daily press is certainly the flabbiest, sleepiest and most cowardly institution under the sun! The greatest infamies can be perpetrated before its very eyes, even directed against itself, and it will remain silent and conceal everything; if the facts had not become known by* accident, *one would never have learnt through the press what splendid March violets have been brought into being by divine grace in some places" (Marx 1849).*

For Marx, the press should protect individuals, but not everybody: *"The press is obliged to reveal and denounce circumstances, but I am convinced that it should not denounce individuals, unless there is no other way of preventing a public evil or unless publicity already prevails throughout political life so that the German concept of denunciation no longer exists"* (Marx 1843d).

Marx positions the press in society and attributes a mediating role to press between the public and ruling forces. At the same time, he considers the press as an indispensable means of voicing the needs and grievances of the people:

> *"the rulers and the ruled alike are in need of a third element, which would be political without being official, hence not based on bureaucratic premises, an element which would be of a civil nature without being bound up with private interests and their pressing need. This supplementary element with the* head of a citizen of the state *and the* heart of a citizen *is the* free press. *In the realm of the press, rulers and ruled alike have an opportunity of criticising their principles and demands, and no longer in a relation of subordination, but on terms of equality as* citizens of the state; *no longer as* individuals*, but as* intellectual forces, *as exponents of reason. The "free press", being the product of public opinion, is also the creator of public opinion. It alone can make a particular interest a general one, it alone can make the* distressed state *of the Mosel region an object of general attention and general sympathy on the part of the Fatherland, it alone can mitigate the distress by dividing the feeling of it among all"* (Marx 1843f).

For Marx, the language of the free press is the language of human conditions, not the determining factor of the human life and human relations. He emphasizes the use of language and its connection with the life conditions and bureaucratic report:

> *"The attitude of the press to the people's conditions of life is based on reason, but it is equally based on* feeling*. Hence it does not speak only in the clever language of judgment that soars above circumstances, but the passionate language of circumstances themselves, a language which cannot and should not be demanded of* official reports*. The free press, finally, brings the people's need in its real shape, not refracted through any bureaucratic medium, to the steps of the throne, to a power before which the difference between rulers and ruled vanishes and there remain only equally near and equally far removed* citizens of the state" (Marx 1843f).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The nature of a writer and his/her professional practices indicate his/her professional ideology. The duty Marx assigns to the journalist and press, for instance, in his defence speech above, shows the professional worldview that he aligns himself with. On the other hand, Marx's criticisms about the writers and the press demonstrate the difference between the professional ideology of those who adhere to the dominant mode and relations and those who do not.

6. Conclusion

Theory in general is a systematic and consistent explanation of, e.g., organized human practices. Explanations should correspond to the explained, otherwise theory itself or theoretical explanation loses its validity and reliability. However, the validity and reliability can be forged by creating images on the correspondence of theory to practice and on the nature of the practices and/or explanations in such a way that the explanations, despite their irrelevant, inconsistent, inappropriate or incompatible nature, are made valid ones via extensive production, circulation and legitimization practices. Legitimization is done through at least two mechanisms: The first one is to establish domination through inter-subjectivity that is based on rationalized claims of objectivity and, furthermore, universality. The second one is the exercise of power that espouses such inter-subjectivity. Namely, such domination is gained and sustained through organized relations of power and personal interests in a society wherein production and reproduction of material life can be done through the praxis of human agents, who drive their consciousness from the organized material and immaterial life and at the same time, reflect their thinking/consciousness to their material and immaterial conditions. Hence, those who have the power and the means of control have advantages in deciding what, how and where to produce and distribute the material and immaterial products and services. The academic world and the nature of academic production become integral parts of this inter-subjective domination. The findings of the present study clearly indicate that the prevailing nature of academic journals' orientations in issue selection, problem formulation, study objectives, theoretical and methodological approaches carry particular expressions of domination. Most studies published in Media and Communication Studies-journals are various manifestations of mainstream approaches; all are interested in attitudes, interests, preferences and behaviours of individuals and advancing the functionality and interests of corporate and institutional structures. The remaining studies mainly serve as controlled or functional alternatives, with few exceptions. The prevailing dominance of variations of functionalism in communication studies has been discussed by various writers. For instance, Hardt (1997) points out the existence of a dominant functionalist perspective of communication research since the 1940s and a preoccupation with issue orientation based on the practical demands of a growing commercial investment in the media industries. He also indicates that the ideological orientations of U.S. Cultural Studies are determined by liberal-pluralist ideas and that they support commercial-industrial interests that guide the relationship between media and society.

Luring academics to participate and shaping of mental production and relations through the numerous promotional ways and means by the power structures are not new. There are many examples in the communication field: The psychological and cold war warriors (Lasswell, Shills, Lazarsfeld, Cantril, Dewitt, Gallop, Likert, Lerner, Berelson, Schramm, Pool and the like) received millions of dollars for involvement in ideological production and distribution by military and intelligence communities and foundations connected with them (e.g., FBI, CIA, Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie Foundations, RAND Corporation). Such forms of participation by academicians are still a part of the practice of sustainable domination. There are valuable studies concerning close relations among academicians, state structures and various foundations (e.g., Doob 1947; Schiller 1974; Simpson 1994; Gary 1996; Glander 2000; Solovey 2001; Maxwell 2003; Pooley 2008; Summers 2008; Jonas 2010).

At present, psychological warfare activities and studies are extended to the entire civilian sphere of social life and include multitudes of legitimized and justified relations among multiple parties within a country and at international levels. Early studies with their funding allies helped to shape the formation concept of communication and the direction of the communication field not only in the US, but also throughout the world. Recent studies continue to reproduce the ongoing warfare not only in the political arena, but also in the economic field in order to maintain sustainable development via mind-, interest- and behaviour-management.

One of the important implications of the present study is that participation in networks of profitable relations, the probability of getting financial benefits from various resources, getting formal recognition and success in university departments, finding a reputable place in ruling academic circles, getting published in leading scholarly journals, and getting funds from granting institutions, financing bodies and professional associations require an academic stance that (a) totally ignores

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the Marxist approach, (b) demonstrates an open anti-Marxist stand, (c) engages in trying to invalidate Marxist views by adopting one of the secure and beneficial approaches based on culturalism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-positivism and the like, (e) provides mostly wrong and distorted explanations like claiming the demise of Marxism, the end of ideology, democratization, knowledge society, interdependence, decolonisation, identity, and a post-Marxist shift.

The Continuation of Theoretical Domination that Supports Ruling Power Structures

This study found that theories and methods used in Media and Communication Studies are mostly based on finding effects and developing the mechanisms of control of individual worldviews and behaviours. The dominant effect research has started with a simple model of persuasion and transmission that is characterized by direct and unmediated effects, typically based on persuasion and the audience modelling of observed behaviour. The interest in effects evolved to analytic constructs of audience motivation and disposition of active audience theories such as the elaboration likelihood model, attribution theory, cognitive consistency and selective exposure, and uses and gratifications theory. Adding the contextual context to the individual psychology and/or moving to macro explanations, theories like two-step- and multiple step-flow, diffusion theory, knowledge gaps and social network approaches brought about new research design techniques, especially on qualitative measures, interaction and historical data analysis. Moving to the macro level of design and analysis in the 1970s, the political, economic and institutional context of communication, theories like cultivation theory followed the liberal-democratic critical approach by emphasizing the cultivation of middle class ideology and cumulative effects of the media. For softening the media effects on the audience, theories like agenda setting and media dependency were emerged. Later, agenda melding, priming and framing theories were added to such approaches. In the neo-liberal atmosphere of the 1980s, theories like reception theory, liberal-pluralist cultural studies and identity theories emerged and proliferated alongside the dominant and evolving effects tradition. Concepts like reception, deconstruction, reconstruction and interpretation were put in circulation: The interpretative turn brought back the active and atomized individual. The present study found that such approaches do not receive much interest in most of the journals studied. Proliferation of and support for such approaches takes place in the peripheries of the ruling circles of current research practices. However, Klapper's summary of mass communication research in the 1960s and his suggestions seem still to be a leading guide for most studies in the communication field:

(a) Mainstream orientations focus on various psychological dispositions of audience members;

(b) Culturalists, social interactionists, liberal-pluralists and social psychologists have interests in the situated social context of message reception beyond socio-demographics;

(c) Some post-structuralists focus on the structure of beliefs among audience members, not just the direction of beliefs as it was before;

(d) Audience-reception analysts reintroduce the active audience thesis in a highly elaborate cover and participate in saving the industry from social responsibility.

Klapper's suggestions and the current pseudo-critical and functional alternative research orientations are important because they are all about "knowing people" in detail in order to control them.

Theoretical domination is maintained also through creating functional alternatives and promoting existing functional alternatives. Such maintenance and promotion is evident in academic relations and production. The present study found that the studies that try to totally or partially invalidate Marx or claim that Marxism is waning, inadequate, ethno-centric and insensitive to identities other than class identity are not mainstream or liberal-democrat oriented studies. Mainstream studies ignore and liberal-democrats generally appreciate Marx. The study findings indicate that Marx is not "contested, modified, and deformed, frequently distorted, overstated, and abused by enthusiastic practitioners and promoters" (Artz 2006, 6), but by various kinds of so-called "critical" or "alternative" approaches. The present study could not find any "enthusiastic promoter of Marx/Marxism" in articles, but found that "alternatives" are "alternative to Marx" and the most "critical" ones are in fact "criticism directed against Marx".

Another interesting, let's say "tactic," is that there has been a popular tendency since the late sixties that some writers (for instance, Foucault, Baudrillard, Laclau and Mouffe, and their followers) start with Marx and end with maintaining the invalidation, demise or inadequacy of Marx. This kind of tendency is very popular and fruitful because such mental products are the best mind management and control tools since they pretend to be the current and valid alternative voices (overtly or covertly directed against Marx).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Reproduction of Theoretical and Methodological Poverty

The present study also found that most of the studies, especially empirical and pseudo-empirical (survey) studies, seriously lack theoretical reasoning in design, hypothesis construction, and the presentation of conclusions. Similarly, some previous studies found low levels of theory use in Media and Communication Studies (Potter and Riddle 2007; Kamhawi and Weaver 1999). Furthermore, the statements of study objectives are based on meeting the interests of industrial needs for knowing and controlling the audience/consumers and media/knowledge workers.

Such findings support the theoretical reasoning that such scholars only care about issues/problems related to personal and organized-private interests rather than establishing a sound theoretical rationale to explain the nature of any phenomena. Such an orientation further indicates that the academic world is mainly an integrated part of the capitalist industrial structure.

Most qualitative studies that claim that they are doing "discourse analysis" have inconsistent and conflicting theoretical narrations and provide no or no proper information about the way they perform the analysis. Providing many inconsistent theoretical statements and explanations and using highly restricted codes does not reduce or eliminate any uncertainty, rather increases it.

Most of the quantitative studies that use multivariate statistical analysis have no hypotheses that require multi-variate statistical testing. Namely, most hypotheses are hypotheses that are based on bivariate relations, hence require bivariate analysis. Furthermore, there are studies that provide only some questions, but do not extract any hypotheses, but do statistical analysis (including factor analysis or test causal relations without providing a causal hypothesis). All of this means that positivist-empirical research designs, data analysis and findings have serious validity problems.

The Marginalization, Downgrading or Keeping Out of Significant Alternatives, and the Promotion of Controlled and Functional Alternatives

Existence of domination means also the existence of the dominated, which makes domination and struggle for liberation continuous and dynamic. The struggle cannot be a monolithic one, rather it has multiple forms and levels that are interrelated not only with each other, but also with the various expressions of dominant practices. The present study found that there are articles with "critical and highly critical content", however very few can be considered a real/meaningful alternative that is based on, e.g., the idea that societal change means a change in the mode and the relations of production. Almost all of the "critical articles" are overtly or covertly, fully, mostly or generally anti-Marxian and are offsprings of, for instance, Durkheim, Heidegger, Husserl, Gadamer, Lacan, Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault, Baudrillard, Said, Habermas, Laclau and Mouffe.

"Criticizing" does not make a theoretical approach critical. "Marx beyond Marx" means a different methodological and theoretical musing if it is not based on Marx's approach. Theoretical approaches that base their main premises on, e.g., the change in the gender composition of parliament, ethnic composition of work force in wage-slavery or obtaining legal recognition of gay marriage are not "alternative orientations" or "critical orientations" because they want acknowledgement by and reintegration into the dominant structure that they criticize. The capitalist system does not become a humane system even if the parliament of capitalism is composed of 100% women, liberals, leftists or even communists. Then, the move away from class analysis to the current kinds of identity politics is an integral part of the global policy of diversion and "divide and rule". Moving away from the interest in social, economical and ideological/cultural studies and focusing instead on the individual expressions in daily life, away from human beings in organized relations to a constitutive function of textual or other discursive manifestations and the like does not constitute a socially responsible, "critical" and/or Marxian analysis. I consider them, in the final analysis, controlled and/or functional alternatives buttressing the current capitalist mode and relations.

The communication field was established by sociologists, social psychologists, and political scientists. It developed as a social science field. Communication stands at the intersection of every field in the social sciences (an all other sciences). However, it is not a stepchild or colony of scholars of any field who do research and write about communication without first having a sound knowledge about communication. I have been criticizing the situation in Turkey by declaring that the communication field is still colonized by those who do not read even the fundamental literature in communication, are mostly unsuccessful in their own fields and find secure place in the colony (the communication field). In recent years, the communication field has been colonized by the worst kind of outsiders, who are harmfully altering not only communication, but all fields of the social sciences. They come especially from literature, semiotics, and hermeneutics. The situation gets worse by the fact that an increasing number of scholars in communication, who have no background in literature, semiotics, or culture, join the band-wagon by doing cultural studies or dis-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

course analysis. The new colonizers pull especially mass communication away from a field dealing with actual human relations in organized power structures and interest relations towards becoming a field of interpretations of the detached texts and meaningless discourses. Correspondingly, the findings of this study indicate that qualitative communication research is leaving the actual human relations and societal conditions aside and moves towards the analysis of the end products in such a way that the product, process or textual interaction (e.g., language, interpretation, deconstruction, or discourse) is made the "determining agent/factor."

Producing the Material and Immaterial Riches and Poverty [7]

The nature of domination and struggle in academic relations, as well as in journal- and article- publishing, depends on the historically determined conditions of the mode of production and production relations at a certain time and place. The development of a field and "exchange of scientific ideas" are deeply connected with establishing, sustaining/maintaining and expanding the dominance of intersubjectivities formed by various interest groups gathered around various ideologies/theories and research traditions that provide work security, status and financial enrichment. This dominance of the system of mutual interests involves the control of production and distribution of functional knowledge for the benefit of the system. In the 21st century, power relations and forms of competition within the scientific and research communities have been shaped in such a way that it reached to the point of "science and research in personal interests" which are realized through serving those who pay more in terms of money, fame and status.

There is a dominance of quantitative multitude, qualitative poverty and normalized abnormality in academic journals. Within this frame, the study findings provide support for the fact that there are at least three interrelated dominant immaterial productions (production of ideologies, thoughts, consciousness, beliefs, feelings, emotions, empathy, sensitivity and everything that is not material) in the current global economic and political marketplace.

The first one is the production of knowledge that is based on scientific research for the advancement of capitalist structures and relations. Such knowledge production is rarely done in universities, but mostly in controlled environments like in corporate R&D departments, private research firms and government institutions. Such knowledge is rarely produced for everybody and the market (not as a commodity); such knowledge is an undisclosed, secret and highly protected product. Such products can be marketed only when advanced knowledge is produced and control mechanisms are established. Such knowledge makes industrial production, advancement and control possible. We cannot see such knowledge in academic journals, unless it is found necessary to establish control and enhance market supremacy[8]. We have no access to them.

The second one is the kind of knowledge that is produced for mind and behaviour management. We can divide this knowledge production into a few sub categories:

(1) **Knowledge about people**: Such knowledge: This kind of knowledge provides helpful information about people as consumers, customers and voters for industrial and institutional decision and policymaking, implementation, auditing, monitoring and revisions. Marketing, advertising and positivist-empirical communication studies work in this domain.

(2) **Knowledge for better work performance**: The purpose of this kind of knowledge is to justify the existence of industrial structures and practices, work relations, wage policies and working conditions, and to installs mind-sets and behavioural dispositions that make people work harder and get gratifications from abstract thoughts, feelings, identifications at work. The exam and grading systems in schools prepare students for readily accepting the structural inequalities in the industrial system. Organizational communication studies that focus on communication auditing, sensitivity training, empathy, effective communication, workers' attitudes, behaviour, work performance and relationships at work and the like are designed for manipulation of workers so that there is better performance without raising wages and improving working conditions. Public relation activities within organizations carry the same purpose.

(3) **Knowledge for people**: This kind of knowledge is provided in order to maintain a certain level and type of consciousness, feelings and sensitivities that justify the conditions of the prevailing mode and relations in life and make people adjust to miserable conditions and ready for accepting individual or mass killings enforced by the ruling forces (Jay Gould's infamous statement saying that *"I can hire one half of the working class to kill the other half*" has lost validity, because the

[7] See for valuable discussions on knowledge and production of knowledge: Marx 1971a; Marx 1973; Marx & Engels 1969; Carchedi 2005; Fuchs, 2010; Mosco & McKercher 2008; Mosco 2008; Schiller 1974 and 1987; Schiller 2007; Weiler 2006; Thompson 1997.

[8] See for various discussions: Blackburn 1973; Berube 1996; Allardt 1999; Gunarathe 2010; Fuchs 2010; Tomaselli and Shepperson 2010; Bauer and Jensen 2011.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ruling forces do not have to hire them now since they are already hired and used). Some parts of such knowledge (as in the production and use of emotions, religious and superstitious values) are a continuation of successfully used strategies of ruling forces throughout human history. Such ruling knowledge of previous times are reshaped and reproduced in a country and distributed globally in the same or glocalized forms and used by other dominant classes in other countries. This is one of the essential parts of globalisation of the capitalist mode. Content and significance of this knowledge are not due to its universal validity, but due to the utmost functionality for the ruling interests and practices. For instance, religious ideas and sensitivities that made people refuse to watch television and consider the use of radio and loudspeakers in mosques as a sin in the 1960s, were reversed in 1970s. This is called the integration of the old functional Ideas, structures and practices into the new interests and the ruling mode and relations. This is true not only for the knowledge of people, but also for knowledge for and by professionals throughout the world: Most articles in the 77 journals in this study were written by academicians from all over the world. Other parts of knowledge belong to the current mode of class domination. Whether it has trans-historical character or not, this kind of knowledge is used to sustain all probable kinds of domination over people. Furthermore, knowledge for people is functional for creating "conspicuous consumption" and consumer society, and for establishing a political atmosphere of certain interests, participation, enmity and readiness. This kind of knowledge's aim is to freeze people's intellect and interest at an early teenage level. Such "knowledge" (reproduction of ignorance as knowing) is provided by the mass media, cultural and political organizations and to a varying degree by formal education.

(4) **Knowledge for professionals and by professionals**: This is the kind of situationally conditioned knowledge that is produced in order to orient the attention, interest, research and educational concerns of scholars towards certain functional professional activities. The activities in daily organizational routines that are based on such knowledge reproduce organizational life. Most mental workers in the production of e.g. a television sitcom can have a false general knowledge about the nature of the product. However, such probability is rather low when it comes to newspaper editors, media professionals and scholars. A scholar is aware of the meaning of a theoretical and methodological choice he/she makes. It is a well calculated or predetermined preference. There is another character of the knowledge and knowledge production under discussion: the number of professional research findings and products that are actually used by the organizational decision makers are at a minimal level. However, most knowledge activities' goal is to keep academicians busy in certain orientations and relational domains. Products of such activities are useless piles of junks for industrial use and, at the same time, extremely useful for the industrial politics of mind and interest control. In this kind of production relations, most academicians are just like football fans: The masses are oriented toward watching or going to football games, the academicians are oriented toward doing research in certain dominant modes. The only difference between the academicians and the masses is that the masses get only psychological satisfaction, while academicians get extra benefits like money and status.

The third one is the production of knowledge on the conditions for knowledge production. We find at least two ruling strategic approaches here: Exclusion and distorted inclusion. One part of this kind of knowledge production has exclusionary character: As it was found in this study, it excludes Marx's (and Marxist) analysis of knowledge production and conditions of knowledge production. This exclusion is done through various mechanisms. The foremost one is the probable productive value or surplus creation probability of the production. For instance, the success of exclusion of an idea is achieved when individuals think that such idea (e.g. learning mass media theory) is useless or that supporting such an idea (e.g. talking about significance of marxist method in communication studies) is not rewarding. The inclusionary character includes various kinds of distortions, invalidations, downgrading, marginalization and inappropriateness.

The explanations about knowledge production above indicate that everyone in various positions in society as an individual and every organized entity participate in production (and dissemination and use) of knowledge. Individuals' knowledge and knowledge of organized entities and the behavioural manifestations are ideologically situated and show the nature of their positions in the class domination and struggle. In the present study, almost all communication scholars with very few exceptions position themselves to serve the interests of the capitalist class. This is most probably because they want to collect the material and immaterial rewards distributed by the same class and also stay away from multiple forms of punishment, which is applied on those who behave differently. They have no interest in the idea of knowledge created, distributed and used for the general interest. Moreover, they are not interested in influencing media practices, policies and taking any urgent social problem as an issue to investigate.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Such findings also provide support for Marx's conclusions on the nature of the distribution of wealth. The production of wealth is social since everybody participates in the process, but the distribution is private in such a way that a small number of people who own and control the means of production appropriate most of the wealth. The same problem exists in the production, distribution and use of knowledge: The distribution of wealth in terms of material gains and in terms of functional knowledge is highly controlled.

Extending the Prevailing Structure of Interests and Relations to the New Media

The present study found that most historically prevailing issues, problems, concerns, ideologies, methods and theories are also carried to and used in the new computer-mediated communication research. The similar mystifications and functional discussions we witnessed during the 1960s about television are reproduced about the Internet.

There are new issues and data collection techniques, because of the nature of new personal communication technologies like mobile phones and computer-mediated communication. However, they are only tools for the implementation of organized objectives, hence they do not change or abandon the prevailing ideological and material interests. Some new issues are renewed old-issues like the role and effects of the new media. There are also mystified new terms like social media, as if the other media are not social, not economical and not directorial and administrative. In fact, all new media are social, economical, industrial, administrative and directional. Technological multi-directionality does not make a communicative action democratic or symmetrical or two-way; a mobile phone is a multi-directional device a lot more than the Internet in terms of permitting a two or multi-sided flow. However, it is not the mobile phone or Internet that determines the nature of relations. The determining factor is the structured nature of power relations and interests. Two ways or multiple ways of a technological device cannot change the nature of power relations and the nature of communication. The mobile phone does not change the mode of relations between you and your boss, and does not alter the fact that your boss is your boss. Democratic relations and freedom of communication are impossible if any of the following determining factors are missing, banned or exercised by only one side. It does not matter if you use the Internet or the mobile phone or not, you are not free and your communication is not symmetrical or democratic if you cannot:

(1) start or stop the communication
(2) organize or influence the organization of time, place and conditions of interaction
(3) fill, modify and change the content of communication as you wish
(4) change or stop the nature of flow during the interaction (for instance, change the subject)
(5) end the communication at any point
(6) exert influence on the objective and outcome beyond being a mere participant

You can participate in every political discussion on the Internet; such participation does not make a political system a democratic system and such a use does not mean that the Internet is an agent of democratisation, since you cannot exert influence on the issues to be discussed, collective political decisions to be taken, implementations to be taken and the benefits to be divided/shared. The Internet is the most recent means of economical, political, mental, emotional and behavioural control; a newly added and improved popular opium of the people – especially of the young generation that is the most likely danger for the system. In essence, it is the new sphere of domination, control and struggle.

It is hard to find an Internet study that investigates the ways in which structure and use of Internet technologies worsens social inequities in terms of labour practices, distribution of wealth, and state surveillance activities, opens new ways of domination and struggle. However, there are many studies on the Internet's role in participatory democracy, bottom-up political forms (as if such forms were possible under the prevailing political structures). Many of them are eulogies to activist groups, the democratic underground, democratic and partisan public spheres. I must repeat that using communications media does not mean that we have reached or that we are at the level of participatory democracy. Participatory democracy or empowerment does not mean "use or consume" in a specific manner. Participating in consumption or use (including use for "writing, authorship") never means a democratic participation in daily life or empowerment as long as we are kept out of the power structure, as long as we are unable to influence the decision-making processes and ruling practices of the dominant forces. Did anybody change his/or her wage or working conditions through the Internet? I reiterate that the Internet is not a tool of emancipation, but a tool of dominance and struggle. We now have an additional medium controlled by economic and political interests. it is another contemporary field and means of struggle against dominance that has dramatically increased opportunities to observe us 24 hours.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Recommendations

Recommendations are useful only for those, who are in the habit of questioning himself/herself and anything and everything in life, and have no affect on those who align their own interest with those who pay the pipers, since they do not read articles like the present one. Those who read either are supporters, sympathizers or concerned by the Marxist approach. Some read just to know as much as possible. Some others read to collect information about the Marxist enemy. In any case, my recommendations based on the current study and accumulated knowledge are as follow:

Some studies have serious theoretical conceptual and methodological problems. Those who are not from the communication field, but conduct a study about communication, should first read the fundamental texts in communication studies beyond simple prescriptions of sender-message-channel-receiver-effect understandings and similar misconceptions. Those, who have a communication background, should either stay away from the popularized interest in cultural studies, discourse anaysis, reception analysis, semiotics and the like or firstly gain necessary knowledge about, e.g., semiotics and methods in semiotics. Furthermore, it is part of academic decency not to do any evaluation and ignore the most basic textual context such as words like “in general”, the sentence before or after a sentence. I also suggest that we should read the original sources if the issue is a person like Marx, who has been widely distorted.

Some studies have serious problems in choosing the socially significant issues, theory and method. This is mostly because of the prevailing nature of academia. I suggest it is time to start to question the dominant orientations and to study Marx’s theoretical and methodological approach in search of significant ways for understanding the nature of communication in society and societal change. The functionalist theoretical approaches and their current versions and their explicit and implicit assumptions and outcomes for the organized human life and environment have been well documented and their resonance can still be felt in current communication scholarship. In light of this multifaceted dominance, a basic advantage of Marx’s approach is that it provides a lot better theoretical and methodological means and ways of social inquiry. At the same time, it leads us to study socially significant issues with most meaningful manner by including all probable contextual determinants in understanding the nature of production, distribution and consumption of communication products, control, subversion, coercion, domination and struggle.

Marx’s approach can enable a systematic study of communication across multiple levels of relationships/interaction and analyses, ranging from the individual to the global level. No approach has been valid enough to be able to facilitate the study of prevailing conditions, development and change. For instance, modernization/development studies based on equilibrium, structural functionalist or behaviourist approaches and their current versions do not only fall short in explanations, but also tend to create mystifications and factoids about media and communication related issues. Recent global crises also mean the crisis of prevailing dominant and neo-dominant approaches in sociology, political science, economics and communication. Hence, despite all the produced obstacles, Marx’s approach remains the most viable approach to the study of any kind of communication, especially mass communication.

Although there are studies that have generated insightful theoretical, conceptual and practical explanations, there is still a growing need for better understanding of Marx and his contributions to the study of communication. Doing so, studying from time to time the nature of research orientations in Media and Communication Studies is an important and constructive academic initiative. Scholarly discussions on the status of the field, its historical development and its nature are a necessary outcome of such activity.

I believe that any initiative of Marxist scholars in the publishing and tenure environment is a meaningful and important contribution to Marxist Communication Studies and the communication field, given that even the use of the name of Marx can result and has historically often resulted in repression.

References

Adakli, Gülseren. 2009. *The Process of Neo-Liberalization and the Transformation of the Turkish Media Sector in the Context of the New Media Architecture*. In Jackie Harrison, and Bridgitte Wessels (eds.) Mediating Europe: New Media, Mass Communications. N. Y.: Berghahn Books.

Allardt, Erick. 1999. The Future of the Social Sciences in the 21st Century – A Comment. *Current Sociology* 47 (4): 13–17.

Babe, Robert. The Political Economy of Knowledge: Neglecting Political Economy in the Age of Fast Capitalism (as Before). Accessed February 4, 2012. http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/2_1/babe.htm

Babbie, Earl R. 2004. *The Practice of Social Research.* 10th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Bagdikian, Ben H. 1997. The Realities of Media Concentration and Control. *Television Quarterly* 29 (3): 22–28.

Bauer, Martin W., and Pablo Jensen. 2011. The Mobilization of Scientists for Public Engagement. *Public Understanding of Science.* 20 (1): 3-11.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Berube, Michael. 1996. Cultural Criticism and the Politics of Selling Out. Accessed January 28, 2012. http://www.altx.com/ebr/ebr2/2berube.htm

Berube, Michael, and Cary Nelson.1995. *Higher Education under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities*. New York: Routledge.

Blackburn, Robin. 1973. *Ideology in Social Sciences.* New York: Pantheon.

Bodemann, Y. Michal. 1979. The Fulfilment of Fieldwork in Marxist Praxis. *Dialectical Anthropology* 4 (2): 155-161.

Boyer, Richard O., and Herbert M. Morais. 1965/1980. *Labor's Untold Story*. New York: UE.

Carchedi, Guglielmo. 2005. On the Production of Knowledge. In *The Capitalist State and Its Economy: Democracy in Socialism (Research in Political Economy, Volume 22)*, edited by Paul Zarembka, 267-304. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Cerwonka, Allaine. 2009. Higher Education 'Reform', Hegemony, and Neo-Cold War Ideology. *Cultural Studies* 23 (5-6): 720-735.

Chouliaraki, Lilie, and Norman Fairclough. 1999. *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dei, George J. S., and Gurpreet S. Johal. 2005. *Critical Issues in Anti-Racist Research Methodologies*. New York: Peter Lang.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Domenech, Antoni. 2009. University Autonomy, a Return to the Thirties. Accessed January 12, 2012. http://www.barcelonametropolis.cat/en/page.asp?id=23&ui=148#

Doob, Leonard. 1947. Utilization of Social Scientists in the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information. *American Political Science Review* 41 (4): 49-67.

Dorfman, Ariel.1983. *The Empire's Old Clothes*. New York: Pantheon.

Ewen, Stuart. 1996. *PR! A Social History of Spin*. New York: BasicBooks.

Fetscher, Iring, ed. 1969. *Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels. Pressefreiheit und Zensur*. Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Class, Knowledge and New Media. *Media, Culture & Society* 32 (1): 141–150.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010a. Grounding Critical Communication Studies: An Inquiry into the Communication Theory of Karl Marx. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (1): 15–41.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. An Alternative View of Privacy on Facebook. Information 2: 140-165. Accessed February 7, 2012. http://fuchs.uti.at/489/

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Gans, Herbert. 1975. Social Science for Social Policy. In *The Use and Abuse of Social Sciences*, edited by Irvin L. Horowitz, 3-23. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books.

Garnham, Nicholas. 2001. The Information Society: Myth or Reality. Accessed January 12, 2012. http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/gricis/actes/bogues/Garnham.pdf

Gary, Brett. 1996. Communication Research, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Mobilization for the War on Words. *Journal of Communication* 46 (3): 124-147.

Glander, Timothy R. 2000. *Origins of Mass Communications Research during the American Cold War: Educational Effects and Contemporary Implications*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gorz, Andre. 1980. *On the Class Character of Science and Scientists.* In *Ideology of/in the Natural Sciences*, edited by Hillary Rose and Steven Rose, 59-71. Cambridge, MA: Scenkman Publishing.

Golding, Peter. 2000. Forthcoming Features: Information and Communications Technologies and the Sociology of the Future. *Sociology* 34 (1): 165-184.

Grossberg, Lawrence. 1997. *Bringing It All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies.* London: Duke University Press.

Gunaratne, Shelton. A. 2010. De-Westernizing Communication/Social Science Research: Opportunities and Limitations. *Media, Culture and Society* 32 (3): 473-500.

Hardt, Hanno. 1997. Beyond Cultural Studies - Recovering the 'Political' in Critical Communications Studies. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 21 (2): 70-79.

Hardt, Hanno. 2000. Communication is Freedom: Karl Marx on Press Freedom and Censorship. *Javnost - The Public* 7 (4): 85-100.

Haye, Yves de la. 1980. *Marx and Engels on the Means of Communication.* Paris: International General.

Jhally, Sut. 1993. Communications and the Materialist Conception of History: Marx, Innis and Technology. *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 7 (1). Accessed December 2, 2011. http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/7.1/Jhally.html

Jonas, Marie. 2010. A Short History of the Relationship between the American Psychological Association and the U.S. Military. hhttp://www.law.berkeley.edu/historyofAPAandMilitarypaper(final)11June10.pdf

Kamhawi, Rasha, and David Weaver. 2003. Mass Communication Research Trends from 1980 to 1999. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80 (7): 7-27.

Klapper, Joseph. T. 1960. *The Effects of Mass Communication*. Glencoe, III: Free Press.

Martin, Brian. 1998. Tied Knowledge: Power in Higher Education. Accessed January 7, 2012. Http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/98tk/tk02.html

Marx, Karl. 1842a. Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction. Accessed January 13, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/02/10.htm

Marx, Karl. 1842b. Prussian Censorship. Accessed December 10, 2011. Http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch01.htm

Marx, Karl. 1842c. Opponents of a Free Press. Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch02.htm

Marx, Karl. 1842d. On the Assembly of the Estates. Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch03.htm

Marx, Karl. 1842e. As a Privilege of Particular Individuals or a Privilege of the Human Mind?. (May 12) Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch04.htm

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl. 1842f. Censorship. Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch05.htm
Marx, K. 1842g. Freedom in General. Accessed December 10, 2011. Http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch06.htm
Marx, Karl. 1842h. Editorial Note: Communism and the Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung. Accessed January 10, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/10/22.htm
Marx, Karl. 1842j. The Supplement to Nos. 335 and 336 of The Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung on the Commissions of the Estates in Prussia. Accessed December 3, 2012 http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/12/10.htm
Marx, Karl. 1842k. The Polemical Tactics of the Augsburg Newspaper. Accessed November 28, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/11/29a.htm
Marx, Karl. 1843. The Ban on the Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung. Http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/12/31.htm
Marx, Karl. 1843b. Polemical Articles against The Allgemeine Zeitung. Accessed November 28, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/01/03.htm
Marx, Karl. 1843c. Stylistic Exercises of the Rhein- und Mosel-Zeitung. Accessed November 28, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/03/13.htm
Marx, Karl. 1843d. Cabinet Order on the Daily Press. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/11/16a.htm
Marx, Karl. 1843f. Justification of the Correspondent from the Mosel. Accessed January 12, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/01/15.htm
Marx, Karl. 1843g. Justification of the Correspondent from the Mosel. Accessed January 12, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/01/15.htm
Marx, Karl. 1848. Articles by Marx and Engels in Neue Rheinische Zeitung. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/newspapers/neue-rheinische-zeitung.htm
Marx. Karl. 1848a. Communist Manifesto. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm
Marx, Karl. 1849. The Censorship. Accessed November 28, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1849/03/15b.htm
Marx, Karl. 1849b. Speech by Karl Marx: The First Trial of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Accessed November 28, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1849/02/07.htm
Marx, Karl. 1853. The War Question. *New-York Daily Tribune*, No. 3904. Accessed October 21, 2009. http://csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/marxists.org/archive/marx/works/nydt/531021.htm
Marx, Karl. 1853b. Revolution in China and Europe. New York Daily Tribune 14 June. Marxists Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/14.htm
Marx, Karl. 1853c. Revolution in China and Europe. New York Daily Tribune 14 June, Marxists Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/14.htm
Marx, Karl. 1854. Declaration of War. – On the History of the Eastern Question. *New-York Daily Tribune,* April 15. Accessed November 25, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1854/03/28.htm
Marx, Karl. 1857. Russian Trade with China. New York Daily Tribune 7 April, Marxists Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/04/07.htm
Marx, Karl. 1857a. Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Appendix I. Accessed November 23, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/appx1.htm
Marx, Karl. 1857b. The Revolt in India. *New-York Daily Tribune,* September 15. Accessed Nevember 25, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/09/15.htm
Marx, Karl. 1857d. The Grundrisse: Notebook III. The Chapter on Capital (Continuation). Accessed January 15, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch06.htm
Marx, Karl. 1859. Critique of Political Economy. Accessed November 25, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch02_4.htm
Marx, Karl. 1859a. Grundrisse: Threefold Character, or Mode, of Circulation. Accessed December 13, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch13.htm#p678
Marx, Karl. 1860. Letter to the Editor of the Free Press: Prosecution of the Augsburg Gazette. Accessed December 3, 2012 http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1860/02/04.htm
Marx, Karl. 1961. The Opinion of the Newspapers and the Opinion of the People. Accessed January 13, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1861/12/31.htm
Marx, Karl. 1861a. The North American Civil War (Collection of Articles). Accessed February 13, 2012. http://libcom.org/library/american-civil-war-karl-marx
Marx, Karl. 1863-1883. Capital Volume III. Accessed November 25, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch39.htm
Marx, Karl. 1964. *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy.* (Translated by T.B. Bottomore). London: McGraw-Hill.
Marx, Karl. 1867. Capital Volume I. Accessed November 25, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm
Marx, Karl. 1971a. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. N.Y: International Publishers.
Marx, Karl. 1871. Letter to Ludwig Kugelmann. Accessed January 12, 2012. http://solomon.tinyurl.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/soth/getdoc.pl?S10022522-D000107
Marx, Karl. 1973. Grundrisse: *Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin.
Marx, Karl. 1975. *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*. Early Writings. London: Penguin.
Marx, Karl. 1976. *Capital.* Vol. I, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1977. *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.* Moscow: Progress Publishers.
Marx, Karl. 1885. *Capital Volume II*. Accessed December 13, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1885-c2/index.htm

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1846. *The German Ideology.* Accessed December 13, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01c.htm

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1962. *Selected Works,* 2 vols. Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm

Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1965. *Selected Correspondence (1955).* 2nd ed. Moscow: Progress.

Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1969. *The German Ideology.* New York: International Publishers.

Mattelart, Armand, and Seth Siegelaub. 1979. *Communication and Class Struggle: Capitalism, Imperialism.* Bagnolet: International Mass Media Research Center.

Maxwell, Richard. 2003. *Herbert Schiller*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Maxwell, Richard. 2001. *The Political Economy of Culture.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

McChesney, Robert W. 2008. *The Political Economy of the Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Mingers, John. 1996. A Comparison of Maturana's Autopoietic Social Theory and Giddens' Theory of Structuration. *Systems Research* 13 (4): 469-482.

Mosco, Vincent. 1982. *Pushbutton Fantasies.* Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing.

Mosco, Vincent. 1996/2009. *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*. London: Sage.

Mosco, Vincent. 2004. *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Mosco, Vincent, and Catherine McKercher. 2008. *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* New York: Lexington Books

Mosco, Vincent. 2008. Knowledge Workers of the World! Unite? *Communication, Culture & Critique* 1 (1): 105–115.

Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 1977. Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations. In *Mass Communication and Society*, edited by James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacoot, 12-43 . London: Arnold.

Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 1978. Theories of Communication and Theories of Society. *Communication Research* 5 (3): 339-356.

Padover, Saul K., ed. 1979. *The Letters of Karl Marx.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Padover, Saul. K., ed.1974. *On Freedom of the Press and Censorship.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Philo, Greg, and David Miller. 2000. Cultural Compliance and Critical Media Studies. *Media, Culture and Society* 22 (6): 831-839. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://www.glasgowmediagroup.org/content/view/3/

Pooley, Jeferson. 2008. The New History of Mass Communication Research. In The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories, edited by David Park and Jefferson Pooley, 43-69. New York: Peter Lang.

Potter, W. James, and Karyn Riddle. 2007. A Content Analysis of the Media Effects Literature. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (1): 90-104.

Potter, W. James, Roger Cooper, and Michel Dupagne. 1993. The Three Paradigms of Mass Media Research in Mainstream Journals. *Communication Theory* 3 (4): 317-335.

Riffe, Daniel, and Alan Freitag. 1997. A Content Analysis of Content Analyses: Twenty-Five Years of Journalism Quarterly. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (4): 873-882.

Schiller, Dan. 2003. End of the Telecom Revolution. Le Monde Diplomatique English Edition, August 2003. Accessed January 10, 2011. http://mondediplo.com/2003/08/08schiller

Schiller, Dan. 2000. *Digital Capitalism.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Schiller, Dan. 2007. *How to Think About Information.* Urbana, IL:: University of Illinois Press.

Schiller, Dan. 1993. *Capitalism, information and Uneven Development*. In Communication Yearbook 16, edited by Stanley A. Deetz, 386-406. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Schiller, Dan. 1982. *Telematics and Government.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Schiller, Herbert I. 1971. *Mass Communications and American Empire.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Schiller, Herbert I. 1974. *Mind Managers.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Schiller, Herbert I. 1987. *Culture Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Schiller, Herbert I. 1991. *Culture, Inc. The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Schiller, Herbert I. 1992. *Mass Communications and American Empire.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Schiller, Herbert I., and Ithiel de Sola Pool. 1981. Perspectives on Communications Research: An Exchange. *Journal of Communication* 31 (3): 15-23.

Shaw, Donald. L., Bradley J. Ham, and Diana L. Knott. 2000. Technological Change, Agenda Challenge and Social Melding: Mass Media Studies and the Four Ages of Place, Class, Mass and Space. *Journalism Studies* 1 (1): 57–79.

Simpson, Christopher. 1994. The Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare 1945-1960. New York: Oxford University Press.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1982. *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Solovey, Mark. 2001. Project Camelot and the 1960s Epistemological Revolution: Rethinking the Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus. *Social Studies of Science* 31 (2): 171-205.

Summers, Frank. 2008. Making Sense of the APA: A History of the Relationship between Psychology and the Military. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 18 (5): 614–637.

Therborn, Göran. 1976. *Science, Class and Society.* London: New Left Books.

Thompson, Herb. 1997. Ignorance and Ideological Hegemony: A Critique of Neoclassical Economics. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics* 8 (4): 291-305.

Tomaselli, Keyan G., and Arnold Shepperson. 2010. All the World's Brothel Metaphysics of the Text and Cultural Economy in the Information Age. *Critical Arts* 24 (1): 51-74.

Wasco, Janet, Graham Murdock and Helena Sousa, eds. 2011. *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

About the Author

İrfan Erdogan
is Professor in the Faculty of Communication at Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey. He has published books and articles regarding theoretical, methodological, ideological, cultural and political economy aspects of mass communication. Currently he is working on research about the theoretical and methodological orientations of current media studies and on a book based on a study of the nature of television programs.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 392-412, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Towards Marxian Internet Studies

Christian Fuchs

Uppsala University, Department of Informatics and Media, Sweden. christian.fuchs@im.uu.se, http://fuchs.uti.at

Abstract: *This article gives an overview of example approaches of Critical Internet Studies and points out key concepts of this field. Critical Cyberculture Studies and Critical Political Economy/Critical Theory of the Internet are identified as two approaches in Critical Internet Studies. The paper also discusses the role of 11 Marxian concepts for Critical Internet Studies. Marxian concepts that have been reflected in Critical Internet Studies include: dialectics, capitalism, commodification, surplus value/exploitation/alienation/class, globalization, ideology, class struggle, commons, public sphere, communism, and aesthetics. The paper points out the importance of explicitly acknowledging the importance of Karl Marx's thinking in Critical Internet Studies. Marx's concepts are today frequently used implicitly, without acknowledging and engaging with their roots. A critique of the approach of "Critical" Cyberculture Studies is advanced. This approach is compared to the approaches of Critical Theory and Critical Political Economy of the Internet. The difference between these two approaches reflects the debate about class exploitation and non-class domination between Cultural Studies and Critical Political Economy in Media and Communication Studies.*

Keywords: *Critical Internet Studies, Critical Cyberculture Studies, Critical Theory of the Internet, Critical Political Economy of the Internet, Karl Marx, Marx is Back*

1. Introduction

The Internet has become an important socio-technical system that shapes and is shaped by life in contemporary capitalism. Internet Studies has become a crucial field that is engaged in thinking about the transformations of society, individuality, politics, economy, culture, and nature (Fuchs 2008).

As some scholars have argued the third world economy crisis that started as housing and financial crisis, but soon became a world crisis of capitalism, has resulted in a renewed interest in approaches that label themselves as explicitly critical and anti-capitalist (Harvey 2010, Žižek 2009, 2010b), it is an important task to reflect on the state of those approaches within Internet Studies that label themselves as being explicitly critical. The task of this paper is therefore to provide a short overview of approaches to Critical Internet Studies, to point out key concepts of this field, and to reflect on critiques of Critical Internet Studies. The paper is divided into the discussion of the return of Marx (section 2), Critical Cyberculture Studies (section 3), Critical Political Economy/Critical Theory of the Internet (section 4), a comparison of these two approaches (section 5), a discussion of Critical Internet Studies concepts (section 6), Critiques of Critical Internet Studies (section 7). Finally, some conclusions are drawn (section 8).

2. Marx is Back

Eagleton (2011) notes that never a thinker was so travestied as Marx and shows that the contrary of what the common prejudices claim about Marx is the core of his works. Žižek (2010b) argues that the recent world economic crisis has resulted in a renewed interest in the Marxian Critique of the Political Economy. This is shown by the attention recently paid to Marx in the mainstream media. *Time* magazine, for example, had Marx on its cover and asked about the global financial crisis: What would Marx think? (*Time Magazine*, February 2, 2009). Hobsbawm (2011, 12f) argues that for understanding the global dimension of contemporary capitalism, capitalism's contradictions and crises and the existence of socio-economic inequality we "must ask Marx's questions" (13). "Economic and political liberalism, singly or in combination, cannot provide the solution to the problems

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

of the twenty-first century. Once again the time has come to take Marx seriously" (Hobsbawm 2011, 419).

One interesting thing about Marx is that he keeps coming back at moments, when people least expect it, in the form of various Marxisms that keep haunting capitalism like ghosts, as Derrida (1994) has stressed. It is paradoxical that almost 20 years after the end of the Soviet Union, capitalism seems to have intensified global problems, caused severe poverty and a rise of unequal income distribution, and as a result has brought a return of the economic in the form of a worldwide economic crisis and with it a reactualization of the Marxian critique of capitalism. Although a persistent refrain is "Marx is dead, long live capitalism", Marx is coming back again today.

There are especially six aspects of Marx's works that are relevant for the analysis of contemporary capitalism:

- The globalization of capitalism that is seen as an important characteristic of contemporary society by many social theorists is an important aspect in the works of Marx and Engels (for example: Callinicos 2003). Connected to this topic is also the Marxian theme of international solidarity as form of resistance that seems to be practiced today by the altermondialiste movement.
- The importance of technology, knowledge, and the media in contemporary society was anticipated by the Marxian focus on machinery, means of communication, and the general intellect (see for example: Dyer-Witheford 1999; Fuchs 2008, 2011; Hardt and Negri 2004; McChesney 2007).
- The immizerization caused by neoliberal capitalism suggests a renewed interest in the Marxian category of class (see for example: Harvey 2005).
- The global war against terror after 9/11 and its violent and repressive results like human casualties and intensified surveillance suggest a renewed interest in Marxian theories of imperialism (see for example: Fuchs 2011, chapter 5; Hardt and Negri 2000; Harvey 2003).
- The ecological crisis reactualizes a theme that runs throughout Marxian works: that there is an antagonism between modern industrialism and nature that results in ecological destruction (see for example: O'Connor 1998).
- The new global economic crisis that started in 2008 has shown that Marxist crisis theory is still important today (Foster and Magdoff 2009). Capitalism seems to be inherently crisis-ridden.

Žižek argues that the antagonisms of contemporary capitalism in the context of the ecological crisis, intellectual property, biogenetics, new forms of apartheid and slums show that we still need the Marxian notion of class and that there is a need to renew Marxism and to defend its lost causes in order to "render problematic the all-too-easy liberal-democratic alternative" (Žižek 2008, 6) that is posed by the new forms of a soft capitalism that promises and in its rhetoric makes use of ideals like participation, self-organization, and co-operation without realizing them. Therborn argues that the "new constellations of power and new possibilities of resistance" in the 21st century require retaining the "Marxian idea that human emancipation from exploitation, oppression, discrimination and the inevitable linkage between privilege and misery can come only from struggle by the exploited and disadvantaged themselves" (Therborn 2008, 61). Jameson argues that global capitalism, "its crises and the catastrophes appropriate to this present" and global unemployment show that "Marx remains as inexhaustible as capital itself" (Jameson 2011, 1) and makes *Capital. Volume 1* (Marx 1867) a most timely book.

The implication for Internet Studies is that it should give specific attention to the analysis of how capitalism shapes and is shaped by the Internet. This means that there is a need for rethinking Internet Studies and reorienting it as a Critique of the Political Economy and Critical Theory of the Internet that takes into account the specific character of Marxian analyses of media, technology, and communication, namely to analyze "how capitalist structures shape the media" (McChesney 2007, 79), the role of communication in the "structure of social relations and […] social power' with a particular concern for the analysis of that role in the 'system of social power called capitalism" (Garnham 1990, 7), and "the analysis of the relationship of media and capitalist society" (Knoche 2005, 105).

In 20th century Marxism, the critical analysis of media, communication, and culture has emerged as a novel quality due to the transformations that capitalism has been undergoing. Early 20th century approaches that gave attention to culture and ideology included the ones by Gramsci, Lukács and Korsch. The latter two thinkers have influenced Frankfurt School Critical Theory (Kellner 1989). Gramsci has had an important influence on British Cultural Studies (Turner 2003). Frankfurt School

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Theory and British Cultural Studies differ in a lot of respects, but have in common the interest in ideology critique. In addition, authors like Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Benjamin, Williams, or E.P. Thompson had a profound knowledge of, interest in and made thorough use of Marx's works. Cultural Studies has also been influenced by Althusser's theory of ideology (Turner 2003). The focus on ideology has been challenged by Critical Political Economy scholars like Smythe and Garnham, who stress the economic functions of the media, whereas other political economists like Schiller, Golding, Murdock, Herman, Chomsky, McChesney acknowledge the importance of the economic critique of the media, but have continued to also stress the role of media as producers of ideology (Mosco, 2009). More recent developments in Marxist theories of culture and communication have for example been approaches to integrate diverse approaches (for example: Kellner 1995), theories of alternative media that have been implicitly or explicitly inspired by Enzensberger's version of Critical Theory (for example: Downing 2001) and the emergence of the importance of Autonomist Marxism (for an overview see: Virno and Hardt 2006). Marxist Studies of the Internet can make use of this rich history of 20th century Marxism.

Critical Studies of the Internet have been influenced by various strands of Marxist Cultural and Media theory, such as Ideology Critique (see for example the concept of Net Critique: Lovink and Schultz 1997), Autonomist Marxism (Dyer-Witheford 1998; Fuchs 2008; Hakken 2003), Critical Political Economy (Andrejevic 2007, 2009; Fuchs 2009b, 2010a, 2011; Hakken 2003), or Critical Theory (Andrejevic 2009; Fuchs 2008, 2011; Taylor 2009).

3. Cyberculture Studies and the Un-/Critical

We can distinguish two broad approaches in Internet Studies that describe themselves as critical. The first have a cultural studies background, the second a political economy background. The theoretical background of the first is, in broad terms, post-structuralist; that of the second is Marxist.

Critical Cyberculture Studies has been positioned explicitly as being an application of Cultural Studies and Postmodernism (Bell 2001, 65-91; Jones 2006, xv-xvi; Sterne 2006). David Bell (2006b) mentions in his introduction to his 4-volume collection *Cybercultures. Critical concepts in media and cultural studies* 18 influences on Cyberculture Studies. Among them are for example cultural studies, the philosophy of science and technology, feminist studies, and policy studies, whereas approaches such as Critical Theory, Marxism, or critique of the political economy of the media and communication are conspicuous by their absence. The title of Bell's collection promises that one will find "critical concepts" of Internet Studies represented in the 1600 pages of the four volumes, but while reading the 69 chapters, one too often wonders why the critical dimension of the concepts is missing. Exploitation, surplus value, and class on the Internet are marginal issues, whereas topics such as the history of the Internet, research methods, virtual communities, online identities, bodies and minds in cyberspace, and cyborgs are prominently featured. Explicit discussions of Internet capitalism and exploitation, as in the contributions by Dwayne Winseck, Kevin Robins/Frank Webster, or Tiziana Terranova, are marginalized within this volume. The volume lives up to what Bell promises in the introduction – and does therefore not deserve the subtitle "critical concepts".

David Silver (2006b) characterizes "Critical Cyberculture Studies" as the third stage in Cyberculture Studies that followed after Popular Cyberculture Studies and Cyberculture Studies. He characterizes Critical Cyberculture Studies as:

1) exploring "the social, cultural and economic interactions that take place online" (Silver, 2006b, 67),

2) the analysis of discourses about cyberspace,

3) the analysis of access to the Internet,

4) focusing on participatory design (Silver 2006b, 67-73).

Silver advances a shallow notion of the critical. The first quality is extensively broad, the vast majority of analyses of the Internet focuses on social, cultural, or economic issues (except political and ecological analyses), so it remains unclear what shall be specifically critical about "Critical"

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Cyberculture Studies. When discussing the study of "online marginality", Silver stresses the importance of exploring "issues of race, ethnicity and sexuality" (Silver 2006b, 70). The category of class is not mentioned.

David Silver and Adrienne Massanari (2006) present in their collection *Critical cyberculture studies* 25 readings. In the introduction, Silver (2006a, 6f) mentions capitalism as one context of "Critical Cyberculture Studies", but a much stronger focus is on the "cultural differences" of "race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, and disability" (Silver 2006a, 8). This is also reflected in the volume's contributions, where the analysis of class, surplus value, and exploitation on the Internet are marginal issues, whereas topics relating to "cultural difference" in cyberspace occupy a dominant position.

4. Critical Political Economy and Critical Theory in Internet Studies

The second typical approach that can be found in Critical Internet Studies is based on Critical Political Economy and Critical Theory. The sequence of presentation of the following approaches does not reflect an assessment of the importance of approaches, but is based on a chronological order of key works. Included are approaches that use distinctive terms related to critical theory and political economy to characterize themselves.

Geert Lovink and Pit Schultz (1997) argue that "Net Critique" analyzes the organization of power in the immaterial sphere (Lovink and Schultz 1997, 6) as well as imperialism and ideology on the Internet (Lovink and Schultz 1997, 11). The goal of Net Critique is free access to all media and all content (Lovink 1997). Net Critique would not be a theory, but a theory-praxis that stands for radical criticism within an exploding electronic public (Lovink and Schultz 1997). Since the *Call for Net Critique* (Lovink and Schultz 1997) has been published in 1997, a multitude of publications has emerged from the Net Critique Approach (for example: Lovink 2002; Lovink and Scholz 2005; Lovink and Zehle 2005; Jacobs, Janssen and Pasquinelli 2007; Lovink and Rossiter 2007; Rossiter 2006), which has more recently also included a critique of web 2.0 (for example: Lovink 2008; Lovink and Niederer 2008; Rossiter 2006). The Net Critique approach of Lovink and others does not understand itself as a systematic critical theory, but as a very practical form of critique that is therefore also closely related to media activism and media art.

Nick Dyer-Witheford (1999) has suggested reinventing Marxism for the analysis of 21st century techno-capitalism. He terms this project cyber-Marxism. Dyer-Witheford's applies the approach of autonomist Marxism that is represented by scholars like Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Paolo Virno, Maurizzio Lazaratto, and others, to Internet Studies. Dyer-Witheford sees Autonomist Cyber-Marxism as an alternative to the techno-determinism of scientific socialism, the neo-Luddism of the Braverman-inspired technology-as-domination theories, and the techno-euphoria of many theorizations of post-Fordism (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 38-61).

Greg Elmer (2002) sees three characteristics of Critical Internet Studies:

1) the refutation and questioning of ideologies that claim the Internet is revolutionary,

2) the analysis of the "process of Internet corporatization and portalization" (Elmer 2002, x),

3) the focus on radical possibilities of the critical Internet community especially the cracks, fissures, and holes in the forms of domination that characterize the Internet.

David Hakken (2003) argues for a knowledge theory of value that is grounded in Marxian theory. He sees cyberspace as being shaped by "vast contradictions" (Hakken 2003, 393). New information- and communication technologies "are better viewed as terrains of contestation than as ineluctable independent forces. Technologies do have politics, but like all politics, they manifest multiple, contradictory tendencies" (Hakken 2003, 366).

Fuchs (2008, 2009a, b; 2010a, b; 2011) speaks of Critical Internet Theory/Studies and the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. He argues that these approaches are grounded in more general approaches, especially Frankfurt School Critical Theory and Marx's Critique of the Political Economy that are both foundations for Critical Media and Information Studies (Fuchs

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

2011). He thereby undertakes an ontological and epistemological grounding of the critical analysis of the Internet by basing it:

1) on a general social theory level,

2) on the analysis of capitalism,

3) on the critical analysis of media, technology, and communication, and

4) on the specific analysis of the Internet in a critical inquiry that yields emergent qualities.

Fuchs defines Critical Internet Theory/Studies and the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet as an approach that engages in "identifying and analysing antagonisms in the relationship of the Internet and society; it shows how the Internet is shaped and shapes the colliding forces of competition and cooperation; it is oriented towards showing how domination and exploitation are structured and structuring the Internet and on how class formation and potential class struggles are technologically mediated; it identifies Internet- supported, not yet realized potentials of societal development and radically questions structures that restrain human and societal potentials for cooperation, self-determination, participation, happiness and self-management" (Fuchs 2009b, 75). Fuchs (2011) defines this approach as a unity of philosophically grounded critical theory, empirical research, and praxis-oriented critical ethics.

For Mark Andrejevic (2009), "critical media studies 2.0" challenge the uncritical celebration of the empowering and democratizing character of contemporary media by showing how new media are embedded in old forms of domination. "Thus, when it comes to the revolutionary promise of participatory media, the challenge faced by the proponents and practitioners of a Critical Media Studies 2.0 is not to assert (in all too familiar rhetoric) that, 'everything has changed,' but rather to explain why, even in the face of dramatic technological transformation, social relations remain largely unaltered. To put it bluntly, Critical Media Studies is not interested in media for their own sake, but for society's sake" (Andrejevic 2009, 35). In an approach comparable to the one of Andrejevic, Paul A. Taylor (2009) speaks of Critical Theory 2.0 in order to "describe the manner in which traditional Critical Theory's (1.0) key insights remain fundamentally unaltered" (Taylor 2009, 93), which would be necessary for challenging web 2.0 optimism.

These approaches mainly differ in their understanding of theory, the role that is given to empirical research, the employment of different research methods (such as qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, content analyses, statistical analyses, critical discourse analyses, or ethnography). For example Dyer-Witheford's cyber-Marxist approach is purely theoretical and based on a reconstruction of Marxian theory for cyberspace. Net Critique tends to discuss examples that are critically reflected upon from theory-inspired positions that are deliberately eclectic and sometimes personal or journalistic and do not form a systematic theoretical whole as in Adorno's prismatic method of exposition. Fuchs on the one hand is keen on basing his approach on a systematic Hegelian dialectical philosophy, in which every category has a clear place in the theoretical system and categories are dialectically developed from the abstract to the concrete level. On the other hand he applies dialectical philosophy at a concrete level as a foundation for empirical studies that make use of a whole range of methods.

Although there are vast theoretical, methodological, epistemological, and ontological differences between various approaches that advance a Critical Theory or the Critical Political Economy of the Internet, there are also commonalities that are especially relating to the normative understanding of criticism. One important commonality is the *normative understanding of critique*. Critical Internet scholars thereby reflect the old debate between the understanding of critique as epistemological/methodological and as normative procedure. This issue was already at the heart of the positivism debate in German sociology in 1961. Karl R. Popper (1962) argued that the method of the social consists of gaining and differentiating knowledge by testing solutions to problems. Popper considered this method as critical because scholars question the works of others in order to improve knowledge in trial and error processes. For Popper, critique was an epistemological method that shows logical contradictions. Theodor W. Adorno (1962) argued in contrast to Popper that contradictions are not only epistemological (in the relation of subject-object), but can be inherent in objects themselves so that they cannot be resolved by acquiring new knowledge (Adorno 1962, 551).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Adorno stressed that Popper's ideal of value-free academia is shaped by the bourgeois concept of value as exchange value (Adorno 1962, 560). He said that positivism is only oriented on appearance, whereas critical theory stresses the difference between essence and appearance (Adorno 1969, 291). He pointed out that Popper's notion of critique is subjective and cognitive (Adorno 1969, 304). There is a fundamental difference between epistemological critique (Popper) and the critique of society (Adorno). Critical Internet scholars question the empiricist application of methods to studying the Internet without grounding the analyses in a thorough analysis in society and in a critical theory of society. This includes some who question all empirical research because they think that the normative falsehood of domination cannot be empirically tested, but only argued for. They all share Adorno's focus on the critique of society.

A second feature that Critical Internet Studies approaches share is the consideration of conventional Internet Studies that dominate the field as forms of instrumental and technological rationality that help legitimize and reproduce capitalism and other forms of domination within capitalism. Instrumental reason means that "ideas have become automatic, instrumentalized" that are not seen as "thoughts with a meaning of their own. They are considered things, machines" for the achievement of the reproduction and deepening of domination (Horkheimer 1974/1947, 15). Technological rationality is another term for instrumental reason, which stresses "elements of thought which adjust the rules of thought to the rules of control and domination" (Marcuse 1964b, 138). Technological rationality denies that reality could be other than it is today. It neglects alternative potentials for development. It aims at "liquidating the oppositional and transcending elements" (Marcuse 1964, 56). Technological rationality causes a one-dimensional thinking, in which "ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe" (Marcuse 1964, 12). Critical Internet scholars consider conventional Internet Studies as ideological because they analyze the Internet as it is, without embedding the analysis into an analysis of structures of domination and without engaging in the struggle for a better world that abolishes domination.

A third commonality concerns the normative and practical levels. Critical Internet Study approaches criticize phenomena that they describe as exploitation, domination, oppression, or exertion of power and structural violence and seek to help advance practices that result in the liberation from these phenomena. Maria Bakardjieva (2010, 61) argues that Critical Internet Studies in contrast to statistical and interpretative approaches seeks answers to normative questions relating to the Internet's role in empowerment, oppression, emancipation, alienation and exploitation. Critical studies relate the analysis of the Internet to both domination and liberation. To a larger or lesser degree this involves explicitly the establishment of a post-capitalist society that is for example described as grassroots socialism, communism, participatory democracy, or sustainable information society. The normative dimension is described by such approaches as their emancipatory character.

The critical normative orientation is the central characteristic of Critical Internet Studies. It reflects Horkheimer's insight that critical theory aims at "a state of affairs in which there will be no exploitation or oppression" (Horkheimer 1937/2002, 241). Horkheimer in his essay on *Traditional and critical theory* reflects Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and reformulated Marxian theory as critical theory of society. One may therefore say that Critical Internet Studies is not only indebted to the Frankfurt School's understanding of critique, but also that the root of this understanding is the theory of Karl Marx. Marx summarized the normative dimension of critical analysis by saying that it grasps "the root of the matter", is based on "the teaching that *man is the highest essence for man*" and therefore ends "with the *categoric imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence" (MEW Vol. 1, 385). If we understand Marxian critique as the critique of all forms of domination and all dominative relationships, then all critical studies are Marxian-inspired. My argument is that this heritage should not be denied, but taken seriously and positively acknowledged.

The critical normative dimension Critical Internet Studies means that it does not operate in a vacuum, but is on a more general level related to various approaches in the analysis of media, communi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cation, technology, culture, and information that also stress the normative critique of domination and the goal of emancipation. It is in this respect especially related to analyses of the critique of the political economy of media and communication, critical theory, and critical information systems research. The Critique of the Political Economy of the Media and Communication[1] studies the "the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources" (Mosco 2009, 2). This approach addresses "how the media system" interacts with and affects "the overall disposition of power in society" (McChesney 2007, 77), and asks "basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good" (Murdock and Golding 2005, 61). A critical theory of media and technology analyzes "society as a terrain of domination and resistance and engages in critique of domination and of the ways that media culture engages in reproducing relationships of domination and oppression" (Kellner 1995, 4). It is "informed by a critique of domination and a theory of liberation" (Kellner 1989, 1; see also Feenberg 2002). Critical information systems research produces "knowledge with the aim of revealing and explaining how information systems are (mis)used to enhance control, domination and oppression, and thereby to inform and inspire transformative social practices that realize the liberating and emancipatory potential of information systems" (Cecez-Kecmanovic 2005, 19). Its task is the analysis of the role of information systems in disempowerment and empowerment and to help "overcome injustice and alienation" (Stahl 2008, 9).

5. Critical Cyberculture Studies and Critical Political Economy/Critical Theory of the Internet

The main difference that can be found in Critical Internet Studies is the one between Critical Cyberculture Studies and the Critical Political Economy of the Internet. The first approach focuses more on issues relating to the marginalization of identities online, whereas the second has a focus on issues relating to class, exploitation, and capitalism.

When reading "Critical" Cyberculture Studies books and collections, one should remember Nicholas Garnham's insights that "modern forms of racial domination are founded on economic domination" and that "forms of patriarchy have been profoundly marked by the way in which the capitalist mode of production has divided the domestic economy from production as a site of wage labor and capital formation" (Garnham 1998, 610). Critical Political Economy "sees class – the structure of access to the means of production and the structure of the distribution of the economic surplus – as the key to the structure of domination, while cultural studies sees gender and race, along with other potential markers of difference, as alternative structures of domination in no way determined by class" (Garnham 1998, 609). The same difference can be found in Critical Internet Studies. The approach of "Critical" Cyberculture Studies tends to see gender and race in cyberspace as not being necessarily shaped by class. It tends to not see class as the key to understanding domination in cyberspace that has crucial influence on gender, race, and other lines of difference. It tends to ignore topics of class, capitalism, and exploitation. "Critical" Cyberculture Studies is therefore an approach that in its postmodern vein is unsuited for explaining the role of the Internet and communications in the current times of capitalist crisis. The crisis itself evidences the central role of the capitalist economy in contemporary society and that the critical analysis of capitalism and socio-economic class should therefore be the central issue for Critical Internet Studies.

Ernesto Laclau has in a trialogue with Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek admitted that in postmodern approaches it is a common language game to "transform 'class' into one more link in an enumera-

[1] Representatives of this approach, such as Nicholas Garnham, Peter Golding, Robert McChesney, or Graham Murdock, speak of a political economy approach, which is somewhat misleading because political economy is not necessarily critical as indicated by the subtitle of Marx's (1867) main work *Capital*: *A Critique of Political Economy*. Marx characterized uncritical political economy as approaches that systematize capitalism "in a pedantic way" by proclaiming capitalism and its constituents for "everlasting truths" (Marx 1867, 174f). As those approaches that are normally discussed in the Anglo-American context under the heading of "political economy of the media and communication" do normally not naturalize and fetishize the specific capitalist form of the media and communicaiton, a self-description as critique of the political economy of the media and communication is more appropriate.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tive chain […] 'race, gender, ethnicity, etc. – *and* class" (Butler, Laclau and Žižek 2000, 297) and to put class deliberately as last element in the chain in order to stress its unimportance – Laclau speaks of "deconstructing classes" (Butler, Laclau and Žižek 2000, 296). Slavoj Žižek has in this context in my opinion correctly said that Postmodernism, Cultural Studies, and post-Marxism have by assuming an "irreducible plurality of struggles" accepted "capitalism as 'the only game in town'" and have renounced "any real attempt to overcome the existing capitalist liberal regime" (Butler, Laclau and Žižek 2000, 95). Subordinating or equalizing the category of class to other antagonistic categories (gender, ethnicity, age, capabilities, etc) poses the danger of burying the project and demand to establish participatory alternatives to the capitalist totality. The Butler-Laclau-Žižek debate implies for "Critical" Cyberculture Studies that its tendency of neglecting class, exploitation, and capitalism means that it will necessarily have a reformist political agenda and will not be able to conceptualize alternatives to a capitalist Internet in a capitalist society (Fuchs 2011).

All non-class antagonisms are articulated with class, whereas not all non-class antagonisms are articulated with each other. All antagonisms of contemporary society have class aspects and are conditioned by class. Class is the antagonism that binds all other antagonisms together; it prefigures, conditions, enables and constrains, and exerts pressure on possibilities for other antagonisms (Fuchs 2008). At the same time, non-class antagonisms influence the class antagonism so that complex dynamic relationships are present. If class is the super-antagonism of capitalism that does not determine or overdetermine, but condition other antagonisms, then it is important to give specific attention to this category.

According to its own self-descriptions, "Critical" Cyberculture Studies wants to help overcome "online marginalization". It does however very well in marginalizing critiques of how capitalism, class, and exploitation are related to the Internet. It therefore does not deserve the name "critical". "Critical" Cyberculture scholars should take very seriously Douglas Kellner's warning: "Neglecting political economy, celebrating the audience and the pleasures of the popular, overlooking social class and ideology, and failing to analyze or criticize the politics of cultural texts will make media/cultural studies merely another academic subdivision, harmless and ultimately of benefit primarily to the culture industry itself" (Kellner 2009, 19f). It is time for cyberculture scholars to stop purely focusing on their heroes like Donna Haraway, Sherry Turkle, Howard Rheingold, Manuel Castells, and various postmodernists (Bell 2001, 74-88; Bell 2007; Silver 2006b, 65; Silver 2006a, 3) and to substantiate these approaches by reading and interpreting Karl Marx's works.

The number of and interest in analyses of the Internet that are focusing more on class and exploitation have been growing. In the current times of capitalist crisis and the end of postmodernism and culturalism, this development is likely to continue. My argument is that it is time to engage with pleasure in conducting Marxist Internet Studies. We have rather entered times, where it becomes increasingly a matter of explanation why you are not a Marxian scholar.

Truly critical Internet Studies have in common their opposition to positivistic Internet Studies, instrumental/technological rationality, the critique of domination, the struggle for emancipation, and the shared normative grounding in Marxian analysis and various critical analyses of the media, communication, technology, and information. My argument is not only that Internet Studies is in need of Marxian theory, but also that Internet Studies to a certain degree already makes use of Marxian categories and should therefore acknowledge its own Marxian roots.

The next section will focus on the analysis of specific Marxian categories of Critical Internet Studies.

6. Karl Marx and Critical Internet Studies Concepts

Critical Internet Studies to a certain degree already makes use of Marxian categories and should therefore acknowledge its own Marxian roots. With the help of examples this circumstance will now be shown especially for eleven Marxian concepts:

1) dialectics
2) capitalism

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

3) commodity/commodification
4) surplus value, exploitation, alienation, class
5) globalization
6) ideology/ideology critique
7) class struggle
8) commons
9) public sphere
10) communism
11) aesthetics

Vincent Mosco stresses that Marxian political economy decentres the media by "placing in the foreground the analysis of capitalism, including the development of the forces and relations of production, commodification and the production of surplus value, social class divisions and struggles, contradictions and oppositional movements" (Mosco 2009, 94). To this analysis, six additional crucial Marxian concepts are added: globalization, ideology, commons, public sphere, communism, and aesthetics.

The first relevant Marxian concept is *dialectics*. Marx applied the Hegelian method of dialectical thinking to the analysis of capitalism. Dialectics is "in its very essence critical and revolutionary" because "it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well. […] the movement of capitalist society is full of contradictions" (Marx 1867, 103). Fuchs's approach has an epistemological and ontological focus on dialectical philosophy in order to conceptualize the relationship Internet/web 2.0 and society not as one-dimensional and techno-deterministic, but as complex, dynamic, and contradictory (Fuchs 2009b; Fuchs 2011, chapters 2+3). Peter Lunenfeld (1999) and Michael Heim (1999) have spoken of the digital dialectic. Such approaches are related to the dialectical insight of the critical theory of technology that technology is "an 'ambivalent' process of development suspended between different possibilities" (Feenberg 2002, 15).

Marcuse (1941) wanted to avoid deterministic dialectics and to bring about a transition from a structural-functionalist dialectic towards a human-centred dialectic. Therefore he argued that capitalism is dialectical because of its objective antagonistic structures and that the negation of this negativity can only be achieved by human praxis. The Internet or specific Internet platforms have multiple, at least two, potential effects on society and social systems that can co-exist or stand in contradiction to each other (Fuchs 2008, 2011). Which potentials are realized is based on how society, interests, power structures, and struggles shape the design and usage of technology in multiple ways that are also potentially contradictory. One should therefore think about the Internet dialectically just like Marx thought about technology in capitalism as being shaped by an antagonism between productive forces and relations of production. Networked productive forces are in capitalism "antithetical forms", which are at the same time 'mines to explode' capitalism (Marx 1857/1858, 159) and governed by class relations that are 'no longer productive but destructive forces' (Marx and Engels 1846, 60). So for example the services created by Google anticipate a commons-based public Internet from which all benefit and create new potentials for human co-operation, whereas the freedom (free service access) that it provides is now enabled by online surveillance and user commodification that threatens consumer privacy and results in the economic exploitation of users. The solution is not to call for the abolition or replacement of Google, but to argue for its transformation into a publicly organized and controlled search engine (that could for example be run as collaborative project by public universities). The Internet holds at the same time potential for "capitalist spectacle and commodification" and the construction of "cybersituations" that are "aimed at progressive change and alternative cultural and social forms" (Best and Kellner 2001, 237f).

The second cluster of Marxian concepts that is reflected in Critical Internet Studies is *capitalism/capitalist mode of production/capitalist society*. For Marx, capitalism is a system of capital accumulation, in which the worker "has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, to live only insofar as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter's co-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

consumers of surplus value)" so that "the whole capitalist system of production turns on increasing this gratis labour" (Marx 1875, 310). Therefore this system "is a system of slavery" (Marx 1875, 310). The notion of capitalism/capitalist mode of production is reflected in Critical Internet Studies within concepts such as communicative capitalism (Dean 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010; Passavant 2004), informational capitalism (Fuchs 2008, 2009a; Schmiede 2006), the antagonism of the networked digital productive forces and the relations of production (Fuchs 2008, 2009b; Žižek 2004, 293), digital capitalism (Schiller 2000), hypercapitalism (Graham 2006), or new media/digital visual capitalism (Nakamura 2008). David Beer argues that in studying web 2.0 and social networking sites what is missing is "a more political agenda that is more open to the workings of capitalism" (Beer 2008, 526).

The third important Marxian category is that of *commodity/commodification*. Marx argues that the fundamental element of capitalism is the commodity, a good that is exchanged in a certain quantitative relationship with money: x amount of commodity A = y units of money. "A given commodity, a quarter of wheat for example, is exchanged for x boot-polish, y silk or z gold, etc. In short, it is exchanged for other commodities in the most diverse proportions" (Marx 1867, 127). The commodity is for Marx the cell form of capitalism: "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form" (Marx 1867, 125). Commodification is the transformation of a social relationship into an exchange relationship between buyer and seller. The notion of commodification has been used in Critical Internet Studies for example as the commodification of the Internet (Fuchs 2008, chapter 7), the commodification of online privacy (Campbell and Carlson 2002; Fernback and Papacharissi 2007), the commodification of community in cyberspace (Campbell 2008; Fernback 2004), and the concept of profiling as online commodification machine of personal information (Elmer 2004).

Fourth, one finds the concepts of *class, surplus value, exploitation, and alienation* in Critical Internet Studies. These notions are inherently related for Marx. Their connection is neatly summarized in the following passage: "On the one hand, the process of production incessantly converts material wealth into capital, into means of creating more wealth and means of enjoyment for the capitalist. On the other hand, the labourer, on quitting the process, is what he was on entering it, a source of wealth, but devoid of all means of making that wealth his own. Since, before entering on the process, his own labour has already been alienated from himself by the sale of his labour-power, has been appropriated by the capitalist and incorporated with capital, it must, during the process, be realised in a product that does not belong to him. Since the process of production is also the process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power, the product of the labourer is incessantly converted, not only into commodities, but into capital, into value that sucks up the value-creating power, into means of subsistence that buy the person of the labourer, into means of production that command the producers. The labourer therefore constantly produces material, objective wealth, but in the form of capital, of an alien power that dominates and exploits him; and the capitalist as constantly produces labour-power, but in the form of a subjective source of wealth, separated from the objects in and by which it can alone be realised; in short he produces the labourer, but as a wage labourer. This incessant reproduction, this perpetuation of the labourer, is the sine quâ non of capitalist production" (Marx 1867, 716).

Examples for the usage of these Marxian categories in Internet Studies can be given. Fuchs (2010b) argues that capital accumulation is in the corporate 2.0 based on the infinite exploitation of prosumers, who are sold as Internet prosumer commodity to advertising clients. He sees users of the corporate web 2.0 as part of the proletarian class that is exploited by capital (Fuchs 2010b). He bases his analysis on Marx's surplus value concept and Dallas Smythe's notion of the audience commodity. Mark Andrejevic (2002) and Josh Lauer (2008) argue that the work of being watched in respect to the media is a form of exploitation and productive labour. Discussions about value creation on digital media have become important (see for example also: Bolin 2011, Jakobsson and Stiernstedt 2010). Andrejecvic speaks of "the interactive capability of new media to exploit the work of being watched" (Andrejevic 2002, 239) and Lauer (2008) of consumer surveillance as alienated

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

labour. Andrejevic (2009) employs the term exploitation 2.0 in order to stress that exploitation remains a fundamental characteristic of the web 2.0 environment. In another work, Andrejevic (2007) has connected the notion of the work of being watched to the category of the digital enclosure. Terranova (2004) has advanced the concept of the exploitation of free labour on the Internet. For Jonathan Beller, surplus value creation on the Internet is characteristic for a cinematic mode of production (Beller 2006). Lisa Nakamura (2009) describes the racialized exploitation of play workers in online games that are facing maquiladora factory conditions. Also the notion of proletarianization has been used for analyzing social media (Breen 2011). Burston, Dyer-Witheford and Hearn (2010) have edited a special journal issue about "digital labour". Digital labour-conferences like "Digital labour: Workers, authors, citizens" (University of Western Ontario, October 2009; see Burston, Dyer-Witheford and Hearn 2010) and "The Internet as Playground and Factory" (New School, November 2009; see the book Scholz 2012) have achieved extraordinary interest in terms of contributions and attendance. A related question is the one of how class relations have changed in the context of culture, the Internet, networks and information (Fuchs 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Huws 2003; Mosco and McKercher 2009; Qiu 2009).

The fifth concept is that of *globalization*. Marx stressed that capitalism has an inherent tendency to globalize because of "the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market" and "the international character of the capitalistic regime" (Marx 1867, 929). The world market, capital export and the global organization of companies are aspects of this capitalist globalization process. Kellner (2002) stresses the importance of Marx's dialectical and critical theory in contemporary "technocapitalism" for understanding that globalization and the Internet are contested terrains composed of oppositions. Harvey (1990), reflecting Marx's insight that "capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier" and that "the means of communication and transport" are connected to 'the annihilation of space by time" (Marx 1857/1858, 524), says that the rise of a flexible regime of accumulation in combination with new communication technologies has brought about a new phase of time-space compression of capitalism. For Schiller (2000, 135), the Internet is a "transnational consumer medium" that helps networking digital capitalism. Dyer-Witheford (1999, 130) says that the Internet is an "electronic pathway" for the "circulation of money, commodities, and power". Webster (2002, 77) stresses that ICTs like the Internet 'allow the orchestration of globalised production and marketing strategies and of global financial trade. These approaches reflect the insight of Marx that communication technologies like the Internet are the medium and at the same time outcome of the globalization tendency of capitalism (Fuchs 2008, 110).

The sixth concept is the one of *ideology/ideology critique*. For Marx, ideology is inverted consciousness, consciousness that is manipulated so that it sees reality other than it is. "In all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura" (MECW Vol. 5, 14). It is "an inverted consciousness of the world" (MECW Vol. 3, 175). In *Capital,* Marx (1867) described ideology as the fetishism of commodities that makes social relations appear as characteristics of things and thereby creates "misty realms" of consciousness (Marx 1867, 165). Some examples for ideology critique in Critical Internet Studies can be given: Trebor Scholz (2008) criticizes web 2.0 as marketing ideology. José van Dijck and David Nieborg (2009) argue that web 2.0 optimism is uncritical and an ideology that serves corporate interests. Web 2.0 users would be more passive users than active creators (van Dijck 2009). Eran Fisher (2010a, b) argues that web 2.0 is shaped by a discourse that legitimates capitalism that he characterizes as the new spirit of networks. Marcus Breen (2010) argues that digital determinism is an ideology that shapes the age of Internet capitalism. Jodi Dean applies the commodity fetishism concept to the Internet and speaks of Internet fetishism (Dean 2005, 2009). She (Dean 2005, 2009) criticizes the assumption that online politics is inherently critical and constitutes relevant political activities as ideological and argues that communicative capitalism advances communication without communicability (Dean 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010) that frequently ideologically blinds users. Drawing on the work of Slavoj Žižek, Dean (2006) argues that politicization of the Internet is not automatically present and must be struggled for. Fuchs characterizes the notion of "participatory web 2.0" (within capitalism) as ideology (Fuchs 2011, chapter 7). Thomas Mathiesen (2004) in the spirit of Horkheimer and Adorno describes the corporate Internet as a system of silent silencing. Dominant Internet ideologies are mostly separat-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ed from everyday working class reality (Olsson 2006). The rise of new technologies often creates an "eruption of feeling that briefly overwhelms reason" (Mosco 2004, 22). Technological determinism ignores the political economy of events. Social media determinism is an expression of the digital sublime, the development that "cyberspace has become the latest icon of the technological and electronic sublime, praised for its epochal and transcendent characteristics and demonized for the depth of the evil it can conjure" (Mosco 2004, 24).

The seventh Marxian category is *class struggle*. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight" (Marx and Engels 1962, 35f). In Critical Internet Studies, the notion of class struggle is for example reflected in the concept of anti-capitalist Internet play struggles that help to "hack" capitalism (Söderberg 2008) or the notion of Internet as means for the circulation of class struggles (Dyer-Witheford 1999). Related concepts are the electronic fabric of struggle (Cleaver 1998) and electronic civil disobedience (Critical Art Ensemble 1996). In discussing Internet-supported struggles, Kahn and Kellner (2004) say that the Internet is the base and basis for globalization-from-below. Also the real of alternative online media as means of struggle has been explored in this context (Kidd 2003). Class struggle-oriented concepts in Critical Internet Studies have their origin in descriptions of the struggles of the Mexican Zapatistas against neoliberalism and the role of the Internet in these struggles. Later, Hardt's and Negri's (2004) concept of the struggle of the multitude – has become of central importance in such approaches. The multitude consists of "singularities that act in common" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 105), "all those who work under the rule of capital" (ibid., 106). It is shaped by immaterial labour, that is labour "that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (ibid., 108).

The eighth Marxist category is that of *commons*. Commons are resources that are essential and basic for the survival of a society, that all need, and that are produced by all. Marx has stressed the common character of knowledge with his concept of the "General Intellect", which is the "power of knowledge, objectified", "general social knowledge" that becomes "a direct force of production" (Marx 1857/1858, 706). He pointed out that knowledge is "brought about partly by the cooperation of men now living, but partly also by building on earlier work" (Marx 1894, 199). Its common character is due to "communal labour, [that] however, simply involves the direct cooperation of individuals" (Marx 1894, 199). The concept of the commons has been applied to the context of knowledge on the Internet that is collectively produced and shared and appropriated by capital (see for example: Dyer-Witheford 1999, 4, 219ff; Fuchs 2010b, 2011; Hardt and Negri 2009, 282; Kidd 2003, Žižek 2010a). Discussions of Internet commons relate especially to free software, Wikipedia, and filesharing.

The concepts of class struggle and the commons are in contemporary Marxism and in critical studies of the Internet especially grounded in Autonomist Marxism, a perspective that Žižek (2008, 354) criticizes (mainly in respect to Hardt and Negri) as celebrating the informational revolution as "the unique chance for overcoming capitalism" and as thereby ignoring the rise of a new frictionless soft capitalism that enabled by IT makes use of a rhetoric consisting of ideals like participation, self-organization, and co-operation without realizing them. Žižek however agrees with Hardt and Negri (2009) that the exploitation of the commons of society (such as knowledge on the Internet, education and culture) justifies at the political level as a form of resistance "the resuscitation of the notion of communism" (Žižek 2008, 429).

The ninth concept is the *public sphere*. Marx imagined alternatives to the bourgeois state that serves class interests when he described the Paris Commune as a specific kind of public sphere: The commune superseded class rule (Marx 1871, 274), it "was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms" (Marx 1871, 274). "Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Committee. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune" (Marx 1871, 274). The Commune was "the self-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

government of the producers" (ibid., 275), who "administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates" (ibid., 275), abolished "that class-property which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few" (ibid., 277), and transformed "the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour" (ibid., 277) so that a "united co-operative" society (ibid., 277) emerges. Marx asks about such a true public sphere: "what else, gentlemen, would it be but Communism" (ibid., 277)? Habermas' original concept of the public sphere is grounded in this Marxian understanding (see: Habermas 1991, 122-129). Marx saw the bourgeois public sphere ironically (Habermas 1991, 123). "Marx denounced public opinion as false consciousness: it hid before itself its own true character as a mask of bourgeois class interests" (Habermas 1991, 124). Marx's "critique demolished all fictions to which the idea of the public sphere of civil society appealed. In the first place, the social preconditions for the equality of opportunity were obviously lacking, namely: that any person with skill and 'luck' could attain the status of property owner and thus the qualifications of a private person granted access to the public sphere, property and education. The public sphere with which Marx saw himself confronted contradicted its own principle of universal accessibility" (Habermas 1991, 124).

A number of authors has discussed how to apply the notion of the public sphere to the Internet and thereby has also taken into account Habermas' Marxist grounding by describing how the political economy of capitalism can colonize and thereby limit the potential of the Internet to act as a tool that advances the transformation towards a public sphere (for example: Dahlberg 2004; Dahlgren 2005; Paparcharissi 2002). However, most of these authors have ignored Marx's concept of the public sphere as communism that transcends the private control of the means of production and the acknowledgement of this dimension by Habermas. Taking both Marx's and young Habermas's concepts of the public sphere seriously must mean for Critical Internet Studies to discuss what a communist Internet is all about (Fuchs 2011). According to Habermas, the public sphere is not only a normative ideal, but also a concept that allows criticizing the political reality of the media. He has stressed in this context that the liberal public sphere limits its own value of freedom of speech and public opinion because citizens in capitalism do not have same formal education and material resources for participating in the public sphere (Habermas 1991, 227) and that it limits its own value of freedom of association and assembly because big political and economic organizations "enjoy an oligopoly of the publicistically effective and politically relevant formation of assemblies and associations" (Habermas 1991, 228). Critical Internet Studies should especially take a look at how freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are limited by unequal conditions of access (money, education, age, etc) and the domination of visibility and attention by big economic and political organizations.

The tenth concept considered here is *communism*. Marx and Engels did not mean by the term communism a totalitarian society that monitors all human beings, operates forced labour camps, represses human individuality, installs conditions of general shortage, limits the freedom of movement, etc. For them, communism is a society that strengthens common co-operative production, common ownership of the means of production, and enriches the individual sphere of activities and thereby individuality. The new crisis of capitalism has brought about an interest in the idea of communism (see: Žižek and Douzinas 2010). Marx spoke of "an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common, and expending their many different forms of labour-power in full self-awareness as one single social labour force" (Marx 1867, 171). Communism is "a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle" (Marx 1867, 739). In Critical Internet Studies, scholars have for example spoken about the goal of a communist Internet in a communist society (Fuchs 2011), 21st century communism (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 4), cybernetic communism (Barbrook 2007), or dot.communism (Moglen 2003), an alternative Internet (Atton 2004), or a public-service Net (Patelis 2000, 99). The notion of communism has for Internet Studies special relevance for the question to which extent the common sharing (like on file sharing platforms) and co-operative production of knowledge (like on Wikipedia or in the Free and Open Source Software movement) constitutes foundations of a communist mode of production. Marx has stressed the common character of knowledge with his concept of the "General Intel-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

lect", which is the "power of knowledge, objectified", "general social knowledge" that becomes "a direct force of production" (Marx 1857/1858, 706). He pointed out that knowledge is "brought about partly by the cooperation of men now living, but partly also by building on earlier work" (Marx 1894, 199). Its common character is due to "communal labour, [that] however, simply involves the direct cooperation of individuals" (Marx 1894, 199). The concept of the commons has also been applied to the context of knowledge on the Internet that is collectively produced and shared and appropriated by capital (see for example: Dyer-Witheford 1999, 4, 219ff; Fuchs 2010b, 2011; Hardt and Negri 2009, 282; Žižek 2010a).

The eleventh concept is *aesthetics*. Marx pointed out that art should not be organized as surplus-value generating labour, but in capitalism can be transformed into this kind of work and thereby can become an object of commodification (Marx 1863, 401). For Marx, communism meant the end of the division of labour, so that all people could engage in artistic activities. "In a communist society there are no painters but only people who engage in painting among other activities" (Marx and Engels 1846, 418). Adorno pointed out based on Marx the relationship of art, capitalism, and communism by arguing that authentic art is non-identical with the logic of capitalism, it neglects instrumental reason: "the function of art in the totally functional world is its functionlessness" (Adorno 1997, 320). In recent years, discussion abouts Marxist aesthetics have been applied to the realm of the Internet, online play, and computer games (see for example: Kline, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter 2003, Andrejevic 2006, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter 2009).

The eleven concepts discussed are some of the most frequently invoked Marxian notions in Internet Studies. Others could be added and the discussion extended, but the limited space of this article does not allow discussing these issues at length. The examples given are, however, suggestive of the importance of Marxian theory for critical analysis of the Internet. Certainly such concepts are not only welcomed, but are also opposed. This phenomenon is discussed in the next section.

7. A Critique of the Critique of Critical Internet Studies

The use of Marxian concepts in Critical Internet Studies is opposed by two main strategies: 1) anti-Marxism, 2) the subsumption of Marxian concepts under the dominant ideology. Both aim at delegitimizing alternatives to the corporate control of the Internet.

The anti-communist strategy is represented by Andrew Keen and Josh Lanier. Andrew Keen, author of the book *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture* (Keen 2007), argues that web 2.0 rhetoric has a political agenda and shares Marxist political goals (Keen 2006). Keen sees web 2.0 as a dangerous development and argues that a new web 2.0 communism will put an end to traditional culture and society. "Without an elite mainstream media, we will lose our memory for things learnt, read, experienced, or heard" (Keen 2006). The fear that haunts him seems to be the fear that capitalism and corporate interests are challenged and could somehow cease to exist. Josh Lanier (2006) argues that web 2.0 results in "digital Maoism", a form of collectivism that is as totalitarian as Maoism and negates individuality.

Such approaches advance the idea that Marxism is dangerous and anti-individualistic, which is an error. Whereas the individual was indeed not greatly valued by Mao or Stalin, it was highly important for Marx, who saw communism as the sublation of the class individual and the rise of the well-rounded individual. Communism is for Marx not the collectivization of life, but the creation of a highly productive post-scarcity economy that is based on wealth for all, the minimization of estranged labour, and the maximization of freely chosen labour. Maximizing self-determined labour has potentials for releasing creative capacities and fostering the maximization of the development powers of all humans. The precondition for Marx is the sublation of the private property of the means of production. "In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association" (Marx and Engels 1846, 87). This real community would be the "re-integration or return of man to himself, the transcendence of human self-estrangement" (Marx 1844, 101f), "the *positive* transcendence of *private property* as *human self-estrangement,* and therefore as the real *appropriation* of the *human* essence by and for man" (Marx 1844, 102), and "the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being" (Marx 1844, 102). Communist society enables the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

"all-round development of individuals, precisely because the existing form of intercourse and the existing productive forces are all-embracing and only individuals that are developing in an all-round fashion can appropriate them, i.e., can turn them into free manifestations of their lives" (Marx and Engels 1846, 464). For Marx, capitalism limits the development potentials of humans because the lack of material resources does not allows them to fully develop their capacities. In communism, there is "the development of individuals into complete individuals" (Marx and Engels 1846, 97). "The approporiation of a totality of instruments of production is, for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves" (Marx and Engels 1846, 96).

For Marx, a communist society or socialist mode of production is based on the principle: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!" (Marx 1875, 306). This means that in a communist society all goods and services are for free and human activities are self-chosen. The precondition is that "the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual" and that "all the springs of common wealth flow more abundantly" (Marx 1875, 306). Computer technology plays an important role in achieving a communist society: it allows increasing productivity so that overall wealth can be increased. If class relations are substituted by co-operative relations, these material conditions allow post-scarcity and wealth for all as a basis for free labour (in the self of self-determined, not unpaid!) and free goods and services (in the sense of gratis for all). A communist Internet is only possible in such a communist society. In a communist society, digital goods and services will be created in voluntary co-operative labour and will be available to all for free. Digital commodities and commodities in general cease to exist. Self-determined activities online and offline will create a well-rounded individuality that is not a form of digital Maoism, but a true form of freedom realized in a dynamic and self-enhancing dialectic of individuality and collectivism.

The second strategy (ideological subsumption) is represented by Kevin Kelly, who preached the neoliberal credos of liberalization, privatization, and commercialization in relation to IT in the 1990s (see for example: Kelly 1998), argues that the "new web", where people "work toward a common goal and share their products in common, […] contribute labor without wages and enjoy the fruits free of charge" (Kelly 2009, 118) constitutes a "new socialism" – "digital socialism". The new socialism is for Kelly a socialism, in which workers do not control and manage organizations and the material output they generate. Therefore this notion of socialism should be questioned. For Kelly, socialism lies in collective production, not in democratic economic ownership. If "socialism seeks to replace capitalism by a system in which the public interest takes precedence over the interest of private profit", "is incompatible with the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few", and "requires effective democratic control of the economy" (*Frankfurt Declaration of the Socialist International*; Socialist International 1951), then Kelly's notion of socialism that is perfectly compatible with the existence of Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, and other web corporations (as indicated by the fact that he lists Google, Amazon, Facebook, and YouTube in his history of socialism), is not at all a notion of socialism, but one of capitalism disguised as socialism. For Rosa Luxemburg, socialism was "a society that is not governed by the profit motive but aims at saving human labour" (Luxemburg 1913/2003, 301). She argued that the "aim of socialism is not accumulation but the satisfaction of toiling humanity's wants by developing the productive forces of the entire globe" (Luxemburg 1913/2003, 447).

Kelly's notion of socialism is incompatible with theoretical concepts of socialism, it is theoretically ungrounded and can be considered as the ideological attempt to redefine capitalism and capitalist exploitation as socialism.

8. Conclusion

The analysis of approaches in this paper showed that there are methodological, ontological, and epistemological differences within Critical Internet Studies. Critical Cyberculture Studies is influenced by Cultural Studies, it rather ignores aspects of class and exploitation, and should therefore better be termed "Cyberculture Studies". Critical Theory and Critical Political Economy of the Internet are based on the insight that class is crucial for understanding the structures of exploitation and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

domination that express themselves on the Internet and in other media and that in capitalism, all forms of domination are related to and conditioned by forms of exploitation. Either implicitly or explicitly, a lot of Marxian concepts have been reflected in Critical Internet Studies: dialectics, capitalism, commodification, surplus value/exploitation/alienation/class, globalization, ideology, class struggle, commons, public sphere, communism, aesthetics. Anti-Marxism and subsumption are two strategies that attempt to neutralize the critical role of Marxian concepts in Internet Studies.

The outlined eleven Marxian concepts allow formulating an incomplete research agenda for Critical Internet Studies that includes the following questions:

1) How can the creation, development and the contradictions of the Internet be understood by a dialectical and historical critical theory?

2) What exactly is the role of the Internet in capitalism? How can this role be theorized and empirically measured? Which Internet-based capital accumulation models are there?

3) Which forms of commodification do we find on the Internet and how do they work?

4) Which different forms of surplus value creation are there on the Internet, how do they work? What do users think about them?

5) How does the Internet interact with globalization processes?

6) Which myths and ideologies are there about the Internet? How can they be uncovered, analyzed, and criticized?

7) What is the role of the Internet in class struggles? What are the potentials, realities and limits of struggles for an alternative Internet?

8) What are Internet commons? How does the commodification of the Internet commons work? Which models for strengthening the Internet commons are there?

9) What are the potentials and limits of the Internet for bringing about a public sphere?

10) What is a commons-based Internet? Which forms and models of a commons-based Internet are there? How can the establishment of a commons-based Internet be strengthened?

11) How does the Internet change art and aesthetics? Are there potentials of online art and online aesthetics for challenging the logic of capitalism and to help advancing a different logic?

This paper has attempted to show the importance of Marx for Critical Internet Studies. The results confirm the views of a number of critical media/technology studies and information science scholars, who stress the importance of Marx for studying communication (see especially: Fuchs 2010a). Dallas Smythe called for a “Marxist theory of communication“ (Smythe 1994, 258). Murdock and Golding (2005, 61) say that “Critical Political Economy of Communications“ is “broadly marxisant“. Andrew Feenberg has stressed that the critical theory of technology “originates with Marx” (Feenberg 2002, vii) and that Marx provided the first critical theory of technology (Feenberg 2002, 47). Robert McChesney has argued that Marx is of fundamental importance for communication science because he provided intellectual tools that allow:

1. the critique of capital accumulation in the culture industry,
2. the critique of commodity fetishism,
3. the critique of ideologies that legitimate domination (McChesney 2007, 53-55). Furthermore 4. Marx’s own journalistic practice would be a model for critical, independent quality journalism (McChesney, 2007 55-57).

Edward Herman (1998) has stressed that the following elements of Marx’s analysis are important for an inquiry of contemporary capitalism and communication:

1. the profit and accumulation drive,
2. the role of technological change,
3. the creation of a reserve army,
4. globalization,
5. instability and crises,
6. the control of the state by dominating classes.

Gerald Sussmann (1999, 86) has emphasized in a special issue of the *Journal of Media Economics* on the topic of “Political Economy of Communication” that critical communication science is

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

based on Marxian thinking: ”Marx, one of the first to recognize modern communications and transportation as pillars of the corporate industrial infrastructure“. Bernd Carsten Stahl (2008, 10, 32) has argued that Marx is the root of the critical intention of critical information systems research and critical studies in general.

If Internet Studies is a distinct highly interdisciplinary field (Ess 2011), then Critical Internet Studies can be characterized as a subfield of Internet Studies, which focuses on the analysis of dominative structures and practices on the Internet, Internet-based struggles against domination, and seeks to find ways of using the Internet for liberating humans from oppression, inequality, and exploitation. I have argued in this paper that in the contemporary situation of capitalist crisis it is specifically important that Critical Internet Studies focuses on the analysis of the role of the Internet in capitalism and draws upon the Marxian roots of all critical studies. Some scholars in Critical Internet Studies acknowledge explicitly the importance of Marxian analysis for studying the Internet critically, whereas others refer implicitly to Marx. Authors in Critical Cyberculture Studies tend to bracket issues relating to class and capitalism. It is time to actively remember that Karl Marx is the founding figure of Critical Media and Information Studies and Critical Internet Studies (Fuchs, 2010a, 2011) and that Marxian analyses are crucial for understanding the contemporary role of the Internet and the media in society (see also: Fuchs and Winseck 2011).

Steve Macek (2006) has distinguished between two forms of digital media studies: 1) analyses “typically informed by Marxism, materialist feminism, radical political economy, critical sociology, and social movement theory”, 2) “postmodernist and poststructuralist media scholarship” (Macek 2006, 1031f). The first approach is certainly “vastly superior to the other“ (Macek 2006, 1038; see also the analyses in Artz, Macek and Cloud 2006). In addition, it needs to be stressed that the second approach is completely out of joint with the capitalist crisis times we have entered.

Marx is back, capitalism is in crisis – therefore we require Marxist Internet Studies if we want to understand the role of the Internet in domination and exploitation and its potential for liberation.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1962. Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften. In *Soziologische Schriften I*, 574-565. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1969. Einleitung zum “Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie. In *Soziologische Schriften I*, 280-353. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1997. *Aesthetic Theory*. London: Continuum.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2002. The Work of Being Watched: Interactive Media and the Exploitation of Self-Disclosure. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2): 230-248.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2005. The Work of Watching One Another: Lateral Surveillance, Risk, and Governance. *Surveillance & Society 2* (4): 479-497.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2006. Apprehensions of the Future: Internet Aesthetics and Ideology. In *Ideologies of the Internet*, edited by Katharine Sarikakis and Daya Thussu, 19-34. London: Hampton Press.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2007. *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2009. Critical Media Studies 2.0: An Interactive upgrade. *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 1 (1): 35-51.

Artz, Lee, Steve Macek and Danah L. Cloud, eds. 2006. *Marxism and Communication Studies*. New York: Peter Lang.

Atton, Cris. 2004. *An Alternative Internet*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bakardjieva, Maria. 2010.. The Internet in Everyday Life: Exploring the Tenets and Contributions of Diverse Approaches. In *The Handbook of Internet Studies*, edited by Mia Consalvo and Charles Ess, 59-82. Chicester: Wiley.

Barbrook, Richard. 2007. *Imaginary Futures*. London: Pluto Press.

Beer, David. 2008. Social Network(ing) Sites. Revisiting the Story So Far: A Response to danah boyd & Nicole Ellison. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (2): 516-529.

Bell, David. 2001. *An Introduction to Cybercultures*. New York: Routledge.

Bell, David, ed. 2006a. *Cybercultures. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Bell, David. 2006b. Introduction: Approaching Cyberculture. In *Cybercultures. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, Volume I,* edited by David Bell, 1-10. New York: Routledge.

Bell, David. 2007. *Cyberculture Theorists*. New York: Routledge.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Beller, Jonathan. 2006. *The Cinematic Mode of Production*. Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press.

Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner. 2001. *The Postmodern Adventure*. New York: Guilford.

Bolin, Göran. 2011. *Value and the Media. Cultural Production and Consumption in Digital Markets*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Breen, Marcus. 2010. Digital Determinism: Culture Industries in the USA-Australia Free Trade Agreement. *New Media & Society* 12 (4): 657-676.

Breen, Marcus. 2011. *Uprising. The Internet's Unintended Consequences*. Champaign, IL: Common Ground.

Burston, Jonathan, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Alison Hearn, eds. 2010, Digital Labour. Special issue. *Ephemera* 10 (3/4): 214-539.

Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek. 2000. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*. London: Verso.

Callinicos, Alex. 2003. *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Campbell, John Edward and Matt Carlson. 2002. Panopticon.com: Online Surveillance and the Commodification of Privacy. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 46 (4): 586-606.

Campbell, John Edward. 2008. *Virtually Home: The Commodification of Community in Cyberspace* (dissertation). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania (January 1, 2008).

Cecez-Kecmanovic, Dubravka. 2005. Basic Assumptions of the Critical Research Perspectives in Information Systems. In *Handbook of Critical Information Systems Research,* edited by Debra Howcroft and Eileen M. Trauth, 19-46. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Cleaver, Harry .1998. The Zapatistas and the Electronic Fabric of Struggle. In *Zapatista!,* edited by John Holloway and Eloina Peláez, 81-103. London: Pluto Press.

Critical Art Ensemble. 1996. *Electronic Civil Disobedience.* New York: Autonomedia.

Dahlberg, Lincoln. 2004. Net-Public Sphere Research: Beyond the "First Phase". *Javnost 11* (1): 27-44.

Dahlgren, Peter. 2005. The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication. *Political Communication* 22 (2): 147-162.

Dean, Jodi. 2004. The Networked Empire: Communicative Capitalism and the Hope for Politics. In *Empire's New Clothes. Reading Hardt and Negri*, edited by Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean, 265-288. New York: Routledge.

Dean, Jodi. 2005. Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics. *Cultural Politics, 1*(1), 51-74.

Dean, Jodi. 2006. *Žižek Politics*. New York: Routledge.

Dean, Jodi. 2009. *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies. Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Dean, Jodi. 2010. *Blog Theory.* Cambridge: Polity.

Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Specters of Marx*. New York: Routledge.

Downing, John. 2001. *Radical Media*. London: Sage.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx. Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Urbana, IL: Universiy of Illinois Press.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick and Greg De Peuter. 2009. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Eagleton, Terry. 2011. *Why Marx Was Right.* London: Yale University Press.

Elmer, Greg, ed. 2002. *Critical Perspectives on the Internet*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Elmer, Greg 2004. *Profiling Machines*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ess, Charles 2011. Introduction to Part I. In *The Handbook of Internet Studies,* edited by Mia Consalvo and Charles Ess, pp. 11-15. Chicester: Wiley.

Feenberg, Andrew. 2002. *Transforming Technology: A Critical Theory Revisited*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fernback, Jan. 2004. Community as Commodity. Empowerment and Consumerism on the Web. *Internet Research Annual* 1: 224-230.

Fernback, Jan and Zizi Papacharissi. 2007. Online Privacy as Legal Safeguard: The Relationship among Consumer, Online Portal, and Privacy Policies. *New Media & Society* 9 (5): 715-734.

Fisher, Eran. 2010a. Contemporary Technology Discourse and the Legitimation of Capitalism. *European Journal of Social Theory* 13 (2): 229-252.

Fisher, Eran. 2010b. *Media and New Capitalism in the Digital Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foster, John B. and Fred Magdoff. 2009. *The Great Financial Crisis. Causes and Consequences*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society. Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009a. A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of Transnational Informational Capitalism. *Rethinking Marxism* 21 (3): 387-402.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009b. Information and Communication Technologies and Society. A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. *European Journal of Communication* 24 (1): 69-87.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010a. Grounding Critical Communication Studies: An Inquiry into the Communication Theory of Karl Marx. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (1): 15-41.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010b. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian and Dwayne Winseck. 2011. Critical Media and Communication Studies Today. A Conversation. *tripleC* 9 (2): 247-271.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1990. *Capitalism and Communication*. London: Sage.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1998. Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce? In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, edited by John Storey, 600-612. Harlow: Pearson

Graham, Phil. 2006. *Hypercapitalism*. New York: Peter Lang.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1991. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hakken, David. 2003. *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*. New York: Routledge.

Hammer, Rhonda and Douglas Kellner. 2009. From Communications and Media Studies through Cultural Studies. In *Media/Cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*, edited by Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kellner, ix-xlvii. New York: Peter Lang.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude*. New York: Penguin.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2009. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David. 2010. *A Companion to Marx's Capital.* London: Verso.

Heim, Micahel. 1999. The Cyberspace Dialectic. In *The Digital Dialectic*, edited by Peter Lunenfeld, 24-45. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Herman, Edward S. 1998. The Reopening of Marx's System. *New Politics* 6 (4): 131-135.

Hesmondhalgh, David and Sarah Baker 2011. *Creative Labour. Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 2011. *How to Change the World. Marx and Marxism 1840-2011*. London: Little, Brown.

Horkheimer, Max. 1937/2002. Traditional and Critical Theory. In *Critical Theory*, 188-252. New York: Continuum.

Horkheimer, Max. 1947/1974. *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Continuum.

Huws, Ursula. 2003. *The Making of a Cybertariat. Virtual Work in a Real World*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Jacobs, Katrien, Marije Janssen and Matteo Pasquinelli, eds. 2007. *C'LICK ME. A Netporn Studies Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Jakobsson, Peter and Fredrik Stiernstedt. 2010. Pirates of Silicon Valley. State of Exception and Dispossession in Web 2.0. *First Monday* 15 (7).

Jameson, Frederic. 2011. *Representing Capital.* London: Verso.

Jones, Steve. 2006. Foreword. Dreams of a Field: Possible Trajectories of Internet Studies. In *Critical Cyberculture Studies*, edited by David Silver and Adrienne Massanari, ix-xvii. New York: New York University Press.

Kahn, Richard and Douglas Kellner. 2004. New Media and Internet Activism. *New Media & Society* 6 (1): 87–95.

Keen, Andrew. 2006. Web 2.0. The Second Generation of the Internet Has Arrived. It's Worse Than You Think. *The Weekly Standard*, May 16.

Keen, Andrew. 2007. *The Cult of the Amateuer: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture.* New York: Currency.

Kellner, Douglas. 1989. *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kellner, Douglas 1995. *Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Kellner Douglas. 2002. Theorizing Globalization. *Sociological Theory* 20 (3): 285-305.

Kellner, Douglas. 2009. Toward a Critical Media/Cultural Studies. In *Media/Cultural Studies: Critical Approaches,* edited by Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kellner, 5-24. New York: Peter Lang.

Kelly, Kevin. 1998. *New Rules for the New Economy*. New York: Viking.

Kelly, Kevin. 2009. 009, June 2009. The New Socialism. *Wired*, June 2009: 116-121.

Kidd Dorothy. 2003. Indymedia.org: A New Communication Commons. In *Cyberactivism*, edited by Martha McCaughey and Michael Ayers, 47-40. New York: Routledge.

Kline, Stephen, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greg De Peuter. 2003. *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Knoche, Manfred. 2005. Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Medienökonomie als Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie der Medien. In *Internationale partizipatorische Kommunikationspolitik,* edited Petra Ahrweiler and Barbara Thomaß, pp. 101-109. Münster: LIT.

Lanier, Jaron. 2006. The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism. *Edge – The Third Culture.* Retrieved from http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lanier06/lanier06_index.html

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Lauer, Josh. 2008. Alienation in the Information Economy. Toward a Marxist Critique of Consumer Surveillance. In *Participation and Media Production,* edited by Nico Carpentier and Benjamin De Cleen, 41-56. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

Lovink, Geert. 1997. Von der spekulativen Medientheorie zur Netzkritik. *Telepolis*, January 1.

Lovink, Geert. 2002. *Dark Fiber. Tracking Critical Internet Culture.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lovink, Geert. 2008. *Zero Comments. Blogging and Critical Internet Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Lovink, Geert and Sabine Niederer, eds. 2008. *Video Vortex Reader. Responses to YouTube.* Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Lovink, Geert and Ned Rossiter, eds. 2007. *MyCreativity Reader. A Critique of Creative Industries.* Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Lovink, Geert and Trebor Scholz, eds. 2005. *The Art of Free Cooperation*. New York: Autonomedia.

Lovink, Geert and Pit Schultz. 1997. Aufruf zur Netzkritik. In *Netzkritik*, edited by nettime, 5-14. Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv.

Lovink, Geert and Soenke Zehle, eds. 2005. *Incommunicado Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Lunenfeld, Peter. 1999a. Introduction: Screen Grabs: The Digital Dialectic and New Media Theory. In *The Digital Dialectic*, edited by Peter Lunenfeld, xiv-xxi. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Luxemburg, Rosa. 1913/2003. *The Accumulation of Capital*. New York: Routledge.

Macek, Steve. 2006. Divergent Critical Approaches to New Media. *New Media & Society* 8 (6): 1031-1038.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1941. *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory.* New York: Humanity Books.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man.* New York: Routledge.

Marx, Karl. 1844. *Ecomomic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

Marx, Karl. 1857/1858. *The Grundrisse*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1863. *Theories of Surplus Value*. Volume 1. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital: Critique of the Political Economy. Volume 1*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1871. The Civil War in France. In *Selected Works In One Volume*, 237-295. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, Karl. 1875. Critique of the Gotha Programme. In *Selected Works In One Volume*, 297-317. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, Karl. 1894. *Capital. Volume 3*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1846. *The German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1968. *Selected Works in One Volume*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Mathiesen, Thomas. 2004. Panopticon and Synopticon as Silencing Systems. In *Silently Silenced. Essays on the Creation of Acquiesence in Modern Society*, 98-102. Winchester: Waterside Press.

MEW. 1962ff. *Marx-Engels-Werke*. Berlin: Dietz.

MECW. 1975ff. Marx-Engels-*Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers.

McChesney, Robert W. 2007. *Communication Revolution*. New York: New Press.

Moglen, Eben. 2003. *The dotCommunist Manifesto*. Retrieved August 8, 2010, from http://emoglen.law.columbia.edu/my_pubs/dcm.html#tex2html2

Mosco, Vincent. 2004. *The Digital Sublime*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage. 2nd edition.

Mosco, Vincent and Catherine McKercher, eds. 2009. *The Laboring of Communication. Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* Plymouth: Lexington.

Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 2005. Culture, Communications and Political Economy. In *Mass Media and Society*, edited by James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, 60-83. 4th Edition. New York: Hodder Arnold.

Nakamura, Lisa. 2008. *Digitizing Race. Visual Cultures of the Internet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Nakamura, Lisa. 2009. Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game. The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 28 (2):128-144.

O'Connor, James. 1998. *Natural Causes.* New York: Guilford.

Olsson, Tobias. 2006 A Marginal Resource for Civic Identity. The Internet in Swedish Working Class Households. *Javnost-The Public* 13 (1): 73-88.

Papacharissi, Zizi. 2002. The Virtual Sphere. The Internet as a Public Sphere. *New Media & Society* 4 (1): 9-27.

Passavant, Paul A. 2004. Postmodern Republicanism. In *Empire's New Clothes. Reading Hardt and Negri*, edited by Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean, 1-20. New York: Routledge.

Patelis, Korinna. 2000. The Political Economy of the Internet. In *Media Organisations in Society*, edited by James Curran, 84-107. London: Arnold.

Popper, Karl R. 1962. Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 14 (2): 233-248.

Qiu, Jack L. 2009. *Working-Class Network Society. Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Rossiter, Ned. 2006. *Organized Networks*. Rotterdam: NAi.

Schiller, Dan. 2000. *Digital Capitalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Schmiede, Rudi. 2006. Knowledge, Work and Subject in Informational Capitalism. In *Social informatics: An Information Society For All?*, edited by Jacques Berleur, Markku I. Nurminen and John Impagliazzo, 333-354. New York: Springer.

Scholz, Trebor, ed. 2012. *Digital Labor. The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York: Routledge.

Scholz, Trebor. 2008. Market Ideology and the Myths of Web 2.0. *First Monday* 13 (3).

Silver, David. 2006a. Introduction: Where is Internet Studies. In *Critical Cyberculture Studies*, edited by David Silver and Adrienne Massanari*,* 1-14. New York: New York University Press.

Silver, David. 2006b. Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards: Cyberculture Studies 1990-2000. In *Cybercultures. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, Volume II,* edited by David Bell, 61-79. New York: Routledge.

Silver, David and Adrienne Massanari, eds. 2006. *Critical Cyberculture Studies*. New York: New York University Press.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1994. *Counterclockwise.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Socialist International. 1951. Aims and Tasks of the Socialist International. Retrieved August 8, 2010, from http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticleID=39

Söderberg, Johan. 2008. *Hacking Capitalism*. New York: Routledge.

Stahl, Bernd C. 2008. *Information Systems: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Sterne, Jonathan. 2006. Thinking the Internet: Cultural studies versus the Millennium. In *Cybercultures. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, Volume II*, edited by David Bell, 80-106. New York: Routledge.

Sussman, Gerald. 1999. On the Political Economy of Communication. *Journal of Media Economics* 12 (2): 85-87.

Taylor, Paul A. 2009. Critical Theory 2.0 and Im/materiality: The bug in the Machinic Flows. *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 1 (1): 93-110.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture*. London: Pluto.

Therborn, Göran. 2008. *From Marxism to Post-Marxism?* London: Verso.

Turner, Graeme. 2003. *British Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

van Dijck, José. 2009. Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content. *Media, Culture & Society* 31 (1): 41-58.

van Dijck, José and David Nieborg. 2009. Wikinomics and its Discontents: A Critical Analysis of Web 2.0 Business Manifestos. *New Media & Society* 11 (5): 855-874.

Virno, Paolo and Michael Hardt, eds. 1996. *Radical Thought in Italy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Webster, Frank. 2002. *Theories of the Information Society*. New York: Routledge.

Žižek, Slavoj, 2004. *Revolution at the Gates: Žižek on Lenin*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2008. *In Defense of Lost Causes*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2009. *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2010a. How to Begin from the Beginning. In *The Idea of Communism*, edited by Slavoj Žižek and Costas Douzinas, 209-226. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2010b. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj and Costas Douzinas, eds. 2010. *The Idea of Communism*. London: Verso.

About the Author

Christian Fuchs

Christian Fuchs holds the chair professorship in media and communication studies at Uppsala University's Department of Informatics and Media. He is also board member of the Unified Theory of Information Research Group and editor of tripleC (cognition, communication, co-operation): Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society. His main research fields are: social theory, critical theory, political economy of media, ICTs, communication, information, technology; critical information society studies, ICTs and society. He is author of numerous academic publications, including the books "Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age" (New York: Routledge 2008, paperback edition 2010) and "Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies" (New York: Routledge 2011). He is co-founder of the ICTs and Society Network and chair of the European Sociological Association's Research Network 18 – Sociology of Communications and Media Research.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 413-424, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Did Somebody Say Neoliberalism?: On the Uses and Limitations of a Critical Concept in Media and Communication Studies

Christian Garland* and Stephen Harper**

** University of Warwick, UK and Fellow of Fellow of the Institut für Kritische Theorie, Freie Universität Berlin*
christiangarland@hotmail.com
*** University of Portsmouth, School of Creative Arts, Film and Media, Portsmouth, UK,*
stephen.harper@port.ac.uk

Abstract: *This paper explores the political-economic basis and ideological effects of talk about neoliberalism with respect to media and communication studies. In response to the supposed ascendancy of the neoliberal order since the 1980s, many media and communication scholars have redirected their critical attentions from capitalism to neoliberalism. This paper tries to clarify the significance of the relatively new emphasis on neoliberalism in the discourse of media and communication studies, with particular reference to the 2011 phone hacking scandal at The News of the World. Questioning whether the discursive substitution of 'neoliberalism' for 'capitalism' offers any advances in critical purchase or explanatory power to critics of capitalist society and its media, the paper proposes that critics substitute a Marxist class analysis in place of the neoliberalism-versus-democracy framework that currently dominates in the field.*

Keywords: *Neoliberalism, Marxism, Critical Theory, Critical Media and Communication Studies, Hackgate*

The media and communication studies textbooks of the early 1980s constituted an ideological battleground for the struggle between liberal pluralism, on the one hand, and Marxism, on the other (see, for example, Gurevitch et al. 1982). Under the influence of European critical theory and British cultural studies, Marxist communication scholars talked of capitalism and class struggle, and accused pluralists of underestimating structures of domination (Hall 1982). With stronger roots in US sociological tradition, pluralist media critics advocated for democracy, chastising Marxists for their economic determinism or functionalism. While it is certainly possible to read the history of the relationship between Marxist and liberal pluralist approaches to media and cultural studies in terms of a series of rapprochements and overlaps (McLennan 1989), there can be little doubt that in recent decades, the pluralist perspective has all but vanquished its erstwhile ideological competitor.

Marxism has always, of course, been marginalised in media and communication studies. In the twentieth century, for example, McCarthyism in the US and the Radikalenerlass in Germany restricted the activities of Marxist communication scholars. Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 1970s, Marxism was a driving force in workers' struggles and a tangible presence in the academy. The critical marginalisation of Marxism became particularly apparent with the ebbing of class struggle in the 1980s and 1990s. In these decades, the disciplines of media and cultural studies, under the sway of a celebratory postmodernism, came to distinguish their pluralist wisdom from the supposedly "elitist" positions of the different Marxist traditions, continually emphasising the eclectic nature of their own standpoints and of the media cultures they critiqued. According to the pluralist paradigm, the newspaper reader, the television viewer, the radio listener are free to consumer culture as active, empowered, resistant audiences in a marketplace of ideas underpinned and sustained by liberal democratic ideology. Following on from this there is the recognition that capitalism may have some shortcomings, but it is 'the best we've got' and so must be made the best of: the capitalist system and its media institutions are seen to represent the best possible arrangement of things. The popularity of this perspective in the cultural studies milieu of the 1990s has reconfigured the ideological co-ordinates of cultural and media theory, so that for many critics today, the task of media and cultural criticism is no longer to critique capitalism, but to defend the principles of "democracy" and "pluralism" against unwelcome encroachments of the market –

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

encroachments often understood as so many manifestations of "neoliberalism" or the "neoliberal agenda".

Indeed, the hegemony of pluralism in media and cultural studies has been accompanied by some telling terminological shifts. The word "capitalism", for instance, has all but vanished from the lexicon of the left – as sure a sign as any, as Slavoj Žižek (2007, 212) notes, of capitalism's ideological triumph. In the 1990s, as Boltanski and Chiapello (2005, ix) observe, "the term [capitalism] was simply struck from the vocabulary of politicians, trade unionists, writers and journalists – not to mention social scientists, who had consigned it to historical oblivion". Today, we would suggest, the term "neoliberalism" has largely replaced "capitalism" (and its more optimistic variant "late capitalism") in media and cultural studies discourse and the former word now appears in contexts where once we would have expected to have read the latter. In an article on media ideologies, to take just one example, the prolific discourse analyst Teun van Dijk (2006, 121) discusses how media audiences recognise "racist, sexist or neoliberal" arguments. As such formulations suggest, the Marxism/pluralism dyad of yesteryear has largely given way to a new paradigm structured by the binary opposition between neoliberalism, on the one hand, and democracy (or, sometimes, in the Laclauian formulation, "radical democracy"), on the other. Today, it is neoliberalism, rather than capitalism as such, that preoccupies many academics working in the fields of media and cultural studies. As one leading media scholar, Natalie Fenton (2009, 56), puts it, "if media studies must do anything, then it must analyze and explain the cultural and political significance of [the] neoliberal market doctrine".

In itself, this enterprise is not necessarily misguided. In fact, as we argue below, much valuable work in media and cultural studies has proceeded on this basis. Yet even among critics who have embraced the term, neoliberalism is sometimes hazily defined and its conceptual intelligibility is often taken for granted (Mudge 2008). This paper tries to clarify the relevance and utility of the concept of neoliberalism for critical scholarship in media and cultural studies, questioning whether the hegemonic acceptance of the term offers any genuine increase in critical purchase or explanatory power to critics of capitalist society and its media. In particular, it is argued that it has become something of an accepted practice in media and cultural studies to identify "neoliberalism" – rather than capitalism *per se* – as the ultimate target of critique. In Fenton's terms, neoliberalism is a "market doctrine" which has supplanted an earlier version of the same market in which the liberal democratic state imposed "checks and balances" on capitalist power and critiques of neoliberalism are often animated by a reformist concern to return to the former, social democratic vision by "reclaim[ing] the state" (Wainwright 2003) from the forces of the market. The danger of such critiques, we argue, is that they may lead to a tepidly agonised hankering after a long-gone "fairer", "more democratic" capitalism and a call for the "renewal" of Keynesianism. In relation to the media and cultural industries, meanwhile, the attack on neoliberalism, while commendable in itself, all too often entails a problematic defence of "public service" broadcasting as a bulwark against commercialisation.

This paper seeks to contribute to a more radical critique of the functioning of neoliberalism within critical discourse, challenging the assumptions frequently underlying the use of the term and its application to the media and cultural industries. Our own perspective on questions of media power is informed by Marx and Engels' well-known contention in *The German Ideology* that

> the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it (Marx and Engels 1970/1845, 64).

For us, as for Marx and Engels, the mass media play a crucial role in helping to reproduce ideology and specifically the ideology which maintains capitalism to be an inevitable and immutable

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

reality that is here to stay; for it is indeed "the ruling material force of society" (the value-form and profit motive) which "is at the same time its ruling intellectual force". The colossal influence wielded by the media's billionaire owners does indeed filter through all that they own and control, and directly or indirectly through majority and institutional shareholders these same representatives of the capitalist class acquire "the means of material production", thus gaining "control at the same time over the means of mental production". Moreover, in the epoch of reality television in which cameras are turned on atomised (non-)individuals by way of a spurious "democratic" populism, truly "the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it", even in those rare instances where they are chosen to be the recipients, fleetingly, of celebrity status. But such subjection is not merely a consequence of neoliberalisation. As Marx and Engels' thesis indicates, the critical problem with the media and cultural industries is not simply that their character is determined by *market forces*, but that they represent the interests of a *ruling class*. Any properly Marxist media and cultural studies critique must therefore encompass both the so-called "free market" and the state that underwrites and coordinates that market in the interests of the capitalist class. Indeed, we hold that in the messy field of 'actually existing' social reality, class and class struggle – and not some false and apologetic concept such as 'classism' – exist. Class struggle is, as Walter Benjamin was well aware, the "fight for the crude and material things without which no refined or spiritual things could exist". It is the material struggle between classes – that is, capital against labour and labour's struggle against the capital-labour relation itself, the value relation, and the wage relation – which defines the conditions of emancipation from them, and from abstract labour. To reduce all of this, we would argue, to a struggle against "the market" is to risk abandoning Marxism altogether.

Neoliberalism can be seen, in Andrew Glyn's (2007) phrase, "capitalism unleashed", a "political rationality" (Foucault 1988) entailing the de-socialization of economic activity and the espousal of, *inter alia*, coercive competition, state rationalization and factor mobility (or "globalization"). Above all, neoliberalism prioritises market forces over state intervention and dirigisme and the emergence of neoliberalism has been marked by a "motivated shift away from public-collective values to private-individualistic ones" (Barnett 2005, 7). The philosophical origins of neoliberalism lie, of course, in the free-market advocacy of economists such as Hayek and Friedman; but it was not until the late 1970s, as a result of a series of so-called "deregulatory" – or better, perhaps, "re-regulatory" – policies pursued by Western governments, that neoliberal ideology began to exercise material force. Over the following years, the state has retreated somewhat from social welfare provision and certain areas of economic organisation – through tenders to private third parties bidding for contracts to carry out the functions of the state, most recently observed in the proposal that policing be opened up to this process – resulting in a hyper-financialised, "globalised" economy and an increasingly privatised socio-political order that interpellates individuals as competitive and autonomous, monadic subjects (Harvey 2005). In the same period, media organisations have increasingly tended to defer to market imperatives and the ties that once bound them to the social groups that directed or controlled the state – such as political parties, the unions and the churches, have been loosened, especially in the US (McChesney 2001; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Hallin 2008).

As this broad-brush outline suggests, the concept of neoliberalism helps to illuminate many aspects of Western capitalism's struggle to suppress the working class over the last four decades. As an *ideology*, neoliberalism sees the market as a supreme good in itself; its accompanying rhetorical emphasis on "freedom" ultimately concerns the freedom to buy and sell and to acquire and maintain property. In effect, the essence of "freedom" becomes economic – the freedom to work or to starve and the freedom to obey laws sanctioning this state of affairs. The neoliberal project might be described as a purer form of capitalism than Keynesianism; in effect: the imposition, as far as possible, of market imperatives at all times and in every area of life – the reign of the "cash nexus", in Marx's famous phrase. In contrast with the post-war Keynesian social compromise of full employment, a strong welfare safety net, public ownership of key industries, and state intervention to "pump prime" the economy when needed, neoliberalism successfully all but destroyed this consensus with its own prescriptions of privatization, deregulation, structural un-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

employment, corporate tax breaks, and welfare "reform". In this sense, the neoliberal project was, and is, also a strategy aimed at restoring and maintaining *class power*, a response by capital to the seismic shocks generated by the worker and student revolts of the 1960s and 70s, no less than the ongoing economic crises of the latter decade (Harvey, 2005).

Nevertheless, some qualifications are in order at this point. The extent to which the scope and remit of the capitalist state has been "rolled back" in recent years, for example, is debatable. John Dewey once remarked that "government is the shadow cast by big business over society" and the nation state remains pivotal in regulating capitalism. As Harvey (2005, 159-164) notes, the state has played a pivotal role in the upward redistribution of wealth in recent decades. In fact, without a state to coordinate the system of competition, market competitors would tear one another, and society, to pieces. The nation state thus functions as what Engels, in *Anti-Dühring* (1947/1878), called the "ideal collective body of all capitalists", regulating the chaos that arises as capitalist interests compete. Left-liberals and the more timid of the "anti-globalization" activists who advocate something similar to the "radical democracy" advocated by Laclau and Mouffe (1986) often complain that the role of the nation state is being usurped by transnational powers such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Yet these institutions were set up by American imperialism and have operated in its interest ever since. Indeed, given that supra-national bodies such as the OECD, WTO, G8 and G20, not to mention the EU, were all established by liberal democratic states, calling for their reclamation from the market, or from the undue power of neoliberalism, is at best unconvincing. As Ellen Meiksins Wood (2005, 138) puts it:

> many participants in movements of this kind are not so much anti-capitalist as anti-"globalization", or perhaps anti-neoliberal, or even just opposed to particularly malignant corporations. They assume that the detrimental effects of the capitalist system can be eliminated by taming global corporations or by making them more "ethical", "responsible", and "socially conscious".

By the same token, it seems somewhat confused to express the concern that supra-state institutions that were *founded* by states committed to liberal democracy are "undemocratic" (see for example: Klein 1999; Monbiot 2001; Hertz 2002) for seeking to do the bidding of capital. What such critiques often overlook is the necessary inter-imbrication of the state and the market. Indeed, despite the global nature of the capitalist market, the nation state form remains indispensable for capitalism. As Saskia Sassen (2006) argues, the forces of "globalization", far from abolishing the nation state, operate within it – just as surely as the nation state exists within the global order. Thus, while elements of the nation state have been deterritorialized, the state retains its vital role in capitalist organization. "No other institution", as Wood (2005, 139) writes, "has even begun to replace the nation state as an administrative and coercive guarantor of social order, property relations, stability of contractual predictability, or any of the other basic conditions required by capital in its everyday life".

It could even be argued that capitalism's very survival over the last century has been premised upon an increasing fusion of state and market. As early as the end of the nineteenth century, Kautsky observed in *The Class Struggle* (1971/1892) that the state was being forced to take into its own hands an increasing number of functions, a trend that, as observers such as Bukharin and Trotsky noted, intensified in the early twentieth century. Indeed, at that time, in the face of revolutionary threat and the difficulties posed by the saturation of global markets, the relatively *laissez-faire* capitalism of the nineteenth century gave way to the statified planning regimes of Stalinism, fascism and New Deal-style social democracy. This interpretation is borne out by economic data from the early twentieth century: in both the UK and US, government spending as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product, while largely static throughout the nineteenth century, began to grow significantly in the 1920s, culminating, of course, in the post-war creation of the welfare state.

Critics of neoliberalism usually suggest that the swelling of the state in the post-war period began to be reversed in the Reagan-Thatcher years. Western capital's tendencies towards privati-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

zation and outsourcing, as well as the erosion of the welfare state since the 1980s, certainly bear this out. On the other hand, in recent years the US, UK, Irish and Icelandic states have responded to the economic crisis by bailing out failed banks with public money, reminding us that states intervene constantly and crucially in the operations of markets in order to maintain the conditions for capital accumulation. The military expenditures of supposedly neoliberal, Western states, meanwhile, are gargantuan and massive standing armies are used to conquer new markets overseas – an historically unprecedented situation. Such facts problematize any simplistic view of the last few decades as a period during which the state has been in retreat. In fact, from the perspective of the *longue durée*, the purview of the state can be seen to have significantly *increased* since the early twentieth century. It seems to us, then, that neoliberalism is a term that must be used with caution; it certainly should not be understood in terms of a simple weakening or diminution of the power of the liberal democratic state. At the very least, the foregoing observations oblige us to recognise neoliberalism as a "hegemonic *restructuring ethos*, as a dominant pattern of (incomplete and contradictory) regulatory transformation, and not as a fully coherent system or typological state form" (Peck et al 2010, 104; see also Ortner 2011). It might be added that the process of 'neoliberalisation' has not been uniform, affecting some nations and geographical regions more profoundly than others (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Hallin 2008).

This is not to argue that neoliberalism is of no explanatory value to media critics and sociologists. Using the framework of neoliberalism, media sociologists have drawn attention to themes such as the celebritization of politics and the use of low-paid but flexible, or outsourced labour in the media industries (Deuze 2007). At the same time, textual and cultural critics have rightly highlighted some of the profoundly individualising aspects of late capitalist governmentality. In a series of books, Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 2007, 2011) has convincingly described and condemned the restless, "liquid" lifeworld of late capitalism, while Nick Couldry (2010), David Grazian (2010), John McMurria (2008) and Nick Stevenson (2010) have all commented astutely on the role of reality television in producing flexible, mobile and self-fashioning "entrepreneurial subjects" (du Gay 1996). In a similar vein, Janice Peck (2008) has skilfully outlined the ways in which the individualistic discourses of self-reliance emphasized in the self-help books and television talk shows of Oprah Winfrey serve to reinforce neoliberal orthodoxies. Such work is valuable in illustrating and critiquing the radical de-socialization of the media and cultural industries over the last two decades, prima facie evidence of which can be gleaned from a glance at the lifestyle and consumer programmes that dominate today's television schedules and whose ideal viewer appears to be a self-disciplining *homo economicus* concerned only with regulating her diet, climbing the property ladder and surgically enhancing her face.

But while the concept of neoliberalism facilitates valuable insights into the ongoing atomisation of contemporary institutions and subjectivities, it is not without its limitations as a tool of critical media analysis. For one thing, while it is true that a good deal of contemporary media culture addresses its audiences as hyper-flexible, autonomous consumers, much of it is also more traditionally propagandistic, aimed at the creation of patriotic citizens of the capitalist state. BBC political discussion programmes such as *Question Time*, party political broadcasts and, indeed, political journalism in its entirety overwhelmingly reflect the material interests, and reinforce the symbolic power of the capitalist state. So too does the ubiquitous Help for Heroes campaign, which – whatever good offices it may facilitate – surely serves to instil nationalist and militarist sentiment. This is to say nothing of the less obtrusive forms of "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995) promoted in nationwide television magazine programmes and sports coverage. Although it may be unfashionable in contemporary media and cultural studies to describe the media in terms of state propaganda, instilling a sense of loyalty to the capitalist nation remains a major function of much of the media we consume, especially in so-called "public service" broadcasting. Such poisonous additives of media propaganda and the contextual fallacy used in the (very) selective presentation of information retards and limits popular understanding of the world, and any critique from emerging – as it is intended to do. Critiques of the media that focus only on "neoliberal" agendas and ideologies risk failing to register this reality.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Indeed, besides the reactionary media institutions that serve as instruments of right-wing propaganda, there exists in "developed" capitalist societies the far more subtle – and thus far harder to critique – agenda-setting discourse of the liberal media, which sets the terms of what is considered acceptable in public debate, delimits the "sphere of legitimate controversy", in Daniel Hallin's (1986) famous phrase. The public service media, in particular, diffuse and reproduce what is considered acceptable discourse and thereby "manufacture consent" and legitimacy for what will never – and must never – be called into question. In the UK, where both of the authors are based, the news and current affairs programming of BBC and Channel 4 television is sometimes considered more "serious" than that of their commercial competitors. Yet it can be argued that both Channel 4 and the BBC – long the bogus whipping boy of the hysterical tabloid press – are in reality at almost every turn faithful servants of vested interests of private wealth and state power (Edwards and Cromwell 2005; Garland 2011; Harper 2012). Historically, for example, the BBC has tended to support the British government's foreign policy during both the Cold War (Jenks 2006) and afterwards (Edwards and Cromwell 2005). Indeed, a Cardiff University study into the BBC's reporting of the Iraq war showed that the BBC was actually *less* critical of the invasion than its commercial competitors (Lewis 2004). The point here is not that the quantity or quality of "serious" news coverage broadcast by BBC and Channel 4 has diminished in recent years; rather, it is that the "quality" news and current affairs programming on which both channels pride themselves constitutes the "acceptable discourse" of public debate, aimed at legitimizing liberal capitalism and preempting any critique of the system.

Our argument here is that too tight a focus on the undoubtedly malign influence of neoliberalism on politics or culture can cause us to neglect the equally, if not even more problematic machinations of both the state and the liberal media. Here we might consider, as an example, the left-liberal responses to the 2011 phone hacking "scandal" at Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World* newspaper, in which certain journalists were found to have hacked into the voicemail messages of a range of celebrities and ordinary members of the public. As is well-known, Murdoch's rise to power was facilitated by the "free market" media policies for which he noisily advocated and which he imposed on those who worked for him (McChesney 2001, 14). In fact, Murdoch was an early champion of neoliberal economic ideas and his friendships with politicians who shared what can be seen as his libertarian outlook, such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, were particularly important to his ascendancy (McKnight 2003). Whether explicitly or implicitly, many left-liberal scholars have identified Murdoch's commitment to neoliberalism as a fundamental element in the explanation not only of Murdoch's rise, but also of his fall from grace. One media scholar, for example, notes that the phone hacking scandal took place "in an era of untrammelled neoliberalism" (Savigny 2011). Indeed, identifying neoliberalism as the pernicious ideological background to the scandal, many media academics and activist organisations – such as the liberal campaign group Avaaz – have called for the reform of private media power (Freedman 2011).

Media commentators and victims of the phone hacking have rightly condemned the outrageous malpractice of the *News of the World* journalists. Yet in lambasting the embodiment of neoliberalism, Rupert Murdoch, in the wake of the scandal, left-liberal critics have tended to overlook the wider political context of the affair. By any standards, Murdoch is a powerful figure in the global media; but it should not be forgotten that Murdoch was brought down by a significantly more powerful coalition of forces, including anti-Murdoch factions within the British state and the non-Murdoch media, such as the BBC and *The Guardian*. Although the British state had known about phone hacking at the *News of the World* since at least 2007 (when two of the newspaper's journalists were jailed for related offenses), Murdoch's bid for full control of BSkyB must have raised concerns at the heart of the British establishment. It seems reasonable to suggest that the pro-US stance of the Murdoch media had become increasingly unpalatable to the British state, which may have felt it was time to bring News International under control and, however indirectly, to force Murdoch's hand in closing down his Sunday tabloid. In this context, the humbling of Rupert Murdoch and News International is best understood not as a modest victory for democratic accountability over the forces of global neoliberalism, but as the entrammelling of a globally massive

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

but nationally rather inconvenient private power bloc by the formidable forces of a dominant state faction and those elements within the media loyal to it. In class terms, the eruption of the scandal was the result of a well-timed intervention launched by one bourgeois faction against another. To understand Hackgate in this way is not to embrace a conspiracy theory, but to understand that the pragmatic co-operation of the various factions of the capitalist state is forever prone to breaking down, giving way to what Marx, in the third volume of *Capital* (1967/1894, 253), called a "fight among hostile brothers" whose outcome is "decided by power and craftiness".

Indeed, from a Marxist perspective, the exposure of phone hacking at the *News of the World*, together with the subsequent official inquiries into media ethics, demonstrates not so much the untrammelled influence of private media corporations, or the malignant effects of neoliberal ideology, as the power of the dominant factions of the nation state to act as an ideologically containing, regulatory force, reigning in or disciplining unruly elements. A class struggle perspective on the phone hacking affair would emphasize that the Leveson Inquiry into the affair and the voices calling for media "reform", far from constituting a counter-hegemonic force, represent a ruling class recuperation: media "reform", through the humbling of News International, was exactly what the dominant faction of the British ruling class sought. In this connection, it might be added that however heinous the crimes of the *News of the World* phone hackers may have been, it is unlikely that they can compare in their invasiveness to the everyday surveillance activities of the British state – a point politely disregarded in most discussions of the hacking scandal.

None of this is to argue that the current attempts to "reform" the media, via the Leveson Inquiry, are necessarily either regressive or doomed to failure. But our understandable eagerness to condemn the private media power represented by the archetypically "neoliberal" Murdoch empire should not cause us to fall into the trap of uncritically supporting the regulatory reforms now being proposed by a state whose own apparatuses of surveillance may not bear close scrutiny. Nor should it cause us to overlook the thoroughly capitalist nature of the non-Murdoch media. *The News of the World* may have been the paradigmatic embodiment of confected, salacious scandal and the paper folded with an unconvincing claim that the newspaper's self-declared exceptionalism to the rules governing the "free press" was in defence of those same rules – the better to serve democracy and the best interests of that imaginary demographic, "the public"; but as John Pilger (2011, 21) has written:

> Britain's system of elite monopoly control of the media rests not on News International alone, but on the *Mail* and the *Guardian* and the BBC, perhaps the most influential of all. All share a corporate monoculture that sets the agenda of the 'news', defines acceptable politics by maintaining the fiction of distinctive parties, normalises unpopular wars and guards the limits of "free speech". This will be strengthened by the illusion that a "bad apple" has been "rooted out".

As Pilger's final sentence suggests, the attack on Murdoch by powerful elements of the state and the non-Murdoch media – whatever other effects it may have – has conservative ideological implications, reinforcing the myth that the liberal democratic media are, at least in the normal course of events, unconstrained by powerful interests.

The limitations of neoliberalism as a critical paradigm can also be apprehended through an analysis of the media coverage of the recent, and ongoing, global economic crisis. For many academic critics, the crisis represents a "crisis of neoliberalism" (Beder, 2009; Duménil and Lévy 2011) and of "free market" ideology, meaning "financialization" (Kotz 2008), privatization, deregulation, and an absence of state intervention in the economy. On the other hand, others, most notably the Marxist economist and neoliberalism sceptic Andrew Kliman (2010a, 2010b, 2012), argue that the crisis is rather a crisis of capitalism as a whole, whose fundamental cause is a falling rate of profit (see also Mattick 2011 and Fuchs 2011, 26-29). Kliman also argues (2012, 50-51) that while neoliberalism is useful in describing the dominant political and ideological landscape since the 1980s, "it is not a useful concept for explaining the trajectory of the economy over the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

last several decades". Here is not the place to engage in complicated debates over economic theory. Yet the doubts raised in Kliman's work at least give us leave to question the widespread populist *media* representation of the crisis as one of unregulated, free market capitalism. For many journalists, the crisis was caused by a short-sighted commitment to "neoliberal ideology", understood in terms of the excesses of a certain form of "extreme" capitalism and widely personified in the tabloid and even the liberal media by the stereotypical (and arguably anti-Semitic) figures of the "greedy banker" and the unscrupulous trader. As the liberal commentator David Marquand (2010, 27) put it in an article in *The Guardian*:

> For the last two years we have been living through the third great capitalist crisis of modern times; and it is not over yet. The neoliberal paradigm that has dominated policy-making throughout the developed world, not least in the institutions of global economic governance, has been turned inside out. Markets, we have discovered (or rediscovered), do not always know better than governments. Private greed does not procure public benefits.

It has generally been argued, particularly by left-liberal journalists, that the best remedies for these ills are stronger financial regulation and the fostering of socio-economic "fairness" within the framework of a "responsible capitalism", as the *Guardian* journalist Polly Toynbee (2012, 27) has put it. Liberal journalists have thus tended to understand the economic crisis in populist and moralistic terms, complaining of the rampant greed of the laissez-faire financial sector – a discourse that has been very influential in framing the activities and objectives of the various Occupy movements that have sprung up across the world since 2011. Yet as one Marxist critic, the late Peter Gowan (2009), argues, the problem with such accounts is that

> while the New Wall Street System was *legitimated* by free-market, laissez-faire or neoliberal outlooks, these do not seem to have been *operative* ideologies for its practitioners, whether in Wall Street or in Washington. Philip Augar's detailed study of the Wall Street investment banks, *The Greed Merchants* […] argues that they have actually operated in large part as a conscious cartel – the opposite of a free market.

From this point of view, journalistic explanations of the economic crisis in terms of neoliberalism may have furnished some convenient media scapegoats, but they hardly provide an adequate or accurate account of the causes of, or possible solutions to, the economic recession. The "neoliberalism" theory has become a staple of mainstream media accounts of the crisis; yet the moralism and populism to which it often leads stand in sharp contrast to the materialist analyses of the recession offered by Marxist commentators such as Andrew Kliman (2012) and Paul Mattick (2011).

If neoliberalism is a problematic concept for media and cultural studies critics and practitioners, then so too is its slippery binary opposite, "democracy". In addition to calling for greater regulation of capitalism and capitalist media, critics of neoliberalism typically call for greater democracy in political life. But even where these appeals are not openly nationalist – as they seem to be in appeals to defend "our democracy" (e.g. Fenton 2011) – the tendency to posit democracy as the solution to the ills of neoliberalism is highly problematic for Marxists. For one thing, as Jodi Dean (2010) points out, liberal democracy, far from negating neoliberalism, constitutes its very conditions of possibility. To appeal to the liberal democratic state to reign in neoliberal excesses therefore seems contradictory. Something of the circularity of this position is observable in Michael Moore's documentary film *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009). Moore's film movingly depicts the inhuman effects of capitalism upon working class people. However, the ending of the film is more problematic insofar as it seems to lay the blame for the horrors it details at the door of neoliberal, "financialized" and generally "out-of-control" capitalism. The film concludes with shots of Wall Street and Moore's calls for greater regulation of the banking sector; thus, having identified and excoriated many of the injustices of liberal democracy – and clearly insisted upon the need to end

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the capitalist system – Moore proposes that the solution to the financial and institutional corruption he has identified is (and here Moore pauses, as if for thought) "democracy". In fact, Moore has elsewhere argued that his aim in making the film was to encourage his audience to become more "engaged in their democracy" (McGreal 2010, 32). Of course, the cause of the apparent contradiction here lies in Moore's use of two quite different definitions of "democracy": throughout the film, Moore rightly attacks democracy as a form of capitalist governance, while the more positive appeal to democracy at the film's end understands democracy in terms of grassroots, working class decision-making – a definition of democracy consistent with Marxist thought. Moore's argument, then, is not as contradictory as might at first appear. But the potential for slippage in the meaning of "democracy" suggests that, as with "neoliberalism", there is always a danger of backsliding in the direction of liberal and reformist political positions. As Jodi Dean (2009, 94) warns:

> the appeal to democracy remains unable to elaborate a convincing political alternative because it accepts the premise that we already know what is to be done – critique, discuss, include and revise. Left reliance on democracy thus eschews responsibility for current failures (*Look, democracy isn't perfect*) but also for envisioning another politics in the future.

For Marxists, indeed, to advocate democracy as the antidote to neoliberalism is not only to mistake the cause for the cure, but also to accept democracy as the goal of class struggle rather than, as Marx put it in "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1970/1875), "the last form of state of bourgeois society".

We would not presume to suggest that the foregoing brief reflections on the theoretical and analytical value of neoliberalism constitute anything like the last word on the matter. Nevertheless, we would argue that there is a need for those media critics and journalists who have recourse to the term "neoliberalism" to consider the ramifications of this usage. Neoliberalism does name verifiable shifts affecting certain areas of Western political and cultural life in recent decades, as noted in the best work on this subject, such as that of David Harvey (2005). Yet the critique of neoliberalism too often functions as what Fredric Jameson (1981) calls a "strategy of containment" that precludes the structural critique of capitalism and its media institutions. Indeed, the political assumptions of many critics of *neoliberalism* are underpinned by the assumptions of *liberalism*, according to which a largely benign and neutral state needs to be reclaimed for democracy; anything more radical, after all, smacks of a tyrannising "grand narrative". The solutions suggested by the critics of neoliberalism are usually greater state intervention in the economy and the regulation of capitalism and the capitalist media. Yet, as Richard Wolff (2007) puts it, "leftists who see no further – who criticize neoliberal globalization and advocate a warmed-over welfare-state Keynesianism – have abandoned Marx's critical *anti-capitalist* project". A Marxist critique must move beyond the critique of "excessive", "financial", "de-regulated" or "neoliberal" capitalism to incorporate a critique of the value-form and the capital-labour relation. It must encompass both the commercial media and their more paternalistic – but no less capitalist – public service counterparts.

Moving beyond the critique of neoliberalism also entails discriminating between intra-class faction fights such as the *News of the World* scandal and identifying opportunities for working class self-assertion in the media. Indeed, the radical transformation of both the media and society requires the working class to struggle on its own class terrain; "the emancipation of the workers", as the famous phrase has it, "must be the work of the working class itself". To some extent, any radical transformation of the media will require the working class to organize itself and defeat capitalism. On the other hand, while we should be very wary of the often hyperbolic claims made for the liberatory potentials of the Internet and new media (Fuchs 2011; Morozov 2011; Curran et al. 2012), it is clear that new forms of networking and social media – insofar as they remain unbanned by the state and economically accessible to working class people – can promote working class consciousness and organisation against capital (Hands 2010; Fuchs 2011), creating a new

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

media, as it were, in the shell of the old. Notably, the only commentary on Hackgate – to the authors' knowledge – that analysed the scandal in relation to its class character and to the tensions within global imperialism has appeared on the website of the Marxist group the International Communist Current (2011). Through this website and thousands like it, ordinary people are able to discuss how to confront and defeat not neoliberalism, but the capitalist system in its entirety.

For Marxists, neoliberalism was never a very adequate critical term, insofar as it has been understood as a regime of accumulation that is parasitical on, or extrinsic to the normal functioning of an otherwise unproblematic capitalism. Embedded in its usage, all too frequently, are the assumptions of liberal democracy, and those who employ the term are often horrified by their belated discovery that the state is, and always has been, hand in glove with capital. In any case, at the levels of policy and economics, the supposedly neoliberal epoch is in many ways over, as sovereign debt crises force capitalist states to adopt increasingly protectionist political strategies. Perhaps now, then, is the time to relinquish neoliberalism as an analytical category. Nor does the term seem to have much rhetorical value for radicals today. Mark Fisher (2009) points to the paradox that capitalism today, in the absence of visible alternatives, is widely understood as the only possible political system, thereby becoming paradoxically invisible. To replace capitalism, as a critical term, with neoliberalism, is to risk complicity with this "making invisible" of capitalism. Bertolt Brecht once quipped that "capitalism is a gentleman who doesn't like to be called by his name"; but if we wish to identify and overcome the socio-political ills of our time, it is imperative, as Jameson (1991, 418) recommends in a revival of the famous 1960s slogan, to "name the system" that causes them.

References

Barnett, Clive. 2005. The Consolations of "Neoliberalism". *Geoforum* 36 (1): 7–12.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. London: Polity.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2007. *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. London: Polity.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2011. *Culture in a Liquid, Modern World*. London: Polity.

Beder, Sharon. 2009. Neoliberalism and the Global Financial Crisis. *Social Alternatives* 8 (1): 17-21.

Benjamin, Walter. 1940/1999. *Theses on the Philosophy of History,* in *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico.

Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.

Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello. 2005 *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *On Television and Journalism.* New York: The New Press.

Brown, Wendy. 2006. Neoliberalism, Neo-Conservatism and De-Democratization. *Political Theory* 34 (6): 690-714.

Couldry, Nick. 2009. My Media Studies. *Television and New Media* 10 (1): 40-42.

Couldry, Nick. 2010. *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*. London: Sage.

Curran, James, Natalie Fenton and Des Freedman. 2012. *Misunderstanding the Internet*. London: Routledge.

Dean, Jodi. 2010. Is Democracy Possible? Sure, This is what Democracy Looks Like. Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://jdeanicite.typepad.com/i_cite/2010/12/is-democracy-possible-sure-this-is-what-democracy-looks-like.html

Deuze, Mark. 2007. *Media Work*. London: Polity.

Du Gay, Paul. 1996. *Consumption and Identity at Work*. London: Sage.

Duménil, Gérard and Dominique Lévy. 2011. *The Crisis of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Edwards, David,and David Cromwell. 2005. *Guardians of Power: The Myth of the Liberal Media*. London: Pluto Press.

Engels, Friedrich. 1947/1878. *Anti-Dühring. Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Fenton, Natalie. 2009. My Media Studies: Getting Political in a Global, Digital Age. *Television and New Media* 10 (1): 55-57.

Fenton, Natalie. 2011. Murdochgate and the News: We Need to Reframe Media and the Public Interest. *Our Kingdom*. http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/natalie-fenton/murdochgate-and-news-we-need-to-reframe-media-and-public-interest

Fisher, Mark. 2009. *Capitalist Realism*. Winchester: Zer0 Books.

Foucault, Michel. 1988. Politics and Reason. In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-84*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, 57-85. New York: Routledge.

Freedman, Des. 2011. The BBC is Not Part of the Problem Raised at Hackgate. Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/des-freedman/bbc-is-not-part-of-problem-raised-by-hackgate

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Garland, Christian. 2011. Simulating Events as They Happen: Media Spectacle, Ideology, and Readymade Bogeymen. http://fu-ber-lin.academia.edu/ChristianGarland/Papers/1143145/Simulating_events_as_they_happen_media_spectacle_ideology_and_readymade_boogeymen

Glyn, Andrew. 2007. *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization and Welfare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gowan, Peter. 2009. Crisis in the Heartland. *New Left Review* 55. Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://www.newleftreview.org/A2759

Grazian, David. 2010 Neoliberalism and the Realities of Reality Television. *Contexts* 9 (2): 68-71.

Gurevitch, Michael, Tony Bennett, James Curran, Janet Woollacott, eds. 1982. *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Methuen.

Hall, Stuart. 1982. The Rediscovery of "Ideology": The Return of the Repressed in Media Studies. In *Culture, Society, and the Media*, edited by Michael Gurevitch et al., 56-90. London: Methuen.

Hallin, Daniel C. 1986. *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hallin, Daniel C. and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Hallin, Daniel C. 2008. Neoliberalism, Social Movements and Change in Media Systems in the Late Twentieth Century. In *The Media and Social Theory*, edited by David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee, 43-58. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hands, Joss. 2010. *@ Is For Activism*. London: Pluto.

Harper, Stephen. 2012. *Beyond the Left: The Communist Critique of the Media*. Winchester: Zer0 Books.

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hertz, Noreena. 2002. *The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy*. London: Arrow.

International Communist Current. 2011. http://world.internationalism.org/

Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jenks, John. 2006. *British Propaganda and the News Media in the Cold War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Klein, Naomi 1999. *No Logo*. Toronto: Knopf Canada.

Kotz, David M. 2008. *Neoliberalism and Financialization.* http://people.umass.edu/dmkotz/Neolib_and_Fin_08_03.pdf

Kliman, Andrew. 2010a. Master of Words: A Reply to Michel Husson on the Character of the Latest Economic Crisis. *Marxism 21*, 7 (2): 239-281.

Kliman, Andrew. 2010b. A Crisis of Capitalism (Not Neoliberalism, 'Financialised Capialism' or Low Wages). Accessed 14 March 2012. http://www.marxisthumanistinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/a-crisis-of-capitalism-rvsd-1027101.pdf

Kliman, Andrew. 2012. *The Failure of Capitalist Production: Underlying Causes of the Great Recession*. London: Pluto.

Kautsky, Karl. 1892/1971. *The Class Struggle*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. 1986. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*: *Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.

Lewis, Justin. 2004. Television, Public Opinion and the War in Iraq: The Case of Britain. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 16 (3): 295-310.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Marquand, David. 2010. Green, Socialist, Republican: The New Politics Needs a Realignment of Mind: Tarted-up Neoliberalism Won't Cut It. The Great Question of Our Time Isn't the Deficit, but Halting the Capitalist Merry-Go-Round. *The Guardian*. May 26, 27.

Marx, Karl. 1967/1894. *Capital: Volume III*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1970/1845. *The German Ideology*. Ed. C J. Arthur. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1970/1875. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Mattick, Paul. 2011. *Business as Usual: The Economic Crisis and the Failure of Capitalism*. London: Reaktion.

McChesney, Robert. 2001. Global Media, Neoliberalism and Imperialism. *Monthly Review* 52 (10): 1-19.

McGreal, Chris. 2010. "Capitalism is Evil – You Have to Eliminate il": After Guns and the Iraq War, Michael Moore is Now Taking on an Entire Political and Economic System in his Latest Documentary. So What Message Does the Man Who Once Planned to Become a Priest Have? *The Guardian*, January 30, 32.

McLennan, Gregor. 1989. *Marxism, Pluralism and Beyond: Classic Debates and New Departures*. London: Polity.

McMurria, John. 2008. Desperate Citizens and Good Samaritans: Neoliberalism and Makeover Reality TV. *Television and New Media*. 9 (4): 305-332.

McKnight, David. 2003. "A World Hungry for a New Philosophy": Rupert Murdoch and the Rise of Neo-Liberalism. *Journalism Studies* 4 (3): 347–358.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Monbiot, George. 2001. *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain*. London: Pan Books.

Morozov, Evgeny. 2011. *The Net Delusion: How Not To Liberate the World*. London: Allen Lane.

Mudge, Stephanie L. 2008. What is Neo-Liberalism? *Socio-Economic Review* 6 (4): 703–731.

Ortner, Sherry. 2011. On Neoliberalism. *Anthropology of This Century* 1. Accessed 14 March 2012. http://aotcpress.com/articles/neoliberalism/

Peck, Janice. 2008. *The Age of Oprah: Cultural Icon for the Neoliberal Era*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Peck, Jamie, Nik Theodore, and Neil Brenner. 2010. Postneoliberalism and its Malcontents. *Antipode* 41: 94-116.

Pilger, John. 2011. Amid the Murdoch Scandal, There's An Acrid Smell of Business As Usual. *New Statesman*, July 25, 21.

Sassen, Saskia. 2006. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Savigny, Heather. 2011. Media, Murdoch, Morals and Markets: Time for A New Kind of Politics? Accessed 14 March, 2012. http://dmt.uea.ac.uk/media/2011/07/13/media-murdoch-morals-and-markets-time-for-a-new-kind-of-politics/

Stevenson, Nick. 2010. Education, Neoliberalism and Cultural Citizenship: Living in 'X Factor' Britain. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 13 (3): 341-358.

Toynbee, Polly. 2012. Miliband Has Been Proven Right: Fairness Does Matter: How You Share Resources in Hard Times Counts More Than How You Share A Growing Cake. Even Cameron Has To Agree. *The Guardian*, January 10, 27.

Tronti, Mario. 1965. The Strategy of Refusal. Accessed 14 March, 2012. https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/TrontiRefusal.html

Van Dijk, Teun A. 2006. Ideology and Discourse Analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11 (2): 115-140.

Wainwright, Hilary. 2003. *Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy*. London: Verso.

Wolff, Richard D. 2007. Neoliberal Globalization is Not the Problem. *Monthly Review*. Accessed 14 March 2012. http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2007/wolff041207.html

Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2005. *Empire of Capital*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2007. With Defenders Like These, Who Needs Enemies? In *The Truth of Zizek*, edited by Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp, 197-255. London: Continuum.

About the Authors

Christian Garland

Christian Garland is a writer and theorist; he is also a PhD candidate at the University of Warwick and Fellow of the Institut für Kritische Theorie, Freie Universität Berlin. His research interests include the original Frankfurt School and critical media theory. His publications include *Refusing the terms of non-existence, breaking their constraints: John Holloway, cracking capitalism and the meaning of revolution today*, which is forthcoming in *Journal of Classical Sociology* (12.2) and, also forthcoming in 2012, *Negating that which Negates us: Marcuse, Critical Theory and the New Politics of Refusal* in *Radical Philosophy Review*.

Stephen Harper

Stephen Harper is Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Portsmouth, UK. His research interests span political and social issues in British television, critical theory and cultural geopolitics. He has written academic articles on a wide range of subjects including British television drama and documentary, dramatic representations of war and media representations of mental distress. He is also the author of *Madness, Power and the Media* (Palgrave, 2009) and *Beyond the Left: The Communist Critique of the Media* (Zer0 Books, 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 425-438, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Coolness of Capitalism Today

Jim McGuigan

Loughborough University, UK. j.t.mcguigan@lboro.ac.uk

Abstract: *This paper is about the reconciliation of cultural analysis with political economy in Marxist-inspired research on communications. It traces how these two traditions became separated with the development of a one-dimensional and consumerist cultural studies, on the one-hand, and a more classically Marxist political economy of communications, on the other hand, that was accused of holding a simplistic and erroneous concept of ideology. The paper defends a conception of ideology as distorted communication motivated by unequal power relations and sketches a multidimensional mode of cultural analysis that takes account of the moments of production, consumption and textual meaning in the circulation of communications and culture. In accordance with this framework of analysis, the cool-capitalism thesis is outlined and illustrated with reference to Apple, the 'cool' corporation. And, the all-purpose mobile communication device is selected as a key and urgent focus of attention for research on commodity fetishism and labour exploitation on a global scale today.*

Keywords: all-purpose communication device, capitalism, cool, cultural analysis, distorted communication, ideology, multidimensional analysis, neoliberalism, political economy

Thanks to Dave Elder-Vass for referring me to 'a sociology of Steve Jobs'

It's not just cheap labor

The iPhone is assembled in China by Foxconn, the largest electronics assembler in the world. US executives say they cannot function without companies like Foxconn. The Taiwanese company has a million workers, many willing to live in company dorms, work midnight shifts and spend 12 hours in a factory, six days a week. Chinese workers are cheaper than their American counterparts – but just as important, they are more flexible and plentiful, and thousands can be hired overnight.
(Charles Duhigg and Keith Bradshaw 2012, 4)

1. Introduction

In the study of communications and culture there are various different traditions of research. They may be incommensurate with one another or, alternatively, there may be grounds for synthesis between different schools of thought. Compatibility is especially difficult to achieve with regard to theorising and analysing the relation of political and economic factors to the determination of meaning. In the Marxist tradition, this has been a focal point of controversy and has resulted in schismatic lines of development. For researchers keen to avoid the kind of economic reductionism that once seemed to characterise Marxism, there has been a tendency to over-emphasise cultural autonomy and ideological determinacy in communications.

This paper argues that the most satisfactory mode of cultural analysis in critical communication studies is multidimensional. That is, amongst other things, it takes account of the interaction between cultural-ideological and economic-political factors. However, critical multidimensionality does not so much present an alternative to economic reductionism of a Marxist kind today but instead it is obliged to challenge the ideological dominance of technological determinism. This is most notable and urgent with regard to the role of 'new media' and the significance of personalised and mobile communications in culture and society now.

2. Cultural Analysis and Political Economy

From the 1970s a split occurred between two traditions of Marxist-inspired communications research in Anglophone scholarship, in effect, between cultural analysis on the one hand and political economy on the other. The particular tradition of cultural analysis under consideration here, which

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

had many precursors, became associated very largely at this time with the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under the leadership of Stuart Hall. The tradition of political economy under consideration was associated most strongly with the work of Herbert Schiller and his associates in North America and, in Britain, with the work of Nicholas Garnham, Peter Golding and Graham Murdock; not so much with the Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory (see, for example, Murdock & Golding, 1973)[1]. It is unnecessary to rehearse here the key themes in the work of these critical communications' scholars. However, it is necessary to indicate, albeit briefly, why the cultural studies' tradition became separated from the political economy of communications so sharply in the 1980s.

The separation had already been signalled as early as the 1950s by Raymond Williams, the most important founding figure of what came to be known as "British Cultural Studies" (Turner 2003). Commenting on the kind of Marxist writings on culture that had flourished to some extent in Britain during the 1930s, Williams (1963 [1958], 272-273) remarked in exasperation twenty years later, 'To describe English life, thought, and imagination in the last three hundred years simply as "bourgeois", to describe English culture now as "dying" [as Christopher Caudwell had indeed done in the 1930s], is to surrender reality to a formula'. Williams himself recognised that many Marxists were unhappy with such simplistic and windy rhetoric. Yet, even the more sophisticated Marxist ways of making sense of culture and society known to Williams at the time still left him perplexed as to the truth of the matter:

> Either the arts are passively dependent on social reality, a proposition that I take to be that of mechanical materialism, or a vulgar misinterpretation of Marx. Or the arts, as the creators of consciousness, determine social reality, the proposition which the Romantic poets sometimes advanced. Or, finally, the arts, while ultimately dependent, with everything else, on the real economic structure, operate in part to reflect this structure and its consequent reality, and in part, by affecting attitudes towards reality, to help *or hinder* the constant business of changing it. I find Marxist theories of culture confused because they seem to me, on different occasions and in different writers, to make use of all these propositions as the need serves (Williams1963 [1958], 266-267).

Not unusually, of course, the complaint here is not so much against Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels (in fact, they are quoted favorably by Williams in 1958) as it is against Marxists. Still, it did make Williams think at the time that he needed to look beyond the Marxist tradition in order to develop his own theorising. When he did eventually get around to naming his distinctive theoretical position as "cultural materialism" (Williams 1981), though, Williams certainly saw it as broadly *Marxist* (see Williams 1977). Yet, by then – the 1980s – Williams was no longer the leading light of 'British Cultural Studies'. Stuart Hall had become the chief spokesperson for this newly popular field of study. Hall (1986 [1980]) asserted in his paper 'Cultural Studies – Two Paradigms' that 'the names of the game' in the field were 'culturalism' and 'structuralism'; and he gave short shrift indeed to

> ...the attempt to return to the terms of a more classical 'political economy' of culture. This position argues that the concentration on the cultural and ideological aspects have been wildly over-done. It would restore the older terms of 'base/superstructure', finding in the last-instance determination of the cultural-ideological by the economic, the hierarchy of determinations which both alternatives [culturalism and structuralism] appear to lack. This position insists that economic processes and structures of cultural production are more significant than their cultural-ideological aspect: and that these are quite adequately caught in the more

[1] Interestingly, the Frankfurt School of critical theory that coined the term 'culture industry' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979 [1944]) and inspired a great deal of critical communications research was more interested in the ideology critique of capitalist culture than the political economy of capitalism and, in this respect, had an affinity with 'the Birmingham School' of cultural studies, as Douglas Kellner (1997) has noted.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> classical terminology of profit, exploitation, surplus-value and the analysis of culture as commodity. It retains a notion of ideology as 'false consciousness' (Hall 1986 [1980], 46-47).

Hall may well have been right to complain about the undervaluing of the determinacy of the cultural-ideological – that is, the problem of meaning, which was too easily treated as 'false consciousness' – by the political economy of communications perspective. Yet, it was extremely unfortunate to have exiled terms like 'profit', 'exploitation' and 'surplus-value' from Marxist-inspired cultural analysis. Without an acknowledgement of them, cultural analysis would hardly be Marxist. It might well be something else. At that time, however, Hall probably did not intend to dispense entirely with Marxism if at all. Yet, he did, perhaps unwittingly, open the way for other exponents of 'British Cultural Studies' effectively to do so.

For Hall, the question of ideology was crucial to the study of communications so how it was defined really mattered. His concept was focused upon signification, "ideological power: the power to signify events in a particular way" (Hall 1982, 69). In this respect, Hall was very much influenced by structural linguistics and how it could explain "the reality effect" of signification. He also drew upon the early Soviet linguist Volosinov's notion of the "class struggle in language" and the *multi-accentuality* of the sign, which was similar to Umberto Eco's emphasis on *polysemy*. Hall's (1997 [1974]) own *encoding/decoding* model of television discourse had already placed great stress on differential interpretations of meaning. Encoding/decoding had affinities with the uses and gratifications school of communications research, which also assumed an audience actively appropriating and making sense of media messages for its own purposes at the point of consumption. Inevitably, this way of thinking raised questions concerning just how active was the audience. For Hall and his closest followers, audience activity was motivated socially in relation to class, gender and ethnicity. For others, agency was played up much further, not only in media study but also in subcultural research. John Fiske (1989, 37), for instance, took this conception of the active audience/consumer in what was becoming an uncritical populist strand of Cultural Studies to an absurd extreme, at one point even comparing young people's pilfering of clothes in a shopping mall to the tactics of the Vietcong. At this absurd extreme, then, shopping had indeed become a revolutionary act. It was an absurdity that was gleefully derided by more economic-minded critics of communications and culture (see McGuigan 1992).

Stuart Hall himself never went to such lengths yet much of his work is quite evidently premised upon an avoidance of economic reductionism and, in consequence, there is a tendency to neglect economic factors and to exaggerate the role of ideology[2]. In this respect, he was drawn to the work of Louis Althusser on ideology and Antonio Gramsci on hegemony. His dismissal of a caricatured concept of ideology as 'false consciousness', very much inspired by Althusserianism, begs a great many questions. It is reasonable to argue as Hall, Althusser and Gramsci have all done in their various ways that ideological power does not just reside in ideas but is inscribed in taken-for-granted practices and customary routines. Also, it is quite reasonable to assume that ideological assumptions are not wholly mistaken, that they have within them elements of truth or truthfulness. Otherwise, their appeal would be much weakened. However, it is not strictly necessary to dispense with the critical force of *a concept of ideology as distorted communications*, which is a rather more complex notion than 'false consciousness'. Although Hall - at least in his writings on ideology in the

[2] Hall himself never actually denied the importance of economic factors in his path-breaking work on law and order (Hall et al, 1978) and authoritarian populism/Thatcherism (Hall and Jacques 1983; Hall 1988), though political and ideological factors tended to be emphasised rather more in such work. The later 'New Times' thesis (Hall and Jacques 1989) however, was obliged to take account of epochal transformation in political economy with the advent of neoliberalism and in the light of historical setbacks for socialism. And, in an interview with Laurie Taylor, whilst admitting a certain disillusion and bafflement with contemporary politics, Hall insisted, 'I am still a Marxist in terms of what Marx says about capital. Capital remains an incredibly revolutionary force. It has transformed our lives. We are now seeing yet another globalisation to create the world as a market for capital. This is about the seventh attempt. We've had all kinds of globalisations: imperial colonisation, Cold War American hegemony. Now Blair [still British PM at the time of the interview] aspires that capitalists should provide healthcare for my grandchild, that Barclays or Tesco should run my school. It's an astonishing aspiration. It only happens when capital becomes such a huge global force' (Hall & Taylor, 2006: 16-17).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

1980s – retains the sense that ideology frames reality to serve the interests of the powerful (thereby, remaining largely in line with the dominant ideology thesis), he tends to evade proper consideration of a process of distortion when he actually critiques the claims of the powerful. Marx (1976 [1867], 163-164), however, did stress this aspect of distortion not only in denouncing dominant ideology but also when he described the process of commodity fetishism, which I take to be an ideological effect:

> A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it satisfies human needs, or that it first takes on these properties as the product of human labour. It is absolutely clear that, by his activity, man changes the forms of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing that transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.

For a cultural analyst now, that famous passage from Marx is especially pertinent when there is such a proliferation of heavily fetishised albeit useful communications gadgetry in everyday life that is not only at the hub of meaning in circulation but also of capital accumulation today, constituting a key nexus of ideology and economy.

So-called 'post-Marxists' today are not only keen to avoid the taint of economic reductionism; they also prefer to risk sliding into relativism by adopting a conventionalist position in epistemology instead of pursuing a critical-realist interrogation of ideology whereby they might be required to distinguish between truth and falsehood. This is the case with J.B. Thompson (1990) who, nevertheless, provides an exceptionally useful heuristic typology of different modes of ideological representation (legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification) each with its associated strategies of symbolic construction (such as displacement and euphemisation for dissimulation) that I have borrowed and applied in my own research on the Millennium Dome fiasco (McGuigan 2003).

3. Multidimensional Analysis

Since the 1980s, Cultural Studies has developed along several different trajectories to the extent that it is no longer possible to isolate a mainstream position with a discernible consensus around it except to note that it probably is no longer especially Marxist in any recognisable sense (see my account of the subsequent history in McGuigan, 2006 and updated in McGuigan, 2010a). It also ceased to be '*British* Cultural Studies'. Following the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and during the early phase of the neoliberal counter-revolution (that is, to Williams's (2011 [1961] "long revolution") that was underway in Britain from the 1980s, as an indication of the way things were going, a number of British exponents of Cultural Studies went to Australia, including John Fiske and Tony Bennett. Then, Bennett (1998) set about the construction of a Foucauldian and managerialist school of Cultural Policy Studies. Eventually, there was a North American takeover, especially signalled by the editorial control of the journal *Cultural Studies* moving to the USA under the command of Lawrence Grossberg. Fiske also moved to the USA. And, by the mid-2000s, it was possible to publish an anthology of work purporting to go beyond the American takeover to represent the thoroughgoing 'internationalisation' of Cultural Studies (Abbas and Erni 2005). Nevertheless, the Marxist dispute with the legacy of Hallian (Birmingham School) Cultural Studies continued, particularly with the alternative emergence of a multidimensional framework of analysis adopted by

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

some scholars[3] that was curiously enough not so very different from Stuart Hall's and Richard Johnson's (1979) own earlier thinking about the shape of the field.

My own developed critique of "cultural populism" in Cultural Studies (McGuigan 1992, 1997, 2006, 2011) focuses upon two problematic issues: first, the ontological inadequacy of its one-dimensional methodology; second, its coalescence with neoliberal ideology. Cultural Studies from and inspired by the Birmingham School concentrated almost exclusively upon consumption by the end of the 1980s and left an extremely dubious legacy for education and research that spent much time and effort over subsequent years simply tracking and celebrating the pleasures of mass-popular consumption. Very little analytical work was done on production, either with regard to the labour process involved in making cultural products or in respect of the political economy of the media and cultural industries – that is, *capitalist* media and cultural industries. Moreover, textual analysis was qualified excessively by variants of reader-response theory and 'ethnographic' audience research that was often of a slight and superficial character. Hall's 'preferred reading' that was said to be encoded ideologically into media texts seemed to count for little in the face of free-wheeling popular interpretation and creative use of cultural products by active audiences and consumers. Such methodology could not possibly account for the ontological complexity of culture in circulation. It could not explain how and why we get the communication and cultural products that we do. Only some kind of multidimensional analysis that takes account of both ideological *and* economic factors from production to consumption could do so satisfactorily (see, for example, Kellner 1997 on production, text and consumption).

Consumptionist Cultural Studies attributed an inordinate measure of agency to the consuming subject and, now with the advent of interactive, social-networking media, to the producerly consumer, reminiscent of Roland Barthes's (1977 [1968]) "birth of the reader", a figure that was already there in the active audience. These hyperactive consumers, shoppers, readers, listeners, viewers, spectators, cybersurfers and, latterly, citizen journalists, bloggers and so on bear a striking resemblance to the sovereign consumer of neoclassical economics, the core ideological assumption of neoliberal, "free-market" capitalism. The customer as king or queen is the endlessly repeated mantra of neoliberalism, as though giant corporations were really beholden to the whims and wishes of ordinary people rather than the masters of the Universe. In order to dictate supply, it should be appreciated, the sovereign consumer must already be fully aware of what he or she wants and be able to imagine exactly what can be supplied as well. Ordinary people rarely if at all, to put it mildly, have access to such knowledge; nobody does. It is the producers who come up with the stuff and cultivate the tastes and habits of consumers. Yet, neoliberalism insists upon flattering our vanity as it picks our pockets. Even if the sovereign consumer was as all-knowledgeable as free-market 'theory' presumes, only a very small number of such luminaries would actually be in possession of enough money in any case to buy whatever they want.

It is perfectly reasonable to reject the view of ordinary people that may have been held by some left-wing critics in the past as passive dopes overwhelmed by the lure of consumerism and the distortions of the media. It is also reasonable to doubt elitist assumptions concerning cultural value and have a more nuanced and discriminatory appreciation of mass-popular culture. These straw Marxists and their allegedly simplistic beliefs are easily dismissed as irrelevant. However, consumerist Cultural Studies and what I have called 'cultural populism' simply inverted those assumptions and merely asserted the exact opposite virtually without qualification, thereby losing sight of the sheer power both economically and ideologically of capital.

[3] A good example of a developed multidimensional analysis of communications and culture is Toby Miller and his co-authors' (2001, 2005) "global Hollywood" research, which grew out of a dissatisfaction with much film/screen studies and its exclusively textual orientation. An important concept derived from this work is the new international division of *cultural* labour (NICL).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4. Cool Capitalism

In the aftermath of the seemingly uninterrupted crisis of the past few years that erupted in 2007-8 there has been some fundamental questioning of the capitalist system and exploration of alternatives to it (such as Harvey 2010; McChesney and Foster 2010; Wright 2010). Yet there are still many serious critics of capitalism who treat its persistence as an unsurpassable given (for instance, Gamble, 2009). The legitimacy of capitalism as a civilisation remains strong, according to the 'realists' whose conventional wisdom spreads from Right to the Left across the political spectrum, even when its mode of production is faced with systemic collapse. This is, no doubt, at least partly attributable to the relatively parlous condition of the international Left, its confidence and indeed very existence shattered and nearly destroyed over the past thirty years. There are, however, promising signs of not just critical but practical rebirth in the rhizome laid down by the global justice movement from the turn of the Millennium, the advance of social democracy through the 2000s in South America, recent manifestations of the Occupy movement and growing labour unrest around the world.

Not so very long ago, the legitimacy of capitalism was constantly in doubt: its justification was called into question repeatedly. Critics pointed to the internal contradictions of capitalist political economy, recurrent crises of over-production, loss of conviction in dominant ideology, faulty apparatuses of ideological reproduction, cultural challenges to the hegemonic fashioning of "reality", outbreaks of class struggle and innumerable sites of political contestation, including feminist, gay and anti-racist campaigns. Now, radical political culture is much quieter if not exactly silent and the questioning of capitalism's legitimacy muttered only perhaps in jest. Why should such questioning appear to be unspeakable in contemporary discourse, if heard seriously at all in the public sphere, sounding nostalgic and distinctly *passé*? Is it really beyond our imaginative capacity to countenance an alternative? What imaginary prevents it?

The cardinal question that should concern us is not, however, only to do with explaining the diminution of criticism and opposition. Nor is it the big one, how does capitalism persist? But, rather, less ambitiously, how is capitalism justified? Admittedly, it would be mistaken to assume that capitalism's existence is accounted for by its ideological legitimisation alone. It is too deeply entrenched materially and institutionally - that is, systemically - to be propped up simply by ideas. Yet, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, (2005 [1999]) are right to argue that capitalism in its various phases has to be justified. There has to be some compelling justification and, indeed, sense of justice closely associated with it. Boltanski and Chiapello are also onto something when they suggest that the most efficient justification for a set of societal arrangements that contributes to its renewal and sustenance derives, paradoxically, from the appropriation of criticism. This insight may be counter-intuitive, though it is not difficult to note historical instances of the same, the stealing of the opposition's clothing, for instance, that was attributed to Disraeli in the nineteenth century. Just think of the role of socialism in the reconstruction and restoration of capitalism in the mid-twentieth century.

Boltanski and Chiapello distinguish between the *artistic critique* and the *social critique* of capitalism. These two forms of critique draw upon quite different sources of *indignation*. The social critique is indignant at the poverty and inequality associated with capitalism; and also challenges the opportunistic and egoistic values fostered by capitalism. These criticisms of capitalist civilisation have been heard much less since the 1970s. On the other hand, however, the artistic critique's indignation at disenchanting and inauthentic features of capitalism that are combined with a generalised sense of oppression has had greater resonance during the same period. Demands for autonomy, liberation, authenticity and singularity – values associated with May '68 and all that – have indeed been heard and, moreover, apparently integrated into the system. This 'new spirit of capitalism' is very different from the asceticism of Max Weber's Protestant ethic that was supposed to have been the original value system of a rational and robust capitalism. The new spirit is characterised by the project-orientation of portfolio workers, which is a key feature of the managerial and networking mentality that is promoted by the voluminous literature coming out of business schools.

Capitalism may be an absurd system, as Boltanski and Chiapello argue, founded upon outrageous exploitation and manifestly destructive as well as creative, but few doubt its validity whatever the social and personal cost. How, then, is it justified so effectively? Ideological hegemony is not

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

only obtained at the philosophical level (assuming that the free-market economics propounded by business schools, corporate expertise and mainstream news media deserve to be categorised as such) but also - and necessarily - in terms of cultivating popular consent. Adherence to capitalism does not result, most significantly, from reasoned agreement with the supposed truths of free-market economics and recognition of the deficiencies of socialist planning and command-management economics but much more importantly, instead, by misrecognition and imaginative construction at a mundane level, consonant with both the dull as well as the flashy routines of a capitalistic way of life.

The aim of the cool capitalism thesis that is outlined below, then, is to at least partly account for how latter-day, that is, neoliberal capitalism has constructed popular legitimacy of such a resilient kind that it goes beyond management ideology and propaganda into the texture and common sense of everyday life in spite of severe and recurrent economic crisis; and, indeed, worsening ecological conditions in the world today – all of which directly affects people's lives.

The basic definition of *cool capitalism is the incorporation of disaffection into capitalism itself*. It is, in Erving Goffman's (1971 [1959]) sense, a "front region" that is seductively tasteful in its appeal to populations at large, both the comparatively affluent and, indeed, the aspirant poor. There is, however, a "back region", rather like an industrialised kitchen with dirty secrets that do not meet health and safety standards. This back region is occasionally glimpsed and, in consequence, the fare on offer is called into question by troubled voices. Like in any good restaurant, the *maitre d'* must somehow cool out the customers who might otherwise take their custom elsewhere. Maybe it is 'cool' to have a filthy kitchen and, in any event, you have to smash eggs in order to make an omelette; and sometimes they spill onto the floor where the rats hang out.

It is hardly necessary to point out how ubiquitously the word "cool" is used presently around the Earth; or, just as important, how widely embedded is the sensibility associated with that term whether the word is actually used or not. It is everywhere. Coolness is not some marginal or dissident trend. It is at the heart of mainstream culture insofar as we can speak of such a phenomenon at all.

In my book *Cool Capitalism* (McGuigan 2009), several examples of present-day coolness are given, particularly in commerce. The genealogy of the word and the discourses through which it has passed are also traced. 'Cool' derives from West African *itutu*, the core meaning of which refers to composure in the heat of battle. Although it was closely associated with masculinity in origin, this may not have been exclusively so and, in any case, it is not exclusively so today. The American art historian, Robert Farris Thompson (1974, 1976 [1971]) has documented the aesthetics of *itutu* in the West and the South of Africa, its passage to the Americas with the slave trade and the formation of a cool culture of disaffection on the margins of US society. Generally speaking, coolness became a personal stance, mode of deportment and argot, associated with dignity under pressure in oppressive circumstances. It is a distinctive feature of 'Black Atlantic' culture (Gilroy, 1993) and it also became extremely prominent and attractive to others, including whites, especially through mid-twentieth century jazz culture.

Although coolness is difficult to pin down – and deliberately so - Pountain and Robins (2000) have, nevertheless, sought to identify three essential traits of the cool persona: *narcissism*, *ironic detachment* and *hedonism.* It is easy to call up plenty of sub-cultural examples over the years, either indirectly or directly related to black culture, from, say, Parisian existentialism to latter-day hip-hop culture. Very recently, an article in a philosophy magazine that was unusually on sale on the mass market celebrated coolness as a 'fusion of submission and subversion'. From this point of view, the cool person, albeit perpetually alienated, conducts a creative balancing act. The would-be philosopher in question obviously thinks coolness is still cool. Some black American commentators don't.

Social psychologists Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson (1993 [1992], xi) remarked several years ago in their empirical study of black masculinity in urban locales, "coolness may be a survival strategy that has cost the black male – and society – an enormous price". Whilst it represents black identity and pride in the ghetto such 'compulsive masculinity' in that context is also

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

seriously damaging to both women and men, not to mention the druggy lifestyle, disorganised sociality and violent criminality – which is by no means confined to working-class black males in the USA.

Cool today is not only about black American culture; it is global and colourless. The sign floats free. And, key to the cool capitalism thesis, 'cool' has traversed the political landscape, roughly speaking, from the Left to the Right. It is now more a sign of compliance than of resistance.

This argument is substantiated by Thomas Frank's (1997) research on "the conquest of cool" in which he claims that cool sensibility caught on in the American mainstream as long ago as the 1950s with the rise of rebels without a cause, rejecting the staid conformity fostered by post-Second World War organised capitalism in middle-class life *and business*. Nowadays, of course, nearly every management consultant you meet plays blues guitar. According to Frank, the counter culture caught on very rapidly in corporate America. Cool pose and the buzzword, 'creativity' are now *de rigeur* in managerial ideology. And, as a couple of Swedish management theorists have pointed out, business today is "funky" (Ridderstrale and Nordstrom 2002 [2000]).

It is interesting that Frank confined his research on 'cool' business and management discourse to the USA while Boltanski and Chiapello restricted their research to France. Yet, even French management texts are influenced by 'Anglo-Saxon' neoliberal thought and, indeed, Gallic *cadres* read American management books. Cool capitalism is now a global phenomenon with albeit American roots, though by no means restricted to the USA. It is indisputably a feature of 'Americanisation' but Americanisation, it has to be said, is only part of the story and too simple a way of understanding cool capitalism's presence in the world at large.

In their different ways, Boltanski and Chiapello's "new spirit of capitalism" and Frank's "conquest of cool" stress the role of managerial ideology in the organisational and cultural changes wrought by the neoliberal transformation of culture and society. Yet, the most evident site of "cool capitalism" in everyday life is consumer culture and the representation of "cool" commodities. This has been especially notable in the clothing industry addressed to the young with companies like The Gap and Nike drawing upon countercultural themes and symbolisation with their "rebel" gear. However, the coolest of all commodities today is the *all-purpose mobile communication device*, that is, on-line mobile phones and tablets, which is the subject of the next section. However, it should be emphasised that multidimensional analysis of culture in circulation involves textual analysis (see McGuigan 2008 and 2010a) and research into the labour process of production (see McGuigan 2010b and 2012 forthcoming) as well as the political economy and ideology of "cool" corporations.

5. The All-Purpose Mobile Communication Device

The all-purpose mobile communication device (apmcd) represents an ideal focus for critical communication studies today and constitutes a perfect test case for multidimensional analysis from a broadly Marxist perspective and, perhaps also, for the cool-capitalism thesis. The issues at stake are numerous and far-ranging.

In order to make sense of the significance of the apmcd in contemporary culture and society, it is necessary, first and foremost, to confront the old chestnut of technological determinism. The classical critique of technological determinism in communications was made by Raymond Williams (1974) in the 1970s and developed further by Brian Winston (1995 [1990], 1996) in the 1990s. It is unnecessary to rehearse those criticisms here (see my explication in McGuigan 2007). Suffice it to say that Williams stressed the importance of *intention* in technological innovation, that there always has to be a social motivation for investment, research and application in product development. In the original test case of television, Williams also linked technological development to the phenomenon of *mobile privatisation* that emerged historically with mass migration and urban industrialism. On-line mobile phones, laptops and tablets are exactly the kind of technological gadgetry that is functional to a yet more mobile and privatised way of life under conditions of late-modernity. They

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

are extolled as such persistently in advertising and, more generally, in the technologically determinist propaganda that is a prominent feature of neoliberal political economy.

Still, however, technological-determinist explanation in relation to politics is a temptation even for the shrewdest of critics today. Take, for instance, the British journalist Paul Mason's (2012) account of the 2011 eruption of democratic protest around the world, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere – The New Global Revolutions*. Recalling a debate he had with radical students in London, Mason (2012, 2) remarks, "is it the technology, the economics, the mass psychology or just the zeitgeist that's caused this global explosion of revolt? I inclined to a technological-determinist explanation". He enthuses about the social networking through Facebook and Twitter that contributed to mobilising protesters in Tunisia and Egypt. 'It's the network', blurts Mason, thereby also echoing Manuel Castells's (1996) largely technological-determinist take on the social impact of computer-mediated communications – emergence of "the network paradigm" – nearly twenty years ago. Yet within a page, Mason (2012, 3) was to somewhat contradict his own self-styled technological determinism:

> We're in the middle of a revolution caused by the near collapse of free-market capitalism combined with an upswing in technical innovation, a surge in desire for individual freedom and a change in human consciousness about what freedom means. An economic crisis is making the powerful look powerless, while the powerless are forced to adopt tactics that were once the preserve of niche protest groups.

Surely that passage suggests that the principal determination of democratic protest in 2011 was the economic crisis and, not unconnected to it, failed corrective policy measures, including the punishment meted out to ordinary people for the misdemeanours of finance capital. Other factors noted by Mason include "desire for individual freedom and a change in human consciousness" (which is actually a proposition about a cultural phenomenon rather than a technological phenomenon as such). Undoubtedly, digital and mobile technologies of communication and socially-embedded patterns of use among the young facilitated the mobilisation of bodies and the flow of messages from these communicative networks through the sluicegate of the international public sphere, thus appearing in amplified form in the publicity arena of "old media" like television. "New media" played their part, as did older media of, say, print or, further back, word-of-mouth in the past history of popular protest and indeed revolutionary upsurge. There is no need, therefore, to fetishise "new media" as the sole cause of recent events since they surely are not. Peter Golding's (2000, 171) distinction between Technology One and Technology Two is helpful here in clarifying what is at stake analytically:

> Technology may be construed as the mechanisms by which human agency manipulates the material world. We can conceive of two forms of technological innovation. Technology One allows existing social action and process to occur more speedily, more efficiently, or conveniently (though equally possibly with negative consequences such as pollution or risk). Technology Two enables wholly new forms of activity previously impracticable or inconceivable. In essence many ICTs are more obviously Technology One than Technology Two.

This rather measured distinction, which does not deny the importance of new media technologies but, at the same time, puts into serious doubt the usual hyperbolic claims concerning their capacity to 'change the world'. Clearly, digital communication systems, their multiple applications and the endless succession and upgrading of seductive gadgets make a difference but not in splendid causal isolation from various combinations with cultural, economic, ideological and political factors. Such gadgetry and the mythology surrounding it is a salient feature of cool capitalism. Take, for instance, the Apple Corporation and the late Steve Jobs. Such 'cool' gadgets as the iPod, iPhone and iPad, useful as they undoubtedly are, nevertheless, exemplify the process of commodity fetishism and the obscuring of neoliberal capitalism's system of global exploitation.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The celebrification and, indeed, mystification of the entrepreneurial hero has been embodied perfectly in the figure of Jobs, who, from the point of view of critical communication studies, must be treated as a textual set of signs, that is, a media construct like any other celebrity figment of the mediated imagination (see Rojek 2001 on the social construction of celebrity). Kieran Healy (2011), for instance, has sketched "a sociology of Steve Jobs" by applying Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority to the Apple CEO. Jobs has also been the subject of considerable managerial fascination as a guide to business success (Gallo 2011) and biographical attention (Moritz 2011 [2009]; Isaacson 2011), in fact, engendering a mini-publishing industry before and especially during the year of his death. His cool-dude persona and the smart gadgets that he presented to the public – though did not actually design himself – exemplify the incorporation of a certain kind of selectively constituted and apparently dissenting sensibility that is inherited from the 1960s' counter-culture whilst also making Apple the most profitable company in the world by the time of Jobs's death in October 2011.

In his sociology of Steve Jobs, Healy only mentions the manufacture of Apple products as an afterthought to his main concern with Jobs's "charisma". And, on the question of manufacture, Healy is quick to point out that Apple are not the only electronics firm that relies on a murky outsourcing and pernicious system of labour exploitation in "developing countries", most notably China. This is reminiscent of the problem with singling out Nike for special attention in the garment-industry campaign that became associated with Naomi Klein's (2000) *No Logo* at the turn of the Millennium in that they are not the only one. However, Nike and Apple are especially pertinent examples of the culture and political economy of transnational capitalism now since they have both cultivated a counter-cultural and rebel image that might at one time have been linked to anti-capitalism but is no longer so, thereby epitomising cool capitalism. Outsourcing the largely American corporations' digital electronics manufacture to low-pay economies where the policing of labour conditions and rights is relaxed to say the least, if existent at all, lagged behind garment manufacture but in recent years it has caught up dramatically.

In 2006, the Netherlands-based Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) reported on the structure of the mobile-phone industry, the network of firms along the supply chain all the way down to factories in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) or Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in places like Shenzen in Southern China (Wilde and de Haan 2006). Other research NGOs like China Labor Watch, based in New York, and Hong Kong's Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) have produced ethnographic studies of the treatment of labour in Chinese factories. Reading their reports is reminiscent of Marx's use of the governmental 'blue books' on Victorian industry in the later part of *Capital* Volume One.

China Labor Watch (2011) studied ten electronics factories in Guangdong and Jiangsu provinces where they interviewed over four-hundred workers in late-2010. These factories supply products for Dell, Salcomp, IBM, Ericsson, Philips, Microsoft, Apple, Hewlett Packard and Nokia amongst others. They found that excessive hours of overtime were required, the minimum wages (usually $150-200 a month) paid did not actually cover living costs, work rates were highly intensive, tests excluded pregnant women from employment and typically formal labour contracts are either non-existent or their provisions not actually observed in practice.

It is vital to plumb the deep structures and processes of the industry, as such research aims to do, albeit rather more descriptively than critically, in order to grasp the moment of production in the circulation of communications technology and, in consequence, meaning. Usually, general publics around the world only learn of the most extreme abuses – particularly with regard to child labour – and instances of personal tragedy. A spate of suicides at the Taiwanese-owned Foxconn plants in China have been a particular focus of international attention in recent years, spurring SACOM (2011) to study where Foxconn manufactures iPods, iPhones and iPads in Shenzen, Chengdu and Chongqing. Apple was supposed to have demanded that Foxconn cleaned up its act but, as it turns out, to little or no avail, according to the Hong Kong researchers. The China Labor Watch (2011: 77) researchers from New York took a more sanguine view, arguing that, in response to criticism, 'Foxconn had become the top performer in the electronics industry' in terms of wages, by paying

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

new recruits $184.80 monthly, rising to the princely sum of $247.13 a month after six months on the job.

In March and April 2011 SACOM interviewed one-hundred and twenty workers in Shenzen, Chengdu and Chongqing, normally young people aged between 16 and 30, approached outside the factory gates. It was found that workers are keen to do overtime because the basic wage is not enough but there is no guarantee that the overtime will actually be paid. SACOM gives an indication of the schedule of a typical day for workers at the Chengdu plant where iPads are made:

> 06.45 Wake up
> 07.15 Queue up for bus
> 07.45 Arrive at Foxconn (breakfast and punch card)
> 08.10 Work assembly
> 08.30 Work shift begins
> 11.20 Lunch
> 12.20 Work shift resumes
> 17.20 Dinner
> 18.20 Overtime shift begins
> 20.20 Work shift ends
> 21.00 Arrive at dormitory (SACOM 2011, 12).

Health and safety conditions are very poor at the factory in Chengdu, as they are in other Foxconn facilities. Some quotations from workers in Chengdu give a further sense of their lived experience:

> *"Though we produce for iPhone, I haven't got a chance to use iPhone. I believe it is fascinating and has lots of function. However, I don't think I can own one myself,"* a worker from Guanlan who joined Foxconn in February 2011 said.
> *"I never dreamed that I will buy an iPad, it may cost me two months salary. I cannot afford it. I come from a village to sell my labour at Foxconn, all I want is improve the living conditions of my family,"* a 24-year-old worker expressed.
> *"Our salary is too low compare to the selling price of an iPad. We deserve more as we generate wealth for Apple every day,"* an assistant to frontline supervisor in Chengdu.
> (SACOM 2011, 19)

Such empirical data brings home the dirty little secret of cool capitalism, a secret that is not well concealed but nonetheless easily ignored. However, breaking the silence, *The New York Times* (Duhigg and Barboza 2012, a, b) has conducted a campaign of interrogation concerning Apple's operations in China. The predominant theme of such journalism in the USA, however, has been around the 'fade' in 'middle-class jobs' back home. "Middle class" is, of course, American for working class. The taken-for-granted assumption is that iPods, iPhones and iPads are manufactured in China rather than the USA because wages are much lower there. That is true but this may not be quite as significant as it appears at first sight. It has been calculated by academic economists that making iPhones in the USA would add only $65 dollars to the price since the price of labour is such a small part of the cost of making iPhones anyway, according to the *New York Times* journalists, Charles Duhigg and David Barboza (2012a, 6). It is also said, to further complicate matters, that the USA does not educate enough skilled engineering operatives at an appropriate sub-degree level. Yet more seriously, though, it may be that American workers are insufficiently docile for Apple's rapid capital-accumulation strategy. Duhigg and Barboza tell the story of how Steve Jobs complained about how easily the plastic screen scratched on the iPhone prototype just before launch in 2007. He demanded that it be replaced with glass screens within six weeks. When these replacement screens eventually arrived at the assembly plant in China around midnight:

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> A foreman immediately roused 8,000 workers inside the company's dormitories, according to the executive. Each employee was given a biscuit and a cup of tea, guided to a workstation and within half an hour started a 12-hour shift fitting glass screens into beveled frames. Within 96 hours, the plant was producing over 10,000 iPhones a day (Duhigg and Barboza 2012a, 2)

These extraordinary gadgets and their updates enhance the routine pleasures and everyday conveniences of the world's comparatively affluent but at a cost, the human cost of exploiting cheap labour and making life miserable for people who are prepared to work extremely hard under conditions that the world's affluent would not tolerate in order to overcome their relative poverty. A fully developed programme of Marxist analyses that explores various aspects of capitalism's cool culture, including information and communication technology as a complex social phenomenon and not just gadgetry, is vital here, tracing the economic-material and cultural-ideological nexus of communications today[4]. This is not to suggest that Marxism explains everything. However, Marxism's great value remains – as was also the case one-hundred-and-fifty years ago – that it asks questions which the powerful would prefer not to be asked since the answers to such questions may demystify the world we live in and yet have so little control over.

References

Abbas, Ackbar and John Nguyet Erni, eds. 2005 *Internationalizing of Cultural Studies*. Malden MA: Blackwell.

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. 1979 [1944]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: New Left Books.

Barthes, Roland. 1977 [1968]. The Death of the Author. In *Image, Music, Text*, edited by Stephen Heath, 142-148. London: Fontana,

Bennett, Tony. 1998. *Culture – A Reformer's Art*. London: Sage.

Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello. 2005 [1999]. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

China Labor Watch. 2011. *Tragedies of Globalization – The Truth Behind Electronic Sweatshops*. New York: China Labor Watch.

Duhigg, Charles and Keith Bradshaw. 2012. Where the iPhone Work Went. *The New York Times* Articles selected in association with *The Observer*, 29 January, pp1,4.

Duhigg, Charles and David Barboza, 2012a. How the US Lost Out on iPhone Work. *The New York Times*, 21January.

Duhigg, Charles and David Barboza, 2012b. In China, Human Costs are Built Into an iPad. *The New York Times*, 26 January.

Fiske, John. 1989. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London: Unwyn Hyman.

Frank, Thomas. 1997. *The Conquest of Cool – Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Gallo, Carmine. 2011. *The Innovative Secrets of Steve Jobs – Insanely Different Principles for Breakthrough Success*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Gamble, Andrew. 2009. *The Spectre at the Feast – Capitalist Crisis and the Politics of Recession*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso.

Goffman, Erving. 1971 [1959]. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hall, Stuart, 1997 [1974]. The Television Discourse – Encoding and Decoding. In *Studying Culture – An Introductory Reader*, edited by Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan, 28-34. 2nd edition London: Arnold.

Hall, Stuart. 1988. *The Hard Road to Renewal and the Crisis of the Left*. London: Verso.

Hall, Stuart. 1986 [1980]. Cultural Studies – Two Paradigms. In *Media, Culture & Society – A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Collins, James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Paddy Scannell, Philip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks, 33-48. London: Sage.

[4] It would be unfortunate, however, if the kind of political economy of communications industry and technology in China that is researched by the likes Yu Hong (2008 & 2011) were not articulated in relation to cultural analysis of the lived experiences of the labour process referred to in this article and the ideological seduction of people around the world that is critiqued by the cool-capitalism thesis.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Hall, Stuart, Chas Criticher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts. 1978. *Policing the Crisis – Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.

Hall, Stuart and Martin Jacques, eds. 1983. *The Politics of Thatcherism*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, Stuart and Martin Jacques, eds. 1989. *New Times – The Changing Face of Thatcherism in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, Stuart and Laurie Taylor, 2006, Culture's Revenge, *New Humanist*, March/April, 14-17.

Harvey, David. 2010. *The Enigma of Capital – And the Crises of Capitalism*. London: Profile.

Healy, Kieran. 2011. A Sociology of Steve Jobs. http://kieranhealy.org/blog/archives/2011/10/10/a-sociology-of-steve-jobs/ downloaded 19-01-12.

Hong, Yu. 2008. Distinctive Characteristics of China's Path of ICT Development – A Critical Analysis of Chinese Developmental Strategies in Light of the East Asian Model. *International Journal of Communication* 2: 456-471.

Hong, Yu, 2011. *Labor, Class Formation, and China's Informationized Policy of Economic Development*. Langham, MD: Lexington.

Isaacson, Walter, 2011, *Steve Jobs*, London: Little, Brown.

Johnson, Richard. 1979. Histories of Culture/Theories of Ideology – Notes on an Impasse. In *Ideology and Cultural Production*, edited by Michèle Barrett, Philip Corrigan, Annette Kuhn and Janet Wolff, 49-77. London: Croom Helm.

Kellner, Doulas. 1997. Critical Theory and Cultural Studies. In *Cultural Methodologies*, edited by Jim McGuigan, 12-41. London: Sage.

Klein, Naomi. 2000. *No Logo – Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. London: HarperCollins.

Majors, Richard and Janet Mancini Billson. 1993 [1992]. *Cool Pose – The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. New York: Touchstone.

Marx, Karl. 1976 [1867]. *Capital* Volume 1, tr. Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Mason, Paul. 2012. *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere – The New Global Revolutions*. London: Verso.

McChesney, Robert and John Bellamy Foster. 2010. Capitalism, the Absurd System – A View from the United States. *Monthly Review Press* 62 (2): 1-12.

McGuigan, Jim. 1992. *Cultural Populism*. London: Routledge.

McGuigan, Jim. 1997. Cultural Populism Revisited. In *Cultural Studies in Question*, edited by Marjorie Ferguson and Peter Golding, 138-154. London: Sage.

McGuigan, Jim. 2003. The Social Construction of a Cultural Disaster – New Labour's Millennium Experience. *Cultural Studies* 17 (5): 669-690.

McGuigan, Jim. 2006. The Politics of Cultural Studies and Cool Capitalism. *Cultural Politics* 2 (2): 137-258.

McGuigan, Jim. 2007. Technological Determinism and Mobile Privatisation. In *New Media Worlds – Challenges for Convergence*, edited by Virginia Nightingale and Tim Dwyer, 103-117. Sydney: Oxford University Press.

McGuigan, Jim. 2008. Apprentices to Cool Capitalism. *Social Semiotics* 18 (3): 309-319.

McGuigan, Jim. 2009. *Cool Capitalism*, London: Pluto.

McGuigan, Jim. 2010a. *Cultural Analysis*, London: Sage.

McGuigan, Jim. 2010b. Creative Labour, Cultural Work and Individualisation, *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16 (3): 323-333.

McGuigan, Jim, 2011, From Cultural Populism to Cool Capitalism. *Art and the Public Sphere* 1 (1): 7-18.

McGuigan, Jim. 2012 forthcoming. Cool Capitalism at Work, In *The Cultural Career of Coolness*, edited by Ulla Haselstein, Irmela Hijiya Kirschnereit, Catrin Gersdorf and Elena Giannoulis. Lanham, MA: Lexington Books.

Miller, Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria and Richard Maxwell. 2001. *Global Hollywood*, London: British Film Institute.

Miller,Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Mazwell and Ting Wang. 2005. *Global Hollywood 2*. London: British Film Institute.

Moritz, Michael. 2011 [2009]. *Return to the Little Kingdom – Steve Jobs, The Creation of Apple, And How it Changed the World*. London: Duckworth.

Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 1974. For a Political Economy of Mass Communications. In *The Socialist Register 1973*, edited by Ralph Miliband and John Saville, 205-234. London: Merlin.'

Pountain, Dick and David Robins. 2000. *Cool Rules – Anatomy of an Attitude*. London: Reaktion.

Ridderstrale, Jonas and Kjell Nordstrom. 2002 [2000]. *Funky Business – Talent Makes Capital Dance*. London: Pearson.

Rojek, Chris. 2001. *Celebrity*, London: Reaktion.

Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM). 2011. *Foxconn and Apple Fail to Fulfil Promises – Predicaments of Workers after the Suicides*. Hong Kong: SACOM.

Thompson, John B. 1990. *Ideology and Modern Culture – Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Thompson, Robert Farris. 1974. *African Art in Motion*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Thompson, Robert Farris, 1976 [1971]. *Black Gods and Kings*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Turner, Graeme. 2003. *British Cultural Studies – An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Wilde, Joseph and Esther de Haan. 2006. *The High Cost of Calling – Critical Issues in the Mobile Phone Industry*, Amsterdam: Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO).

Williams, Raymond, 1963 [1958], *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Williams, Raymond. 1974. *Television – Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Fontana.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1981. Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis. *New Left Review* 129: 51-66.

Williams, Raymond. 2011 [1961]. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian.

Winston, Brian. 1995 [1990]. How are Media Born and Developed? In *Questioning the Media – A Critical Introduction*, ed. John Downing, Ali Mohammadi and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi. 54-74. London: Sage.

Winston, Brian, 1996, *Technologies of Seeing – Photography, Cinematography and Television*. London: British Film Institute.

Wright, Erik Olin, 2010, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, London: Verso.

About the Author

Jim McGuigan
is Professor of Cultural Analysis in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University, UK. His most recent books are *Cool Capitalism* (Pluto, 2009) and *Cultural Analysis* (Sage, 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 439-456, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Dialectical Method and the Critical Political Economy of Culture

Brice Nixon

University of Colorado Boulder, Journalism and Mass Communication, Boulder, USA,
brice.nixon@colorado.edu

Abstract: This article argues that the quality that defines critical political economy is its critical method. Definitions of the critical political economy of culture are considered and shown to focus on specific theoretical concerns while not fully addressing the fundamental issue of method. Method is here discussed in terms of the way human reason is used to produce knowledge. A critical method for Marx is a historical materialist dialectical method, thus this paper argues for a deeper consideration of the Marxist dialectical method in relation to critical political-economic theorizing. Sources for methodological consideration from Marx to 20th-century Western Marxists are outlined. The potential contribution of the Marxist dialectical method in the continued development of the critical political economy of culture is demonstrated by showing the possibility of developing a complementary critical political economy of consciousness. Smythe's theorizing of audiences as workers is considered as a useful starting point, and its potential development through incorporation of the work of other critical scholars of media and culture is outlined.

Keywords: Critical Political Economy, Dialectical Method, Historical Materialism, Critical Theory, Culture, Consciousness, Marx, Smythe

1. Introduction

The critical political economy of culture, communication, media, and information has been defined, examined, and re-examined by a number of eminent political economists over the course of at least four decades. That collective self-reflectivity I take to be a necessary and productive quality of critical theorizing. What does not seem to have been addressed, however — at least not sufficiently — is the critical *method* by which political economy is a critical theory. Critical theory relies on a critical method, and a critical method for Marx is a historical materialist dialectical method. In fact, that method is the foundation of Marx's critical theory. Thus, Marx is an essential source for considering the nature of that method, in addition to being an essential source for the theory and concepts of critical political economy. In this article, I attempt to outline an engagement with the dialectical method that I suggest is necessary for a critical political economy of culture, and I attempt to demonstrate the productive potential of such an engagement by connecting it to the "blindspot" debate about the place of communication in Marxist theory initiated by Smythe (1977). Critical political economy can be a critical theory of the production of culture *and* the production of consciousness if it is further developed by the Marxist dialectical method.

Marx and a number of Western Marxists developed a historical and materialist dialectical method. By method, I mean a particular use of human reason to produce knowledge of human existence. I follow Marx, Lukács, and Sartre in describing human reasoning as a "method." By *historical materialist dialectical* method, I mean the use of human reason to produce knowledge of human existence by seeing it as a historical *process* within a material *reality*, thereby enabling an understanding of human social being as interrelated and contradictory as it actually is. Such reason is dialectical in that it is "the knowledge and comprehension of man by man" (Sartre 1976, 823); in other words, knowledge and the known, the subject and the object, are dialectically related. Dialectical reason, then, contrasts most clearly with analytical reason, by which knowledge is produced by separating reality into distinct parts. Such reason cannot grasp the whole of human existence because it sees fundamental separations as existing in reality (e.g. "culture" and "economy," "society" and "nature," "mental" and "material"), or, even more fundamentally, asserts an unbridgeable separation of subjective knowledge and objective existence (e.g. Kant 2009). While, as Hegel (1977, 11) said of the knowledge produced by dialectical reason, "the True is the whole." For Marx, human existence is both individual and social, differentiated and unified, so any real knowledge of it must be able to see it in that dialectical sense. A dialectical method as employed by Marx (1990, 103) is "critical and revolutionary" because it is a means to produce consciousness of the social reality of which every individual is a part but which, as a social reality, is thereby a *social* product. The dialectical method of reasoning is the means by which Marx produced his own critical thought.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

It is that dialectical method that is the critical foundation of Marx's critical theory, thus I define "critical theory" specifically as theory produced by means of a historical materialist dialectical method, which I also refer to here as a critical or Marxist dialectical method. I do not claim that there is only a subjective, epistemological dialectic – that there is only a dialectical *method* – and not an objective, ontological dialectic. The method of knowing existence and existence itself cannot be separated in that way if knowledge is to reflect reality ("[T]he dialectic is both a method *and* a movement in the object" (Sartre 1976, 20). The question I raise in this article is the nature of the method of the critical political economy of culture, an issue within media and cultural studies, not philosophy, thus I do not deal with the dialectic itself. My answer to the question of method is the Marxist dialectical method. Because that critical dialectical method is the critical foundation of Marx's work, it is necessary for political economists who wish to be similarly *critical* to be self-conscious of their *method* of theorizing as much as they are self-conscious of their political-economic theory and its concepts so that those concepts, and even the theory itself, do not become static but instead remain perpetually critical. This article is intended to contribute to a consideration of the critical dialectical method of theorizing as it is relevant to critical political economy.

First, I discuss the critical political economy of culture as it has been defined by those who have had a significant role in its development in the late-20th and early-21st centuries. Method in the sense that I define it above does not seem to have played a significant role in defining the critical nature of that political-economic theory, although I note two scholars who have dealt with the critical dialectical method of theorizing culture and communication: Dan Schiller and Christian Fuchs. Next, I examine the role of dialectical method in the work of Marx. I argue Marx's historical and materialist dialectical *method* is at least as important for the critical political economy of culture as the specifics of his political-economic theory. I then consider the development of the historical materialist dialectical method in the 20th century by Western Marxists who did not attempt to use it as a method of political-economic theorizing but instead as a method of theorizing culture and consciousness. I argue their use of dialectical reasoning to critically understand culture and consciousness is a crucial link between Marx's political economy and the critical political economy of culture and consciousness. Finally, I connect the Marxist dialectical method to the critical political economy of culture by examining the "blindspot" debate and Dallas Smythe's insights into the production of both culture and consciousness.

While the "audience commodity" (Smythe 1977) is an established concept in the critical political economy of culture, the full extent of Smythe's insight seems to have been missed by critical political economists. If the Marxist dialectical method is used more extensively in theorizing culture and, especially, consciousness, the critical political economy of culture can be expanded and developed in a productive way. What I would then call the critical political economy of culture and *consciousness* can be developed most productively by means of a dialectical method of theorizing as well as an integration of other critical theories (e.g. Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Williams 1977) and critical histories (e.g. Schiller 1989; 1992) of culture and consciousness. As I hope to make clear in the subsequent sections of this article, a number of previous scholars have already done much to produce the methodological consideration and theoretical development I encourage in this article, and it is only by virtue of their previous efforts that I am able to suggest there is more work to be done in precisely the direction to which they have pointed. This article is primarily aimed at scholars in the area of critical political economy – hence my discussion of the Marxist dialectical method is not comprehensive but rather a sketch of the fundamentals of the method, its intellectual history, and its relevance for the critical political economy of culture – but it is simultaneously intended as a methodological discussion potentially of interest to all scholars of media, communication, and culture. My goal is to make the issue of method a central concern of critical political economy and to demonstrate some of the potential of the historical materialist dialectical method in relation to culture and communication.

2. Critical Political Economy of Culture: The Problem of Method

Beginning in the 1970s, a number of scholars contributed to the conscious development of a political economy focused on culture, communication, media, and information. In addition to distinguishing their "political economy" from the dominant neo-classical "economics," those scholars generally defined their approach as "critical." A brief intellectual history of those definitions over more than four decades makes clear the unifying characteristics of that critical political economy. I group them all under the label critical political economy of "culture," although others consider the more appropriate overarching label to be "communication(s)," "(mass) media," or "information." While the continuous efforts to clarify, define, and critique the precise nature of the critical political economy of culture is one of its most productive features – enabling it to follow actual historical change – its

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

method does not seem to have received the same attention. Schiller (1996) and Fuchs (2011b), however, have contributed to that latter process. I argue for an engagement with method that is as continuous and widespread as consideration of the theoretical categories and concepts has been.

When "method" has been specifically discussed, it has tended to be *techniques* of analytical reasoning rather than method in the more fundamental sense of self-conscious critique and declaration of the way in which the human capacity to reason is used to produce "knowledge." In the tradition of Enlightenment thinking, that is what Marx meant by "method," whether discussing his method or that of other political economists or philosophers, and it seems to be equally important for critical political economists of culture to deal with the question of method. Importantly, Marx (1990, 102-103) identified his method with the dialectical method of Hegel, which he claims to have modified to make it "critical and revolutionary." By "method," then, I am referring to what can be considered questions of "philosophy," but I do argue that all critical political economists of culture must also be philosophers; rather, it is simply necessary to engage with the work of those who have considered what specifically makes for a "critical" method. Discussions of dialectical method by Marx and Western Marxists are a necessary methodological foundation for a critical political economy of culture. I do not find much evidence of such methodological consideration in the definitions of the critical political economy of culture, and I claim that has had and continues to have important implications for the theory itself. In particular, the production of consciousness has yet to be systematically incorporated as a fundamental aspect of what would then be a critical political economy of culture and consciousness. Instead, the relationship between political economy and consciousness (often under the name "ideology") remains contradictory, and political economists' attempts to resolve that tension threaten the theory with precisely the reification that a critical method is the means to avoid. There are already numerous, though disparate, elements through which a theoretical incorporation of the production of consciousness into critical political-economic theory can be achieved. This article is, in part, an effort to outline what those elements are.

First, I summarize the definitions of the critical political economy of culture offered over the last four decades. Murdock and Golding (1973, 205) define the "political economy of mass communications" as an understanding of the "basic features" that "underpin and shape the economic context and political consequences of mass communications." They argue it is necessary to see mass media organizations as "first and foremost" profit-based businesses producing commodities. Media businesses are just like every other capitalist business. But, they are also quite distinct from other industries because of the nature of the commodities they produce: Their products are also ideas objectified into "culture" (e.g. television shows, news stories, music). That dual nature of cultural production through communication media – the products are both "commodities" and "ideas" – is a theme present in all definitions of critical political economy of culture. For Murdock and Golding, the most important task of a political-economic theory is to clarify concretely and specifically how "ideology" is produced (207) by articulating "the general and systematic constraints" generated by media industries' production of culture as a commodity (223). The culture produced is limited by its commodity nature, which creates a general "ideological" effect of reinforcing the status quo (226-227). The political economy of "media" is an analysis of the way capitalist power relations are legitimated (232). While Murdock and Golding outline basic theoretical aspects and the recent history that makes such a theory necessary, the issue of method is not addressed.

Garnham (2006/1986) does deal with the critical method of theorizing culture and communication. His complex statement remains an essential foundation of a critical political economy of culture. Most of the article, however, is a discussion of specific *theoretical* issues, with the dialectical method itself only implicit, although strongly so. Because he stops short of such direct methodological consideration, Garnham fails to completely reject vulgar materialism. While Garnham insightfully critiques exactly the aspects of Marxist theory that must be addressed by a critical political economy of culture (base/superstructure, the means of mental production, ideology, the production of culture), he does not fully resolve the issues he highlights. He relies on a partially reified concept of "the economic" and his political economy of culture is thus also partially reified: Culture can be understood by understanding its historically specific "economic" production. While Garnham repeatedly emphasizes the importance of understanding production historically, his method of theorizing actually de-historicizes the capitalist production of culture and consciousness by taking capitalism at its word and examining production as "economic." While the production of culture cannot be critically theorized that way, the production of *consciousness* is completely eliminated from consideration. "The economic," is then an "evasion" (Williams 1977, 93; Garnham 2006/1986, 207). Ultimately, Garnham's position is insightful but contradictory, which is what makes his essay a necessary and useful starting point for a critical political economy of culture.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

In critiquing Garnham on those grounds, it might seem as though I am questioning the entire premise of a political economy of culture, but my goal is just the opposite: By arguing that political-economic theory can neither exclude human activity related to "consciousness," "ideology," or "subjectivity," nor consider it something that is understood once "class" and "capital accumulation" are critically theorized (Garnham 2006/1986, 203), I am attempting to expand the terrain of political economy. It seems that the production of culture has been incorporated into the theory in a way that avoids a reductionist "reflection" theory – and that is precisely the contribution of the critical political economy of *culture* to critical political economy in general – but the production of consciousness remains mostly outside political economy even though consciousness was the first thing Marx (1978d) attempted to show was materially produced.

In one example of the contradictions of the essay, Garnham (2006/1986, 206) actually articulates that precise issue: "[W]e could say that the purpose of a political economy of culture is to elucidate what Marx and Engels meant in *The German Ideology* by "control of the means of mental production". But Garnham's critique of Williams reveals a refusal to fully deal with the implications for the critical political economy of culture of "control of the means of mental production": It must also be a critical political economy of *consciousness*, dealing directly with the problem of "ideology" by means of its own critical method rather than avoiding the problem by proclaiming cultural production a matter of capitalist economics rather than a simple reflection of ruling-class ideology. Again, Garnham is clear in his assertion of the need to see cultural production as the production of commodities and ideas, but the full significance of that production of ideas, which Murdock and Golding (1973, 206) also highlight as the aspect of real importance in cultural production, is left unaddressed.

While Williams (1977; 1980a; 1980b) pushes for the elimination of all reified methods of theorizing social production by incorporating what he saw as the last significant barrier — culture as *material* production – Garnham (2006/1986, 207) pushes back by way of historical specificity and a distinction between "the economic" and "the material". He mistakenly finds Williams to be ignoring the specificity of capitalist production and counters with a reified "economic perspective," while missing the significance of Williams' critique of the *method* of theorizing. Williams (1977; 1980a; 1980b) demonstrates that, if the concepts and categories of political economy are to remain critical, and if Marxist theory is to remain a critical theory of the social production of human life itself (Marx 1978a, 4), the concepts and method of Marx's theorizing must also be used to theorize the production of culture. In contrast to that, Garnham (2006/1986, 208) makes what is perhaps his most problematic claim: the distinction between "social form" and "cultural form", between which there is "an essential divide". He concludes with the claim that culture and consciousness are not material until "they are translated into social forms". The production of consciousness, and its relationship to culture, is thereby banished from the political economy of culture. There are no grounds for refuting the now-popular but problematic concept of "immaterial labour", a concept representative of the logical development of the critical theory of culture and consciousness because critically theorizing consciousness has been left to others (Garnham /2011, 41) now signals explicit acceptance of that concept and criticizes its absence from the critical political economy of culture).

Smythe provides the means to reclaim for the critical political economy of culture the space abandoned by Garnham, although Smythe also fails to fully overcome the problems he identifies. Smythe (1977) focuses attention precisely on the production of consciousness by means of the critical dialectical method of Marx. He does not stop at consideration of production by the culture industries but also theorizes audiences as producers rather than consumers. For Smythe, "control of the means of mental production" is in the hands of the "consciousness industry". Members of the audience are forced to work for advertisers, who buy audience labour-power from media companies. Importantly, however, by Smythe's method of theorizing individuals are seen to labour in the production of their own consciousness (and the whole process is seen as social). Smythe does not fully develop his insight to make the critical political economy of culture also a critical political economy of consciousness, but he provides the basic means to do so. He directly addresses the necessity of a dialectical method: "[T]he way to a Marxist theory of how ideology is produced by monopoly capitalism is to use an historical, materialist, dialectical method always seeking the reality of class struggle" (Smythe 1978, 126).

The primary theoretical aspects outlined in the late 1970s have remained the foundation of the critical political economy of culture. Jhally (1989, 66) describes it is a theory of "the economic context of ... mass-mediated culture", or what are called "the cultural industries." Like Murdock and Golding, Garnham, and Smythe, Jhally emphasizes the importance of the dual nature of cultural production as commodity production – it produces both commodities for exchange on the market and objects with cultural meaning – and the necessity for the critical political economy of culture to

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

account for both. Jhally insightfully claims the Frankfurt School (particularly in "The Culture Industry" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002)) is one half of a critical political economy of culture, alongside those more typically identified as political economists (e.g. the scholars discussed in this section). However, Jhally's (1989, 80) claim that the exchange-value of cultural commodities dominates the use-value is indicative of the need to further expand the theoretical scope by reconsidering the method of theorizing: While the claim seems to be a simple statement of fact about commodities in a capitalist society, it enables political economists to ignore the use-value, or "meaning", of cultural commodities. The production of culture is thus only partially grasped, since "meaning" is central to the process, and the production of consciousness is again pushed aside as something that can only be understood by other means of theorizing. Critical political economy must be a theory of the production of "meaning" as much as the production of commodities.

More recent definitions of the primary aspects of the critical political economy of culture also echo the earlier definitions (e.g. Garnham 2011; Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko 1993; Mosco 2009; Wasko, Murdock, and Sousa 2011). Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko's (1993, 113) discussion of "method" is telling: It makes no reference to the dialectical method of reasoning while claiming use of what it describes as the "*analytical*" methods of sociology, history, and political economy, including Marx. It is clear the significance and specifics of Marx's dialectical method has been missed. Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko are indeed correct that "a reassessment of method" is necessary (115). In a wide-ranging survey of the specifics of the critical political economy of "communication," Mosco (2009) fills in the details of how scholars have theorized culture, communication, media, and information by the general approach first outlined in the 1970s. However, his relatively brief discussion of the "philosophical foundation" of the theory does not address the dialectical method, and his description of the "critical" epistemology of the theory is telling: Critical is understood in relation to other, presumably uncritical, theories that also have different values (10), rather than the method of reasoning that Marx considers the critical foundation of his political economy. Wasko, Murdock, and Sousa (2011, 1-2) define the "critical" aspect of critical political economy similarly — that is, by virtue of the content of the theory rather than the method of theorization. Garnham (2011, 42) has recently criticized the field for remaining "stuck with a set of problems and terms of analysis that history has simply passed by", "a tired and narrow orthodoxy". While that critique points directly to problems of method, Garnham instead limits his critique to the concepts and contents of the theory itself. Garnham's political economy of "information" seems to be a move in the wrong direction.

Calabrese (2004, 2) agrees with the defining characteristics of a critical political economy of culture outlined by the authors already noted, but he also urges precisely the theoretical development toward which this article is intended to contribute: a deeper engagement with "*the production and circulation of meaning*" (ibid., 9). He also specifically cites the dialectical method of theorizing as the key to that development (ibid., 9-10). In one sense, then, this article is a contribution further "toward a political economy of culture," a contribution in which the dialectical method is the primary focus.

Two scholars in the field of critical political economy of culture who have dealt with the question of method are Fuchs (2011b) and Schiller (1996). As their considerations of method seem to be exceptions within the field, I highlight them as a necessary starting point for the development of the theory. Fuchs (2011b, 97) defines a "critical" theory of communication and media similarly to the critical political economists discussed above: "the analysis of media, communication and culture in the context of domination, asymmetrical power relations, exploitation, oppression and control." Importantly, he also specifically insists that "dialectical philosophy" is essential for critical theory in general (ibid., 3-71) and critical media and information studies as an aspect of critical theory (ibid., 112-121). In developing the latter point, Fuchs concentrates on media as technology of communication and thus specifically elaborates on how the critical dialectical method is a means to produce a "complex technology assessment" (ibid., 112) and to see the dialectical relationship between media and society. I focus on culture and consciousness, so I want to expand on his discussion of the critical dialectical method in relation to media and cultural studies by demonstrating the method is useful beyond the avoidance of technological determinism (either optimistic or pessimistic), although that is certainly one necessary use. In terms of a critical theory of culture and consciousness, the critical dialectical method is also a means to critically understand the social production of culture and consciousness. Fuchs also argues for the development of a critical theory of media that *integrates* approaches that see media as either repressive or emancipatory (ibid., 102, 108, 112), and this article is, in part, an attempt to contribute to that integration.

Schiller (1996) emphasizes Williams' discussions of the critical method of theorizing culture and communication as essential to what he considers a necessary development of a "unified conceptual framework" for theorizing communication. Schiller calls for a framework unified around the con-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cept of "labour" so that human communication can be understood as an active human process but one that is not separate from other aspects of human social existence. He argues against what he considers to be the theoretical reification of "intellectual labour" as something distinct from "manual labour." While the "dialectical method" is not Schiller's explicit focus, he clearly promotes that critical method of theorizing. Like Fuchs' integrative, dialectical method of theorizing, Schiller's unified approach is a productive way forward in the development of a critical political economy of culture. The method of theorizing culture and communication as production is a historical materialist dialectical method that makes a critical understanding of *all* human social activity, and the conditions of that activity, the basis of knowledge. By that method, the production of culture and the production of consciousness are the object of a critical political economy of culture and communication. The implications of that method of theorizing will be explored in the final section of this article. First, a deeper engagement with the Marxist dialectical method of theorizing is necessary.

3. Marx's Dialectical Method: Historical, Materialist, Critical, Revolutionary

Lukács (1971) argues that method is the essence of Marxism. To be "Marxist", then, is to follow Marx's method rather than to take what he wrote about a capitalist system of production as a definitive, absolute statement. Political economy, then, must be produced by that dialectical method if it is to be similarly critical and revolutionary. The Western Marxists who have explicitly engaged with the dialectical method, however, have not been those working in the area of political economy; they have been those Marxists who went back to the question of method as a way to figure out how to be Marxist without being economistic. The critical political economy of culture that later developed in relation to Western Marxism re-emphasized the importance of the categories of Marxist political economy for understanding culture and communication, but seems to have done so by reiterating Marx's political economy without also engaging with the method that produced it. I follow Lukács in emphasizing the fundamental importance of method, focusing on the method of theorizing. For political economy to be a critical theory, a critical and revolutionary dialectical method is necessary. A critical, revolutionary political economy of *culture* can only be produced through that same method. In this paper, I attempt to demonstrate what a Marxist dialectical method can contribute to a critical, revolutionary political economy of culture. Marx's dialectical method is the focus of this section. The development of that method by Western Marxists is the focus of the following section.

Marx (1990, 103) considers his critique of political economy "critical and revolutionary" by virtue of his dialectical method. It is a critical and revolutionary method because it is not a means to producing thinking that celebrates existing society but is rather a means to produce consciousness of society as a product of human action that is thus historical rather than eternal, and that is thus transformable. The dialectical method, and the theory produced by it, is critical and revolutionary in terms of the consciousness it is a means to produce. For Marx and Marxists, such critical knowledge of society is a necessary means for the social production of a society of freedom and equality. Marx's dialectical method is the foundation of his critique of classical political economy, through which he simultaneously produces his own critical, revolutionary political economy. It enables him to produce knowledge of capitalist society by seeing that society as the product of a social *process* of production, and to see the nature of that process itself. "Society" is a product, and Marx's critical political economy is a means by which the producers can become conscious of their production; Marx's dialectical method is the means by which he produces that critical political economy:

> In its rational form, [the dialectic] is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps the transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary (Marx 1990, 103).

In a number of his works, Marx critiques the method – the use of reason – of others. It is possible to define Marx's critical, revolutionary dialectical method without seeing it as a specific method for political economy but instead as a means of using human reason in a particular way that can produce knowledge of the world as it is. In Volume I of *Capital*, Marx (1990) describes what he considers to be the difference between his "materialist" dialectical method and that of Hegel:

> My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> subject, under the name of "the Idea," is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought. (102)

Marx thereby attempts to establish the materialist basis of his dialectical method: An understanding of the "material" world *of* humans is the means by which to understand human social existence. The "material" world is, for Marx, the product of human activity but the relationship is dialectical: "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances" (Marx, 1978d, 165). Marx (1978b) says a "*true materialism*" that is a "*real science*" is one in which the basic principle is "the social relationship 'of man to man,' " (108). Marx (1978c) also says a critical, revolutionary materialism conceives reality as "*human sensuous activity, practice*" (143). That materialist method is a dialectical method that sees men as the ones "who change circumstances," although they are then also "products of circumstances" (144). Human "essence," the essence of human existence, is not an individual quality; it is social: It is "the ensemble of the social relations" (145). "Social life is essentially *practical*"; understanding "human practice" in the material world is the method by which to understand social life (145). That is the materialist aspect of Marx's dialectical method.

Marx (1978b), critiques the method of classical political economy as being, essentially, uncritical and counter-revolutionary. It is a method of producing a consciousness of society that does not see it as fundamentally human-produced and, therefore, does not see it as something that can be changed, certainly not something that should be changed. The consciousness produced is one in which existing society – the essence of it, at least – is understood as natural and eternal. Through that consciousness, human activity *reproduces* existing society. By virtue of that method of reasoning, political economy inherently sides with the interests of capitalists. That is evident in the categories of classical political economy, which Marx (1973, 104) claims are "fixed, immutable, eternal categories" that are supposed to represent eternal relations of production. Thus, classical political economists produce an understanding of bourgeois institutions as natural institutions. "In this they resemble the theologians, who likewise establish two kinds of religion. Every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation from God" (120-121). For political economists, present-day relations "are themselves natural laws independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws that must always govern society. *Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any*" (121, emphasis added).

In contrast, Marx (1973, 106, emphasis added) says, "[a]ll that exists, all that lives on land and under water, exists and lives only by some kind of *movement*. Thus the movement of history produces social relations." Economic categories are ideas produced by humans; they are "*historical and transitory products*" (110). It is possible, therefore, to produce critical, revolutionary categories and critical, revolutionary political economy. Marx claims his method is a means to produce those kinds of categories and that kind of theory. He describes it as dialectical, material, historical, critical, and revolutionary. Marx's dialectical method is a "materialist" method and a "historical" method, which makes it "critical and revolutionary": It is a means to produce knowledge of the fact that human social activity has produced the world that exists, thus human social activity can produce a different world. In *The German Ideology*, Marx (1978d) defines the fundamental premises of his method: actual human history, meaning human material social being, or human life, as it is comprehensible to humans. Thus the first premise is "the existence of living human individuals" (149):

> The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but *real premises* from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those they find already existing and those produced by their activity (149).

Marx re-emphasizes the premises of his method a number of times (154, 155), so it should be clear that the human social process of production that *is* human life is the foundation of his means of using human reason to understand what is in fact a social totality. It is precisely because that totality is in fact a constantly moving social *process* of human material activity that Marx asserts it is possible for humans to have knowledge of it. That is the historical aspect of Marx's dialectical method.

While Marx's (1978a) statements about "structure" and "superstructure" in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* can and have been interpreted as his declaration of the greater importance of the economic "base", they can be understood differently if they are placed in the context of what, in the crucial paragraph, he *twice* says is the thing in which he is most interested: humans producing their own lives. The absolute centrality of "the material condi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tions of life" "served as a guiding thread" for his work (4). In that paragraph, there is a well-worn quotation that I, too, will cite, but I want to draw attention to the prepositional phrase at the start: "*In the social production of their life*" (4, emphasis added). I argue that is the key part of the statement for Marx, for the reasons I have already tried to make clear in this section. While the entirety of the long paragraph is necessary for a full account of one of the foundational statements of Marx's method, these essential lines are a useful starting point:

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite state of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness (4).

I will restrict my comments on that dense statement to a few key points. The "social production" of human life is the crucial concept to grasp in order to see the critical and revolutionary extent of Marx's method. It is not an economic determinism. It is a means to know real human social life. To say social being determines social consciousness is not to say that "the economy" determines everything else; "the economy" is an abstraction that is not inherently critical, while Marx uses "the economic structure of society" as a critical concept to describe something concrete: the social and material conditions in which human existence is produced. That perspective on the "social production" of human life should make clear why, for Marx, political economy was a useful means of producing his own consciousness of that social production: Political economy is the theory of material production. Developing that theory with a critical, revolutionary method – a historical materialist dialectical method – makes it a critical, revolutionary theory, and one that is knowledge of *all* human production, or all human life, not just "economic" production. That knowledge is what Marx produced with his dialectical method.

Marx's method pushes "political economy" to its limits as an independent "science" because it is a method by which to produce knowledge of *all* social production, meaning *all* of human life. In developing his own critical political economy, Marx proceeds "from the premises of political economy" (1978b, 70). He uses the concepts of uncritical, counter-revolutionary political economy as a means to produce a critical, revolutionary theory. To do so, he uses a critical, revolutionary, historical materialist dialectical method. In the Preface to the First Edition of *Capital* Volume I, Marx (1990, 90) describes the essence of that method: "In the analysis of economic forms," the only scientific method available is "[t]he power of abstraction." In the process of living, humans always produce consciousness of their existence: Humans have the capacity to abstract from the totality of social being and analyse that totality by breaking it down into concepts and ideas; they can abstract from a process in which they are actively involved. Historical materialist dialectical reasoning is that production of consciousness in a way that does not see the objective world as separate from the knowledge of it. In fact, the ground of Marx's method is that *real* "scientific" knowledge is only possible as an aspect of the process of human life itself; knowing is only ever really an aspect of being. Humans have the reasoning *capacity* to produce such *real* knowledge by thinking dialectically, but they do not automatically do so simply by existing. Hence, I consider Marx to be the most radical of "radical Enlightenment" thinkers (Israel 2010). Critical dialectical reasoning is the only "scientific" means to produce knowledge of human life because human life cannot be observed in nature or isolated in an experiment since humans cannot be outside human life. The historical materialist dialectical method is a means of producing knowledge from inside the process itself, hence it is also a critical, revolutionary method in the true spirit of the Enlightenment. To produce critical and revolutionary consciousness requires a dialectical method that is "materialist" – having its foundation as *human activity* – as well as "historical" – viewing human life as an ongoing *process*. That dialectical method is critical and revolutionary because it is a means to produce knowledge of the truth of human life: Humans socially produce their social existence. "[T]he present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and is constantly engaged in a process of change" (Marx, 1990, 93).

4. Western Marxism: Developing a Critical, Revolutionary, Dialectical Method

Marx's historical materialist dialectical method was further developed by a number of Western Marxists in reaction to the "Marxism" of the Soviet Union, in which the dialectic became a law of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

nature rather than a human capacity to reason. A re-emphasis on the dialectical method was a means to make Marxist theory critical rather than reified. The Western Marxists I consider – Lukács, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Lefebvre, Sartre, and Williams – did not attempt to produce a method for "political economy" but instead contributed to the on-going production of a "critical theory" of society to demonstrate that the Marxist method is not an "economistic" or "reductionist" means of dealing with the aspects of human life that some have problematically considered part of the "superstructure" that "reflects" or is "determined" by the material "base". A Marxist political economy of culture must necessarily deal with that problem within Marxism, therefore it must deal explicitly with questions of method. This article is meant to be a contribution to that process.

Lukács, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Lefebvre, and Williams all reiterate the historical materialism of Marx's dialectical method; Sartre develops that method itself. Lukács (1971) outlines the basic critical method of theorizing in the Marxist sense. Important to such a critical theory is a "process of abstraction" (6), but that does not mean the theory is divorced from real human history. On the contrary, the method of critical theory is to abstract *from* history. There is, thus, a dialectical relationship between theory and history within the method. In the case of a critical theory, actual history is the specific source for abstraction. By that method, critical theory moves beyond the "real existence" of facts to their "inner core" (8). At the heart of a dialectical method of theorizing is "the simultaneous recognition and transcendence of immediate appearances" (8). By seeing "the isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process" and integrating them "in a totality," critical theory becomes a way to turn "knowledge of the facts" into "knowledge of *reality*" (8). Theory, as "knowledge of the whole" (Lukács 1971, 10; an indication of the importance of Hegel (1977, 11) for the Marxist dialectical method), is a "dialectical conception of totality" that makes it possible "to understand reality as a social process" (13). It is consciousness *of* existence, a necessary aspect of a conscious existence that is capable of producing a different reality. By that critical and revolutionary method, critical theory is also a theory of social change:

> Only when the core of existence stands revealed as a social process can existence be seen as the product, albeit the hitherto unconscious product, of human activity. This activity will be seen in its turn as the element crucial for the transformation of existence (19).

Marcuse (1976) defines the Marxist dialectical method similarly, as the means to reveal existence as a social process so that it can be consciously transformed. By virtue of the method used, the theory produced is "a practical one; praxis does not only come at the end but is already present in the beginning of the theory" (Marcuse 1973, 5). It is a critical, revolutionary theory because it is knowledge that informs real action. Because being is dialectical, it "can only be grasped dialectically" (Marcuse 1976, 16). Humans can understand themselves and the world they create – the social process in its totality – as historical and dialectical because that social totality *is* historical and dialectical. That social process is human history itself, and it is that material social process for which the method is a means of producing consciousness. "Only because and insofar as the real is historical, it is dialectical; the real can and must be understood through the dialectical method" (19).

What Horkheimer (1972) labels "critical theory" is produced by that same historical materialist dialectical method. It is the method of theorizing that Horkheimer attempts to show differentiates a "critical" theory from a "traditional" theory. In fact, Horkheimer's definitive essay would be more aptly titled, "Traditional and Critical *Method*". A Marxist theory is a critical theory produced by means of a critical method. A critical dialectical method demands critical *theorizing*, not static theory. The traditional method of theorizing, on the other hand, produces a theory that is *uncritical* consciousness of the reality of social being. For traditional theory the basic requirement is "harmony": "all the parts should intermesh thoroughly and without friction" and there should be no contradictions (190). In the traditional method, theory and history are separated. "There is always, on the one hand, the conceptually formulated knowledge and, on the other, the facts to be subsumed under it", and that method of subsumption is called "theoretical explanation" (193). Traditional theory is a theory of the status quo. The reproduction of existing society necessitates uncritical consciousness. Critical theory is inherently a theory of social change: It sees society as a material social process of production by means of its historical materialist dialectical method. It is consciousness that is critical and revolutionary because it can envision "the rational state of society", "a future society as a community of free men" (216-217)

Lefebvre also reiterates the critical and revolutionary aspect of the historical materialist dialectical method. Against the method of "dogmatic," simplified, and "economistic" Stalinist Marxism, Lefebvre (2009) defines a "dialectical" form of materialism that is produced by a critical, revolutionary method. Lefebvre's *Dialectical Materialism* is a critique of Stalinist "dialectical materialism" as a

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

philosophy of Nature, with "the laws of the dialectic" as "the laws of Nature" (1-3). Lefebvre's dialectical materialism can be defined negatively as "opposed to those doctrines which limit human existence, either from without or within, by subordinating it to some external existence or else by reducing it to a one-sided element or partial experience seen as being privileged and definitive" (98). In particular, Lefebvre wants to reinstate "alienation" as a foundational concept, in opposition to the method of dogmatic Marxism that rejects or de-emphasizes it (4). For Lefebvre, the *historical materialist* dialectical method is a means to produce critical, revolutionary consciousness of "the dialectical movements within the human and social reality" (5).

> Dialectical materialism's aim is nothing less than the rational expression of the Praxis, of the actual content of life – and, correlatively, the transformation of the present Praxis into a social practice that is conscious, coherent and free. Its theoretical aim and its practical aim — knowledge and creative action – cannot be separated (Lefebvre, 2009, 100).

Like Lefebvre, Sartre attempts to counter a "Marxism" that is produced by a non-dialectical method. Sartre's *Search for a Method* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* develop the Marxist dialectical method itself. For Sartre (1968), "philosophy" is method (5); it is "a method of investigation and explication" (5) to produce consciousness. Soviet "Marxism" separates theory and practice into "pure, fixed knowledge" and "empiricism without principles" (22). "[I]t has ceased to live with history" (29). What Sartre (1976, 27) calls "external," "transcendental," or "universal" dialectical materialism is a method of seeing human history as simply an aspect of natural history. For Sartre, that method provides no foundation for the possibility of the truth of human knowledge since the movement of history is in nature, outside of human influence. Instead, Sartre insists, the dialectical method must be historical materialism, in which to live and to know are the same (thinking is "a particular form of human activity") but being is irreducible to thought (25, 33). "Knowledge" is itself historical (Sartre 1968, 4), thus, it is socially and materially produced; it is a process of "knowing" (4). The method of "knowing" must also be historical and material: It must be critically dialectical. For Sartre, that is a historical materialist dialectical method that is a "regressive-progressive and analytic-synthetic method" (148), a "heuristic" method that "teaches us something new because it is at once both regressive and progressive" (133). The product is critical, revolutionary consciousness, which makes the method "a social and political weapon" (5).

Although Williams also reiterates Marx's historical materialist dialectical method, he also brings the theoretical discussion back to culture and communication. As with the other Western Marxists discussed in this section, Williams attempts to demonstrate that Marxism is not a theory of mechanical materialism or economic determinism or reductionism. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams (1977) insists on understanding communication, culture, and consciousness as materially and socially produced. Underlying the dialectical method for Williams is what he describes as an indissoluble, continuous, material social process. That indissoluble process is the unity of different individual human activities, and all such human activities are material. Williams draws on what is a similarly fundamental concept for Marx (1978b; 1978c; 1978d): human material social activity, or labour.

Williams (1977) specifically questions the usefulness of the concept of "ideology." He recognizes its use by Marx as an effort to push for a dialectical method by critiquing attempts to separate and prioritize "consciousness" or "ideas". Williams argues that Marx sees consciousness "from the beginning as part of the human material social process, and its products in 'ideas' are then as much part of this process as material products themselves" (59-60). The human material social process is an "indissoluble process" that includes consciousness and thought (61). Williams says the concept of "ideology" might be insufficient for the redefinition of the products and processes of social signification that is necessary to reinvigorate Marxist cultural theory (71), and the use of the concept within critical political economy in a way that displaces the process of producing consciousness suggests he is correct.

As Williams makes clear, the problem for a critical dialectical method is precisely how to distinguish aspects of what is actually a whole, continuous social process in order to gain knowledge of that process. The Western Marxists considered here have produced complementary answers to that question. Williams makes his own significant contribution in a way that is directly useful for a critical, revolutionary political economy of culture: The method must be to understand *all* human activity as material production. Williams (1977) critiques the non-dialectical Marxism that divides the whole social process into material production and mental labour/consciousness/thought/culture, a method that he says results in a position that seems "too materialist," or materialist in a vulgar sense, but is actually not materialist enough (90-92). That form of materialism fails "to understand

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the material character of the production of a cultural order" (93). To overcome that failure, Williams says, it is necessary "to look at our actual productive activities without assuming in advance that only some of them are material" (94). It is in the precise spirit of that statement that a critical political economy of consciousness can be developed by means of a dialectical method.

One development within Western Marxism that represents a major alternative to the historical materialist dialectical method I explore and advocate in this article is the Italian or autonomist tradition of Marxism. Specifically, the autonomist concept of "immaterial labour" (e.g. Lazzarato, n.d.) is a theoretical challenge to what I claim is the necessary development of a critical political economy of culture and consciousness. In one sense, the autonomist method of theorizing immaterial labour is a direct challenge to Williams' "cultural materialism", which I cite as particularly useful for the critical political economy of culture and consciousness. The autonomist method appears to be neither fully dialectical nor fully materialist, since its foundation is that "immaterial" activity is *now* a basic aspect of human life because of technological change (Terranova 2009). Culture and consciousness are essentially distinct from "material" processes and, thus, cannot be understood by the historical materialist dialectical method. A "non-economic critique of political economy" is now necessary because value "is increasingly becoming social and subjective" (Terranova 2009). The autonomist social factory thesis is that social relations produce economic value (Terranova 2009). While I agree with the need to develop a theory of the subjective and the cultural – I push critical political economy toward culture and consciousness – the autonomist method that makes culture and consciousness only *now* theoretical objects is problematic. The historical materialist dialectical method provides a means to see the production of both culture and consciousness as productive human activities prior to the development of computer technologies. The concept of immaterial labour appears to be a product of exactly the reification of "intellectual" labour that Schiller (1996) critiques. Terranova (2000) is right to see "cultural" and "affective" activities as labour, and she argues for labour as the fundamental category (e.g. 40). She is also correct that we are all "knowledge workers" (42): Culture and consciousness are basic aspects of all human life. But in seeing such as activities as *immaterial* labour, she relies on a method that prevents the totality of the social process that is human life from being understood as such. Work processes have not *now*, *abruptly* "shifted from the factory to society" (33); Work processes within a capitalist society have always entailed labour outside the strict confines of the factory and every other "workplace," particularly the production of consciousness.

Immaterial labour, however, leads directly away from theorizing advertising as a material production process: Postindustrial business "is focused on the terrain *outside* of the production process: sales and the relationship with the consumer" (Lazzarato, n.d., emphasis added). Advertising is included among "properly 'immaterial' production" as a relationship between production and consumption. It is precisely that theorization that Smythe (1977; 1978) critiques by insisting that the audience labours, thus it is involved in a material process of *production*. However, Lazzarato (n.d.) also notes that the "production of subjectivity … becomes directly productive, because the goal of our postindustrial society is to construct the consumer/communicator – and to construct it as 'active.' " That claim highlights the issue of method, since Lazzarato insists in a seemingly *materialist* way that subjectivity is produced and individuals are active, but he insists the whole process is *immaterial*. The production of subjectivity – what I call the production of consciousness – is not only "an instrument of social control" but now a "productive," "economic" process. For Lazzarato, reception is "*a creative act*" and, crucially, the "whole … social relation" of author-work-audience is productive. That is an argument quite similar to Smythe's. But while Smyth's historical materialist dialectical method leads him to theorize the production of consciousness as an aspect within the totality of material production that had previously been missed, Lazzarato's method leads him to insist that the production of consciousness is a distinct, historically new, immaterial process and that it is a social relation that is productive. Rather than theorizing the productivity of a social relation, it seems more useful to theorize the production of culture (based on an "author-work" relation) and its relationship to the production of consciousness (based on a "work-audience" relation).

5. Toward a Critical Political Economy of Culture and Consciousness: The Marxist Dialectical Method as Solution

A number of scholars have made significant contributions toward the development of a critical political economy of culture and consciousness by using a dialectical method of theorizing, and I consider a number of them in this concluding section. Although the production of consciousness has not been explicitly theorized by the theory and concepts of critical political economy, many scholars have cleared the way for the development of a critical political economy of culture and conscious-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ness. A more in-depth engagement with the Marxist dialectical method should prove productive in the further development of such a critical theory. The production of commodified thinking cannot be left outside the realm of critical political economy if the reification, under the name "ideology," of an active, material, and social human process — the production of consciousness — is to be avoided. The historical materialist dialectical method, rather than a more "vulgar" approach (Meehan 1993), a political economy of information (Garnham 2011) or greater emphasis on the commodification of labour within industrial media production (Mosco 2011), is the necessary way to further develop a critical political economy that includes consciousness.

Smythe's (1977) initial effort to start a debate on the understanding of communication among Western Marxists claims there is a "blindspot" in the *method* of theorizing: Media have been explained by their "ideological" rather than their economic or political role. Smythe labels it an "idealist" explanation (1) because what he calls the "consciousness industry" has not been theorized as an industry producing commodities. He claims the ideas in media content have been emphasized at the expense of the economic process of production in which media and advertising industries are involved. While Smythe has sometimes been understood as claiming the "ideological" role of media is less significant than it economic role, or even abolishing "the problem of ideological reproduction entirely" (Murdock, 1978, 113), he actually makes a significant contribution to a critical political economy of *consciousness*, which would not abolish the problem of "ideological reproduction" but rather employ a different method of theorizing that process. Smythe (1978, 126, emphasis added) insists "the way to a Marxist theory of how ideology is produced by monopoly capitalism is to use an historical, materialist, dialectical *method* always seeking the reality of class struggle." In this final section, I attempt to demonstrate how a deeper engagement with the Marxist dialectical method enables the further development of a critical political economy of culture and consciousness along the specific lines suggested by Smythe. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that a critical political economy of consciousness is not a radical step but rather the continued development of the project begun as the critical political economy of culture (outlined in Section 2).

Smythe (1977; 1978; 2006/1981) argues that the product of media supported by advertising is not the content communicated through a specific medium (e.g. newspaper articles, television programs) but rather the audience for that content. The "commodity form of mass-produced advertiser-supported communications" is audiences, or more specifically, audience labour-power (1977, 2-3). Media produce audience labourers, meaning the audience "works". The method of theorizing media as producing psychological manipulation ("effects") is not a critical method; the critical – i.e. historical, materialist, dialectical – method of theorizing communication media is to abstract from the real human activity engaged in a process of production under specific conditions. By theorizing audience activity in exactly that critical way, Smythe produces a critical political-economic theory of advertising. Audience members are actively engaged in a process of production; they are not manipulated. But that labour process is controlled by the "consciousness industry", and profit is made from the productive activity of audience members. The audience is a commodity, or, more accurately, its capacity to labour is a commodity produced and sold by media and purchased by advertisers. Audience members do not choose to sell their labour-power, but they work for advertisers nonetheless. The "consciousness industry" is a capitalist industry that profits through the process of people producing their own consciousness, a process in which capital owns both labour-power (audiences) and the means of production (for Smythe, advertisements).

Murdock (1978, 110) considers Smythe's argument to be a rejection of Western Marxist media theory and replies that "a critical engagement with western Marxism is still indispensable to the development of a comprehensive and convincing Marxist analysis of mass communications". Murdock is correct, but an engagement with the dialectical *method* of Western Marxism is at least as important as the *theoretical* engagement he urges. An engagement with that method enables the integration of Marxist media theories and the further development of, among other things, a critical political economy of culture and consciousness. In the previous two sections, I attempted to outline aspects of that methodological engagement with Marx and Western Marxists. In this conclusion, I make provisional suggestions for a development of Smythe's critical political economy of advertising by outlining the contributions of critical theories and histories of media and culture that can be integrated into Smythe's theory to develop a *critical political economy of culture and consciousness*.

The audience commodity (audience members as labourers) is a widely used concept in the critical political economy of culture: Since the initial debate sparked by Smythe (Smythe 1977, 1978; 2006/1981; Livant 1979; Murdock 1978), the concept has been re-examined (Jhally and Livant 1986; Meehan 1993) and has more recently been both critiqued (Caraway 2011; Hesmondhalgh 2010) and employed by a number of scholars to critically theorize human activity in relation to the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Internet (Andrejevic 2002; Fuchs 2009; 2010; 2011a; Lee 2011; Napoli 2010). For the audience commodity to remain a critical concept, however, it must be used in a critical, dialectical method of theorizing. One sign of the potential reification of the concept is the failure to distinguish audience labour from "user-generated content". A number of scholars have used the concept of the audience commodity to examine commodification in relation to online activity but failed to fully see the difference between the labour processes of audience members and Internet users (Caraway 2011; Cohen 2008; Fuchs 2009; 2010; 2011a; Hesmondhalgh 2010; Napoli 2010): Audience members are labourers in the production of consciousness, while Internet users producing user-generated content are labourers in the production of culture. Clearly, Internet users also produce their own consciousness while "consuming" online content (including advertising). Uploading a video online or posting on a social networking site, however, is clearly producing culture. Commodified audience labour is a critical concept specifically with respect to the process of producing consciousness, but in contrast to the *audience* of mass media, the *users* of new media produce both consciousness and culture.

Commodification on social networking sites, for example, is not only a matter of generating profit by selling members' labour-power to advertisers; it is also a matter of commodifying the culture produced on the site in the form of intellectual property (e.g. Facebook 2011) and controlling the means of producing culture on the site by determining what activities are possible, even if use of the site itself is free. Thus, the Internet makes more obvious the need to connect the critical political economy of culture to the critical political economy of consciousness. Fuchs (2010, 191-192), in fact, calls attention to the relationship between producing culture and producing consciousness, but he uses the audience commodity to account for both processes. A necessary further development is to critically theorize the specific processes and conditions of producing culture *and* consciousness, and the relationship between the two.

Williams is essential to that development of a critical political economy of culture and consciousness. He conceptualizes the "means of communication" as "means of production" and theorizes communication and culture as human processes of production (Williams 1980a; 1980b; 1982), providing a way to theorize culture and consciousness through the theory and concepts of critical political economy. Most importantly, human productive activity is at the core of Williams' dialectical method of theorizing: "A society is not fully available for analysis until each of its practices is included" (1980a, 44). Cultural practices are an aspect of "the general social process" (44). Within what Williams (1980b, 53) calls "the whole historical social and material process," by which he means human existence, people produce both their consciousness and culture. In both cases, means of production are combined with labour in a process of production. Echoing Marx (1978e), Williams (1980a, 46-49) insists on theorizing human activities primarily as processes of *production* rather than consumption, and he says there has been a particular failure to do so with respect to communicative and cultural practices. The significance of media companies is that they control those production processes by turning both the means of production and labour into private property. In the capitalist production of *culture*, media companies are part of the "culture industry" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002) owning the means of production (media) and the labour (employees) and producing cultural commodities. The possibility for non-capitalist social cultural production is one of the more significant potentials of the Internet (Benkler 2006): Users' labour-power is not commodified, although their products (culture) often are. In the capitalist production of *consciousness*, media companies are part of the "consciousness industry" (Smythe 1977), owning the means of production (culture, including advertising) and labour (audiences and Internet users) and producing commodified thinking. Integrating Smythe and Williams, then, allows Horkheimer and Adorno's potential contribution to critical political economy to be better understood.

For Horkheimer and Adorno (2002), the culture industry encloses cultural production and produces commodified culture. Their argument is not a critique of mass culture, however; its real significance is the implication of commodified culture for the production of consciousness. The commodified culture produced by the culture industry is used by those who consume it – audience members – in the production of consciousness, and the product is commodified consciousness, which is why Horkheimer and Adorno describe the culture produced by the culture industry as advertising for existing society (131-136): It functions in that manner within the active production of consciousness. Rather than "enlightenment", the result of the mass-produced and widely available commodified culture is "mass deception". Horkheimer and Adorno produce a critical theory of consciousness, not just culture, and the development of a critical political economy of culture and consciousness would benefit from incorporating their method of theorizing culture and consciousness. While Smythe demonstrated the role of advertising and media in the production of consciousness, Horkheimer and Adorno use a dialectical method to critically theorize the relationship between cul-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ture and consciousness and the role of *all* culture as a means of producing consciousness, so that, e.g., television programs are no less important than the advertisements that accompany them.

Harvey (2002) develops the political-economic concept of "monopoly rent" in relation to cultural production in a way that also seems useful for theorizing consciousness production. He defines monopoly rent as profit produced by the exchange of exclusively controlled private property (94). It is capital accumulation without wage labour. To the extent media companies have exclusive control over audience labour-power as their private property, as Smythe (1977; 1978; 2006/1981) theorizes, they can extract monopoly rent from advertisers who need access to that labour commodity (a fact also noticed by Jhally and Livant (1986, 125) and Caraway (2011, 701-702)). To the extent media companies have exclusive control over culture as their private (intellectual) property, they can also choose to extract monopoly rent from audience members who need access to that cultural commodity (e.g. cable television). To the extent that advertisers purchase specific audience labour-power as private property, they can extract monopoly rent from non-media companies who need access to those specific audiences. But how does the production of culture and consciousness become a human capacity that can be sold as commodified labour-power in the first place? A historical process stands to be revealed, something Smythe (1977, 16-20) realized in his initial critique of Marxist media theory, which he concluded with a brief history of the relationship of newspapers and advertising. Harvey (2003) also offers a concept useful in revealing the historical process of capitalist culture and consciousness production: "accumulation by dispossession." In fact, he makes explicit mention of such a process in relation to cultural production (147-148). The accumulation of capital (the accumulation of social power as defined within a capitalist system of production) does not only occur through wage labour processes and market exchanges, but also through dispossession: appropriation, force, and coercion.

Smythe's (1978, 121) description of audience labour as "mind slavery" can thus be seen as a critical conceptualization of the forced, unpaid labour of audiences that results from the appropriation of the means of producing culture and consciousness. While Caraway (2011, 701) is correct about media companies creating profit by extracting rent from advertisers, he is incorrect in claiming audience labour is therefore not productive labour. Audience workers produce their own consciousness, and the media companies' monopoly ownership of the necessary means of production (culture) and technology (communication media) makes that process one of coerced labour. A process of dispossession, or enclosure, of the means of consciousness production is made apparent. A vast amount of historical analysis of that process has already been done (e.g. McChesney 1993; 2004; Schiller 1989; 1992; 2006/1991).

Herbert Schiller's work can be seen as a necessary critical historical complement to a critical political economy of culture and consciousness. His analysis of processes of "cultural imperialism" (Schiller 1992; 2006/1991) is a history of the cultural aspect of the "new imperialism" that Harvey (2003) claims is dependent on accumulation by dispossession. With respect to cultural production, Schiller (2006/1991, 297) labels the result of that cultural dispossession "*transnational corporate cultural domination*." It is a cultural "system of exploitative control of people and resources" (299). As Schiller (1992, 9) notes, the international system of cultural imperialism has its historical origins in the dispossession and monopolization of the means of cultural production nationally: In the United States, multiple processes, including "the seizure of as many sites as possible where people – potential consumers – congregate have produced a commercially saturated national environment. ... Scarcely a cultural space remains, consequently, that is outside the commercial web." Accumulation by dispossession and monopoly power are not only a matter of international processes; they also occur within a nation, as Smythe's (1977) sketch of U.S. advertising history suggests. Schiller (1989) also specifically suggests global capitalist cultural production has implications for *consciousness* production, although the implication is an "ideological" effect rather than an active process of production; the critical political economy of *consciousness*, however, can be developed in connection with the critical political economy and critical history of cultural production. The origin of *capitalist* culture and consciousness production can be seen – like the origin of capitalist agricultural production (Marx 1990; Wood 2002) – in the enclosure of the means of production. It is through such enclosure that media companies produce audience labourers, as Smythe (1977) originally claimed: The means of consciousness production are turned into private property, making "consumers" out of producers. Audience activity is "productive consumption" (Marx 1990, 290), producing consciousness by consuming commodified culture. And, as Harvey (2003) demonstrates, accumulation by dispossession is a continuing process: In the production of culture and consciousness, the Internet represents an instrument for potentially non-capitalist production (Benkler 2006), necessitating continuous efforts at "digital enclosure" (Andrejevic 2007, 1-4; Meinrath, Losey, and Pickard 2011). Dan Schiller (1999; 2007) and Fuchs (2010) have both analysed that historical pro-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cess while further developing the critical political economy of culture by means of a historical materialist dialectical method.

Dan Schiller and Fuchs consider the "audience commodity" within their critical political economies. Both use a dialectical method to theorize the production processes within "digital" and "informational" capitalism (Schiller 1999; Fuchs 2010). Schiller (2007, 152) analyses the historical process by which "the Web was rapidly colonized and transformed into a new sales instrument." He sees in the history of the Internet an effort by capitalists to remove the independence of activity that the Internet seems to grant by enclosing online activities and commodifying those activities as audience labour through advertising (Schiller 1999, 116-123). Fuchs (2010, 191-192) theorizes human activity on the Internet as labour but considers users generating online content as an example of audience labour, failing to distinguish the production of culture from the production of consciousness. Neither Schiller nor Fuchs develops the critical dialectical method to the full extent to which it can be a *materialist* method for a critical political economy: They do not see the production of consciousness as a material, social process distinct from, but directly related to, the production of culture. Audience labour-power is commodified and made productive in a particular production process: the production of consciousness.

Smythe's theory remains a necessary and useful means of producing a critical, revolutionary political economy in which all human activity is seen as material, social activity in a material, social process of production. Smythe uses a historical materialist dialectical method to produce a theory of media audience "consumption" as an act of production. From that he develops the critical concept of the "audience commodity", or the audience labour-power commodity. He also specifically points to the importance of *method* in the development of a political economy that is a critical theory: It is necessary to use a historical materialist dialectical method (Smythe 1978, 126). But Smythe does not, ultimately, escape the "idealist" explanation of media and advertising that he critiqued because he does not move completely beyond "ideological" effects to a critical theory of the active social production of consciousness. Still, Smythe provides a means to develop a critical, revolutionary theory of culture and consciousness by emphasizing "labour," or human activity, as the materialist and historical foundation of a dialectical method of theorizing. The way forward for a political economy of culture and consciousness that is materialist all the way through, that is critical and revolutionary, is to first to go back to Smythe and the historical, materialist, dialectical method, the critical and revolutionary method.

The critical political economy of culture and consciousness produced by the Marxist dialectical method makes clear that the fundamental policy issue is control over the means of producing culture and consciousness. Such a critical political economy makes human activity the focus of understanding social processes and the concern is focused on the effect on humanity of having human activities turned into activities to generate profit for capitalists. *Capitalist* consciousness and cultural production are then not seen as natural. Critical political economy enables us to see what advertising actually is. As Smythe theorizes, it is the production of consciousness turned into a labouring activity for the accumulation of capital. But advertising only exists on top of already commodified culture and consciousness production. It is only because the means of producing consciousness – the cultural commons – have been enclosed that cultural production becomes the commodified activity of the culture industry and consciousness production is forced to draw on that commodified culture. When advertising is understood as a way to profit from the basic, perpetual activity of humans producing there own consciousness, it is easier to understand why there is an incentive to put advertising everywhere possible: Every activity in which people "consume" content is an activity that can be turned into what Smythe calls audience labour. "Decommodification" (Esping-Andersen 1990; Vail 2010) seems to be a practical response. Advertising must be understood as an issue of people's ability to think for themselves without having that activity turned into a way to create profit. Policies of decommodification include expanding the availability of public media and simply decreasing the amount of advertising in culture. With regard to the general issue of consciousness production beyond advertising, however, control over the means of production — culture — is also a policy issue. A cultural commons (Benkler 2003a; 2003b; 2006) is then the ideal for culture as the means of consciousness production. Critical political economy makes clear the necessity of policies to prevent "digital feudalism" (Meinrath, Losey, and Pickard 2011) and "digital enclosure" (Andrejevic 2007; Schiller 2007).

The critical political economy of culture and consciousness is a means to develop critical political economy in general, enabling it to be useful in the creation of a reality that is not capitalist by making it theory that is critical, revolutionary "knowledge of *reality*" (Lukács 1971, 8), of actual history. To achieve that, it is necessary to make explicit the historical specificity of *capitalist* cultural production, the continued existence of non-capitalist cultural production as well as continued efforts

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

to commodify its products or the labour-power of its producers, and the process of consciousness production and its relationship to cultural production. Historical materialist dialectical reasoning is the only way to avoid separating in thought what is in reality related (Calabrese 2004; Peck 2006): The production of culture and consciousness must be understood within the totality of social production, the totality of human existence of which Marx's method is a means of producing knowledge. A Marxist dialectical method is the necessary means to produce a critical political economy of culture and consciousness that is knowledge of the social production of culture and consciousness within the whole dialectical process of human history: humans producing themselves and their society from the means provided by existing society, means which have previously been produced in the same manner. The Marxist dialectical method is a means to unite critical theory with actual human history.

References

Andrejevic, Mark. 2002. The Work of Being Watched: Interactive Media and the Exploitation of Self-Disclosure. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2): 230-248.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2007. *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Benkler, Yochai. 2003a. The Political Economy of Commons. *Upgrade* 4 (3): 6-9.

Benkler, Yochai. 2003b. Freedom in the Commons: Towards a Political Economy of Information. *Duke Law Journal* 52: 1245-1276.

Benkler, Yochai. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Calabrese, Andrew. 2004. Toward a Political Economy of Culture. In *Toward a Political Economy of Culture: Capitalism and Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Andrew Calabrese and Colin Sparks, 1-12. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Caraway, Brett. 2011. Audience Labor in the New Media Environment: A Marxian Revisiting of the Audience Commodity. *Media, Culture & Society* 33 (5): 693-708.

Cohen, Nicole S. 2008. The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook. *Democratic Communiqué* 22 (1): 5-22.

Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1990. De-Commodification in Social Policy. In *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 35-54. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Facebook. 2011. Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.facebook.com/legal/terms?ref=pf

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Information and Communication Technologies and Society: A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. *European Journal of Communication* 24 (1): 69-87.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society* 26 (3): 179-196.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011a. An Alternative View of Privacy on Facebook. *Information* 2: 140-165.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011b. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. London: Routledge.

Garnham, Nicholas. 2006/1986. Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication. In *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 201-229. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Garnham, Nicholas. 2011. The Political Economy of Communication Revisited. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, 41-61. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Harvey, David. 2002. The Art of Rent: Globalization, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture. *Socialist Register* 38: 93-110. Accessed February 26, 2012. http://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5778/2674

Harvey, David. 2003. Accumulation by Dispossession. In *The New Imperialism*, 137-182. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hegel, G. F. W. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2010. User-Generated Content, Free Labour and the Cultural Industries. *ephemera: theory & politics in organization* 10 (3/4): 267-284. Accessed April 30, 2011. http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/10-3/10-3hesmondhalgh.pdf

Horkheimer, Max. 1972. Traditional and Critical Theory. In *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, 188-243. New York: Herder and Herder.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. 2002. The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Israel, Jonathan. 2010. *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jhally, Sut. 1989. The Political Economy of Culture. In *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, edited by Ian H. Augus and Sut Jhally, 65-81. New York: Routledge.

Jhally, Sut and Bill Livant. 1986. Watching as Working: The Valorization of Audience Consciousness. *Journal of Communication* 36 (3): 124-143.

Kant, Immanuel. 2009. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated and Edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. n.d. Immaterial Labour. Accessed M arch 29, 2012. http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm

Lee, Micky. 2011. Google Ads and the Blindspot Debate. *Media, Culture & Society* 33 (3): 433–447.

Lefebvre, Henri. 2009. *Dialectical Materialism*. Translated by John Sturrock. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Livant, Bill. 1979. The Audience Commodity: On the "Blindspot" Debate. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3 (1): 91-106.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Lukács, Georg. 1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1973. The Foundation of Historical Materialism. In *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, 1-48. Translated by Joris de Bres. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1976. On the Problem of the Dialectic. *Telos* 27: 12-39.

Marx, Karl. 1973. *The Poverty of Philosophy*. New York: International Publishers Co., Inc.

Marx, Karl. 1978a. Marx on the History of His Opinions. In *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd Ed), edited by Robert C. Tucker, 3-6. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Marx, Karl. 1978b. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd Ed), edited by Robert C. Tucker, 66-125. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Marx, Karl. 1978c. Theses on Feuerbach. In *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd Ed), edited by Robert C. Tucker, 143-145. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Marx, Karl. 1978d. The German Ideology: Part I. In *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd Ed), edited by Robert C. Tucker, 146-200. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Marx, Karl. 1978e. The Grundrisse. In *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd Ed), edited by Robert C. Tucker, 221-293. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Marx, K. 1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume I*. London: Penguin Books.

McChesney, Robert W. 1993. *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of U.S. Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McChesney, Robert W. 2004. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Meehan, Eileen. 1993. Commodity Audience, Actual Audience: The Blindspot Debate. In *Illuminating the Blindspots: Essays Honoring Dallas W. Smythe*, edited by Janet Wasko, Vincent Mosco, and Manjunath Pendakur, 378-397. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Meehan, Eileen R., Vincent Mosco, and Janet Wasko. 1993. Rethinking Political Economy: Change and Continuity. *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 105-116.

Meinrath, Sascha D., James W. Losey, and Victor W. Pickard. 2011. Digital Feudalism: Enclosures and Erasures from Digital Rights Management to the Digital Divide. *Commlaw Conspectus: Journal of Communications Law and Policy* 19: 423-479.

Mosco, Vincent. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication* (2nd Ed). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Mosco, Vincent. 2011. The Political Economy of Labor. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, 358-380. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Murdock, Graham. 1978. Blindspots about Western Marxism: A Reply to Dallas Smythe. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2 (2): 109-127.

Murdock, Graham and Peter Golding. 1973. For a Political Economy of Mass Communications. *Socialist Register* 10: 205-234. Accessed October 7, 2011. http://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5355/2256

Napoli, Philip M. 2010. Revisiting "Mass Communication" and the "Work" of the Audience in the New Media Environment. *Media, Culture & Society* 32 (3): 505-516.

Peck, Janice. 2006. Why We Shouldn't Be Bored with the Political Economy Versus Cultural Studies Debate. *Cultural Critique* 64: 92-126.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1968. *Search for a Method*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Vintage Books.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1976. *Critique of Dialectical Reason: Volume I: Theory of Practical Ensembles*. Edited by Jonathan Reé. Translated by Alan Sheridan-Smith. London: NLB.

Schiller, Dan. 1996. *Theorizing Communication: A History.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Schiller, Dan. 1999. *Digital Capitalism: Networking the Global Market System.* Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Schiller, Dan. 2007. *How to Think About Information.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Schiller, Herbert. 1989. *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Schiller, Herbert. 1992. *Mass Communications and American Empire* (2nd Ed). Boulder: Westview Press.

Schiller, Herbert. 2006/1991. Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era. In *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 295-310. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Smythe, Dallas. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-27.

Smythe, Dallas. 1978. Rejoinder to Graham Murdock. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2 (2): 120-127.

Smythe, Dallas. 2006/1981. On the Audience Commodity and Its Work. In *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 230-256. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2000. Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy. *Social Text* 63: 33-58.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2009. The Internet as Playground and Factory: Prelude Part III (speech). Accessed March 29, 2012. http://vimeo.com/6882379

Vail, John. 2010. Decommodification and Egalitarian Political Economy. *Politics and Society* 38 (3): 310-346.

Wasko, Janet, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa. 2011. Introduction: The Political Economy of Communications: Core Concerns and Issues. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, 1-10. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1980a. Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory. In *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, 31-49. London: Verso.

Williams, Raymond. 1980b. Means of Communication as Means of Production. In *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, 50-63. London: Verso.

Williams, Raymond. 1982. Means of Production. In *The Sociology of Culture*, 87-118. New York: Schocken Books.

Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2002. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. London: Verso.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

About the Author

Brice Nixon
is a Ph.D. candidate in Communication in the Journalism and Mass Communication program at the University of Colorado Boulder. His dissertation concerns the political economy, history, and cultural policy issues of advertising.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 457-473, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

"Feminism" as Ideology: Sarah Palin's Anti-feminist Feminism and Ideology Critique

Michelle Rodino-Colocino

Penn State, University Park, USA, michelle@psu.edu, http://comm.psu.edu/people/mlr31

Abstract: The point of this essay is threefold: to describe the main tenets of Marx's theory of ideology by critically engaging in the work of Marx and Engels, to flesh out the claim that Sarah Palin's "feminism" works ideologically as Marx and Engels describe, and consequently, to demonstrate that ideology critique is important intellectual work for feminist Marxist scholars. As I suggest in the conclusion, this is work that should inform scholars' political activism.

Keywords: Ideology, Feminism, Postfeminism, Patriarchy, Abortion, Marx, Sarah Palin, Political Campaigns, US Elections

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank editors Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this essay. Thanks also to Dunja Antunovic for her excellent research assistance for this project.

1. Introduction

This special issue of *tripleC* explores the relevance of Karl Marx's works for Critical Media and Communication Studies, in general, and of Marxist concepts for investigating and intervening in struggles involving the production of knowledge and media content, in particular. The issue also attends to the significance of Marx during dangerous "end times" marked by climate crisis (Žižek 2010) and global capital that has grown "more concentrated and predatory than ever" (Eagleton 2011, 7). Capitalism appears to be in crisis, although given past economic and ecological disasters since Marx's day, it would be more accurate to describe such status as ongoing rather than novel in the twenty-first century. However, as Eagleton argues, the sharpening of capital's concentration, in addition to its adaptability and ruthlessness over the past three centuries, make Marxism all the more relevant for its trenchant critique of capitalism. Thus, for Marxists it is the worst of times (material reality is most fraught and life at risk) and therefore, the best of times for doing Marxist-informed critique.

We could say the same for feminism. In the wake of "post-feminism," the "sensibility" in news and entertainment media that recognizes the success of political struggle against sexist oppression only to dismiss it as passé, feminist media scholars find much to study in the endurance and ruthlessness of patriarchy (Gill 2007, McRobbie 2004, Vavrus 2002). Feminist analysis and political struggle, like that informed by Marxism is also precarious work (one hopes), as Eagleton (2011) points out[1]. Marxists hope to witness, if not bring about, an end to their object of study (capitalism), just as the teleology of feminism is patriarchy's downfall[2]. After all, more than two-thirds of the world's poor, illiterate, and refugees are female; women do the bulk of unpaid work at home and in the workforce, and poor and Third World women undertake the "caring work" (nannying, elder care, cleaning, and sex work) that make First World lifestyles possible (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002). In the US, the most industrialized country with the highest income inequality, feminism appears under attack by the prospects of "postfeminist" media and culture and by right-wing female politicians who call themselves "feminist". Thus, in addition to bringing Marxism back, it is time to revive the project of a marxist-feminist partnership, but not necessarily a "marriage", a metaphor that suggests unequal power relations, as Lisa McLauglin (2002) points out and as Heidi Hartmann's (2010) seminal (and recently republished) essay makes clear.

The following analysis contributes to the revival of a healthy feminist Marxism and Marxist feminism by exploring the "feminism" of Sarah Palin. Palin declared herself a "feminist" in 2010 and, using a folksy, populist rhetorical style, articulated anti-feminist arguments and policy. At first glance, Palin's feminism may appear as trivial campaign discourse designed to appeal to right-wing women during the midterm elections. But Palin's brand of feminism shows the "crafty," "resourceful" nature of anti-feminism (and ultimately, of patriarchy) that Eagleton (2011, 8) locates in today's

[1] It is worth noting, however, that Eagleton's mention of feminists appears with little explanation, and thus, reads as a non sequitur in a book otherwise about Marx and Marxism: "If there are still Marxists or feminists around in twenty years' time, it will be a sorry project" (Eagleton 2011, 2).

[2] For Armand Mattelart (1978), critical communication scholars should create conditions that put capitalism into crisis.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

capitalism. As an anti-feminist discourse that revises history to claim authenticity, and therefore, legitimacy against a feminism that is allegedly outdated and wrongheaded, Palin's feminism complements postfeminism's contention that liberal and radical feminism is "so done" (Douglas 2010). Conservative Palinite feminism, in contrast, is part of a larger move of the right-wing anti-choice movement to reclaim feminism as theirs. During the US midterm elections of 2010, at least two prominent Senatorial candidates embraced feminism or were cast as feminists by the anti-choice political action committee, the SBA List (Susan B. Anthony List), which generates revised histories of first-wave feminism to support anti-choice candidates.

In addition to contributing to a fruitful partnership between feminism and Marxism generally, I also want to underscore something quite specific about Sarah Palin's "feminism" that is relevant to the work of critical media and communication scholars: Palinite feminism works ideologically in Marx's sense of the word. I stated as much in a recent analysis of political campaign discourse (Rodino-Colocino forthcoming), where I observed that Marx's conceptualization of ideology captures Palin's brand of feminism because it turns the meaning of feminist politics on its head and benefits elites who possess tremendous political-economic power. This observation is worth developing for several reasons.

First, studies that have applied Marxist ideology critique in communication and media studies have been fruitful. Nicholas Garnham (2000) argues, for example, that theories of the "information society", especially Manuel Castell's careful analysis of it, work "as an ideology" in ways that Marx and Engels describe, "to elicit uncritical assent to whatever dubious proposition is being put forward beneath its protective umbrella" (Garnham 2000, 140). Theories of the "information society," specifically, view "networks" (and primarily, the internet), rather than capitalism as primary organizer and driving force, and consequently, place undue and misplaced emphasis on technologies as resources that need to be "accessed" in order to boost productivity and individual wealth[3]. "Information society" theories, furthermore, exert political and economic power, and like ideology, have material effects. In the U.S., as elsewhere around the world, government agencies and private corporations have funded initiatives to move "information have-nots" to the "right" side of the "digital divide" (Sterne 2000, U.S. Department of Commerce 1995). Without addressing systemic problems, like structural unemployment, however, such efforts help reproduce "that monstrosity, an industrial reserve army", that as Marx explained, was "kept in misery in order to be always at the disposal of capital" (Marx 1867, 314).

Dana Cloud's (1998) *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics – Rhetoric of Therapy* draws on Marx and Engels' conceptualization of ideology to critique "therapeutic discourse" that serves as a source of consolation in the face of downsizing, outsourcing, falling wages. Psychotherapy, since its popularization at the turn of the twentieth century, redirects workers' discontent, revolutionary thought, sentiment, and action inward, to self-improvement, personal responsibility, and adaptation. Such discourse blames individual workers and privatizes a key material, political-economic problem of capitalism: the drive to cut labor costs and boost profits for business owners. By substituting consolation for political and economic compensation, especially in the case of Gloria Steinem's feminist-therapeutic turn, "therapeutic discourse" consequently, "has become a commonplace diversion from political engagement in contemporary American society" (p. xi). Such "diversion" reinforces capitalism and other oppressive systems including patriarchy and white supremacy. Cloud's and Garnham's studies contribute to scholarship in communication and media studies that engage in analysis of Marx's primary texts on ideology (Cloud 2001, Fuchs 2009, 2011; Hall 1985, 1986; Larrain 1982), consider the place of ideology critique in communication and media studies (Dorfman and Mattelart 1991; Garnham 1983; Golding and Murdock 1997; Goldman 1992; Kellner 1989, 1995; Mosco 1994; Murdock 1997; Smythe 1997), and more specifically, that argue that Marxist communication studies have focused too closely on ideology critique, to the exclusion of other moments in commodity production (Garnham 1979; Smythe 1997), comment on the Frankfurt School's ideology critique (Aune 1994, Schatz 2004), and expand on and apply Marx's conceptualization of ideology (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Ewen 1976; Mattelart 1991; Wernick 1991; White 1992; Williamson 1984)[4].

As fruitful as these studies are, however, misinterpretations of Marx's ideology have dampened its application in Critical Media and Communication Studies. Thus, a second reason to closely engage with Marx's and Engels' primary texts on ideology is to correct and revitalize Marxist ideology critique in the field. Stuart Hall's (1986) explanation of ideology, for example, misreads Marx

[3] Information and network technologies may also tap additional surplus value by dividing, deskilling, and speed up work, and, of course, are also products of such labor, sold as commodities.

[4] Key Frankfurt School works the conduct ideology critique analyzed by critical media and communication scholars include Adorno (1997), Adorno and Horkheimer (1994) and Marcuse (1972).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

and Engels' *The German Ideology* (which constitutes just one location in Marx's oeuvre that develops the concept) as arguing for "fixed correspondences" between class position and the ability to produce ideology. Hall mistakes Marx and Engel's brief discussion of "ruling ideas" for a conceptualization of ideology (Hall 1986, 31; also see Hall 1985, 97; and Larrain 1991). On the basis of this misreading, Hall calls for a conceptualization of ideology that allows for "no necessary correspondences" (1985, 94) and, more generally, for a "Marxism without guarantees" (Hall 1986) as the title of this seminal essay suggests.[5] Following this, Hall's reading of ideology informed work in critical media and communication studies (Grossberg 1986; Lewis 1992; Makus 1990). Thus, the concept of ideology needs to be polished and publicized as a tool for critical communication and media studies.

Finally, conducting a close analysis of Marx's "ideology" may suggest that rather than bring such a conceptualization "back," readers may determine that such critique has never quite left. Some scholars have engaged in Marx's ideology critique without recognizing it as such. As Christian Fuchs argues is the case with Dwayne Winseck's analysis of record industry rhetoric, "you are more into ideology critique than you think you are" (Fuchs and Winseck 2011, 262). I suspect that my own research would show that I was similarly "more into ideology critique" than I may have acknowledged. Thus, I hope the following essay will inspire others to overtly embrace ideology critique of media and culture as Marx theorized and practiced.

Marx practiced ideology critique in two ways: intellectually and politically. What I mean by this is that Marx engaged in ideology critique of media, as his philosophical and journalistic writings show. Marx also meant to press criticism into action through practice ("praxis"). As Saul Padover's (1974) translation of Marx's essays on freedom of the press and censorship demonstrate, Marx's investigative journalism on poverty and the Prussian press' censorship of his analyses moved him more radically to the left, from a liberal democrat to a communist (Rothman 1975). For Marx, ideology critique and political activism were deeply interconnected. When Marx famously said, "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx 1983, 158, emphasis in original), he meant to argue for the importance of the interrelationship between critique and political action. As Steve Macek (2006) explains, this aphorism highlights the importance of understanding capitalism, as means to inform political activism, which can also, in turn, inform critique of capitalism. Such insight, put into practice, guards against retreating into idealism thorough ideology critique, which Garnham (1983) cautioned against.

Because Marx's ideology critique promises intellectually and politically fruitful interventions, it is time to revive both the concept and method in Critical Media and Communication Studies. Or, borrowing from the Occupy Wall Street movement, it is time to "occupy ideology". Such occupation requires that we read Marx's (and Marx and Engels') writings that use the term "ideology" in addition to those that do not. A philosopher, historian, and journalist, Marx was a prolific writer. Thus, synthesizing Marx's oeuvre is not easily given to summary in one essay. Nevertheless, the following essay analyzes key texts from Marx's writings to explore his theorization of ideology. The point of this essay is threefold: to describe the main tenets of Marx's theory of ideology by critically engaging in the work of Marx and Engels, to flesh out the claim that Palinite "feminism" works ideologically as Marx and Engels describe, and, consequently, to demonstrate that ideology critique is important intellectual work for feminist Marxist scholars. As I suggest in the conclusion, this is work that should inform scholars' political activism.

2. Marx's Conception of Ideology*

2.1. "Ideology" in Marx's Early Writings

Central to Marx's conceptualization of ideology is the notion of ***distortion***. But it is a specific kind of distortion that serves a particular function. In the early stages of his intellectual development (through 1844), Marx developed the idea of ***inversion*** that formed the foundation for his theory of ideology[6]. In *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* (written in 1843; Marx 1992), Marx borrows from Feuerbach to critique Hegel's theory of the state for taking for its subject an "abstract person" rather than foregrounding "the realization of the real, empirical person" (Marx 1992, 98). Hegel's conceptualization of the state, consequently, "does not proceed [as it should] from the real person

[5] Colin Sparks (1989) explains Hall's debt to Ernesto Laclau's *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (pp. 85-86).

*See italicized, bolded items in Table 1, p. 9.

[6] The following interpretation of Marx's theorization of ideology, developing through three stages of Marx's writings, is indebted to Jorge Larrain's (1991, 1996) analyses.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

to the state, but from the state to the real person" (ibid., 98). As Jorge Larrain (1991) argues, Marx faults Hegel with inverting reality on this point – in conceptualizing the state as an abstraction from which real people (as real subjects) emerge, rather than the other way around. What Marx calls "human activity" (i.e., human history, humans' making history), then, "necessarily appears as the activity and product of something other than itself" (Marx 1992, 98). Representing human activity and real human existence as products of an abstract "Idea," then, leads Hegel to "convert the subjective into the objective and the objective into the subjective with the inevitable result that an *empirical person* is *uncritically* enthroned as the real truth of the Idea" (ibid., 98f). This inversion, Marx argues, stem's from the philosopher's purpose: "For as Hegel's task is not to discover the truth of empirical existence but to discover the empirical existence of the truth…In this way Hegel is able to create the impression of *mystical profundity*" (ibid., 99). Thus, even in this early passage (and throughout the work), we see a budding historical materialism, an argument for "real," "empirical existence" that determines history, from the ground up, as it were, rather than proceeding from the Idea (the abstract) on down.

Hegel errs again, in Marx's view, by also inverting the relationship between civil society and the bourgeois state. According to Marx's reading of Hegel, the bourgeois state is left to overcome its own contradictions (that stem from the clash of private interests that it serves) and determine civil society (Larrain 1991; Marx 1992). In regards to conceptualizing the relationship between the bourgeois state and civil society, Marx argues,

> "Hegel's chief error is that he regards *contradiction in the phenomenal world as unity in its essence, in the Idea*. There is however [sic] a profounder reality involved, namely an *essential contradiction*, e.g., in this case the contradiction in the legislature is itself only the self-contradiction of the political state, and hence of civil society" (Marx 1992, 158).

For Hegel, an abstract idea determined reality, and such a position inverted reality. Another key point here is that because the bourgeois state really is an abstraction, Hegel's inversions sprang from reality not misunderstanding; they were not "mere illusions" or falsehoods (Larrain 1991, 12). To underscore this, Larrain draws readers to Marx's observation that "Hegel should not be blamed for describing the essence of the modern state as it is, but for identifying what is with the *essence of the state*" (Marx 1992, 126-127, emphasis in original)." Marx continues, "That the rational is real is *contradicted* by *the irrational reality* which at every point shows itself to be the opposite of what it asserts, and to assert the opposite of what it is" (ibid., 127). Thus, Hegel's inversion covers up the contradictions of the bourgeois state that serves private interests but is beholden to rival influences. Such a cover up also lends legitimacy to the state by precluding critique of its essence.

Marx (1992) further explains how inversion works in *A Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (written from 1843-1844), which builds on Feuerbach's critique of religion to argue that if in religion, the powers of man appears in an inverse relationship to those of God, it not only reflects reality but also points to deficiencies for which religion serves as compensation. Larrain (1991) points to Marx's argument (borrowing from and then exceeding Feuerbach's) that "Man makes religion, religion does not make man" (Marx 1992, 13; see also Marx 1992, 244). Reading further around this quote, we see that Marx moves immediately from this Feuerbachian formulation to arguing, "Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again." This points to the ***compensatory function*** ideology serves. From here, Marx cautions readers, "But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man,* state, and society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world." The inversions that constitute religion are, in other words, real not imagined; religion reflects the inverted world in which "man, the state, and society" coexist.

Adding, "Religion is the general theory of this world…its universal basis of ***consolation*** and ***justification***," Marx highlights ideology's function as symptomatic of and compensation for an unjust world. Although he quips that religion is "the opium of the people," Marx emphasizes, "*Religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions" (ibid., 244). Religion springs from real suffering, wrought by real contradictions, as Hegel's notion of the state sprang from real inversions that masked actual contradictions. Thus, "the struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion" (ibid., 244). Addressing religious suffering, moreover, requires action in the real world, real action by real people, not mere philosophizing. Extinguishing the illusions people have about their spiritual relationship to the world under Christianity, for example, requires that

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

people change lived conditions. Putting it poetically, "The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to *call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions*" (ibid., 244). For Marx, contra Feuerbach, the truth (alone) will not set people free, but action in the real world, informed by the truth, holds such potential.

2.2. Historical Materialist "Ideology"

Thus, in these early writings Marx previews a theory of ideology that constitutes his historical materialism: humans make ideas and history, and therefore, intervention in the material world brings about changes in that world. Additionally, the material world is, under capitalism, fraught with contradictions that cause suffering and beg remedy through intervention into these contradictions. Although Marxist scholars typically point to *The German Ideology* (written from 1845-1846) as offering a "first formulation of the materialist conception of history" (Larrain 1991, 16), or even to the "outline" of historical materialism "jotted down" in his "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845; Kumar 2006, 79), Marx's earlier criticism of religion (1843-1844) proved a significant starting point for Marx's critique of the real, sensuous world. As Marx put it in *A Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, "The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the *criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*" (Marx 1992, 244). As Larrain (1991) points out, theory, in this text, serves a central and material purpose in history-making and in the proletariat's revolution. Marx contends that "the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy" which can lead to "emancipation [that] will transform the *Germans* into *men* [sic]" (Marx 1992, 256). The point of criticism, even at this early stage in Marx's intellectual development, is liberation in the material world as this metaphor makes clear: "Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower" (ibid., 244).

On this last point and in *The German Ideology* (1996), Marx and Engels criticize the Young Hegelians for positing ideas as "the real chains of men," to which they would "have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness" (Marx and Engels 1996, 41)[7]. The source of oppression, is therefore, not products of consciousness, but products of the real, material world. Thus, ***action*** is required for liberation. But by critiquing mere ideas, the Young Hegelians support the status quo and thus, "are the staunchest conservatives." For by "only fighting against '*phrases'*…to these phrases [the Young Hegelians] are only opposing other phrases" (ibid., 41). No matter how "'world-shattering'" their statements, then, "they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world," and as a result, such intellectual work amounts to "only further embellishments of [the] claim to have furnished…discoveries of universal importance" (ibid., 41). Dana Cloud (2001) alludes to the importance of this passage to underscore the significance of materialist rhetorical critique to "explain the connections between phrases on the one hand and economic interests and systems of oppression and exploitation on the other" (Cloud 2001, 7). Thus, when Marx said, "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to ***change*** it" (Marx 1983, 158), he was elaborating on this argument and calling for action in the material world[8]. In this way, Marx was developing his theory and method of historical materialism that approached history as contingent, human-made.

The German Ideology is also noteworthy for contributing to Marx's historical materialism generally and for its conceptualization of ideology as a "camera obscura" specifically. In an oft-cited passage leading up to this concept, Marx and Engels (1996) discuss the relationship of human beings to material reality, the mode of production (called "productive forces"), relations of production (called "the intercourse") and ideas:

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men [sic], the language of real life…Men [sic] are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. –real, active men [sic], as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse correspond to these… (p. 47).

[7] The Young Hegelians were leftist Prussian intellectuals who followed and responded to Hegel. Marx became a young Young Hegelian while studying philosophy at the University of Berlin in the late 1830s.

[8] Emphasis in original.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Ideas, in other words, are manufactured by people (who engage in "mental production", 47) but are constrained by material conditions. But as Marx and Engels later explain, material reality under capitalism can be a tricky thing; it produces and is produced by contradictions that turn reality upside down. Marx and Engels (1996) preview this argument by suggesting that "If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the ***inversion*** of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process" (Marx and Engels 1996, 47). Thus, like the bourgeois state Hegel describes, ideology inverts reality because reality is indeed inverted. This is a key ingredient of ideology that makes it an especially useful tool for analyzing Palin's feminism and other cultural artifacts that represent an inverted world (Larrain 1996).

It is also worth noting that Marx and Engels (1996) do not argue that ideology springs exclusively from members of the ruling class, as Stuart Hall (borrowing from Laclau) suggests is the case. Although Marx and Engels claim that "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force" (Marx and Engels 1996, 64), they mean to elaborate on the argument that material reality determines ideas, not the other way around. Additionally, here Marx and Engels refer to "ideas," not "ideology," a key point that seems forgotten by arguments like Hall's that interpret Marx's notion of ideology as claiming ruling class origins. That this is not the case should be clear enough by reading a bit further down, where Marx and Engels describe how the division of labor

> manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the **illusion of the class about itself** their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves… (Marx and Engels 1996, 65; emphasis added).

Thus, ideology may be produced by members of the ruling class who are its "**conceptive ideologists**," including politicians like Sarah Palin. Ideological content, furthermore, may emanate from any individual or cultural organ attached to any class or class fraction, as Marx and Engels do not specify a "necessary correspondence" between ideological production and class, as Hall (1985, 1986) argues. Additionally, this passage suggests that ideologists who are ***members of the ruling class create illusions about themselves***. Marx and Engels do not elaborate on what "illusions about themselves" means in practice. Thus, a number of questions arise: do ruling class conceptive ideologists "perfect illusions" about the role of capitalists, as a class in society? Do conceptive ideologists of the ruling class "perfect illusions" about the forms their power should take? The extent of their control over working conditions, pay, civil rights, and public debate (and our media system)? It is important to keep these elements of ideology in mind when analyzing Palin's feminism, as it appears to speak to elites and nonelites, but it may also ***convey illusions that capitalist patriarchs and their representative hold about themselves as a class, illusions that reinforce the synergistic relationship between capitalism and patriarchy***.

2.3. "Ideology" in Marx's Mature Writings

In later works, from *Grundrisse* (written from 1857-1861, published in 1939) through *Capital* (vol. I, 1867; vol. II, 1885, vol. III, 1894), Marx distinguishes between appearances or "phenomenal forms" on the one hand and real relations or "the essence" on the other (Larrain 1991, 31). Under capitalism, these two spheres are contradictory, and yet, constitute material reality. Thus, Marx refines and makes more complex earlier arguments that ideas must be understood as springing from and thus reflecting material reality: **under capitalism, material practices are real and yet can work ideologically**. The **wage**, for example is a real, phenomenal form that compensates workers for their labor, but the wage hides the fact that workers are not paid for all of their labor-time. The wage mystifies "the essence" of profit-making in the capitalist mode of production, the production of surplus value. As Marx explains in *Capital vol. I*, surplus value is the ratio of "surplus labor" to "necessary labor". Surplus labor is the time a worker works for the capitalist beyond the time it takes for her to produce the equivalent of her wage through necessary labor. The more surplus labor, the more surplus value she produces for the capitalist. Surplus value may be increased by extending or intensifying the workday, thereby expanding "absolute surplus value", or by short-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ening the amount of time it takes for workers to produce their subsistence, thus expanding "relative surplus value." Relative surplus value increases as an effect of reducing the amount workers need to produce to cover living expenses or as an effect of devaluing labor power (Marx 1867). None of this is revealed in the wages workers receive or in the prices of commodities. In the chapter in *Capital* on wages, Marx (1867) explains,

> On the surface of bourgeois society the wage of the labourer appears as the price of labour, a certain quantity of money that is paid for a certain quantity of labour. Thus people speak of the value of labour and call its expression in money its necessary or natural price. …In the expression – value of labour, the idea of value is not only completely obliterated, but actually reversed. It is an expression as imaginary as the value of the earth. These imaginary expressions, arise, however, from the relations of production themselves. They are categories for the phenomenal forms of essential relations. That in their appearance things often represent themselves in inverted form is pretty well known in every science except Political Economy.
>
> Let us next see how value (and price) of labour-power, present themselves in this transformed condition as wages.
>
> …As the value of labour is only an irrational expression for the value of labour-power, it follows, of course, that the value of labour must always be less than the value it produces, for the capitalist always makes labour-power work longer than is necessary for the reproduction of its own value… [A] part only of the working day…labour-is paid for, [but it] appears as the value or price of the whole working day of 12 hours, which thus includes... unpaid [labour]. The wage form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour (Marx 1867, 373-375).

The wage's great ideological triumph, then, is to obscure the fact that workers are not paid for all of their work. The notion "wage" rests on a theory of value (the classical political economists' theory of value) that makes an essential inversion regarding "value" as something natural that can be expressed simply by a "price." As Marx argues, "value" has no inherent value and, under capitalist production, is produced by the additional, unpaid labor of workers that wages-for-hours-worked hide. Thus, Marx argues,

> …[T]he money-relation conceals the unrequited labour of the wage labourer. Hence, we may understand the decisive importance of the transformation of value and price of labour-power into the form of wages, or into the value and price of labour itself. This phenomenal form, which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalistic mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists (Marx 1867, 375).

Throughout *Capital, vol. I*, Marx notes how capitalist production works through these phenomenal levels of appearance that appear natural, are "real," and yet hide their inner workings, which bear contradictions. Thus, Marx discusses how "productive power," which workers sell to capitalists, "appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature a productive power that is immanent in capital" (1867, 228). Earlier in his analysis, Marx discusses the transformation and circulation of money as involving "two antithetical phases" wherein money is transformed into a commodity, and another, "the sale", through which the commodity is transformed again into money. "'M-C-M,'" Marx concludes, emphasizing the level of phenomenal appearance that is also constitutive of material reality, "is therefore in reality the general formula of capital as it appears prima facie within the sphere of circulation (ibid., 106). Appearances, puzzles, and mystifications work alongside material reality throughout *Capital,* which sets as one of its tasks as to "solve the riddle presented by money" (ibid., 33).

A useful explanation of ideology under capitalism also appears in *Capital vol. III* (edited by Engels). Without using the word, "ideology," the following discussion of **"competition"** walks readers through the dynamic process of ideology as it works in capitalism through material (in production) and discursive (via conceptions) means that involve **inversions** that are real (i.e., they are phe-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

nomenal) that hide (or mystify) yet positively signify, and that **enable capitalism to work (i.e., benefit the ruling class)**:

> What **competition** does not show, however, is the determination of value, which dominates the movement of production; and the values that lie beneath the prices of production and that determine them in the last instance. Competition, on the other hand, shows: 1) the average profits… 2) the rise and fall of prices of production caused by changes in the level of wages… 3) the fluctuations of market-prices… All these **phenomena seem to contradict the determination of value by labour-time** as much as the nature of surplus value consisting of unpaid surplus-labour. Thus **everything appears reversed in competition**. The final pattern of economic relations as seen on the surface, in their real existence and consequently in the conceptions by which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to understand them, is very much different from, and indeed quite the reverse of, their inner but concealed essential pattern and the conception corresponding to it (Marx 1894, 146, emphasis added).

Perhaps what Marx calls the **"Fetishism of commodities,"** widely known as **commodity fetishism**, best encapsulates his theory of ideology, illustrating a mature historical materialism that critiques real phenomenal forms that obscure deeper (and also real) relations. Without using "ideology," Marx illustrates how commodities work ideologically to **conceal** the labor that produced them (and the "dead labor" they thus constitute); they appear as things that have exchange value and thus, appear as relations between things instead of relations between people (i.e., relations among the many workers from whom capitalists extract surplus value in the process of producing the things that become commodities). The opposite, as Marx shows throughout *Capital*, is true. Commodities are real, they are phenomenal forms, but they hide deeper relations between people that constitute relations of capitalist production, specifically, the exploitation of labor. Treating commodities as having values expressed in the money form (i.e., bearing prices) mystifies the process of producing value and lends a veneer of equality, since prices suggest the trade of equivalent values. Profit appears to emanate from simply making more money than commodities cost, as a simple subtraction of cost-price from selling price, instead of emanating from worker's production of surplus value, which can be calculated by the ratio of surplus to necessary labor. Viewing commodities as things traded for money, again, **turns upside down** the social and contradictory relations between classes. "A commodity" Marx (1867) argues,

> is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour (Marx 1867, 46-47).

Fetishizing, or treating commodities as things, then, **benefits the ruling class** of capitalists by **lending an air of fairness and thus legitimacy** to relations of production. Marx compares **"Fetishism of commodities"** to a form of capitalistic worship and in this way, harks back to his early critique of religion,

> In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the **Fetishism** which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (Marx 1867, 47).

Bourgeois political economists, as Marx calls them, thus, have served as **conceptive ideologists** for capitalists who benefit from mystifying exploitative relations of production, and in this way, erect an economic religion of sorts. Synthesizing elements of ideology from the three phases of Marx's intellectual development, commodity fetishism explains how material practice and language together **distort, invert, conceal, justify, compensate and serve the interests of the ruling class**. If ideology turns reality upside down, additionally, this appearance points to real inversions,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

real contradictions that need righting so that people can "pluck the living flower" and enjoy the sweetness of real liberation.

Distorts an inverted world. Represents capitalist relations of production as inverted, which they are in reality. Thus, there is nothing "false" about ideology. Examples include wages and commodity fetishism.
Conceals political-economic contradictions.
Offers justification for capitalism.
Promises compensation and consolation for oppression under capitalism.
Serves the interests of the ruling class.
Conveys illusions members of ruling class have about themselves.
Ideology critique informs activism against capitalist exploitation and capitalism in general; such activism may inform ideology critique.

Table 1: Elements of Marx's Theory of Ideology

Additionally, Marx and Engels argued that ideology does not spring exclusively from the ruling class, but that generated by ruling class members and their associates may point to illusions they hold about themselves. Finally, for Marx and Engels, conducting ideology critique promises to inform **practices (i.e., actions and activism)** necessary to ending oppression wrought by capitalism. As I discuss below, Sarah Palin's brand of feminism exemplifies Marx's theory of ideology and its critique underscores the need for feminist activism aimed at eradicating the oppressive, synergistic systems of capitalism and patriarchy.

3. Palin's "Feminism" as Marx's Ideology*

In a May 14, 2010 speech at a fundraising breakfast for the pro-life political action committee, Susan B. Anthony List (SBA List), Sarah Palin embraced "feminism." Palin praised the group for "returning the women's movement back to its original roots," which spring from the goals of the "earliest leaders of the women's rights movements, [who] were pro-life…[w]omen like your namesake..and Elizabeth Cady Stanton" who demanded women's suffrage and an end to abortion. In her book *America by Heart*, released in November 2010, Palin elaborates on her connection to Stanton and Anthony, praising "our foremothers in the women's movement [who] fought hard to gain the acceptance of women's talents and capabilities as equal to men's" (Palin 2010a, 140). Stanton and Anthony's embrace of the "laws of nature" and laws that "nature's God entitle them" earned Palin's praise. Palin interprets these words, part of the Declaration of Sentiments written in 1848 following the Seneca Falls convention for women's rights, as proof that "original feminists" "didn't believe that men were oppressors, women were victims, and unborn children merely 'personal choices.' (ibid., 141). "They believed," Palin continues, "that we were children of God, and, as such, we were all – men, women, our littlest sisters in the womb, everyone – entitled to love and respect" (ibid., 141). According to Palin, abortion is unnatural, ungodly, inhumane, and anti-feminist.

Examining how Palin's appropriation of SBA List feminism works ideologically requires that we ground our discussion in an understanding of feminism. Although it is beyond the bounds of this essay to give a full historical account of feminist political movements and debates around feminism's definition, it is helpful to share details relevant to our discussion. First, regarding the "first wave" feminists with whom Palin claims to "feel a connection," it is important to understand that nineteenth-century feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton agitated for women's right to vote because, among other goals, they wanted to stop marital rape. One way of thwarting women's service as "slaves to men's lust" in marriage, as Stanton put in commentary in *The Revolution* in 1868, was to extend suffrage to women as well as rights to education (Beisel and Kay 2004, 512). These goals served each other: stopping marital rape served as a rhetorical exigency that demanded remedy by politically empowering women (by extending suffrage). Stanton and Anthony deemed abortion "infanticide" but did so to highlight the brutal results of men's sexual abuse of women that, in turn, demanded women's political empowerment. Second, they represented one faction within the nineteenth century women's movement in the US, and a radical and controversial one at that, which viewed abortion as the "natural consequence" of husband's raping their

*See italicized, bolded items in Table 2, p. 13-14.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

wives (Beisel and Kay 2004, 513). Like other suffragists of the day, Anthony and Stanton also drew on racist, nativist discourse and racist financiers to organize for women's suffrage.

Our understanding of how Palinite feminism works ideologically also calls for a definition of feminism that can include various moments in its history, a definition that gets at its root as a political movement. As bell hooks (1984) argues, engaging in intellectual and political feminist work requires consensus about feminism's meaning. Hooks' description of feminism as "a movement to end sexist oppression," enables intersectional analyses that take race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and class into account. Rather than hinge on "equality," which begs unproductive (and counterproductive) questions like "equal with whom?", feminism understood as seeking to "end sexist oppression" emphasizes the constructive goal of the movement. The purpose of hooks' "feminism," furthermore, "is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men" (hooks 1984, 26). Additionally, this notion of feminism can be pressed into the radical transformation of society because it challenges systems of domination, namely patriarchy, but it may also contribute to anti-capitalist revolution. Thus, for hooks, "feminism is neither a lifestyle nor a ready-made identity or role one can step into" (ibid., 26). Feminism is best rendered through verbs not adjectives.

Palin's brand of feminism appears as a movement that supports an identity and a proliferation of adjectives. Additionally, looking at the historical record, Palinite feminism works against the goals of first-wave "original feminists," from whom it claims to descend. Palin's vice presidential candidacy in 2008 provided glimpses of the feminism she would embrace during the 2010 midterm elections. One came from "dissident feminist" and anti-feminist Camille Paglia when she noted several days after the Republican's nominating convention that Palin "represented an explosion of a brand new style of muscular American feminism" (Paglia 2008, para. 10). A second appeared in Palin's much maligned 2008 interview with Katie Couric where the candidate answered affirmatively when asked if she considered herself a feminist (Gallagher, 2010).

Sarah Palin's SBA-List speech in May 2010 describes her brand of feminism as one that harks back to the ("muscular") pioneering spirit of American frontierswomen that stood in sharp relief to the feminized, inauthentic feminists of the East Coast. Just over halfway through her 34-minute speech, Palin thanked the organization "for being home to a new conservative feminist movement" that has begotten "an emerging conservative feminist identity" before bemoaning that for "[f]ar too long when people heard the word "feminist" they thought of the faculty lounge at some East Coast woman's college [sic], right?" In contrast to passive academic feminism, Palin's springs from the hardy Western frontier,

> I'd like to remind people of another feminist tradition, kind of a western feminism, it's influenced by the pioneering spirit of our foremothers who went in wagon trains across the wilderness and they settled in homesteads. And these were tough, independent pioneering mothers whose work was as valuable as any man's on the frontier. And it's no surprise that our western states that gave women the vote, the right to vote way before their East coast sisters in a more genteel city, perhaps, got it right. These women, they had dirt under their fingernails, and they could shoot a gun, and push a plow and raise a family all at the same time…These women, our frontier foremothers…loved this country, and they made sacrifices to carve out a living and a family life out of the wilderness. They went where no women had gone before. I kind of feel a connection to that tough, gun-totin' pioneer feminism of women like Annie Oakley and them (Palin 2010b).

Palin, thus, assumed a "tough mother" voice and strong "mother tongue" (Foust 2004; Jetter, Orleck and Taylor 1997; Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles 1996; Rodino 2005, Triece 2012) to conjure images of "tough, gun-totin' pioneer feminism" Palin associates with icons like Annie Oakley. The adjective-heavy language that describes "western," "pioneering," "frontier," "tough," "gun-totin'" feminism contrasts with descriptors for the "East coast," "genteel" feminism that Palin opposes (Palin mispronounced the "g" in "genteel" by giving it a French-sounding "zh" like the "g" in "mirage"). In this way, Palin's is a form of identity feminism that promises **compensation** (i.e., being considered an "authentic feminist") and works against the political goals of ending women's oppression by posing feminism as a static lifestyle and title (brand?) to embrace rather than as a movement that requires activism (i.e., actions and verbs). As hooks explains, even when such lifestyles appear quite radical, for example, in visions of a "counter-culture" that consist of a "woman-centered-world wherein participants have little contact with men" (hooks 1984, 26), such formations involve "diverting energy from feminist movement that aims to change society" (ibid., 26). Additionally, in as much as Palin **congratulates** the SBA List for fostering "a new conservative feminist

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

movement" she does so for its production of an "emerging conservative identity" that harks back to an earlier one shared by women with dirty hands that sowed fields and raised children in the Wild West.

Although they did such undainty work, US frontierswomen were not necessarily suffragists. This was true for Annie Oakley, whom Palin singles out for representing "pioneer feminism" that won voting rights (or at least enjoyed them) before their East coast sisters. Despite her career as showwoman sharpshooter who entertained audiences for four decades and who symbolized the modern, liberated woman, Oakley opposed extending suffrage to women. Pointing to negative outcomes of opening suffrage to all women, Oakley was known for saying, "If only the good women voted" (Kasper 1992, 213). "Little Sure Shot," furthermore, refused to support the suffrage movement because it was unladylike. Additionally, divisions that formed between the radical National Women's Suffrage Association (founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton) that barred men and the American Woman Suffrage Association (founded by Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone) that welcomed them threatened to alienate audiences and, consequently, hurt Oakley's show business (Riley 2002). Added to the misinterpretation of Anthony's and Stanton's reasons for calling abortion "infanticide" and the lack of appreciation for their radical stance (not to mention their radical newspaper *The Revolution*), Palin's embrace of Oakley for representing early feminism and American women's voting rights turns history on its head, as Marx's "ideology" does. Additionally, the **inversion** represented here exists in reality: in the end Palin supports the confluence of capitalist and patriarchal – not feminist – interests.

Perhaps more counterproductive to the feminist movement – and indeed, more dangerous to women than her inversion of history – is that Palin's policies stand to oppress women. In *America by Heart*, Palin discusses how her brand of feminism opposed those of "the left-wing," who, during her 2008 vice presidential run, "didn't know what to make of an Alaskan chick out on the campaign trail talking about the Second Amendment, kids (the more the merrier!), and America's urgent need for greater security through energy independence" (Palin 2010a, 137). Although this seems in some ways, like a casual "throw away" line, one that echoes nearly verbatim an aside in her SBA-List speech, it alludes to policy positions that include loosening restrictions on gun ownership and opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; positions that most women oppose (Public Takes Conservative 2009; Saad 2009; Walsh 2008). Palin also opposes material support of poor households through state subsidy and instead supports the Earned Income Tax Credit that reduces tax burdens on low-income households, a position that threatens US single-mother headed households, 42% of which survive below the poverty line, a rate that is more than three times that of the general population (Single Mother Poverty 2011).[9] Thus, Palin's brand of feminism serves to **justify** policies that, rather than end women's oppression, **marginalize women's political voice and erode their financial wellbeing**.

Most anti-feminist of Palin's policy positions, however, is her stance on abortion. Even in cases of rape and incest Palin opposes abortion (Goldman 2008)[10]. Although she alludes to God and her Christian religious philosophy in defense of the right of women to enjoy equality with men (although she also acknowledges differences between men and women), Palin articulates her position on abortion as exemplifying "new," true feminism:

> Together the pro-woman, pro-life sisterhood is telling the young women of America that they are capable of handling an unintended pregnancy and still pursue a career and an education. Strangely, many feminists seem to want to tell these young women that they're *not* capable, that you *can't* give your child life and still pursue your dreams. The message is: 'Women, you are not strong enough or smart enough to do both. You are not capable.'
>
> The *new* feminism is telling women they are capable and strong. And if keeping a child isn't possible, adoption is a beautiful choice. It's about empowering women to make *real choices*, not forcing them to accept false ones. It's about compassion and letting these scared young women know that there [is help] for them to raise their children in those less-than-ideal circumstances (Palin 2010a, 153, emphasis in original).

After this explanation, Palin shares her own experiences with "less-than-ideal circumstances": learning of her son Trig's Down's syndrome during her pregnancy and the momentary temptation to consider abortion. "God will never give me something I can't handle", Palin told herself. "Less-than-ideal" circumstances also include teen pregnancies like the one her teenaged daughter Bristol experienced. Bristol's decision, despite her youth and unwed status, to bear the child was "[n]ot an

[9] See also: http://www.issues2000.org/Sarah_Palin.htm
[10] Palin supports abortion only when pregnancy endangers the mother's life.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

easy road, but the right road" (Palin 2010a, 155). Palin omits discussion of rape and incest, however. In doing so, Palin lets the phraseology "less-than-ideal circumstances euphmenize bearing children as a result of such tragedies. Restricting abortion in cases of rape and incest, of course, limits women's choices, and therefore, disempowers women. Palinite feminism **promises compensation and consolation** for supporting policy positions that would further oppress women.

This stance also **turns upside down** Anthony's and Stanton's arguments for women's suffrage, particularly men's sexual abuse of women, which, as a "natural consequence," drove women to abort babies. Recall that the goal of Anthony's and Stanton's feminism was not to criminalize abortion, but to highlight the consequences of men's sexual abuse of women to mobilize support for women's voting rights. When Palin argues that Anthony and Stanton advocated for unborn children and women because the rights of both were connected, she also neglects the primacy of women's sexual exploitation in Anthony's and Stanton's feminism,

> Founders of the American women's movement such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not believe abortion was good for women. Quite the contrary, they saw the rights of the unborn child as fundamentally linked to the rights of women (Palin 2010a, 156).

Palin's version of SBA-List feminism **distorts** suffragists' use of abortion as a rhetorical exigency meant to highlight women's sexual oppression not to support legal restrictions on abortion. Anthony and Stanton intended for women to have more not less control over their bodies and hoped to secure such control by expanding women's political power.

Palin also sidesteps the racism, classism, and covert and overt links to eugenics that underlay their and other American suffragists' opposition to abortion. The historical record shows that Anthony and Stanton concurred with postbellum physicians' stated goal of preserving white middle class women's fertility in the face of immigration and loosened restrictions on citizenship. And, although Stanton and Anthony did not lobby for the criminalization of abortion for white women, they articulated fears of falling Anglo-Saxon power when they likened abortion to infanticide. As Stanton argued in *The Revolution* in 1868:

> The murder of children, either before or after birth, has become so frightfully prevalent that physicians…have declared that were it not for immigration the white population of the United States would actually fall off! (Beisel and Kay 2004, 512).

Stanton's position represents the "positive eugenics" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that encouraged wealthy white women to procreate and discouraged poor, racial minority and newly immigrated women to seek birth control and abortion. Although Palin singles out Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger as the "[o]ne great exception to the culture of life promoted by early feminists" (Palin 2010a, 157). Other first wave feminist "exceptions" include Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Victoria Woodhull, who advocated prevention of the "unfit" from bearing children in ways that suggested control over women's bodies, and fertility more specifically, by government (Carpenter 2010; Perry 2005). Woodhull, who cautioned against breeding "imbeciles", furthermore, held a position quite contrary to Palin's championing of "life" in "less-than-ideal circumstances", a position that informed Palin's "decision" to bear her youngest child. Thus, in some ways, first wave feminists' advocacy of birth control for undesireables runs counter to both Palin's version of feminism and to the very premise of feminism as a movement to free women from sexist oppression. **Palin's feminism distorts an already inverted feminism**, just as capitalist ideology distorts an already inverted economy.

The racism mobilized in eugenicist arguments against abortion for whites ("positive eugenics") and for abortion for poor southern European and Asian women ("negative eugenics) also traded on the "wages of whiteness" (Roediger 2007), the notion that whiteness, more specifically, Northern Europeanness, conferred cultural authority that compensated for various forms of political-economic power. Historians David Roedgier (2007) and Alexander Saxton (1971) have demonstrated that to unite white workers even socialist labor organizers drew on fears that Chinese workers would steal whites' jobs. When considered together with her regressive stance on immigration, including support of Arizona's "papers please" law (SB 1070) that required individuals who "look" like immigrants to carry immigration documents (Condon 2010; Palin 2010a), Sarah Palin's feminism **updates wages of whiteness for today's conservative women**.

Palinite feminism also **serves the interests of the ruling class** by supporting patriarchal capitalism. By opposing direct subsidies to poor families and supporting restrictions on abortion, Palin's

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

policies and their defense through her "feminist" discourse support the availability of poor American women as sources of cheap labor desperate to work any job. In this way, Palin's policies and rhetoric serve to maintain the "reserve army of labor" Marx has described as essential to the production of surplus value (Marx 1847, 1867), and thus to the very reproduction of capitalism. Such policies also support patriarchy. Unable to find sustenance through state support, poor women would remain eager to work, or, perhaps marry a man, since men out earn women and, reflecting global divisions of poverty, two-thirds of American adults living in poverty are women. At least twice as likely to live in poor households than white women, Latinas and African American women may feel even more pressure to work than whites (Kendall 2010). By opposing choice, Palin's "feminism" also promotes patriarchy by denying women reproductive rights that men enjoy without question (and as one recently proposed bill underscores, Gumbrect 2012), and may make them even more vulnerable economically. Thus, Palinite feminism underwrites policies that support what Marx (1867) called the "dull compulsion of the economic", that under capitalism, "completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist." Since Palin's policies and rhetoric subjectify women workers (including unemployed and underemployed women), her "feminism" reinforces sexist oppression.

Additionally, **Palin's feminism supports candidates funded by capitalist patriarch brothers Charles and David Koch**, owners and executives of the energy exploration and consumer product conglomerate Koch Industries. The fourth and fifth richest people in the world (Kroll and Dolan, 2011), the Kochs have developed synergistic relationships with Palin and 2010's neoconservative Senatorial and Congressional candidates who oppose choice. In 2010 the brothers contributed $128,000 to the speaker's bureau employed by Sarah Palin and $1.9 million to the Tea Party Express that supported neoconservative, anti-choice "mama grizzly" candidates Angle, Bachmann and O'Donnell in 2010 (Good 2010, Loder and Evans 2011, Mayer 2010, Vogel 2011). Thus, despite rallying behind women with "dirt under their fingernails", Palin's "feminism" represents the policy objectives of wealthy patriarchs. Palinite feminism, then, offers insights into the **illusions capitalist-patriarchs have about themselves as a class** and, more specifically, illustrates the work of **Sarah Palin as a "conceptive ideologist"** for capitalists, patriarchs, and the synergies between them.

Elements of Marx's theory of ideology	Palinite feminism as Marx's theory of ideology
Distorts an inverted world. Represents capitalist relations of production as inverted, which they are in reality. Thus, there is nothing "false" about ideology. Examples include wages, competition, and commodity fetishism.	Palinite feminism (PF) distorts first wave feminism by turning its critique of abortion upside down; PF also obscures the inversion of first wave feminist eugenicists who embraced birth control of those deemed "unfit" racially, economically, and mentally. PF distorts Annie Oakley's position on women's voting rights: Oakley opposed extending suffrage to all women.
Conceals political-economic contradictions.	PF conceals contradictions between feminism as a movement against sexist oppression and capitalism that draws on patriarchal relations for survival.
Offers justification for capitalism.	PF offers a justification for sexist oppression of women (i.e., denying women reproductive rights on the basis of its alleged link to "authentic feminism"); offers justification for policies unpopular with women and that stand to erode women's financial wellbeing.
Promises compensation and consolation for oppression under capitalism.	Claiming lineage from "authentic feminism", PF promises compensation and consolation for women's oppression under patriarchy and capitalism (i.e., accepting restrictions on abortion even in cases of rape and incest; supporting policies that ignore women's preferences and threaten their financial wellbeing); promises an updated "wages of whiteness" for today's conservative women.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Elements of Marx's theory of ideology (continued)	**Palinite feminism as Marx's theory of ideology (continued)**
Serves the interests of the ruling class.	PF supports policies that maintain the "reserve army of labor" that capitalism and patriarchy need to survive (i.e., women willing to work for lower wages, in lower-waged fields then men and additionally, make marriage more and divorce less economically attractive for women). Palin's campaign and the campaigns of her "mama grizzlies" were heavily funded by capitalist patriarchs.
Ruling class' "conceptive ideologists" produce ideology that conveys illusions members of ruling class have about themselves.	PF points to illusions that "conceptive ideologists" Palin and her supporters (SBA-List organizers and wealthy patrons like the Koch brothers) have about their role in women's political history; PF is not a grassroots philosophy.
Ideology critique informs activism against capitalism and activism against capitalist exploitation, which may inform ideology critique.	Critique of Palinite feminism can inform feminist activism aimed at ending sexist oppression, which may inform critique of "feminism" as ideology

Table 2: Comparison of Marx's Theory of Ideology with Palinite "Feminism" as Ideology

4. Conclusion

I have argued in this essay that Sarah Palin's brand of feminism works as ideology in the ways that Marx and Engels defined the concept. Palinite feminism justifies women's domination under capitalism and patriarchy by inverting a reality already inverted by these systems of domination. It offers to conceal and compensate for such domination and serves interests of the ruling class (wealthy capitalist patriarchs) over and above women, women of color, and political economic non-elites, including men. Palin's anti-feminist "feminism" refines illusions that capitalist patriarchs, their representatives, and allies craft about themselves. The "feminism" that Palin represents, after all, is not an "authentic," "original" one, but rather, a rendition distorted (and inverted) by patriarchy. Nor is Palin's feminism evidence of an ever encroaching "postfeminism." Borrowing from Susan Douglas' (2010) comical interpretation of postfeminism, I suggest that Palinite feminism is "good, old-fashioned sexism that reinforces good, old fashioned, grade-A patriarchy" (10). At least one poll suggests that Palin's patriarchal "feminism" resonates more with men than with women (Stan 2010). And it works through a folksy, Alaskan brogue and trademark wink. Palin's feminism is good, old-fashioned patriarchal-capitalist ideology.

Understanding how ideology works can help critical media and communication scholars craft more effective critiques and aim actions at the wellspring of anti-feminist ideology –material reality– so that we do not, as Marx and Engels cautioned in *The German Ideology*, fight "phrases with phrases" (Marx and Engels 1996, 41). Thus, questions this analysis raise include: how can Marxist feminist communication and media scholars intervene in the production of capitalist-patriarchal ideology to frustrate efforts to enact policies under its banner? How can we use such knowledge to bring about reform and radical change that emancipate women and workers?

One insight from this analysis is that ideologues seem to want to rewrite history in ways that sanitize it, that imagine the history of the women's movement as not necessarily racist, or concerned with the reproductive capacity of middle class white women. Perhaps an important intellectual project for Marxist feminist scholars is to revive and publicize this history through public scholarship (intellectual work shared with a nonacademic audience) in addition to academic publications and course offerings. The same should be done for the very history of the confluence of capitalism and patriarchy, as suggested by Heidi Hartmann's (2010) description of contradictions inherent in the longstanding capitalist-patriarchy partnership. The family wage, an offspring and enabler of this union, has been decimated over the past several decades, yet patriarchal ideology seems to be working overtime to reclaim the wages of white masculinity. What other texts, images, and dis-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

courses work in this way? Critical media and communication scholars are well positioned to analyze such dynamics.

Such critique, furthermore, should highlight the social, cultural, and political economic aspects of this history that are ripe for change and perhaps only threatened by a coming together of people oppressed in multiple ways: by race, ethnicity, immigrant status, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. In some ways, the Occupy Wall Street movement is engaging in such work and borrows from feminist consciousness-raising to do so (Rogers 2011). How else can intellectual and political work inform each other? How can critical scholars of communication and media use ideology critique to inform political action? As Marx's aphorism that the "point is to change it" suggests, such critique would also become more trenchant as scholars become activists and embrace activism in scholarship (Cloud 2011; Macek 2006; Rodino-Colocino 2011). Perhaps there are "intellectual weapons" to be found in philosophy, as Marx (1992, 258) suggested in his early writings. In the end, I am calling on scholars to take action not simply to overturn ideology to reveal "the truth." Borrowing from Marx's critique of religion, I am calling on critical scholars of media and communication to take action to overturn "*a condition that requires illusions*" (Marx 1992, 244).

References

Aune, James Arnt. 1994. *Rhetoric & Marxism*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Beisel, Nicola and Tamara Kay. 2004. Abortion, Race, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America. *American Sociological Review* 69: 498-518.

Carpenter, Cari, ed. 2010. *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull: Suffrage, Free Love, and Eugenics*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.

Cloud, Dana. 2011. The Only Conceivable Thing to Do: Reflections of Academics and Activism. In *Activism and Rhetoric: Theories and Contexts for Political Engagement*, edited by Seth Kahn & JongHwa Lee, 11–24. New York: Routledge.

Cloud, Dana. 2001. The Affirmative Masquerade. *American Communication Journal* 4 (3): 1-12.

Cloud, Dana. 1998. *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Condon, Stephanie. 2010. Palin: Obama Doesn't Have the 'Cojones' for Immigration Reform. *CBS News*, August 2. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20012319-503544.html

Dorfman, Ariel and Mattelart, Armand. 1991. *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic,* translated by David Kunzle. New York: International General.

Douglas, Susan. J. 2010. *The Rise of Enlightened Sexism: How Pop Culture Took us from Girl Power to Girls Gone Wild*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Eagleton, Terry. 2011. *Why Marx was Right*. London: Yale University Press.

Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russell Hochschild. 2002. Introduction. In *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, edited by Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, 1-13. New York: Henry Hold and Company, LLC.

Ewen, Stuart. 1976. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Foust, Christina R. 2004. A Return to Feminine Public Virtue: Judge Judy and the Myth of the Tough Mother. *Women's Studies in Communication* 27 (3): 269-293.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Grounding Critical Communication Studies: An Inquiry Into the Communication Theory of Karl Marx. *Journal Of Communication Inquiry* 34 (1): 15-41.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Theoretical Foundations of Critical Media Studies: Reflections on Karl Marx and the Media. *International Journal Of Communication* 3: 369-402.

Fuchs, Christian, and Dwayne Winseck. 2011. Critical Media and Communication Studies Today. A Conversation. *TripleC (Cognition, Communication, Co-Operation): Open Access Journal For A Global Sustainable Information Society* 9 (2): 247-271.

Gallagher, Maggie. 2010. Sarah Palin's Girl Power. *Real Clear Politics*, May 5. Accessed March 17, 2012 http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/05/20/sarah_palins_girl_power_105650.html

Garnham, Nicholas. 2000. Information Society as Theory or Ideology: A Critical Perspective on Technology. Education and Employment in the Information Age. *Information, Communication & Society* 3 (2): 139-152.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1983. Toward a Theory of Cultural Materialism. *Journal of Communication* 33 (3): 314-329.

Garnham, Nicholas. 1979. Contributions to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication. *Media, Culture & Society* 1 (2): 123-146.

Gill, Rosalind. 2007. Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10 (2): 147-166.

Golding, Peter, and Graham Murdoch. 1997. Ideology and the Mass Media: The Question of Determination. In *The Political Economy of the Media Volume I*, edited by Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, 476-506. Brookfield: Edward Elgar Publishing Company.

Goldman, Robert. *Reading Ads Socially*. 1992. New York: Routledge.

Goldman, Russell. 2008. Sarah Palin Explains Abortion Stance, Explains 'bridge to nowhere' Support. *ABC News*, September 12. Accessed April 6, 2012. http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/sarah-palin-defends-abortion-stance-explains-bridge-support/story?id=5787748#.T3dNCxxSupw

Good, Chris. 2010. Sharron Angle Gets a Tea Party Bump. *The Atlantic*, May 14. Accessed April 12, 2012. http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/05/sharron-angle-gets-a-tea-party-bump/56741/

Grossberg, Larry. 1986. History, Politics and Postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies. *Journal of Communication Inquiry,* 10 (2): 61-77.

Gumbrecht, Jamie. 2012. Georgia Democrats propose limits on vasectomies for men. *CNN, February 21*. Accessed April 6, 2012 http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/21/georgia-democrats-to-propose-limitations-on-vasectomies-for-men/

Hall, Stuart. 1985. Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (2): 91-115.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Hall, Stuart. 1986. The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (2): 28-44.
Hartmann, Heidi. 2010. The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union. In *Marx Today: Selected Works and Recent Debates*, edited by John F. Sitton, 201-228. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
Herman, Edward. S., and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* New York: Pantheon Books
hooks, bell. 1984. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press.
Jetter, Alexis, Annelise, Orleck, and Diana, Taylor. 1997. *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
Kasper, Shirl. 1992. *Annie Oakley*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
Kellner, Douglas. 1989. *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
Kellner, Douglas. 1995. *Media Culture. Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern.* New York: Routledge.
Kendell, Diana. 2010. *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*. Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
Kroll, Luisa and Kerry A. Dolan. 2011. World's Billionaires 2011: A Record Year in Numbers, Money and Impact. *Forbes,* March 9. Accessed April 6, 2012. http://www.forbes.com/2011/03/08/world-billionaires-2011-intro.html
Kumar, Deepa. 2006. Media, Culture, and Society: The Relevance of Marx's Dialectical Method. In *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point is to Change it*, edited by Lee Artz, Steve Macek and Dana Cloud, 71-86. New York: Peter Lang.
Laclau, Ernesto. 1977. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. London: Verso.
Larrain, Jorge. 1996. Stuart Hall and the Marxist Concept of Ideology. In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 47-70. New York: Routledge.
Larrain, Jorge. 1991. *Marxism and Ideology*. Vermont: Gregg Revivals.
Larrain, Jorge. 1982. On the Character of Ideology Marx and the Present Debate in Britain. *Theory, Culture & Society* 1 (1): 5-22.
Lewis, Charles. 1992. Making Sense of Common Sense: A Framework for Tracking Hegemony. *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 9 (3): 277-292.
Loder, Asjylyn and David Evans. 2011. Koch Brothers Flout Law Getting Richer with Secret Iran Sales. *Bloomberg*, October 3. Accessed April 12, 2012. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-10-02/koch-brothers-flout-law-getting-richer-with-secret-iran-sales.html/
Macek, Steve. 2006. From the Weapon of Criticism to Criticism by Weapon: Critical Communication Scholarship, Marxism, and Political Activism. In *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point is to Change it*, edited by Lee Artz, Steve Macek and Dana Cloud, 217–242. New York: Peter Lang.
Makus, Anne. 1990. Stuart Hall's Theory of Ideology: A Frame for Rhetorical Criticism. *Western Journal Of Speech Communication* 4 (4): 495-514.
Marx, Karl. 1847. *Wages*. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/12/31.htm
Marx, Karl. 1894. *Capital Vol. III*, edited by Frederick Engels. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/index.htm
Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. I*. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/
Marx, Karl. 1992. *Early Writings*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton. New York: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl. 1983. Theses on Feuerbach. In *The Portable Karl Marx*, edited by Eugene Kamenka, 155-158. New York: Penguin Books.
Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick Engels. 1996. *The German Ideology*, edited by C.J. Arthur. New York: International Publishers.
Mattelart, Armand. 1978. The Nature of Communications Practice in a Dependent Society. *Latin American Perspectives*, 5: 13- 34.
Mattelart, Armand. 1991. *Advertising International: The Privatisation of Public Space*. New York: Routledge.
Mayer, Jane. 2010. Covert Operations: The Billionaire Brothers Who are Waging a War against Obama. *The New Yorker*, August 30. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/30/100830fa_fact_mayer
McLaughlin, Lisa. 2002. Something Old, Something New: Lingering Moments in the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism. In *Sex & Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media*, edited by Eileen R. Meehan and Ellen Riordan, 30-46. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
McRobbie, Angela. 2004. Post-Feminism and Popular Culture. *Feminist Media Studies* 4(3): 255-264.
Mosco, Vincent. 1994. *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
Murdock, Graham. 1997. Blindspots about Western Marxism: A Reply to Dallas Smythe. In *The Political Economy of the Media Volume I*, edited by Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, 465-475. Brookfield: Edward Elgar Publishing Company.
Padover, Saul, K., ed. 1974. *Karl Marx: On Freedom of the Press and Censorship*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
Paglia, Camille. 2008. Fresh blood for the vampire. *Salon*, September 10. Accessed March 17, 2012. http://www.salon.com/2008/09/10/palin_10/
Palin, Sarah. 2010a. *America by Heart: Reflections on Family, Faith, and Flag*. New York: Harper Collins.
Palin, Sarah. 2010b. Sarah Palin Remarks on Pro-Life Agenda. *C-Span Video Library*. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/LifeAg
Perry, Michael. 2005. *Lady Eugenist: Feminist Eugenics in the Speeches and Writings of Victoria Woodhull*. Seattle: Inkling Books.
Parry-Giles, Shawn, J. and Trevor, Parry-Giles. 1996. Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction: A Reassessment of the 'Feminine Style.' *Communication Monographs* 63: 337-353.
Public Takes Conservative Turn on Gun Control, Abortion. 2009. Pew Research Center. Accessed March 31, 2012. http://www.people-press.org/2009/04/30/public-takes-conservative-turn-on-gun-control-abortion/
Riley, Glenda. 2002. *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
Rodino, Michelle. 2005. War Mothering. *Feminist Media Studies* 5 (3): 380-385.
Rodino-Colocino, Michelle. "Man Up," Woman Down: "Mama Grizzlies," "Feminism," and Tree House Politics. *Women & Language* (forthcoming).
Rodino-Colocino, Michelle. 2011. Getting to "not especially strange": Embracing participatory-advocacy communication research for social justice. *International Journal of Communication* 5: 1699-1711. Accessed April 12, 2012. http://www.ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1299/644

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Roediger, David. 2007. *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* New York: Verso.
Rogers, Stephanie. 2011. What Occupy Wall Street Owes to Feminist Consciousness-Raising. *Ms. Magazine Blog*, December 13. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://msmagazine.com/blog/blog/2011/12/13/what-occupy-wall-street-owes-to-feminist-consciousness-raising/
Rothman, Stanley. 1975. Marx the Journalist. *Columbia Journalism Review* July/August: 57-58.
Saad, Lydia. 2009. Before Recent Shootings, Gun-Control Support was Fading. Gallup. Accessed March 31, 2012. http://www.gallup.com/poll/117361/recent-shootings-gun-control-support-fading.aspx
Saxton, Alexander. 1971. *The Indispensible Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Schatz, Thomas. 2004. *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge.
Single Mother Poverty in the United States in 2010. 2011. *Legal Momentum,* September 15, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund. Accessed April 30, 2012. http://www.ncdsv.org/images/LM_SingleMotherPovertyInTheUS-2010_9-15-2011.pdf
Smythe, Dallas. 1997. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. In *The Political Economy of the Media Volume I*, edited by Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, 438-464. Brookfield: Edward Elgar Publishing Company.
Sparks, Colin. 1989. Experience, Ideology, and Articulation: Stuart Hall and the Development of Culture. *Journal Of Communication Inquiry* 13 (2): 79-87.
Stan, Adele, M. 2010. Sarah Palin's Brand of 'Feminism' More Popular with Men than with Women. *AlterNet*. Accessed April 8,2012. http://www.alternet.org/news/148976/sarah_palin%27s_brand_of_%22feminism%22_more_popular_with_men_than_women/
Sterne, Jonathan. 2000. The Computer Race Goes to Class: How Computers in Schools Helped Shape the Racial Topography of the Internet. In *Race in Cyberspace*, edited by Beth Kolko, Lisa Nakamura and Gil B. Rodman, 191–212. New York: Routledge.
Triece, Mary. 2012. Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers: Crafting the "Mother Tongue" in Welfare Rights Activism, 1967-1972. *Communication Studies* 63 (1): 1-17.
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunication and Information Administration. 1995. Falling Through the Net: A Survey of the "Have-Nots" in Rural and Urban America. Accessed April 19, 2012. http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fallingthru.html
Vavrus, Mary. 2002. *Postfeminist News: Political Women in Media Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Vogel, Kenneth P. 2010. Face of the Tea Party is Female. *Politico*, March 26. Accessed April 8, 2012. http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0310/35094.html
Walsh, Bryan. 2008. Palin on the Environment: Far Right. *Time*, September 1. Accessed April 6, 2012. http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1837868,00.html
Wernick, Andrew. 1991. *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
White, Mimi. 1992. Ideological Analysis and Television. In *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled (2nd edition)*, edited by Robert C. Allen, 161-202.
Williamson, Judith. 1978. *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*. New York: Marion Boyars.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2010. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso.

About the Author

Michelle Rodino-Colocino
Michelle Rodino-Colocino is Assistant Professor in Film/Video and Media Studies in the College of Communications and is affiliate faculty in the Department of Women's Studies at Penn State, where she teaches courses on media and culture. Her research explores media, gender, feminism, technology, ideology, labor, and ways to integrate activism into scholarship. Michelle's work has appeared in *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, Critical Studies in Media Communication, Democratic Communiqué, Feminist Media Studies*, *New Media and Society*, *Work Organization, Labour and Globalization* and more.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 474-487, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Systemic Propaganda as Ideology and Productive Exchange

Gerald Sussman

School of Urban Studies and Planning, Portland State University, sussmang@pdx.edu, http://www.pdx.edu/usp/profile/meet-professor-gerald-sussman

Abstract: *Informed by the works of Marx and his progeny (Lukács, Gramsci, Althusser) as well as more recent marxian scholarship, the purpose of this paper is to explore the role of ideology and propaganda in the production and circulation of commodities and in the informalization of the contemporary workplace, particularly in the context of the promotional economy, politics, and culture of the United States. The heightened functions of media and communication technologies mark the pinnacle expression of late capitalism—the production, reproduction and colonization of the sphere of consciousness as a necessary condition for the maintenance of the corporate state as it faces its most profound contradictions in production and governance. The central question is whether the present dialectic is leading to a more liberated commons or to a society of exploited prosumers in what Italian Autonomistas call the "social factory"*

Keywords: *Marxism, Ideology, Propaganda, Prosumer, Labor*

Acknowledgement: The author wishes to express his thanks to Sy Adler and Evguenia Davidova, who read and provided useful critiques on a draft of this paper.

1. Introduction

"The more production comes to rest on exchange value, hence on exchange, the more important do the physical conditions of exchange – the means of communication and transport – become for the costs of circulation. *Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it*" – Karl Marx (1973, italics added)

"We Are All Workers" – Levi's ad

As a living praxis, one of the critical tasks of marxism[1] is to apply its incisive logic to interpreting the current conditions in the labor process and in the modern production of surplus value. Reflecting on the influence of capitalist state power and ideology on popular consciousness and on labor resistance, this essay argues that marxist media studies is a tool not only for understanding communications as an *infrastructure* of capitalist production but also in explaining its increasingly penetrative applications as *systemic propaganda*. Media are centrally important in reproducing the ideological preconditions underpinning state legitimacy at home and abroad and, a fatal contradiction, in deepening the abstraction, alienation, and dehumanization of labor, ultimately destroying the very basis of its legitimacy. The accumulation, coercion, and cultural functions of mainstream media in support of the capitalist mode of production – within what has become a *promotional economy* – have intensified and yet are increasingly transparent, making hegemonic (i.e., ruling class) ideology, the grand narrative behind propaganda, considerably more vulnerable to challenge and disruption. If anything, the internationalization and automation of production enabled through digital technology has only strengthened the marxian approach to understanding the radical changes in capital accumulation and worklife (Dyer-Witheford 1999, 5-6).

In this essay, I look at formal marxist interpretations of *ideology* from four principal sources of that discussion, Marx & Engels, Lukács, Gramsci, and Althusser, and apply their thinking to present day revisionist marxian analyses of *labor* to build on the critical intersection of the two. I argue that

[1] I use the lower case for marxism, marxist, and marxian to assert its assimilation as a worldwide framework of analysis, equivalent to putting capitalism and socialism in lower case.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the neoliberal transformation of the economic system, with particular focus on the United States, from one based on manufacturing employment (now down to below 10 percent from 16.5 percent in 1987 and an even starker decline in its share of GDP: 11 percent in 2010 from 25 percent in the early 1980s) to one built on services, including financial and information services, has altered the political and ideological culture. In this context, promotion and ideology-based propaganda[2] have risen to central *factors of production* – while directly influencing the casualization, informalization, and precarity of labor.

This essay draws in part on the work of the Italian Autonomistas and their "social factory" thesis in which distinctions between formal and informal labor and producer and consumer continue to break down[3]. To this I add the importance and *organic role* of systemic propaganda in reducing the status of citizens to individuated consumers and of citizenship to spectatorship. I start with core ideas regarding base and superstructure to set up the marxian framework and proceed to a general discussion of the uses of propaganda in the contemporary production process, the neoliberal economic context, ideology and class consciousness, and the relationship of ideology and propaganda to the informalization of labor in the social factory.

2. Propaganda and Ideology as Base and Superstructure

In his Preface to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx distinguished the realm of the social relations of production (the base) from that of the ideological (legitimating) institutions (the superstructure) that help to maintain the political order:

In studying such transformations [leading to revolution] it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

That men (sic) would fight it out makes clear that what Marx had in mind about ideology is that while it is dominated by the institutions of capital, it is nonetheless contested terrain over which conflict continuously resurfaces, and not simply a predictable sphere predetermined by virtue of the control of the productive forces.

However, capital is never complacent about the risks associated with ideology. In its relentless and ever-expanding drive toward totalizing power over people and non-human resources and over time and space, late capitalism has mapped out consciousness as its final frontier. This involves a deeper order of production and continuous reproduction of ideology and public persuasion necessitated by the service character of the digital economy and aimed at cultivating passivity, the promotion of desire, and the construction of materialist identities. What do I mean by *propaganda*? To begin with, propaganda refers to organized doctrinal texts communicated throughout the voice, print, and audio/visual media in the service of state and corporate interests (and of aspiring power interests). *Systemic propaganda* means the penetration of promotional activities into almost every sphere of public life: the conduct of domestic politics and foreign affairs, the selling of public policy, the marketing of goods, services, and public and private institutions, the profusion of consumption within the "culture-ideology of consumerism" (Sklair 2001), with social psychological inducements to self-commodification (adoption of the insignia, habits, and discursive practices of the commodity culture) and an informalized "prosumer" labor force. It is also found in the wholesale infomercialization of news and spectacularization of mass media, joined by intensified subterranean and sublimi-

[2] The general distinction I make between promotion and propaganda is that promotional activities are individuated acts on behalf of specific products and policies, whereas propaganda (which incorporates promotion) is undertaken for the broader purpose of constructing ideological hegemony over the whole society. On the distinction between ideology and propaganda, the former is a world view (a way of making sense), while the latter is a set of discursive and symbolic practices derived from a particular form of ideological sense-making.

[3] There is an intensive debate about whether the Automistas are indeed marxists. That debate is beyond the scope of this paper. I wish only to infer that what constitutes labor has changed with the intensification of capitalist relations of production within the digital informational mode of development and the relocation of production from the factory to the social factory.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

nal advertising, the commercialization of public space and public events, and in the promotion of self-promotion (via websites, Facebook, blogs,Twitter, etc.). The range and depth of promotion throughout the cultural and political life of the United States and other countries has led to what a group of critical scholars have termed a "propaganda society" (see Sussman 2011). By *promotion* I mean a lower-level regular employment of advertising, marketing, direct marketing, public relations (PR), and other direct selling initiatives on behalf of the more prosaic objectives of both elites and non-elites and performed by those trained as active promotional and self-promotional agents.

On the question of *ideology*, I first turn to Marx & Engels. In *The German Ideology*, they start with the universal structure of the commodity, which is the material embodiment of the social relations of production reified within capitalist ideology as a relationship not among workers but among things. The reification takes the form of what Marx (1967) referred to as the "commodity fetish", the objectification of the commodity dwelling on the outward appeal of a thing without reference to the intrinsic exploitative conditions of labor and unpaid "externalities" that brought such a thing into existence and the circuit of exchange. Representations of an independent character of commodities, orphaned from their direct producers, are thus made to appear natural. The "superstructure" is a realm of consciousness-molding (ideology), a range of activities produced by institutions (e.g., education, church, media, courts, corporate self-promotion) acting as the legitimating, sometimes oppositional, agents of/against the capitalist "base" (sphere of production) to provide a culture of compliance with (or resistance to) the hegemonic designs and values of the ruling class.

Where does the marxist concept of ideology fit into an explanation of contemporary societal conditions? Marx and Engels clearly understood the power of ideology to indoctrinate the working class and to redirect their attention from the system of exploitation:

> Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking…. generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas (Marx and Engels 1845).

For Marx & Engels (1845), "language is practical consciousness", and we can interpret "language" to cover a broad swath of communication(s), including advertising and marketing, in the reproduction of hegemonic ideology and the materialist realm from which it springs. In the material universe that Marx inhabited, his emphasis was understandably placed on the central importance of communications as an infrastructure of capitalist production inasmuch as communications was confined to servicing the production and circulation of basic necessities of nineteenth century life. The hegemonic power (cf Gramsci) of ideological state apparatuses (cf Althusser) in his era was at an early phase of the emerging consciousness industries (cf Enzensberger). Marx died before the takeoff of the modern advertising agency and the onset of mass marketing that eventually established consumerism as a dominant way of life and as one that supervised a more efficient circuit of production-consumption. The velocity of circulation in the late nineteenth century could not compare to the contemporary speed with which capital, especially finance and other immaterial forms of capital (advertising, fashion, cultural activities, software, data files, works of art, photography, and the like), are moved around the world[4]. "Brand value" is an *immaterial* form of value creation – the socialization of capital – in which consumers identify with the (fetishized) lifestyle ideas associated with the commodity (Arvidsson 2005). As Hardt and Negri (2000, 24) noted: "Biopower…refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself."

Marx generally regarded ideology as a construct of dominant repressive regimes, writing in *The German Ideology* (1845) the familiar epigraph, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the

[4] By 2010, the volume of daily currency trading worldwide reached $4 trillion (Watts 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ruling ideas...," expressing the interests and dominant material relationships of the state, whereas his intellectual progeny have tended to view ideology as a necessary function of *any* state, capitalist, theocratic, or socialist. Indeed, within the Soviet Union, the uses of agitation and propaganda (agitprop) were regarded as means to educate the masses about socialism and to animate and activate them in the pursuit of social rectification. Marx, however, primarily regarded ideology as the means by which the interests and dominant material relationships of the capitalist state and a mythical understanding of capital are naturalized in public consciousness, a theme critically elucidated by Antonio Gramsci.

Marx thus associated "ideology" with the *false consciousness* spread by the ruling class, a superstructural project intended to enjoin the obedience of the working class (the function of legitimation). For that reason, Marx devoted little attention to ideology as an *alternative* form of consciousness that could prepare workers to embrace socialism, though he did describe the moment in the class struggle when the proletariat turn from a class "in itself" (*an sich*) to a class "for itself" (*für sich*) (Marx 1971). For Gramsci, the domination of classes (hegemony)[5] in capitalist societies is more ideological and cultural than physically coercive. The task of working class liberation, he argued, rests with educated radicals, the organic intellectuals (members of the working class who articulate a practical understanding of repression and struggle through active counter-ideology) capable of seeing through the miasma of bourgeois propaganda.

Althusser as well regarded ideology in dialectical terms and treated it as a formative aspect of class identity, though he attributed its power more in structural terms (*infra*). For Althusser, ideology establishes ways of thinking and acting. As he observed:

> the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class "in words" (Althusser 1994, 104).

Althusser argued that under capitalism it is principally the education system that reproduces the culture of compliance; in an earlier era, the Middle Ages, it was the Church. These days the dominant (mainstream) media perhaps exercise even greater hegemony over the minds of working people than do formal educational institutions, a point made by the Frankfurt School theorists, particularly Herbert Marcuse (1964), who regarded media-driven consumerism as a totalitarian ideology for pacifying the working class. As a practice, propaganda relies on ideological understandings to effect its intended results.

In the workplace, ideology operates at each stage of production. Workers must be prepared to lend their power to the production process. They must also internalize the discipline in the workplace needed for its smooth operation. Ideology next assumes a critical function in the circulation of commodities (the role of advertising, marketing, branding, and other promotional activities are critical here). And finally ideology is central to the conversion of commodities at the point of sale where they are transformed into money for sellers and into consumption for buyers (Kjøsen 2010). In the production of digital commodities, the points of production and consumption are nearly coterminous, annihilating space by time and permitting capital to rapidly increase the velocity of circulation and the entire circuit of production-consumption.

Raymond Williams (1973), however, argued that ideology should not be construed as merely instrumentalist or reductionist:

[5] The hegemonic culture is one in which the values of the bourgeoisie become the "common sense"' values of the whole society, where the working class identifies its own interests with that of the bourgeoisie and thereby desist from resistance or rebellion.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> For if ideology were merely some abstract imposed notion, if our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has ever been or is.

Rather, ideology is constructed through interplay between base and superstructure, between culture, including its residues of earlier cultural epochs, and the reflexive practices of cultural, social, and political economic institutions. Capitalist ideological reproduction is achieved not through the repression of dissent as much as its *appropriation* within commodified confines of protest, stripped of spontaneous or revolutionary impulses. Capital takes no prisoners in its assault on all manifestations of cultural resistance[6]. In one of the more explicit consumerist efforts to wipe out memories of revolutionary thought, Macy's logo, a five-pointed red star, 60 years ago would have brought its executives before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Saks Fifth Avenue uses designs that are stylized in the form of Constructivist state-run department store ads in the 1920s Soviet Union (Wilson 2009). Ads for Fortune 500 company Levi Strauss, produced by the Wieden & Kennedy PR firm, sell jeans with such slogans as: "We Are All Workers", "Made Strong for the New Work", and "Everybody's Work is Equally Important". It wasn't a quote from Marx, when an ad called "2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee Manifesto Commercial" (Brian 2010) ran with the slogan, "Things We Make, Make Us", but it sounds as if it were.

Capitalism repeatedly draws on revolutionaries for its self-aggrandizing inspirations, a tribute of sorts to the irrepressible character of radical leaders and working people. But it repackages and commodifies radical movements without any reference to the original sources or contexts. True radical ideas and representations are never patented, but once stolen by capital they are converted to property. Perhaps even sections of the *Communist Manifesto* may one day be copyrighted, with infringement suits directed at anyone who dares to publicly recite its passages—similar to Time Warner's ownership of the ubiquitous happy birthday song.

In the digital informational era, the promotional (circulation) aspects of production take on a higher order of importance, a centrality of discursive and symbolic persuasiveness and general valorizing and non-valorizing social practice, inasmuch as the manufacturing base has been relocated en masse to low wage (third world) industrial zones of the new international division of labor. This leaves Western economies the task of selling and consuming the commodities produced offshore. In the United States, where shopping has long been the most important personal activity outside of work and sleep, circulation has become the most critical aspect of wealth creation – the circulation of that which is affectively produced in the first place (in effect the circulation of circulation) – and within that reality immaterial promotion efforts are key to the maintenance of the capitalist mode of production, the overarching ideological sphere, and the unending waging of class warfare and pursuit of cultural hegemony over workers, wherever they may cluster.

3. Propaganda and the Mode of Production

Where does contemporary commercial ideology fit into Marx's superstructure thesis? In the 19th century, communications came into its own as a means of supporting industrialization, urbanization, and mediatization of the leading industrial cities and states. Marx was among the most prescient observers of the power of communications to speed up the process of commodity production

[6] Among the many examples of such appropriation of dissent are: the fashion of "convict" pants; clothing bearing names like Ideology, Propaganda, and Revolution; Das Kapital and Che Guevara t-shirts; "The Body Shop" capitalizing on the ideology of the environmental movement; Mercedes Benz car ads ripping off the eponymous song title lyrics of Janis Joplin; corporate polluters greenwashing themselves (to which culture jammers like Adbusters retaliate); the PR industry's "astroturfing" and "guerrilla marketing"; corporate tycoons assuming the pose of global philanthropists; Apple Computer marketing its identity as rebellious, even while it brutally exploits its workers in China to the point of inciting active rebellion (Harris 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

and circulation and in the spreading profanity of a capitalist ideology that, as he and Engels put it, "batters down all Chinese walls" (Marx and Engels 1848). For the most part, however, Marx looked at communications, most especially the telegraph, as an instrument serving the production sphere – in contrast to the dominant ideology then and now that construes technological history within traditional hagiographic renderings of Morse, Bell, Edison, and others and a genealogy of their "inventions" (see Sussman 1997, especially chapters 3 and 4.) With the advancement of communications in commerce[7] (the facilitating role of telegraphy in newspapers, newspapers in radio, radio in television, and the like), later marxists such as Gramsci and Lukács took a deeper interest in and appreciation of the ideological functions of communications.

Since the Second World War, the state increasingly has exercised ideological control over the accumulation, coercion, and legitimation processes with the aid of advanced technology and the sweeping presence of (*pace* Althusser) Repressive State Apparatuses and the less blunt instruments of Ideological State Apparatuses. State legitimacy rests in part on its capacity to represent and internalize in the consciousness of its citizens its *raison d'etre* and its policies and manner of administration as natural, just, and in the best interests of the populace. Ideology is stored propaganda (and vice versa), employed toward specific state and commercial objectives and ratified through the general beliefs, values, assumptions, and received ideas that propagate its cultural power. In the sphere of material culture, propaganda is central to the production of commodities, in the manufacture of desire (without use value there is no exchange value), and in the broader ideology of consumption as a way of life (*consumo, ergo sum*).

As Mike Wayne suggests, to update Marx we need not only to consider formal marxist categories of analysis but to review them in light of a changed world that takes into consideration the "increasing importance of culture, communication, the exchange of ideas, feedback systems, data analysis and so forth, in the production process" (2003, 45). In a *promotional economy*, the forces of production are dedicated to circulating domestically- or foreign-made products and requires a system of surveillance and information processing to fuel its steady stream of propaganda. It also involves a systematic violation of norms of privacy of millions of people on whose lives it relies for its data harvesting and valorization – constituting in effect an "identity labor" force. This panoptic power in turn rests on a heightened fetishizing of commodity culture that induces workers and consumers (and intermediary "prosumers" – see *infra*) to submit not just their knowledge but their personal profiles to the labor process and commodity value formation.

In his widely cited discussion of audience as labor, Dallas Smythe (1977, 1981) anticipated a future in which sections of capital would deepen the range of its efforts toward the commodification of consciousness and a closer reliance on the value-producing consumer (*prosumer*). Smythe focused on advertising and the "work" of audiences, which he understood to be a demographic, in the watching of ads. Thus the audience, acting as a "labor force," a deviation from the orthodox marxist view of surplus value creation (what he saw as a "blindspot" in its communication research), is itself treated as a commodity. But what he did not live long enough to witness were the advanced scientific methods by which advertisers watch the watchers. His most important insight was that promotion breaks down the separation between producers and consumers, between work and leisure, and between use value and exchange value. Advertisers pay for audiences' TV and print media watching (or radio listening) time to sell them not only specific commodities but also the habit of consumption, and they are happy to pay for audiences' attention, particularly those audiences with the propensity to consume their products[8].

Corporate ideology reifies and universalizes false consciousness by concealing the exploitative nature of the commodity, as if it were something other than the labor and labor conditions embedded in its materialization, and through identification with possession of those commodities (I am what I own). In this way the object becomes the subject, and the subject becomes the object. In-

[7] Telegraphy was also crucial in the development of financial markets and in consolidating the power of Wall Street over national capital.

[8] To this far-sighted analysis, Jhally and Livant (1986) offered the more nuanced explanation of the co-production of "watching time" by networks that purchase the "watching power" of audiences and sell it to advertisers.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

deed, capitalism could not operate without attending to the molding of what Lukács called a "unified structure of consciousness" amongst the workforce – as producers (engaged in exchange value), as consumers (engaged in use value), and as administrators of the system of production. "Bureaucracy implies the adjustment of one's way of life, mode of work and hence of consciousness to the general socioeconomic premises of the capitalist economy" (Lukács 1971).

The propaganda and promotional functions of the state, particularly when the success of the economy depends on the sales effort, have never been more critical to its survival. Apostles of neoliberal doctrine, particularly in the United States, seek to bring the remainder of nature and independent social life into the circuit of production and consumption through a revised international division of labor, segregating the manual from mental and creative from robotic aspects of work. As U.S. manufacturing industries and agriculture have been shrinking, services have come to represent more than 80 percent of GDP, with information services representing the largest share of value added GDP and 59 percent of the U.S. workforce by 2000 (Apte, Karmarkar and Nath 2007, 2, 4). The promotional activities, including advertising, marketing, public relations, branding, and sales management are crucial to the circulative aspects of production in the U.S. economy, which, with only 4 percent of the world population consumes a quarter of global energy output and a third of the world's paper and plastic; the average American as of 2000 consumed 53 times more than the average Chinese person (Tilford 2000) though that ratio is certainly changing with China's developing consumer economy.

Both the growth and concentration of the U.S. promotional economy is astounding. Just 100 advertisers (of nearly 40,000 firms) represent 41 percent of the country's total advertising expenditures (Wood 2008). Advertising alone was an estimated 2.6 percent of GDP in 2007 or $153.7 billion (TNS Media Intelligence 2007), while worldwide spending on advertising reached close to $500 billion in 2008 (Mullaney 2009). And although advertising momentarily slowed during the start of the recession, 2008–2009, PR has continued to expand. Total U.S. spending on communications in 2008 was estimated at $923.91 billion, a 5.4 percent growth over the previous year (IT Facts 2008). This staggering figure is close to Australia's entire GDP and larger than all but 13 (out of 210) other countries. The infrastructure for propaganda and promotion has never been more permeative.

The promotional culture reaches into all phases of political, economic and social life. The phrase "public space" is fast losing its meaning, as one is confronted by a visual spectrum in American cities that are filled with advertising and commercial logos. High school stadiums bear the imprint of commercial advertising, while soft drink companies compete for school "pouring rights." Street car and bus stops are branded with corporate identities as are professional sports stadia and even theater tickets. Probably as many people watch the Super Bowl for its 30-second ads, each of which in 2012 cost on average $3.5 million, as those interested in the game itself[9]. Personal websites, blogs, and Facebook accounts and e-book readers come with conspicuous commercial advertising. With the help of a compliant Supreme Court, which in 2010 ruled in favor of permitting nearly unlimited spending by "super PACs" (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*), American federal elections are expected to cost over $8 billion in 2012. Most of this spending will end up as 30-second TV political spots, for which political media consultants will collect a 15 percent commission. (For a longer discussion of corporate branding, see Sussman 2011.)

4. Neoliberalism, Ideology, and the Informalization of Living Labor

Traditional propaganda normally was employed in the service of *specific* policy or project outcomes of the state; *systemic propaganda* derives from a generalized and globally integrated strategy of development rooted in neoliberal political economy and supportive technological infrastructure.

[9] The amount of actual ball-in-play time for an average 185-minute televised National Football League game comes to just 11 minutes; the rest is advertising (a third), replays, huddling, and just shots of players standing around. (Biderman 2010). This calculation of TV advertising time doesn't include the visual space covered by corporate logos adorning player uniforms and stadium billboards, fences, green screens, and merchandise.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

One can date the transition to systemic propaganda to the beginning of "deindustrialization,"[10] deregulation, and flexible accumulation, starting in the 1970s. Aided by digital communications technology, boundaries, economic and moral, public and private, that long stood intact to that point began to crumble like the Berlin Wall. With the shift from fordism to a more flexible mode of production, capital is able to capture "larger pools of social and cultural knowledge" (Terranova 2000, 38), which it transforms into commodities and private wealth. Despite the severe crisis of the 1970s, capitalism was anything but finished and was not about to yield to a crisis of confidence, a legitimation crisis – what Jimmy Carter sermonized at the time as a national "malaise". The neoliberal project acquired a political leadership with Reagan and Thatcher that reinvigorated capitalist expansionism. Althusser (1994) argued, however, that the capitalist state does not depend for its vitality on innovations in the technological sphere or on particular individuals but does require a recharging of its ideological channels: "To my knowledge, *no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses" (italics in original, 112).*

Indeed, with its grounding more firmly embedded in services than manufacturing and with greater emphasis on individuated consumption, neoliberalism is marked by increased investments in cultural production and in the proliferation of signs (Goldman 1992) that permeate every sphere of society. The selling of commodities, material and immaterial, is now intrinsic to the corporate capitalist state's mode of economic, political, and cultural (re)production, such that the consumerist life becomes the norm of a corporatist state society, making propagandists of those engaged in this collective effort to convert citizenship to spectatorship. The promotional (capitalist) economy is the most predatory of all forms of industrial economies, as it is designed to colonize not only the bodies of its workers, as in the manufacturing system, but also their consciousness, identity, and personality – as well as the leadership of the state. Well over half of the members of the U.S. Congress become lobbyists, lawyers, or executives of corporations once they formally leave their government posts, normalizing business practice as an extension of government service[11].

In the promotional economy, the consciousness of the workforce is "atomized" for the segmented tasks of commodity production, through which workers become alienated from any sense of their independent productive capacities and further marginalized as remote appendages to machine production. The logic of such development and the resources employed for its implementation, including digital technology and objectified labor, are spread out over time and space. The relatively stable conditions of work that once existed vanish from mainstream public discussion, and the life of uncertainty, instability, and precarity becomes the general social norm. That is to say, within a specific mode of development[12], all life is organized under a regime and discipline of understanding (ideology) and a division of labor assigned to the main tasks of that regime.

The transition from a fordist regime to what Harvey (2007) calls one of "flexible accumulation" necessitated a deeper level of worker discipline that could expand capitalist control over the spatially dispersed and disaggregated workplace. Time-motion methods of managing workers in the manufactory offered lessons for tertiary sector jobs, such that standardized, routinized, regimented, repetitive tasks could be instituted in service practices, in effect creating not a post-industrial as much as a *hyperindustrial* society (Sussman 2011, 11-12). Workers' subjectivity, seized and surveilled as serviceable in the production-consumption circuit, becomes the veritable *property* of capi-

[10] The term "deindustrialization" is somewhat contentious, depending on whether one views economy in national or global terms. If the latter, one can argue from a world systems perspective that manufacturing although spatially decentered remains centralized in terms of control, and that the overseas transnational corporate workforce is constituted as part of a common labor formation with the design, R&D, promotional, and sales workers that are employed in the core countries.

[11] According to the Center for Responsive Politics (2012), of those members of the 111th Congress (2009-2011), 52 percent went to become lobbyists or clients of lobbyists; an additional 5.2 percent worked for political action committees and 22.1 percent of the rest became executives of private organizations.

[12] Manuel Castells (1996) uses the term of "mode of development" to refer to the digital media of production and exchange. He regards the digital informational mode of development as akin to the centralizing force of electricity in the making of the industrial world a century earlier.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tal. Informal identity labor is integrated with formal labor, with the predominant form of work rooted in informational services and the promotional industries.

Fordist (routinized) labor, meanwhile, is effectively expanded through the collapsing and convergence of job descriptions or expectations in which promotional performance is appended to jobs that in the past did not include them, such as the scripted speech of chain-store cashiers ("Did you find everything you were looking for?"), customer relations employees, technical support and other call-center operators, and wait staff who in their transactions with consumers suggest additional purchasing options ("Would you like a drink with that order?" and the like). Similarly, TV sportscasters and radio talk show hosts are now expected to plug products on-air. Promotional behavior under the new work requirements is intended to increase exchange value, thus enabling an intensification of exploitation (the surplus value appropriated and valorized under such ultra-commodified "labor power").

In the neoliberal promotional economy, with the infrastructural support of digital technology, capital has undergone a major restructuring, driven by both organizational and technological opportunities and necessities – and characterized by deregulation, privatization, deterritorialization, cutbacks in government social spending, technological and institutional convergences, union-busting, erosion of the public sphere, manufacturing and service sector outsourcing, and a deepening of consumerist ideology. When not long ago, one could still imagine the separation of the workplace and home life, work and leisure, public and private space, producer and consumer, formal and informal labor, today with corporate capital at the forefront of social and political changes, these and other such dichotomies are converged and subsumed under a corporate aegis. Before entering and after departing the formal workplace, workers routinely submit their identity data, through covert surveillance and institutionalized identity theft, but often through "voluntary" means as well, for the production and marketing of goods and services. In such surplus value-generating opportunities, "prosumers" are employed consciously or unconsciously as free informal labor,[13] undertaking such labor using their own equipment and software (computers, programs, and internet connections). The intensification of labor extraction in a system in which informational aspects of production have become increasingly possible and necessary has led to a changing form and composition of labor in material and immaterial goods production[14].

Creative industries also regularly announce, usually online, the outsourcing of problem-solving activities to amateurs or specialists willing to participate without standard pay, perhaps in hopes of a prize or status of some sort, in finding solutions that profit the company – a system of free or very modestly compensated labor the industry calls "crowdsourcing"[15]. Inasmuch as such work contributes to the creation of exchange value, people at large and outside the formal workplace have come to constitute a major source of informal labor (in the crowdsourcing example via the liberal use of their knowledge for software production). As one study noted, "the co-creation economy is about experimenting with new possibilities for value creation that are based on the expropriation of free cultural, technological, social, and affective labor of the consumer masses" (Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody 2008, 166). The principal form of labor involved in commercial crowdsourcing or surveil-

[13] One form of crowdsourcing is local television stations' use of their websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and special apps for soliciting news tips, photos, video, and feedback from prosumer audiences, in some cases on an exclusive (quasi-contractual) basis. Certain high-end cameras are marketed as "prosumer" quality.

[14] The formal workplace is not by any means the sole locus of value creation. There is in fact a presumption of free labor that now prevails in many spheres of daily life: self-checkout at shopping centers, submission to various kinds of polling and consumer surveys, consumer data profiling created through "cookies" and credit card surveillance, registration for the use of websites, the use of ATM machines instead of tellers, and many other, often inconspicuous, acts that convert consumer behaviors and information into factors of production, further mystifying (fetishizing) the nature of the commodity.

[15] The willingness of workers to supply their free intellectual labor to a private entrepreneur represents the power of reification of commodities disassociated from their social relations of production. Informal labor that contributes aesthetic, social, or affective appeal to commodities or that helps establish their marketable potential is in most instances *free labor*, not wage labor, sometimes offered voluntarily, more often captured by stealth. It demonstrates what Hardt and Negri (2001) have argued about the intensification of capital's internalized direction, though, I would contend, this does not mean that capital has abandoned its spatially aggrandizing ambitions.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

lance is promotional in character, reinforcing the appeal and ideological aspects of the consumerist economy. Businesses want to know how to better design, market, and brand their products and look to audiences for that knowledge.

Such new forms of labor, compelled by speedup in a promotional economy, one in which the space between production and circulation is potentially reduced to zero (Kjøsen 2010, 83), generates a greater reliance on mental over physical labor. This "immaterial labor", writes Tiziana Terranova, a critic from the Autonomista persuasion, "involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as 'work' – in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion" (Terranova 2000, 41), but which are nonetheless part of the "process of valorization" (Lazzarato 1996, 132–133). That is to say, consumers help to produce the value of a commodity, even if only within a narrow range of resources that such labor is able or willing to invest in a given commodity creation[16].

The traditional categorical boundaries between production and consumption have thus begun to wither. In a parallel manner, the distinction between traditional media products and advertising has also begun to disappear in the age of mega-media, the "infomercial", product placement, news plugola (the marketing of parent or affiliated network assets as part of the news agenda; see Higgins and Sussman 2007), and numerous other forms of commercial cross-over that shift the construction of commodities from direct and formal to more indirect and informal sources of production. As one critical technology scholar comments, "the direct exploitation of labour is becoming less important as a source of profit and the private exploitation of social knowledge is becoming more important" (Tessa Morris-Suzuki, cited in Arvidsson 2006, 9). Surveillance is also normalized at the level of popular media culture. The journalist Chris Hedges notes how "'Big Brother' and 'Survivor' glamorize the intrusiveness of the surveillance state" to draft voyeuristic impulses of audiences in the project of self-commodification (Hedges 2009, 39).

In the selling economy, greater importance is given to the circulation of commodities, which makes both its promotion and the larger culture of consumerism (ideology) central to the creation of surplus value. There is a separate sphere of activity, which can be called the production of consumption, involving the various promotional activities (advertising, marketing, public relations, sales management, branding, and the like), which are industries in and of themselves. The mobilization of people as prosumers in the promotional economy leads to what Mario Tronti (see Cleaver 1992) identified as the "social factory" – the production of all by all, a deeper level productive and ideological penetration integrating the social relations of production and consumption. Within the social factory, where capital focuses more of its attention on cultural production, the consumer imagines her/himself to have a communitarian identity through access to the commodity. Raymond Williams (1973), concerned with the prevailing ideology of capitalism, urged that "we should look not for the components of a product but for the conditions of a practice…. the point of departure, in practical and theoretical work, within an active and self-renewing Marxist cultural tradition."

Hyperindustrialization of work routines is typical in retail sales, telemarketing, automobile service, clerical jobs, and other low-wage, non-professional occupations, often organized with precise automated pavlovian signaling systems (e.g., buzzers and flashing lights in fast food restaurant kitchens, predictive dialing technology at call centers) that pace the responsive output of workers. Though there is now a more geographical spread of manual and mental labor, the conveyor belt method of production looks very much the same for the millions of workers tied to checkout counters, call centers, and fast food assembly lines, as it does in the manufactory setting. Even medical

[16] The Autonomistas, including Terranova, Lazzarato, Tronti, and others, are sometimes placed between orthodox marxists and anarchists, though they embrace notions of class in ways that anarchists do not. The principal difference between orthodox and autonomist marxism on the question of class is that the former take a broader view of what and who constitutes a class formation. In the context of a state where factory labor has greatly diminished in scale and where work is increasingly embedded in immaterial forms of production, it would appear appropriate to reconsider class constituency, although the concept of the social relations of production is as valid as ever.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

clinic physicians are paced by the clock and pressured to treat patients as processing units with taylorist regularity.

With new forms of immaterial capital and an informalized labor pool, there are no speed limits to the circulation of immaterial commodities. The reproduced value of commodities in digital format is potentially immense as there are no added production costs associated with each retransmission, hence superexploitation of those who produce but do not own the prototype. Capital in fact must withhold the release of digital commodities in order to prepare for its circulation (advertising, marketing, etc.) (Kjøsen 2010, 83). Once released, however, it is elatively easy for others to reproduce and recirculate items on a shareware basis. File sharing practices is known as "copyright infringement" from the capitalist standpoint, but could just as easily be regarded as redistribution of compensation in kind for the appropriation of labor value that went into the production of commodities – better than access to software would be broader, more beneficial social benefits, such as single payer national healthcare, free higher education, and the guarantee of decent housing.

5. All the King's Horses and All the King's Men Couldn't Put Humpty Together Again": The Coming Collapse of State Legitimacy?

Under neoliberalism and the digital communications system, the consumer has become far more integrated not only as an end user of production (consumption) but as a *factor* of production – the *prosumer*. In the promotional economy in which surveillance and communications in general are now vital aspects in perfecting the circuit of production, from the sweatshops in China to the internetshops in America to final consumption, there are no longer well-defined boundaries to what constitutes labor (those who create exchange value). Far from undermining the marxist theory of value and the related precepts of exploitation and alienation, the idea of promotional labor places marxism at the center of understanding the new global economy. The biggest change in the past 35 years or so is the rise of the promotional economy in which the central economic (and cultural, political, and ideological) activity is selling, whether it be tangible commodities, largely produced offshore, or public policies.

With the system of production so entwined in the system of consumption, the ensemble of the "social factory," the present assignment of ownership of production knowledge to the capitalist class is fundamentally disputable. Value creation in the promotional economy makes conspicuous the fact that commodity production derives from socially constructed knowledge (Virno 2001) – what Marx (1973) called the "general intellect." Capital relies on the general intellect to increase productivity and sustain its rate of profit. In the social factory, the scope of the general intellect on which capital can directly draw is vastly enlarged through the means of digital contact, surveillance, knowledge expropriation, and the promotion of desire. But, as Negri (2006), Žižek (2009), and others have argued, capitalism has *privatized* the general intellect, the result of which is an "increase of surplus labor time [that] *prevents* more and more people from enjoying the free time of creative learning and experimentation that would lead the general intellect to flourish" (Smith n.d., 5; italics in original).

The increasing use of informalized labor in the form of surveys, polling, crowdsourcing, focus groups, web use, media subscription, credit card surveillance, cookies, "cool-hunting," and myriad other ways of employing identity labor of consumers as value producers (prosumerism) makes virtually everyone a bonafide shareholder in the production of goods and services. That is, the capitalist system has converted the society as a whole into a production "factory" and into what has become a system of socially organized consumption (Lazzarato 1996), with labor functions extended throughout the matrix of personal, social, and work life. The system of patents, trademarks, and copyrights, always an ideological and legal as much as a property instrument for the control of production and regulation of society by the capitalist class, has become an anachronistic residue of a belief system that has no relationship to how production is actually constituted.

In a production system conceived as a reification of the "general intellect", the appropriate form of ownership would be collective. Of course the name given to a system in which ownership is as-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

signed to the whole society is socialism. Is socialism possible? In the promotional economy, it is all the more transparent that the working class as a whole[17] produces the wealth of nations, ergo there has never been a more compelling justification for workers to claim political power on that basis. The creative designs of communications to manage capitalist society can also be employed and are being employed to undermine it (Wikileaks exposés, growing distrust of the mainstream media, media "piracy" and hacking, anti-advertising movements, growing uses of alternative media, Occupy social networking, and other on-the-ground and mediated forms of resistance). There are clear signs of rupture in US domestic ruling ideology, but physical conditions will have to deteriorate before a counter-ideology, based on collectivist thinking can take shape and produce propaganda in line with radically different notions of social progress, teleology, and the role of the individual.

What forms of opposition and resistance are presently feasible, and how can they rejuvenate a sense of class struggle? In a digital informational environment, mental labor is indeed difficult to keep proprietary, and there appears to be an unrelenting grassroots effort to maintain the principal information sharing and social networking system, the Internet, as a system of free exchange. No democratic state worthy of the name can exist without a vibrant communication system that provides citizens with the means to make informed and rational political and personal choices. There cannot be a complete negation of all that has evolved under capitalism, but there can be a reappropriation of the promotional means of production toward the cultivation of a harmonious work life, with far less emphasis on consumption and far more value placed on planetary coexistence with all life forms. It is important for social activists to fight for an open Internet system and at the same time for recovery of the airwaves. The Occupy Movement needs to include local and network TV channels as targets for occupation, because they still represent the principal sources of "news", information, propaganda, and ideology for most Americans. Their constant stream of misinformation, ideological distortion, and destructive consumerism and imperialist jingoism has been lethal to the prospects of a more democratic society.

An active and enlightened source of free exchange on the web, based on principles of inclusiveness and social justice, can contribute to a wakening and reawakening of the spirit of the commons and to deep challenges by the working class as a whole (the social factory) to state institutional repression and the fatuousness of its class-centered rationalizations. This level *and consciousness* of collective agency in turn can form the alternative of cooperative labor and the radical deconstruction of and reflexivity of refusal toward corporatism and the erosion of its hegemonic ideology and propaganda, the formation of socialist political institutions, and the gradual elimination of the many forms of exploitation and alienation and class reproduction itself. When the conditions are right, and with the aid of digital media designed for other promotional purposes, a *tsunami* of revolt, like that witnessed in the "Arab Spring", will spread across the shores of the United States and its corporate capitalist world system allies, cancelling the grand imperialist theft of worker knowledge and creativity and substituting collectivization for privatization in the common interest of citizenship and human survival.

References

Althusser, Louis 1994. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation). In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, 100-140. London: Verso.

[17] Hardt and Negri (2000) choose to refer to the class of non-capitalists as the "multitude", a somewhat vague description of the "99 percent"" Even if Marx's term "petty bourgeoisie" (those with capitalist administrative functions, such as lawyers, accountants, corporate scientists and engineers, and others) is out of fashion, his concept of class stratification is more substantial than the undifferentiated notion of "multitude." However, both Hardt and Negri and Marx use terminology, whether multitude or proletariat, that tend to wash over cultural and practical distinctions based on race, ethnicity, and gender.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Apte, Uday M., Uday S. Karmarkar, and Hiranya K. Nath. 2007. Information Services in the US Economy: Value, Jobs and Management Implications. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/ssme/references/Karmarkar_ref2_cambridgessme07.pdf

Arvidsson, Adam 2005. Brands: A Critical Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2): 235-258.

Biderman, David. 2010. 11 Minutes of Action. *Wall Street Journal*, January 15. Online edition.

Brabham, Daren. 2011. The Myth of Amateur Crowds. Flow TV Website. January 15. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://flowtv.org/2011/01/the-myth-of-amateur-crowds/

Brian. 2010. In Want of Things We Can Touch. Anidea website. Accessed February 3, 2012. http://anidea.com/strategy/in-want-of-things-we-can-touch/

Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Center for Responsive Politics. 2012. Revolving Door: Former Members of the 111th Congress. Open Secrets.Org website. Accessed March 1, 2012. http://www.opensecrets.org/revolving/departing.php?cong=111

Cleaver, Harry. 1992. The Inversion of Class Perspective in Marxian Theory: From Valorisation to Self-Valorisation. In *Essays on Open Marxism: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 2, edited by Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn and Kosmos Psychopedis, 106-144. London: Pluto Press.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Fleming, Peter and Andrew Sturdy. 2011. "Being Yourself" in the Electronic Sweatshop: New Forms of Normative Control. *Human Relations* 64 (2): 177-200.

Goldman, Robert. 1992. *Reading Ads Socially*. New York: Routledge.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harris, Paul. 2012. Apple Hit by Boycott Call over Worker Abuses in China. *The Observer*, January 28. Online edition.

Harvey, David. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hedges, Chris. 2009. *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*. New York: Nation Books.

Higgins, Carey L. and Gerald Sussman. 2007. Plugola: News for Profit, Entertainment, and Network Consolidation. In *Urban Communication: Production, Text, Context*, edited by Timothy A. Gibson and Mark Lowes, 141-162. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

IT Facts. 2008. Telecom Spending to Reach $923.91 Bln in 2008. Accessed February 29, 2012. http://www.itfacts.biz/telecom-spending-to-reach-92391-bln-in-2008/11091

Jhally, Sut and Bill Livant. 1986. Watching as Working: The Valorization of Audience Consciousness. *Journal of Communication* 36 (3):124-143.

Jubas, Kaela. 2007. Conceptual Con/Fusion in Democratic Societies: Understandings and Limitations of Consumer-Citizenship. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 7 (2): 231-254.

Kjøsen, Atle Mikkola. 2010. An Accident of Value: A Marxist-Virilian Analysis of Digital Piracy. Master's thesis, University of Western Ontario. Accessed January 14, 2012. http://uwo.academia.edu/kjosen/Papers/387636/An_Accident_of_Value_A_Marxist-Virilian_Analysis_of_Digital_Piracy

Lazzarato, Maurizio. 1996. Immaterial Labor. In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 132-146. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lukács, Georg. 1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marx, Karl. 1859. Preface: *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*. Accessed December 18, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm

Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital. Vol. 1*. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1971. *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1973, *The Grundrisse*. Trans. M. Nicolaus. New York: Penguin. Accessed December 12, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch10.htm

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1845. *The German Ideology*. Accessed December 14, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1848. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Accessed December 13, 2011 http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm

McInerny, Vivian. 2003. Presenting a New Ideology. The Clothing Line aims for Style and Quality Without Designer Prices. *The Oregonian*, April 29, C-1.

Mullaney, Tim 2009. Global Ad Spending to Fall in 2009, Forecasters Say. Bloomberg News. Accessed January 13, 2012. http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aZ2ysU0uRIYo&refer=home

Negri, Antonio. 2006. *Goodbye Mr. Socialism: In Conversation with Raf Valvola Scelsi*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Sklair, Leslie. 2001. *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Malden, MA: Blackwell

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Smith, Tony (n.d.). The 'General Intellect' in the *Grundrisse* and Beyond. Accessed March 23, 2012. http://www.public.iastate.edu/~tonys/10%20The%20General%20Intellect.pdf

Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1–27.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1981. On the Audience Commodity and Its Work. In *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada*, 22-51. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Sussman, Gerald. 1997. *Communications, Technology, and Politics in the Information Age*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sussman, Gerald. 2011. Introduction: The Propaganda Society. In *The Propaganda Society: Promotional Culture and Politics in Global Context,* edited by Gerald Sussman, 1-21. New York: Peter Lang.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2000. Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy. *Social Text* 18 (2): 33-58.

Tilford, Dave. 2000. Why Consumption Matters. Sierra Club. Accessed February 12, 2012. http://www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/tilford.asp

Virno, Paolo. 2001. General Intellect. Trans. Arianna Bove. Accessed January 18, 2012. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htm

Watts, William L. Daily Foreign-Exchange Turnover Hits $4 Trillion. *Market Watch*. Accessed January 22, 2012. http://www.marketwatch.com/story/daily-currency-trading-turnover-hits-4-trillion-2010-09-01

Wayne, Mike. 2003. *Marxism and Media Studies.* London: Pluto Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1973. Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory. Accessed December 15, 2011. http://www.rlwclarke.net/courses/LITS3303/2008-2009/04CWilliamsBaseandSuperstructureinMarxistCulturalTheory.pdf

Wilson, Eric. 2009. Consumers of the World Unite. *New York Times*. Online edition, January 7.

Wood, Deborah J. 2008. *Hanon McKendry Buys into Alternative Media Firm for Online Advertising Growth*. Accessed January 22, 2012. http://www.rapidgrowthmedia.com/devnews/mndscpe1002.aspx

Žižek, Slavoj. 2009. *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2012. The Revolt of the Salaried Bourgeoisie. *London Review of Books*, 9-10. January 26.

Zwick, Detlev, Samuel K. Bonsu and Aron Darmody. 2008. Putting Consumers to Work: "Co-Creation" and New Marketing Govern-Mentality. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8 (2): 163-196.

About the Author

Gerald Sussman
is Professor of Urban Studies and International Studies at Portland State University, where he teaches graduate courses in international development, political economy, political communication, and media studies. His latest book (as editor) is: *The Propaganda Society: Promotional Culture and Politics in Global Context* (Peter Lang, 2011). He is also the author of *Branding Democracy: U.S. Regime Change in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe* (Peter Lang, 2010), *Global Electioneering: Campaign Consulting, Communications, and Corporate Financing* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), and *Communication, Technology, and Politics in the Information Age* (Sage, 1997), and editor of two other books.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 488-508, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

"A Workers' Inquiry 2.0": An Ethnographic Method for the Study of Produsage in Social Media Contexts

Brian A. Brown*, Anabel Quan-Haase**

*Western University, London, Canada, bbrown26@uwo.ca

**Western University, London, Canada, aquan@uwo.ca, http://SocioDigital.info

Abstract: *In this paper, we propose a new ethnographic method for the study of produsage (Bruns 2008) in social media contexts. The proposed method is based on three lines of thought: Marx's method of 'A Workers' Inquiry', the autonomists' method of co-research, and recent critical theory of Web 2.0. To show the applicability and usefulness of the proposed method, we first compare it to other Marxist inspired methodological approaches and then we describe a case study to illustrate the method's diversity and its potential for providing new insights into the processes of produsage and the commodification of audiences as described in previous work by Smythe (1977), Bruns (2008), Cohen (2008), and Fuchs (2011). The case study consists of a critical examination of the mode of produsage as it takes place in Flickr, one of the largest photo-sharing communities on the Internet.*

Keywords: *Internet; Critical Theory; Immaterial Labour; Flickr; Social Media; Web 2.0; Digital Ethnography; Produsage; Research Methods*

Acknowledgement: *The present study has benefitted from support given to Anabel Quan-Haase by the Academic Development Fund and Social Science Alumni Research Award, Western University and to Brian A. Brown by the Provincial Government of Ontario through two Ontario Graduate Scholarships 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. We thank Ahmad Kamal and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.*

1. Web 2.0 and Critical Theory

User-generated content (UGC) and Web 2.0 sites and services have unleashed a torrent of creativity, ingenuity, and generosity on the part of their participants, who daily post, comment, and update content on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr. On Web 2.0 environments a shift has occurred in how individuals communicate with one another through the sharing of thoughts, ideas, likes, and dislikes. The rising popularity of Web 2.0 sites and services is at the centre of this shift and also shows no signs of abating. Data from 2010 indicates that email is being substituted – at least in Canada – for Web 2.0 services (Moretti 2010). In the 13−17 and 18−24 age groups, a total of 77% and 82%, respectively, are now using Facebook more than email. In these digital environments, 'users' become active participants, producing massive amounts of content free of the wage relation. What makes the study of unwaged immaterial labour, or what Bruns (2008) refers to as produsage, interesting is that 'users,' a complete misnomer, are willing to produce content at no cost to the owners of these domains at the same time as these sites generate massive profits.

Bruns (2008) coined produsage in an attempt to differentiate between the industrial mode of production and the mode of 'production' responsible for the creation of digital content in Web 2.0 environments. According to Bruns (2008), the mode of produsage is "built on iterative, evolutionary development models in which often very large communities of participants make a number of usually very small, incremental changes to the established knowledge base, thereby enabling a gradual improvement in quality which – under the right conditions – an nonetheless outpace the speed of production development in the conventional, industrial model" (1). Various terms have been proposed to describe the nature and dynamics of this new form of work. Building on contributions made by Lazzarato (1996) in his coining of the term 'immaterial labour' and Hardt and Negri's amplification of the concept in *Empire* (2000), Terranova offers the concept of "free labour" (2004) as a term meant to describe all of the unwaged immaterial labour undertaken by Internet 'users.' Immaterial labour 2.0 (Coté and Pybus 2007), and informational labour (Fuchs 2011) have also been introduced as new concepts to describe these changes. What these concepts emphasize is that the absence of the wage relation does not negate the productive capacities of Web 2.0 'users' nor does it preclude the presence of an exploitative relation. Expanding on the groundbreaking work of Smythe (1977), critical theorists Cohen (2008) and Fuchs (2009, 2011) argue that Web 2.0 sites and services are highly exploitative in that they profit from the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

work of 'users' and do not offer a wage in return for this labour. In fact, the above authors rightly stress that the absence of a wage actually intensifies these exploitative relations.

Part of the complexity of this situation and relationship is that we have yet to adequately grasp how the 'users' of Web 2.0 sites and services perceive their place in this socio-economic system. The study of the mode of produsage and of the unwaged immaterial labour taking place therein, then, requires an appropriate set of methods through which workers' perceptions and opinions might be uncovered. Such a method can serve as the starting point to increase produser awareness of how their contributions are part of a new relationship between owners and workers unique to social media environments, yet still based on the exploitation of labour prevalent in the industrial era. Current methodologies, however, do not do justice to the complex relations that exist between Web 2.0 produsers, the sense of community engendered by the mode of produsage, and the exploitative relations between these communities and the owners of the sites. Moreover, a new complexity emerges in the study of produsage through the intimate links that obtain between produsers and the artefacts they produse. Thus, this paper suggests that with each modification to the mode of production, there arises a need to develop new methodologies adapted to the particularities of these changed circumstances. The mode of produsage characteristic of Web 2.0 signals the need for such alterations. In turn and below, we detail the adaptations required to one research method of particular importance to critical communications scholars working within the Marxist tradition.

We propose a new ethnographic method called "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" for the study of the mode of produsage taking place in social media contexts. The proposed method is based on Marx's 'A Workers' Inquiry', the thinking and methods of Italian autonomists, and recent critical theory of Web 2.0. To show the applicability and usefulness of the proposed method, in Section 2 of this paper we compare it to Marx's method of "A Workers' Inquiry". Section 3 demonstrates the alterations made by autonomists to Marx's original method and discusses the links between this method and participatory action research (PAR). In Section 4, we explain the theoretical lineage that underlies the mode of produsage and address some of the criticisms of one of its central tenets. In Section 5, we analyse how the proposed method of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" adapts Marx's and the autonomists' method to the Web 2.0 environment. This section consists of a case study and a critical examination of the mode of produsage as it occurs on Flickr, one of the largest photo-sharing communities on the Internet. In Section 6, we suggest that the mode of produsage – and the central place of the produser within it – necessitates a re-consideration of the value – economic, personal, and social – of the product or artefact created through labour. Central to this section is a discussion of the close and often personal link between produsers and the artefacts, or content, they contribute to these sites. Section 7 compares the proposed method with other approaches and outlines its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, in Section 8, we conclude with a discussion of the value of employing the tenets outlined in a 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' to concerns regarding the mode of produsage, cyber capitalism, and the processes of monetizing produser-generated content.

2. Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry"

In 1880, Karl Marx published a list of one hundred and one questions in *La Revue Socialiste*. *La Revue Socialiste* was a publication that served the industrial proletariat of France in the late nineteenth century. Known as "A Workers' Inquiry", (1938/1880) the questions were divided into four untitled subsections that dealt with different facets of the labouring context in that era. The questions Marx asked to the workers were designed to assess the level of exploitation within the industrial factories of France and to make workers conscious of their own exploitation. In this way, 'A Workers' Inquiry' was an attempt to obtain a holistic picture of the social, technical, and political dynamics occurring in the workplace (Wright 2002), so as to

> make the worker aware of his own predicament in capitalist society, to cut through the fog of illusions and habitual responses and fictions which prevent the worker from understanding his social world, and by thus making the worker conscious of his predicament giving him a chance to solve it (Burnham, Shachtman, and Spector 1938, 1).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

By making the worker aware of his predicament, Marx's questions were inherently political, drafted to rouse the anger of labourers, help the workers to realize the extent of their exploitation, and, as this realization grew, ultimately motivate them to take action.

The editors of *The New International*, which republished Marx's 'A Workers' Inquiry,' argue that "[w]ith the changes in industrial production during the past half-century, certain of these questions in their given form have become archaic. But no one would find difficulty in modifying them in such a manner as to bring them up to date" (Burnham, Shachtman, and Spector 1938, 1). What the editors of *The New International* were signalling is not that the key tenets of the methodology were archaic, out-dated, or flawed, but rather that as the struggles between capital and labour change the form and content of our modes of production, our methods of study must change along with them. Hence, if our methodologies are to keep pace with the evident changes in the labour process, then they too must be adapted and updated so as to take into account these changed circumstances. In the mid-1950s, Italian autonomists did just that and it is to the modifications they made to Marx's 'A Workers' Inquiry' that we now shift our focus.

3. Autonomist Co-Research & Participatory Action Research

Beginning in the 1950s, Italian autonomist Marxists[1] had similar desires to that of Marx's, but found themselves in distinctively different historical circumstances. While the mode and relations of production had changed significantly (see: Bologna 1980; Wright 2002; Negri 1989), the need to speak with and consult workers so as to gain insight into the technical and political circumstances of the workplace remained a central concern for autonomists. Adapting their methods of gathering information regarding the level of exploitation in the factories of Italy and the consciousness of the workers toiling therein was therefore necessary. Taking a much more direct approach than Marx, autonomists infiltrated the industrial factories – sometimes even got jobs therein—and conducted their research alongside the workers and from within the factory itself.

To adapt the existing methods to the new circumstances, autonomist Marxists developed co-research (Negri 2008, 162-163)[2]. Like "A Workers' Inquiry", the aim of co-research is to gather information about the conditions of workers through surveys, observations, and interviews, to create awareness in the workers themselves regarding their exploitation, and, by doing so, giving them the opportunity to do something about it. One of the key advantages of co-research is that it begins on the shop floor and is premised on the political organization and radicalization of the workers' consciousness. By infiltrating the factories, speaking with workers directly, asking them questions through interviews, having them complete surveys, getting their impressions of their working conditions, observing worker behaviour first-hand, and, finally, trying to identify within it strategies or tactics that could be leveraged in the service of liberating the workers from the exploitation exacted upon them, autonomists were following in the tradition established by Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry", but modified that tradition to suit the unique attributes of their time and place.

Antonio Negri, one of the leading figures of autonomist Marxism, offers a succinct summation of the practice of co-research. His is one of the clearest treatments regarding the procedural aspects of the methodology and has the advantage of drawing parallels between co-research and Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry", while at the same time acknowledging the differences between them:

> In terms of practice, 'co-research' simply meant using the method of inquiry as a means of identifying the workers' levels of consciousness and awareness among workers of the processes in which they, as productive subjects, were engaged. So one would go into a factory, make contact with the workers, and, together, with them, conduct an inquiry into their conditions of work; here co-research obviously involves building a description of the

[1] Autonomist Marxism is a branch of Marxist philosophy that emphasizes the priority, creativity, and initiative of labour in its relation to capital. While capital relies on labour as the source of profit, labour has the skill and knowledge to organize its productive activities free of the capitalist relation. It is, then, potentially autonomous. Nowhere is the potential autonomy of labour more evident than on the self-organized, self-managed, and self-directed networks of Web 2.0 sites and services.

[2] For overviews of co-research, its contemporary uses, and the attempts to organize struggles against exploitation from a variety of perspectives see: Malo de Molina 2004a, 2004b; Situaciones Colectivo 2003; Precarias a la Derive 2004; Brophy 2006.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

> productive cycle and identifying each worker's function within that cycle; but at the same time it also involves assessing the levels of exploitation which each of them undergoes. It also involves assessing the workers' capacity for reaction – in other words, their awareness of their exploitation in the system of machinery and in relation to the structure of command. Thus, as the research moves forward, co-research builds possibilities for struggle in the factory (Negro 2008,162-163).

One of the central parallels between Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry" and co-research is the concentration on the factory as the central site of study. Both methods focus on conducting research with individuals who work within the physical infrastructure of a factory in the hopes of making the conditions of their exploitation overt and, ultimately, leading toward changing these conditions. Marx contacted the workers via a publication distributed to the factories. By contrast, co-researchers went directly to the sites of production and infiltrated the factory in order to obtain information regarding the level of exploitation and the preparedness of the workers to struggle against it. Because large numbers of workers were concentrated in geographically specific locations – working en masse at regular and predictable hours, and on jobs that could be observed or described first hand – the factory was the obvious place to start any inquiry into labour relations.

Co-research as practiced by autonomists closely resembles what has come to be known as participatory action research (PAR) or action research. Both methodologies emphasize the active role of the researcher and the individuals, groups, and communities that participate in the co-creation of actionable knowledge. One of the central differences, however, between the two is that co-research maintains its focus on the factory, while action research expands the scope of research locales into communities, schools, and clinics (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991; Barnsley and Ellis 1992). Similar to co-research, in action research, individuals in the community or institution under investigation are actively involved in establishing the goals and directions of the research, but are also involved throughout the entire research process – including the presentation of the findings and the implications of these for the community or group. Action research is often contrasted with other research approaches, where research participants are not engaged in all phases of the study and members of organizations and communities are viewed as passive (Whyte et al. 1990). Another similarity between co-research and action research is that they both try to develop programs-based research findings acquired through direct interactions and conversations with individuals, groups, and institutions (Barnsley and Ellis 1992). Similar to co-research, the objectives of action research "go beyond the creation of knowledge. The literature emphasizes that PAR includes an educative function which raises the consciousness of its participants and a plan for action to improve the quality of their lives" (Cassano and Dunlop 2005). Both co-research and action research are methods that recognize the importance of applying unique approaches to unique contexts so as to gain new insight and formulate relevant conclusions and actionable strategies (Whyte 1990). It is the problems presented by the contemporary labouring context that force us to once again change our strategies. "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" draws inspiration from the above methodological lineages, but is focused on a unique productive locale. We discuss next how changes to the nature of labour itself and the locales where labour takes place impact where and how an inquiry into the social and political dynamics of a relatively new labouring context might occur. These changes are conceptualized under the heading of immaterial labour and the mode of produsage.

4. Immaterial Labour, the Mode of Produsage, and the Role of the Produser

Similar to, yet fundamentally different from, the owners of industrial factories, the owners of Web 2.0 sites and services also depend on legions of workers to produce the outputs that get turned into profit for them and their shareholders. There exist, however, significant differences between these two exploitative relationships. The differences are best explained by recourse to a better understanding of the concept of *immaterial labour* (Lazzarato 1996) and what Bruns (2008) calls the *mode of produsage*. In what follows, then, we discuss the concept of immaterial labour, its critiques, and its relation to the mode of produsage. This theoretical lineage informs the proposed methodology of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" by placing an emphasis on the nature of the artefacts produced/produsedd, the close and personal

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

interrelationship between workers and these artefacts, and the conspicuous absence of the wage relation within the mode of produsage.

4.1. Immaterial Labour

Immaterial labour is a concept coined by Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) in an attempt to describe the changes in the nature of labour that were taking place at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. For him, immaterial labour is split into two different kinds of labour related to, but distinct from, industrial production. Lazzarato identifies as the defining characteristics of his concept on the one hand, the labour that produces the informational content of a commodity and on the other, the labour that produces the cultural content of the commodity. These two types of labour result in no physical or tangible end product, but rather create the language, symbols, images, and ideas that adhere to commodities (Lazzarato 1996). For instance, producing the informational content of a commodity refers to the activities that are needed to explain the functioning, purpose, and/or legalities of a particular product. The Terms of Service (TOS) for one of the popular social networking sites (SNSs)[3], or one of the dense and multilingual instruction booklets that accompany any digital gadget sold on the market, are good examples of the labour required to produce the informational content of a commodity. The labour required to produce the cultural content of a commodity is described by Lazzarato as "the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion" (Lazzarato 1996, 133). This work is done primarily by advertising agencies, public relations firms, institutions of the mass media, and all of the photographers, copy and film editors, technicians, engineers, etc. that support this kind of cultural production. In *Empire* (2000), Hardt and Negri expand upon Lazzarato's initial formulation of the theory of immaterial labour by adding "a third type of immaterial labour [that] involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293). This form of immaterial labour is characteristic of those persons working in the service industries where producing a sense of satisfaction, a feeling of well-being, contentment, or frustration are the primary outcomes of one's labour.

Despite the importance of the concept in its description of a relatively new mode of production, from the beginning, the theory of immaterial labour has been wrought by controversy and debate. The major point of contention regarding the concept of immaterial labour revolves around the qualifier "immaterial". These criticisms mainly address two shortcomings of the theory as put forth by Lazzarato and amended by Hardt and Negri. The first is that the labour that produces the informational, cultural, and affective content of a commodity still requires the application of material body and mind to the tasks at hand. Immaterial labour, then, necessarily contains within it a material essence and this materiality requires more attention than the above authors have devoted to it. The second major criticism has to do with Hardt and Negri's (2004) characterization of immaterial labour as hegemonic in the contemporary era. That is, according to Hardt and Negri immaterial labour "has become *hegemonic in qualitative terms* [in that it] has imposed a tendency on other forms of labour and society itself. Immaterial labour, in other words, is today in the same position that industrial labour was 150 years ago" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 109; emphasis in the original).

In the above explanation, Hardt and Negri attempt to qualify their use of immaterial labour by defending it against the critiques that claim it all too quickly elides the persistence of material forms of industrial production, especially those pushed to areas of the 'global south.' In response to these criticisms, the authors argue that

> This does not mean that there is no more industrial working class whose calloused hands toil with machines or that there are no more agricultural workers who till the soil. It does not even mean that the numbers of such workers has decreased globally. What it means, rather, is that the qualities and characteristics of immaterial production are tending to transform the other forms of labour and indeed society as a whole (Hardt and Negri 2004, 65).

[3] The extent of the work needed to create the informational content of an immaterial commodity is exemplified by Facebook's privacy rules, which have been critiqued because of their length being comparable to that of the United States Constitution. Navigating the complexity of these rules and regulations is not made easier by Facebook's "Help Center", which is meant to assist members, in that it has more than 45,000 'explanatory' words (Privacy Commissioner of Canada 2009).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

While these debates rage on, there is no doubt that Lazzarato and Hardt and Negri have identified a number of core characteristics representative of a relatively new labouring context that is having an increasing impact on the working lives of many individuals.[4] While admittedly problematic, the concept of immaterial labour does go a long way in explicating some of the more consequential changes to have taken place in the nature and form of labour for large numbers of workers around the world. These changes should not be considered in isolation, but need to be thought of in their relationship to the industrial mode of production (Castells and Hall 1994). This necessitates that we further explore and continue to question the meaning of the concept and examine more carefully how it is related not only to industrialized labour, but also to its unwaged variant known succinctly as produsage.

4.2. The Mode of Produsage, The Produser and The Wage Relation

Drawing inspiration from the work of Toffler (1981) and his concept of the prosumer, Bruns grasps the unique position of the misnomic 'user' and the work that s/he does on Web 2.0 sites and services via his hybrid concepts of the Prod-User and Prod-Usage. According to Bruns (2008),

> Produsers engage not in a traditional form of content production, but are instead involved in *produsage* – the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement. Participants in such activities are not producers in a conventional, industrial sense, as that term implies a distinction between producers and consumers which no longer exists; the artefacts of their work are not products existing as discrete, complete packages … ; and their activities are not a form of production because they proceed based on a set of preconditions and principles that are markedly at odds with the conventional industrial model (Bruns 2008, 21).

By leveraging the "techno-social affordances" (Bruns 2008, 19) of distributed networks, the mode of produsage and the produsers responsible for the evident efficiencies made possible by these affordances, do not require, nor want, a boss to scientifically manage their labour (Taylor 1915), organize their activities from above, or hand down orders from on high. This capricious and fickle labour force shows up to 'work' when they want, they concentrate their energies on what they want, work with whom they want, and can walk away from these tasks at any time they see fit. Through these terminological innovations, Bruns emphasizes the produser's active and creative role in the creation and generation of digital *artefacts*. 'Artefact' is the term used by Bruns to describe the dynamic and iterative nature of digital creations in the contemporary era. This term better emphasizes the ephemeral and inherently dynamic qualities of digital creations than does 'end-product.' Bruns' concepts of produser, produsage, and the artefact are adopted herein because they emphasize the active and creative nature of the work done by content generators on Web 2.0 sites and services. This kind of work is fundamentally different than that done by industrial labourers, but, as is detailed below, there is a common feature that weaves them together.

The owners and shareholders of industrial manufacturing facilities exploit their workers by offering them a disproportionally low wage in exchange for their labour power and time. By paying a wage lower than the amount of capital it generates, the capitalist enterprise extracts a profit from the labour force. It is these profits and, reciprocally, the exploitative relationship that underlies them, which are the lifeblood of capitalist enterprises. Profitable Web 2.0 sites and services operate via recourse to a similar logic. They too are heavily reliant on a workforce to produse the artefacts (including content and site development) that draw a mass audience to the site and, in turn, make a profit. However, these individuals are not offered a wage in return for their labour power and time. This business model depends on selling advertising space to advertisers that are purchasing the ability to ply their wares to a consistent and quantifiable number of eyeballs. Via the concept of the audience commodity, Smythe (1977) filled in the so-called Blind Spot of Western Marxism by arguing that the

[4] Recent reports in the media on working conditions at electronics manufacturing facilities in Asia and Latin America highlight the close interplay between immaterial and material labour (Duhigg and Barboza 2012) as well as the political potentials that continue to exist within these industrialized domains.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

straightforward "answer to the question – What is the commodity form of mass-produced, advertiser-supported communications under monopoly capitalism? – is audiences and readerships" (2). While this business model has undergone significant changes in the past few years, according to Fuchs (2011) and Cohen (2008), its core characteristics are easily identifiable in the Web 2.0 era. Moreover, the exploitative relationship between owners and workers typical of the industrial mode of production is intensified within the immaterial mode of produsage as a result of the absence of the wage relation. However, what makes this relationship more complex is the quasi-voluntary nature of the engagement in the exploitative relation. On the face of it, participating on social networks is a voluntary act that one enters into without being compelled by force. When the unique attributes of the contemporary communicative environment are taken into consideration, however, characterizing participation as voluntary becomes less convincing. Social networking sites and services have centralized the means of online communication to the extent that not participating in them runs the risk of missing important information and potentially feeling disconnected from certain social groups (Raynes-Goldie 2010). Individuals are compelled, then, to participate on these sites and services at the risk of decreasing their social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2007), thus making the voluntary nature of them an illusion.

According to Fuchs and Cohen, when compared to the industrial mode of production, the mode of produsage should be considered hyper-exploitative because it does not even offer its legions of workers a wage in exchange for their labour power and time. The exploitation of this workforce is made palpable when the surplus value generated by produsers is considered. In 2005, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp purchased then popular MySpace for $580 million (Brook 2005). Six years later and in response to a rapid decrease in membership, News Corp sold MySpace at a considerable loss for $35 million (Stelter 2011) – a telling indicator of the value generated by the Web 2.0 audience commodity. In the spring of 2011, LinkedIn, a professional social networking site, went public and netted its owners and investors a combined $8.8 billion (Levy and Spears 2011). Twitter, a micro-blogging service, is estimated to be worth roughly $7.7 billion by secondary markets (Reuters 2011). And finally, Facebook's rumoured initial public offering (IPO) in the spring of 2012 is reportedly valued at nearly $100 billion (Bilton and Rusli 2012; Cellan-Jones 2012). Clearly, the Web 2.0 'audience commodity' is in high demand. The above valuations are based on the vast stores of information produsedby produsers regarding their tastes, likes, predilections, habits, hobbies, and interests stored within these sites and services. All of this personal information results in a highly refined audience commodity. In turn, these sites sell this commodity to advertisers seeking a better return on their investment by micro-marketing their products or services to niches of eyes, ears, and minds that have shown previous interest in the products or services on offer. The pivotal role of the produser in this relationship is emphasized by Fuchs (2011) when he asks us to consider "what would happen if [produsers] would stop using platforms like YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook: the number of [prod-]users would drop, advertisers would stop investments because no objects for their advertising messages and therefore no potential customers for their products could be found, the profits of the new media corporations would drop, and they would go bankrupt" (Fuchs 2011, 298). Additionally, expanding the scope of this analysis to the World Wide Web (WWW) by focusing on Google and the commodities produsedby Google 'users,' Fuchs (2012) argues "Google exploits Google users and WWW content producers because their work that serves Google's capital accumulation is fully unpaid" (Fuchs 2012, 44). Thus, when produsers begin generating content and, by doing so, generating value for the site, "in terms of Marxian class theory, this means that they also produce surplus value and are exploited by capital as for Marx productive labour is labour generating surplus" (Fuchs 2009, 30; see also: Cohen 2008; Kleiner and Wyrick 2007). Based on the work of Smythe and according to political economists of Web 2.0 and social media, the relationship between Web 2.0 owner and produser is, therefore, hyper-exploitative because it does not even offer the "user" a wage in exchange for their pivotally important work.

There is nascent evidence that this hyper-exploitative relationship is causing produsers to organize struggles against it. The frequent uproars occurring on social networking sites regarding the violation of one's privacy have time and again resulted in controversy, but these controversies are more often than not understood as having to do with the violation of one's privacy on social networks that are essentially public. The near-exclusive focus on the violation of one's privacy as the cause of these uproars is a mischaracterization and a mistake. A better understanding of these instances of produser uproar is provided by Brown

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

(forthcoming) when he argues that privacy and social networks are conceptually oxymoronic in that adherence to the principles of the former would render pointless the primary purposes of the latter. Therefore, the frequent occurrences of produser uproar regarding the violation of one's privacy on networks that are eminently social are better understood as instances of struggle against the exploitation of the highly personal artefacts produsedby and through the mode of produsage. Undergirding this characterization of these uproars are a long lineage of struggles fought by other unwaged, yet highly productive, groups of individuals such as female domestic labourers (Dalla Costa and James 1973; Huws 2003) and students (Wright 2002; Touraine 1971).

As Bruns (2008) notes above, the social and political dynamics of the mode of produsage are fundamentally different than the industrial factories that Marx and the autonomists concerned themselves with. Moreover, they are also different from the social and political dynamics of domestic labour as well as that of student labour. While exploitation remains an important and salient feature of the mode of production/produsage, the relationships between owner and worker and between workers themselves are fundamentally different in the Web 2.0 era than they were in the industrial era. These differences require that we once again modify our methodologies so as to better understand the unique social and political dynamics of the mode of produsage. While Marx's and the autonomists' goal of creating awareness and also rousing the ire of workers so as to enable them to put a stop to the exploitative circumstances they found themselves in remains a goal of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0", the context within which this research takes place as well as the context from which the researcher conducts his/her research have changed substantially. The idiosyncrasies of the mode of produsage characteristic of sites like Flickr force us to approach the procedural elements of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" with caution and care. These idiosyncrasies must be considered when attempting to undertake a research project inspired by Marx's and the autonomists' methodological lineage. What follows, then, is our attempt to rethink these methods in light of the unique nature of Web 2.0.

In order to do so, three distinctive characteristics specific to the mode of produsage and its relationship to contemporary academic research need to be taken into consideration. The first characteristic of produsage that needs to be addressed in its relation to "A Workers' Inquiry" and co-research is the lack of a distinct, physical, and consistent location from which to recruit potential research subjects. The second characteristic addresses the challenges of subjecting an informal, casual, and leisurely domain such as any number of Web 2.0 sites and services to the formalities and rigid protocols required of academic research on human subjects. Reconciling the highly formal procedural requirements of ethical research boards at universities with the highly informal communicative norms and cultural practices characteristic of Web 2.0 sites and services necessitates a unique approach. The means and method by which these incongruities were successfully negotiated are addressed below in prong one of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0". The third characteristic, addressed below in prong two of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0", has to do with the nature of the artefacts produsedthrough the mode of produsage. The pivotal role occupied by the produser in the design, functionality, and evolution of these artefacts necessitates further methodological adaptation. It is to the details of these adaptations that we now focus our attention.

5. A Workers' Inquiry 2.0: Prong One – Factory Flickr

We discuss in this section the key tenets of 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' and show its applicability to the study of the mode of produsage taking place in social media contexts. We examine the unique challenges of Web 2.0 inquiry and employ a case study and a critical examination of the mode of produsage as it occurs on Flickr to illustrate how the proposed method functions in the field.

5.1. Location of Contact with Research Participants

The first characteristic of produsage that needs to be addressed in its relation to "A Workers' Inquiry" and co-research is the lack of a distinct, physical, and consistent location and time from which to recruit potential research subjects. Similar to Marx's and the autonomists' goal of gaining insight into how power relationships circulate throughout the industrial mode of production, in the Web 2.0 era, the need to get a sense of the social and political power relationships that underlie the mode of produsage remains undiminished. However, with no central and consistent geographic location acting as a primary meeting place from which to

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

conduct the research, communicating and engaging with produsers in a similar fashion to Marx and the autonomists is more complex than simply turning up at the factory gates. The openness, highly social, and communicative qualities of Web 2.0 sites and services, though, make the lack of a consistent physical location to contact research participants less of a problem than it appears to be.

The Internet Protocol (IP) address of these sites (i.e., www.flickr.com) resembles the street address of the factories where Marx and the autonomists contacted workers. The IP address is the virtual, yet centralized, meeting place where the produsers responsible for building and maintaining these sites and services assemble. While workers in the industrial era had predefined and predictable work hours, Web 2.0 sites and services consist of a fluid and loosely-connected network of produsers. In the example of Flickr, it is within this space that the work of coding the software via Flickr's open application programming interface (API), sharing photographs, participating in groups, chatting with friends, and commenting on others' images takes place. Vital to the virtual infrastructure of Factory Flickr are communicative channels that not only encourage, but also make natural the inclination to share one's thoughts, ideas, and opinions with other community members. Via internal messaging systems, such as FlickrMail or discussion forums, members chat about whatever it is they deem to be important, thought provoking, or exciting at that particular moment in time.

Communication amongst Flickr members, then, is the social bedrock of the website. Predictably, the topics, focus, and concentration of the publicly accessible forums are as diverse as the interests and aptitudes of their members. Ranging from mundane discussions regarding photographic technique to well considered thoughts on the social, cultural, and political impact of digital photography, one thing is certain, for a website dedicated to sharing photographs, Flickr is replete with chatter and banter. "Finding" *some* Flickr members and getting them to talk about photographs, photography, and the various aspects or dimensions of them is not a problem. Finding all of them, however, is a challenge and it is to this challenge that portions of Section 7 of this paper are focused. Conducting this kind of inquiry as an academic investigation, all the while adhering to the ethical protocols, standards, and formalities of this type of research is also challenging and a different matter entirely.

In sum, this first attribute of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" emulates one of the primary methodological features of the research conducted by Marx and the autonomists. Speaking to and with those responsible for produsing the ever-evolving artefacts on Flickr is an irreplaceable element in trying to assess and to dissect the social and political dynamics of Factory Flickr. The opinions, thoughts, impressions, ideas, and feelings of these individuals remain a pivotal ingredient in trying to understand the social and political dynamics of these domains at the same time as trying to grasp the subjective dimensions of the produsers working within them. The idiosyncrasies of the mode of produsage combined with the ethical requirements of non-medical research on human subjects, however, require a level of planning, strategizing, and understanding that Marx and the autonomists were never forced to consider.

5.2. Codes of Research Ethics and Social Norms of Web 2.0 Sites

The second central characteristic has to do with modifying one's methodology so that it remains congruent with the idiosyncrasies of the environment from which research participants are recruited. We suggest the following four steps as a good strategy for recruitment: 1) engage the community in discussion about the topic of interest; 2) approach a select group of participants for more in-depth data collection; 3) obtain informed consent for the interviews, and 4) determine the time and media over which the interview will take place. The goal of this recruitment process is to be inclusive so as to recruit as many respondents as possible, all the while leveraging the communicative advantages of Web 2.0 sites to its benefit. It should be noted that the method described below was developed for Flickr in particular but can be easily adapted to other Web 2.0 domains where produsage occurs as well.

One of the foremost challenges encountered when conducting research on human subjects online is the successful recruitment and retention of research subjects. This is an especially tricky process when Web 2.0 environments are the spaces upon and within which the research is conducted. Web 2.0 sites and services each have their own unique patterns of normalized behaviour that have developed over time and which characterize the quotidian behaviours of their membership. To obtain a better understanding of Flickr's unwritten norms

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

and standards was, in fact, the primary purpose of the research project to which this method applies[5].

Similar to Marx's method, "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" asks produsers a list of questions in the hope of gaining insight into their thoughts, feelings, and consciousness regarding their place in the mode of produsage. At the same time and once again similar to Marx's method, this methodology aims to increase the awareness of produsers regarding their own exploitation. As well, much like the process of co-research where researchers would enter the industrial factory, sometimes get a job there, and conduct their research alongside the workers labouring therein, "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" also encourages the researcher to become a member of the Web 2.0 site within which the research is taking place. This is advantageous because previous involvement in these domains increases familiarity with the unwritten behavioural norms that characterize them, greatly aiding in recruitment of research participants[6]. However, this element of the methodology raises another important ethical consideration that has to be managed with care. As a result of being both a community member and a researcher at the same time, the scholar/community member must negotiate these roles judiciously. The reason being that, if handled awkwardly, the trust of other community members in the scholar might be broken and along with it their willingness to further participate in the research.

Each and every step in designing the methodology and executing the research, therefore, needs to respect the idiosyncratic norms of the particular space if it is to be successful. The initial point of contact is, in this way, ultimately important. If one's initial message and approach is ill fitting, too blunt, or awkward in any way, the thousands upon thousands of potential research participants that populate Web 2.0 sites and services very quickly falls to none. For this particular design, the first step was to recruit research participants from three different groups on Flickr by posting a provocative question to their group discussion forums. The three groups used as sources for the recruitment of research participants were: Flickr Central, Flickr API, and Utata. All three of the chosen groups are designated as "Public – Anyone can join". Importantly, the vast majority of the groups on Flickr are created, administered, organized, and managed by members. They have their own self-authored guidelines that explain what the group is about, what it focuses on, and what one can expect if one were to join it. These guidelines were important elements in selecting the groups as potential sources of research participants because they describe the purpose of the group and by doing so allow the researcher a glimpse, albeit an obstructed one, into the norms of the group in question.

In the subject line of the initial message, a very simple, straightforward, yet suggestive question was asked: "Is Flickr Work?" In the body of the accompanying message, the purposes of the project, the researcher's identity, his institutional affiliation, and the broader contexts of the question were detailed. The provocative nature of the question, as well as the ensuing description, elicited a large number of responses from the members of two of the three chosen groups.[7] The group that did not respond very well to the initial message is telling of the importance of crafting this initial message so that it adheres to the norms of the group. This is one of the weaknesses of the present methodology and will be addressed more substantively in Section 7 of this article.

The other two groups were better suited to the contemplative nature of the original question and responded to it well. Flickr Central and Utata are both public groups within Flickr that address a plethora of topics, ideas, issues, and elements regarding digital photography and photo-sharing. Their members responded quickly, enthusiastically, and comprehensively to the research question. As with all discussion threads, however, there is a point in time when the conversation runs its course and members move on to different threads so as to think through different ideas and issues. This is the moment when the second step of recruiting research participants should take place. From our experience within these virtual

[5] The research project for which the 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' was originally developed was designed to answer the following question: If, as Hardt and Negri claim (2004, 66), waged immaterial labour is biopolitcal, then what are the biopolitics of unwaged immaterial labour or produsage? Following the example set by Marx and the autonomists, the best way to evaluate the biopolitics of this environment is to try and understand the relationships of power that influence the ways in which individuals act and react within it.

[6] In this particular instance, the lead author of this article had been a member of Flickr for five years before initiation of the research project.

[7] In the FlickrCentral group there was a total of forty-four unique respondents and one-hundred-and-one messages. In Flickr API there was a total of three respondents and three total messages and in Utata there were thirty-five individual respondents and forty-four total messages.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

and ever-shifting environments, it is important not to delay sending follow-up requests for interviews because doing so adversely impacts the readiness of potential research subjects to participate further in the project.

Like many social networks, Flickr has an internal email/messaging system called FlickrMail that allows members to contact each other via a more private form of communication than the group chat forums[8]. Very soon after the threaded discussion ran its course, a private message was sent via FlickrMail to all those persons that responded to the thread. In this private email, they were asked if they were willing to have a more in-depth conversation regarding whether or not the time they spent on Flickr can or should be considered a form of labour and if they ever felt it to be exploitative.

The third step consists of obtaining informed consent, which can be cumbersome in the context of Web 2.0. Importantly, and somewhat frustratingly, FlickrMail does not allow one to attach files or documents to messages sent to other members making the procedural requirements of ethical research more involved and complicated than they would have been otherwise. The delivery and return of a Letter of Informed Consent that details the purposes of the research, the obligations of the researcher, and the rights of the research subject is an important element to any ethical research. It is also, however, an obstacle that disrupts the casual, informal, and natural flow of communication on Web 2.0 sites and services in such a way that threatens the continuing participation of research participants. This is especially the case when the delivery and receipt of such a document is pushed beyond the immediate site of research. The inherently informal, casual, and relaxed norms and mores of Web 2.0 discussion forums – where punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure are often ignored – stand in opposition to the formal and often temporally taxing nature of ethical protocols. There exists a tension between these formal documents and the casual and informal communicative norms associated with Flickr and other Web 2.0 sites and services. It is this tension that threatens the success of conducting research of the sort proposed by "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0".

After a Flickr member agreed to participate in the research project, a second message was sent via FlickrMail asking them for an email address where a Letter of Informed Consent might be delivered. When, and if, this email address was received the Letter of Informed Consent was attached to a message and sent to the given address. This step is particularly sensitive because participants are asked to provide contact information outside of Flickr. Considering that participants may use pseudonyms, aliases, or other nicknames to protect their identity (Raynes-Goldie 2010), it is important to consider that participants may drop out of the study at this point. Upon its return, a third message was drafted and a convenient time and medium over which to conduct semi-structured, open-ended interviews was scheduled.[9]

Conducting the interviews, then, is the fourth and final step in the first prong of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0". Following the suggestion of the editors of *The New International* which republished Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry" in 1938, these open-ended, semi-structured interviews were inspired by Marx's technique, questions, and goals, yet were adjusted and modified so as to reflect the idiosyncrasies of the mode of produsage characteristic of Flickr and Web 2.0. Interviews varied in length, lasting on average less than an hour and addressed a host of issues all involving the ways in which the Flickr member thought and felt about the time, effort, and energy they expended on the site, their consciousness regarding the exploitation of their labour time and power, and, similar to Marx and the autonomists, their preparedness to do something about that exploitation.[10] As the above steps have detailed, the first prong of 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' emulates the methods used by Marx and the autonomists but modifies and adapts their procedures so as to bring them into the contemporary era. Focusing exclusively on the experiences, impressions, and affects of produsers, however, fails to acknowledge one of the most important pieces of information that reflects the members' subjectivity and consciousness. It is to this, or, rather, these artefacts that we now turn our attentions.

[8] When one signs up for a Flickr account, one is automatically given a FlickrMail account as well.

[9] In an attempt to accommodate as many research subjects as possible, it is advisable that each interviewee be given the option of conducting the interview via the media of their choice. In this case telephone, Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol, instant messaging, or email were all used by the researcher to communicate with research subjects.

[10] The results of this research project are too involved to adequately address in the available space and are oblique to the central purposes of this paper. They are, however, dealt with briefly in what follows and in much more detail separately and elsewhere (Brown 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

6. A Workers' Inquiry 2.0: Prong Two — A New Object of Study

Similar to other Web 2.0 sites and services that leverage the unwaged labour of members, nearly all of the labour required to produse Flickr is self-managed, self-organized, self-motivated, and, because of this, fundamentally different from the mode of industrial production that Marx and the autonomists were researching. From the perspective of business consultants, Tapscott and Williams appreciate the monumental changes that the mode of produsage responsible for Flickr evinces. They comment,

> Flickr provides the basic technology platform and free hosting for photos … *Users do everything else*. For example, users add all of the content (the photos and captions). They create their own self-organizing classification system for the site … They even build most of the applications that members use to access, upload, manipulate, and share their content (Tapscott and Williams 2006, 38; emphasis added).

Echoing the undercurrent of amazement identifiable in Tapscott and Williams' assessment of the mode of produsage, Caterina Fake, co-founder and former owner of Flickr, argues,

> the thing that really makes Flickr Flickr is that *the users invent what Flickr is*. … [L]ike us, outside developers could build new features and give Flickr new capabilities. In fact, we used the same API as the outside developers, meaning that they had all the same capabilities we had. We hoped that people would build things that we didn't have the time or resources to build – like an uploader for Linux or plug-ins for desktop management software and blogging services – and they did. But we also hoped that they would build things that we hadn't thought of – and they definitely did that too (Tapscott and Williams 2006, xi; emphasis added).

And finally, from the perspective of a Yahoo! executive involved in the purchase of Flickr in 2005 for an estimated US$30 million (Schonfeld, 2005), Bradley Horowitz gushes, "With less than 10 people on the payroll, they had millions of users generating content, millions of users organizing that content for them, tens of thousands of users distributing that across the Internet, and thousands of people not on the payroll actually building this thing, … That's a neat trick" (Levy 2006). A neat trick indeed, but one predicated on the exploitation of an unwaged workforce that spans the globe. According to Fuchs, "this situation is one of infinite over-exploitation … [or] an extreme form of exploitation" (Fuchs 2011, 298). It is for this very reason that Flickr's produsers were consulted via the methodological foundations provided by Marx and the autonomists. The pivotal place occupied by the produser in the mode of produsage, however, also forces us to reconsider an element that Marx and the autonomists had no reason to contemplate with their investigations of the industrial mode of production.

By "Harnessing the Collective Intelligence" of its membership and by "Treating Users as Co-Developers" (O'Reilly 2005), the owners and administrators of Flickr were more than willing to relinquish their control over the process of developing their photo-sharing utility and let their members do the majority of the heavy lifting required to test, debug, develop new applications, code software, and, of course, upload photographs. As the quotes above suggest, the labour of produsers was (and continues to be) instrumental in the construction and creation of the website. Rather than trying to predict what their members wanted out of the website and devoting scarce temporal and financial resources to untested ends, the owners of Flickr released the source code to the developer community and by doing so enlisted them to hack and code Flickr into existence. They also granted their members a great deal of autonomy and latitude to build and grow the site in whatever way they saw fit. Additionally, the owners of Flickr actively encouraged their produsers to communicate with them via discussion forums and, in paying close attention to what their members were saying, many of the suggestions made by produsers were incorporated into the design and functionality of Flickr by its paid staff. According to one of Flickr's paid software developers, Eric Costello divulges that "User feedback … drove a lot of the decisions about features. We had user forums very early on and people told us what they wanted. … We do look at numbers, but really we just keep our ears open. We listen to what people say to us on our forums" (Garrett and Costello 2005, 11-24). Hence, Flickr developed in the way it did not because of a corporate hierarchy dictating to wage labourers what was going to be built and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

scientifically managing the exact manner in which they were going to build it. Rather, by reversing the direction of this command and control structure, the owners and administrators of the site took a very hands-off approach and allowed produsers to build Flickr in their own image.

In short, then, Flickr is a reflection of the subjective wants, needs, desires, and labour of its membership more than it is that of its owners and administrators. While Marx and the autonomists considered the end products produced by industrial labourers as important ingredients in the overall mode of production, they never thought of them as a source of insight or knowledge regarding the social and political dynamics of the workplace or as a reflection of the subjective consciousnesses of those that produced them. For Marx or the autonomists, the end products, whether coal, cars, or typewriters, held no interpretive or hermeneutic value regarding the subjectivities of workers. As Flickr's developmental history indicates, however, the irreplaceable position, contribution, and place of the produsers' subjectivity in the design, functionality, and content stored on the website, indicates that continuing inattention to the artefacts of produsage is a mistake. Ignoring these artefacts omits from consideration valuable information regarding the social and political dynamics of the mode of produsage and the subjective dispositions of those produsers responsible for building Flickr.

We must, therefore, consider these ever-developing artefacts as important indices of the social and political dynamics of the workplace and of the workers' subjectivity, predispositions, inclinations, and consciousness. Marx and the autonomists rightfully ignored this dimension of the end products of industrial labour in their studies. Because the scientific management of an industrial workforce alienates and divorces the workers' head from the products of his/her hands, the links between the subjectivity of the worker and the end product were non-existent. Under these conditions, there was no justifiable reason for Marx or the autonomists to examine these end products with any hope of gaining further insight into the subjectivities of those persons following orders and doing the work of assembling them. The labour of generating the raw content for Flickr – of capturing, uploading, indexing, and annotating the billions of images found therein, of coding new applications and software, and of providing a constant stream of input, feedback, and direction – grants Flickr's membership much more agency in the overall structure and feeling of the website.

In sum, the history of the development of Flickr, much like many Web 2.0 sites and services, was not driven, directed, or scientifically managed in an hierarchical, top-down fashion by the owners or managers of the website. Rather, as the one-time owner of Flickr acknowledged above, the members and produsers of Flickr – their whimsical wants, idiosyncratic desires, playful hacks and remixes, their enthusiasm, but most of all their self-managed, self-organized, and autonomous labour – made Flickr what Flickr is. This photo-sharing social network is and would be nothing without the direction, guidance, and unwaged labour of its membership. Unlike the tedious, monotonous, and highly repetitive industrial production process where workers have no control over what gets built, when it gets built, how it is built, what these products are meant to do, and whose needs they satisfy, the mode of produsage responsible for produsing Flickr is diametrically different. It is this difference that confers upon the produsing artefacts a particularly important hermeneutic value.

One way of approaching this new object of study would be to examine the structure, dynamics, and motivational instruments used by particular groups within Flickr that have been successful in eliciting enthusiastic participation. Utata, for instance, one of the groups on Flickr used as a source of research participants for this project, is an excellent example. With a few simple guidelines and a request that members be polite, the self-organized and self-motivated unwaged administrators of the group have managed to produse a vibrant and committed community built around the sharing of photographs, thoughts, and ideas. Utata has over twenty thousand members and more than three hundred and seventy-five thousand images uploaded to its group photo-stream. They organize weekly "photo-projects" built around thematically inspired topics combined with particular photographic techniques. Every Thursday, members go on a virtual "photo-walk" with each other. They capture images of the places, faces, and spaces they happen to be, see, or visit that day and upload their favourites to that week's dedicated photostream. There is a group discussion forum where ideas, problems, thoughts, and photographs are discussed politely and in detail. If the conversation gets heated, as it sometimes does, there are offerings of virtual cake to one's interlocutor(s) as a gesture of good will and support. In short, Utata is a fascinating group that has managed to harness the creative activities of its membership to inspired ends.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

Another artefactual corner of the Flickr-verse that merits attention in this regard is an area called The Commons. The Commons began as a joint endeavour between the U.S. Library of Congress (LOC) and Flickr in 2008. The LOC approached Flickr and asked if there was a way to share their archival photographic collection with Flickr's membership and by doing so 'harness their collective intelligence' by asking them to add information to the photographs on display. The aim of this project was to augment and increase the profile of the LOC's collection at the same time as increasing the available information regarding this same collection. They did so by bringing their photographic archive to one of the largest groups of individuals interested in photography on the Internet and by simply asking for their assistance. According to the LOC, this project "resulted in many positive yet unplanned outcomes" (Springer et al. 2008, 2).

One of the benefits of using Flickr is that it has an inbuilt tagging system that allows produsers to add descriptive tags to the photographs shared by others. It is "important to note that for the purposes of this pilot, [the LOC] took a very 'hands off' approach to the tags, other than to check for blatantly inappropriate content. (…) There were exceptionally few tags that fell below a level of civil discourse appropriate to such an online forum—a true credit to the Flickr community" (Springer et al. 2008, 18).

The LOC's participation in The Commons was a massive success for both Flickr and the library. They conclude their internal report on the Flickr project by stating that "the overwhelmingly positive response to the digitized historical photographs in the Library's Flickr account suggests that participation in The Commons should continue" (Springer et al. 2008, 33). The success of this project as well as other aspects of Factory Flickr shed much needed light into the social and political dynamics of the space. Once again, unlike the automobiles rolling off the assembly line in the industrial era, the artefacts of produsage allow for a better-informed appreciation of the kinds of subjectivities being produsedand re-produsedvia the mode of produsage.

The full results of the research project for which this method was designed are too involved to be dealt with in the available space. Briefly, however, the social and political dynamics of the Flickr-verse are such that, for the most part, those individuals responsible for Flickr's creation and evolution do not consider the time, effort, and energy they expend on the website as a form of labour, nor do they feel exploited by the owners of Flickr. As this article suggests, however, the relationship between the owners and members of Flickr is eminently exploitative. Via mechanisms and systems that tap into Flickr's "altruistic substratum" (Springer et al. 2008, 15), the owners of these sites and services enlist a legion of produsers to do the work of expanding the boundaries of the Flickr-verse by creating the social connections and relationships required to continue its growth. This paradox is one of the primary reasons that research focused on raising the consciousness of produsers regarding their own exploitation is important to undertake and accomplish on Web 2.0 sites and services.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

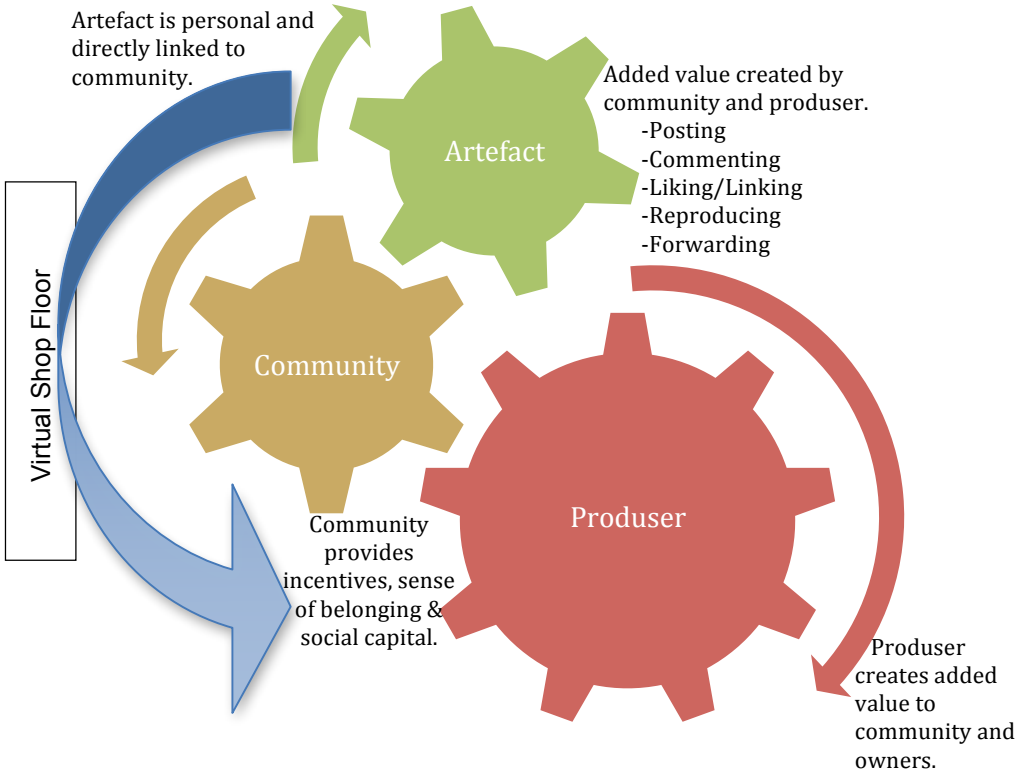


Figure 1: Unique characteristics of the mode of produsage influencing research methods

We need to know much more about the virtual gears and cogs of the mode of produsage responsible for these kinds of produser generated artefacts, their inner-workings, and their social dynamics if we are to understand how this organization of labouring bodies and minds differs from its predecessors and the political potentials that these differences make possible. We need, in other words, to continue to engage in serious academic study of how they work, why they work, and where they might be replicated. The above method offers one such approach.

Figure 1 shows three key dimensions that lie at the centre of our methodological framework: 1) the artefact, 2) the community of produsers, and 3) the produser her/himself. While Marx and the autonomists took into consideration the worker him/herself, they had no reason to consider the end products (or artefacts) of industrial labour as important elements that contribute to a better understanding of worker subjectivity. As Figure 1 indicates, however, in the Web 2.0 era and regarding the mode of produsage, the artefact is an influential and consequential instrument that contributes significantly to the overall dynamics of the mode of produsage. In light of this, 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' adopts a two-pronged approach that, much like Marx and the autonomists, begins on the virtual 'shop floor' by speaking with the exploited workers responsible for the produsage of Web 2.0 sites and services, but goes one step further and beyond by also considering the community in which these workers operate, and the artefacts of their labour as hermeneutically significant objects of study that have important details to communicate regarding the social and political dynamics that imbue the means and relations of produsage.

7. Strengths and Weaknesses of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0"

It is important to not only consider "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" in the context of the Marxist tradition and methodology, but also to understand its relevance vis-à-vis other methodologies employed in the social sciences. In this section, we discern the strengths and weaknesses of the new method by comparing it with other data collection and analysis techniques available to scholars. Moreover, we show how 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' builds on ethnography as practiced by anthropologists, with its emphasis on lived experience and emergence in the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

field. We also show where 'A Workers' Inquiry 2.0' departs from Marx's 'A Workers' Inquiry' and uniquely addresses concerns that arise within Web 2.0 and produsage.

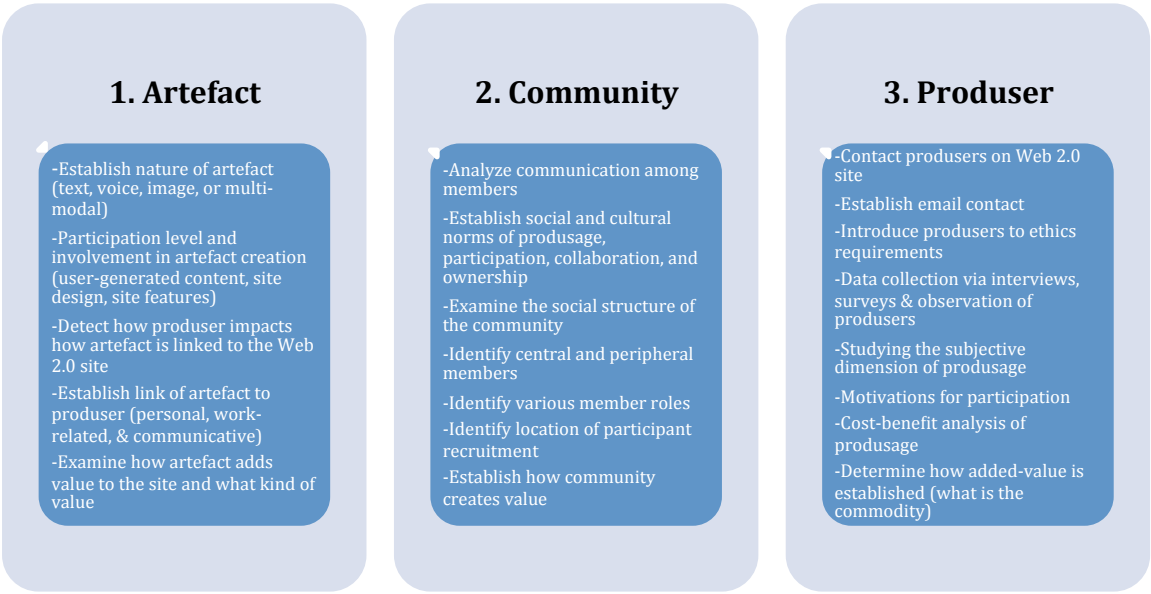


Figure 2: Framework for Examining 'A Workers Inquiry 2.0'

The Field: The experiences accumulated in the field are central to any ethnography. While ethnography usually consists of living in other cultures or immersing oneself in different social environments, in this case it consists of becoming part of an online community (Kendall 2002). A part of this consists of understanding social meanings and participating in what Brewer describes as "ordinary activities" (Brewe 2000, 10).

Multiple Sources: "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" relies on multiple sources of information, to a large extent resembling qualitative methodologies employed in the social sciences. It not only collects data from those involved in the mode of produsage through discussions on the forum/groups, interviews, and surveys, but it attempts to go beyond these standard means of gathering information about a phenomenon. Figure 2 shows how a critical engagement with the nature of the artefact and its link to the community and the produser are a central source of data.

Triangulation: Similar to qualitative research, triangulation becomes an integral part of the analysis. Triangulation in qualitative analysis refers to the study of data from sources in relation to one another. That is, data from one source is compared and contrasted with data from other sources to obtain a more rich and holistic picture of the individuals involved and their social relations. Triangulation also becomes important in light of the nature of online communities, where trolling and identity play are an inherent part of these communities.

Artefacts as Data: What really sets "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" apart from other data collection techniques is a focus on the artefacts produsedby produsers within Web 2.0 environments. These artefacts represent a rich source of data in "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" as they directly speak to the complex relations that exist between produsers, the rest of the community, and the norms and mores that characterize the site.

Worker Awareness: This is the primary goal of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" as it attempts to start a discussion around the uniquely exploitative relation that exists between produsers and those who own Web 2.0 sites and services. The juxtaposition here is between the benefits and costs associated with participation in these social media environments. On the one hand, there is no doubt that social media creates gains for those involved, including the pleasure of adding UGC, as well as being uniquely positioned to engage and contribute to a community (see figures 1 and 2). In a study of uses and gratifications of Facebook, survey respondents indicated that their key gratifications were to pass time on the site (for example for entertainment, for relaxation, and to escape) (Papacharissi and Mendelson 2011; Quan-Haase and Young 2010), for social surveillance and social searching (for example to learn about friends and family without their knowledge) (Joinson 2008; Zhang et al. 2011), and for maintaining social ties (i.e., connecting with friends and family) (Dunne, Lawlor and Rowley

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

2010; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008). On the other hand, produsers are not compensated for their time, effort, and overall added-value to the site. Indeed, produsers in many cases have no control over how the site manages content, as the example of Facebook and its constantly changing Terms of Service has clearly demonstrated. Similar to Marx and the autonomists, by making produsers aware that their labour is the source of the accumulated wealth of these websites, the present method seeks to raise the consciousnesses of these produsers regarding their own exploitation and their abilities to do something about it. As Figure 2 shows a detailed analysis of costs and benefits is also an integral part of understanding produsage in Web 2.0 environments.

Action and Social Change: One of the cornerstones of Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry" and the autonomists' method of co-research was the idea that the methodology should lead not only to workers' increased awareness of their exploitative labour conditions, but ultimately also to take action. As quoted above, the goal of the intervention was to "make the worker aware of his own predicament in capitalist society (…) and by thus making the worker conscious of his predicament giving him a chance to solve it" (Burnham, Shachtman and Spector 1938, 1). Even though "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" ultimately has the same goals, it becomes quickly apparent that this is not a straightforward task. What complicates this endeavour is the quasi-voluntary nature of the engagement in the exploitative relation. While the industrial mode of production offered workers little choice regarding where they laboured, in Web 2.0 environments, participation in the mode of produsage is compelled not by the risks associated with a lack of income, but by the risk of social seclusion and communicative isolation. While easily transportable to other (often new) Web 2.0 sites and services, in the contemporary communicative context, produsers are concentrated in a very small number of sites and rely on these sites for their communication needs. This is where the method requires further elaboration as it develops and is utilized to study the quasi-voluntary mode of produsage within social media environments.

Central Strength and Weakness: In light of the above, it is possible to identify a central strength and weakness of "A Workers Inquiry 2.0". The central strength of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" is that rather than stopping at the identification of an exploitative relationship between the owners of Web 2.0 sites and services and the produsers of them, it follows the example set by Marx and the autonomists by going directly to the workers themselves and trying to better understand their thoughts regarding their own exploitation. It enables an examination of the social and political dynamics of the mode of produsage from "below" or from the perspective of the workers. However, "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" goes beyond this revelatory function in its attempt to better understand the political potentials of produsage and the alternatives it posits regarding the autonomous labouring capacities of coordinated groups. While the valuations of Web 2.0 sites and services clearly indicate the presence of an exploitative relation, the existence of such a relationship, as well as the produsers opinions regarding the time and effort they expend on the site, should not overshadow the possibilities and potentials created by the mode of produsage. This method, then, enables an examination and appreciation of an organization of labouring bodies and minds that come together to work collaboratively, cooperatively, and autonomously, free of the wage relation. The original goal of Marx's and the autonomists' method was to provide workers with the intellectual and emotional tools required to struggle against their own exploitation. While produsage remains highly exploitative, Flickr produsers do not experience it as such. Making clear this exploitative relation, then, is vital. However, the self-organized, self-managed, and autonomous nature of the mode of produsage points to ways of living and working together beyond capital. It is by no means a perfect blueprint. It does, however, provide valuable information regarding some of the constituent elements of a mode of production/produsage that may play an important role in moving beyond the exploitative capitalist relation.

The central weakness of this iteration of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" is the relatively limited number of produsers consulted as research participants in proportion to the overall Flickr membership. With over fifty-one million members intermittently populating Factory Flickr, it is all but impossible to get in contact with each of them. This leaves particular areas of the Flickr-verse under-explored or completely unexplored. As the sparse reaction of the Flickr API group to the research question indicated, the voluntary nature of produsage and the specific focus of particular groups within Flickr, creates new challenges for researchers undertaking this kind of research. These challenges are directly related to accessing and recruiting Flickr members to participate in a research project oblique to their primary purpose of being on the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

site. Our experience with attempting to recruit participants from the Flickr API group is indicative of these new challenges.

The Flickr API Group is a place for unwaged hackers and programmers working with Flickr's code to share their experiences. While the API group is designated as 'public' and open to anyone, the focus of the group and the vast majority of the discussion threads found therein are overwhelmingly directed towards technical programming issues and their solutions. The question posed to them by this research project, then, has nothing to do directly with these core activities and was simply ignored by the majority of the group's membership. This is evidence of the potential problem alluded to above. Even if a researcher approaches his/her potential research participants on Web 2.0 sites and services with an informed understanding of the particular norms that circulate throughout the domain, the members of particular groups may not respond to the message, ignore the call for participation, and as a result the research project will stall before it is allowed to begin.

The amount of time, effort, energy, and work devoted to hacking the API is substantial. For this reason, a larger number of members from this group would have been interesting produsers to speak with regarding whether or not they considered their activities a form of labour and if they ever felt exploited by this process. Obtaining this perspective would have been of particular relevance as these produsers are engaged in creating highly specialized knowledge for Flickr, are responsible in part for how Flickr operates, and have one of the largest stakes in how Flickr makes use of their artefacts. While two research participants were in fact recruited from this group, the response to the original question was meagre compared to the response from Flickr Central and Utata. We believe this is due to the fact that the Flickr API discussion group is primarily a space for hackers/coders to discuss the intricacies, challenges, and opportunities of hacking the API. It is however not clear why this group, who is most involved with the development of the Flickr backbone, would be the most hesitant to engage in reflective practices about their labour. This remains a concern that needs to be addressed by subsequent iterations of the proposed methodology.

The difficulty of accessing produsers working within important corners of Factory Flickr is another reason why the artefacts of produsage are particularly important elements to consider when assessing the overall social and political dynamics of the mode of produsage. They do not replace the input provided by produsers, but they do assist in shedding some much-needed light into the obscure corners of Factory Flickr that might otherwise escape detailed scrutiny. While the weakness identified above merits recognition, it should not overshadow the information and data gleaned by the other members who did participate in the project.

8. Conclusions

The goal of Marx's and the autonomists' methods was to seek out workers, speak with them, evaluate the social and political dynamics of the workplace, gauge the workers level of exploitation, their cognizance of this exploitation, and, by doing so, provide them with the intellectual and emotional tools to do something about it. This remains the goal of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0". In prong one of the research design detailed above, we describe one procedure for adapting Marx's and the autonomists' methods to the Web 2.0 era and the mode of produsage. In addition to the elemental step of seeking out produsers and speaking with them, we must, however, also examine the artefacts produsers by them in an attempt to better understand the intricacies and nuances of the social and political dynamics that animate the mode of produsage. This vital function was described in prong two of "A Workers' Inquiry 2.0" by arguing that the artefacts of produsage are valuable pieces of data because of their being conceived, directed, and produsers by produsers themselves and not by the owners or administrators of these sites and services.

These artefacts and the mode of produsage responsible for their creation are evidence of what self-organized and self-managed individuals can accomplish autonomously, in cooperation and collaboration with others, free of the wage relation, and when left to their own devices. They tell us things about how we might relate to one another when the naked self-interest characteristic of monetary gain is pushed into the background. Whereas industrial production fragments the worker and the workforce into so many scientifically managed, fractured, and frustrated shards (Braverman 1998; Lukács 1967), the mode of produsage allows a place for all these contributions in and to the whole. By holding these artefacts and accomplishments up to the light and learning as much as we can from them – examining their successes, failures, set-backs, and achievements – we provide produsers not only with proof

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

of their exploitation, but, more importantly, with imperfect evidence of the nascent feasibility of an organization of labouring bodies and minds uninspired and unmotivated by the dictates of capitalist command and control. As a result, the artefacts are both a critique of the present and evidence of what may be possible in the future. In its own small way, then, Flickr provides the intellectual and emotional tools required to begin thinking about what it might mean to live and labour in a world beyond capital.

References

Barnsley, Jan, and Diana Ellis. 1992. *Research for Change: Participatory Action Research for Community Groups.* Vancouver, British Columbia: Women's Research Centre.

Bilton, Nick, and Evelyn Rusli. 2012. From Founders to Decorators, Facebook Riches. Accessed March 15, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/technology/for-founders-to-decorators-facebook-riches.html?_r=1andsrc=meandref=technology

Bologna, Sergio. 1980. The Tribe of Moles. *Semiotext(e)* 3 (3): 36-61.

Braverman, Harry. 1998. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Brewer, John D. 2000. *Ethnography*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Brook, Stephen. 2005. *Sale of Website to News Corp Branded a 'Giveaway'*. Accessed March 20, 2012: http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2005/sep/01/media.business1

Brophy, Enda. 2006. System Error: Precarity and Collective Organizing at Microsoft. *Canadian Journal Of Communication* 31 (3): 619-638.

Brown, Brian A. Forthcoming. Primitive Digital Accumulation: Privacy, Social Networks & Biopolitical Exploitation. *Rethinking Marxism*.

Brown, Brian A. 2012. *Will Work For Free: The Biopolitics of Unwaged Immaterial Labour.* The University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Information and Media Studies. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation.

Bruns, Axel. 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage.* New York: Peter Lang.

Burnham, James, Max Shachtman, Max, and Maurice Spector. 1938. *Introduction to Marx's "A Workers' Inquiry".* Accessed March 15, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/ni/vol04/no12/marx.htm

Cassano, Rosemary, and Judith Dunlop. 2005. Participatory Action Research with South Asian Immigrant Women: A Canadian Example. *Critical Social Work 6* (1).

Castells, Manuel and Peter Hall 1994. *Technopoles of the World: The Making of Twenty-First-Century Industrial Complexes*. London: Routledge.

Cellan-Jones, Rory. 2012. Facebook's IPO - It's Up To You. Accessed March 15, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-16835116

Cohen, Nicole. 2008. The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook. *Democratic Communique: Journal for the Union of Democratic Communications* 22 (1): 5-22.

Coté, Mark, and Jennifer Pybus. 2007. Learning to Immaterial Labor 2.0: MySpace and Social Networks. *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 7 (1): 88-106.

Dalla Costa, Mariarosa and Selma James. 1973. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community.* Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press.

Duhigg, Charles and Barboza, David. 2012, January 25. In China, Human Costs are Built into an iPad. Accessed March 15, 2012: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/26/business/ieconomy-apples-ipad-and-the-human-costs-for-workers-in-china.html?pagewanted=all

Dunne, Áine, Lawlor, Margaret-Anne., and Rowley, Jennifer. 2010. Young People's Use of Online Social Networking Sites - A Uses and Gratifications Perspective. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* 4 (1): 46-58.

Ellison, Nicole B., Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe. 2007. The Benefits of Facebook "Friends": Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (4): article 1. Retrieved from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html

Fake, Caterina. 2006. Foreword. In *Flickr Hacks: Tips and Tools for Sharing Photos Online*. Sebastapol, CA: O'Reilly Media.

Fals-Borda, Orlando and Muhammad Anisur Rahman, eds. 1991. *Action And Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research.* New York: The Apex Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Social Networking Sites and the Surveillance Society. A Critical Case Study of the Usage of studiVZ, Facebook, and MySpace by Students in Salzburg in the Context of Electronic Surveillance. Salzburg/Vienna: Research Group UTI.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. Web 2.0, Prosumption, and Surveillance. *Surveillance and Society* 8 (3): 288-309.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. Google Capitalism. *tripleC: cognition, communication, co-operation* 10 (1): 42-48.

Garrett, Jesse James, and Eric Costello. 2005. An Interview With Flickr's Eric Costello. Accessed March 15, 2012. http://www.adaptivepath.com/ideas/essays/archives/000519.php

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of Empire.* New York: Penguin Press.

Huws, Ursula. 2003. *The Making of a Cybertariat: virtual work in a real world.* London: Merlin.

Joinson, Adam. 2008. 'Looking at', 'Looking up' or 'Keeping up with' People? Motives and Uses of Facebook. In *Proceedings of CHI'08,* 1027-1036.

Kendall, Lori. 2002. *Hanging out in the Virtual Pub: Masculinities and Relationships Online*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

Kleiner, Dimytri and Brian Wyrick. 2007. InfoEnclosure 2.0. Accessed March 15, 2012 from *Mute: Culture and Politics After the Net*: http://www.metamute.org/en/InfoEnclosure-2.0

Lazzarato, Maurizzio. 1996. Immaterial Labor. In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics,* edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 133-147. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Levy, Ari, and Spears, Lee. 2011. LinkedIn Retains Most Gains Second Day After Surging in Initial Offering. Accessed March 15, 2012. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-18/linkedin-raises-352-8-million-in-ipo-as-shares-priced-at-top-end-of-range.html

Levy, Steven. 2006. The New Wisdom of the Web. Accessed March 15, 2012 from Newsweek: http://www.newsweek.com/id/45976

Lukács, Georg. 1967. *History and Class Consciousness.* London: Merlin Press.

Malo de Molina, Marta. 2004a. *Common Notions, Part 1: Workers-Inquiry, Co-Research, Consciousness Raising*. Accessed February 23, 2012: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en

Malo de Molina, Marta. 2004b. *Common Notions, Part 2: Institutional Analysis, Participatory Action-Research, Militant Research*. Accessed February 23, 2012: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0707/malo/en

Marx, Karl. 1938/1880. *A Workers' Inquiry.* Accessed March 15, 2012 from Marxists.org: http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/ni/vol04/no12/marx.htm

Moretti, Stefania. 2010, November 2. Facebook using Canada as testing ground. London Free Press. Accessed March 15, 2012: http://www.lfpress.com/money/2010/11/02/15923106.html#/money/2010/11/02/pf-15923101.html

Negri, Antonio. 1989. *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century.* Oxford, Great Britain: Polity Press.

Negri, Antonio. 2008. *Reflections on Empire.* Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.

O'Reilly, Tim. 2005. *What is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software*. Accessed March 15, 2012. http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html

Papacharissi, Zizi, and Andrew Mendelson. 2011. Toward a New(er) Sociability: Uses, Gratifications, and Social Capital on Facebook. In *Media Perspectives for the 21st Century*, edited by Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, 212-230. New York: Routledge: 212-230.

Precarias a la deriva. 2004. *Adrift through the Circuits of Feminized Precarious Work*. Accessed March 15, 2012: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0704/precarias1/en

Privacy Commissioner of Canada. 2009. Facebook Agrees to Address Privacy Commissioner's Concerns. Retrieved from http://www.priv.gc.ca/media/nr-c/2009/nr-c_090827_e.cfm

Quan-Haase, Anabel, Alison and Young. 2010. Uses and Gratifications of Social Media: A Comparison of Facebook and Instant Messaging. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 30 (5): 350-361.

Raacke, John and Jennifer Bonds-Raack. 2008. MySpace and Facebook: Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to Exploring Friend-Networking Sites. *CyberPsychology and Behaviour* 11 (3): 169-174.

Raynes-Goldie, Kate 2010. Aliases, Creeping, and Wall Cleaning: Understanding Privacy in the Age of Facebook. *First Monday*,15 (1), January. Accessed March 15, 2012: http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/2775

Reuters. 2011. *Twitter Share Auction Suggests $7.7 Billion Valuation*. Accessed March 15, 2012. http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/04/us-twitter-idUSTRE7221JL20110304

Schonfeld, Erick. 2005. *The Flickrization of Yahoo!* Accessed March 20, 2012: http://money.cnn.com/magazines/business2/business2_archive/2005/12/01/8364623/

Situaciones Colectivo. 2005. Something More on Research Militancy: Footnotes on procedures and (in)decisions. *Ephemera* 5 (4): 602-614.

Smythe, Dallas. 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1-28.

Springer, Michelle, Beth Dulabahn, Phil Michel, Barbara Natason, David Reser, David Woodward, and Helena Zinkham. 2008. *For the Common Good: The Library of Congress Flickr Pilot Project.* The Library of Congress. United States Government.

Stelter, Brian. 2011. *News Corporation Sells MySpace for $35 Million*. Accessed March 20, 2012: http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/news-corp-sells-myspace-to-specific-media-for-35-million/

Tapscott, Dan and Anthony Williams. 2006. *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything.* New York: Portfolio.

Taylor, Frederick Winslow. 1915. *The Principles of Scientific Management.* New York: Harper and Brothers.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press.

Toffler, Alvin. 1981. *The Third Wave.* New York: Bantam Books.

Touraine, Alain. 1971. *The May Movement, Revolt and Reform: May 1968-The Student Rebellion and Workers' Strikes-the Birth of a Social Movement.* New York: Random House.

Whyte, William F. 1990. Introduction. In *Participatory Action Research,* edited by William F. Whyte, 7-15. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Whyte, William F., Davydd Greenwood, and Peter Lazes, Peter. 1990. Participatory Action Research: Through Practice to Science in Social Research. In *Particpatory Action Research*, edited by William F. Whyte, 19-55. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Wright, Steven. 2002. *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism.* Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press.

Zhang, Yin, Leo Shing-Tung Tang, and Louis Leung, Louis. 2011. Gratifications, Collective Self-Esteem, Online Emotional Openness, and Trait like Communication Apprehension as Predictors of Facebook Uses. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 14 (12): 733-739.

About the Authors

Brian A. Brown

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

is a PhD candidate at Western University in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies. His research is focused on the biopolitics of social media, autonomist theory, and visual culture studies.
Anabel Quan-Haase
is Associate Professor of Sociology and Information and Media Studies at Western University. Her interests lie in social media, social networks, social capital, inequality, and serendipity.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012

tripleC 10(2): 509-517, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Pastoral Power of Technology. Rethinking Alienation in Digital Culture

Katarina Giritli Nygren & Katarina L Gidlund

Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall, Sweden, katarina.giritli-nygren@miun.se & Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall, Sweden, Katarina.lindblad-gidlund@miun.se,

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to rethink alienation in digital culture in the light of Foucault's "pastoral modalities of power". Pastoral power does not displace other conceptions of power, but provides another level of analysis when considering the forging of reasonable, responsible subjects willing and able to sustain alternative conceptions of power. We will draw particularly on the early writings of Marx and the recent poststructuralist developments concerning hegemony and superstructure in relation to technology. Technology as such is analysed in terms of the repercussions of the "design of the machine" in industrial technological contexts and the "design of digital culture" in digital technological contexts. Pastoral power not only directs our attention to the making of technologies, but also to the making of individuals capable of taking on responsibility for those technologies. This means that it is necessary to acknowledge the fact of the effective power of ideologies and their material realities.*

Keywords: *Digital culture, alienation, pastoral power, digital practices*

1. Introduction

Applying a Marxist approach to twenty-first-century information society is demanding and rewarding in equal measure; demanding in terms of the complex lines of argument required to unpick largely hidden phenomena, yet rewarding for its fine-grained analytical tools that uncover the power structures in any historical materiality. We will draw particularly on the early writings of Marx (Marx, 1963, 1986) and recent poststructuralist developments concerning hegemony and superstructure, and argue that such an endeavour provides a better understanding of the practices of digital technology in our time. In a classical Marxian analysis of technology in twenty-first century information society, digital technology could almost be seen as reinforcing the principles of automation, exploitation, and rationalization, for example in the context of electronic performance monitoring systems that are enhancing many of the Tayloristic thoughts on productivity, division of labour, and surplus value (Aiello and Kolb 1995; Carayon 1993). However, we would like to draw attention to another side of technological development – digital practices operating in the private sphere – where we suggest a Marxian analysis is relevant if we are to understand the new ways of reproducing capitalism.

To this end, we revisit a Marxian understanding of alienation and technology in the light of Foucault's concept of pastoral power, so capturing the new ways of distributing power in the digital era. According to some of Foucault's followers, the modern era (like other eras) is marked by an all-encompassing social practice (see for example: Bocock and Thompson 1992). All the phenomena that are characteristic of this era are designed either to strengthen or to counteract this practice. Pastoral power as such does not displace other conceptions of power, but provides an additional level of analysis with which to examine the forging of subjects willing and able to sustain an all-encompassing social practice. To view alienation within digital cultures as a ramification of pastoral modalities of power makes it possible to discuss technology as operating in structures of thinking and action that often seem to be devoid of power relations in the digital era.

While there are contradictions between Marx's and Foucault's theories (see for example: Barrett 1991; McDonald 2002), we would argue that it is precisely because of these tensions that it is rewarding to analyse alienation in digital cultures. One of the most frequently mentioned contradictions between these two giants of theory concerns the possibility of causal explanations or the differences between why questions and how questions are posed. Marx's position is as follows:

> *The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> *expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant relationships grasped as ideas (Marx and Engels 1976, 59).*

Marx and Engels's interest was primarily the material relationships that constitute ruling ideas. This line of reasoning implicitly creates an ontological explanation for the causal relationship between the ruling material forces, the ruling class, and the ruling ideas. Foucault, on the other hand, goes to lengths to avoid raising ontological questions, and instead focuses on epistemological questions, which here mean analysing how technology is intertwined with political prescriptions, power, and knowledge, and is embedded in socio-cultural practices. Socio-cultural practices are understood as the institutional and organizational circumstances in which the making of technology is situated. Since information society, like all kinds of societal transformations in history, is multidimensional, involving technological, economic, social, cultural, and political changes, it is necessary to analyse the strong image of information technology in relation to its twofold nature.

The implications of the differences in Marx's and Foucault's focus are here presented as a challenging way to move our understanding forward. We argue that this unconventional way of situating both thinkers in a theorization of digital culture provides an important avenue to re-evaluating the contribution they might make. Using pastoral power as a lens, our discussion begins with an outline of the new modalities of power in digital culture, before moving on to a more analysis of alienation and reification in digital culture by revisiting Marx's early writings. We conclude with a discussion of objectification and subjectification. We argue that alienation and objectification are definitely still valid in digital culture, but have to be enriched by an understanding of the modalities of power in digital culture working in the processes of reification that produce objectified, subjectified, and subjectifying subjects.

2. Modalities of Pastoral Power in Digital Culture

Our starting-point is an analytical separation between the practices of industrial and digital technology, where industrial technology is closely related to the labour sphere and ideas of rationalization (see for example: Habermas 1970; Feenberg 2010). Digital technology, in addition to being related to the labour sphere as industrial technology, is also related to the private sphere and ideas of individualization. Such an additional understanding assists in the analysis of the distribution of power under the historical conditions surrounding digital culture. Furthermore, it provides an analytical approach to digital practices operating as ideologies or norms, while at the same time retaining the material historicity of locality and everyday life practices.

We will base our analysis of technology in general, and digital culture in particular, on an epistemological rapprochement between "practices" (see for example: Pacey 1999). In order to address digital practices in relation to alienation, we make an analytical distinction between the two different operations of technology practices, in part following Pacey (1999), who writes of the two faces of technology practice: an object-centred, mechanistic approach that dominates science, engineering, and technology, and which marginalizes everyday experiences and leads to a compartmentalized and alienated practice; and a more people-centred, convivial approach in which social meanings co-exist and interact with the personal responses and existential experiences of individuals. We use this dichotomy to understand technology's close relation to labour power distribution and rationalization, in line with many updated Marxian analyses of technology (Feenberg 2010), but we also view digital technology as being linked to individualization, where the subject is part of the power distribution process. This is not a bald statement of the fact that technology and humans are separable in modern society (since they are linked in many ways)—the task is rather to retune the analysis of power distribution.

Consequently, we understand digital technology as an analytical object "on the threshold of materiality" (Dunne 2005, 11), a view informed by the philosophical view of technology as being underdetermined. The undetermination of technological artefacts "leaves room for social choice between different designs", and these "have overlapping functions but better serve one or another social interest" (Feenberg 2010, 7). According to Feenberg this means that "context is not merely external to technology, but actually penetrates its rationality, carrying social requirements into the very workings of gears and levers, electric circuits and combustion chambers" (Feenberg 2010, 7). Digital technology has a material existence without defined tangible qualities, and as such could be adhered to in almost all possible future scenarios. The symbolic logic is translated into a form that is characteristic of the digital artefact, and it is both the acceptance of the symbolic logic and the performed practices themselves that become the object of analysis (see for example: Löwgren and Stolterman 2004). Technology is nothing but a mirroring of hegemonic social concepts (such as

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

rationalization or individualization), but we need to create, update, and recreate tools to analyse its interaction with the distribution of power. Thus the opaqueness of digital technologies in twenty-first-century information society calls for a deeper understanding of alienation and capitalism, analysing and criticizing the uniqueness of things digital.

Here, Marxist theories and concepts are exceptionally well placed, especially where the ambition is to unveil cultural production in relation to marketization. However, we think that such an analysis is not enough. The opaqueness of digital technologies calls for a more complex conceptualization that allows a deeper, more structural analysis of the ways in which power is displayed. It is necessary to analyse an understanding of power that goes beyond power as a relation between oppressors and oppressed, between worker and owner, or as an effect of the State, and it is to this end we advance a theoretical framework that draws on both Marx and Foucault. We argue that a Foucauldian analysis of power is needed if Marx's concepts of alienation and dialectical analysis are to have full rein in a critical analysis of the distribution of power in digital culture.

Foucault's concept of pastoral power was coined in his genealogical discussion of the historical development of the Christian Church and its gradual assimilation into modern State apparatuses. Its primary focus is the technologies and modalities of power as first developed in a Christian context (Foucault 1982, 2007). He shows that during the eighteenth century, pastoral power found a new way of distributing this kind of individualizing power. The modern State developed as a sophisticated structure into which individuals could be integrated, given one condition: that their individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns. The State, according to Foucault, should be seen as modern matrix of individualization—a new form of pastoral power. Foucault argues that pastoral power is reproduced by human beings themselves; the human being turns himself into a subject. At first the subjects were "the body of the religious soul", then "citizens", then "workers", and now they are "cultural beings" (see Touraine 2007). In the transformation from Christian to State modalities of pastoral power, Foucault characterized pastoral power as follows (Foucault 1982, 784):

(i) It is a form of power whose ultimate aim is to assure individual salvation in this world.
(ii) It is not merely a form of power that commands, it must also be prepared to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock.
(iii) It is a form of power that does not look after just the whole community, but each individual in particular, during his/her entire life.
(iv) It is a form of power that cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it. We argue that pastoral power has once again found a new way of distributing individualizing, and subjectifying power - this is what we call the pastoral power of technology.

We are addressing the process of subjectification, not as "the subject", but as "the storying of the self" (see for example: Rose 1996; Deleuze 1990; Derrida 1978). Subjectification is seen as arising from a regime, and this regime is tied to assemblages of power – in the present case, the pastoral power of technology, making the logic that of performing our multiple selves as commodities. The proposition is that this is an expression of our own will. So we the authors, for example, are performing ourselves as "elitist intellectuals" resistant to the possibilities of the market to attach lifestyle commodities to our performances. These performances are what is sayable, audible, operable, and performable, while other phenomena are not. Digital technologies effectively mask the origin of the relevant discursive practices, which are located in particular sites and procedures even though pastoral power disguises them effectively as logics of individualization and self-performance. The practices are pre-personal, structured into relations that grant power to some and limit the power of others. As such, the self is understood not as a mental mechanism, but as conversations, grammar, and rules. We *must* perform this way (see for example: Rose 1996).

It is also this dialogic character of self-narrative that demands a closer analysis when it comes to digital technology. Self-narratives are culturally provided stories about selves that serve as the resources with which individuals can interact with one another and with themselves (Rose 1996). By a combination of training and technological possibilities, we are becoming more and more skilled in performing ourselves (our multiple self-narratives). As a result, pastoral practice is increasingly being honed. The dialogic character of our self-narratives is also strengthened by digital technologies, since the responses (the interactional nature of subjectification) are more easily amplified (for example, by "liking" on Facebook, leaving blog comments, etc.). It is therefore also important to turn to the techniques and apparatuses of the regime. The pastoral power of digital technology adds to this by convincing individuals that the choices they make in the staging of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

their selves is their own, and that they are making these choices as expressions of their individuality. We are becoming willing and efficient self-governing subjects. By addressing things digital as a means of persuasion, exposure, amplification, and transmission, and as subjectification processes and performances, these circumstances are made more visible. The opaqueness of digital technology is exposed and made an object of study. The specific historical conditions of digital technology allow the process of individualization to colonize the lifeworld in a very effective manner:

(i) Digital technologies amplify the exposure of our self-narratives (our performances).
(ii) Digital technologies speed up the transmission of self-narratives (our performances).
(iii) Digital technologies amplify the number of responses, so strengthening interactional subjectification.
(iv) Digital technologies speed up the response time for interactional subjectification.
(v) Digital technologies enable multiple self-narratives in a more efficient manner.
(vi) Digital technologies (software such as photoshop, hardware such as digital cameras or smartphones) facilitate the creation of multiple self-narratives.
(vii) Digital technologies enable congruent self-narratives.

Drawing on the arguments Foucault presents, we propose that digital technology can be viewed as a modern matrix of individualization or as a specific form of pastoral power. Foucault writes of the State modalities of power, yet consider the following quotation when the term "the State" is replaced by "digital technology":

> *I don't think we should consider* [digital technology] *as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence, but on the contrary as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns (Foucault 1982, 783).*

Digital technology allows the subject to individualize, to stage the self, and, as such, the technological (digital) potential seduces the subject with the idea that with digital technology we can construct and display individuality. In the same way as automated technologies are embedded with rationalization (the social concept of a rationality that co-constructs society), digital technologies are embedded with individualization (individualization as an equally social concept co-constructing society). Pastoral modalities of power involve the entire history of processes of human individualization; saying that one does not want to express individuality with the help of digital technology sounds as awkward in our digital society as refusing to act in a rational way sounded in industrial society. Because this individualization is left unquestioned, it appears all members of society find it of interest—universal, neutral, natural, and inevitable. Yet where Foucault talks about "the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy" (Foucault 1982, 778), our argument turns on pre-censorship versus the censured, what is staged versus what is behind the scenes, the performed versus the unscripted, and the displayed versus "the dislocated" and "the localized".

3. Marx Revisited

In modern societies, knowledge is conjoined with power and together they produce individual subjectivity and the social order. Marx's works offers excellent tools to analyse objectifying practices, but when it comes to analysing subjectifying practices, they have some shortcomings. There are also clear connections between Marx's analysis of capitalism and Foucault's conception of disciplinary power. For example, Foucault clearly states that the rise of disciplinary power was a central feature of modern society that went hand in hand with the development of the capitalist mode of production, which needed a labour force both subjected to and better utilized by its system (see Marsden, 1999). Foucault also contrasts Marx's economics of untruth with the politics of truth – the first focuses on the relation between economic, material praxis, and ideology, while the second focuses on the relationship between knowledge, discourse, truth, and power. To capture the opaqueness of digital technology, we think it is necessary to keep both theories in mind, especially as Foucault's concept of pastoral power speaks to the subjectifying practices of digital technology, not only its objectifying practices. Foucault's notion of pastoral power is based on the metaphor of the relationship between the shepherd and his flock (Foucault 2007, 125–130), where the shepherd gathers and defines his flock and each member of the flock is saved by the shepherd's individualized goodness – the shepherd, in other words, takes control of the individuals through individualizing techniques. Pastoral modalities of power are based on people's freedom of choice, but have a controlling function that makes them choose what is deemed necessary.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Humans are as much controlled when they are created as objects as when they are created as subjects, at least as long as their subjectivities confirm hegemonic practices (Foucault 1988).

Digital technologies can be understood as an institution producing and sustaining new forms of transnational material relationships that make the ruling classes even more invisible, as well as an institution that produces new subjectivities and new forms of governing that involve the activating rhetoric of neo-liberalism. Foucault (2007) describes the pastoral modalities of power as a power linked to the production of truth and a unique combination of individualization and totalization. As such, the conceptual advantages of situating pastoral modalities of power within the understanding of alienation in digital culture offers a clearer view of how the practices of power become processes of subjectification within digital cultures: it offers a dialectical understanding of reification and individualization.

Certainly, digital technologies in twenty-first-century information society are of an opaqueness that calls for a greater understanding of alienation and capitalism, and the question of their uniqueness should be analysed. Marxist theories and concepts are exceptionally well placed to unveil cultural production in relation to marketization, but equally, such an analysis is not enough, for the opaqueness of digital technologies calls for a more complex conceptualization, which allows a more detailed, structural analysis of the ways in which power is displayed. It is necessary to analyse an understanding of power that goes beyond that of power as a relationship between oppressors and the oppressed. Moreover, we see the opaqueness of digital technology as something different and more complex than industrial technology, where ideal expressions of dominant material relationships, not to mention the material distribution of hegemonic, neo-liberal ideas, have to be taken into account. While Marx focuses on material conditions rather than ideas, Foucault focuses on ideas as material conditions (see for example: Foucault 1984).

There is much to revitalize thinking about twenty-first-century information society in the works of Marx. The concepts of alienation and reification offer good starting-points in better understanding the “digital” element in digital cultures. As is well known, Marx articulated his theory of alienation most clearly in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1988) and *The German Ideology* (1976). His critique extends to both Feuerbach and Hegel, while discussing and acknowledging other forms of alienation such as political alienation and religious alienation. For Marx, the alienation of labour is the most basic form of alienation (Marx and Engels 1976): built on a particular form of wage labour, is for him a systematic result of capitalism (Marx and Engels 1976, 1988).

Alienated individuals have to be alienated from *something*, as a result of certain objectifying and dualistic practices that manifest themselves in the historical framework. Alienation is then a consequence of human totality and human self-consciousness standing in opposition to each other. As such, religious alienation is connected with the dualistic construction of body and soul, or the empirical life on earth and the spiritual life in heaven, whereas political alienation is connected with the (bourgeois) dualistic creation of the individual as abstract citizen and private human being (Marx 1963). In his analysis of the alienation of labour, Marx stresses two points:

(i) In the process of work, and especially work under the conditions of capitalism, man is estranged from his own creative powers, and,
(ii) The objects of his own work become alien beings, and eventually rule over him; they become powers independent of the producer (Marx 1963).

This form of alienation means, for Marx, that individuals do not experience themselves as the acting agents, but that the world (Nature, others, and he himself) remains alien to them. They become reified and appear as objects, even though they may be objects of their own creation. In a capitalist society, workers can never become autonomous, self-realized human beings in any significant sense, except in the way the ruling class wants the workers to be realized. They can only express this fundamentally social aspect of individuality through a production system that is not publicly social, but privately owned; a system for which each individual functions as an instrument, not as a social being (Marx 1963).

When differentiating industrial from digital technology, it becomes apparent that Marx’s theory of alienation is very much based upon his observation of emerging industrial production (for a similar discussion, see Feenberg 2010). Marx developed his theories during the era of modern industry, when workers were assembled in large factories or offices to work under the close supervision of a hierarchy of managers who were the self-appointed brains of the production process. Workers could be seen as extensions of machines rather than machines being the extensions of workers. This type of analysis of alienation is still valid in the twenty-first-century information society. Digital technologies also enhance many of the industrial phenomena of productivity, division of labour, and surplus value (Aiello and Kolb 1995; Carayon 1993), which shows that information society is not

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

only, if at all, a post-industrial society. But, if we return to the question of digital technology and its opaqueness, we take our lead from Marx in suggesting that it is necessary to talk of a new form of alienation that has emerged with the Internet and information society – "digital alienation", which with its dislocated virtual life constructs a dualistic relation between dislocated and located forms of being (online/offline identities). The life situation (whether digital or virtual) is still located; the image of liberation, disengagement, and loss of stability is (to paraphrase Marx) part of this epoch's "ruling ideas", meaning the ideas of the ruling class. It is a widespread contemporary belief that increased economic globalization, together with online communication, will reduce the importance of geographical sites as a base for people's identity (see, for example, theorists such as Giddens 1990; Virilio 1993; Negroponte 1995). The construction of "placelessness" and a possible dissolution of space and time give rise to a new form of alienation – digital alienation – that reproduces and hides class conflicts in contemporary global societies.

According to Marx, the alienation of labour occurs when the worker is alienated from the product of his work and therefore becomes alienated from work itself. His argument is that it is essential to human beings to express ourselves creatively, but that we lose contact with ourselves if this is not the case in our own working conditions. In industrialized society, working conditions deny us control of our work and the world we live in. The line of argument for digital alienation is similar, but based on the process of individualization. We position digital alienation alongside the alienation of labour, in much the same way as religious and political alienation are positioned alongside the alienation of labour: as an objectifying and dualistic practice. Human totality is alienated from self-consciousness, and the digital "self" becomes a commodity. The subject might resist, but is constantly undermined by the relation to the "screen". We are "seduced" by the world of consumption into performing our self on the digital stage. Here the individual is merely a screen onto which the desires, needs, and imaginary worlds manufactured by the new communications industries are projected. Those who no longer find the guarantee of their identity within themselves are ruled, indistinctly, by what escapes their consciousness (see Touraine 2007, 101).

For example, individuals perform themselves on the stage of digital culture, and their control of the performance is lost because of the conditions of the digital performance (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.). We are no longer in control of the "self" we perform. We censor our thoughts and our images in relation to the expected (the life-styling logic) and the product/the self becomes alienated. We lose control of our digital selves and the world we live in, and it is hard to feel committed to the self since the analogue or localized life is separated from the digital. Neo-liberal subjects become dependent on the labour market, and ultimately on education, consumption, welfare state regulations and support, consumer supplies, and on possibilities and fashions in medical, psychological, and pedagogical counselling and care. This all points to the institution-dependent control structure of capitalist hegemony. With the advent of digital technology and neo-liberalism, the norms and hierarchies governing the processes of capitalistic hegemony tend to be hidden, and the processes themselves become mystified as nothing but the outcome of free individual choice (see Mosco 2004).

According to Marx, it is not until real individuals, in their individual circumstances, become one with their empirical lives that they can realize themselves as authentic social beings (Marx and Engels 1963). This line of thought is not unproblematic, since it is based on certain fundamental assumptions concerning the conditions for the self-realization of a possible, total, and authentic self, which is clearly related to Hegel and the *Bildung* tradition (for a more detailed discussion, see for example: Levine 2012). This is why the understanding of alienation in digital culture would be better redirected towards the analysis of processes of reification embedded within the pastoral modalities of the power of technology, where reification specifies the dialectic relationship between social existence and social consciousness. What we want to avoid is the social structural dimension disappearing, reducing alienation and reification to the level of a psychological characteristic of an abstract individual. To focus on the processes of reification means that we need to understand relations of power, recognizing that it is more important to analyse the processes that lead to alienation rather than the alienated condition as such. The concept of reification is used by Marx to describe a form of social consciousness, in which human relations come to be identified with the physical properties of things, thereby acquiring an appearance of naturalness and inevitability. To focus on processes of reification then means analysing how human relations operate and what they signify, which is, we argue, a theoretical standpoint very similar to Foucault's theory.

The multidimensionality of both the concepts of alienation and reification, and specifically the insights they provide into the inner structure of capitalist relations, show how capitalist social relations are materialized in the shape of the Internet. As such, they are built into information and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

communication technologies, and, because of the pervasiveness of commodity relations, they provide a fertile ground for reified forms of social consciousness. Based on the growth of digital technologies, new forms of reification have emerged.

Bringing the pastoral power of technology to an analysis of underlying social relations that produce alienation and reification provides a model for a more general analysis of the nature of technological and ideological mystification in contemporary neo-liberal and capitalist societies. This means that alongside the fetishism of commodities we also have the fetishism of technology. Where once the worker employed the instruments of production, now the instruments of production employ the worker.

4. A Multifaceted Analysis of the Distribution of Power

At the start of this paper, we proposed rethinking alienation and power in digital cultures. By proposing a dialectical analysis of digital technologies in relation to superstructure and base, hegemony and everyday practices, we have reappraised the understanding of alienation in twenty-first-century digital culture by viewing it in terms of the pastoral power of technology in order to analyse the opaqueness of digital practices. Pastoral power not only directs our focus to the relation between power and technological practices, but also to the making of individuals who willingly take on the responsibilities of power. This shows that it is necessary to focus on the notion of the effective power of ideologies and their material reality.

In talking about alienation in digital culture, we suggest it is crucial to note the specific type of alienation that arises in the era of digital technologies. It is of the outmost importance to analyse alienation in digital culture as a result of certain objectifying and dualistic practices when using Marx's theory. For the fundamental alienation of labour, Marx emphasizes that we do not experience ourselves as the acting agents in our grasp of the world; with digital technology, we *do* experience ourselves as acting agents. However, it does not matter how virtual the subject might be, there is always a positioned and localized body of experience and everyday life attached to it, from which the virtual subject is alienated. In this way, digital technologies are able to cause an illusionary feeling of subjectification and agency without having any empirical consequences – it is possible to voice opinions and thoughts without anyone listening. In similar vein, Fuchs (2008, 2009, 2010) states that social networking platforms are ideological expressions of individual creativity that create the illusion that individual expression counts in capitalism because they can be published online. Furthermore, he discusses the complex connections between the objectifying and subjectifying practices of digital technologies that are based on instrumental reason, but driven by active play labour (ibid.). This form of alienation results in what Fuchs (2010) calls a "total commodification of human creativity" (see also Smythe's original analysis of audience commodification (2006)). This is very much in line with a Foucauldian power/knowledge dystopia, in which even moral and practical knowledge are transformed into cognitive and technical systems that normalize and regulate what was previously private (see Lash 2007). And here the reason to adduce Foucault's theory becomes obvious since it permits a more flexible exploration of digital cultural and subjective phenomena. A Marxian approach to analysing the distribution of power is still needed in the twenty-first century. It provides analytical tools that not only expose alienation and reification in terms of material conditions of labour (extreme Taylorism), but also reveal alienation and reification in terms of material and objectifying practices in digital culture. Furthermore, an analysis of the subject as a target for commodification and dislocation allows us to see how reification is performed and operates today. For a better understanding of reification in digital culture, we have supplemented Marx's concept of reification with Foucault's concept of pastoral power to reveal the subjectifying practices. The analysis shows that the subject is an object of different modalities of pastoral power, for example in the ideology that holds that there are unique opportunities to express individuality in digital practices. Digital practices enable the subject to perform individualization, to stage the self, and, as such, they seduce the subject with the thought that with digital technology it is possible to construct and display individuality.

This theoretical construct draws attention to another level of analysis: the multifaceted analysis of the distribution of power in terms of the sublime equilibrium of objectified, subjectified, and/or subjectifying subjects. Neither Marx's nor Foucault's analysis is completely dystopian, as both leave room for resistance and action. By adding a careful analysis of the distribution of power, subjectification, and subjectifying processes (see, for example, Touraine 2007), another balance is struck. When Touraine address the image of a self and the subject, he draws a clear distinction between the notion of a subjectified subject and the subject in Foucault's pastoral power, and adds the idea of the subjectifying subject who has the ability to resist and to reflect. In the pairing of subject and subjectifyer, creator and created, liberator and imprisoned, the subjectification-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

reflecting subject resists the subjectifying practices. By focusing on processes of reification, the combined framework of Marx and Foucault successfully addresses both the procedures of objectification and subjectification in digital practices: objectification as an extension of competitive rationalization and domination (in other words, an extension of industrialization with the help of digital practices) and subjectification as commodification of the subject (or the marketization of the self), where, for example, the naturalization of certain capitalist values that turn the consumer into the ideal citizen takes place across national borders. Moreover, digital technologies have also been employed as modes of surveillance. As a consequence, control and power in digital culture manifest an increasing tendency towards the total surveillance and administration of society conducted through globally gathered and sorted digital information. Citizens, thanks to digital technologies, are becoming increasingly transparent to private and public monitoring agencies. The leading companies such as Apple, Google, Amazon, and Facebook have integrated data about our locations, preferences, or life events that are already put to use in various economic, political, and social contexts (see Andrejevic 2009). This paper has shown how the relationship between the distribution of power in digital practices in terms of *objectification* as a prolonged modernity, where everything is objectified and shaped according to commercial, rational and instrumental thinking, and *subjectification* as the expression of ultra-modernity, where instrumentality is supported by the illusory and ideological image of individual self-choice, could simultaneously be analysed as processes of reification within the digital pastoral modalities of power.

Reification then refers to two contemporary regulatory digital practices:

(i) processes of domination by others and/or subordination to an alien system of power, and

(ii) processes of being invented as a subject of a certain type.

Digital technologies have made it possible to govern in an advanced, liberal manner, providing a surplus of indirect mechanisms that translate the goals of political, social, and economic authorities into individual choices and commitments.

The task of global chains of production within digital societies is as much about producing subjects as it is about providing jobs and generating profit. However, it is important to also note that such a multifaceted analysis also touches on the transcendent balance between dystopia and utopia. We are not arguing for one or the other, but for revealing the full extent of the distribution of power and the potential for practices of resistance. Online activities, after all, also hold the promise of new forms of citizenship, communities, and political practice (see, for example, Bernal, 2006)

References

Aiello, John R. and Kathryn J. Kolb. 1995. Electronic Performance Monitoring and Social Context: Impact on Productivity and Stress. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 80 (3): 339–353.

Andrejevic, Mark 2009. *ISpy: Surveillience and Power in the Interactive Era*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas.

Barrett, Michele 1991. *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bernal, Victoria. 2006. Diaspora, Cyberspace and Political Imagination: The Eritrean Diaspora Online. *Global Networks* 6 (2): 161-179.

Bocock, Robert and Kenneth Thompson, eds. 1992. *The Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Carayon, Pascale 1993. Effect of Electronic Performance Monitoring on Job Design and Worker Stress: Review of the Literature and Conceptual Model. *Human Factors: Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society*,35 (3): 385–395.

Deleuze, Gilles 1990. *Entretien sur Mille Plateaux*., translated by S.-O. Wallenstein. Paris: Minuit (originally published in *Libération*, 23 October 1989).

Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *The Dangerous Supplement. Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Spivak, 141–164. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Dunne, Anthony. 2005. *Hertzian Tales, Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experience, and Critical Design*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Feenberg, Andrew. 2010. Marxism and the Critique of Social Rationality: From Surplus Value to the Politics of Technology. *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34 (1): 37–49.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777–795.

Foucault, Michel. 1988. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other writings 1977–1984*. New York: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*. New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fuchs, Christian 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Information and Communication Technologies and Society: A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. *European Journal of Communication* 24 (1): 69–87.

Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Class, Knowledge and New Media. *Media Culture and Society* 32 (1): 141–150.

Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Graham, Stephen. 1998. The End of Geography or the Explosion of Place? Conceptualizing Space, Place and Information Technology. *Progress in Human Geography* 22 (2): 165–185.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1970. Technology and Science as 'Ideology'. In *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, translated by Jeremy Shapiro, 81–127. Boston: Beacon.

Hunt, Alan J. 2004. Getting Marx and Foucault into Bed Together! *Journal of Law and Society* 31 (4): 592–609.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Lash, Scott. 2007. Power after Hegemony: Cultural Studies in Mutation? *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (55): 55–87.
Levine, Norman 2012. *Marx's Discourse with Hegel*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Löwgren, Jonas and Erik Stolterman. 2004. *Design av informationsteknik, materialet utan egenskaper*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
Marsden, Richard 1999. *The nature of capital: Marx after Foucault.* London: Routledge.
Marx, arl. 1963. *Early Writings*, translated and edited by T. Bottomore. London: C. A. Watts.
Marx, Karl 1986. *Karl Marx: The Essential Writings*, edited by F. L. Bender. Boulder: Westview.
Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1976. *The German ideology. Marx and Engels Collected Works, V*. 19–539. Moscow: Progress.
Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1988. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844: and the Communist Manifesto*. London: Prometheus Books.
McDonald, Bradley J. 2002. Marx, Foucault, Genealogy. *Polity* 34 (3): 259–284.
Mitchell, William J. T. 2002. Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture. *Journal of Visual Culture* 1 (165): 164–181.
Mosco, Vincent. 2004. *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power and Cyberspace*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Negroponte, Nicholas. 1995. *Being Digital*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
Pacey, Arnold 2001. *Meaning in Technology.* Cambridge: MIT Press.
Rose, N. 1996. *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*. Cambridge: CUP.
Thorpe, Ann. 2007. *The Designer's Atlas to Sustainability*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
Smythe, Dallas W. 2006. On the Audience Commodity and its Work. In *Media and Cultural Studies*: *Keyworks*, edited by Meenakshi G. Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 230–256. Malden: Blackwell.
Touraine, Alain. 2007. *A New Paradigm for Understanding Today's World.* Cambridge: Polity Press.
Virilio, Paul 1993. The Third Interval: A Critical Transition. In *Rethinking Technologies*, edited by Verena Andermatt-Conley, 3–10. London: University of Minnesota Press.

About the Authors

Katarina Giritli Nygren
Katarina Giritli Nygren is senior lecturer in Sociology at Mid Sweden University. Her research focus is twofold. The one concerns rethinking technology in digital cultures in order not only to enlarge our understanding of the nature of technology, but also to provide tools with which to analyse how it strengthens or counteracts established practices. The other concerns place as a site where processes of normalization are located in terms of inclusion and exclusion in relation to ethnicity, gender, and class.

Katarina L Gidlund
Katarina L Gidlund is associate professor of Informatics at Mid Sweden University. Her main research interest is critical studies of digital technology and societal change. This involves issues such as critical and reflexive design, defamiliarization, the discursive level of design, and the interplay between rhetoric and practice (hegemonies and their material practices, power structures, the visualization of dominant stories, and embedded internationalities). She is co-coordinator of the Swedish eGovernment Research Network, programme committee member of the International EGOV conference and the Scandinavian Information Systems Conference, and editorial board member of the International Journal of Public Information Systems.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 518-536, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Social Media, Mediation and the Arab Revolutions

Miriyam Aouragh

Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom, miriyam.aouragh@orinst.ox.ac.uk

Abstract: *This article discusses the socio-political implications of user-generated applications and platforms through the prism of the Arab revolutions. Popular postmodern conceptualisations such as (post-nation state) network societies, (post-class) immaterial economies and (horizontal) political resistance through multitudes requires rigorous reassessment in the aftermath of the events in the MENA. Although the revolutions have led to a resurgence of debates about the power of new media, such arguments (or rather assertions) are echoes of earlier suggestions related to peculiar fetishisations of ICT in general and social media in particular. The point of my critique is not to deny the social and political usefulness of new media but to examine the pros and cons of the internet. I tackle the juxtaposition of the internet and political activism through the Marxist concept Mediation and investigate how the social, political and cultural realms of capitalism (superstructure) are both conditioned by and react upon the political-economic base. This helps us to understand structural factors such as ICT ownership (political-economic decision making of social media); while deconstructing the effect of cultural hegemony disseminated through mass media. It also overcomes an unfortunate weakness of some "academic Marxism" (an overwhelming focus on theory) by anchoring the theoretical arguments in an anthropological approach*

Keywords: *Mediation, Base and Superstructure, 'Facebook Revolution', Middle East, Arab Revolutions*

Acknowledgement: *I would like to thank Jamie Pitman for helpful references to the 'immaterial labour' debate; Jonny Jones for comradely advice concerning the Marxist theory of value; the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments; and Rob Jackson for proof-reading.*

There is no doubt that the internet is an important medium since it offers ways to disseminate counter-hegemonic content and at times even allows new forms of political mobilization. By hook or by crook, activists must experiment with the internet to be effective. This online political engagement requires a critical analysis though. Politics in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) often operates in the context of media censorship, police oppression, war or colonial-occupation. Especially in times of revolution many forms of online politics are rendered meaningless - unless organically related to offline street politics. The events shaking the region since 2011 have starkly demonstrated this. I wish to revisit these developments from a media, communication and (non-western) anthropological angle.

The Arab evolutions motivated a broad range of responses and provided a publicity niche resulting in facile analysis of the "Arab Spring" and a sense of "intellectual frustration" (Sabry 2012, 80). Sabry identifies four categories: *Muteness* (intellectual impotence); *Stammering*; *Tele-Techno-* (the 'experts'); *Subaltern* (the activists themselves) (81). A quick overview of the work published in communication and media disciplines responding to the 'Arab Spring' shows two remarkable features: the sheer volume of material produced (dozens of academic publications in several special issues dedicated to the topic)[1] and its lack of engagement with Marxist theory. The fact that recent years have seen a popular re-emergence of interest in Marxist critiques while Marxist theories are hardly engaged with in mainstream academia shows a widespread gap between established and new scholarship and probably an inherited prejudice regarding 'systemic' analyses. To be clear, this is also the case for anthropology (Graeber 2001)[2]. Part of the explanation lies in an existing confusion at the very core of Marxist academia, centred on the dependency of superstructure as I will discuss. The overall objective of this paper is to offer a critical conceptualisation of the Arab

[1] Special issues related to internet activism and/or Arab revolutions are for instance: *International Journal of Communication* ["The Arab Spring and the role of ICTs", Volume 5]; *Communication Review* [Volume 14]; *Arab Media & Society* [Issue 14]; *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* [Volume 5]; *Globalizations* [Volume 9]. *Cyber Orient* ["The Net Worth of the Arab Spring", Autumn 2012); *Journal of Communication* ["Social Media and the Arab Spring", Volume 62].

[2] This is most probably related to a more prevalent anti-Marxist reflex, especially in US academia, which, not unimportantly, dominates the international academic field. As discussed by Graeber, many anthropologists (at Western universities) avoided Marxist theories in their work since Marxists were often persecuted. Even after WW2 and height of the Cold war, when there was more intellectual space, Marxist anthropology was absent or dominated by an orthodox Marxist (evolutionary) scheme. There was a break in the 1960s when most anthropologists' understanding of their discipline underwent a transformation, engaging more with a type of scrutiny exposing the workings of a system of inequality and injustice. A Marxist anthropologists' critique of non-Western social orders was not because it was different (the kind of relativism that was for long dominant in anthropology) from his or her own, but largely to the degree that it was *similar* (2001, 24).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

revolutions through the prism of the internet. But revolutions cannot be studied through the prism of the internet: internet activism is here viewed through the prism of the revolutions, combining theory with ethnographic insights both from meetings I had with Egyptian activists in Cairo in August 2011 and their online testimonies. This will help to push back the narrow presumptions about the universality of digital experiences and, by constructing a *grounded* empiricism, contribute to existing critical explorations.

The theoretical and political proposition regarding the potentials of social media, which underlies this paper, rests on a radical critique of the liberal-capitalist internet-ecology. From this follows a *rejection* of technological reductionism (not in the least because such approaches distract from necessary material-political explanations) and an *inclusion* of the disempowering materiality of technology. Social movement theories (many also formative to internet studies) were popularised with the surge of anti-capitalist movements, yet in some cases became part of the problem. An understanding of Marx is crucial to grasp how political encounters mediated through cyberspace impact existing political dynamics. Marxist theories of literature and art provided inspiring vantage points for a radical approach to social media and political change. I have found particularly helpful Terry Eagleton's 1976 expose *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Critical Marxist work in communication and cultural studies (e.g. Kellner 2004, Wayne 2003) further helped construct my arguments.

Eagleton (1976) considers literature to be shaped by the means of production and distribution. Therefore to be able to understand its implications requires an awareness of the historical conditions (iv) as well as the social composition of the authors (2). This evokes exactly the broader dialectic I am interested in exploring regarding social media. The (revolutionary) interconnected role of literature was originally outlined by Trotsky (1991) who nevertheless stressed that literary forms should have, and in fact do have, a high degree of autonomy. Eagleton (1976, 26) relates to this analysis by arguing that literature and art do not merely bend to ideology but evolve partly in accordance with its own internal pressures. For instance, books are not just (structured) expressions of meaning but also commodities produced by publishers and sold for profit. Literature is in fact considered the most highly mediated of social products and is also part of the economic base (60). The superstructure functions as an ideological organiser of the social class that owns the means of economic production. This double metaphor has suffered from distortion because the concept of the base (political-economy) is easily confused to mean 'essence' and superstructure (ideology/media) just an extraction thereof. The dialectics of art and literature provides an important framework for the study of the social-political implications of online media productions as I will argue. Some of the unhelpful economistic analyses notwithstanding, it is important to include this class focus.

The overall objective of this paper is to shed light on the complex online-offline dynamics shaping and preceding the current revolutionary transformations, and to step away from the void 'Facebook Revolutions' cheering. In the past years several scholars have produced critical work problematizing the oft-assumed relation between increasing democracy and internet technology (e.g. Doogan, Fenton, Fuchs, Haug, Kellner, Mejias, Sayer, Terranova) with whom I will engage in this paper. I will start by describing the Marxist concept of *mediation,* which offers a creative and very helpful tool to explore the pros and cons of the internet in revolutionary turmoil. Especially in internet studies where the subject of investigation is also a powerful economic sector and condition of capitalist production, it is crucial to critique the economic context. Mediation unveils this relation between base and superstructure. How internet-related re-conceptualisations have in due course redefined the very definition of activism and resistance shall be reviewed in the second section. I recognise that the internet is both a product of capitalist logics and simultaneously used to resist those logics. In the third section I therefore discuss ICT imperialism and the potential impacts of this on political activism. In the final part of this paper I set out to empirically deconstruct how political organising and internet technologies relate, avoiding the customary straw-man positions. In the background of these debates I take the centrality of the concept mediation because it allows me to engage with its dual nature and hermeneutical distinction. Social mediation is not impressed by 'nodes' alone, instead, it highlights the nexus of political hegemony and liberation of internet politics. Although I proceed in a more integrated manner in the second half of the paper, the theoretical (sometimes dreary) propositions about base-superstructure deserve to be spelled out first.

1. Deconstructing *Mediation*

The aforementioned reluctance to engage with Marx (and more general confusions) is probably due to the fact that while 'base' represents a combination of forces and relations of production, one of the elements in this combination is 'more basic' than the other. As Engels himself anticipated "If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determin-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ing one, he transforms it into a meaningless abstract and absurd phrase" (in Eagleton 1976, 9). The confusion about the legal and political 'superstructure' mostly arises from the definition of the 'base'. An important correction given by Harman (1986) is that Marx doesn't make a *single* distinction between 'base' and 'superstructure' because there are two distinctions; between the 'forces of production' and the relations of production; and between the relations of production and the remaining social relations. The *forces* of production are dynamic and can come into conflict with the (more static) *relations* of production. The relations of production correspond to the forces of production – hence, as Harman lucidly argues, the forces of production (that have the agency and motivation) rebel against the relations of production - not the other way round.

So, to recap, the forces and organisation of labour are the economic structures (base) of society from which emerge a certain polity and politics (superstructure), and these in turn merge in different ways, depending on the historical situation in which it occurs. If as Marx and Engels argued, the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force, how does this dynamic occur in the realm of ideology - literature, art, media? As hinted at above, the business and the production of ideas are interrelated. For instance, literary works or art are (and aren't) embedded in state ideology which is why the *mediation* between these forms requires an analysis in itself. They are forms of perception related to the dominant (state) ideology (Eagleton 1976, 7). *Mediation* suggests the presence of normative representations of social relations, but it also depends on what form of mediation (books, newspapers, films, websites) is at stake. Each technological transformation is both a continuation and a unique transformation, manifested in ways depending on a particular development. Every new technological force will also have implications for the balance of forces and the tools required. This is where the Marxist roots (base and superstructure) of mediation are most clearly related to the internet's political (e.g. expressing an ideology that prefers non-violent horizontal networks) – economy (a medium deeply embedded in neoliberal ICT corporations).

The revolutionary transformations that occurred in the availability and usage of communication and information technologies had enormous political implications throughout history. For instance, replacing the time-consuming technique of parchment with papyrus had important consequences for European Protestantism and via the upcoming bourgeoisie for other social classes too (Deibert 1997). Presenting phenomena as unprecedented occurrences with the adjective 'new' does not relate to how everyday technologies have morphed with each new stage of development (Briggs and Burke 2005). The popularity of blogs that shaped the Arab public sphere since 2006 is a good example. Armbrust (2007) and Ulrich (2009) remind us of the need to historicise technological (user-generated) developments such as Arab blogging by looking at the longer existing and strong culture of oral mediation, or tape-recorded sermons distributions and of course popular magazines. There is a common tension between historical continuity and change. But historicising is not merely tracing technical forces in themselves; in a Marxist epistemology what matters more is the place they occupy within a whole mode of production (Eagleton 1976, 74). Also, and therefore, the transformation or morphing does not occur immediately. According to Peters (2009, 18), most mass media passed through five stages: the technical invention (which is a combination of the old and new); cultural invention (thus how they are linked to new social uses); legal regulation; economic distribution; and finally, social mainstream[3]. But again, superstructure also refers to non-material (non-economic) consequences. Producers of 'culture' (in whatever form or expression) are relatively free, yet influenced by that material reality[4]. How this relation is structured, the interdependence formed, is called mediation.

There have been interesting discussions of the mediation of culture and communication in the Arab revolutions, such as Sabry's reference to the *aesthetics and poetics of mediation* (2012, 82). Rather than its literal meaning, this paper engages with mediation beyond the connotations of *dissemination* and signifies the capitalist rules of engagement between base and superstructure. Mediation reveals these inner relationships and lays down the patterns that obscure relations of exploitation; by doing so it represents both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes. The question is how to apply this Marxist exercise in the context of media technologies.

Wayne (2003, 128) identifies seven levels of mediation with regards to the media: text; production process; production context; industrial context; the state; modes of development; and mode of production. All these levels are related but the most important levels in the context of social media

[3] To the fifth phase can be added the register of ways new technologic inventions are countered, as is sometimes the case with dystopian deliberation about the internet, including by leftist progressives.

[4] As Harman clarifies, ideology and consciousness is "a subjective link between objective processes"; ideas develop on the basis of material reality and feed back into that reality. Thus while they cannot be reduced to that reality, they can neither be divorced from it.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

(Facebook, Twitter) are those addressing the production process and production of context. But the relationship between producer and consumer is itself contained in the practices of communication.[5] Raymond Williams (1979), following Adorno's *Theses on the Sociology of Art,* stressed that mediation is in the object itself. This could correspond to what is believed to be the core characteristic of internet media. So how can we reconcile this apparent contradiction of mediation? For Marx, capitalism is a system that creates its own gravediggers. Besides a more organized fashion of exploitation the concentration of workers into workplaces, paradoxically, created the possibility of class consciousness and stronger ties through firmer constructions of identities that are in addition to existing identity formations based on shared expectations, endurances, lifestyles, and proximity. Nonetheless, the absence of (free, accessible) communication technology (through the free-market privatisation of these means) weakens the social ties of the exploited classes. But what happens to the process of mediation when this gap is overcome in terms of 'authorship', when the user-generated content or products as well as the users' intentions are about free and artistic development, about social change and (internet) subversive activism? What happens to this process when even the producer and consumer are the same, the most celebrated feature of Web 2.0?

The (power of the) author as producer is not a new idea and is discussed by Marxist media theorist Walter Benjamin in 1934, later coined by Toffler (1980) as *prosumer*, and recently by Bruns (2010) *produsage*. But unlike the recent understandings focussing on participation by consumers within the capitalist system,[6] Benjamin meant a revolutionary intervention to counter the dominant bourgeois media and ideology. It was even less about the participation of *prosumers* in corporations to further reduce investment costs and increase clientele as Fuchs (2009, 95) argues with regards to Facebook. Such a 'prosumer' doesn't signify democratization (participation) but rather a further commodification of human creativity.

My point is that ideological mediation is played out partly through the commodification of media sources and tools. Presently this occurs with corporate platform operators and providers who basically sell its users to advertisers and further intensify exposure to the commodity propaganda of advertisements while online (Fuchs 2012,146). This is the arena where the mediated base and superstructure is demonstrated most clearly in the case of the Arab revolutions: the available ICT is a direct output of corporate structure and ideological (consensual) symbols that have helped frame the narrative about social media and the Arab revolutions. But can we really draw such conclusions about very different media environments - Web 0 (before-internet) and Web 2.0 ? It seems that this has been the underlying understanding about the ramifications of neoliberalism and simultaneously the transition towards it and an information-economy. Consequently, mediation also has to be understood differently. It is important to engage with this critique for the sake of empiricism; but when we have the most accurate picture we also find clues for how best to fight (or how not). Thus, before I continue to discuss the internet in the Arab revolutions this has to be explained.

1.1. From Das Kapital and class to Das Empire and Multitude?

It is true that since the *Communist Manifesto* or *Das Kapital* there have been important developments, it could be argued that the dominant corporate media has restructured itself and morphed into different mode of production and capital. Perhaps technological innovations represent a new stage in society. A popular way to deal with this is focussing on what distinguishes internet-economies in the new state contexts (from a post-war liberal welfare to a neo-liberal state). For many internet theorists, communication is *the* force of change. According to Castells (2009) communication is the central power (and counter-power) in contemporary society.[7] *Base* can now be understood through *informationalism*, alluding to a technological development rather than mode of production. This adaptation is similar to what became known, in a more crude fashion, as *immaterial labour* by Hardt and Negri. They consider the ('immaterial') production of ideas (characterising this type of capitalism) by virtue of what it produces rather than the labour process. The internet is often seen as the qualitatively different commodity here, apparently confusing the term 'labour' with 'work'. According to Camfield (2007) the central theme in these analyses can't actually play the role assigned to it because they don't address how surplus value is extracted and tends to underestimate the exploitation that underlies it. A 'post-capitalist' economics in which the separation between consumption and production mysteriously dissolves with new technologies (consumer and producer became one) suggests that the internet can function outside the structures of capitalism,

[5] Williams engages here with Adorno's *Theses on the Sociology of Art*.

[6] For a helpful overview of the so-called 'democratic turn' and its introduction in the Knowledge Economy debate see Daniel Araya's review:<http://www.danielaraya.com/docs/ProsumerInnovation.pdf>.

[7] Castells identifies four kinds of power: networking; network; networked and network-making power.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

turning class into a different category altogether.[8] Meanwhile, in their work *Empire* Hardt and Negri understand immaterial labour as industrial production that has been 'informationalised' and which has therefore transformed "the production process itself." Manufacturing is regarded more as a 'service' which they then consider to be the driving force behind "the postmodernisation of the global economy" (2000, 293). The global economy is somehow one entity, beyond inter-state competition (perhaps the most important feature of modern capitalism), thus beside class (multitude) there is also a different role reserved for state (empire).

Ironically, while Hardt and Negri challenge his theory of value, Marx gives serious consideration to the social implications of technological development. He actually mentions that technology has the potential to *unlock the free development of individualities* and the *reduction of labour time to a minimum* in the service of *artistic and scientific development* (i.e. rather than for the sheer creation of surplus labour).[9] To postmodern thinkers the (old) term 'labour' challenges the question of (new) 'knowledge production'. But for Marx labour represents action that both presupposes and propagates new knowledge. Far from ignoring the impact of the 'superstructure' on the 'base', as many critics have claimed for more than a century, Marx builds his whole account of human history around it. Political and ideological struggles that arise as a result of competition and exploitation, are decisive for whether a new rising class (based on new forces of production) displaces an old ruling class (Harman 1986). For Marx, knowledge and physical labour have always been continuous with one another but the idea of the *informationalisation* of industrial production is problematic.

Perspectives about a *new* capitalism are associated with a restructuring of the labour market and globalization causing a fusion of transnational market systems and new technologies, the supposed 'dematerialisation' of the economy (Haug 2009). 'Old' forms of employment are replaced by new internet-formed discourses that aligned it mostly with knowledge ('cognitive') processes. It is now "biopolitical production" in which the economic, the political, and the cultural increasingly overlap (Sayers 2007, 444). These, rather far-fetching, (re)definitions do not have a clear analysis of the exploitative mechanisms at work and have provoked critique such as describing these novel projections as coming down to "the presence of left wing harmonies in the neoliberal chorus' (Doogan 2010, 29). Part of the motivation for this stems from the opinion that Marx left us ill-equipped to deal with the absorption of knowledge and new technologies in the production process, thus substituting the 'classical' Marxist tradition with 'immaterial labour'. It seemed that the analysis was flipped, because the challenge is to have a clear understanding of the social relations underpinning capitalist production "rather than fetishize its effects" (Fine & Saad-Filho 2010, 23). But for Hardt and Negri (2004,140) history moves on and social reality changes, thus old theories are no longer adequate: new realities demand new theories.

Conversely, technology is an integral fixture in Marx's analysis of capitalist society as the previous paragraph describes. Marx obviously did not delve into a communication and information medium at the time, but he didn't overlook its role either. Discussing technology as an alienating force of modern industry in *Capital*, Marx considers technology disclosing the process of production and thereby also "lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them".[10] From this we can understand that the relations of production rely on the production of property *and* information. Taking this further, the *dual* condition outlined here with the internet turns it into a much more lucrative techno-communication *product* as well as a user-generated medium. Besides catering for its users, social media also constitute the mechanism that strongly underlies capital accumulation (Fuchs 2009). This, unsurprisingly, draws a different picture, and impacts how resistance is organised and, hence, needs to be assessed in relation to social movements as well before I can apply the related concepts to concrete empirical examples.

2. How the Internet Redefines Resistance

Celebratory portrayals of the Arab revolutions made possible with (Western) technology are not completely new. With the struggle of the Zapatistas;[11] the revitalization of anti-capitalist protest movements (e.g. WTO-Seattle, World Social Forum); and new open-source platforms like

[8] Voluntarism in the blogger, open-source and hacker communities often comes to mind. A telling example is the recent case by former contributors against the much hailed Huffington Post. These bloggers had produced and helped disseminate Huffington content for free. It was the kind of immaterial labour praised indeed. But when the owner made a multi-million deal with AOL the philanthropy ended: they sued her and demanded a share in the proceeds. See: <http://www.politico.com/blogs/onmedia/0411/Unpaid_bloggers_sue_Huffington_Post_and_AOL.html>.

[9] These views can be found particularly in chapter 14 of the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1857/1858)

[10] From Capital Vol. 1, the rest of the paragraph in:<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/granat/ch02.htm>.

[11] Ironically, the Zapatistas have been appropriated in the original internet-resistance myth – they were not internet activists, but guerrillas in the mountains of Chiapas who deployed the internet to literally mediate their offline resistance.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Indymedia, academic interest in communication and technology joined these waves. This enthused debates about the internet as the new spaces of resistance and a turn of politics into the realm of social networking sites developed considerably. But the more mediating the message of protest came to be considered the protest itself, it also introduced a *commoditization* of internet politics. To a certain extent this is true since communicating our demands and alternative analyses is fundamental. We *want* to construct (influence) meaning-making processes; we understand very well that the media are amongst the most fundamental spaces to achieve this on a broad scale.

Social movement literature is often based on theories of collective action. The prominence of the internet questioned the relevance of traditional collective action paradigms, (traditional) theories that emerged in conditions lacking the key communication possibilities presently available (or rather, for almost two decades by now). Then, does this imply that certain (pre)conditions are no longer universally present in the realm of activism? The much cited work by Bimber et al. (2005) argues that "new forms of collective action *reliant* on certain technological aspects illuminate several fundamental aspects of all collective actions that so far have remained theoretically obscure" (366).[12] The two most important changes challenge the binary choices of *participation* (in the past this is assumed to rely on strong ties and vanguards) and the role of *organisation* (conceived mainly as vertical structures of command and control) with explicit leadership and division of labour. Bimber et al. reframe collective action as '"a set of communication processes involving the crossing of boundaries between private and public life" (367). It is true that with the internet (especially Web 2.0) weak ties can be included and in effect contribute to political organising; it is not stuck between being a 'free rider' or a 'vanguard'. There is a false dichotomy however, joined by what seems to be an error in the overall assessment. Firstly there is a dichotomy between weak and strong ties, as if not anymore reliant on a constant weighing between cost and benefit, beneath its optimistic narrative there is a rather pessimistic outlook whereby motivation or political engagement is strongly dependent on 'low investment'. There will probably be an efficiency balance at stake but it obviously misses factors like solidarity, camaraderie, unity and of course necessity. My second point has to do with the word 'reliant' in the previous quotation; causing much of the confusion. The answer to the riddle can be found in this 'relative' condition as I will explain regarding the *unequal* effects of internet activism.

However, the authors consider the largest obstacle to be the nature of organisation (369). Here too Seattle (anti-WTO protests of 1999) seems to have shattered everything with its loosely coupled networks without a fixed structure of leadership and decision making or recruitment policies. Despite the high-dosage of mythology there are two underlying premises I take issue with: everybody everywhere seems to be connected (otherwise it wouldn't be a democratic –representative- form of organising obviously); it seems that people value online commitment and community similarly as offline [physical] interaction. Illustrative is the following quote they cite "Right now, every time we do an action, we send out an e-mail and a hundred people show up. It's like magic. We couldn't do it without e-mail" (Bullert 2000, 4; in Bimber 2005, 370). But anyone who was or is involved in activism knows that it isn't magic. When you mobilize and send out an email, that is *communicating*, such as calling, texting, fly-posting and standing on a soap box was, and often still is. I don't think we consider the turn-out in these cases as magical, moreover: not everyone is connected. Perhaps more relevant in the context of this paper: many people are not convinced enough to sacrifice their time, risk their jobs or accept bodily harm based on a passing message received via online platforms.

Technology has undercut some of the annoying requirements of organising and allows a broader circle of people (to be semi/activists) to contribute and it is important to accept that there is improvement. But many of the examples have to do with dissemination (thanks to email, bulletin boards, SNS) and better ways of sharing, as Bimber et al. rightfully argue (372). But how does the mobilization of new collective action now result from "largely uncoordinated efforts" (373)? What is missing is the *content* and *how* the demands come about: who organised the initial or eventual calls/meetings/protests? There is some truth to Bimber's suggestion but it is only partial. If there are, hypothetically, six crucial stages or spheres of political organising then the issue of coordination of dissemination covers two at most. Thus as activists we are relieved from some important burdens but most characteristics of political organising are not *overcome* or altered because they have to do with the power relations we depend on and the privilege we (because of our subversion) don't possess and wish to actually remove altogether. Nevertheless, as the authors note "new faces of collective action exhibit both formalized and informal structures" (374). And, if the boundary crossing phenomena "lie at the heart of new forms of technology based collective action, and they form the general class of which the traditional free-riding decision is one special albeit very im-

[12] The authors discuss some of the prominent collective action theories since Olson's 1965 study marked this discipline.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

portant, subset" (377), how are we to asses this reframing if it turns out not to be so since it underestimated previous and non-wired dynamics? Some of the same processes are found in non-technological spaces of interaction - which makes it so important to historicise our current modes of communication and embed these analyses in ethnographic realities. For instance, the networks of the *baqqal* (neighbourhood grocer), the taxi driver, the mosque or *hammam* (public bath) includes an enormous amount of information flows. All of a sudden it seems less extraordinarily unique that boundaries between private and public domains can be crossed. But this is not a sufficient analysis, in the last section I will return to *when* exactly *what* matters in more detail.

The problem is that revisions of concepts (such as resistance and revolution) in a time during which the real-life practices behind those very concepts are defied, results in a flattening of the concept of resistance and potentially in turn a weakening of this very resistance. These redefinitions are not autonomous but closely associated to the altered meaning of class (considered to be defeated) and state (dissolved into flows of networks) by neoliberal globalisation; even the replacing of political-economy (Kellner 2002, 287).The techno-tunes stemming from these theoretical alterations actually resemble earlier ('post-colonial') shifts which contributed to analytical moves from politics to culture. Paradoxically, the subaltern-type reassessments, de-politicised the debate in the long term (removing some of the necessary conceptual tools), particularly in the context of the Middle East which comprises neo-colonialism and imperialism.[13] New social movement paradigms turned to the possibility of creating new identities, equating 'old' only with struggles over access to resources and identities based on class alliances, the (original) idea of collective identities and class struggle were deemed outdated, conservative or essentialist. The internet as representational activism (texts, visuals, online public spheres) sits comfortably with and change at the level of representation and social movement theories that related to *narrative* or discursive practices - exercising power in and through discourses - further flattening the concept of resistance. The theoretical shifts coincide with novel interpretations about the role of new online networking methods for political change because the internet offers democratised networks and the increasing power of the individual.[14]

Consequently, if labour and capital are both core forces in capitalism, the state is the mediator between (the exploitation of) the first and (the potential of) the second, the state is the metaphorical hyphen in political-economy. The main (Eurocentric) flaw here regards the recommendation to 'go beyond' the nation-state to those struggling for economic and territorial autonomy or (in the case of Palestine or Western-Sahara) a state even. As noted, mediation is not about representation in a merely figurative sense; it is that political and economic *regulation* through corresponding state structures and ensuing ideologies. Gramsci developed the concept hegemony as used earlier by Lenin to suggest that capitalism maintained control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie became the 'common sense' (hegemony). Ordinary people identify with the bourgeoisie (consensus culture) and maintain the status quo. With this understanding of hegemony Gramsci set out to emphasize the importance of the superstructure in both maintaining and fracturing relations of the base.[15]

The internet is not non-hierarchical but embedded in structural inequalities and the strong privileges of some (existing) media over others. Besides neoliberalism and the fact that information flows are not in the same league as those dominant on the internet (O'Neil 2009, 15), the problem is that other forces of power set the rules for such fights. There is the strong effect of hegemony (of coercion and consent) in capitalist ideology, disseminated and shaped by state-institutes. This relates to the meaning of mediation as a de-fetishizing force; most directly to unveil the impact of social media. Mejias (2011) noted that the overwhelming prominence of the narrative that Facebook and Twitter are crucial agents for change (besides being conceptually wrong) white-washes corporate capitalism.

Right from the start, debates about the internet coincided with the 'globalisation discourse' because, indeed: neo-liberal globalisation had strongly shaped conventional modes of communication (Featherstone and Lash 1995). They were accompanied by exciting stories about the internet creating gender equality, increasing economic development and other anticipations, but also doom-

[13] In such anti-class definitions marginal comes to mean 'the other', I don't want to simply end with a 'Third World' view and thus acknowledge that the same accounts for the 'First World'. To follow Eagleton: "The true scandal of the present is that almost everyone in it is banished to the margins" (2004, 19).

[14] Often mentioned are the four versions of power according to Castells: Networking power; Network power, Networked power, and Network-making power. Castells is important to mention as he has had a great impact. He is the 5th most cited author and is susceptible for unintended re-conceptualised frameworks that continue to be associated to him.

[15] For a collection of analyses see: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/index.htm>, and see also International Socialism Journal (114, Special Issue on Gramsci):<http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?s=contents&issue=114.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

scenarios about virtual reality; often articulated with postmodern theory. Take for instance this view by Baudrillard (from *Impossible Exchange)*:

> Reality is growing increasingly technical and efficient; everything that can be done is being done, though without any longer meaning anything. […] As for the sign, it is passing into the pure speculation and simulation of the virtual world, the world of the total screen, where the same uncertainty hovers over the real and 'virtual reality' once they go their separate ways. The real no longer has any force as sign, and signs no longer have any force of meaning (Baudrillard 2001, 5)

Some new technologies were indeed revolutionary in the realm of everyday life (to refuse this new reality is basically to refuse progress). But it is precisely therefore in the penetration of daily life that they involve new modes of fetishism: help disseminate capitalist norms (Kellner 2002, 299). Insofar as social and economic relations are not egalitarian within society today, we need to expect the same for the economy of new media (Mansell 2004, 97). The political realities after 9/11 and the collapse of the housing market and subsequently the banking system itself in 2008 forcibly 'corrected' some of the premature propositions about the political impact of the internet downgrading the significance of nation-states in (temporarily) global networks. This is for instance tackled by Jones (2011, 89-90), who argued that the importance of class presents itself in two ways: the class nature of the internet (as a sector) which conditions our communication styles (open source FLOSS entrepreneurialism notwithstanding) and class in terms of the organisational consequences of the proponents of internet media (as opposed to independent left-wing publications sold face-to-face on streets and protests) which has real implications for political organising. The latter is important because, as Mejias (2010) argues, network theories rely heavily on being wired by technologically connected nodes, but the overwhelming majority are not, they are 'para-node'. Through this critique Mejias shows the politics of inclusion and exclusion encoded in the network as they are embedded in global economic systems based on corporate interests. Most people in revolutions are non-nodes, excluded from the networks, those who have no access to technologically mediated networks of communication. Technology is *one of* many societal interactions. There are nodes in all networks. What matters is to differentiate between the quality of technological networks and social networks, and between each and when these two interact (Fuchs 2009, 96). But they can be organically interacted through mediators, as I will explain.

What do Marxist theories, then, actually contribute to my understanding of contemporary revolutionary activity and ICT? As I argued at the outset of this paper, reconciling differences between theories that start from social structure (top down) and individual motivation (bottom up) comes down to unveiling the mediation without ending up disregarding individual human action. This is not a new problem in social theory. Engaging with the theory of value is not common in anthropology because this discipline was wedged in the theoretical limbo of social theory at large (Graeber 2001, 2)[16]. Eventually the very idea of applying grand theory was seen as a contradiction since an anthropologist's place is in (the other's) ethnography. But ethnography *always* applies a theory since it is based on a ray of assumptions, the real choice is thinking about this epistemological challenge explicitly or disregarding it (Graeber 2001, 20). Marxist anthropology offered the opportunity to add a critical niche when it started to be more centred around the idea of 'mode of production', a focus that offered debates beyond (the classic anthropological) exchange but how societies continue to exist and "reproduces" itself. The questions are often about how a society's most basic forms of exploitation and inequality are rooted in the social relations through which people do so (24). These Marxist-inspired inquires introduced a series of powerful analytical terms – exploitation, fetishism, appropriation. Marxism has not had an enormous impact on anthropology in an institutional sense but its influence was apparent (e.g. "critical theory"), and inspired a whole series of new approaches (25). The main motivation was to unmask the hidden structures of power, dominance, and exploitation that lay below even the most mundane aspects of daily life. But critical theory ended up "*sabotaging its own best intentions, making power and domination so fundamental to the very nature of social reality that it became impossible to imagine a world without it"* (30). In that case, criticism loses its point altogether. Contemporaries like Baudrillard basically argued, that resistance is futile since we are stuck in a totalising system. A good example is this élan, following-up from the previous reference:

[16] The Marxist theory of value considers that the value of commodities is derived from the human labour that went into producing them, but this fact tends to be obscured when the object is bought and sold on the market so it seems that its value arises naturally, from the qualities of the object itself. This can also be considered the trap in the reinterpretation of internet commodities.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> [T]he economic sphere, the sphere of all exchange, taken overall, cannot be exchanged for anything. There is no meta-economic equivalent of the economy anywhere, nothing to exchange it for as such, nothing with which to redeem it in another world. It is, in a sense, insolvent, and in any event insoluble to a global intelligence. […] Politics is laden with signs and meanings, but seen from the outside it has none. It has nothing to justify it at a universal level (all attempts to ground politics at a metaphysical or philosophical level have failed). It absorbs everything which comes into its ambit and converts it into its own substance, but it is not able to convert itself into – or be reflected in – a higher reality which would give it meaning (Baudrillard 2001, 3-4).

According to Graeber (2001) this mix of abstract yet edgy discourse explains the appeal of mass consumption as a topic of upper-middle class academics. But he also reminds us that these awkward preoccupations did not occur in a vacuum but respond to the dissolution of the vast social movements in the '60s; the rise of neoliberal ideologies; itself partly made possible by the failure of the left to come up with plausible alternatives (30).The most influential impact on anthropologists' understanding of value came from Appadurai's "Commodities and the Politics of Value" (1986). Anthropologists would do better, he suggests, to forget Marx's approach (which has an emphasis on production in which value arises from human labour; thus essentially a capitalist phenomenon) and look instead to value that is not rooted in human labour or a social system but arising from exchange, from individual desire. Unlike Marx's, his model can easily be applied even where formal markets don't exist; there is always some form of exchange after all. This approach has its advantages: it allows the analyst to skip past the problem of social totalities (structures of meaning) and focus on individual actors and their motivations (Graeber 2001, 30-31). But the other side of the coin is that it leaves us with a doomed and static image of commerce (self-interested, acquisitive calculation) as a universal human urge (33). It is not very surprising how this comes to fit with the emphasis on power and consumption in critical theory.

But there is also a *critical realist* philosophy of a different kind made popular by Bhaskar, which merges a Marxist theory of ideology that defends the critical emancipatory inquiry against post-modernist analyses. One that sees reality operating at different levels, what is happening at the surface does not tell us all, underneath that surface will be strains in and between structures that have a potentiality to destabilise existing social relations. What this approach suggest is that human agency is made possible by social structures that themselves are conditioned, but we are capable of consciously reflecting upon (changing) the actions that produce them (Bhaskar and Callinicos 2003). As Harman (2007), commented though, these notions are not new discoveries; Marx pointed out (in volume III of Capital) "All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance was the essence of things"; Lukács stressed the distinction between different levels of reality in *History and Class Consciousness* and Gramsci described Marxism as "the philosophy of practice".

This dialectical method inspired me to separate between social media as space and tool (Figure 1). I partly derive this distinction from the above correlation between practice and theory, an important tradition in Marxist social theory. My dual assessment echoes this twin agency-structure approach. Internet space refers to both the structural aspects of the internet and society, while internet tool represents the tactical aspects and political agency. Having made this deconstruction, it still requires a critical inclusion of the materiality of the internet as it *actually* exists, such as in terms of internet access (Alexander and Aouragh 2011). Actual penetration rates and other statistical evidence are important arguments against the celebratory and technophile claims cheerleading neoliberalism, but I argue that online and offline politics are actually unequal. A misunderstanding regarding the negative interpretations of the internet (shared also by progressive critics) is caused by the fact that the total penetration rates are not representative. We cannot assess the political impact of the internet in terms of 'the population' and should, instead, appreciate this (especially the 'tool' function) in terms of its meaning for 'the activists'. To start with, this allows me to get deeper into the matter and give affirmative assumptions where they are the case. I will further explain this in the final section.

We need more than the increase of communication and dissemination. I take from internet theorist Fenton (2006) that first and foremost political solidarity is the socio-political glue, and that social movements gain public legitimacy and political force through the embodiment of solidarity offline. I conclude that without an organised body with a centre, resistance is more likely to dissipate. The misconception of revolutionary organising comes down to centralism = hierarchy = authoritarianism. A Leninist understanding of democratic centralism therefore has two conditions: it has to be democratic because only through democracy can the best lessons be incorporated and the most advanced experiences internalised and if necessary generalised. But, secondly, consensus-style activism without centralism will look very liberal (and morally superior) yet it is largely unpractical. It is legitimate to disagree, to *not* reach consensus, it is a method that can at times allow for a certain

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

trial and error in our tactics and in turn improve (or disprove) the overall methods of struggle. A more relevant problem with these approaches is the lack of democratic structures and as such accountability – what Freeman called the *tyranny of structurelessness*. Resistance in Gramsci's dialectical understanding of power and hegemony is the independent organised class (through a revolutionary party) which acts not as a substitute but represents the organised body of the oppressed. But perhaps more to the point in the case of the Middle East: forms and choices of organizing are not autonomous but very determined by the territorial context and the balance of power therein. While the discourse (and to some extent practical manifestations) of capitalism and imperialism changed, its effects did not (Callinicos 2009). There are changes in the economic practice in a globalized era; but it is not as if nation-states don't network (or float) for instance. The question is where exactly power lies in those 'spaces' and 'flows'[17]. Global political-economy, ICT and Middle East politics are more related than one thinks.

3. ICT Imperialism

Not that long ago, the myth was that ICT positively impacts promotion of freedom because the expansion of ICT generates the tools and services enabling citizen participation in the decision-making process, and thus democracy. Political-economy, which in the MENA region often comes down to colonialism and imperialism, is the elephant in the room in much of the ICT analyses. But there was a peculiar anticipation that the internet would increase 'development' (ICT4D) in the MENA. This is no surprise because the ICT sector was the front runner of a shift in the MENA from state to liberal [privatised] economy, with a more or less correlated experience of democratization processes and social political reform in the late 1990s. Jordan and Egypt were hailed as the poster boys of this new experience. Whereas *development*, deployed as rhetorical tools to promote the internet, is often understood to entail economic prosperity and even peace, the very imperialism that obstructs the actual justice and prosperity in the MENA are hardly mentioned by ICT policy propagandists.

Ya'u (2004) referred to the merging of political-economy and ICT as the 'New imperialism' because global economic participation depends on ICT. It is the life-line of neoliberal globalization. The WTO allows the flow of market intelligence for greater profit margins, and thus if we zoom out we can see that enforced institutionalised policies like the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) increased rather than prevented digital divides. But the most important feature of this imperialism, control and ownership, is very prevalent through what is called 'global governance' directed by big powerful institutes that strongly privilege industrialised free market states. This consolidation can only occur through state support, to be precise.

The infrastructures of the internet expose how powerful and centralised bodies like the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) are, demonstrated by their allocating of URL names and addresses. Apparently, the argument is that the sheer volume of information will transform policies. But such analyses (e.g. Shirazi 2008) about the MENA are mostly derived from euro-centred analysis (e.g. Brinkerhoff 2005) claiming that the internet facilitates the expression of liberal values such as individualism, modernity. Weak ICT is related to the combined problem of 'late development' post-independence impediments itself stemming from colonial structures that were inherited. In essence these structures hardly changed and continued in a neo-colonial fashion (Murphy and Zweiry 2010). The internet is bounded by neoliberal rules of engagement which disadvantage Middle East countries (Saleh 2011). Ya'u thus makes an important contribution by reintroducing neo-colonialism and imperialism into our terminology. While the agenda for the 2003 WSIS conference in Tunisia was set by the private sector, in that case the Internet Telecom Union (ITU), which serves powerful conglomerates, had the official goal of promoting ICT as a bridge to digital divides. As Costanza-Chock (2003, 4–5) shows, civil society and NGO actors were invited to such summits to mask the neoliberal agenda and also refer to this corporate behaviour as 'imperialist'. Of course there is another definition of imperialism which is not sufficiently clear and cannot be solely explained through parasitical ICT firms.

The Middle East is predominantly depicted as suffering from political social conflicts. While these conflicts are mostly portrayed as an essential characteristic, they are rarely identified as a result of external factors (occupation of territory by Israel or invasions under the banner 'war on terror',

[17] To be fair, Castells does strongly argue that power is unequally distributed because capitalist corporations are more dominant. He also points at the dialectical relation between the online 'space of flows' and the offline 'space of places'. It is important to relate critically yet precisely here. A similar reinterpretation occurred in parts of the *neo social movement* theory. To Melucci's dismay, the 'new' in his original writings became reified as a category and meant as opposing class with collective action, presenting a false contradiction between supporters of the old and new movement theories (Melucci 1996:6).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the arming and funding of dictatorships). As Terranova (2004) argues, rather than being disconnected from a particular place (virtual reality) internet power is grounded. The precondition for internet activism should at least be affordable availability and infrastructural access and reach. This is a far cry from space-less and border-less myths and the very point of struggle over self-determination and territorial autonomy. This is not to mention a massive amount of personal data that has become accessible to both corporate and state institutions (Lyon 2003), especially with the advent of the war on terror and Web 2.0 (Fuchs 2011). The overwhelming materiality of power over technology in capitalist nation states - a power structure itself (that hyphened demarcation in *political-economy*) was practiced during the internet shut-down in Egypt at the start of the revolution. Showing us just how 'free' the free market is Vodafone almost immediately complied with government orders to disconnect its paying clients. The provider Noor was the last one to operate but that was mainly because it hosted the stock exchange. Discussing the fascinating graphs offered by Renesys (listing all the ISPs and visualising their active connection line until the day of the shut-down when all of a sudden there is a flat line), Dan Mcquillan argues that the 'falling of the internet' shows a sequenced-pattern (with short intervals) suggesting that the companies were being phoned one at a time and being told to take their connection off the air.[18] With this, we are also reminded that it is real people, with agency - managers and CEO's – and with choices and decision-making power running the show. And this, at the end of the day, also implicates them as collaborators. Looking back, it seems quite extraordinary that internet connection was restored at the moment the fiercest fights and state-orchestrated crackdown (*battle of the camels*) took place, but this also suggests there were plenty of internal divisions at the heart of the regime. That chaos can be explained by the fact the security apparatus was taken by surprise by people's well-organised and fierce resistance.

Imperialism is not just like any other label for Middle East politics but lies at the centre of its oppression and resistance. This is a region where the most important natural resources for capitalism (oil, gas, phosphate) are found and its geography practically determines the trade routes (including access to those very resources). On top of this: the region is an important source for the (state-sponsored) arms industry. In light of these realities the copy and paste colour revolutions become more about Western liberal uprisings than about indigenous experiences. The unprecedented uprisings (termed the Arab spring by the western media but revolutions by the activists) are driven by popular protest and were linked to years of preparations (Marfleet and Al-Mahdi 2009).

4. The Arab Revolutions and Internet

Up until the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutionary uprisings, the thought of collective self-emancipation through classical revolutionary processes were deemed a part of the past. Revolutions are "first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny" (Trotsky 1930). The Arab revolutions refute many of the social theories that considered revolution a thing of the past (Callinicos 2011, 5). The uprisings renewed the very idea of revolution and showed world-wide resonances through protest movements that centred on city squares such as the Spanish *Indignado* Movement and the Occupy Movement which started in Wall Street, New York, and spread to 900 cities. Initial assessments seemed confused by the discovery that they too use new technologies and assumed that the internet caused the "tipping point". Conversely, before the 2011 Arab revolutions (and before the 2009 protests in Iran - Twitter Revolution), foreign-policy and security experts were interested in the use of the internet in the Middle East with regards to counter-terrorism and online radicalisation. These essentialist approaches neglect other important developments; the surprised response to the revolutions unmasked this bias. The tipping-point momentum in revolutions is not really related to the tools at hand but to political-class dynamics. Revolutions are unique, there are decades where nothing happens; and suddenly there are weeks where decades happen, to paraphrase Lenin[19]. Revolutions offer us an important material understanding of the implications of the internet. The events open up a space for bottom-up analysis that has previously been ignored.

Between 2005-2009 Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, Moldova's Twitter-Spring and Iran's Green-Twitter Revolution were a preview of the popular copy and pasting that were to emanate in the prominent 2011 markers of events in which the internet was elevated as a crucial player. The Arab Spring/Facebook reference revolutions were simultaneously a contin-

[18] The 'flat-line' graphs by *Renesys* are found in this online post:< http://www.renesys.com/blog/2011/01/egypt-leaves-the-internet.shtml>.

[19] It is not clear where this quote is from but it is found in a 1920 text by Lenin and bundled in his Collected Works available online: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/oct/20.htm>.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

uation and a break of this narrative. When the struggles intensified, 'revolution' began to mean something else than the copy-and-paste demarcations and fetishized with colourful flora and fauna labels. Overt fascination with social media gave the impression that the revolutions were mainly middle class and secular.[20] Western experiences were taken as the model or Arab revolutions evaluated through the lens of modernity going hand in hand with the idea that social media plays an important role in developing a sense of modernity or, as this fascinating analysis claims: "Much like Western societies, parts of Egyptian society are transforming away from traditional groups and towards more loosely structured 'networked individualism" (Wellman et al. 2011, 6).The underlying assumption of the modernity-technology paradigm is that digital politics changed 'traditional' methods of political organising. With the rapid nature of mass communication platforms and new forms of organising, discipline became non-hierarchical. In such a digital world, it is assumed that ideologically 'recalcitrant' groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood are no longer the only (or effective) way to organize political opposition. In this narrative, the Muslim brotherhood was not seen as legitimate or modern (as opposed to digital) while certain individuals (e.g. Google rep. Wael Ghonim, who was also the secret administrator of the much-discussed Khaled Said Facebook group) were admired; projecting a certain wishful thinking about a new social media generated non-ideological (secular) generation. But this means that Western liberal values are being injected into what are predominantly local ideals and above all efforts. A similar orientalist representation follows from interpreting and, as a result, discussing the 'local' as a single entity.

I don't wish to replace a negative with a positive essentialism, as the initial outburst of the "Facebook Revolution" commentary tended to do, but to consider the internet as tactically embedded in a broader political strategy. The revolutions raise crucial questions about the role of communication technology in social movements, such as how political agency is mediated in and through cyberspace. While the preferred 'network' claims less hierarchy and more autonomy, the complex local political context refutes the approach to political activism hidden within these narratives. The revolutions represented an ideological melange of progressive socialists, liberal Islamists, capitalists, reactionary conservatives; but 'ideological' groups such as the active Revolutionary Socialists and huge Muslim Brotherhood were at the base of the revolution. Also, the reality of imperialism has several implications, one of them being the active policy of protecting brutal dictators, a fact that many of those protesting did not forget, and a reminder of one of the causes for the on-going revolutions. Ben Ali and Mubarak were both Western backed rulers and the initial response of the West can best be described as a complicit hesitance. Only when it became clear that the mass protests were indeed historical events with crucial (geo-political) ramifications did the political statements change. The needles of the political compass in Washington-London-Paris reversed; hesitance was swapped for support.

Two of the most important factors of the on-going revolution are the changing political landscape with an amalgam of new leftist political parties emerging and, secondly, the re-surfacing of class struggle signified by the largest workers strikes and struggles since 1946 and the formation of independent unions. Class relations are a crucial element of the political struggle in Egypt. Rosa Luxemburg (1970) theorised how political uprisings crystallize in a periodic fertilisation: with the spreading of the political struggle the economic struggle extends. But, and this is the digital difference, a third segment of the political dynamic is the manifold political campaigns and coalitions born on Tahrir square. Many here use and work within online and offline networks as will be discussed in the next section. I assume that this positive standpoint coincides with the massive coverage, because it was a celebration of the tools rather than the causes.

The local specificities are crucial because the internet is shaped by a strong relation with the ground. Online activism *facilitates* offline liberation strategies. In other words, explaining the value of the internet can never make sense without including a political and historic contextualisation. Rather than a sudden 'awakening', the region was already in turmoil, protests had been accumulating for almost a decade, starting with the outbreak of the Second Intifada and Ariel Sharon's massacre of Palestinians; the invasion of Iraq; anger over leaders seen as the local lackeys of the US and Israel. A widespread and deep anger over the regional politics overlapped with domestic issues and grew deeper as the economic impact of the neoliberal (IMF/WB) privatisation combined with the price increases caused by the global financial crisis. Wikileaks documents in 2010 that the extent of corruption and Arab collaboration were not a cause but a confirmation – and thus a deepening – of the growing anger.

In the face of these important and contentious events technology was of essential importance, probably projecting the everyday conditions of the authors of those narratives, rather than thinking

[20] This coincides with geo-political double standards: it doesn't matter what Palestinians, supporters of Hezbollah or Ahmedinejad do with social media.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

through the everyday Arab political realities. Inserting the internet corporations—Facebook, Twitter, Google – at the centre of analyses suggests that certain western characteristics were crucial, denying a genuinely popular Arab revolution. Fundamentally, this is a form of orientalism. Orientalism as a discourse relies on presenting and representing the MENA and her people with a set of (colonial) wishes and interests. Moreover, Edward Said 1979 *Orientalism* shows that an orientalist discourse also lays down the rules of representation. In due course (when unchallenged/resisted) this will become so subtle (normalized) that it does not even have to rely on prejudicial (chauvinistic) views. The production of knowledge through certain technophile mediation is important here because technology symbolises modernity which in turn symbolises western civilisation. But it does not have to necessarily or explicitly be organised as such: it is also part of the dominant (hegemonic) notions internalised about the region and the role of the internet. This is nowhere as intense as in Middle East studies, the very foundation of this discipline is itself intimately connected to foreign policy (Mitchells 2003). The revolutions show that this myth is still present today as my critique of the connection between technology, modernity and revolutions illustrates. The fallacy in much of the (media) discourse is where the internet equals a new youthful generation of activists. This framing prefers non-violence and the non-ideological as the better form, thereby insinuating a negative undertone for resistance that includes all forms (violent-non-violent, manifest-latent) of struggle.

Internet activists rely on the same tools as their oppressive authorities, they also have to juggle between self-activity and the potential of being co-opted in these new dynamics; the potential subversion of power is not very great in the face of the extreme asymmetrical relation. Youmans and York (2012, 3) remind us that social media platforms were not designed to cater to activists in the first place; there is a direct mismatch between the commercial logic and activist use of social media as public information infrastructures. Information system policies empower authoritarian regimes concretively in the prohibition of anonymity. This arises from its design and governance concerns, which hamper the activists on two levels: the application of certain code programming and user terms (intellectual property, content) (idem, 12). Fuchs (2009, 99) simplifies the matter by asking to what degree are users autonomous if 19 out of the top 20 Web 2.0 platforms are profit-oriented, the only exception being Wikipedia. Returning to the (base and superstructure) dialectics of the concept mediation, I assume that while the (user-generated) internet affects the material conditions it also implicates political activism.

4.1. Online-Offline Dialectics

Discussing the role of the internet, it is important to distinguish what effect we mean to address. How does the internet tip the scales of power? Castells (2009) identifies three important advances for social movements that simplify this complex enquiry: flexibility, scalability, survivability (respectively: reconfiguration, expanding/shrinking, and operational continuation). Of particular interest for the context of the Arab revolutions are the ideas of scalability (the expanding of ties) and survival (operational continuity). The cut-off created a survival mode at its most extreme, therefore also many pre-digital technologies were crucial (such as dial-up modems and fax-to-web bridges), creating so-called *analogue networks*[21]*.* I merge these operationalisations with the assessment that the internet has two sides, it is a *tool* for activists (survival, operational continuity) and a *space* for activism (expanding networks). Archiving, technological solidarity (cooperation) and political conviction proved to be meaningful elements of counter-hegemonic organising as this section will show.

I deconstruct the theoretical (abstract) level of interrogation by (re)connecting the (hermeneutic/ethnographic) features of online politics. I suggest interpreting the online/offline divide as a reflection of the *base-superstructure* separation and the space/tool separation as part of the overall political strategies and tactics also prevalent in *mediation*. Previous fieldwork in Palestine and Lebanon suggests that the stage (or timing) of certain actions has more relevance for the potential role of the internet. I thus distinguish between various revolutionary stages: pre-revolution (preparation and mobilization), moment of revolution (the actual tipping points), and post-revolution (successful continuation or dangerous escalation). This dialectics of mediation, illustrated in the Matrix of internet resistance (figure 1), shows clearly that the internet is not dominant but can be a factor of change. Merging these conceptual deconstructions, results in a much more coherent understanding of internet resistance.

[21] Internet Artizans, 10 Februari 2011:<http://www.internetartizans.co.uk/socnets_with_old_tech_egypt#comment-8423>

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Matrix of Resistance (Analytical Framework)

With each stage of the revolution the existing balance of power (and the actors involved) changes.	Space / Stage	Online	Offline
	Pre-Revolution (Preparation & Mobilization)	Tool / Space	Tool / Space
	Revolution (Tipping Point)	Tool / Space	Tool / Space
	Post-Revolution (Continuation & Escalation)	Tool / Space	Tool / Space

Figure 1: Matrix of Internet Resistance

Political networks and collective protest are, first and foremost, consolidated offline. But online spaces of interaction and communication amplify political agendas and opinions. Social media are the choice of most Arab activists simply because they are the spaces and tools which (predominantly young) people already choose for everyday communication. And thus for a specific layer of activists and participants in the uprisings internet spaces served a crucial function as counter-hegemonic spaces (Warner 2002). In the pre-revolutionary period a collective critique of the existing political and social order were articulated on many such spaces, without this preparatory stage the maturation of the tipping point is hard to imagine. Adding a hermeneutic separation based on phases is also significant to appreciate the different values of technologies during the chaotic outbreak of revolt. For instance, on the 25th of January it was critical to use real-time online updates in order to device the safest routes for marches or locate the most risky one's and avoid those. Kira Allmann shows the life and death significance of a functioning mobile technology in her research among activists in Cairo (2012). And *during* the revolution the internet was relevant as a vehicle for building global solidarity. The internet also became a parallel space for political identity formation: where people met other people who relate to their opposition and shared information about protests, or disseminate messages that further ignited their anger and determination. In this sense, social media platforms become online public spheres convenient for political deliberation and a space where opinions are shaped and at times (when offline opportunities are severely compromised such as with curfews) decisions are made.

Within the social networking spaces of the *Shabaab 6 April* (April-6 Youth) and *Kuluna Khaled Said* (We are all Khaled Said) Facebook groups (the English and the Arabic one), as well as those of high-profile individuals (Alaa Abdel Fatta, 3arabawi, Sandmonkey). These were not only meeting points for activists themselves, they were also the *source* of much of the forwarded mobile text messages and emails, Tweets and shared Facebook posts and as such instrumental in mobilizing a section of the wired-youth. In a revolutionary phase *repetition* is important, and so is agitation (for a march towards Tahrir) or the consolidation of general political analysis (the need to stay in Tahrir square) and the organization thereof. These engaging acts echo the trio-characteristic of revolutionary political organising: *Educate-Agitate-Organize*. Those involved in these *online* realms are a selective segment of the protesters – and social movements are in themselves a selective portion of society. In extraordinary times, the impact of these sub-scenes can reach beyond their usual networks marking the digital-revolutionary difference. In revolutionary moments, when at a 'tipping point', emotional/cognitive power is crucial. This corresponds to how Castells (2009) in the aforementioned 'advances' deconstructs the public impact of internet power as framing, agenda setting, indexing. Without the innumerable video files provided via Facebook and YouTube by ordinary people, the revolutions would not have been documented (and therefore: experienced) with the same intensity. Massive reporting by conventional sources has political repercussions, such as giving activists the confidence to advance their agendas through the capacity of mediation to reassure people that they are not alone and thus influencing the judgements and choices of activists.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

I referred to the *relative* importance, to counter the difference between absolute and proportional representation, which is often forgotten. One of the other signs of the relative importance of ICT was the particular empirical dynamic as related by activists in Cairo. There were interesting divisions of labour between techno-savvy activists, crackers and hackers; those able to communicate in different languages; those with well-established international networks; those who can reach large local audiences (unions, football supporter clubs, and student movements). Activists very consciously use different tools for different audiences. Two tents on Tahrir Square were manned by techno-savvy protesters with their laptops and tapping power from lamp posts while signs on the tent announced the point to gather videos and pictures; mobile phone footage recorded during the blackout was collected and posted online so as to be used by journalists. Those activists not in Egypt would follow tweets from within Egypt, translate and re-tweet (RT) to non-Arabic speakers, and offer online critiques of misrepresentations.

I intentionally mention social media as *parallel* spaces and as *disproportionate* because the internet is valued less than where/when one can meet face-to-face, such as the overlapping private-public places in the previous section signify. With regards to previous discussions about resistance and the importance of democratic centralism it is important to explicitly state that those physical meetings are better for political planning and organising and building trust; for conscripting personal sacrifice as the hundreds of martyrs testify. Another reason is that offline protest sites were those usually connected to mosques in densely populated working-class neighbourhoods, and university campuses. The fact that the revolution continued despite the internet black-out is of monumental importance.

During a visit in August 2011 several activists recalled how they experienced the revolutionary upheavals in the early days (January/February). For Mohamed, Salma and Dina, being cut off didn't dismantle the revolt; the disruption of the mobile phone services was far more crucial for on the ground politics. The crucial tactics that finally led to the occupation of Tahrir Square had little to do with Facebook, in fact: false information was purposely posted to confuse the *mokhabarat* (secret security). For weeks activists had met daily, often in a cramped living room, and it is precisely because the organising was done offline that it was rarely noted by the internet-obsessed reporters. Also, while the technology was absent the people, and their physical resistance, were very present. Paradoxically, it reduced distraction and gave focus during the five-day blackout. Social networking sites like Facebook are not a social network but a social-networking-tool. Its users, together with all those non-connected, those outside the virtual structures of the 'nodes' what Mejias (2010) called the *para-nodal, were* network. Thus not the technological networks but the people were the backbone. According to well-known blogger and revolutionary socialist, Hossam al-Hamalawi, the real strength of the internet occurs most dramatically when mainstream media begin to use their data as sources of information and voices as witness accounts. Such was the case with live-feeds in January and February. Re-dissemination from big and highly respected mediums such as Al Jazeera, added to the fame of these tools, which at the same time reminds of the indirect mediation.

The MENA region at large has the world's highest internet penetration growth rates (1600 per cent for 2001-2009) in terms of internet usage; particularly the increase of social (user-generated) media in 2011 are indicative (ASMR 2011). But instead of isolating 'the internet', I see a new creation of synergies. Consider for instance how social networking and satellite broadcasters interacted when Al Jazeera became a megaphone for activists in Tunisia and Egypt when it aired their YouTube content. The internet is not crucial but important to organise and archive the bravery and resolve and these recorded events are valuable for other activists (Naguib 2011, 17). The real empowering impacts can be found in this nexus.

With the verbally-graphic narratives of Sandmonkey I give a slice of the (start of the) revolution as it unfolded. Whereas archiving is important in itself, with digital media this happens so easily and real-time updates are quickly buried under millions of other updates – the same day. The revolution of Egypt was beamed to millions via the now world-famous Kuluna Khaled Said Facebook groups, Twitter and YouTube. This digital footprint, straight from the epicentre of events, as documented in his words since the call for protest on January 25, 2011, have been archived on Twitter. The Twitter voices included activists who were very prominent in the physical movements[22].

There are several caveats about the prospects of the internet as a space or tool of activism. Firstly, there is an increasing balance between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic users, as demonstrated in the previous section about ICT and imperialism. Another important prospect is that activists in the online social media space are operating in an online community that increasingly mirrors their own. The implication of a digital world filtered by social-networking sites (dominated by

[22] These are selections of Tweets which were recited by Nunns and Idle (2011) in their joyful *Tweets from Tahrir*.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the parasitical Facebook) that create unrepresentative bubbles is a result of these platforms derived from corporate premises and marketing algorithms. The consequences will reach wider than pure economics, including new rules of mobilization: debating, sharing and inviting those already largely on your side and actually not reaching out to wider networks. Pariser (2011) argues that with the rise of personalization (e.g. Google and Facebook customizing search results) internet users are sent down particular information tunnels and hence controlling-and limiting-the information we consume based on the motivation to predict what users are most likely to click, threatening the autonomy of how we consume or share information. Therefore, I argue that it is the very awareness of these techno-social power fields, as outlined in this article that will become increasingly crucial. This social capital has 'real' offline repercussions for activists—the difference between being arrested, and intercepted online by being lured into believing a certain narrative.

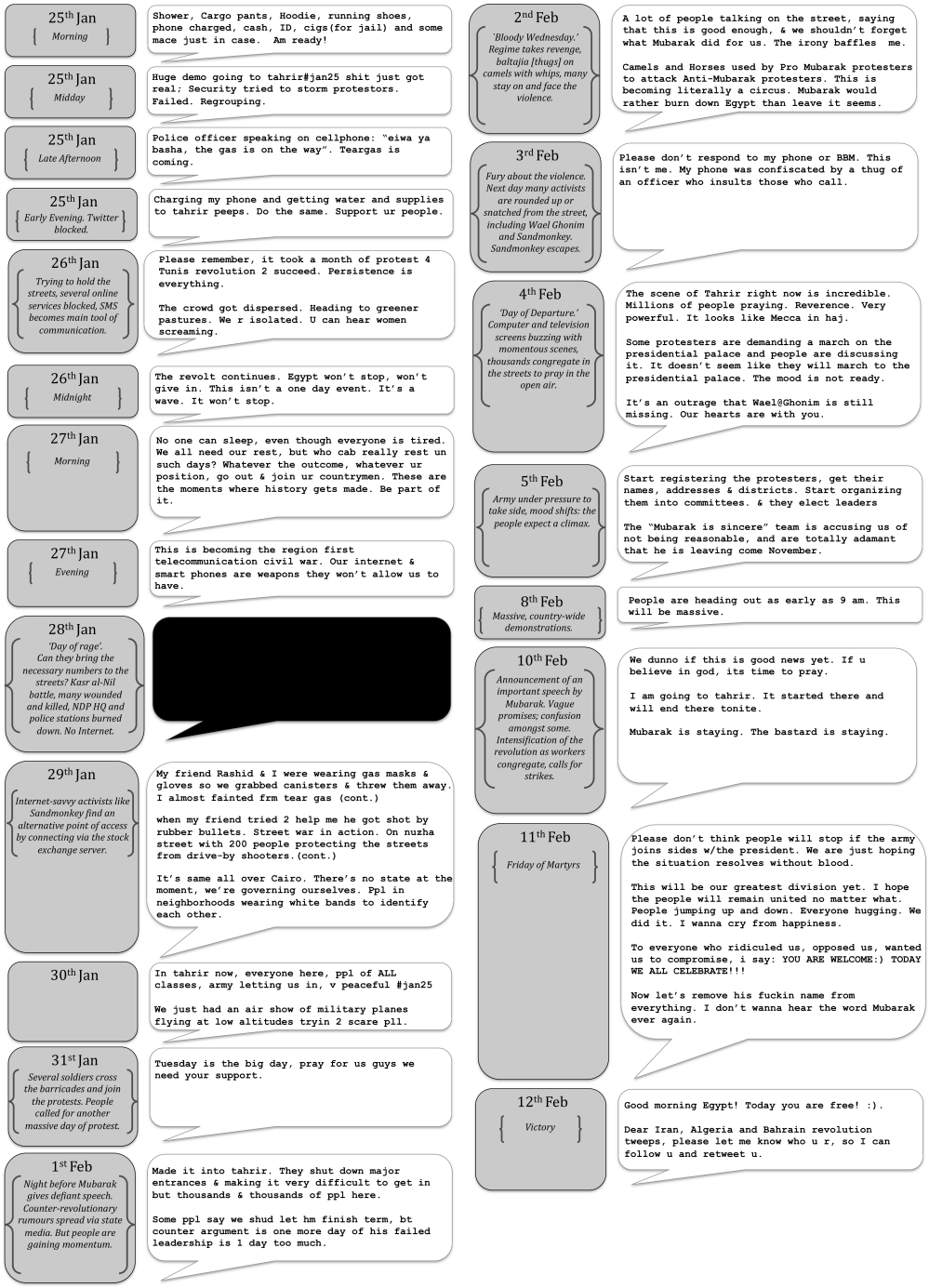


Figure 2: Narrating the Revolution through Twitter by Sandmonkey.[23]

[23] Graph-design made with help of Kira Allmann, Oxford University.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

5. Conclusion

The ultimate and recurring question for many of us is the following: would this have happened without the internet? One of the answers is that it would not have been exactly the same, i.e. we wouldn't be able to RT and forward the amazing updates of people like Sandmonkey, or the YouTube footage from the ground and in response to many such mediations assemble at the Egyptian, Tunisian, Libyan embassies in protest of the complicity of our governments and in support and celebration with the people rising up. Revolutionaries could not have countered many of the government lies as they came out. This is the most visible part of social media as mediation. This matters greatly for the concrete labours of web-designers or Twitter authors and must be viewed as being interlocked and mutually constitutive; both are engaged in creating use and surplus-value. Marx envisioned technology becoming a means to liberation, provided it is freed from the tyranny of capital. To Marx a writer is also a productive labourer not in so far as he produces ideas, but in so far as he enriches the publisher who publishes his work.[24] When immaterial labour is valorised it makes us blind to these impediments. Immaterial labour remains anchored in class relations and the attempt to by-pass that fails to grasp the devastating economic crisis and the revolutionary turmoil currently taking place.

Another answer could be that, of course, the revolution would have happened because the main conditions were there anyway, maybe it would not have been January but February or 80 days not 18 for Mubarak to be defeated. But the real answer is that we need to apply a dialectical and historical materialist approach to the whole question: thus this is an illogical question to begin with, like asking whether without printed leaflets earlier revolutions could happen. This is the stage we are at in the production and development of technology and it is a medium in the conditions we have not ourselves chosen.

I discussed the internet as a tool of protest in the Arab revolutions as part of larger political-economic landscape in which political activists operate; they allude to an (orientalist) framing and reflect the deeper ideological meaning of the Marxist concept of mediation. I evoked the interplay between technology and Marxist politics and invoked examples from Arab activists. This multi-levelled investigation allows me to go beyond the dominant Eurocentric focus that prevails in (mainstream) internet studies. I argued, echoing Rosa Luxemburg, that revolutionary change does not rely on spontaneous unorganized acts: it needs organizers, leaders, determination, and accountability. Discipline and structured organizing enables activists to generalize from complex and uneven realities and they are imperative for the survival of political movements. The activist networks do not confirm the view of leaderless swarms as often remarked when 'new' internet structures for political activism are concerned. It is mostly because it looked like it was a new, youth, non-ideological, online, horizontal movement that it gained attention and perhaps for many disillusioned with mainstream politics to give it the benefit of the doubt. Invoking the notion of mediation made us understand that clichés about the role of the internet don't help us understand the dual character of the internet: it empowers and disempowers. How to describe the relationship between art as production and art as ideology is one of the most important questions because it connects modes of production to representation, this in turn is important because "unless we can relate past literature, however indirectly, to the struggle of men and women against exploitation, we shall not fully understand our own present and so [will be] less able to change it effectively" (Eagleton 1976, 76). This paper therefore offered a conceptual understanding of internet activism that integrates imperialism and political-economy with the possible value and contribution of the internet to grass-roots social capital. Social media cannot be reduced to capital ideology but have a rather particular relationship to it, revealing to us the limits of that ideology too (19). This is not a contradiction at all but the *normalized* exception in the ultimate rule called 'capitalism', a paradox prominent in the opening of Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto for a good reason.

References

Allmann, Kira C. 2012. Mind, Body and Phone: Mobility, Mobile Technology and Political Activism in the Context of the Egyptian Revolution. (Unpublished Master's Thesis). University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Aouragh, Miritan 2012. Framing the Arab Revolutions: Myth Meets Modernity. Cin*ema Journal* (51) 4.

Aouragh, Miriyam and Anne Alexander. 2011. Sense and Nonsense of Facebook Revolutions. *International Journal of Communication* 5: 1344-1358.

Aouragh, Miriyam 2008. Virtual Intifada: Online Activism and everyday Resistance. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research* 1 (2): 109-130.

[24] *Theories of Surplus Value* is available online:<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1863/theories-surplus-value/ch04.htm>.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Arab Social Media Report (ASMR). Vol. 1 (2). 2011. Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter. Accessed May 25, 2012. http://www.dsg.ae/NEWSANDEVENTS/UpcomingEvents/ASMRHome.aspx.

Armbrust, Walter. 2007. New Media and Old Agendas: The Internet in the Middle East and Middle Eastern Studies. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (4): 531-533.

Bhaskar, Roy and Alex Callinicos. 2003. Marxism and Critical Realism: A Debate. *Journal of Critical Realism* (1(2).

Benjamin, Walter. 1970 (1934). The Author as Producer. Republished by New Left Review I/62 July-August. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/theatre_s/postgraduate/maipr/teaching_1112/warwick/st2/kobialka_reading_-_benjamin_w_-_the_author_as_producer.pdf

Briggs, Asa and Peter Burke. 2005. *A Social History of Media From Gutenberg to the Internet.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bruns, Axel. 2010. From Reader to Writer: Citizen Journalism as News Produsage. In *International Handbook of Internet Research*, edited by Jeremy Hunsinger, Lisbeth Klastrup, Matthew Allen, 119-134. Dordrecht, NL: Springer

Burgess, Jean and Joshua Green. 2009. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Callinicos, Alex. 2001. *Social Theory – A Historical Introduction.* Cambridge: Polity

Camfield, David 2007. The Multitude and the Kangaroo: A Critique of Hardt and Negri's Theory of Immaterial Labour. *Historical Materialism* 15 (2): 21–52.

Callinicos, Alex. 2011. The Return of the Arab Revolution. *International Socialism* 130, April. Accessed May 25, 2012. http://www.isj.org.uk/?id=717

Castells, Manuel 2009. *Communication Power.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Carpenter, Charli and Daniel W. Drezner. 2010. International Relations 2.0: The Implications of New Media for an Old Profession. *International Studies Perspectives* 11 (3): 255–272.

Carey, James W. 2005. Historical Pragmatism and the Internet. *New Media & Society* 7 (4): 443-455.

Costanza-Chock, Sasha. 2003. WSIS, the Neoliberal Agenda, and Counterproposals from 'Civil Society'. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 3 (2): 118-139. Paper presented for OURmedia III, Barranquilla Conference May, 30 2003.see also: http://mediaresearchhub.ssrc.org/wsis-the-neoliberal-agenda-and-counterproposals-from-civil-society/resource_view

Deibert, Ronald. 1997. *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Doogan, Kevin. 2011. *New Capitalism? The Transformation of Work.* Cambridge, MA: Polity.

Eagleton, Terry. 1976. *Marxism and Literary Criticism.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Eagleton, Terry. 2004. *After Theory.* London: Penguin Books.

Eagleton, Terry. 2011. *Why Marx was Right.* United States: New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

El-Ghobashy, Mona. 2011. The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution. *Middle East Research and Information Project* 258. http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution

El-Mahdi, Rabab, and Philip Marfleet, eds. 2009. *Egypt: The Moment of Change.* London: Zed Books.

Featherstone Mike and Scott Lash. 1995. Globalization, Modernity and the Spatialization of Social Theory: An Introduction. In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, 1–24. London: Sage.

Fenton, Nathalie. 2006. Contesting Global Capital, New Media, Solidarity, and the Role of a Social Imaginary. In Reclaiming the Media. Communication Rights and Democratic Media Roles, edited by Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier, 225-242. Bristol: Intellect..

Fine, Ben and Alfredo Saad-Filho. 2010. *Marx's Capital*. 5th ed. London: Pluto Press

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Reflections on Manuel Castells' Book "Communication Power". *tripleC - Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 7 (1): 94-108.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. Cognitive Capitalism or Informational Capitalism? The Role of Class in the Information Economy. In *Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labour*, edited by Michael A. Peters and Ergin Bulut, 75–119. New York: Peter Lang

Fuchs, Christian 2012. The Political Economy of Privacy on Facebook. *Television & New Media* 13 (2): 139-159.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2011. Arabs are Democracy's New Pioneers. *The Guardian*, 24 February.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2001. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Books

Harman, Christ. 1986. Base and Superstructure. *International Socialism* 2(32): 3–44.

Harman, Chris. 2007. Dialectics of Morality. *International Socialism* 113.

Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 2009. Historical–Critical Dictionary of Marxism: Immaterial Labour. *Historical Materialism* 17 (4): 177–185

Hirschkind, Charles 2011 Uprising in Egypt: The road to Tahrir. The Immanent Frame: blog of Social Science Research Council Blog: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/02/09/the-road-to-tahrir

Howard, Philip N. 2010. *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Idle, Nadia and Nunns, Alex 2011. *Tweets from Tahrir: Egypt's Revolution as it Unfolded, in the Words of the People Who Made It*. London: Or Books.

Jones, Jonny. 2011. Social Media and Social Movements. *International Socialism* 130.

Kellner, Douglas. 2002. Theorizing Globalization. *Sociological Theory* 20 (3): 285-305.

Kellner, Douglas. 2004. Cultural Marxism and Cultural Studies. Accessed November 25, 2011. http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/culturalmarxism.pdf

Kahn, Richard and Douglas Kellner. 2004. New Media and internet Activism: From the "Battle of Seattle" to Blogging. *New Media & Society* 6 (1): 87–95.

Kahn, Richard and Douglas Kellner. 2005. Oppositional Politics and the Internet. *Cultural Politics* 1 (1): 75-100.

Mansell Robin. 2004. Political Economy, Power and New Media. *New Media & Society* 6 (1): 96-105

Marfleet, Philip . 2011. Egypt Shaped at the Grass Roots. *Open Democracy*, 25 June. Online: http://www.opendemocracy.net/philip-marfleet/egypt-shaped-at-grass-roots

Marx, Karl. 1857/1858. *Grundrisse*. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch14.htm

Mazarella, William T.S. 2007. The Myth of the Multitude, or, Who's Afraid of the Crow? *Critical Inquiry* 36: 697-727.

Mejias, Ulises. 2009. The Limits of Networks as Models for Organizing the Social. *New Media & Society* 12 (4): 603–617.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Mejias, Ulises. 2011. The Twitter Revolution Must Die. http://blog.ulisesmejias.com/2011/01/30/the-twitter-revolution-must-die
Mitchell, Timothy. 1988. *Colonising Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. America's Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry. *Middle East Report* 169: 18-36.
Mitchell, Timothy. 2003. The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science. University of California International and Area Studies Digital Collection, MIT-IJMES (1).
Morozov, Evgeny. 2011. *The Net Delusion*. London: Allen Lane.
Naguib, Sameh. 2011. *The Egyptian Revolution: A Political Analysis and Eyewitness Account*. London: Bookmarks.
O'Neil, Mathieu. 2009. Cyber Chiefs: Autonomy and Authority in Online Tribes. London: Pluto Press.
Pariser, Eli. 2011. *The Filter Bubble. What the Internet is Hiding From You*. New York: Penguin Press.
Peters, B. 2009. And Lead Us Not into Thinking the New is New: A Bibliographic Case for New Media History. *New Media & Society* 11 (1&2): 13-30.
Sabry, Tarik. 2012. On Historicism, the Aporia of Time and the Arab Revolutions. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5 (1): 80-85.
Saleh, Nivien. 2011. *Third World Citizens and the Information Technology Revolution*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Sayers, Sean. 2007. The Concept of Labour: Marx and his Critics. *Science & Society* 71 (4): 431-454.
Said, Edward W. 1997. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books.
Shirky, C. and Malcolm Gladwell. 2011. From Innovation to Revolution. Do Social Media Make Protests Possible? *Foreign Affairs* (March/April).
Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto.
Toffler, Alvin. 1980. The Third Wave. New York: Bantam Books.
Trotsky, Leon. 1930. *The History of the Russian Revolution*. http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch00.htm
Trotsky, Leon. 1991. *Literature and Revolution*. London : Redwords.
Ulrich, Brian. 2009. Historicizing Arab Blogs: Reflections on the Transmission of Ideas and Information in Middle Eastern History. *Arab Media & Society* 8, http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=711
Wayne, Mike 2003. Marxism and Media Studies: Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends. London: Pluto Press.
Warner, Michael. 2002. Publics and Counterpublics. *Public Culture* 14 (1): 49–90.
Wu, Tim 2011. *The Master Switch. The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*. New York: Alfred Knopf.
Ya'u, Yunusa Z. 2004. The New Imperialism and Africa in the Global Electronic Village. *Review of African Political Economy* 31 (99): 11-29.
Youmans, William and Jillian York. 2012. Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements. *Journal of Communication* 62 (2): 315-329.
Zweiri, Mahjoob and Emma C. Murphy. 2011. *The New Arab Media, Technology, Image and Perception*. Reading: Ithaca Press.
Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

About the Author

Miriyam Aouragh
Aouragh is associate member of the Middle East Centre (Oriental Institute), University of Oxford. She teaches Cyber Politics in the Middle East and her research concerns the everyday implications of the internet for activists as well as cyber warfare in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Her *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet and the Construction of Identity* came out in 2011 (IB Tauris). Miriyam is a socialist activist.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 537-554, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

21st Century Socialism: Making a State for Revolution

Lee Artz

Purdue University Calumet, Department of Communication, Hammond, IN, USA, artz@purdue.edu

Abstract: *The Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela has built mass organizations of workers and communities that have erratically challenged class and market relations – verifying that taking political power is difficult but essential to fundamental social change and that capitalist cultural practices complicate the revolutionary process. This work identifies components of state power, separating state apparatus (government) as a crucial site for instituting social change. The case of democratic, participatory communication and public media access is presented as central to the successes and problems of Venezuelan 21st century socialism. Drawing on field research in community media in Caracas, the essay highlights some of the politico-cultural challenges and class contradictions in producing and distributing cultural values and social practices for a new socialist hegemony necessary for fundamental social change.*

Keywords*: community media, public media, state, state power, participatory communication, social change, hegemony, culture, revolution, class, class conflict.*

Acknowledgements: *Much thanks and solidarity to Ana Viloria at MINCI (Ministry of Communication and Information, Wilfredo Vasquez at Catia TV, and Carlos Lujo at Radio Primero Negro for their time, insights, and dedication to democracy and social justice; thanks to Carlos Martinez for logistics and translation during our visits with dozens of Venezuelan media workers, and to Steve Macek and the organizers and participants of the Marxism and Communication conferences at the National Communication Association who provided critique and corrections for this work. Travel grants from Purdue University Calumet made the field research possible.*

1. Introduction

Objectively speaking, movements, classes, and media must challenge power to be revolutionary. One cannot govern from below. There can be no grass roots social transformation without replacing existing power. History has shown from Ghandi and Mandela to Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and Lula in Brazil, neither the working class nor its charismatic representatives can secure any lasting accommodation with their patriotic capitalists. Negotiating better terms for the exploited while leaving the social relations of capital intact is not revolutionary, nor even defensible as pragmatic today. If freedom, democracy, and social justice are expected, there is no "third way" as Hugo Chavez and Venezuela realized after the media coup of April 2002.

In the 21st Century, it's either global capitalism, with more human suffering and environmental collapse or it's socialism with the working class and its allies building a democratic society of international solidarity. Venezuela provides a positive prime instance of this claim. In Venezuela, revolutionaries are changing society by taking power. This essay highlights the features and contradictions in this historic process, turning to media practices in particular to illustrate the dialectic of state and revolution. This contribution recognizes the need for revisiting and contextualizing the Marxist theory of the state, the role of the working class, and the relationship between culture and socio-economic relations under capitalist globalization of the 21st century. Marx and Engels wrote almost two centuries ago, while Lenin and Trotsky constructed and implemented Marxist theory in an isolated and underdeveloped, largely pre-capitalist country. Their collective contributions have been debated, defended, and redefined in the subsequent decades by reformists and revolutionaries alike – from parliamentary social democrats insisting socialism would organically arise from mass democratic experiences to Maoists, fidelistas, and other focoistas fighting rural guerrilla wars to take power "through the barrel of the gun," the character of the state and state power has remained crucial to social revolution, both theoretically and practically. This essay does not attempt to review and evaluate the claims and contentions from past or ongoing debates, rather it offers the Venezuelan phenomena as a concrete opportunity for observing class conflict in action. Without constant reference or elucidation, the essay accepts the thrust of Antonio Gramsci's writings on he-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

gemony, which seem to offer considerable clarification to understanding capitalist society since its modern, industrial development, including multiclass political parties, referenda elections, and commercialized mass media and popular culture.

Unless one is active in the solidarity movement or subscribes to radical journals, probably little is known about Venezuela and its inspirational project for social transformation. The US media have settled on two themes: President Hugo Chavez is a caudillo, a populist dictator, hiding behind repeat show elections and bribing the population with social programs funded by oil wealth; Chavez's anti-democratic agenda is evidenced by authoritarian attacks on media and freedom of speech, while social problems remain. These themes express US disdain for all participatory democracy and obscure the actual existing democracy of citizens and workers who overwhelming ratified a constitution with "obligations of solidarity, social responsibility, and humanitarian assistance". The real problem for US media and US capital is that Venezuela is demonstrating to the world that democracy indeed can work, but not through neo-liberal, market relations. Democracy needs socialism.

2. A Strategy for Revolution: Government Policy and Political Parallelism

The transition to socialism in Venezuela is a dialectical political process synthesizing objective conditions with subjective material possibilities. Led by President Hugo Chavez and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) the Bolivarian socialist strategy (a hybrid of Marxism, Venezuelan revolutionary nationalism, and international solidarity) promotes the power and action of the working class and its allies as agents of social change. Since the first explicit pronouncement for socialism in 2006, the strategy has been to use the objective material power of the Chavez-led government to dismantle and break the capitalist state while expanding participatory democracy by the citizens – organizing and mobilizing "new forces and new passions" fettered by capitalist society (Marx 1867).

The Venezuelan strategy of a using the "state for revolution" proceeds along two intersecting avenues, with appropriate tactics, creating a pincher movement on capitalism, the capitalist class, and capitalist social relations. First, the revolutionary leadership is using its position as the legitimate elected government to administer policies and practices that benefit the working class and weaken capitalist social relations. Government power in the hands of Chavez and the Bolivarian socialists is used to undermine capitalist relations and advance socialist democracy, especially participation in decision-making. For every major proposal, the administration encourages public dialogue, mass communication, and mass public participation. Seeking public consent before action secures support for government policies. The ideological, political, and legal framework for such revolutionary policy and practice adheres to government decisions. The "socialist" government becomes a weapon against the capitalist state. Since 1999, when 71% of voters approved a new Constitution and subsequently voted for representatives to the National Assembly, the Bolivarian movement has relied on a complex interactive process of public communication, program initiatives by and for social movements, and continuing confirmation of the legitimate political representation of the interests of the working class majority. Chavez has used his executive power as elected President and the PSUV (and its organizational predecessors) has used its legislative power as elected representatives to create and implement new laws and policies (along with more than a dozen national elections and referenda), while the courts and army have used their legal power to enforce and defend the new laws.

There have been many, many transformational new laws and policies, including land reform, housing reform, indigenous rights, widespread nationalizations (including in oil, steel, aluminum, electricity, telecommunications, and more), provisions for worker's control and ownership of production, creation of a social fund for education, health care, basic food subsidies, and other laws which benefit the working poor and middle classes. In almost every instance, laws, civil codes, and initiatives followed public debate and discussion organized through community councils or other venues. For more than a decade, in law and policy and enforcement, the Chavez government has

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

resolutely advanced the interests of the working majority and undermined the interests of the capitalist elite.

Using direct government power has been coupled with a second complementary approach in the Venezuelan "state for revolution" strategy: parallelism. Recognizing that the existing national, state, and local government apparatus remains staffed by the old bureaucracy and technocrats, the Venezuelan government, through both executive and legislative initiatives, has established and promoted various popular missions parallel to traditional government institutions. Rather than confronting the old caste directly and instigating premature social conflicts, parallel institutions provide much needed social services, encourage participation, build consciousness, and establish new norms for solidarity and social responsibility. Organizing parallel institutions is the Bolivarian implementation of Marx's suggestion that the working class should "wrest power by degrees" (Marx and Engels 1998). Undoubtedly, parallelism is a useful strategy for establishing a new hegemony, creating leaderships, practices, social relations and ideology – a new culture of solidarity, collaboration, participation, and human needs before profits. While avoiding any direct confrontation with the existing capitalist state, parallel institutions, in the form of social missions, anticipate that any future attempts at abolishing or dismantling the missions would likely find engaged, confident, and experienced community activists unwilling to give up either their rights or powers. The missions provide vital human services to the working class, urban and rural poor, and underserved communities. The government has redirected income from oil rent and royalties to fund mission social services. Mission Robinson and Mission Rivas provide free public primary and continuing education to adults. With the help of Cuban volunteer doctors, Mission Barrio Al Dentro provides easy access community health care to millions. Mission Mercal has established neighborhood grocery stores across the country, providing affordable basic food supplies. There are many other federally supported programs in agriculture, land, housing, fishing, cooperatives, and independent community media. Democratic participation is the most striking characteristic of each of these government-supported missions and programs. Democratically elected collaborative community councils ensure continuous dialogue with citizens. Significantly, more than 600 factory councils in primary industry control production, working conditions, and community relations.

The experiences and strategies of the Venezuelan revolution over the last ten years demonstrate the validity and value of several Marxist tenets which suggests how revolutionaries might use a "state for revolution" strategy: social being determines social consciousness; socio-economic structures frame political and cultural practices; and fundamental social change requires new social relations and structures. A capitalist state cannot do socialist tasks. So what's a revolutionary to do? Understand and wield historical materialism for revolution. With a clear strategy and flexible tactics, revolutionary movements can intentionally use the capitalist state to consciously dismantle that same state while simultaneously building a socialist "self-government of workers", in Marx's phrase.

3. On the State

The state is not solely the government, nor does the government alone comprise the state, but using the "state for revolution" by using government power for revolutionary transformation is not only viable, it is a necessity for 21st century socialism. This is the big dialectic. A Marxist approach to society identifies what is materially present, where historical contradictions exist or may occur, and how conscious human intervention might influence developments. As expressed in countless treatises and debates, the state has multiple, interactive components. In general terms, the state organizes the social reproduction of social relations. We should speak of state power as the expression of dominant class relations and the state apparatus as the institutionalized political means for implementing and enforcing class relations. Additionally, state power depends on the population's hegemonic consent for dominant class leadership reproduced ideologically and culturally in common sense practices and everyday norms (Gramsci 1971).

State power thus consists of: 1) the forces and relations of production; 2) the state apparatus that establishes and enforces rules; 3) and the cultural and ideological practices that legitimize

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

class relations and norms. In class society, state power crystallizes relations between classes in institutional structures and expresses those class relations in policies. In other words, the state institutional apparatus (government) is a primary manifestation of the social division of labor expressed in the content and effect of government policies (Therborn 2008). Government policies in a capitalist state defend and reproduce market relations through laws, regulations, and enforcement. Meanwhile, in contemporary capitalist states, media and culture industries promote, reinforce, and reproduce ideological explanations and cultural practices appropriate for capitalism.

Above all, a state is a relation, not just an institution or an instrument. State power establishes, expresses and reproduces class relations through policies and practices – including cultural and ideological. A capitalist state apparatus uses its political and coercive powers to maintain and extend class relations and to break or obstruct any challenges to that rule. A capitalist state apparatus functions as a political manager and reproducer of class relations, including wage labor, private profits, and market tenets, while reflecting and reinforcing ideologies and cultural practices which legitimize capitalist relations, such as individualism, consumerism, authoritarianism, and spectatorship entertainment, e.g. Given this triad of state power, it is easier to recognize and comprehend a capitalist state which nationalizes industry, or a socialist state which reintroduces market relations. Capitalism can function with state-run production, provided wages and profits are sacrosanct. Socialist states may even exist short term with small scale, atomized retail markets, provided the norms and practices of social production and social wealth are reproduced – although long term market relations tend to undermine solidarity, social responsibility and collaborative relations (Lebowitz 2010) as Mészáros (1994) also observes in the Yugoslavian "socialist" market experience.

A capitalist state is marked by market mechanisms and managerial control of production, the apparatus is comprised of party politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats, entertainment and consumerism are cultural norms, if not pastimes. A socialist state would lead to collective participation, production by social appropriation and collective, democratic planning, while politics and culture would be characterized by public persuasion and participation in all cultural production and activity. In general terms, a state may be characterized by its tasks, personnel, and processes of decision and administration – its class character revealed by which class relations it defends, what rules and laws are created and enforced. A socialist state has less need for personnel because workers and community organizations initiate, implement, and evaluate policies and practices. A socialist state must have laws, but more importantly, in a socialist state, the government does not enforce, but the working class and other progressive social agents must realize and implement laws and policies on their own behalf – a perspective codified in the Venezuelan Bolivarian Constitution (Lebowitz 2006). Capitalist states encourage consumer atomization, privatization of social activities, and market rule: protecting the market and the reproduction of private property and capital, by enforcing wage labor and private profits. Socialist states would rely on human solidarity, collectivity, equality, participation, and public transparency: advancing public discourse and debate, public social ownership and collaborative, democratic decision-making. Lebowitz (2010) provides a lively, accessible summary of 21st century socialism as anticipated through the practices of Venezuelan communal councils.

Venezuela is a capitalist country. Bolivarian socialist Chavez is president. The socialist PSUV has a majority in the National Assembly. The Constitution proclaims participatory democracy. Missions, councils, nationalizations, and public service programs continue to expand. Still Venezuela is a capitalist country. Ten million may vote for Chavez and socialism in October 2012. Maybe most of eight million workers prefer factory councils. More than 30,000 workers may be members of worker's militias. Venezuela remains a capitalist country. For now.

Michael Lebowitz (2010) calls Venezuela a "rentist" capitalism, because the primary resource, oil, has been nationalized as state property since 1976 and global oil giants "rent" most of the oil fields from the government. Still, the classic explanation of capitalists exploiting labor power by providing wages while withholding surplus value as profit expresses dominant social relations in Venezuela. While no corporation "owns" the oil, the rent paid for using the oil fields and the royalties paid for extracting the oil does not interfere with wealth acquired in drilling, refining, processing,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

and distributing oil. Technically, rent and royalties is the Venezuelan government's share of surplus value, while capitalist social relations based on the wage labor production of a commodity for the market remain. Oil provides almost 80% of the exports and some 25% of the GDP for Venezuela. Venezuela has the fifth largest oil reserves and may have the largest oil shale fields in the world. With such oil wealth, development in Venezuela was distorted. Populations have been concentrated on the urban coast, agriculture was neglected for food imports. In addition to oil production, Venezuela has other major industry, including: aluminum, steel, paper, concrete, auto assembly, textile, rice, retail food and beverage production, and media entertainment, among others (Enright, Frances, & Saaverda1996). Until the 21st century, the Venezuelan economy was private, commercial, and capitalist. But capitalism has its internal contradictions of overproduction and class inequality. In short order, global capitalist triumphalism ended the relative tranquility in Venezuela. Even as the wall fell in Berlin, the neoliberal policies of the Perez government in the 1980s led to mass unrest and resistance in Caracas. Since 1992, Hugo Chavez has personified and articulated the new anti-capitalist direction of Venezuela. Venezuela may still be capitalist, but the government is not, and incursions elsewhere have begun. The capitalist state is now under siege.

4. Reproduction, Reform, and Revolution

Certain theoretical and practical questions arise from the above understanding of the state: Does the Chavez state have the commitment and/or power to implement socialist relations? What has the PSUV/Chavez government done and what will it do with its (government) power? What is the empirical evidence that state apparatus actions are maintaining and reproducing capitalist social relations, or is there evidence that government poiicies and actions have advanced working class interests and socialist relations? What are the conditions for change and how do policies and practices of the government promote collective action and working class power? Or do policies and practices (including enforcement or lack of enforcement) maintain and protect exploitation and domination by the capitalist class? Capitalism creates surplus value through commodity production and the expropriation of wealth from labor power…it also must necessarily reproduce social relations with wageworkers, managers, owners and the economic, political, and cultural institutions that normalize those relations.

Over the last ten years, what social relations have been reproduced? What role has the government played in maintaining or protecting the capitalist class? What role has the Chavez state played in dismantling capitalist relations, private profit and wage labor? Is the government advancing on capitalism/are capitalists organizing against government actions or complacent and sanguine about government policies? What role has the Bolivarian state played in promoting collective control of the production of social wealth? In other words, how are the three components of state power in Venezuela dialectically developing and what are various class forces doing to intervene in class relations and state power? Have capitalist relations of production (ownership, control, regulation, profit) expanded, been maintained, or curtailed? Has the state apparatus (administration, legislative, courts, and police) created laws, policies, and enforcements that protect capitalist relations or do they advance socialist relations? Have cultural and ideological practices been promoted or emerged that encourage collective collaboration, solidarity, citizen participation, creativity, and social justice or does consumerism, self-gratification, and passive spectatorship remain.

Even a cursory review of the political trajectory of the PSUV and social movements in Venezuela today indicates that a popularly elected revolutionary leadership is using its government power to consciously push against existing social contradictions and unleashing class conflicts that can only be resolved through concerted revolutionary class action. These conflicts are not orchestrated but are being systematically unearthed, providing impulses and opportunities for an organized working class to transform the social relations and replace the capitalist state, not just its government. Government policy and the Chavez leadership, including large sections of the PSUV, seem intent on extending and intensifying socialist relations across society: extending socialist relations through new nationalizations in more industries and services; intensifying new class relations by insisting on worker's control of production, establishing worker's militias to enforce decisions, and support-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ing social movement initiatives for accelerated land reform, housing reform, and media access. The state apparatus of Venezuela is extending socialist relations, creating space for new class relations, interfering with production for profit, against labor as a commodity, and for social intervention in the production of basic goods and services (as expressed in new laws on media, nutrition, production, and civil rights). Confrontations will come soon, but as VP Elias Jaua says: "without confrontation there can be no social gains" (Jaua 2011).

The strategy of "state for revolution" is a conscious process of building independent working class institutions with decision-making power and control. This strategy has three interrelated elements that conform to the three components describing state power presented above: in production and ownership; in political power; and in cultural norms. The Chavez government has declared socialism as its goal with worker's control of a nationalized means of production a first step. This is not simply nationalization and government expropriation of industry. Rather, changing ownership of the means of production includes laws and policies for changing the relations of production through worker's councils, community councils, and worker's militias – no government control over production, but worker and community control to decide allocation of resources locally, regionally, and nationally.

Chavez's weekly three-hour television program, "Alo Presidente!" is only an iconic example of the government ideological and persuasive campaign for 21st century socialism. More significantly, the popular programming on new public service television (ViVe TV, TVes, and Avila TV) and the hundreds of community radio and television stations organized by community councils indicate how democratic mass communication for a new society permeates everyday life – media access, public discourse, and participatory communication – whatever the political consciousness of the programmers.

5. Media in Venezuela

The changing ownership structure, production practices, and programming content in media in Venezuela reveals the "state for revolution" strategy. The state apparatus has promulgated laws to curb the capitalist means of media production, expand working class access to the means of communication through laws which limit private ownership and privilege community social ownership, and thereby providing a public space for popularizing democracy, participation, and new social relations not based on advertising, profits, and audience markets. The narrative on community media in Venezuela is above all a prime example of class conflict, highlighting how the socialist government has used its power to nurture another site of power by establishing and promoting non-state institutions under worker's control for communicating a more socialist and humanist culture. Because the political economy of media in Venezuela reflects the social relations of the larger capitalist society, the incursions against commercial media and the burgeoning parallel community media also reveal the possibilities for the strategy using government power against state power, of creating a "state for revolution."

Historically, media in Venezuela have been commercial, private, and highly concentrated in a few hands (Golinger 2004). Commercial media still comprise more than 80% of all media operations. A small group of business families own fifteen television stations, including the large national broadcasters: Venevisión, Teleleven, RCTV (the Granier group), and Globovisión (Ravell's virulently anti-Chavez UHF and cable station); and several regional stations. Supportive of successive conservative and neoliberal governments, these major media have been highly profitable, selling mass audiences to advertisers by producing mass entertainment programming from soaps to game shows and dramas. The Cisneros Group, owner of Venevisión, has become a significant second-tier global media corporation, with more than 70 media outlets in 39 countries, including Univisión, the largest Spanish network in the US, DirecTV Latin America, AOL Latin America, Playboy Latin America, as well as beverage and food distribution (Coca-Cola and Pizza Hut in Venezuela, e.g.), and other cultural productions, including the Los Leones baseball team and the Miss Venezuela Pageant. Venevisión produces some 184,000 hours of telenovelas each year that are broadcast in 38 countries – more than exported by Argentina, Mexico, or even the famed Brazilian soap opera

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

distributors. Six families own the six largest daily papers. In general, commercial media and entertainment remain dominant and robust, exceeding paper, auto, and all agricultural production in net profits. Significantly, (with the exception of Venevisión and until recently the news daily Últimas Noticias) commercial media are sensationalistic, oppositional, and at times even rabid in their attacks on Chavez. In addition to the large commercial stations, there are a few national specialty broadcasters such as Vale TV, a Catholic, educational channel, Meridiano, a sports channel, La Puma, a music channel, and La Tele, an entertainment channel (Wilpert 2007). The political economy summary: consolidated private ownership of means of production; hierarchical production for profit from advertising-funded entertainment media; programs created and distributed to target audiences of consumers, replete with narratives and themes advancing capitalist social relations, reinforcing passivity, authority, and individual consumption.

6. Reaction and Revolution

These conditions of media production were dramatically challenged following the April 2002 coup, which was orchestrated under the leadership of major media, in particular the owners of RCTV, along with the Chamber of Commerce and the Catholic Church hierarchy (all in consultation with the US) (Gollinger 2006). The coup leaders kidnapped Chavez, immediately "abolished" civil rights and the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, shut down the only independent television station in the country, and broadcast cartoons for the duration of the coup on their own national networks. The people soon discovered the plot, however. The coup was short-lived – interrupted and blocked by mass civic action instigated by nascent community media in the hands of the more conscious sections of the Caracas working class, including low-power community radio, and journalist-activists that printed and distributed thousands of flyers calling for mass demonstrations against the coup (Sanchez 2012). (In May, these activists created the on-line news site, Aporrea.org [American Popular Revolutionary Assembly], which has become an important clearinghouse for nationwide community news and information in support of the revolution.)

Hundreds of thousands came into the streets and surrounded Miraflores, the Presidential building, where the coup was headquartered. After President Chavez was rescued the people celebrated their success. The more conscious leaders had a more sober assessment of the relations of power, however. Perhaps they recognized that a Chavez government had not overcome the power of the capitalist state. Seventy-eight Caracas-area media workers met with Chavez and other government representatives demanding more public independent media – media for revolution – not only in policy but in practice.

Although the government-run VTV was nationally broadcast and available to all, community media workers pointed out the fragility of such concentrated mass communication. They insisted on community media outside the state; community media controlled by workers in communities. Government response was immediate. Within the year, Venezuela had a new formation for communication: the Ministry of Communication and Information (MINCI) launched its "strategic goal" to return the right of communication to the population, initiating independent community media while increasing the regulation and monitoring control over commercial media. MINCI was the state apparatus response to working class demands. With the legitimate power of the state apparatus (the government) in revolutionary hands, all three elements of state power were addressed. From its inception, the Chavez-led government passed laws and provided resources to revolutionize the political economy of the media., including the Organic Telecommunications Law of 2000, which established the right to community media (e.g., Article 12 states that every individual has a right to create a non-profit community station). The state apparatus acted to curtail capitalist relations in the media and to advance socialist relations. Media ownership changed. Public ownership, as social ownership, was expanded, conceived as participatory and collaborative under direct popular control by citizens in their working class communities.

Meetings begun in 2002, however, led to a much clearer understanding, and more pronounced emphasis on participatory community media production, codified in a new media law. First, the Open Community Radio and Television Broadcast Ruling in 2002, defined criteria for media pro-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

duction, prioritizing independently produced, community-based messages and programs. The Partial Reform Law of Radio and TV Social Responsibility (2006) outlines media rights and interests "for the purpose of promoting social justice and contributing to the formation of the citizenry, democracy, peace, human rights, culture, education, health, and social and economic development" and "to promote citizens' active and direct participation" (MINCI 2006, 9, 14). Within the next few years, more 300 FM radio and TV broadcasters were organized and licensed. By 2011, Venezuela was approaching 1200 community media outlets (Venezuela en Noticias 2012). The government provided equipment, technical resources and training using the Social Fund, established with revenues from the nationalized oil industry – simultaneously impinging on capitalist prerogatives over resources and turning those resources toward support for participatory democracy. With licensing, the government provided space for public media – not the small spectrum and low-wattage normally available to community media in most countries – spectrum, power, and geography so "community" radio broadcasts reach 3 million in Caracas, for example. Using the "state for revolution", media production practices and control changed. Laws and licensing legitimized and empowered revolutionary voices by ensuring direct working class access and control. In law and in licensing, commercial, state, party, and religious officials are excluded from public media, while 70% of the production must be directly from community councils themselves.

A few examples may help illustrate how a socialist state apparatus may use its power to revolutionize the political economy of the media and its striking impact on cultural practices. The development and expansion of national public broadcasting is the most easily recognizable change to the Venezuelan media landscape. The programs and processes of program production underscore how a more democratic political economy frames cultural practice. In addition to Telesur, the cooperative satellite television venture of Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba and Bolivia (Artz 2006), and ANTV, the television channel of the National Assembly, three major DTH broadcastings stations have been established: TVes, ViVe, and Avila TV. These public broadcastings stations are primarily funded by subsidies from the Social Fund and "advertisements" for national social services. They are each independently run outside government direction, oversight, or even approval –highlighted by several shows highly critical of Chavez and the government. The production and programming practices demonstrates the dialectic of social being determines social consciousness, because becoming producers, editors, narrators, and videographers for the new society creates new human beings – their social awareness, their life being is prompted to develop by the explosion in consciousness and awareness of their own creativity, power, and experience of social contradictions. In dozens of conversations and interviews with producers, directors, and technicians (conducted in person in 2006 and 2009, and electronically 2010-2011) expressions of determination and desire for a new society reflected the cumulative experience of democratic participation and decision-making that emphasized and privileged community, workers, women, indigenous, and the average citizen.

7. Public Media, Public Access

In 2007, the license to broadcast expired for RCTV, the largest private broadcaster in the country. The CONATEL (National Telecommunication Commission) and MINCI reviews found that RCTV had violated and admitted violating numerous broadcasting laws. Moreover, the new Constitution required expansion of public broadcasting, so Channel 2 was licensed to Venezuelan Social Television (TVes, pronounced "te ves" – meaning "you see yourself," in Spanish). Even as RCTV continues to broadcast via satellite and cable, while Globovisión, Venevisión, and private local stations maintain media opposition to the Bolivarian social project, TVes became the first national broadcaster in the public interest and with public access (Ciccariello-Maher 2007). TVes is a publicly-run station with a Board of Directors elected by unions and community organizations. Funded with $11 million from the National Assembly (and revenues for some social service advertising productions), TVes relies heavily on independent producers (PIN), journalists and community producers. Seventy-eight PINs provide some 229 programs on TVes' yearly schedule. Meant to be "merely a conduit through which independent cultural production reaches the airwaves," according to Minister of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Communication, William Lara (quoted in Ciccariello-Maher 2007), for the first time in national broadcasting history, TVes shows prominently feature working class, women, and indigenous people. Although telenovelas were perfected by Venevisión and RCTV, TVes airs the first ever soap opera with a black lead. Documentaries of popular history are a regular fare on TVes.

Founded four years earlier, Vision Venezuela TV (ViVe) is almost exclusively dedicated to community productions. Independent, public, and cooperatively-run, ViVe is funded by the Social Fund and prohibits any advertising commercials. Only 10% of programming is produced in-house, the remaining 90% of shows come from community videographers and documentarians (with specials on traditional peasant planting practices, indigenous musical performances, local community cultural activities, and investigative pieces on housing, utilities, and even religious events). More than 14,000 communities have been featured over the last 10 years, about 40 half-hour shows per week on average. Given its community production focus, for the first time on national television, women, Afro-Venezuelans, and indigenous people are prominent. To ensure quality productions, ViVe has organized community-based training for video production through community councils and some worker's councils. The Bolivarian socialist project "created social missions with health care and education for the poor. ViVe will be the equivalent for television, where everybody regardless of class, color, or beliefs can take part in the great political debate for socialism and the transformation of this country" (Sergio Arriasis, quoted in Wynter 2010). ViVe is not public service broadcasting as advocated by the media reform movement in the US. Rather, ViVe is public access, public control and public production of communication. ViVe even has mobile transmitting stations in each region of the country, along with courses to teach citizens broadcasting skills. A new social power has emerged as working class communities and individuals – directly participating and collectively collaborating – produce solidarity media and democratic cultural experiences. These creative producers represent new human beings, human agents consciously working in and for solidarity among working people and their allies.

One more important public broadcaster deserves mention for its connection to Venezuelan youth. Avila TV was originally launched in 2006 as part of a socialist communication initiative by the former Bolivarian mayor of Caracas, Juan Barretto.

Close to 400 twenty-thirty year olds produce, write, edit, film, and broadcast edgy, creative programming aimed at urban youth. Avila might be described as a station with hip-hop sensibility and socialist lyrics. A typical Avila broadcast day includes news, political talk shows, features on international and community issues, and telenovelas about Caracas working class families, but no commercials. Their programming decisions are guided by an explicit commitment to a new social order, as expressed by one of the many articulate young producers, "We aren't trying to sell shampoo or name brands clothes, or any capitalist products for that matter. We are trying to stay true to our principles and combat consumerism" (Mellado 2009). Watching Avila TV, viewers quickly notice the style, the tone, the structure of programming. At time even the music feels argumentative, strident. Avila is "not like ViVe, they privilege discourse, we privilege the aesthetic" (Mellado 2009). For example, in the spring of 2009, Avila aired a weekly series called "El Entrompe de Falopio", about women and gender issues in the revolution. A year-long live program, "Voice, Face, and Struggle of the People", included one titled "Impunity", where hosts, guests, and audience members sharply criticized the government for granting amnesty to the 2002 coup leaders. Even the telenovelas have political overtones with not-so-subtle barbs at the opposition for undemocratic obstruction and the government for not championing working class interests and advancing socialism more quickly. High-quality documentaries, professionally and creatively produced, have included the widely acclaimed 2008 "El Golpe" (The Coup) and the 2009 feature, "200 years of Caracas: The Insurgent Capital of the Continent". The young producers at Avila have also aired shows on Afro-Venezuelans, indigenous cultures, and homosexuality – all topics ignored or taboo on commercial television. Finally, Avila has been an integral part of RED TV (Education for the Revolution and Development of Venezuela), a city-wide educational project to bring classes in screenwriting, playwriting, and video production to the working class communities of Caracas. By 2010, fifty-five community councils in Caracas had media committees, where community members receive exten-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

sive training, mentoring and equipment – cameras, computers, and editing software for video production and post-production. Community media committees then have regularly scheduled spots on Avila's daily schedule for airing 10-15 minute video productions. In other words, the socialist government, nationally and locally, has created laws, provided resources, and prepared space for non-commercial, non-capitalist media production. In the vocabulary of the Bolivarian project, new "protagonists" can now fully participate in creating their own culture, their own stories, expressing their own interests. While they are making video, making television, making communication, they are also making new human beings. Lives and experiences of working class communities and community activists are valuable, valued, and shared – informing the nation of how and what new creative human beings can and will be with the revolutionary transformation of society from capitalism to socialism.

8. Community Media: Independent and Participatory

Complementing and historically and politically preceding these major broadcast ventures, community radio and television in Venezuela have a rich tradition of participatory communication. The seminal leader of all is Catia TV in Caracas, the first legal community television in the country. Catia TV's slogan "Don't Watch TV, Make TV!" is inscribed on the outside walls of its broadcast studios and demonstrated daily by collaborative rotating teams of 4-7 community producers organized in ECPAIs (Independent Community Audiovisual Production Teams). Each ECPAI decides the topics, formats, aesthetics, and content for broadcast programs, "emphazing stories from the barrio, contradictions and changes, or not" " (Vasquez 2009). Catia TV lives popular education and democratic participation, articulating its television production and programming with assemblies, events, and communication guerrillas: muralists, storytellers, oral historians, artisanal creators, and puppeteers. Its purpose "is to act as an organizing tool, where communities build their own audiovisual discourse…" (Catia TVe Collective 2006). Collaboratively teaching and learning creates dozens of ECPAIs, "having knowledge of communication; having a critical analysis surrounding the conditions and social context in which an individual or group must live; identifying the cultural and ideological values that effect the group's or collective's vision; developing a understanding of reality and how they act; associating learning with the collective construction of knowledge; and identifying and analyzing [their] own practices" (Catia TVe Collective 2006).

Beginning as the Simon Rodriguez Cultural Center, a volunteer-based community-building project, showing film and video in vacant buildings in the neighborhood, Catia TV eventually emerged as a media-based social movement that expanded and organically developed through intimate interaction with the community. Even before the Chavez election in 1998, the cultural center was showing community-produced news and entertainment in the community centers of West Catia. (An early leader of the Cultural Center was Blanca Eekhout, now president of ViVe TV, extending the participatory radical social ethos into the heart of public broadcasting, confirming in practice the revolutionary impulse of the Bolivarian government.) Following the national impetus to develop community media, Catia TV was licensed in 2000, by the April 2002 coup was setting the standard for participatory, democratic, public access television—a model to be emulated by the hundreds of community media launched after 2003. "The fundamental principle of Catia TVe is to encourage participation within organized communities. Catia TVe seeks community participation in the making of audiovisual productions reflecting community struggles and demonstrating how to build networks within the community… [the] objective is to build a media that the people want, with democratic participation based on dialogue. As part of this objective and considering that community media is a space for the people to exercise their power, at least 70 percent of Catia TVe's programming must be produced from within the community… Because Catia TVe is a television station connected to the working class…every Catia TVe participant has a minimum political consciousness and social responsibility…Catia TVe shares a space for communication with organized groups that come from various communities in Caracas, as a way of protesting" (Catia TVe Collective 2006).

Dozens of community television stations now broadcast across Venezuela. Not all are successful in integrating community participation with media production. Petare TV was established without

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

much community input and despite funding, technology, and training, it struggles from the lack of collaboration and organic connection to residents. Petare TV shows how government initiatives fall flat without participation and interest: Petare's communal council barely exists; recent Colombia immigrants have created much social disruption; crime, unemployment, drugs, and atomization mark Petare daily life. Citizens are more intimidated than motivated. Thus, Petare TV is just one more station on the dial for neighborhood residents who do not yet feel or believe in social responsibility or collective action. The state apparatus cannot impose participation or a new social order; socialism and the transition to socialism requires participation, initiative, time, aptitude, creativity, and an organic connection to the life of the community. Disaffection and surrender are not key motivators for social change.

In contrast, Afro TV, in Balo Vento on the east coast of Venezuela, illustrates the cultural and social potential for community media led by community activists and linked to a politically awakening community. About 15% of Venezuela is Afro-Venezuela, the historic consequence of Spanish slavery and cocoa plantations in the east. Balo Vento had long been neglected by central government, relegated to continued exploitation by remaining small cocoa growers. Following discussion and ratification of the new Constitution that establishes Venezuela as a multiethnic, pluriculture society, the government established a subcommission of African descendants in the National Assembly. The education, health, and housing missions were extended to Balo Vento, along with the opportunity for public, independent, community media. Afro TV was the early regional media project launched by a handful of community activists. Their mission includes recovering their African past, expressing their cultural and artistic present, and organizing public dialogue on contemporary issues important to Balo Vento, such as land reform, development, and worker's control of cocoa production. In 2009, Afro TV was broadcasting 4-5 hours daily on a UHF signal. Afro TV is also available via the Internet. Early programs included "Cimmarones," stories of slave rebellion, and "Que Es Eso," featuring local characters telling their life stories (Perdemo 2009). Afro TV, while modest in its operation, nonetheless illustrates the relationship between media access and community cultural experiences, the dialectical development of becoming new human beings through participation in creating one's one existence. In the words of MINCI Alternative and Community Media Director, Ana Viloria, "Community media visibilizes our faces, our voices, so we collectively know what we are doing is connected to humanity. We become protagonists…we make for ourselves the task of learning ideas and tools that are available for the political actor" (Viloria 2009).

There are currently more than 100,000 community activists working with more than 400 community radio and 40 television stations with some additional 800 broadcasters in various stages of preparation, production, training, licensing and regular broadcasts, most to be completed by the end of 2012. Community media have been a national priority for MINCI since 2008, when it unveiled a new strategic plan for funding, training, and licensing community media with national broadcast capabilities. By 2009, community media reached 56% of the population. As already indicated, this national program represents the continuing dialogue about communication and the concerted interaction between government and working class communities to establish laws, practices, and democratic control over media in Venezuela. An example of government intent, was Chavez's defense of CONATEL's (National Telecommunication Commission) decision in 2008 to "recuperate" 32 private radio and 2 private television stations for violations of laws on media monopoly, those "stations now belong to the people" who should "control the strategic means of production" of communication in Venezuela (Viloria 2009). At all levels, from officials to teenage producers, socialism for the 21st century is articulated as a process for creating new social relations, beginning with ownership and control over industry, including media that contributes to a new social consciousness and new social being across classes. Community radio illustrates this dialectical process of protagonist-initiated development of political self-awareness and power.

At Radio 23 de Enero (broadcasting at 3000 watts in Caracas), community council journalists and producers from the more than 50 social movement collectives broadcast weekly programs of music, opinion, health, public affairs, and news. Also in Caracas, teens, grandparents, DJs, and investigative journalists collectively share the broadcast schedule at Radio Primero Negro, a station

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

with a long history of community organizing. More than 60 programs are aired weekly by "students, housewives, unemployed, and members of community organizations" (Lujo 2009) The station's community activists conduct regular surveys and conversations with neighborhood residents to assure programs meet the needs and interests of all, and to always recruit more participants for the station, offering training and the expertise of station technicians. Both of these "community" stations reach more than 1 million residents of Caracas – not your typical "community" broadcaster in the US or the rest of the North.

Radio Minero, in Tumeremo, is operated by working miners and their community producing their own news and programs. In Zulia, Maracaibo, the indigenous community broadcasts over Radio Yupa in their native language, with stories and topics drawn from their historic culture and everyday concerns. About 40 television stations, and hundreds of radio stations, now air countless inspiring stories by novices facing microphones for the first time and feeling the power of communication, directly experiencing the meaning of democracy and community (Labrique, 2011). Local stations have leaders, directors, and specialists on cultural, political, and indigenous, community issues, creating a "communication force" for revolutionary change (Viloria 2009).

Participatory journalism and participatory democratic production at ViVe, Avila, Catia TV, El Negro Primero, and other public and community media outlets reflect changing social relations. University and professionally trained journalists work alongside community correspondents and participatory journalists, constructing and distributing news and news reports that are accurate, timely, but much more democratic in framing and sourcing because they are not bound by the advertising needs or editorial dictates of a market-driven media. New norms of objectivity with partisanship serve the information and educational needs of the majority striving for democratic control over their lives. The goal of 21st century socialism as promulgated in word and deed in Venezuela exists (not to provide government largess and with patronizing welfare benefits) but for nothing less than to place the working class and its allies as protagonists in the process of restructuring social relations, including replacing the artificial norms of professional journalism, which pretend to separate facts from context.

Community and public media for 21st century social alter the practices and functions of media in line with human needs, so that a participatory socially-conscious media contribute to a new cultural hegemony of a creative, socialist humanity – against the hegemony of consumerism and neoliberalism – for a culture of cooperation, solidarity, and dedication to creating social justice and solidarity. In this mix, journalism of necessity becomes more vibrant, more alive, identifying facts, sources, and truths related to the real experience and conditions of the working class population.

In addition to community radio, television, and newspapers, the media battle in Venezuela has entered cyberspace. Early on media activists recognized the importance of Internet communication. Aporrea.org went on-line in May 2002, bringing together dozens of journalist-activists linked to community councils, community media, and independent newspapers and journals. Working with and through the National Association of Community and Alternative Media (ANMCLA), Apporea.org has demonstrated the value of networking news and information among community media – one of the few means for countering commercial media dominance. Meanwhile, with more access, more resources, and more cultural capital, privileged youth and university students working with the conservative Primero Justica party, the right-wing foundation Futuro Presente, and other opposition groups have been developing coordinated attacks on the Bolivarian revolution using social media and the Internet. The conservative youth have been courted and funded by the U.S. State Department, Freedom House, the Cato Institute, and the National Endowment for Democracy, and other U.S. government and private agencies. With some $7 million from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), anti-Chavez youth and student groups have used Twitter, Facebook, blogs, websites, and email messaging to destabilize the government through rumor and agitation against social programs and social reform (Golinger 2010). The Venezuelan government has not ceded the terrain. In the last few years, the government has energetically extended Internet access to millions of citizens. In 2000, only 4.1% of Venezuelans had Internet access, in 2009, 33% had Internet access (Internet World Stats, 2012). In addition to the 8 million citizens who have

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Internet access, and in direct refutation of commercial media claims about Internet restrictions, the government has established 668 community-based Internet "infocenters" with free public access. In 2010, the Ministry of Science and Technology launched 27 mobile infocenters "which will travel to remote areas in the Amazon, Andean and rural regions, guaranteeing free Internet services and computer training to citizens" who previously lack access to the technology (Golinger 2010). The Ministry also budgeted $10 million to build another 200 free cybercenters in underserved neighborhoods. In all, the current infocenters provide Internet to 2.5 million permanent users and up to 10 million visitors annually. As with all community media, the government is dedicated to participatory democracy, seeking to transfer operations and administration to community councils so citizens can collectively determine the technological needs of the residents.

Extending access to working classes and indigenous people is only part of the solution. As with other social projects, working class protagonists creating new social relations and more democratic communication forms will determine what a "socialist" Internet may look like. Fuchs sketched some broad outlines for a commons-based Internet dependent on a commons-based society (Fuchs 2012, 48) and the socio-cultural thrust of participatory social programs would suggest the Bolivarian revolution will so advocate, but at this point, beyond extending free public access and community administration it is not yet clear what the Venezuelan revolution will contribute to a more democratic, participatory Internet.

9. The Socialist Triangle

The trajectory of public broadcasting, community media, and participatory democracy with public access to media portends a new social function for media. Legalized, funded, and supported by the new Bolivarian government in power, these independent community media may still be entertaining, but more importantly, they are revolutionary media. Media that air working class-generated narratives reflecting the collaborative creativity and shared experiences of those who aspire to write their own future history; media that broadcast messages, stories, and images of solidarity, collective action, participatory democracy, and communities in struggle for democracy, social justice, self-government, and working class leadership of society. In sum, a revolutionary leadership has used its government power against the capitalist state, expanding sites for additional participation by the Venezuelan working and middle classes, women, youth, Afro-Venezuelans, indigenous populations, and others previously underserved and excluded, politically, socially, and economically. The Bolivarian government for 21st century socialism has been using its legislative, executive, and administrative power to direct Venezuelan national resources towards advancing working class control and democratic social relations.

The emerging popular community media represent what Michael Lebowitz (2010), following István Mészáros (1994, 2008), terms the "socialist triangle." Moving beyond the economist, determinist version of Marxism, which distorts historical materialism, Mészáros and Lebowitz understand the political economy of socialism to include: 1) the productive capacity and forces of society; 2) the social relations of "production" of humanity, understood as revolutionary human development that comes from the "simultaneous changing of circumstances and human activity or self-change" (Lebowitz 2010, 49); and 3) (in direct contrast to capitalist self-interest) the creation of communities of human solidarity—humans consciously working to meet the needs of the [global] community, including the "full development of the creative potentialities" of all humans (Mészáros 1994, 817). There is no doubt this informs Chavez. Citing Mészáros, Chavez proclaimed in 2005 that Bolivarian socialism is creating "a communal system of production and consumption" (in: Lebowitz 2006, 108). In other words, socialism thus conceived includes nationalized industry to secure social wealth (removing capitalist ownership and exploitation of resources and labor), worker's control of production to institute democratic relations of production (ending production for profit without regard for safety, the environment or human needs and opposing state control over production), and democratic, participatory culture for determining how social wealth will be applied to develop humanity (replacing the culture of consumption,, hyper-individuality, ethnocentrism, and self-interest). Public and community media in Venezuela aspire to this "socialist triangle" in their public, social owner-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ship of the means of media production, in the direct control over production and distribution of media by workers and community councils (without interference by the state or commercial media institutional control), and in the organic development of a culture of solidarity through collaborative, participatory production from and by the people themselves (as illustrated in Catia TV's ECPAI teams, Avila and ViVe communal documentaries, and community radio programming across the nation).

In most every respect, public and community media illustrate the dialectic of creating a "state for revolution" – as expressed in Venezuela today. As MINCI's Community Media Director, Ana Viloria explains this is "an exquisite contradiction. The state is used to initiate new practices requiring direct working class control *outside* and *above* the state. The state [government] did not impose, or implement. The state [government] did not bribe or provide a gift, or even provide a service to the public. Rather, the state [government] initiated a policy, provided funds [from the nationalized social wealth], while the communal councils and worker's councils implement, direct, create and decide how to use media to communicate their own messages and ideas" (Viloria 2009).

One third of media broadcasts in Venezuela are now socially-owned with licensing collectively held by the media users themselves. These new media social relations are nothing like the vertical broadcasting and control prevalent in commercial media. These media do not broadcast to "receivers" or "audiences". These new media have established active democratic relations of production because they are under direct workers community control, functioning to develop class actions and advance a new social order. State power over communication (including private control and ownership and government regulation) is passing to organized worker and their constituents, as community media become organizing structures and practices undermining capitalist social relations, production norms, and ideology. Community media, in practice, transform individuals, communities, and social classes who directly experience the power of the power to communicate, the power of the power to democratically decide and implement. Community media, and their national public media counterparts, prepare the working class majority for the coming confrontation with capitalism (within Venezuela and from the US) by experiencing and communicating in production and programming new norms of class solidarity, collective ownership, and democratic practices.

10.The Reality of Power

This is no idealistic journey into possibility. The Venezuelan community media experience is an actual historical dialectic, based in the material reality of an unfolding revolution. In dialectical terms, the social consciousness of workers and their allies arrives before, simultaneously, or in interaction with the available social structures. The material dialectic of becoming is based on the consciousness informed by experience and possibility. Media workers, women, youth, indigenous people, and large sections of the working class, middle class, and unemployed are propelled by workers and communal control to imagine and create new social practices – in violation of the norms of class society that dictate power and control from bureaucratic institutions. New media practices include writing their own stories, producing their own programs, relying on working class sources, recognizing the integrity and value of working class experiences and knowledge, serving their communities and cultures, and connecting with other communities. These practices uncover real human potential, inspire further creative endeavors, as illustrated daily through TVes, ViVe, and Avila airing of communally-produced news and culture. Importantly, these multiple, but shared experiences have the potential to lead protagonists to new understandings, including the recognition that their new access to communication and power can only be secured ultimately by establishing new democratic social relations throughout society—not just in one plant or at one station. Their individual self-realization requires the collective societal realization of 21st century socialism.

In Venezuela, revolutionary voices are no longer compelled to cry out from the grass roots. Revolutionary voices now broadcast from the highest hilltops of the urban centers. Because resolute leaders in the Bolivarian government, from the president to the National Assembly are using the state apparatus for revolution, revolutionary voices have the power of communication, the power of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

action, the power of decision and control over production. In the process of democratic media production, social relations and social consciousness are being transformed.

Socialism, after all, is not just an ideology or a program. Socialism means new, revolutionary human beings with the power to realize the needs of all, using their own voices as power – not speaking truth to power (that impotent refrain of the self-righteous and powerless liberal) – but speaking power with truth, as collective agents of their own historic reconstruction. Community media are a vital, if insufficient, venue for creating new human beings as active agents of history, agents of communication who are no longer listeners, viewers, or spectators, but protagonists who make their own realities.

11.Two States: Dual Power in the Balance

Of course, just as the nationalizations of steel, aluminum, and other industry have not replaced capitalism or its social relations throughout Venezuela and social missions have not replaced traditional political or social institutions, neither has the development of public and community media alongside an entrenched, popularly-appealing commercial media displaced the entertainment-based individual consumerist culture in Venezuela. Indeed, contrary to the New York Times, the Washington Post, and US network television, media in Venezuela are diverse in form and substance, with commercial media being openly, and harshly critical of the Chavez government. In other words, despite and because of the advances of the Bolivarian movement, there are currently two states in Venezuela. The government represents the working class majority and is using that power to organize and promote parallel institutions and sites for building political power and a new socialist culture. At the same time, the few dozen wealthy families and their minions remain as a still powerful capitalist class with major interests in media, banking, retail and food production and distribution, and importantly in popular culture. Music, movies, television, fashion, and the discomforting familiarity of market relations encourage simple self-gratification, individualized mass entertainment, and consumerism. But the capitalist class is politically disoriented and divided, finding political unity difficult even with US guidance. Meanwhile, managers, shopkeepers, and middle class students and professionals are anxious and fearful, pummeled by the market, constrained by their small business mentality. Most are atomized and alienated from society, but many are attracted to the democratic impulses of the socialist reforms in education, health care, housing, and credit. In brief, Bolivarian socialism is growing; capitalism is under siege. A major confrontation is near.

12. Making Change by Taking Power

In the transition to socialism in Venezuela, the conflict between two states must be resolved. The future socialist state is embodied in the current Bolivarian government, parallel political and social institutions, including new media, changing social relations of production represented by worker's control of production, and the explosion of class consciousness and political organization of the working class. The weakened capitalist state relies on the prevalence of wage labor and market relations across the national economy and in global trade, its entrenched government bureaucracy, especially on the provincial and local level, ideologically reinforced by Venezuela's energetic consumerist entertainment culture. The future socialist state is pressuring the lethargic, but agitated capitalist state, featuring "elements of the new society with which the old collapsing bourgeois society is pregnant" (Marx 1871, 335). The capitalist class will not willingly relinquish its power to profit and exploit. There will soon be a war of movement, in Gramscian terms. There will be a battle of classes and their allies. Skirmishes like the media coup of April 2002, the oil management strike of December 2002, the daily obstruction by mid-level government officials, industrial sabotage, irregular border incursions by Colombia, continuous media incitement against government policies and over social problems like crime and housing, are but precursors to more organized civil unrest, including civil war.

Of course, overshadowing the national and regional class conflict is the threatening presence and ongoing intervention of the United States, which continues to advise, finance, and intervene on

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

behalf of the Venezuelan elite and larger U.S. interests (Benjamin 2006; James 2006). In 2012, U.S. President Obama asked for another $5 million for the opposition groups, adding to the $57 million they received in 2010 from the US and EU combined (Golinger 2011). As inroads are made into capitalist power, US intervention will surely increase in myriad ways. The immediate future in Venezuela will be an intense struggle between the old and the new.

Will the Venezuelan working class and its allies be prepared in consciousness and organization to withstand the onslaught, including the likely intervention of the US in some fashion? The strategy of "state for revolution" anticipates the coming confrontation by resolutely building sites and experiences prompting the self-organization of the working classes. Some success can be noted: six million members of PSUV, twenty thousand community councils, hundreds of worker's councils in nationalized industry, thousands of social missions directed and staffed by tens of thousands of community activists, thirty thousand worker's militia, and hundreds of independent community media. The "state for revolution" continues to create opportunities for the working class and their allies to organize their own institutions, relations, and actions to fight for socialism. In action, the collective leadership of the state apparatus, the parallel working class institutions, and the independent political organizations seem to understand that their Bolivarian goals will realize 21st century socialism, only if they secure sufficient revolutionary power in a new state—with democratic, non-capitalist social relations, worker's control of production; direct, participatory political leadership and authority in law and policy; and socio-cultural practices for solidarity, democracy, and democratic communication.

The transitional phase to socialism began once the state apparatus undertook socialist goals, including writing laws and policies that opened avenues for new social relations, and putting the production of social wealth, including the production of media in the hands of the majority. Access to information and media production is a recognized human right in the Venezuelan Constitution (Articles 57-58, 65), the 2004 Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television declared the airwaves and radio spectrum a public good. CONATEL, MINCI, the National Assembly have only elaborated proposals for democratic media. The working class communities are the agents for implementing those proposals. The state apparatuses, such as MINCI exist to "solicit the people's involvement," because revolutionary leaders "know what we are doing is connected to humanity…so we put ourselves the task of learning that ideas and tools are there for political action" by the working class as protagonists of history (Viloria 2009).

By all available indications, using the "state for revolution" in the case of media suggests that public and community media have established working people as protagonists in the revolution, markedly helping personalize the meaning of collective participation for media workers and their community bases. Yet, with a completely sober assessment, this may prove insufficient, because consumer culture is ingrained in Venezuela and seductive in complex ways. When ViVe TV showed indigenous Venezuelans speaking their own language with Spanish subtitles, nobody understood, including the Chavistas (Sergio Arriasis, quoted in Wynter 2010). Fashion shows and beauty pageants remain popular, as do games shows and soap operas on commercial television.

Public and community media in Venezuela are constructing and broadcasting images for a new democratic socialist society, but with a growing awareness that new cultural identities cannot come from images or stories alone. A new socialist culture can only be created through political debates and battles for social justice, democracy, and new social relations that put human needs before private profits. The experiences of community media strongly hint at the real creative potential for humanity. Recognizing that objective material conditions condition possibilities for subjective intervention at opportune conjunctural moments has been a hallmark of historical materialism. In Venezuela, material conditions include oil resources, oil prices, class forces, lingering capitalist cultural norms and the likelihood of US intervention. Subjective conditions include the increasing organization and class consciousness of the working class and its allies, as well as concerted efforts to inform and persuade all of the benefits of solidarity, collaboration, and social justice.

Of course, understanding the dialectic of history and the contradictions within class society may inform the Bolivarian leadership in Venezuela, but it does not guarantee success. Nonetheless,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marxism has once again demonstrated its analytical and practical value for social change. Championing participatory democracy and implementing a "state for revolution" policy of government action and parallelism in social programs is a well-conceived strategy for winning socialism in the 21st century.

Those convinced of the democratic ethic and practical logic of historical materialism would do well to add their own subjective contribution to the efforts for 21st century socialism. Collectively raising more voices to defend, promote, and emulate community and public media in Venezuela will increase the possibilities for success and broaden awareness of an important historical lesson. Community and public media in Venezuela are demonstrating an important strategic truth: social change can only be realized when protagonists for democracy have power. May we recognize our own power in acts of solidarity, encouraging us to mobilize our own independent political power as working people and other citizens are doing in Venezuela.

References

Artz, Lee. 2006. TeleSUR (Television of the South): Discarding Contraflow for Horizontal Communication. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 2 (2): 225-232.

Benjamin, Media. 2006. US Intervention in Venezuela. *Common Dreams*. March 4. http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0304-20.htm Accessed April 12, 2012.

Catia TVe Collective. 2006. Television from, by, and for the People. *Venezuealanalysis*, July 19. Accessed February 22, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/analysis/1843

Ciccariello-Maher, George. 2007. Zero Hour for Venezuela's RCTV. *Venezuealanalysis*, May 29. Accessed February 22, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/analysis/2415

Enright, Michael, Antonio Frances, and Edith Scott Saaverda.1996. *Venezuela: The Challenge of Competitiveness*. New York: Palgrave, MacMillan.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. Google Capitalism. *tripleC* 10 (1): 42-48. Accessed April 14. http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/304

Goliner, Eva. 2011. Money and Intervention in Venezuela. Wikileaks: U.S. Embassy Requests Funds for Anti-Chavez Groups. *Global Research*. Accessed April 10, 2012.

Golinger, Eva. 2010. Internet Revolution in Venezuela. *Venezuealanalysis*, March 26. Accessed April 10, 2012. http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=25444

Golinger, Eva. 2006 . The Chavez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela. London: Pluto Press.

Golinger, Eva. 2004, September 25 . A Case Study in Media Concentration and Power. *Venezuealanalysis*, September 25. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/analysis/710

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* Ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Internet World Stats. 2009. Usage and Population Statistics. Venezuela. Accessed April 17, 2012. http://www.internetworldstats.com/sa/ve.htm

James, Deborah. 2006. U.S. Intervention in Venezuela: A Clear and Present Danger. Accessed April 12, 2012. http://www.globalexchange.org/sites/default/files/USVZrelations1.pdf

Jaua, Elias. 2011. Without Confrontation There Can Be No Social Gains. *Venezuealanalysis*, July 20. Accessed February 22, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/analysis/6366

Lebowitz, Michael. 2006. Build It Now: Socialism for the 21st Century. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Lebowitz, Michael. 2010. The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Labrique, Laruent. 2011. Community Media Give New Face to Venezuela. Accessed January 16, 2012. http://presstv.com/detail/164807.html

Lujo, Carlos. 2009. Personal interview at Radio El Primero Negro. Caracas, Venezuela. June, 2008.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital. Volume One*. Accessed April 12, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch32.htm

Marx, Karl. 1871. The Civil War in France. In *Marx Engels Collected Works: Volume 23,* 307-359. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels 1998. *The Communist Manifesto*. Originally published in 1848. New York: Penguin.

Mellado, Antonio. 2009. Personal interview at Avila TV, Caracas, Venezuela. June, 2008.

Mészáros, István. 1994. *Beyond Capital: Toward a Theory of Transition*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Mészáros, István. 2008. *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time: Socialism in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Perdemo, Luis. 2009. Personal interview with Afro TV organizers in Caracas. Caracas, Venezuela. June, 2008.

Sanchez, Martin. 2012. *Ten Years after the Coup: Alternative Media in Venezuela*. Presentation at DePaul University, Chicago. April 13.

Venezuela en Noticias. 2012. Community Media in Venezuela Get Funding from Telecoms Authority. *Venezuealanalysis,* January 8. Accessed January 9, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/news/6731

Viloria, Ana. 2009. Personal interview at the Ministry for Information and Communication (MINCI). Caracas, Venezuela. June, 2009.

Wilpert, Gregory. 2003. Venezuela's New Constitution. *Venezuealanalysis*, August 27. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/analysis/70

Wilpert, Gregory. 2007. RCTV and Freedom of Speech in Venezuela. *Venezuealanalysis*, June 2. Accessed January 15, 2012. http://Venezuealanalysis.com/analysis/2425

Wynter, Coral. 2010. Venezuela: Creating a New, Radical Media. *Green Left Weekly*, May 23. Accessed January 21, 2012. http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/44207

About the Author

Lee Artz

Ph.D., University of Iowa. Artz teaches media studies and international communication at Purdue University Calumet. Artz, a former steelworker, has edited and published seven books and dozens of articles on social change, hegemony, popular culture, and international media.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 555-569, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Updating Marx's Concept of Alternatives

Peter Ludes

Professor of Mass Communication, Jacobs University Bremen, P.O. Box 750 561, 28725 Bremen, Germany. p.ludes@jacobs-university.de

Abstract: *The analysis of Marx's works will be prepared by outlining a more encompassing research project of intergenerational dialogues, in section 1. Section 2 will review Marx's concept of an alternative, classless society, which was based, e.g., in the projection of rational planning within companies to a national economy - to be revised and updated. Section 3 will discuss how more realistic long-term intergenerational means of orientation and communication of alternatives can emerge. This diagnosis will imply two exemplary and complementary forces calling for alternatives, namely "the perceived risks facing humanity" (Beck) and the enhancement of human rights as global challenges requiring global institutions.*
Keywords: *Alternatives, Classless Society, (De-) Civilizing Processes, Means of Orientation and Communication, Unplanned Processes, Intergenerational Dialogues, Long-term Goals, Multiple Modernizations, Risk Society, Global Challenges*
Acknowledgement: *My research into the sociology of alternatives, since the seventies of the past century, gained from discussions with Daniel Bell, Harvard, and Norbert Elias, Bielefeld and Amsterdam. Since 2009, I discussed the more encompassing project sketched in section 1 in the context of the research centre Humanities, Modernity, Globalization in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Jacobs University Bremen. Kind thanks also to two reviewers of tripleC.*

1. Introduction

Since the first phases of industrialization and democratization in the 19th century, many scholars have contributed eminently to interpreting these economic and political upheavals. Prominently among them were, e.g., Karl Marx and Norbert Elias – among the contemporary ones Jürgen Habermas and Ulrich Beck. Which insights can be gained via explicitly constructed synopses of and dialogues between a few of their highlighted perspectives? Which new insights will be gained via and in terms of such an intergenerational dialogue, concerning driving forces and/or impeding forces? Such an endeavour leads well beyond one theory tradition alone, even if it is as important as the various strands of Marxian analyses and theories, of Marxist organizations and activities.

Yet, from the outset a strong Western bias must be acknowledged, both in terms of the historical phases of industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, education, or democratization taken into account as well as the social scientific theories used to interpret and change social conditions. "How different would the history of sociology or anthropology have been if Max Weber (say) had come from India, Emile Durkheim from Cuba or Norbert Elias from Martinique?" (Burke and Pallares-Burke 2008, 17)

No theory by one author alone can claim to have developed a globally pertinent theory of alternatives. Yet (Marx 1973: Grundrisse, 77, put into parentheses), "if we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic." (Marx 1973, Grundrisse English ed., 159) Therefore, this essay will (1) situate Marx's concept of an alternative classless society in a network of later attempts at understanding long-term developments and detecting alternatives; (2) specify Marx's concept of an alternative classless society with a selection of highly pertinent quotations, referenced both in the original German and in English, which calls for a complementary update in terms of more recent studies, e.g., by Norbert Elias, Jürgen Habermas, and Eric Hobsbawm; and (3) discuss some chances and limits of alternatives at the beginning of the 21st century in terms of global risk challenges and human rights.

2. Intergenerational Dialogues

From Elias's classic theory of long-term social processes, to be sketched below, including those of more realistic sociological means of orientation and communication, two major components are basic to my inquiry: (1) Individual authors and their works are not the most important or decisive units of analysis, but intergenerational figurations, which combine to new types of insights. (2) Not only the concepts of individual authors and of short-term orientations are at stake, but the very notions of a scholarly "work", to be transformed in terms of a "collective authorship or mind". This will lead from a traditional history of ideas to an equal footing of authors from quite different epochs

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

and thereby a collective enlightenment scope, taking into account long-term ambiguities as well as dis-/continuities, shifts or break ups, i.e. tilting phenomena.

This diagnosis requires a concrete research project to enlarge the scope of theory-formation beyond traditional texts and efforts for global knowledge beyond Western biases (Featherstone and Venn 2006; Jin 2007). In order to re-allocate the status of widely acknowledged eminent theoreticians – whose special importance for international social theory formation cannot be deepened here - this essay focuses only on Marx's concept of alternatives, yet in a more encompassing project on the works by the following eleven theoreticians 1) Karl Marx; 2) Friedrich Nietzsche; 3) Max Weber; 4) Georg Simmel; 5) Sigmund Freud; 6) Karl Mannheim; 7) Norbert Elias; 8) Alfred Schütz (and Thomas Luckmann); 9) Jürgen Habermas; 10) Niklas Luhmann; and 11) Ulrich Beck.

As recently examined by Danowksi and Park (2009, 351), "[i]t would be of interest to map the network structure among public intellectuals, based on their co-appearance in the same discussion threads. However, when the study was pilot tested, sufficient co-occurrence of public intellectuals in the same discussion threads was not found to warrant such an analysis". Their findings show "on the internet, dead public intellectuals have a social afterlife, a sociomorphic quality that continues in cyberspace. This is a cultural domain in which discursive formations involving public intellectuals continue to evolve. The findings relate to the existing body of research concerning evaluations of online discussion" (Danowski and Park 2009, 352). They conclude: "It would be fruitful to […] use more traditional methods of content analysis. While threadedness is a message content-based construct, it is only an indirect measure of content. It is more clearly a measure of the persistence of discussion associated with a public intellectual and related ideas, not the composition of the threads. Their semantic composition would be a valuable component of a broader attention to public intellectuals and the internet" (Danowski and Park 2009, 353).

Intergenerational Dialogues will advance in this direction, exemplifying the transformation of the humanities and social sciences in terms of online sources, discourses, and publications. The concept of "dialogues" implies that no hierarchy is presumed or aimed at, but a focus on those theory elements, which combine to innovative synopses, less dependent on their historical or ideological roots. This procedure suspends traditional concepts of biologically and culturally shaped generations, as advanced, e.g., by Karl Mannheim. It deviates from more traditional histories of ideas arguing for the priority of certain thinkers, e.g., Fuchs' (2009) excellent article on Marx and the media.

Therefore, the selected works will not be interpreted as distinct outcomes of generation-specific conditions and insights, but as combining to a joint process of intergenerational knowledge creation and reflection, beyond biological time spans – which, nevertheless are taken into account for preliminary interpretations and the selection of variations of concepts of, e.g., societal alternatives.

A very simple and therefore transparent synopsis of the time horizon of the more encompassing research is sketched in Figure 1 below.

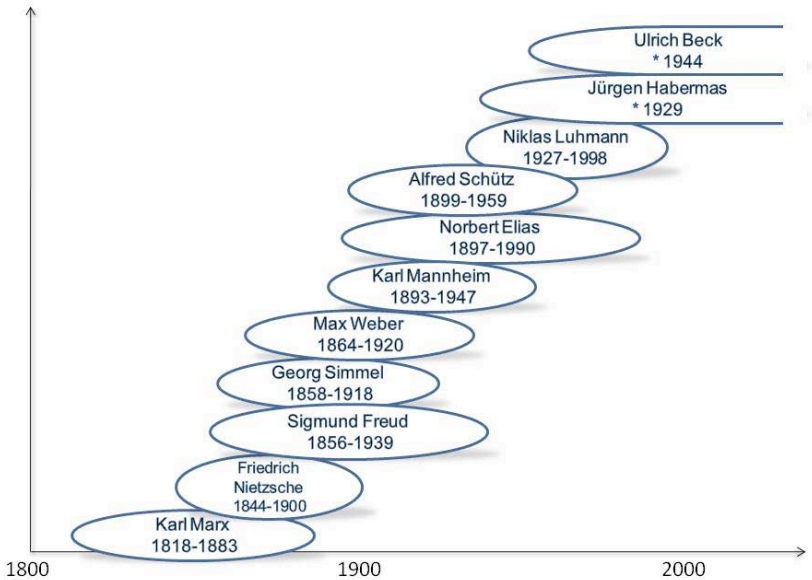


Figure 1: A synopsis of eleven selected public intellectuals from Marx to Beck

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

If we select only two major concepts for each individual work, e.g., for Karl Marx “classless society” and “alternatives” (as core elements of semantic fields), the number of all possible links between such 22 concepts amounts to 231. This network of concepts is visualized in Figures 2 and 3, below:

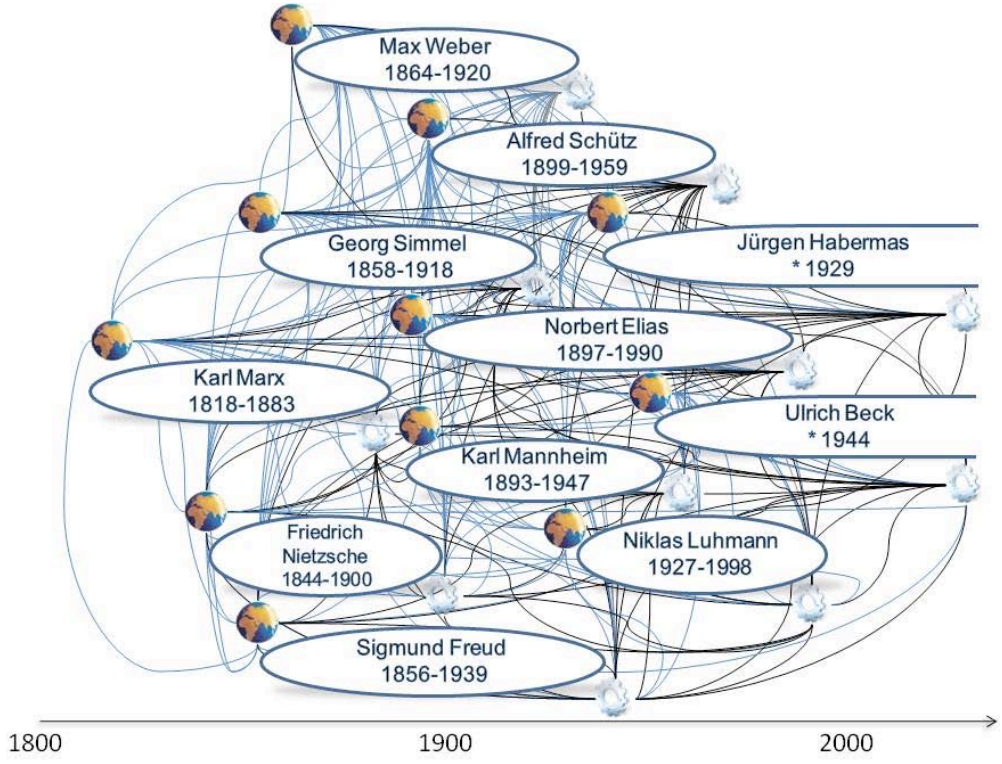


Figure 2: A synopsis of collected writings by eleven selected public intellectuals from Marx to Beck with 231 links for 22 variations of concepts of two selected concepts, emphasis on the authors

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

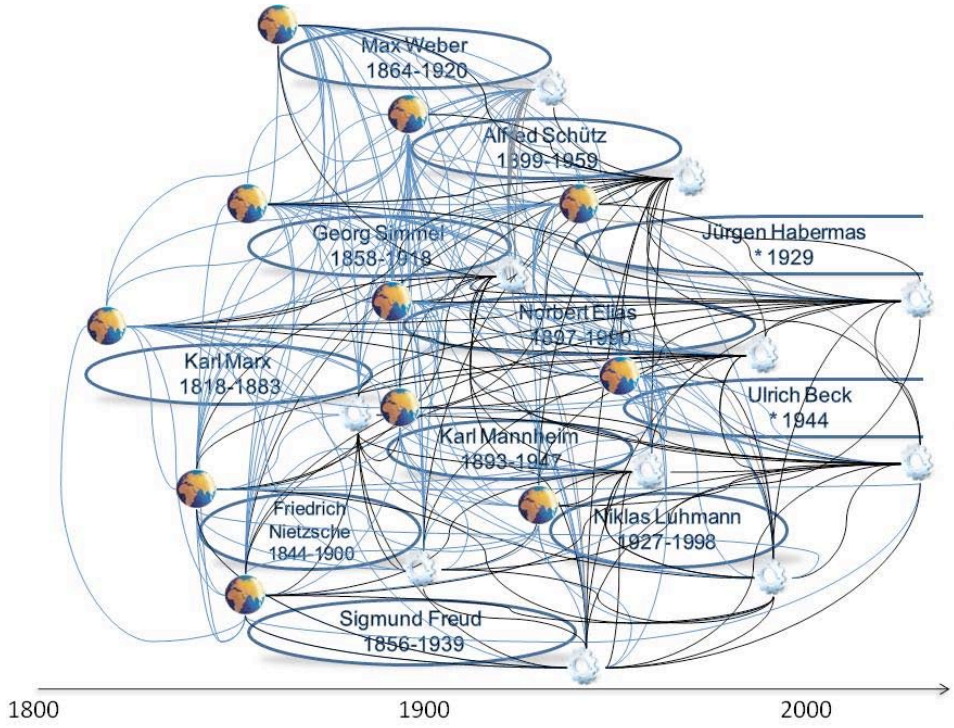


Figure 3: A synopsis of collected writings by eleven selected public intellectuals from Marx to Beck with 231 links for 22 variations of concepts of two selected concepts, emphasis on the intergenerational network of knowledge creation

These figures visualize the increasing interconnectedness of this intergenerational dialogue, leading individual works into the background and the network of concepts into the foreground. Thereafter, similar synopses of online publications will lead to even larger data sets and more complicated visualizations.

Already in 1929, Karl Mannheim developed a dynamic synthesis of diverse perspectives beyond class and political group barriers, challenged by his contemporary Antonio Gramsci. This intellectual challenge becomes more demanding, namely to investigate well beyond traditional national perspectives and to see and show synopses beyond current orientations and now living generations. Mannheim's assistant Elias inquired in his "Habilitationsschrift" from 1933 on the Court Society into a major phase prior to industrial capitalism as an important example for the historic development of state institutions, behaviour standards and personality traits. Elias's later (1939, in English 2000) interpretations of books on manners as observers and standards of human behaviour and personality structures in the context of increasing interdependencies between various social strata and functional realms as well as the monopolization of physical force and taxation by state institutions laid the basis for his outline of a theory of the civilizing process in the West. State formation, behaviour standards and personality structures were seen together. His insights, however, also allow for a better understanding of multiple civilizing processes in historically differentiated cultural zones. (Cp. with explicit references to Elias Ben-Rafael and Sternberg 2001.)

According to Elias's theory of long-term unplanned civilizing processes, networks of interdependencies are multi-dimensional and multi-functional, and only very partially known or intelligible to the actors or authors – which points beyond any attempt at discovering universal principles of socio-economic developments and revolutionary progress. They are so numerous (cp. Elias's chapter 3 on Game models and his calculation of the complexity of social relationships in Elias 1978, 101, Table 1) that it is impossible for any individual actor or author to oversee millions of connections already in small-scale networks. It is even less probable that individuals can calculate advantages and disadvantages, costs and benefits of individual actions within such networks or even parts of figurations beyond their own lifetimes. Elias (1939, cp. Ludes 1989) mainly argued that unplanned long-term social processes predominate any kind of short-term individual constraints and options as well as affective ties and deep-seated levels of anxieties. Such unintended consequences of social actions, strategies, interdependencies of knowledge, and risky unaware-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ness have become a major concern of Ulrich Beck's (1992, 2008a and 2008b) theory-formation on reflexive modernization.

In contrast, Habermas focused on (communicative) *actions* rather than on the means of production, class relationships, civilizing processes, or a risk society, relying on the Weberian tradition of action theory and rationalization processes. Habermas (1981, vol. 1, 439 and 446) focuses on interactions, which can be verbalized. In his theory of communicative action, "total experiences" as a prerequisite for "existential truths" (cp., e.g., Wolff 1976) come closest to dramaturgical actions, fundamentally expressive, calling for existential truth or authenticity in a subjective world. But for any type of discourse, its participants must mutually accept and listen to each other, be trustworthy and act trustfully. In historic terms, sacred traditions offer limitations, which have been only partially transformed and replaced in secularizing phases of social development. Most prominently, in his "Theory of Communicative Action", Habermas (1981, vol. 2, 585) postulated three distinct social realms, namely science, ethics, and arts, whose communication across realms had to be taken into account. Both the distinction and the complementarities condition and frame any discourse on diagnoses and even more so on strategies for actions. In more recent writings, Habermas (1999, 2011) emphasized the "inclusion of the other". Similar to Kurt H. Wolff's emphasis on the historic rupture of the possibility of human self-destruction as a challenge for historically new understandings of all kinds of social relations, Habermas (2001, 125) focused also on the dangers of gene-technology and especially cloning as transforming human autonomy.

Therefore, a globalizing discourse theory does not only require existential truths as prerequisites, but also intergenerational ties, i.e. an alternative social institution, which requires questioning current self-understandings of autonomous individuals, parties, or classes and time horizons limited to individual life-spans. Some attempts at using original Marxian insights from the 19th century for the beginning of the 21st century, from analyses of the early phases of industrialization without any bourgeois and/or proletarian democratization, especially the right to vote or some state and public control of decision-making in companies fall behind Marx's achievements of analyzing socio-economic developments with a multiplicity of perspectives. Only thereby his critiques of the German ideology or of the political economy of the early and mid-19th century could be developed for new types of "alternatives". Therefore, this essay aims at updating Marx's concept of an alternative, classless society in terms of a few social scientific studies from the past decades. Since this update - which implies fundamental upheavals for historically new conditions - begins with Marx's original sketches, a few especially pertinent quotations will be offered; in this context, it appears as obvious that this should be done in English, although concepts always carry on some original language connotations, which often get lost even in excellent translations. As Bielsa (2011, 205) states, "the global dominance of English is expressed […] in […] domesticating translation […] which disrupts the cultural codes of the translating language".

I draw attention only to two "words" in Marx's writings: "bedingen", which may be translated as "to condition" or "to determine", originally is similar to "provide with things" or "provide with material", which does not necessarily refer to a "material basis". "Notwendigkeit", as another example, implies the necessity to turn over misery, "Not-Wendigkeit", not necessarily socio-economic determinism (Fleischer 1972, 74 and 142). "British and American sociology have neglected the important role translation plays in the discipline, both in mediating the international circulation of theory and in key methodological aspects of social research, a lack of interest that can in part be explained as a product of current global inequalities and the dominant position of the Anglo-American academy in the world." (Bielsa 2011, 212)

3. How Did Marx Specify an Alternative, Classless Society?

Reviewing all writings of the Collected Works of Marx in German (MEW) led to a reconstruction of major prerequisites, impediments and characteristics of an alternative, classless society already more than three decades ago (Ludes 1979 and 1980). Mainly in writings not intended for publication including the "Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts", the "Grundrisse" and letters, Marx repeatedly asserted that the conscious control of economic and social processes is desirable and realizable. He also stressed the possibility and desirability of fundamental transformations of human character-formations like a general need for surplus labour, work discipline, solidarity with one's own as well as future generations; moreover, a decline or even abolition of traditional institutions like property, the family, money and finally the state at least in its repressive functions.

Marx (see table 1 in Ludes 1979, 130) named about 210-215 times specific prerequisites, 50-55 times impediments for a classless society, and warned that material wealth might lead to golden chains fettering workers within capitalism.

He sketched characteristics of a classless society in about 150 passages.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

"The German Ideology" (MEW 3, 424) for example considered the division of labour together with private property as limits of productivity: "We have already shown above that the abolition of a state of affairs in which relations become independent of individuals, in which individuality is subservient to chance and the personal relations of individuals are subordinated to general class relations, etc. – that the abolition of this state of affairs is determined in the final analysis by the abolition of division of labour. We have also shown that the abolition of division of labour is determined by the development of intercourse and productive forces to such a degree of universality that private property and division of labour become fetters on them. We have further shown that private property can be abolished only on condition of an all-round development of individuals, precisely because the existing form of intercourse and the existing productive forces are all-embracing and only individuals that are developing in an all-round fashion can appropriate them, i.e., can turn them into free manifestations of their lives. We have shown that at the present time individuals must abolish private property, because the productive forces and forms of intercourse have developed so far that, under the domination of private property, they have become destructive forces, and because the contradiction between the classes has reached its extreme limit. Finally, we have shown that the abolition of private property and of the division of labour is itself the association of individuals on the basis created by modern productive forces and world intercourse" http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch03o.htm (accessed March 30, 2012).

Yet, in Volume 1 of "Capital" (MEW 23, 512), Marx postulated the suspension of the old division of labour. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm#S1 (accessed March 30, 2012). In an earlier version of the sixth chapter of the first volume of Capital, Marx foresaw the ambivalence of scientific progress, which increases human control over nature, but also over workers (Resultate, 80f): "The application of the forces of nature and science [...] are [...] things which confront the individual workers as *alien*, *objective,* and *present in advance*"

http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/economic/ch02b.htm (accessed March 30, 2012).

In his speech at the anniversary of the "People's Paper", Marx argued in 1856:

> At the same pace that mankind masters nature, man seems to become enslaved to other men or to his own infamy. Even the pure light of science seems unable to shine but on the dark background of ignorance. All our invention and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other hand; this antagonism between the productive powers and the social relations of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted. […] The English workingmen are the firstborn sons of modern industry. They will then, certainly, not be the last in aiding the social revolution produced by that industry, a revolution, which means the emancipation of their own class all over the world, which is as universal as capital-rule and wages-slavery
> http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1856/04/14.htm (accessed March 30, 2012).

About two years before his death, Marx wrote to Domela Nieuwenhuis in 1881:

> The thing to be done at any definite given moment of the future, the thing immediately to be done, depends of course entirely (sic!) on the given historical conditions in which one has to act. But this question is in the clouds and therefore is really the statement of a phantom problem to which the only answer can be--the *criticism of the question* itself. No equation can be solved unless the elements of its solution are involved in its terms. […] Perhaps you will point to the Paris Commune; but apart from the fact that this was merely the rising of a town under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in no sense socialist, nor could it be. […] It is my conviction that the critical juncture for a new International Workingmen's Association has not yet arrived and for this reason I regard all workers' congresses, particularly socialist congresses, in so far as they are not related to the immediate given conditions in this or that particular nation, as not merely useless but harmful. They will always fade away in innumerable stale generalised banalities
> http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/letters/81_02_22.htm (accessed March 30, 2012).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Even more fundamental are the following prerequisites, which were not yet met by the beginning of the 21st century and thereby reduce the applicability of Marx's (and Engels's) early "Manifesto":

> National differences and antagonism between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another will also be put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end
> http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm (accessed March 30, 2012)

In the "Grundrisse", Marx elaborated some of his earlier thoughts. Thus:

> When the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a *predetermined* yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? (Marx 1973, Grundrisse English ed., 488 = Marx 1974, Grundrisse German ed., 387. See also ibid., 440).

Marx's discussion of labour as "real freedom" is also worth to be quoted extensively. Marx says in the "Grundrisse":

> Certainly, labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it. But […] that this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity – and that, further the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits – hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour […]. Labour becomes attractive work, the individual's self-realization, which in no way means that it becomes mere fun" (Marx 1973, Grundrisse English ed., 611 = Marx 1974, Grundrisse German ed., 505).

This passage, the whole context of which Marx put into brackets, points beyond a strict separation between the realm of necessity during labour time and the realm of freedom during leisure time. It shows that one must differentiate between general characteristics of labour, common in all types of society, in this case the characteristics that one works in order to arrive at aims which have been posited and that one has to overcome obstacles in attaining them, and characteristics specifying class societies, in this case that the aims of the labour process have been posited by those who own and/or control the productive means and appropriate the surplus labour of those who neither own nor control the productive means but work with them in order to survive or to live adequately according to the respective historical and cultural standards.

Marx never combined his various insights to a theory of prerequisites, impediments, phases and characteristics of an alternative classless society. Yet based on a synopsis of his writings, the following impediments can be systematized: Capitalism is quite flexible and grants only what is absolutely necessary to prolong its existence, classes are divided into sub-classes, petty bourgeois proprietors defend the capitalist system. The organizations of repression, namely the army and the police forces, improve their operations over time. Veiling techniques in the mass media as well as the exploitation of scientifically enhanced control repress pre-revolutionary sentiments and activities.

Rather than class conflicts, national wars dominated the 20th century. "Workers of all Countries Unite!" was a call for action, not a diagnosis. Class solidarity is undermined by actions against minorities. Economic-social developments become less transparent; capitalists do not only wear

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

character masks, but can also become invisible beyond most democratizing control. There is more to loose than chains – and in an age of means of mass destruction, not only a world can be won, it can also be lost. Short-term survival needs or granted privileges delay mid- and long-term goals – the more active workers left their home countries since the 19th century for more promising new worlds. The longer capitalism exists, the more it may appear as a historical necessity, deeply engrained in all major institutions. Therefore mainly a networking of alternatives already realized at smaller scales will contribute to revolutionary upheavals that can be successful in long terms also for generations after the revolution, i.e. an overthrow of economic, cultural and political exploitation and repression.

In general, Marx's procedure of specifying alternatives was a projection of rational planning within companies to a national and even world economy and of highly motivated, politically active and responsible workers to all citizens of a classless society. Do the socio-economic processes since the mid-19th century not require more up to date concepts of alternatives? Which characteristics are made obsolete according to more recent theories of de-/civilizing processes, emancipative discourses, and system-specific rationalities?

A few of the historical limits of Marx's concept of alternatives can be sketched via a more general specification of a sociology of alternatives taking into account the pertinent theories of Elias (esp. 1939 and 1984), Habermas (mainly 1962, 1981, 2006 and 2007), and Luhmann (1995, 1996, 1997 and 2010; cp. Ludes 1989 and 2011), e.g., development patterns of state formations and failing states, de-/civilizing behaviour standards, focusing on means of violent destruction and of self-/constraints (rather than on the means and relations of production), discourses, system-specific rationalities and functionally equivalent alternatives. All these impediments to and transformations of the prerequisites for a classless society require new diagnoses and actions.

In general, alternatives are usually understood as desirable (historically necessary, "notwendige", which already for Marx meant: revolting against misery), consistent, and realizable social actions, processes, or structures fundamentally different from the predominant ones: As Marx emphasized particularly in the "Grundrisse" (quoted above): if there were no concrete models of alternative social relations in present societies, any attempt at overthrowing them would be utopian. In Marx's early metaphor from "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm [accessed March 30, 2012]): "these petrified relations must be forced to dance by singing their own tune to them!"

Somewhat similar to Marx's diagnosis of a monopolization of the productive means and potentialities of economic wealth, Elias postulated a more general mechanism of the monopolization of various means of control as a major integrator of ever increasing interdependencies, going hand in hand with:

- An increase of population size, communication, the division of labour, the use of money and urbanization,
- An increase of taxes and the domination by centres of power,
- The decrease of power and income of the aristocracy, its loss of the monopoly of the effective use of weapons, enhancing the dependence on others,
- A development of new war technologies,
- The purchase of soldiers, and
- A monopolization of the state's exercise of physical force financed by taxes.

According to Elias' theories of civilizing processes and of the developments of more realistic means of orientation, sociological diagnoses should not limit themselves by highlighting either the means and relations of production (like Marx) or disenchantment, bureaucratization, and rationalization (like Max Weber). These realms should not be separated for they remain highly interdependent and shaped by the density of populations or the degree and type of the monopolization of physical force. *Long-term intergenerational interdependencies point beyond alternatives within any living generation's reach.* Since the experiences, anxieties, projects, constraints, and self-control of billions of past humans have led contemporary generations to the present conditions, these chains cannot be exploded or unfettered nor would this be desirable for they have become deeply engrained patterns of humans and institutions. The chains of generations are stronger than the fetters of capitalism. Or, in Marx's (Marx and Engels, Selected Works 1, 398) words in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte": "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."

In contrast to Marx's philosophical speculations about transformations of human nature, which he considered as basic for a classless society as the socialization of the means of production, es-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

pecially in the Paris manuscripts and the "Grundrisse", Elias interpreted books on good manners over centuries as indicators of actual changes of the behaviour and personality structures of the secular upper strata in the West in the context of state formations and state failures. In Elias's (1977/2009, 9, 13, 16f) words:

> Complementary processes of functional differentiation, social integration, and civilization are strands of this complex long-term development. […] One encounters simultaneously a deepening mood of doubt regarding the worth of such progress. People accept its advantages and fear its dangers. […] The same holds for the shifts and fluctuations that are taking place in the power differentials between state societies. […] Therefore, it is to the unplanned contradiction between the continual advance of scientifically acquired means of orientation in the sphere of non-human nature and of the corresponding chances for the exercise of control […] and the relative backwardness in the development of the human world […] that we must attribute a large measure of the growing strength of the voices and doubt in the value of all progress […] One remains, correspondingly, incapable of developing more adequate means of orientation towards and of controlling such progress.

Elias (1977/2009, 27f) continues: "One may think, for example, of the false planning that would be involved if, without systematic sociological investigation of its development potential […] one imposed the pure economic models of relatively capital-rich industrial societies on to a capital-poor society with a predominantly illiterate peasant population". Alternative intergenerational long-term goals (cp. Elias 1984) can become means of orientation and communication only if they take into account chances and limits of (de-) civilizing processes and of the developments of more realistic means of orientation and communication as well as demographics and the length, density, and intensity of intergenerational figurations.

4. Chances and Limits for Alternatives at the Beginning of the 21st Century?

The Google founders and their employees who have grown up with the Internet have "considered its principles to be as natural as the laws of gravity. […] But Page had a real vision: just as Google's hardware could be spread around the world in hundreds of thousands of server racks, Google's brainpower would be similarly dispersed, revolutionizing the spread of information while speaking the local language" (Levy 2011, 5 and 271). New types of information mining and knowledge networking have undermined the 19th and 20th century prioritizations on land, natural resources, labour power and capitalist organization as main or even only sources of (surplus) value. Fuchs (2012, 6) argues: "Google would loose its antagonistic character if it were expropriated and transformed into a public, non-profit, non-commercial organization that serves the common good".

From the perspectives of the 20th and early 21st century social sciences, Marx focused on the economic class struggles, hardly on political developments. An exception is the work "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", which gave us insights into the role of the "Lumpenproletariat" and the corruption of politics. Only an especially pertinent statement on peasants may be quoted here, for it shows Marx's awareness of blatant differences between the peasants and industrial workers, still highly important, e.g., in contemporary China and India: "The small-holding peasants form a vast mass […] much as potatoes in a sack of potatoes. […] In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants […] they do not form a class" (Marx and Engels, 1969, 398). Yet, this inability of communication provides us also with an example of the relevance of information technologies and devices for a new "working-class network society" (Qiu 2009).

Concerning political developments, Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), for example, was the major political figure in Germany during (and beyond) Marx's lifetime and chancellor from 1871 to 1890. Analyzing his autobiography "Erinnerung und Gedanke" and his (partially dubious) talks with various contemporaries as well as a major biography of Bismarck by Gall (1983) showed how different the historic challenges, conflicts, and victories are. Experiences with and attitudes towards physical violence and the role of the state far surpass considerations of economic developments. This applies also to the first social democratic chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1969-1974), Willy Brandt's autobiographical writings and a biography on him (see Ludes 1989, book 2).

Marx and Engels recognized the failure of the 1848 bourgeois revolutions and even acknowledged "Bismarck's 'historically progressive' achievement of German unity, they did not fully work out its implications" (Hobsbawm 2011, 71). This is in line with Hobsbawm's (2011, 86) diagnosis that "ahistorical voluntarism" is less adequate and successful than political decisions in the "frame-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

work of historical change, which did not depend on political decision", Rosa (2005, 477f) concludes in a similar manner, yet in terms of basic institutional upheavals, that the political project of modernity – due to the de-synchronization of socio-economic development and political steering – may have reached its end, giving way to a short-term muddling through. A recent account of "Confidence Men" (Suskind 2011) offers a few examples of how "the Audacity of Hope" (Obama 2006, cp. accounts of the first female chancellor of Germany in Langguth 2010, esp. 371f) is cut off by the influences that Wall Street and Washington have had on the US President.

Therborn (2010, 13) emphasized the significant "concentration of capital, just as Marx predicted" in the US from 1905 to 1999 as well as the development of "new terrain": "Habermas abandoned the systemic contradictions analyzed by Marxist theory, replacing it first with a distinction between different kinds of action and knowledge interests, and later with a conflict between the social system and the 'life-world'" (Therborn 2010, 79, see also 123 for possible long-term future alternatives).

Kurt H. Wolff (see the discussion of an existential turn in sociology in Ludes 2007) emphasized that the human potential of self-destruction became ever more obvious since the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This threat to human survival reframed and undermined all previous social diagnoses. Since the end of the Cold War, military budgets decreased in many democratic and richer countries, partially due to the higher technological efficiency of ever more advanced systems of mass destruction. State budget shares were balanced somewhat and for limited phases in order to finance welfare measures and repair costs in capitalist crises.

Marx's and later sociological theories "have assumed that the basic institutional formations that developed in European modernity […] will 'naturally' be taken over, with possible local variations, in all […] modernizing societies […] But the reality that emerged proved to be radically different. Developments […] did not bear out the assumption of 'convergence' of modern societies. They actually indicated that the various modern autonomous institutional arenas – the economic, the political, the educational or the family are defined and regulated and combine in different ways in different societies and in different periods of their development" (Eisenstadt 2010, 2). According to Eisenstadt (2010, 12), various trajectories and interpretations of modernities and modernizations decouple from Westernization.

The detection of alternatives is therefore characterized by the co-ordination of often highly distinct life worlds, patterns and rhythms of change and corresponding common sense or social scientific theories. There is no standard continuum of measure-units, as they have existed for generations for time, space, or economic values. It must rather be developed for any realistic long-term alternative. Only via the mutual feed back of concepts of alternatives in all their major dimensions of desirability, consistency, and the potentials for the realization of "desirable" actions, processes or structures, can fundamental transformations be prepared. Obviously, such attempts will be fettered time and time again by privileges that defend and enhance class struggles from above (which Warren Buffet considered as successful in the US) and by veiling alternatives.

Therefore, a critique of the political, cultural and mediated networked synchronization of alternatives requires the following long-term efforts (see Ludes 1989, book 2 and Ludes 2011, ch. 1):

- Since there is no physical or biological model for the perception of alternatives, intergenerational networks of alternative social models must be ascertained and enhanced.
- Since the discrepancies of systems and life worlds (to use Habermas's theory of communicative action) do neither allow for near-natural standardizations nor for discourse-based agreements or contracts, other modes of co-ordination will come into the focus of analyses and synopses, characterized by cognition, communication and cooperation.
- Yet these modes of interaction are continuously threatened by violent conflicts or even wars. One needs to develop means of communication and orientation, which enable societal alternatives, that are not only grounded in class analyses, but in networking long-term goals.
- This implies the re-synchronization of functionally distinct realms in the minds of people across generations. Thereby ever more realistic concepts of alternatives emerge, which could again shape the mentalities, especially the projects of actions and institutions as well as master narratives of ever more groups of people taking into account their mutual interdependencies over longer periods of trajectories.
- Such clarifications will allow for some standardization of alternatives, for limited areas, realms, times and issues.
- Only if such standards appear as more or less obvious, not only in cognitive but also affective terms, will they function as acceptable thresholds of otherwise timeless discourses.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

This diagnostic challenge calls for an intergenerational dialogue of theory-formation, in which the means of orientation and communication, of control and self-control, of reproduction and destruction inter-depend with those of production. The variety of culture-specific, transcultural and even globalizing alternative actions, processes, and structures and of criteria for their specification and agreement is so wide that no conscious consensus can be reached. Such models of orientation and communication clearly point beyond individual, short-term perceptions and must allow continuous feedback from the intended and unintended consequences of interactions and "inter-passivities" for various classes, groupings and time horizons. Thereby common standards emerge, which contribute to new behaviour patterns and mentalities. Consciously communicated alternatives always are embedded in less conscious horizons and frameworks (cp., e.g., Honneth 2011, 540-567).

Habermas (2011, 33-38) proposes human rights as a regulatory institution, which Ludes (2011, chapter 8) puts into the context of traditional print, broadcast and web media, symbolically generalized media of communication of money, power, truth or love, and the long-term means of orientation, space, time, and alternatives. Since the historically new global crisis of financial capitalism with its repercussions of economic fragilities and state bankruptcies, Habermas (2011, 100-129) sees a re-shuttling of "political alternatives", which would have been deemed unrealistic before. He calls for the right for unbiased political communication, especially concerning communication about the weapons of mass destruction employed by the global financial markets. The continuous interventions of state regulations in the crisis made transparent that capitalism cannot reproduce itself autonomously from the state, but rather drives the state to collect taxes that are used for resolving capitalism's state of emergency.

Yet: "The evolution of humankind is a contingent, open-ended process, driven primarily through five fields of forces of the mode of livelihood, of demographic ecology, of distributions of recognition, rank and respect, of cultures of learning, communication and values, and of politics" (Therborn 2011, 84). Only self-critical re-conceptualizations of traditional concepts can serve as driving forces for radical transformations of informational capitalism, which, however, tends to monopolize rankings of valuable information and knowledge (cp., e.g., Halavais 2009). Therefore, the appropriation of ICTs in the service of alternative commons has become a major means of revolting against the oligopoly of the means of production and destruction via new means of cognition, communication and cooperation (cp. Fuchs 2011a, section 5). "Given that alternatives frequently do not want to build their organizations on commodities and advertising because they think this will corrupt their political goals, they are frequently facing problems like lack of resources, precarious self-exploitative labour, lack of attention/visibility, etc" (Fuchs 2011b).

Yet, in addition to these and the impediments to Marx's trajectories towards an alternative, classless society sketched above, we must see clearly that the very base of Marx's diagnosis has become obsolete: More than two thirds of the world were almost completely outside of Marx's research (despite a few reflections in newspaper articles on India), namely almost all of Asia, Africa, Latin America. In globalizing socio-economic, military, terrorist, ecological, communication processes in the 21st century, these previously excluded regions and populations will shape also the rules of globalizing capitalism.

A recent "Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment" (Magdoff and Foster 2011, all following quotations will refer to this book) may exemplify the projection of analyses from one country, i.e., the United States, to a global theory. A rhetorical device is the unqualified use of "we", e.g.: "We are constantly being told" (7), "we have an economic system" (12), "our economic system […] we must look" (30), "We must also recognize" (38) and so on till the call for collective actors, which are even more vague that previous conceptions of a class in and for itself, e.g., "people organizing and fighting" (131), "society decides" (135), or "We the people" (151). Similarly, the political economical analyses, mainly based on developments in the United States and exclusively on publications in English, not taking into account any of the above theories from, e.g., Elias, Habermas, Hobsbawm, or Therborn, reify "the economic system" (12, 30), the "present system" (36), "capitalism" (7, 56, 101), "the capitalist system" (59), "the system" (83-85), "the democratic system" (91), "the current system", "the logic of the system" (93), "system", "the system", "the capitalist economic system" (96f) "capitalist society" (111) or "society" (66, sometimes referring to the US alone, sometimes to the whole world without clear distinctions). Based on these generalizations, even more universal "realistic alternatives" are proposed, "Creating an entirely different system […] a truly revolutionary form of change – the transition to a new system altogether": The simplifying "planning" proposed becomes evident in the metaphor of "what the house is to be like […]. Similarly, once society decides that it is critical to fulfil the basic needs of people, then – after some general agreement is reached as to what these needs are – a system that plans production and distribution

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

is required in order effectively to achieve those ends" (135). Compared to this "Guide", Marx's original concept of a classless society may appear as more concrete and aware of historic circumstances – and Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourses as even more realistic.

Magdoff and Foster's analysis is based on the ecological catastrophes due to a (US, global) capitalism inevitably based on economic growth and endless profit seeking, yet it neglects, e.g., "liberal market and more cooperative varieties of capitalism" (Lane and Wood 2009). The very short reference to Beck (111) avoids Beck and others' publications on reflexive modernization, unintended consequences, and methodological nationalism. Therefore, also in the light of this "Guide", the intergenerational dialogue proposed in this essay offers alternative theory strands to be taken into account.

Worldwide, mixed economies and regulations dominate. Or are there state societies, in which various public institutions do not exert some degree of control over capitalist enterprises? So-called communist societies failed and the globally important "communist" People's Republic of China never met the prerequisites for and characteristics of a classless society, which were sketched above. (See Mennell 2003, de Swaan 2003 and Mao's calls for violence as summarized in Chang and Halliday 2005, especially chapters 45-51.)

As Vogel (2011, 706f) argues: "The transition from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban society and the spread of a common national culture are among the most fundamental changes that have occurred in Chinese society since the country's unification in 221 B.C. […] When China began opening in the 1980s, there were virtually no rules in place for food and drugs, product and workplace safety, working conditions, minimum wages, or construction codes. […] The situation in China under Deng was reminiscent of the rapacious capitalism of nineteenth-century Europe and the United States, when there were no anti-trust laws and no laws to protect workers. […] In some ways the situation in China during the Deng era was also similar to the nineteenth-century American West before there were local laws and courts".

Concerning global challenges, I will only quote at length Beck's elaboration of his risk society theory in 2008 (b):

> the fundamental principles of modernity, including the free market principle and the nation-state order itself, become subject to the change, the existence of alternatives, and contingency. You might even say, the historical power of global risk is beyond all the 'saviours' brought forth by history: not the proletariat, not the excluded, not the Enlightenment, not the global public, not the migrants of global society – if anyone or anything at all, it is the perceived risks facing humanity, which can be neither denied nor externalized, that are capable of awakening the energies, the consensus, the legitimation necessary for creating a global community of fate, one that will demolish the walls of nation-state borders and egotisms – at least for a global moment in time and beyond democracy. […] However, global risk public spheres have a completely different structure from the 'public sphere' explored by Jürgen Habermas. Habermas's public sphere presupposes that all concerned have equal chances to participate and that they share a commitment to the principles of rational discourse. The threat public sphere is as little a matter of commitment as it is of rationality. The images of catastrophes do not produce cool heads. False alarms, misunderstandings, condemnations are part of the story. Threat publics are impure, they distort, they are selective and stir up emotions, anger and hate. They make possible more, and at the same time less, than the public sphere described by Habermas. […] World risk is *the* unwanted, unintended obligatory medium of communication in a world of irreconcilable differences in which everyone is turning on their own axis. Hence the public perception of risk forces people to communicate who otherwise do not want to have anything to do with one another. It imposes obligations and costs on those who resist them, often even with the law on their side. In other words, large-scale risks cut through the self-sufficiency of cultures, languages, religions and systems as much as through the national and international agenda of politics; they overturn their priorities and create contexts for action between camps, parties and quarrelling nations that know nothing about each other and reject and oppose one another. That is what 'enforced cosmopolitanization' means: global risks activate and connect actors across borders, who otherwise do not want to have anything to do with one another. […] It is evident, that the taken-for-granted nation-state frame of reference - what I call 'methodological nationalism' – prevents the social sciences from understanding and analyzing the dynamics and ambivalences, opportunities and ironies of world risk society.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Correspondingly, global catastrophes and trends refer more to fatal discontinuities than the falling profit rate, e.g., influenza pandemics, transformational wars, terrorist attacks, global warming, changing water and nitrogen cycles, loss of biodiversity, antibiotic resistance. For example, poor "water quality is a much more common problem. In 2005 more than 1 billion people in low-income countries had no access to clean drinking water, and some 2.5 billion lived without water sanitation [...] About half of all beds in the world's hospitals were occupied by patients with water-borne diseases. [...] Contaminated water and poor sanitation kill about 4,000 children every day [...] Deaths among adults raise this to at least 1.7 million fatalities per year. Add other waterborne diseases, and the total surpasses 5 million. In contrast, automobile accidents claim about 1.2 million lives per year [...] roughly equal to the combined total of all homicides and suicides, and armed conflicts kill about 300,000 people per year" (Smil 2008, 199).

Both Habermas (2011) and Hessel (2011) argue for building more on the Human Rights declaration of the United Nations, which can be interpreted as a substantial globalizing progress compared to Marx and Engels's "Communist Manifesto" and its partially similar concrete proposals. The United Nations and UNESCO have evolved as institutions, which despite all their deficiencies when compared to utopian socialism lead us beyond previous nation-centered analyses; they lead us also beyond a bias on industrialized economies.

This diagnosis combines two exemplary and complementary forces calling for alternatives, namely "the perceived risks facing humanity" (Beck 2008b) and the enhancement of human rights: as global challenges requiring global institutions. Suggestions for solutions to such global challenges therefore need various approaches, not a monopolistic political economic diagnosis; some such complementary strategies have been prepared by the UNESCO's Human Development Reports since 1990. They integrate perspectives from and on all unequally developed regions, strata, and genders and take into account problems usually out of the sight of previous social theoreticians.

As Marx and Engels postulated in the "Communist Manifesto": "United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat" (quoted in section 2). In 2011, the Human Development Report stressed: "Yet there are alternatives to inequality and unsustainability. Growth driven by fossil fuel consumption is not a prerequisite for a better life in broader human development terms. Investments that improve equity – in access, for example, to renewable energy, water and sanitation, and reproductive healthcare – could advance both sustainability and human development. Stronger accountability and democratic processes, in part through support for an active civil society and media, can also improve outcomes. Successful approaches rely on community management, inclusive institutions that pay particular attention to disadvantaged groups, and cross-cutting approaches that coordinate budgets and mechanisms across government agencies and development partners. […] Disadvantaged people are a central focus of human development. This includes people in the future who will suffer the most severe consequences of the risks arising from our activities today" (UNESCO Human Development Report 2011, ii and 1).

Therefore, only the application of the methods of Marx's original generalization of alternative models to more encompassing social developments as well as a critique of political economy can act as foundation for the creation of an update of Marx's concept of alternatives for the 21st century. It must be combined with more globalizing prerequisites and impediments for realms not determined by the modes of production and beyond short-term political goals. Re-combining social scientific long term diagnoses with emancipative actions against the exploitation of the majorities of societies and humankind is a challenge worth to become more dominant in a sociology of alternatives.

References

Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *World Risk Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Beck, Ulrich. 2008a. *Weltrisikogesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Beck, Ulrich. 2008b. *Risk Society's 'Cosmopolitan Moment'*. Lecture at Harvard University, November 12th, 2008.

Ben-Rafael, Eliezer and Yitzak Sternberg, eds. 2001. *Identity, Culture and Globalization.* Leiden: Brill.

Burke, Peter and Maria L. G. Pallares-Burke. 2008. *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Bielsa, Esperanza. 2011. Some Remarks on the Sociology of Translation: A Reflection on the Global Production and Circulation of Sociological Works. *European Journal of Social Theory* 14 (2): 199-251.

Chang, Jung and John Halliday. 2005. *Mao: The Unknown Story.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Danowksi, James A. and David W. Park. 2009. Networks of the Dead or Alive in Cyberspace. *New Media & Society* 11 (3): 337-356.

De Swaan, Abram. 2003. Dyscivilization, Mass Extermination and the State. In *Sage Masters of Modern Social Thought. Norbert Elias,* edited by Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell, Volume II, 119 – 136. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel. 2002. *Multiple Modernities*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel. 2010. *Modernity and Modernization. Sociopedia.isa*: 1-15.

Elias, Norbert. 1939/2000. *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes. Zweiter Band: Wandlungen der Gesellschaft. Entwurf zu einer Theorie der Zivilisation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 4th edition (1st edition Basle 1939). *The Civilizing Process* (English: translated by Jephcott, E.) Oxford, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

Elias, Norbert. 1978. *Was ist Soziologie*? Munich*:* Juventa.

Elias, Norbert. 1984. Knowledge and Power: An Interview by Peter Ludes. In *Society and Knowledge: Contemporary Perspectives in the Sociology of Knowledge and Science,* edited by Nico Stehr and Volker Meja, 203-241. New Jersey: Transaction.

Elias, Norbert. 1977/2009. Towards a Theory of Social Processes. In *Norbert Elias Collected Works, Volume 16: Essays III. On Sociology and the Humanities,* edited by Richard Kilminster and Stephen Mennell, 9-39. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Featherstone, Mike and Couze Venn. 2006. Problematizing Global Knowledge and the New Encyclopaedia Project. An Introduction. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (2-3): 1–20.

Fleischer, Helmut. 1972. *Marxismus und Geschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Theoretical Foundations of Critical Media Studies: Reflections on Karl Marx and the Media. *International Journal of Communication* 3: 369-402.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011a. *Internet Prosumption in Contemporary Capitalism.* Presentation at the European Sociological Association Conference on "Social Relations in Turbulent Times". September 8th. Geneva, Switzerland

Fuchs, Christian. 2011b. *Mail to the Author*. October 11th, 2011.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. Google Capitalism. *tripleC* 10 (1): 42-48.

Gall, Lothar. 1983. *Bismarck. Der weiße Revolutionär*. Frankfurt, Berlin, and Vienna: Ullstein.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1962/1990. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft.* Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990)

Habermas, Jürgen. 1981. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. 2 Volumes*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1999. *Die Einbeziehung des Anderen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2001. *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2006. Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research. *Communication Theory* 16 (4): 411-426.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2007. Keine Demokratie kann sich das leisten. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 16th.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2011. *Zur Verfassung Europas. Ein Essay*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Halavais, Alexander. 2009. *Search Engine Society*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.

Hessel, Stéphane. 2011. *Engagez-vous!* La Tour-d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 2011. *How to Change the World. Marx and Marxism 1840-2011*. London: Little, Brown.

Honneth, Axel. 2011. *Das Recht der Freiheit. Grundriss einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Jin, Huimin. 2007. Redefining Global Knowledge. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (7-8): 276-280.

Lane, Christel and Geoffrey Wood. 2009. Capitalist Diversity and Diversity within Capitalism. *Economy and Society* 38 (4): 531-551.

Langguth, Gerd. 2010. *Angela Merkel*. Munich: dtv.

Levy, Steven. 2011. *In the Plex. How Google thinks, works, and shapes our Lives*. New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Simon & Schuster.

Ludes, Peter. 1979. *Der Begriff der klassenlosen Gesellschaft bei Marx*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus.

Ludes, Peter. 1980. Marx's Notion of a Classless Society. *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 17: 1-54.

Ludes, Peter. 1989. *Drei moderne soziologische Theorien. Zur Entwicklung des Orientierungsmittels Alternativen*. Göttingen: Schwartz.

Ludes, Peter. 2007. Existential Truths as Prerequisites for a Globalizing Discourse Theory. In *The Sociology of Radical Commitment: Kurt H. Wolff's Existential Turn*, edited by Gary Backhaus and George Psathas, 115-136. Lanham etc.: Lexington Books.

Ludes, Peter. 2011. *Elemente internationaler Medienwissenschaften: Eine Einführung in innovative Konzepte*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1995. *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik: Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft, Volume 4*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1996. *Die Realität der Massenmedien*. Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1997. *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Luhmann, Niklas. 2010. *Die Politik der Gesellschaft*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Magdoff, Fred and John Ballamy Foster. 2011. *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism. A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Mannheim, Karl. 1929. *Ideologie und Utopie*. Bonn: Friedrich Cohen.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *MEW*. 1956-1968. *Volume 1 – 19, 23-35 and Supplementary Volume I*. Berlin: Dietz.

Marx, Karl. 1969. *Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses. Das Kapital. I. Buch. Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals. VI. Kapitel*. Archiv sozialistischer Literatur 17. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Neue Kritik.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1969. *Selected Works in three Volumes. Volume 1*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1973. *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft).* Translated with a Foreword by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review.

Marx, Karl. 1974. *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf*), *1857-1858, Appendix 1850-1859*. Berlin: Dietz.

Mennell, Stephen. 2003. Asia and Europe: Comparing Civilizing Processes. In *Sage Masters of Modern Social Thought. Norbert Elias,* edited by Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell, *Volume II*: 101-117. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage.

Obama, Barack. 2006. *The Audacity of Hope*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Qiu, Jack L. 2009. *Working-Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2005. *Beschleunigung. Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Smil, Vaclav. 2008. *Global Catastrophes and Trends. The Next 50 Years.* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Suskind, Ron. 2011. *Confidence Men. Wall Street, Washington, and the Education of a President*. New York: Harper Collins.

Therborn, Göran. 2010. *From Marxism to Post-Marxism?* London and New York: Verso.

Therborn, Göran. 2011. *The World: A Beginner's Guide*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

UNESCO. 2010. *Towards Inclusive Knowledge Societies*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001878/187832e.pdf

UNESCO. 2011. *Human Development Report. 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All.* Accessed April 1, 2012. http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/download/

Vogel, Ezra F. 2011. *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China.* Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press.

Wolff, Kurt H. 1976. *Surrender and Catch. Experience and Inquiry Today = Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science Volume LI.* Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel.

About the Author

Peter Ludes
1973-75 Fulbright Scholar at Brandeis, 1978 PhD, thesis "Towards a Sociology of Alternatives"; (visiting) positions at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Wuppertal, Amsterdam, Harvard, Siegen, Mannheim, Constance; since 2002 a Professor of Mass Communication, Jacobs University Bremen. He initiated the Project News Enlightenment in 1997 and international cooperation on Key Visuals: http://www.keyvisuals.org and http://www.nachrichtenaufklaerung.de. Co-chair of the Research Network Sociology of Communications and Media Research, European Sociological Association (2008-2011); http://www.jacobs-university.de/directory/pludes

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 570-576, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Marx is Back, But Which One? On Knowledge Labour and Media Practice

Vincent Mosco

Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, moscov@mac.com,
http://www.queensu.ca/sociology/people/emeritusfaculty/mosco.html

Abstract: *The global economic crisis has led to a resurgence of interest in the work of Karl Marx. This paper acknowledges this interest, but asks on which of the many shades of Marx, communication scholars should be focusing their research attention. The most general answer is all of Marx, from the early work on consciousness, ideology and culture, which has informed critical cultural studies through to the later work on the structure and dynamics of capitalism that provides bedrock for the political economy of communication. But there is particular need for communication scholars to pay more attention to work that does not fit so neatly in either of these foci, namely, Marx of the Grundrisse and Marx, the professional journalist. Communication scholars need to do so because we have paid insufficient attention to labour in the communication, cultural and knowledge industries. The Marx of these two streams of work provides important guidance for what I have called the labouring of communication as well as for addressing general problems in communication theory.*

Keywords: *Grundrisse, journalism, labor, Marx, political economy,*

Acknowledgement: *This paper was supported by a grant from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. I am grateful for the research assistance of four graduate students at Queen's University: Meagan Crane, Dean Curran, Harrison Smith, and Erica Spink.*

1. Marx is Back

The global economic crisis that filled the headlines beginning at the end of 2008 led to a resurgence of popular interest in the work of Karl Marx. Those of us who made use of this body of thought for many years questioned whether he had ever left, but that was beside the point, as the media were filled with anecdotal accounts of strange sightings and even stranger sound bites. The *Times* of London led the charge on October 21, 2008 when, as capitalism appeared to be crumbling, the normally stodgy newspaper declared in a headline: "Marx is Back". The *Times* of India wrote about "Marx in the time of pink slips" (Saxena 2008). *Das Kapital* rose up the best seller list in Germany and, across the border, Nicholas Sarkozy, never one to miss a photo opportunity, was snapped leafing through a copy. Even Pope Benedict was quoted as praising Marx's "great analytical skill" (Kapital Gains 2008). Not to be outdone, the Archbishop of Canterbury praised Marx for demonstrating that "capitalism became a kind of mythology", charging that its boosters were engaging in nothing short of "idolatry" (Gledhill 2008). This strange dalliance with the theorist of revolution continued well into 2011 as evidenced by a story in *Bloomberg Businessweek* which declared in a story "Marx to Market" that "The Bearded One has rarely looked better" (September 14, 2011). Indeed a headline in Canada's national newspaper declared that it was "Springtime for Marx" (Renzetti 2011).

Marxist scholars, accustomed to toiling in relative obscurity, were courted by mainstream media to explain these developments. *Foreign Policy* magazine featured Leo Panitch's article "Thoroughly Modern Marx" on its cover (Panitch 2009). Invited to lunch with George Soros, Eric Hobsbawn worried about whether he would have to tiptoe around radical talk, only to have one of the world's leading financiers admit that Marx "discovered something about capitalism 150 years ago that we must take notice of" (Renzetti 2011).

One can certainly make too much of all this Marx talk. As government bailouts calmed the markets, the homage to Marx has diminished. But it still resonates enough for me to turn my attention to the relevance of Marx's thought for communication theory. Specifically, this paper focuses on two neglected dimensions of Marx's work that are of particular relevance to media and communication scholars.

2. But which one?

One of my first thoughts on facing the prospect of writing about Marx is to wonder about which of the many persona of Marx one should emphasize. It is clear that the media care about Marx the political economist and revolutionary who provided at least some food for thought about what was

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

for them the shocking meltdown of financial markets and the deepening fears for the future of capitalism. This is certainly understandable and I am no stranger to the task of documenting the importance of this Marx, the Marx of *Capital* and political economy, for understanding global communication. Yet there is another Marx not unrelated to the first whose writing about culture and ideology featured in *The German Ideology*, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and other works of the younger Marx have inspired analysis and critique in cultural studies. It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the Marx of political economy and of cultural studies form pillars of critical communication study.

Nevertheless, an exclusive emphasis on this bifurcated "young Marx/culture – old Marx/political economy" risks missing two other key elements of Marx that are vital to contemporary communication studies. Indeed, although I admit that there are many ways to divide Marx, one particularly useful one is to see him in four parts- and no, I do not mean Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo. In addition to the Marx of political economy and the Marx of cultural studies, there is the Marx of his famous, and also infamous, notebooks *The Grundrisse* and the work of Marx the professional journalist. Indeed although Marx practiced journalism throughout his life, both *The Grundrisse* and the best of Marx's journalism bridged the critical period between the earlier and later years of his career.

3. The Grundrisse

What has come to be called the *Grundrisse* is actually a collection of seven notebooks written over the period 1857-58, midway between the *Manifesto* and the first volume of *Capital*. They were produced in the midst of one of capitalism's first great economic crises, certainly its first crisis of overproduction. The notebooks have been depicted conventionally, by Martin Nicolaus (1973), as the precursor to *Capital*. They also have been described less conventionally by Nick Dyer-Witheford as "the delirious notebooks" which "Marx used to prophesy a moment when capital's development would depend not on the direct expenditure of labour power in production but rather on the mobilization of social and scientific knowledge"[1]. I encountered the *Grundrisse* as a graduate student when the first English translation appeared and joined the applause of young Marxists who were now offered fresh material to digest, debate and use. It did not dim my enthusiasm when former Marxists like my thesis supervisor Daniel Bell rejected the new work as of little use for understanding Marxist thought.

There are good reasons to see the *Grundrisse* as anticipating key arguments in *Capital* and in other later works. But it also explores themes that Marx never had the time to develop in a sustained fashion and some of these have been taken up in contemporary Marxist scholarship. As he would do in *Capital*, Marx acknowledges the contribution of technology and especially that of new communication media like the telegraph for the expansion of global capitalism. For Marx, "Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it. Only in so far as the direct product can be realized in distant markets in mass quantities in proportion to reductions in the transport costs, and only in so far as at the same time the means of communication and transport themselves can yield spheres of realization for labour, driven by capital; only in so far as commercial traffic takes place in massive volume – in which more than necessary labour is replaced – only to that extent is the production of cheap means of communication and transport a condition for production based on capital, and promoted by it for that reason" (Marx 1973, 524).

This passage captures the dual nature of communication in capitalism. It contributes to the commodification of all productive forces and it becomes a commodity in its own right. In the process, communication technology becomes a key tool, along with the development of the means of transportation, in the spatial expansion of capitalism, what we now call globalization. At another point in this work, Marx makes clear that commodification and spatialization are intimately connected to the process of structuration, the development of social relations, including new forms of communication: "Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of reproduction, e.g., the village becomes a town, …, but the producers change too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language" (Marx 1973, 494).

These ideas are central to developing a Marxist theory of communication. They both build upon the early work and prepare the way for *Capital*. But the *Grundrisse* is much more than a way sta-

[1] http://www.fims.uwo.ca/peopleDirectory/faculty/fulltimefaculty/full_time_faculty_profile.htm?PeopleId=3667; see also Piccone 1975

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tion on the long march to *Capital*, a point missed by one of the first scholars to bring the Grundrisse to an English-speaking world. The critical difference between this work and *Capital* is not the difference between the creative display of a work in progress and a fully formed creation, as Nicolaus maintains. Rather, the *Grundrisse* is, however dishevelled or even delirious, a substantive creation in its own right and a touchstone for vital developments in critical communication research. It contains ideas that *Capital* never got around to addressing but which matter considerably to scholarship and politics today.

In the *Grundrisse,* Marx focuses explicit attention on the significance of information for capital. This is expressed in numerous different ways roughly signifying, at different times, social knowledge, the state of scientific and artistic knowledge, and the general intellect. In essence, one of the most important consequences of a developing capitalist economy is that it provides free time to think, create, and advance the general state of scientific, technical and artistic information. Capitalism aims to incorporate this expansion of individual and social capacity into the production process, but faces the resistance of increasingly knowledgeable and empowered workers. In the very process of its development capitalism produces the conditions for its expansion and for resistance from workers who increasingly have the opportunity to advance their own creative ability. In the emphasis on technology, on the material machinery of production that is understandably derived from a reading of *Capital*, one can miss a central point made in the notebooks: the most important embodiment of fixed capital is not the assembly line but "man himself".

In the *Grundrisse*, as nowhere else, the source of value is information, the creative worker, what some would today call human capital: "Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are *organs of the human brain, created by the human hand;* the power of knowledge, objectified. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production,* and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it" (Marx 1973, 706). The determination of value, a concept central to Marx's political economy, comes to be based firmly on the creative individual: "it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth" (Marx 1973, 705).

As capitalism comes to be based increasingly on control over creative ability, and therefore over information, it must mobilize all social institutions involved in producing information. Hence the need for the commodification of the entire creative apparatus, something that can only be achieved "when large industry has already reached a higher stage, and all the sciences have been pressed into the service of capital." As result, "Invention then becomes a business, and the application of science to direct production itself becomes a prospect which determines and solicits it" (Marx 1973, 704).

Because information becomes increasingly central to capitalist development, it is important to consider what Marx means by information. This is difficult because Marx uses a multiplicity of expressions to encompass it. Nevertheless, it is clear that he means more than merely technical knowledge because he uses words that connote both artistic and experiential knowledge. For example, in discussing the contradiction between capital's need to reduce labour time and the need to use it as a measure of social wealth, he refers to the importance for capital of the "artistic, scientific etc. development of individuals in the time set free" (Marx 1973, 706). Again, in a rousing conclusion to a section on economic history, Marx asks what is left of the bourgeois concept of wealth once its limited form is stripped away: "… the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc. created through universal exchange. … The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes the totality of development, i.e., the development of all human powers as such, the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick?" (Marx 1973, 488).

This and the accompanying passages demonstrate that while scientific and technical knowledge are important components of an expanding sphere of information, the point of raising its significance does not end there. That is because information is more significantly a marker for the development of full human capacities, including the scientific but also the artistic, the experiential and, certainly, the creative.

Undoubtedly those familiar with Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, will note distinct similarities. But a key difference in the *Grundrisse* is that the discussion of the full develop-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ment of human powers is now presented within a well-grounded materialist theory of capitalism. The bourgeois world makes it essential that people develop their capacities, but it is so constrained by its own needs for self and social class preservation that it has to restrict this process or be overrun by its consequences. Subsequent work of Marx would provide a more thorough understanding of capitalism, but it does so without returning to the full consideration of the consequences of its own creation. It is the *Grundrisse* that holds out the potential of actually building on the forces of that creation: information, knowledge, artistic, and experiential capability.

The focus on social information or the general intellect has significant implications for the study of labour and especially for labour in the communication industries. First, in the *Grundrisse* Marx acknowledges that however new the industrial world might be, it too was rapidly changing. Just as capitalism needs to commodify all of the creative industries, including science, to accomplish its goals, it must extend the commodification process to every individual's general productive capacity: "No longer does the worker insert a modified natural thing as middle link between the object and himself; rather, he inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it. He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth" (Marx 1973, 705).

Nevertheless, as Marx describes it, the process of ever more deeply commodifying labour, including both intelligence and affect, demonstrates the need to expand these very human capacities. Capital no longer needed just the labourer as appendage to a machine; it needed then and needs now the full "social body" of the individual. This passage and other likes it acknowledge, at a remarkably early stage in capitalist development, the requirement for knowledge and affective labour. Capital needs to create the worker in its fullest subjectivity and then make it part of a process that channels that subjectivity into productivity. On the one hand such a process holds great potential for expanding capitalism into what we now call the knowledge, culture, and information industries. On the other hand, controlling such labour is far more challenging than it is to control and channel manual labour whose knowledge and affect were less consequential to meet the needs of capital. In essence, the *Grundrisse* suggests that understanding the labour of knowledge, cultural, and creative workers is central to understanding the future of capitalism. What is capital's capacity to control these workers? What are their capacities for resistance? What is capital's ability to control their labour process and what is their ability to give it new direction? It is the very utopian quality of many of the notebooks' passages, ("the absolute working-out of his creative potentialities"), that makes it so powerful because it acknowledges just how important are the stakes in this struggle. It is not just a matter of understanding or even of dismantling capitalism, which fills the pages of *Capital*, it is also a matter of appreciating what is to be won, i.e., full control over one's humanity, including the creative potential of both intellect and affect.

This brief overview could only paint a picture in the broadest strokes, suggesting why it is absolutely vital for communication scholars to make use of the *Grundrisse* in research on communication labour and in the wider political economy of communication. There is much more to be addressed in the notebooks themselves as well as in interpretations offered by Piccone (1975), Hardt and Negri (2004), (Negri 1991), Terranova (2004), Dyer-Witheford (1999), Gorz (2010), and others. It is now important to turn to another facet of Marx that is intimately related to the theoretical questions raised in the *Grundrisse*: the life of Marx as a journalist or professional knowledge worker.

4. Marx the Journalist

Scholars who teach about Marx in communication programs focus exclusively on his theoretical writing and tend not to have much to say about Marx as a journalist. There are exceptions, particularly in the work of the critical journalism scholar Hanno Hardt (2001). On the other hand, professors who teach journalism practice exclude Marx completely. When academic journalism instructors do treat Marx, it is typically by equating his views with the totalitarian Marxism of Soviet and Chinese communism. This is unfortunate because there is a great deal to learn about journalism from an analysis of Marx's career as a professional communicator. For a genuine appreciation of Marx the theorist is significantly diminished without consideration of his journalism. Indeed the eminent political philosopher Isaiah Berlin maintains that it was in the course of putting together a story in 1843 that Marx came to recognize "his almost total ignorance of history and principles of economic development" and leapt into the formal study of political economy (Berlin 1970, 12). Moreover, there is a close connection between Marx's *Grundrisse* and his journalism. Although he prac-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ticed journalism throughout his life, arguably Marx's best journalism came in the "middle" period of his life, as he was producing the notebooks. In essence, Marx's most interesting theoretical reflections on what we have come to call knowledge and immaterial labour were penned at about the same time that Marx engaged in his most mature work of knowledge labour as a journalist.

It is a remarkable fact, one passed over all too casually, that one of the most profound social theorists of the nineteenth century, someone whose work continues to resonate powerfully today, also practiced the craft of journalism throughout his life. It all the more stunning that his journalism takes up a full seven volumes of the fifty that comprise his collective works. Marx's journalism was most intensive in two periods, in the early years when at age 24 he wrote for and soon thereafter took on the job of editor in chief of the *Rheinische Zeitung* and then again as writer and editor for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Prussia. He decided to pursue journalism because, like so many new PhDs today, he could not find an academic job, particularly under the stifling controls over the university that the Prussian government fiercely enforced. His journalism work in this period focused on investigations into the authoritarian political establishment of Prussia and included numerous articles on censorship and freedom of the press, which landed him in constant difficulties with the authorities, ultimately leading to his banishment from Prussia. Marx produced his most mature works of journalism in the period 1852-62 when he became a foreign correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, a newspaper founded by Horace Greeley, a leader in the American anti-slavery movement. Greeley's goal was to counter the dominant sensationalist press with in-depth coverage of news and public affairs. Marx wrote from London, where he spent the last half of his life.

Marx's journalism consistently follows principles that provide valuable lessons for any journalist, but especially for those learning about what it means to practice journalism. Moreover, they are principles that also begin to emerge in the *Grundrisse* and which might apply in varying degrees to all knowledge workers. Throughout his career in journalism Marx was consistently opposed to all forms of censorship and regularly made the case for free expression. Consider this assessment of a proposed new censorship law in Prussia: "Censorship brings us all into subjection, just as in a despotism everybody is equal, if not in worth, then in unworthy; it's a kind of press freedom that wants to introduce oligarchy into the mind. At best, censorship declares a writer to be inconvenient, unsuitable within the boundaries of its domain. Freedom of the press proceeds on the presumption of anticipating world history, sensing in advance the voice of the people which alone has hitherto judged which writer was 'competent' which 'incompetent' " (Marx 1974, 43).

When Americans like Thomas Jefferson wrote lines like this, they were venerated as champions of freedom. Marx typically does not enjoy the same response, not when he wrote them and not now. Harassed by the censor and ultimately the police and government officials, he was made to resign from the newspaper, which itself was disbanded by the authorities.

Nevertheless, Marx followed this principle throughout the rest of his life, but in the 1850s focused more of his critical attention on the growing tendency of self-censorship in the media. The *Tribune* was widely read throughout the United States and its editors, though progressive and generally supportive, would engage in their own forms of harassment. For example, they would sometimes refuse to publish an article because of its political tone, would soften the content and lift his byline. Even worse, his editors would often insert remarks that distanced the paper from Marx's ideas like this one that appeared after his byline in one piece: "Mr. Marx has very decided opinions of his own, with some of which we are far from agreeing" (Ledbetter 2007, xx). Not one to back down, he consistently fought with his own editors to resist their editorial censorship which often made for colourful comments like this one to Engels in 1857: "It's truly nauseating that one should be condemned to count it a blessing when taken aboard by a blotting-paper vendor such as this" (ibid.).

In spite of these attacks, Marx continued to practice journalism because of his commitment to the principle that journalism was not just a vocation or a calling, but a *political* calling. He recognized that a newspaper like the *Tribune* did more than help to pay his bills; it provided him with a platform to reach a wide audience which, at the time he wrote for it, counted 200,000 in its circulation, including Abraham Lincoln who read it avidly (Nichols 2011, 61-100). Marx had his own outlets in what we would today call "alternative" media, but these reached far fewer people. In essence, radical though he was, Marx recognized the importance of working for a mainstream publication to widely circulate his central ideas. There is no doubt that his struggles to use journalism to help bring about political change, including walking a tightrope with a mainstream newspaper, took its toll on his spirit and on his writing. Again, complaining to Engels: "To crush up bones, grind them and make them into soup like paupers in the workhouse- that is what the political work to which one is condemned in such large measure in a concern like this (the *Tribune)* boils down to" (Ledbetter 2007, xx). Although the counter-revolution of 1848 left him less hopeful that revolution

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

was imminent, Marx's journalism continues to reveal the urgency of his political mission. As one recent commentator notes in an insightful assessment: "And yet, reading through Marx's *Tribune* dispatches, you can't help but see an urgency, an excitement – almost an impatience – in his portrayals of some insurrections and crises in Europe and India. At times he wrote as if this particular rise in corn prices, or this little dust-up with authorities in Greece, was going to be THE spark that would ignite revolution. And it's not as if one can fault Marx for feeling that way; after all, during this period crowned heads of Europe were toppling and certainly at least liberal revolutions seemed likely in a number of settings. But there are times when his discipline of thought appears to leave him, and he is also prone to the tautology that revolution can only occur when the masses are ready, but we can't know for certain if the masses are ready until they create a revolution" (Sherman 2011).

In addition to holding fast to the principles of free expression and journalism as a political calling, Marx used his journalism to give attention to the critical issues facing the world. His was certainly not the journalism of on scene reporting and of interviews with official and unofficial sources. On the latter, the well-known journalist Murray Kempton wrote of Marx: "Of all the illusions one brought to journalism, the one most useful to lose is the illusion of access to sources. … Persons privy to events either do not know what is important about them or, when they do, generally lie. … Marx had neither the temptation nor the opportunity of access" (Ledbetter 2007, xix). Rather, his approach was to take an event in the news such as the second Opium War in China or the American Civil War and, using the most up-to-date material, address its political economic significance. In this respect he did not disappoint. His writing for the *Tribune* covered imperialism, including major work on China and India, free trade, war and revolution in Europe, British politics and society, the changing world of economics and finance, and the slave question in America.

Marx's writing on China and India in the context of British domination and the mythology of free trade was among the best of the time and is well worth reading today in light of the West's increasingly uncomfortable relationship with these two Asian powers. As one commentator has put it: "With the possible exception of human slavery, no topic raised Marx's ire as profoundly as the opium trade with China" (Ledbetter 2007, 1). This passage conveys some of its depth and passion:

> The Indian finances of the British Government have, in fact, been made to depend not only on the opium trade with China, but on the contraband character of that trade. Were the Chinese Government to legalize the opium trade simultaneously with tolerating the cultivation of the poppy in China, the Anglo-Indian exchequer would experience a serious catastrophe. While openly preaching free trade in poison, it secretly defends the monopoly of its manufacture. Whenever we look closely into the nature of British free trade, monopoly is pretty generally found to lie at the bottom of its 'freedom' (Marx 2007b, 31).

And where is the allegedly free Western media in all of this? His response is worth citing at length:

> How silent is the press of England upon the outrageous violations of the treaty daily practiced by foreigners living in China under British protection! We hear nothing of the illicit opium trade, which yearly feeds the British treasury at the expense of human life and morality. We hear nothing of the constant bribery of sub-officials, by means of which the Chinese Government is defrauded of its rightful revenue on incoming and outgoing merchandise. We hear nothing of the wrongs inflicted 'even unto death' upon misguided and bonded emigrants sold to worse than Slavery on the coast of Peru and into Cuban bondage. … Thus, the English people at home, who look no farther than the grocer's where they buy their tea, are prepared to swallow all the misrepresentations which the Ministry and the Press choose to thrust down the public throat (Marx, 2007a, 23-4).

Marx's journalism provides a central example of his praxis, the unity of theory and practice, that animated his life. It is also full of examples of what journalism can be when it rises above the conventions that sometimes contribute to good writing but often make it difficult to practice the principles that guided his work. These include complete commitment, whatever the cost, to freedom of expression and opposition to censorship, complete belief in journalism as a political calling, and an unrelenting focus on the major issues facing the world. It does not surprise me to read one journalist's assessment: "Even if he had done nothing else, Marx would deserve to be remembered as one of the great nineteenth-century journalists" (Wheen 2007, xiii).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

5. Conclusion

This paper has taken up two facets of Marx's writing, the *Grundrisse* and his journalism, that have heretofore not been presented together. The former was a work of Marx's middle years bridging and moving beyond the early writing on ideology and culture and his later work on political economy. Marx practiced journalism throughout his life but the middle years were also a time of his strongest journalism when he served as foreign correspondent for the *New York Tribune*. Whereas the *Grundrisse* suggested ways to theorize knowledge and communication labour, his journalism demonstrated how to practice it with passion and intelligence. These are lessons that communication students, and not just Marxist scholars, would do well to learn.

References

Berlin, Isaiah. 1970. *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*. Oxford: Oxford University.
Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.
Gledhill, Ruth. 2008. The Archbishop of Canterbury Speaks in Support of Karl Marx. *Times Online*, September 24. Accessed December 14, 2011. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article4819605.ece
Gorz, André. 2010. *The Immaterial*. London: Seagull
Hardt, Hanno. 2001. *Social Theories of the Press*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. 2004. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin.
Kapital Gains, 2008. *Times Online*, October 20. Accessed December 14, 2011. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article/4974195.ece
Ledbetter, James. Ed. 2007. *Karl Marx: Dispatches for the New York Tribune*. London: Penguin.
Marx, Karl. 1973. *The Grundrisse*. Trans. by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin.
Marx, Karl. 1974. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication. In *Karl Marx on Freedom of the Press and Censorship*, edited by Saul K. Padover, 3-47. New York: McGraw Hill.
Marx, Karl. 2007a. English Atrocities in China. In *Karl Marx: Dispatches from the New York Tribune*, edited by James Ledbetter, 20-24. London: Penguin.
Marx, Karl. 2007. History of the Opium Trade (II). In *Karl Marx: Dispatches from the New York Tribune*, edited by James Ledbetter, 28-31. London: Penguin.
Negri, Antonio. 1991. *Marx beyond Marx*. London: Pluto.
Nicolaus, Martin. 1973. Foreword. *Grundrisse*, 5-66. London: Penguin.
Nichols, John. 2011. *The "S" Word: The Short History of an American Tradition … Socialism*. London: Verso.
Panitch, Leo. 2009. Thoroughly Modern Marx, *Foreign Policy*, April 15. Accessed December 14, 2011. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/04/15/thoroughly_modern_marx
Piccone, Paul. 1975. Reading the Grundrisse: Beyond Orthodoxy. *Theory and Society* 2 (2): 235-255.
Renzetti, Elizabeth. 2011. Springtime for Marx. *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, F5.
Saxena, Shobhan. 2008. Marx in the Time of Pink Slips. *Times of India*, 2 November.
Sherman, Steve. 2011. Marx as Journalist: An Interview with Jim Ledbetter. Accessed December 14, 2011. http://www.marxsite.com/Marx%20as%20a%20Journalist.html
Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto.
Wheen, Francis. 2007. Foreward. In *Karl Marx: Dispatches for the New York Tribune*, edited by James Ledbetter, ix-xiii. London: Penguin, pp. ix-xiii.

About the Author

Vincent Mosco is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Queen's University where he was Canada Research Chair in Communication and Society and head of the Department of Sociology. His most recent books include *The Laboring of Communication* (with Catherine McKercher, 2008), *The Political Economy of Communication*, second edition (2009), and *Getting the Message: Communication Workers and Global Value Chains* (edited with Ursula Huws and Catherine McKercher, 2010).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 577-599, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Enclosure and Alienation of Academic Publishing: Lessons for the Professoriate

Wilhelm Peekhaus

School of Information Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, USA,
peekhaus@uwm.edu

Abstract: This paper interrogates and situates theoretically from a Marxist perspective various aspects and tensions that inhere in the contemporary academic publishing environment. The focus of the article is on journal publishing. The paper examines both the expanding capitalist control of the academic publishing industry and some of the efforts being made by those seeking to resist and subvert the capitalist model of academic publishing. The paper employs the concepts of primitive accumulation and alienation as a theoretical register for apprehending contemporary erosions of the knowledge commons through the enclosure effects that follow in the wake of capitalist control of academic publishing. Part of my purpose with this discussion will be to advance the case that despite a relatively privileged position vis-à-vis other workers, academic cognitive labourers are caught up within and subject to the constraining and exploitative practices of capitalist production processes.

Keywords: Academic Publishing, Primitive Accumulation, Alienation, Marx, Open Access, Political Economy

1. Introduction

> "The means of effective communication are being expropriated from the intellectual worker." (Mills 1951, 152)

The situation Mills bemoaned some six decades ago has proceeded apace, reaching a level today that borders on complete expropriation. Similar to most sectors in the communications and media industries, academic journal publishing has experienced a significant wave of consolidation over the last couple of decades. The consequent result is a market dominated by a handful of oligopolistic mega-publishers that wield an inordinate amount of power, as made manifest most prominently in skyrocketing journal subscription costs and a drastic lockdown of content through strict application of copyright and licencing restrictions. While these effects have been widely discussed, particularly among library and information studies and communication and media studies scholars and practitioners, less work has thus far been conducted in trying to account theoretically for these industry developments and their impacts. Even less prevalent in the existing literature is any systematic attempt to interrogate these issues from a critical political economic approach that considers capital's ability to alienate the actual producers from their product, which represents an appropriation of the free labour that underwrites the academic publishing system (notable exceptions include Merrett (2006) and Striphas (2010)).

In an effort to respond to some of these lacunae, this paper seeks to interrogate and situate theoretically from a Marxist political economic perspective various aspects and tensions that inhere in the contemporary academic journal publishing environment. I propose to examine both the expanding capitalist control of the academic publishing industry and some of the efforts being made by those seeking to resist and subvert the capitalist model of academic publishing. In order to engage with these issues, the substantive focus of the paper is informed by the following three questions. First, what are the structural characteristics of the academic publishing industry and how do they impact the production and dissemination of scholarly research? Second, what efforts have been made by various actors to resist the dominant capitalist model in the academic publishing industry? Third, what novel, and potentially more radical, strategies might be offered to drive attempts at actively subverting capital's control of academic publishing?

I suggest that we can conceptualise the responses to these questions by returning to Marx's concepts of 'primitive accumulation' and 'alienation.' Drawing mainly on Volume I of *Capital*, my goal will be to demonstrate that primitive accumulation, understood as a continuing historical process necessary for capital accumulation, offers an apropos theoretical lens through which to contemplate contemporary erosions of the knowledge commons that result from various enclosing strategies employed by corporate academic journal publishers. As a theoretical complement, I will

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

further suggest that some of the elements of alienation Marx articulated in respect of capitalist-controlled production processes capture the contemporary estrangement experienced by the actual producers of academic publications. The exegetical account of alienation offered here will draw primarily on Marx's discussion in the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts*. Aside from demonstrating the continued relevance of the concepts of primitive accumulation and alienation, part of my purpose will be to advance the case that, despite a relatively privileged position vis-à-vis other workers (albeit one increasingly under attack), academic cognitive labourers are caught up within and subject to some of the constraining and exploitative practices of capitalist accumulation processes.

In developing my arguments, the paper will first briefly elaborate the broader structural context of the contemporary academic ecosystem, in which journal publishing is firmly rooted. In particular, I will demonstrate some of the ways that neo-liberal policies have metamorphosed institutions of higher education into sites increasingly characterised by obeisance to and subsumption by capitalist accumulation imperatives. The subsequent section will provide an overview of the commercial academic journal publishing industry, including its major structural characteristics, some of the consolidation trends experienced over the last couple of decades, and their effects on the dissemination of scholarly research. Having established this empirical context, the following section will articulate Marx's concepts of primitive accumulation and alienation. The attempt here will be to make conceptual sense of the way that these broader structural characteristics of the academic publishing industry function as mechanisms of enclosure of the knowledge commons and alienation of the actual producers in support of capitalist accumulation imperatives. The focus will then shift to a discussion of the open-access movement as an active, remedial response to the enclosing and alienating effects inherent in the capitalist-controlled academic publishing industry. As the discussion here will demonstrate, open-access publishing is not inherently anti-capitalist. For that reason, we need to distinguish between traditional open access and the more explicitly anti-capitalist attempts to guarantee open access, in what we might term a commons-based open-access regime that more accurately reflects the actual nature of peer and commons-based scholarly knowledge production and dissemination. In the penultimate section, and in response to question three, I will suggest some basic strategies as well as a possible alternative model for academic publishing that, building on open-access projects, would radically subvert capitalist control.

2. The Academy as a Contemporary Site of Capitalist Accumulation

In order to obtain a firmer purchase on contemporary academic journal publishing, we need to first elaborate the broader academic context in which the industry is situated. As interrogated by a growing corpus of scholarly literature, neo-liberal policies over the previous few decades have imprinted an unambiguous stamp on the nature and functioning of tertiary education. Among other things, the effects of neo-liberalism can be seen in the severe reductions in government spending on higher education, the generation of conflicts of interest within the university, the skewing of research, expanding industry-academia linkages, increasing and intensified faculty teaching and administrative loads, the proliferation of non-tenured and precarious adjunct appointments, and the indoctrination of a new generation of academic researchers motivated increasingly by private rather than public interest (Bok 2003; Giroux 2007; Krimsky 1991, 2003; Levidow 2002; Newfield 2008; Olssen and Peters 2005; Peekhaus 2010; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Washburn 2005). Rather than rehearse this critical literature, with which I am mostly in agreement, my intent here is to focus on a couple of important ways that neo-liberal policies have been made manifest in Canada (though certainly similar trends characterise the situation in respect of higher education in the United Kingdom and United States); ways that impact most directly the production and dissemination of academic research, and thus that are most relevant to academic publishing. The first and perhaps most acute has been drastic government funding cuts. In Canada, reduced federal funding was exacerbated by Ottawa's decision in 1996 to amalgamate the previously separate post-secondary program financing along with transfer payments for healthcare and welfare into the Canada Health and Social Transfer. This new method of block transfer payments from the federal government to the provincial governments, who have constitutional jurisdiction over education, allowed the provinces and territories to determine how they would allocate these funds. Given the heavy emphasis at this time placed by Canadian governments at all levels and political persuasions on the neo-liberal commitment to zero deficits and debt reduction, large portions of the Canada Health and

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Social Transfer went to debt retirement at the expense of many other social imperatives, including education.[1]

Concomitant to these policy developments there also emerged the now well-established 'truth' among many governments, including Canadian, that economic growth and development depend upon the ability of private enterprise to commercially apply and exploit the knowledge and innovation developed in educational institutions. These types of policy have been operationalized in a variety of ways in Canada. For example, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada in 2002 signed a framework of agreed principles with the Government of Canada that commits universities to double the amount of research they conduct and to triple the amount of commercialisation of this research (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 2002). Evidence of this commitment can be seen in the well-staffed technology transfer offices found at universities throughout Canada, which continue to increase their staff complements in response to expanded commercialization activities on Canadian campuses (Bostrom, Bruce, and Flanigan 2007). In part, these developments have been facilitated by the opening up of most Canadian university boards and other top-level governance structures to members of the corporate community (Whiteley, Aguiar, and Marten 2008).

Such trends are have been exacerbated by the latest iteration of federal science and technology policy – *Mobilizing science and technology to Canada's advantage* – according to which this country must engage more ardently in translating publicly-funded research into commodifiable innovation. This Harper Government strategy specifically states that universities should engage in basic research so that the private sector can avoid the time and costs associated with this type of research. The private sector is to have complete and unhindered access to the results of this research. Moreover, should such research yield practical applications, institutions of higher education are admonished to cooperate with business in commercialisation. Business is set to win even further as this new policy also outlines the goal of reducing corporate taxation rates to the lowest levels among G-7 nations on new business investment (Government of Canada 2007). We are thus witnessing yet another instance of the socialization of costs and the private appropriation of any resulting rewards. In order to achieve these types of deliverables, the policy lays out specific plans to undermine the autonomy of Canada's major research granting institutions by inserting representatives from business into the various councils' governing bodies and soliciting private sector input about revamping policies and procedures for selecting fundable research proposals. This same document also makes a plea for producing more scientific researchers who are also trained in business skills – the underlying belief being that we only need to inculcate our scientific researchers with sufficient business acumen in order to increase overall levels of commercialisation of college and university research (Government of Canada 2007).[2] Given the overall tone of the policy document that outlines Canada's new science and technology policy, even the most casual reader is left with the distinct impression that fundable research equates to research that is readily commodified. Of course, an inherent problem with this type of funding structure is that research projects that fail to promise readily commodifiable applications find it very difficult to obtain research grants. The result is a situation in which research questions that go beyond immediate, utilitarian concerns and instead respond to broader social issues run the risk of being marginalised and left unanswered.

In their assessment of the contemporary academic environment, Etzkowitz and Webster (1998) speak of a 'second academic revolution,' characterised by the drive to translate the research developed in institutions of higher education into products and new business ventures for the benefit of the private sector.[3] Kenney (1986) observed these trends already in the 1980s, when he analysed the relationships between universities and business, paying particular attention to the growth in start-up companies that were increasingly managed by businesspeople and active members of the professoriate.[4] Elzinga characterises such developments as an epistemic drift through which the utility of science is measured according to market criteria (as discussed in Etzkowitz, Webster, and Healey 1998). According to Krimsky (2003, 7; emphasis added), "[t]he consequences are that

[1] In fiscal year 2004/2005 the Canada Health and Social Transfer was divided into the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer in order to establish increased transparency and greater accountability for federal healthcare funding.

[2] The previous Labour Government in the United Kingdom engaged in similar policies, committing £250 million to the creation of 44 centres to train 2,000 Ph.D. students over five years. These students will spend up to 75 percent of their time training with industrial partners (Mulland 2008).

[3] The first academic revolution involved a change in emphasis among universities from being bastions of cultural preservation to becoming institutions concerned with expanding the frontiers of knowledge (Etzkowitz and Webster 1998).

[4] Yoxen's (1981) review of the history of molecular biology indicates that there was a substantial amount of reluctance among scientists to conceive of their work as one of the structural components driving industrialisation and economic growth, but that once this transpired, structural change within the institutions of science was quick to follow.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

secrecy has replaced openness; privatisation of knowledge has replaced communitarian values; and commodification of discovery has replaced the idea that university-generated knowledge is a free good, *a part of the social commons*." In the United States, the expansion of long-term collaboration between industry and universities, particularly with regard to fundamental, discovery-oriented research programs, has been facilitated greatly by the *Bayh-Dole Act*, which compels the commercialisation of practical applications that emerge from federally-funded research.[5] But as a number of commentators point out, close alliances between universities and corporate funding partners are often accompanied by a number of associated quandaries, including: restrictions on internal collaboration within the university; loss of academic freedom; deferral of publication and other information withholding practices; loss of objectivity; emphasis on applied research at the expense of basic research; student exploitation; pressure on faculty to concentrate disproportionately on commercial activities instead of other duties such as teaching; and, abuse of the researcher/physician-patient relationship in the case of clinical trials (Bekelman, Li, and Gross 2003; Caulfield and Feasby 1998; Lievrouw 2004; Washburn 2005).

Of course, it might be objected that scientific ideas have long been translated into industrial applications as evidenced by the historical importance of the chemical and electrical industries to the Industrial Revolution.[6] What does appear both quantitatively and qualitatively novel is the intensification of this process in terms of the reduced time frame between discovery and application, the expanded push by governments to encourage (coerce?) universities into becoming incubators for economic growth and development through partnerships with business, and the strategic importance to industry of the knowledge developed in academic institutions. Indeed, scientific knowledge, which has traditionally been considered an input necessary to expand the field, is, under mounting commercial pressure, being evaluated more and more as a research outcome that can drive industrial utility (Freeland Judson 1994; Sigurdson 1993; Krimsky 2003). The corporatist ethos that informs current higher education policies, and that has established a formidable beachhead within university governance structures, threatens to exercise a formidable censoring effect on the generation and communication of knowledge that is perceived to be antagonistic to capital. Moreover, the internalization of neo-liberal values and capitalist accumulation imperatives is effecting a betrayal of Mertonian principles of scientific development that has direct and detrimental implications for two of the most fundamental mandates of the university as institution – knowledge production and knowledge dissemination.[7]

The general point that I want to make based on this brief account is that the discipline of funding cuts, coupled with government emphasis on commodifiable research projects, has helped normalize neo-liberal values within academia in a way that has established the contemporary university as a site of capitalist appropriation. Indeed, the prominence of knowledge in fuelling production and economic growth helps explain why universities have become such an attractive site for appropriation by capital in service of its expansionist agenda. Given the function of academic journals as one of the predominant mechanisms for disseminating such knowledge, capital has also moved to subsume this industry within its own commercial logic.

3. A Survey of the Commercial Academic Publishing Industry and its Impact on the Dissemination of Scholarly Research

Over 25,000 active, scholarly peer-reviewed journals are published each year, and there is steady annual growth in numbers of both journals and articles (Ware and Mabe 2009). In fact, Morgan Stanley has reported that, over the last 15 years, academic journals constituted the fastest-growing subsector of the media industry (Morgan Stanley 2002). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the academic publishing industry has experienced a level of consolidation over the past two decades similar to that found in other information and communication sectors. According to Munroe (2007), by 2004 a mere 12 European and North American publishing companies dominated West-

[5] The American *Bayh-Dole Act* of 1980 requires federally-funded organisations to report any potentially patentable discoveries made as a result of the sponsored research. The institutions are permitted to retain title to their inventions only if they agree to file patent applications and exploit any patent granted. If they fail to do so, the government reserves the right to grant licences to other entities in an attempt to ensure practical application of the invention. Clearly, this law assumes that patents are necessary to facilitate the transfer of technological discoveries from government labs to universities and on to the private sector.

[6] Hindmarsh and Lawrence (2004) point to an even earlier historical period, discussing Francis Bacon's ideas of science as technology.

[7] Given the possibility of sustaining critique for invoking a set of norms that were perhaps more imagined than actual, I hasten to add that my intent here is merely to emphasise some very real and negative impacts on the free and robust production and dissemination of information and knowledge within and from universities that are occurring with increasing frequency at our contemporary neoliberal conjuncture.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ern academic publishing. With total annual revenues of US$65 billion and a quarter of a million employees, most of these companies traced their roots to the 19th century and the bookselling business. The increasing consolidation in academic publishing documented by Munroe (2007) has proceeded apace since her initial study, with the field now dominated by ten major corporations. The top three publishers of scientific journals (Elsevier, Springer, and Wiley-Blackwell) account for approximately 42 per cent of all articles published. And while there are over 2,000 academic journal publishers, no other publisher beyond the big three accounts for more than a three per cent share of the journal market (McGuigan and Russell 2008). In part, this concentrated degree of control has been made possible because these large commercial publishers have been very successful in acquiring many of the most prestigious and high-circulation journals across almost all academic disciplines. Indeed, in the 1980s, a number of scholarly and professional societies began selling their journals to commercial publishers in an effort to avoid the cost and logistical burdens involved in publication and distribution processes. These sales also helped generate additional revenues to subsidize society activities and membership fees (McGuigan and Russell 2008; Kranich 2004).

Although more selective than exhaustive, the following examples of major mergers and acquisitions over the last decade establish the scale of the largest players in the academic publishing industry. The magnitude of these deals offers an important indicator of the lucrative nature of journal publishing, which is underwritten largely by the free labour of (mostly) academics. Thanks to aggressive merger and acquisition activities that actually date to the 1970s, Reed Elsevier is now one of the world's largest publishers of science, technology, and medicine (STM) journals. This Anglo-Dutch conglomerate, whose stock is quoted on the London, Amsterdam, and New York stock exchanges, also specializes in the subject areas of law, education, and business. According to Reed Elsevier, in addition to a catalog of over 2,500 journals available through *ScienceDirect*, the world's largest database of scientific and medical research, the company publishes almost 20,000 new clinical reference works and health sciences and science and technology book titles annually. The company is also active in the business information segment of publishing, offering over 100 business magazines across a wide range of sectors. Reed Elsevier similarly owns LexisNexis, an online legal and news portal that contains over 4 billion searchable documents available from several thousand databases compiled from over 35,000 legal, business, and news sources.

In early 2003, Candover and Cinven, a London-based venture capital firm that specializes in large buyouts and buyins, acquired controlling interests in Kluwer Academic Publishers from the Dutch company Wolters Kluwer for €600 million. Later that same year, Candover and Cinven bought BertelsmannSpringer from Bertelsmann Media Worldwide for €1.1 billion (in 1999, Bertelsmann had acquired 85 percent of Springer Verlag, including its scientific journals). Candover and Cinven subsequently merged these two publishing businesses into Springer, at the time the second largest STM publisher in the world, with annual publications in 2004 of almost 1,350 journals and 5,000 books, and revenues of €880 million. According to the company's website, it now possesses the world's largest collection of STM books, journals, protocols, and reference works (2,741 journals). In 2006, John Wiley paid £572 million to acquire Blackwell Publishing, which, at the time, published around 600 books a year and over 800 journals, many of which are from professional and scholarly societies (Munroe 2007). Together, these two companies produce over 1,400 peer-reviewed journals across a wide range of academic disciplines, including the social sciences, humanities, and STM.

According to economist Mark McCabe (2002), who was employed in the late 1990s in the United States Justice Department's Antitrust Division, merger and acquisition activity within the academic publishing industry played a role in subsequent journal price increases of biomedical titles between 1988 and 2001. Other researchers have similarly determined that prices charged by commercial publishers average between four and six times those levied by non-profit publishers, when considered on a per-page basis (Bergstrom and Bergstrom 2004). Such inflated prices no doubt explain the staggering profit levels that the major academic publishing companies have been able to book. In 2006, Reed Elsevier earned an operating profit of almost 31 percent on its science, technology, and health publications. Wiley carved out an operating profit of over 45 percent on its journals in these same disciplines, while Blackwell, which is involved more in social science publishing, generated a profit of 28 percent. Taylor and Francis's academic and scientific division brought the company an operating profit of over 26 percent, while the Thomson Corporation realized a 24 percent operating profit from its health and science publishing activities (Pirie 2009).

In addition to an increasingly consolidated industry, there are structural characteristics specific to the market for journal articles of which capital is able to avail itself in asserting its grip on academic publishing. One particularly potent mechanism of control is the almost universal practice among commercial journal publishers to make publication of scholarly articles contingent upon the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

author agreeing to transfer the intellectual property rights in a work to the publisher. This ability to demand ownership rights in the work of academic labourers has been partly facilitated by a relatively conservative system of tenure and promotion that reinforces the *status quo* of corporate-controlled journal venues. The nature of academic scholarship has also contributed to the power of capital. Unlike typical goods, competing journals and journal articles, although often complementary because of overlapping subject areas, are rarely substitutes for one another. This lack of fungibility augments substantially the monopoly power of publishers, particularly those that control the top-ranked journals in their respective fields. This is because academic library collection development policies are driven by the underlying objective to maintain and expand research holdings, which motivates collection development librarians to subscribe to as many of the key journals of record as is fiscally possible. Indeed, because of pressure from faculty to ensure easy access to key disciplinary journals, demand is relatively price-inelastic and differences in quality across journals are not typically reflected in price differentials. Similarly, librarians are typically loathe to replace an existing journal with a new one, despite possible price advantages, until they are certain of its quality, as judged by the broader research community. And because those journals with the highest reputations in a discipline typically attract the best papers, it can be a long and arduous process for new journals to establish a sufficiently rigorous reputation. Cognizant of this captured market situation, publishers have an incentive to engage in profit maximizing behaviour, such as price increases far in excess of inflation and bundling practices (Bergman 2006; McCartan 2010).

Industry consolidation, working in tandem with the captured demand side of the market, gave rise to what is commonly referred to as a 'serials crisis,' which is shorthand for a double-pronged dilemma faced by academic libraries beginning in the 1990s: skyrocketing journal prices coupled with static or declining library budgets. For example, journal prices in the United States increased by 10.8 per cent in 1995, 9.9 per cent in 1996, 10.3 per cent in 1997, and 10.4 per cent in 1998 (Bosch, Henderson, and Klusendorf 2011). According to other survey data, the average serial unit cost more than tripled between 1986 and 2003, increasing from US$89.77 to US$283.08 (Greco et al. 2006). This increase far outpaced the 68 per cent rate of inflation during this same period. In terms of overall serials expenditures, libraries had increased their average serials budgets by just over 260 per cent from almost US$1.5 million in 1986 to slightly more than US$5.3 million in 2003. In comparison, monograph expenditures actually declined about two per cent when adjusted for inflation – US$1.1 million in 1986 to US$1.85 million in 2003 (Greco et al. 2006). Perhaps more revealing of the true extent of the serials crisis is the significantly increased expenditure on library materials as a proportion of overall academic library budgets. In 1986, materials (journals and books) represented just over 32 per cent of an average library budget for an Association of Research Libraries (U.S.) member. By 1995, the proportion had risen to just under 36 percent, and by 2000 and 2003 the proportion reached 39 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively (Greco et al. 2006). Caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of higher prices and reduced funding, librarians responded with strategies that typically included cancelling some subscriptions, not subscribing to new journals, and reducing the number of books purchased in order to shore up the amount of funds available for journals. Unfortunately, the impact on monograph acquisitions has been felt in both absolute and relative terms; because the number of monographs has also been rising, now libraries are acquiring an even smaller proportion of available titles.

Even in the most recent years following the global economic meltdown of 2008, serials prices rose at rates between four and five per cent, well above the negative rate of inflation in 2009 and the 1.6 per cent level of inflation in 2010 (Bosch, Henderson, and Klusendorf 2011). According to EBSCO, between 2007 and 2011 journal prices increased by almost 30 per cent for U.S.-based titles and almost 34 per cent for non-U.S. titles (EBSCO 2011a). The higher price of non-U.S. journals might be explained, in part, by the weakness in the U.S. dollar since 2008. For 2012, EBSCO is projecting journal price increases of between four and six per cent for U.S. publications, seven to nine per cent for journals priced in British Pounds, and nine to eleven per cent for journals priced in Euros (EBSCO 2011b).

In contradistinction to some industry proponents, researchers have provided empirical evidence to defeat claims that seek to equate price with quality of a journal. Finding no correlation between high costs and high quality among high-impact economics journals, Greco et al. (2006) determined that the highest quality journals, based on ISI[8] citation indices, were published by non-profit publishers who charged substantially lower subscription fees than commercial publishers. Overall, Greco and his colleagues ascertained that subscription fees, price per page, and price per ISI citation were consistently lower for non-profit publishers than for commercial academic publishers. Although these authors point out that they did not complete similar analyses for journals in the so-

[8] ISI is now known as Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

cial sciences and humanities, their preliminary analysis supports the hypothesis that similar patterns exist in the majority of periodicals in these fields (Greco et al. 2006).

On the supply side, a dominant sales strategy adopted by the major academic publishers in response to these structural conditions was the introduction of bundling practices, through which publishers sell access to an aggregated collection of anywhere from dozens to hundreds of electronic journals rather than individual titles. Such practices force libraries to subscribe to journals that they might not otherwise want as part of their collection in order to obtain those they do require. Referred to in the trade as 'The Big Deal,' these typically multi-year contracts, although sometimes providing price caps over the life of the deal, have been critiqued by some for their almost Byzantine pricing structures that prohibit libraries from cancelling even a single title in the collection during the period under contract (Bergman 2006). Given their all or nothing nature, these deals also erode librarian control over the content and scope of a library's collection. More fundamentally problematic, libraries are actually only renting access to these electronic journals, with no guarantee that back issues will continue to be available should the library terminate the contract. Given the archival function of libraries, many would find it unacceptable to lose access to past scholarly works. This fact, not lost on publishers when setting prices for bundled offerings, further undermines a library's bargaining power when negotiating new contracts. These bundles also represent significant portions of a library's annual acquisitions budget, so when cuts in the collection have to be made it is often the stand-alone journals from smaller publishers that are cancelled. Aside from reducing access for the community served by the academic library, bundling practices also intensify the tendencies towards concentration and monopoly power of the commercial publishing oligarchs.

3.1. Exploding the Added-Value Myth

In an attempt to justify the high rents they extract when selling access to the knowledge created by academic labourers, publishers typically invoke claims about adding value to the broader knowledge ecology. Such assertions completely sidestep the reality that unpaid academic labour provides the content, peer-review, and editorial work (although a few publishers pay editors a small stipend, it is typically well below the true value of the person's efforts) being appropriated by journal publishers. They also occlude the additional time and money burdens typically downloaded onto authors should their manuscript contain colour material, or require copyright release for images and other copyrighted material they might want to incorporate into their work. And even this value-added work is appropriated by publishers who coerce authors into surrendering their intellectual property rights as a precondition for publication. That having been said, it is true that authors receive the value-added services of typesetting, marketing, and, in some cases, copyediting. Academics also realise indirect benefits such as tenure, promotion, and scholarly recognition. And as users, academics benefit from and are becoming increasingly accustomed to a variety of electronic services such as full-text search capabilities, issue and table of contents alerts, citation tracking and export, etc.

Yet, according to a Deutsche Bank analyst, no commercial academic publisher adds a magnitude of value to the publishing process that would warrant the profit margins the major oligarchs are earning:

> "In justifying the margins earned, the publishers, REL [Reed Elsevier] included, point to the highly skilled nature of the staff they employ (to pre-vet submitted papers prior to the peer review process), the support they provide to the peer review panels, including modest stipends, the complex typesetting, printing and distribution activities, including Web publishing and hosting. REL employs around 7,000 people in its Science business as a whole. REL also argues that the high margins reflect economies of scale and the very high levels of efficiency with which they operate.
> *We believe the publisher adds relatively little value to the publishing process*. We are not attempting to dismiss what 7,000 people at REL do for a living. We are simply observing that if the process really were as complex, costly and value-added as the publishers protest that it is, 40% margins wouldn't be available." (as cited in McGuigan and Russell 2008, para. 18; emphasis added)

When even investment analysts cast doubt on the veracity of the claims advanced by commercial publishers about the purported value they add to the publishing process, clearly something is amiss. Indeed, as Clarke (2007) points out in his analysis of alternative approaches to scholarly

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

publishing, the main value added by publishers – journal branding and active marketing, aggressive customer management, and content protection – are mainly of interest and accrue to owners and shareholders, not the scholars actually producing and using the work. Economists Conley and Wooders are similarly critical of industry contentions about purported value added, arguing that "by far the greatest part of spending by commercial publishers is related to advertising for subscriptions, fulfilling subscriptions, and policing access to content, as well as managing all this, paying taxes, employing lawyers and accountants, and so on. None of this activity is closely related to facilitating scholarly communication." (Conley and Wooders 2009, 82)

Industry consolidation, coerced assignment of copyright, bundling, and increasingly prohibitive pricing practices as employed by the Elseviers and Springers of the world to wring maximum surplus value out of scholarly research and communication processes indicate the extent to which academic publishing is increasingly subsumed within the capitalist mode of production. In order to make conceptual sense of this situation, the following section of the paper seeks to demonstrate that recourse to Marx's concepts of primitive accumulation and alienation provides an apposite theoretical lens through which to analyse and understand the structure and practices of the contemporary academic journal publishing environment.

4. Conceptualizing Capitalist Control through the Lenses of Primitive Accumulation and Alienation

Marx provides his deepest discussion of primitive accumulation in Volume I of *Capital*, where he develops a critique of the 'so-called primitive accumulation' articulated by classical political economists. At its most basic, primitive accumulation can be understood as providing the origin of the separation between producers and the means of production, a separation that is responsible for the alienated character of labour and thus for defining the opposition inherent in capitalist social relations. As articulated most fully in the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts*, the alienation of labour under capitalist social relations manifests itself in four manifold ways, two of which are most germane to the present paper.[9] The first consequence of the estrangement of practical human activity – of labour – is a resulting alienated relationship between the worker and the product of labour, which, because of private property and the capital-labour relation, appears as something alien – as a power independent of the actual producer. Because the product of the worker's labour is an alien object that belongs to the capitalist paying her wage, the more that she toils under capitalist social relations the more powerful becomes the alien, objective world she brings into being against herself. Although this basic idea inheres in the production of academic journal articles, it does require a slight adaptation. Publishers own the means of dissemination not production, as is the typical Marxist understanding of the alienation inherent in capitalist social relations premised on wage labour. Although an argument could be made that capitalist control of journal content – a necessary factor of production in subsequent research – represents partial capitalist control of the means of production. In any event, the perhaps stronger argument is that this type of control facilitates an even more insidious form of exploitation and alienation since the capitalist provides neither a wage nor the means of production (in the strictest sense), yet accumulates the benefit of the product of intellectual labour. At perhaps an even more fundamental level, an argument could be advanced that, from Marx's dialectical perspective, alienation reaches farther back than the estrangement among direct producers from the means of production and the resulting products of social labour to include the alienation inherent in the disconnect between the driving motivation of capital, the profit motive, and the fulfilment of socially-produced human needs (Burkett 1999; Mandel 1968).

A second and related aspect of the alienation of labour encompasses the relationship of the worker to the act of production within the labour process. Under the control of capitalist production processes, not only is the product of labour objectified in an alien object that holds power over the actual producer, but the corresponding form of productive activity renders the worker's own labour as something alien and opposed to him, reflecting an estrangement from himself and from his own activity. Rather than offering satisfaction in and of itself, alienated labour is external to the worker, something sold to and thus belonging to someone else. Through its alienability, the relationship of the worker to his activity becomes an example of what Marx refers to as 'self-estrangement':

[9] In elaborating his third characteristic of capitalist alienation, Marx contemplates the effects of alienation on the person's relationship to other people when engaging in productive activity, itself a fundamentally social activity. The fourth type of alienation that Marx develops in the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* is the notion of alienation from species-being – alienation from a person's being as a member of the human species.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "… estrangement manifests itself not only in the result, but also in the *act of production*, within the *activity of production* itself. … So if the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. The estrangement of the object of labour merely summarizes the estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labour itself." (Marx 1975, 326; emphasis in original)

Under the dominance of capitalist social relations, we witness the social separation of the conditions of production from the control of the direct producers in service of capitalist valorisation. As the empirical evidence presented in the previous section illustrates, this dual form of alienation inheres in the scholarly communication process that is dominated by commercial publishers, who have been quite successful in wresting the outputs of scholarly research from the control of direct producers in service of capitalist accumulation imperatives.

Primitive accumulation thus represents a historically specific and class-differentiated relationship of control over the necessary means of social production. Most contemporary scholars engaging in a re-invigoration of primitive accumulation[10] as a theory for comprehending contemporary capitalist development tend to agree on three additional basic points about this concept. First, primitive accumulation should be understood as a continuous process that remains vital for capitalist accumulation. As Marx informs us, "the capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour. As soon as capitalist production stands on its own feet, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a constantly expanding scale." (Marx 1992, 874) That is, the separation between producers and the means of production, a central category of Marx's critique of political economy, is the constitutive presupposition of accumulation and thus common to both primitive accumulation and accumulation in general – capital presupposes this separation. In Marx's own words, "the manner in which the capitalist mode of production *expands* (takes possession of a greater segment of the social area) and subjects to itself spheres of production as yet not subject to it … entirely reproduces the *manner* in which it arises altogether" (Marx 1994, 327; emphasis in original). The *Grundrisse* similarly weighs in on the issue: "Once this separation is given, the production process can only produce it anew, reproduce it, and reproduce it on an expanded scale" (Marx 1993, 462). As Marx again points out in Volume III of *Capital*[11], accumulation is really nothing more than primitive accumulation – which he conceptualises in Volume I in terms of separation – "raised to the second power" (Marx 1967, 246). In Part III of his *Theories of surplus value*[12], Marx is even more explicit about the continuous nature of primitive accumulation, contending that accumulation "reproduces the separation and the independent existence of material wealth as against labour on an ever increasing scale" (Marx 1972, 315). For this reason, accumulation "merely presents as a *continuous process* what in *primitive accumulation* appears as a distinct historical process" (ibid., 272; emphasis in original). We thus note that Marx's discussion of primitive accumulation contains a basic ontological connection between primitive accumulation and expanded reproduction, such that accumulation in general represents a form of intensified primitive accumulation (Bonefeld 2001, 2002; De Angelis 2001, 2007; Mandel 1975).

While there is a temporal element that distinguishes primitive accumulation from accumulation proper – indeed, the *ex novo* separation between producers and the means of production represents an *a priori* historical event – the critical distinction between the two is grounded less in temporality and more in the conditions and exigencies that comprise the separation. As Marx tells us in the *Grundrisse*, "once developed historically, capital itself creates the conditions of its existence (not as conditions for its arising, but as results of its being)" (Marx 1993, 459; emphasis removed). That is, once produced, capital must reproduce the separation between producers and the means of production (and, indeed, expand this reproduction). In order to normalize capitalist social relations, increasingly larger swaths of the population must be brought into the fold of capitalist commodity production through

[10] Depending upon the theorist to whom one refers, the nominal term employed to reflect the phenomenon of primitive accumulation differs. Glassman (2006) discusses 'primitive accumulation,' 'accumulation by dispossession,' and 'accumulation by extra-economic means,' though he seems to favour the original term coined by Marx. McCarthy (2004) speaks of accumulation by 'extra-economic means.' Bonefeld (2001, 2002) and DeAngelis (2001, 2007) remain true to Marx, employing the term 'primitive accumulation.' Harvey (2003, 2006) prefers to substitute the updated predicate 'accumulation by dispossession' for what he believes is the dated 'primitive accumulation.'

[11] Volume III of *Capital*, subtitled *The complete process of capitalist production*, was compiled by Engels based on notes left by Marx. It was originally published in 1894, eleven years after Marx's death.

[12] Marx worked on the three volumes of *Theories of surplus value* in the 1860s. Considered by some to be the fourth volume of *Capital*, this work was published posthumously by Karl Kautsky.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> "the silent compulsion of economic relations [that] sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Direct extra-economic force is still of course used, but only in exceptional cases. In the ordinary run of things, the worker can be left to the 'natural laws of production', i.e. it is possible to rely on his dependence on capital, which springs from the conditions of production themselves, and is guaranteed in perpetuity by them." (Marx 1992, 899)

Once we recognize that primitive accumulation satisfies a precondition for the expansion of capital accumulation, the temporal element assumes a secular form that encompasses not only the period in which the capitalist mode of production emerges, but also the reproduction and expansion of the capitalist mode of production. The upshot of this process is that capitalist production entails the production of surplus value, as well as the reproduction of social relations of production in an inverted form – social production alienated through private property and the commodity form (Bonefeld 1992; De Angelis 2007).

The second point about primitive accumulation is that it manifests in a variety of forms, including the privatization of once public goods, which has the ultimate effect of re-organizing class relations in favour of capital. As presented above, what might be considered the public good character of academic research and its dissemination has been transformed through extensive enclosing practices into a relatively new source of capital accumulation. The third feature of primitive accumulation speaks to its spatial ambition. Despite a general ethnocentrism present in Marx's work (an ethnocentrism that Marx readily admits), he discusses both the historical and the global elements of the processes of primitive accumulation, through which a privileged minority relentlessly pillaged the means of production from the people of pre-capitalist civilizations around the world:

> "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation." (Marx 1992, 915)

Ensuring an expanded reproduction of capital depends upon enveloping new spheres of production and peoples within the web of capitalist social relations of (re)production. Having historically extended the territorial reach of capitalist social relations through colonialist expansion and the imposition of private property rights across the globe, primitive accumulation in the twenty-first century has become both more extensive and intensive, affecting an enormously broad range of spatio-social activity. In practice, primitive accumulation motivates efforts by capital to enclose more and more areas of our social existence that can be mined for extraction of surplus value. Because enclosures make possible M-C-M',[13] as well as its continued reproduction, they all share the basic universal character of separating people from access to any social wealth that falls outside the purview of competitive markets and money as capital. That is, in line with what we elaborated above with regard to the basic element of the theory of primitive accumulation, we note that enclosures provide a mechanism for realizing the *ex novo* separation between producer and the means of production (De Angelis 2007; Harvey 2003, 2006).

[13] Traditionally, capital accumulation is denoted by the following formula: M-C-M´, where M denotes an amount of money invested by individual capitalists in the market to buy commodities, given by C in this formula. The transformation of money into commodities, shown as M-C, represents the act of 'buying'. Individual capitalists, however, purchase such commodities not to satisfy their particular needs but to generate a profit, which occurs when M´ is greater than the amount of money originally invested. In order to realize this potential profit, the commodity C must be placed back on the market to be sold. If buyers are found and the sale is made (C-M´) at a price where M´ is greater than M, the individual capitalist is able to record a profit. Thus, M´ = M + ΔM, where ΔM represents the change in the amount of money in the possession of the individual capitalist after the sale of the commodity. While an individual capitalist might terminate investment at this point, as a system the 'class' of capitalist investors, driven by the profit motive, will generate a new cycle of accumulation in a process that repeats *ad infinitum*: M´-C´-M´´. That is, commodities of a greater value are bought (C-M´) and placed back on the market to be sold for a greater amount of money, which provides investors with a new sum of money available for purchase and subsequent sale of commodities in a potentially endless cycle of accumulation. Bell and Cleaver (2002) provide an excellent and fuller explication of Marx's examination of the role of labour in providing surplus value for capital through the labour/manufacturing process.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4.1. Capitalist Academic Publishing as an Alienating Instance of Primitive Accumulation

As we saw above, capital has availed itself of a number of strategies to subvert toward its own accumulation imperatives the knowledge produced in common by members of the academy. Given the heightened emphasis on commercialisable research agendas within both universities and funding agencies, the general intellect developed within the academy is being appropriated with alarming frequency by capital in ways that that support rather than subvert the status quo. In the terms of our theoretical framework, institutions of higher education have joined the ranks of casualties infiltrated by capital's practices of primitive accumulation. By appropriating the free labour that sustains the production, peer-review, and editing of scholarly communication and then locking the resulting content behind intellectual property rights, licencing agreements, and technological protection mechanisms, capital has developed a very lucrative model in service of its own accumulation imperatives. The result of these processes is an increasing individuation and alienation of scholarly producers that dispossesses them of their material capacity to consciously control their product and potentially their labour processes. While there might not be a formal separation of academic producers from the most basic means of production, research production, or perhaps more precisely its dissemination and use, nonetheless are subsumed increasingly within the capitalist mode of production. This increasing enclosure of scholarly communication and academic publishing within the capitalist market nexus that is informed by property rights, alienability, and capital accumulation represents a contemporary instance of primitive accumulation and alienated productive activity.

The exponential increase in the production of scientific and technical information after World War II helped spur a corresponding increase in the number of academic journals. Recognizing new opportunities for accumulation associated with this burgeoning volume of journals and research articles, capital began exerting a stranglehold over this industry and the processes of scholarly communication in what can be interpreted as yet another area of social existence now brought under capitalist control, thus reinforcing the idea that primitive accumulation remains a continuous social process. Ever larger swaths of the social knowledge produced by academic labourers are being enclosed by capital, which represents intensified efforts to privatise research output paid for largely by the public purse and thus rightly belonging to the public domain. Finally, efforts by capital to bring academic publishing profitably within its control involve the same spatial ambitions outlined previously in respect of primitive accumulation. Although clearly more intense in the global North, scholars in the global South are also increasingly confronted by such efforts, particularly as more and more feel compelled to publish in western academic journals. Moreover, these examples demonstrate how contemporary processes of primitive accumulation and the consequent expanding capitalist control of social production processes are exacerbating the alienation Marx elaborated to include new strata of producers beyond the orthodox Marxist emphasis on the industrial proletariat and waged labour.

However, the imposition of an *ex novo* separation represents a social process that, in practice, is susceptible to contestation by oppositional social forces seeking to recover those social spaces appropriated by capital and to re-invigorate them as spaces of commons. Capital is thus compelled to wage a two-front war in its battles for enclosure: invading and enclosing new realms of social existence that can be subverted in service of capital's accumulation priorities in the face of resistance, and defending those enclosed areas governed by accumulation and commodification imperatives against *ex novo* guerrilla movements struggling to liberate enclosures from capitalist control. The point to take from this discussion is that not only does separation occur *ex novo*, but that *ex novo* opposition can also form in response to capitalist enclosure (De Angelis 2007). Enclosures, and the responses they engender, thus represent strategic problems for capital. They pose limits that must be overcome if capital is to be successful in colonizing new areas of social existence or in sustaining those areas already enclosed from attacks by alternative social forces seeking to de-commodify such spheres and transform them back into commons. We note, therefore, that limits to capital are both endogenous and exogenous. In the former, capital itself identifies and defines a limit that it must overcome, and in the latter, that limit is defined for capital by the oppositional social forces that strive to liberate an already enclosed space. But regardless of how limits are identified, it is critical to recognize that counter-enclosures (read commons) represent alternatives that seek to circumscribe accumulation imperatives either by resisting enclosure strategies or by liberating enclosed areas of social life. Commons therefore tend to emerge out of struggles against their negation. "Therefore, around the issue of enclosures and their opposite – commons – we have a foundational entry point of a radical discourse on alternatives" (De Angelis 2007, 139). And, as the following section demonstrates, a number of struggles have been waged against capitalist enclosure of academic journal publishing.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

5. Open Access Efforts to Subvert Capitalist Control of Academic Publishing

In response to several of the trends in the academic publishing industry that have clearly disadvantaged both authors and libraries – that is, the producers and the purchasers of scholarly output – a sustained movement has emerged over the last decade and a half that advocates for and develops open-access models to academic research. For example, the Santa Fe Convention in 1999 gave birth to the Open Archives Initiative, which was tasked originally with developing a 'low-barrier interoperability framework' that would facilitate access to e-print archives.[14] Soon thereafter, in December 2001, the Open Society Institute convened a conference in Budapest to interrogate issues around open access to scholarly research. This conference, which laid the foundation for the subsequent Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI), was one of the defining moments of the then nascent open-access movement. Indeed, the BOAI was the first internationally-focused, formal statement to articulate a commitment to open access, which is defined as follows:

> "By 'open access' …, we mean its [scholarly literature] free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited." (n.a. 2002, para. 3)

Informed by the underlying premise that scholarly research should be freely accessible online, the BOAI suggests two complementary strategies to achieve and sustain such access. The first suggestion is self-archiving. Recognizing that many scholars might lack the technical capacity to deposit their research in open electronic archives, the BOAI includes language about the need for tools and assistance. Some thought was similarly given to users. By conforming to the standards being developed at the time by the Open Archives Initiative, the drafters of the BOAI envisioned optimal capture and seamless aggregation by search engines of all the emerging electronic repositories. This would alleviate the need for users to know what and where all the separate archives are in order to access content. The second strategy relies on expanding the number of open-access journals, both *de novo* journals and those that elect to transition to open access. Given the underlying emphasis on free access that informs the BOAI, these open-access journals are encouraged to employ copyright in ways that ensure permanent open access. Moreover, and at an even more fundamental level of change, the BOAI suggests that open-access journals should avoid price barriers to access by eliminating subscription or user fees. Instead, open-access journal producers are exhorted to seek out and develop alternative funding sources, including government and foundation grants, author charges, or any other mechanism appropriate to the disciplinary and national context in which the journal is located. Indeed, flexibility, experimentation, and adaptation to local conditions are key elements expressed in the BOAI for ensuring rapid uptake and sustained longevity of the open-access movement.

Within a couple of years, additional international statements in support of open access emerged across a range of disciplines. For example, the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing was drafted in April 2003 by a group of scientists and representatives from universities and medical institutions, funding agencies, libraries, and publishers. Specific to biomedical research, this statement affirms a commitment to open access publication and deposit of all published work and supplemental materials in electronic repositories that ensure open access, unrestricted distribution, interoperability, and long-term archiving (e.g., for biomedical research PubMed Central). At a meeting in October 2003 in Berlin, a very similar statement was adopted for sciences and humanities research (Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities).

The two models suggested by the BOAI have subsequently emerged as the chief mechanisms for delivering open access to scholarly literature. According to Carroll (2011), a member of the Creative Commons[15] Board since 2001, full open access to content requires easy online accessibility,

[14] Although this remains a fundamental mission of the Open Archives Initiative, it has since broadened the scope of its work to include development of a technological framework and standards not restricted by type of content or economic mechanisms surrounding that content.

[15] As outlined on its website, the Creative Commons project provides infrastructure that consists of a set of copyright licenses and tools designed to create a balance inside the traditional "all rights reserved" setting that copyright law creates. These tools provide creators a simple, standardized way to keep their copyright while permitting certain uses of their work — a "some rights reserved" approach to copyright. The ultimate goal is to create, maintain, and expand a vast digital com-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

gratis availability, and unrestricted re-usage rights, save attribution for the original creator. To the degree that either of the latter two characteristics is satisfied, scholars and practitioners distinguish between 'Gratis' and 'Libre' open access. The former eliminates only price barriers while the latter removes at least some permission barriers. Irrespective of whether works are offered Gratis or Libre, there are two accepted models for delivering open access to scholarly works: 'Gold' and 'Green.' The primary distinction between Gold and Green open access is based on venue or delivery vehicle (i.e., journal or repository) rather than price or user rights, which delineates Gratis from Libre. Gold open access refers to peer-reviewed publication in an open-access journal, whereas Green open access involves deposit of the work in an institutional or subject repository.

Depending upon the particular repository, it might provide access to pre-prints[16], post-prints[17], or both. For example, one of the earliest subject archives was ArXiv, a repository for physics pre-prints developed by Paul Ginsberg in 1991. Since its inception, it has expanded its subject area coverage and now provides open access to over 700,000 e-prints in physics, mathematics, computer science, quantitative biology, quantitative finance, and statistics. PubMed Central, another electronic repository, houses full-text articles from biomedicine and the life sciences. Developed and maintained by the United States National Library of Medicine, this online archive of biomedical journal articles experienced significant growth when the National Institutes of Health (NIH) mandated, as of 7 April 2008, that all researchers who receive NIH funding deposit into PubMed Central complete electronic copies of their peer-reviewed articles within 12 months of publication. As of April 2012, PubMed Central contained over 2.4 million items, including articles, editorials and letters.[18] Beyond these well-known examples, a recent search (April 2012) of the Registry of Open Access Repositories returned 2,730 entries of international institutional and cross-institutional repositories.[19]

Beyond the mounting success of the Green model that relies on repositories, recent research provides additional evidence that open-access journal publishing has matured into a sustainable form of scholarly publication (Laakso et al. 2011). In fact, a quick search of the Directory of Open Access Journals revealed over 7,600 registered journals as of April 2012. Perhaps more importantly, many of the early open-access journals remain active and the average number of articles per journal and year has almost doubled between 1993 and 2009. Similarly, relative to growth rates in the overall volume of peer-reviewed research articles, the number of articles in open-access journals has expanded at a much higher rate. In part, this has occurred because in recent years sever-

mons, a pool of content that can be copied, distributed, edited, remixed, and built upon, all within the boundaries of copyright law (http://creativecommons.org/about).

[16] Pre-prints are drafts of articles before they have undergone peer review and thus have not yet been published in a journal.

[17] A post-print is a draft that has undergone peer review. These versions may not always be identical to the published article, depending on whether the author retains copyright and, if not, whether the publisher allows such deposit. However, more and more commercial publishers are permitting Green open access, although often only after a publisher-specified embargo period has lapsed. Project SHERPA/RoMEO tracks publishers' open access policies at the following URL: http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/statistics.php?la=en&fIDnum=|&mode=simple.

[18] In the United States, a bill is currently before Congress that would expand on this mandated open access requirement for federally-funded research. The *Federal Research Public Access Act* (FRPAA) would require "free online public access" to almost all publicly-funded research. This bipartisan bill, which was introduced on 9 February 2012 in both the Senate and in the House by Representatives, would strengthen the open access mandate at the NIH by reducing the maximum embargo period from 12 months to six months, and extend this strengthened policy to all the major agencies of the federal government. Although a maximum of six months would be permitted, the bill requires open access "as soon as practicable" after publication (Section 4.b.4). The chances of this bill being passed into law remain unclear at the moment. Indeed, previous versions of this bill were introduced into Congress in 2006 and 2009/2010. In the United Kingdom, Research Councils UK (RCUK) published a draft policy paper in March 2012 that proposes amending its open access policies to make it mandatory for all RCUK-funded research papers to be made freely available no later than six months after publication (research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economics and Social Research Council will have a maximum 12 month embargo period). A similar policy is already in place for research funded by the United Kingdom Medical Research Council. RCUK is the strategic partnership of the United Kingdom's seven Research Councils. The Research Councils provide around £3 billion annually to fund research that covers the full spectrum of academic disciplines from the medical and biological sciences to astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences, and the arts and humanities. The Wellcome Trust, Britain's largest non-government funding body and one of the world's largest science funding bodies, requires its funded researchers to make electronic copies of their articles available online within six months of publication. It announced in April 2012 that it will begin sanctioning researchers who fail to comply with this policy.

[19] The Registry of Open Access Repositories, which is part of the EPrints.org network, is hosted at the University of Southampton and is funded by the JISC. Historically, the acronym stood for 'Joint Information Systems Committee' but the work of this organization has evolved and expanded over time. The stated goal of this registry "is to promote the development of open access by providing timely information about the growth and status of repositories throughout the world. Open access to research maximises research access and thereby also research impact, making research more productive and effective" (n.a. 2012b). The other leading list of open access repositories around the world is the Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

al high-impact and high-volume journals have transitioned to open access (Laakso et al. 2011). Although annual growth rates of the number of articles appearing in open-access journals has declined during the period from 2005 to 2009, which Laakso and his colleagues (2011) refer to as the consolidation years of open-access publishing, they are still averaging around 20 per cent annually.

As might also be expected given such monumental growth, open-access infrastructure and technical applications have advanced considerably. In particular, Open Journal Systems[20], a journal management and publishing system developed by the Public Knowledge Project[21], has become a widely used software platform by almost 5,000 open-access journals. And, no doubt in response to the various open-access statements articulated above, the use of licencing agreements appropriate to the goal of facilitating unrestricted access to the scholarly literature has increased quite substantially. Finally, and again reflective of the increasing institutional support for open-access research as articulated in the Bethesda and Berlin declarations, many more funding agencies and institutions now permit the inclusion of open-access fees in research budgets (Laakso et al. 2011).

Such institutional support is particularly important because the Gold model of open-access journal publication eschews user fees, so production costs are typically levied upfront to ensure downstream gratis availability. Although Gold open-access journals employ a wide variety of financing models, the most typical model still relies on charging publication fees for accepted articles to be published. As noted, these fees are increasingly paid for by the author's institution or a research funding agency, although many journals will waive fees if they represent an insurmountable barrier to publication for the author. A number of journals that have been successful in attracting some form of institutional support waive publication fees altogether (Laakso et al. 2011).

It is also important to note the positive benefits of open-access publishing for the broader knowledge ecology. For example, a study from the United Kingdom, which modelled the economic implications of alternative scholarly publishing systems, draws the conclusion that expanded open-access publishing would likely produce significant long-term net benefits along the entire scholarly communication cycle and to the broader economy. Although lower during a transitional period, the authors of the report suggest that the net benefits would likely be positive for both open-access publishing and self-archiving alternatives (i.e., the Gold route) and for concurrent subscription-based publishing and self-archiving (i.e., the Green route) (Houghton et al. 2009).

Further, albeit disconcerting, evidence of the growing sustainability of open-access publishing comes from a number of commercial publishers, who have begun to offer open-access options to authors. Springer has implemented a program called Springer Open Choice, which permits authors to make their journal article freely available to anyone, at any time in exchange for payment of an open-access publication fee of US$3,000/€2,000 plus tax. Since 2006, Taylor & Francis Group has offered a similar program called iOpenAccess. Renamed in 2012 to Taylor & Francis Open Select, authors must pay US$3,250/£1,725/€1,900 to permit open access to their article. Taylor & Francis has also announced that it will launch Taylor & Francis Open in 2012, which will expand the number of fully open-access journal titles across a range of subject areas. In February 2011, Wiley-Blackwell launched Wiley Open Access, a new publishing program that currently publishes five open-access science and medical journals. Publication fees vary by journal and range between US$1,850 and US$3,000. The perhaps most stunning example to date of corporate recognition of the accumulation potential of open-access publishing came in 2008, when Springer purchased BioMed Central for a reported US$35 million. BioMed Central was launched in 2000 as an early for-profit, open-access publisher that charged authors a fee of US$500 to have accepted articles published. Springer subsequently quadrupled this article processing fee to US$1,940 an article, although there is some variation among the journals published by BioMed Central (certain journals have processing fees over US$2,500).

But it is not just the major publishers who have begun to exploit the open-access model of publishing for purposes of capital accumulation. For example, Bentham Science Publishers, which is headquartered in the United Arab Emirates and has offices in Oak Park, Illinois and Bussum, the Netherlands, claims to publish over 230 open-access journals in the disciplines of science, technology, medicine, and social sciences. This for-profit company's business model is based on charging authors flat rate article processing fees of US$ 800 for research articles, US$ 900 for re-

[20] Open Journal Systems (OJS) is part of a broader suite of software developed and maintained by the Public Knowledge Project, which includes Open Conference Systems, Open Harvester Systems, and the currently under-development Open Monograph Press. OJS covers every stage of the refereed publishing process, from submissions through to online publication and indexing. OJS is open source software available gratis to any journal that wants to pursue an open-access publication model. As of 2012, the system has had 19 upgrade releases and is available in 20 languages.

[21] The Public Knowledge Project is an effort funded by the Canadian federal government to expand and improve access to research. The other partners involved in the project include the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and Stanford University.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

view articles, US$ 600 for mini-review articles, US$ 600 for letters, and US$ 450 for book reviews.[22] Bentham has been the subject of criticism among a number of academics for aggressive email marketing practices deployed to solicit editorial board members and article submissions. Some have characterised the company's practices as spamming since the email solicitations have often been very poorly targeted. For example, academics in a particular discipline were invited to contribute papers in a completely unrelated discipline or even join editorial boards of journals publishing in areas clearly beyond the subject matter specialty and even discipline of the person asked. And according to some academics, repeated requests to be removed from the company's marketing database went unanswered (Poynder 2008a).

Although such marketing *faux pas* may be shrugged off as unprofessional efforts to expand the scope of content it publishes, the company was involved in a more egregious example of the dangers of letting the profit motive inform academic publishing. After having received numerous emails asking him to contribute his research to one of Bentham's journals, Phil Davis decided that he would test the rigour of the company's peer review system. He used SCIgen, a software programme that generates grammatically correct, yet "context-free" (i.e., nonsensical) essays in computer science, to construct a bogus research paper entitled "Deconstructing Access Points" that he submitted in January 2009 to Bentham's *The Open Information Science Journal* (TOISCIJ). Although complete with figures, tables, and references, the article's professional surface appearance was quickly betrayed upon a cursory reading. For example: "In this section, we discuss existing research into red-black trees, vacuum tubes, and courseware [10]. On a similar note, recent work by Takahashi suggests a methodology for providing robust modalities, but does not offer an implementation [9]." The fabricated institutional affiliation – The Center for Research in Applied Phrenology based in Ithaca, New York (a name that yields the acronym CRAP) – similarly failed to set off alarm bells at the journal; phrenology is a pseudoscience based on the belief that certain mental faculties and character traits are indicated by the shape of the skull. Within about four months Phillips received an acceptance letter from Ms. Sana Mokarram, the Assistant Manager of Publication, in which she requested that the US$800 article fee be sent to the company's post office box in the SAIF Zone, a tax-free complex in the United Arab Emirates. According to Davis, the acceptance letter, despite claims to the contrary, offered no evidence that the article actually went through peer review (Davis 2009b; Shepherd 2009). To be fair, it should be noted that Davis did submit the article to another of Bentham's journals and in that case it was rejected by the editor based on reviewer comments (Davis 2009a). Although certainly not definitive, the case of Bentham does hint at the ways that the dissemination of academic research, even under the banner of open access, can be subsumed within the logic of capital in ways that portend potentially disastrous results for the broader knowledge ecology. What these examples do clearly demonstrate is that open access *per se* is not inherently anti-capitalist. Indeed, these corporate strategies represent a direct response by capital to subvert the open-access model in service of its own accumulation imperatives. In fact, content delivery through the online open-access model contributes to commercial publishers' profits by lowering marginal costs of production to almost zero and reducing many of the traditional costs associated with physically publishing a paper journal (materials, printing, inventory management, and distribution costs). Moreover, with funding agencies and universities beginning to apportion more funds to cover publication fees, there exists the potential for publishers to retain their control and their rent-seeking behaviour as they shift their revenue models from a subscription base to author fees. Given the historically, often-successful ability of capital to decompose class struggle and re-appropriate for its own ends the creativity produced in common by autonomous workers, the increasing adoption of open-access models by commercial publishers is a worrisome trend that demands a counter-response by academics. As perhaps the first part of that response, we need to sharpen the distinction between open access that can be harnessed to serve capital, and explicitly anti-capitalist open access, in what we might term a commons-based open-access regime that more accurately reflects the actual nature of peer and commons-based scholarly knowledge production.

6. Building on and Radicalizing Open Access

As part of the first salvo against the dominant, capitalist-controlled academic publishing industry, all academics, but especially tenured faculty, need to be reminded of their role in the broader knowledge ecology and the constraining effects that the current capitalist model of journal publish-

[22] The actual ownership of the company remains shrouded in secrecy. Despite repeated requests for this information by Richard Poynder, Bentham's Editorial Director, Matthew Honan, would only state that the company is "owned by a number of individuals, and the legal part of the business is based in the United Arab Emirates" (Poynder 2008b).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ing exercises on this ecology. Unfortunately, the conservative value and reward systems of the academy with peer review at its core represent significant challenges to subverting the current scholarly communication/publishing system. In their extended study of the state of academic journal publishing, Greco et al. (2006) ascertained that prestige of publication venue and high readership in the particular discipline, as well as peer-review rather than the ownership status of the journal publisher (i.e., commercial or non-profit) remain the dominant motivating criteria among a sizable majority of scholars when making their decisions as to where to publish their research. Indeed, recent surveys from both the United Kingdom and the United States indicate that aside from low levels of awareness of the opportunities for publishing in open-access journals, most academics feel hamstrung by "the existing reward systems of tenure/promotion (and even grant making) which favour traditional publishing forms and venues" (Cullen and Chawner 2011, 462). Such institutional and cultural inertia pose an immense challenge if younger students and academics, despite being more adept and comfortable with new technologies, are socialised into the current system in a way fails to challenge, let alone, subvert the *status quo*.

As part of this effort, scholars need to be made aware of the emerging evidence about the utility of commons-based open access for research recognition. At the risk of stating the obvious, this is critical since we, as academics, benefit from our work being widely disseminated and used (and hopefully cited), not from royalty streams. A number of bibliometric studies reveal that, although there is variation across disciplines, research published in open-access journals tends to enjoy a citation advantage over metered content of between 25 and 250 per cent (Gargouri et al. 2010; Antelman 2004; Eysenbach 2006; Hajjem, Harnad, and Gingras 2005; Norris, Oppenheim, and Rowland 2008; Donovan and Watson 2011). And in response to charges (charges typically emanating from proponents of the current journal publishing system) about possible author self-selection bias, Gargouri et al. (2010) have determined that the citation advantage that accrues from making research open access is not due to a quality bias on the part of authors, but instead is attributable to a quality advantage through which users, unencumbered by access constraints, are able to more easily select what to employ and cite. Put another way, the open-access advantage is a quality advantage and not a quality bias. Moreover, commons-based open access augments this advantage because it maximises accessibility and consequently citability (Gargouri et al. 2010; see also Hajjem, Harnad, and Gingras 2005).

As another element in this effort, and in direct response to such empirical evidence, we must similarly begin to task tenure and promotion committees with developing new models of assessment that reduce the extant reliance on citation metrics (particularly given all the biases inherent in current, largely capitalist-controlled, measurement tools) and publication in marquee journals, which inhibit faculty, particularly untenured, from publishing their work in open-access journals. Given the potent gatekeeping function of citation indices, many of which are owned by Thomson Reuters, brief consideration of their role in the capitalist-controlled journal publishing industry is warranted. The extensive control that commercial publishers exercise over the major citation indices could be leveraged to exclude open-access journals not published by the major corporate players. I suspect this would particularly be the case for commons-based, open-access journals. Although Thomson Reuters claims on its website for Web of Science (an index of 12,000 international journals in the sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities) that it indexes open-access journals, the actual number of such journals is not publicised. In addition to unilateral power to decide which journals to include in its indices, Thomson Reuters exerts a significant influence on journal publishing through its annual calculations of journal impact factors. The company calculates a journal's impact factor by dividing that year's number of citations to all the articles published in the particular journal by the number of articles considered 'citable' by Thomson Reuters in the immediately preceding previous two years. Yet, accountable only to its shareholders rather than the actual authors and readers of scholarly research, Thomson Reuters refuses to divulge the criteria it employs to determine what counts as a 'citable' article. In their terse assessment of the company's method of calculating journal impact factors, the editors of *PLoS Medicine* "… conclude that science is currently rated by a process that is itself unscientific, subjective, and secretive" (*PLoS Medicine* Editors 2006, 0707). Beyond this complete lack of transparency, journal impact factors are susceptible to a number of additional critiques. For example, the distribution of citations provides no causal evidence about the quality of a particular journal. Similarly, limiting the calculation to two years after publication biases the statistic, particularly for those disciplines in which uptake of new work takes longer. Perhaps more troubling, the calculation fails to properly distinguish between and weight things such as article type (original research articles versus editorials, reviews, and letters), multiple authorship, self-citation, and language. This shortcoming lends itself to impact factor manipulation if a journal publishes a few highly cited pieces of research and/or many review articles,

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

which often garner more citations than novel research articles. This might also explain the frustrating, and seemingly increasing, practice among some journal editors to 'suggest' to prospective authors that they cite other articles from the journal. With regard to tenure and promotion decisions, these weaknesses are exacerbated and can become truly detrimental for academics if they are made to serve as proxies for research quality. Indeed, because the impact factor is based on citations to all articles in a journal for a given year, it is incapable of rendering any assessment about the quality of a specific author or article published in the journal (*PLoS Medicine* Editors 2006).

Their control by capital, coupled with their systemic political, linguistic, and geographic biases, renders current citation indices and their attendant system of journal impact factors largely antithetical to efforts to recuperate academic publishing from capital. Fortunately, competition is emerging in the form of programs and applications for alternative metrics to measure scholarly influence.[23] And although these tools remain very much at a nascent stage in which their effectiveness, validity, potential value and flaws, and their relationship to established measures requires deeper interrogation, it is promising that such tools are being developed. Despite the fact that indexing services require significant capital outlay that can be cost-prohibitive for smaller publishers, not to mention scholarly societies that may only publish a handful of titles, more open-access versions of scholarly indexing are becoming available, such as PubMed (contains more than 21 million citations to biomedical literature) and Citeseer[x], which aid users in locating scholarly articles and in some cases tracking citations (Striphas 2010).[24] Since both of these resources have been supported by federal grants in the United States, a project to develop an open-source and transparent direct alternative to Thomson Reuters would presumably attract government funding. Indeed, given the push to increase access to scholarly research in both the United States and the United Kingdom[25], perhaps a collaborative project would be possible. In terms of actual oversight and maintenance, I suggest that national academic library associations would be suitable candidates. Here too I think that international collaboration would be warranted in order to respond to some of the weaknesses in the current system that tends to underrepresent and undervalue scholarship along North/South trajectories. Through a combination of cultural change and technological development, there exists the potential to break capital's stranglehold on this important gatekeeping function in academia and the journal publishing industry.

At an institutional level, and as open-access champion Steven Harnad has long been advocating, universities need to mandate self-archiving policies so that academics begin engaging in this method of scholarly dissemination on a regular basis. By eventually normalizing such practice, academics and universities would satisfy more fully the dissemination function of higher education. A number of universities in the United States, including Harvard, MIT, and most recently Princeton, have embarked on precisely this path and established open-access policies that grant the university a non-exclusive, irrevocable licence to distribute a faculty member's scholarly articles on a non-profit basis. Typically, the individual universities then establish an institutional repository to house the articles. However, any faculty member can usually apply to the university for a waiver of the licence requirement if the publisher refuses to permit open-access archiving. Moreover, not all policies require immediate deposit. The waiver option and lack of an immediate deposit requirement have been critiqued by some within the open-access movement for introducing a degree of indeterminacy that could potentially undermine open-access archiving. On the user side, open-access repositories could increase their up-take by enhancing metadata standards and quality, as well as search functions. To this end, institutional archives should consider adopting the standards developed by the Open Archives Initiative, as well as best practices from other established repositories.

Open-access proponents, and particularly those seeking to abolish capital's parasitic appropriation of academic publishing, also need to engage in more radical, awareness-raising activities that shake academics out of their complacency to the *status quo* of journal publishing. The recent boycott of Elsevier, which has been gaining substantial support, is a good example of precisely the type of actions needed to re-appropriate academic journal publishing from capital. This protest grew organically out of the blog posting in mid-January 2012 by Cambridge University mathematician Timothy Gowers, in which he wrote that he would no longer publish papers in any of Elsevier's journals or serve as a referee or editor for them. By mid-April of the same year, almost 10,000 researchers from around the world had pledged to support the boycott of Elsevier. The online statement of protest, which was organized by Tyler Neylon, raises three key objections to the business practices of Elsevier. First, individual journal prices are much too high. Second, because of these high prices libraries are compelled to avail themselves of publisher-developed bundles when order-

[23] Altmetrics.com links to a number of alternative tools for measuring scholarly impact: http://altmetrics.org/tools/.
[24] Google Scholar is also increasingly popular, but, given its corporate ownership, reliance on it is not a viable option.
[25] *Supra*, note 18.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ing serials. As noted previously, very often these bundles include journals that are superfluous to a particular library's collection. Finally, Elsevier supported the *Research Works Act* in the United States, a bill introduced in the House of Representatives in December 2011 that would have reversed and banned federal policies that require researchers who receive federal funding to deposit their research papers in open-access repositories within one year of publication.[26]

Elsevier's defence for its support of this proposed legislation, as outlined in an open letter on its website, demonstrates the unbridled hubris of commercial publishers:

> "Why then do we support this legislation? We are against unwarranted and potentially harmful government laws that could undermine the sustainability of the peer-review publishing system. The RWA's purpose is simply to ensure that the US government cannot enshrine in law how journal articles or accepted manuscripts are disseminated without involving publishers. We oppose in principle the notion that governments should be able to dictate the terms by which *products of private sector investments are distributed*, especially if they are to be distributed for free. And private sector means not just commercial publishers like Elsevier, but also not-for-profit and society publishers." (n.a. 2012a, para. 5; emphasis added)

The laughable claim about undermining peer review relies on a failure to appreciate the true locus of effort that permits the peer review system to function: voluntary labour of academics. Similarly, the indignation registered against a government-compelled distribution of "private sector investments" obfuscates the free labour provided by academics that comprises the bulk of the content Elsevier sells.[27] One wonders just how much private investment a company is making when it earns, even in 2010, a profit margin of 36 per cent on revenues of $3.2 billion.

In 2000-01, a similar petition directed against publishers who refused to permit deposit of articles in electronic repositories attracted the support of almost 34,000 scholars. Although it is unclear how many people actually remained true to the pledge, the more important development was the creation of Public Library of Science by some of the people who spearheaded the campaign. Originally developed as an electronic repository in 2000, Public Library of Science founders, Harold Varmus, Patrick Brown, and Michael Eisen, expanded quickly into Gold open access and began publishing open-access journals in 2003, when they launched *PLoS Biology*. As a non-profit publisher, Public Library of Science currently produces seven peer-reviewed, open-access journals in the field of biomedicine.

Open-access models, and particularly the Gold route, have performed admirably in expanding the amount of valuable knowledge produced in the academy that now flows freely into the public domain. And while I am very sympathetic to these models of knowledge dissemination, they remain plagued by certain weaknesses. The first problem is specific to Gold open access, which eschews subscription fees. While the thinking behind this principle is both understandable and admirable, it requires that a journal secure some source of external funding or levy author charges. The first strategy can be problematic since funding sources are very seldom guaranteed long term, thus placing the longevity of the journal in question. And author charges could represent unacceptable hurdles to publishing for those academics who possess negligible or even non-existent research budgets. Given the emphasis within the neo-liberal university on commodifiable research, as outlined above, and the consequent redistribution of university budgets and research grants, I suspect that many people in the social sciences and, especially, the humanities might experience precisely such difficulties. And as also discussed previously, article processing fees are even higher in those open-access journals controlled by commercial publishers. Since decisions about tenure and promotion rely so heavily on peer-reviewed output, underfunded academics might thus be compelled to publish in conventional journals, thereby further reinforcing the *status quo* of commercial publishing. One potential solution might be for universities to establish and fund publishing programs, perhaps administered by university libraries, that academics could draw on to cover author charges. However, the current fiscally-challenged environment of higher education does not bode well for the chances of such a solution materialising, particularly since during any transition period libraries would also need to continue paying for high-priced, capitalist-controlled journals. And in developing

[26] A month before the *Research Works Act* was introduced into the House by Representatives Issa (R-CA) and Maloney (D-NY), the White House tasked the Office of Science and Technology Policy with soliciting formal public input on the potential impacts of establishing a national policy that mandates public access to the research results of projects funded by the federal government.

[27] In the face of substantial pressure, Elsevier formally withdrew its support for this bill on 27 February 2012. However, in its statement the company made it clear that it will continue to oppose legislated efforts to extend open-access mandates. On the same day, the sponsors of the bill announced that they will no longer try to move it through Congress.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

countries this would presumably be even less of an option, thus threatening to further marginalise non-western knowledge and scholars. This leads to the second and more systemic problem of current open-access models, particularly the Gold route. While they might challenge on the fringes, for the most part they not only leave in place the dominant commercial model that is proving so disastrous, but they also add additional costs to the overall system of knowledge production and dissemination.

I therefore believe that we need to become even more radical in our solutions to the capitalist enclosure of our knowledge ecology. As mentioned previously, academics provide the majority of labour that sustains the production of scholarly knowledge, including the actual research and writing, peer review, and editing. It is time for academics to re-appropriate from capital the products and processes of our collective labour in order to revitalise the knowledge commons in ways that serve the public good rather than capitalist accumulation imperatives. And although this might require significant amounts of persuasion among some of our more conservative colleagues, I want to suggest that logistically such a re-appropriation would be less difficult. There already exists a basic publishing infrastructure in the form of non-profit university presses, which should be able to substitute easily for the commercial publishers in ways that would not require the assignment of copyright by authors or the imposition of onerous pricing and licencing contracts on customers. I realise that this proposal will fall flat among those open-access advocates for whom user fees are anathema. Nonetheless, I think this suggestion recommends itself for several reasons. Without the profit motive and bloated marketing and legal budgets, university presses should be able to produce and distribute academic journals at prices much lower than is currently the case. In fact, I would further suggest that the price differentials would be so large as to permit university presses to charge libraries much more affordable prices for journals, while still retaining some level of revenue that could be employed to cross-subsidise monograph publishing and provide better author services such as copyediting, particularly for those authors whose native language is not English. Moreover, because this solution fits the current funding model of serials acquisition, it would require very little change within the university or the library to implement. Although some type of national, and possibly international, co-ordination, perhaps in the form of library and publisher consortia, might be required to facilitate the logistics of developing pricing models that would ensure equitable access across institutions of higher education. Here too I think that national academic library associations could play an immediate and effective role. Given the massive cost savings, libraries might face a challenge in trying to convince university administrators that the cost savings obtained in serials budgets remain within the library system to shore up other areas that have long been neglected because of the serials crisis. Finally, this proposal aligns with the Green open access model since it would permit academics to deposit their scholarly research in an institutional or subject repository. Since many journal titles are actually owned by the commercial publishers, my proposed solution would almost certainly require the creation of new journals. Again, I think any difficulty here would result more from conservative torpor within the academy since it really is the quality and reputation of the journal editor and the editorial board that contributes to the success of a particular journal in attracting scholarly contributions. The task is therefore to convince significant numbers of editorial boards to stop providing their free labour to capitalist publishers, who then sell back that work to libraries at inflated prices. I am in no way underestimating the power of inertia within the academy and hence the scope of this challenge. But, there are a number of precedents for editorial boards deciding to resign en-masse and successfully create a competing journal (see *Journal declarations of independence* at the following URL: http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Journal_declarations_of_independence). Given the general tenor in broader society, in which increasingly larger numbers of people are disaffected by our current socio-economic conditions, we may be at a critical junction point. By this I mean that people appear much more critically attuned to the exploitative practices of capital. We need to seize on this disaffection and make more people aware, both within and outside of the academy, of the deleterious effects capitalist control has on the knowledge ecology. Only by revealing and openly challenging such exploitative relations of production will we recover and restore our labour products and processes in service of a vibrant and sustainable knowledge commons. Commercial publishers have had their golden age. Now it is time for them to go the way of the dinosaur.

7. Conclusion

As elaborated above, Marx critiques capital as an alienating social form because it privatises the product of another's labour as property, thus rendering it susceptible to the exigencies of atomised market exchange from which an inequitable distribution of the wealth generated by social production obtains. The object of labour increasingly appears as alien property to the actual producers as

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

the means of their existence and of their activity is concentrated progressively in the hands of capital. Corporate control of academic publishing through strategies and practices such as industry consolidation and forced assignment of copyright represents a new modality of capitalist primitive accumulation that strives to appropriate and enclose the knowledge commons that otherwise would emerge from the unrestricted flow of academic research. "Capital has from the start sought to enclose the commons. From colonization to slavery, from the work day to the home, from activity to the deepest thoughts and feelings, the history of capital is its extension into the human commons" (Neill, Caffentzis, and Machete n.d., para. 46).

The evidence presented in respect of the capitalist academic publishing industry is similarly testament to the expanding range of actors caught up in practices of primitive accumulation and capitalist control of social production processes. Despite a still relatively privileged position vis-à-vis other workers, it is precisely through such capitalist-controlled processes that cognitive workers in the academy are being robbed of control over their works, and scholarly research production and communication practices more broadly, as academic journal publishing becomes increasingly integrated into capitalist relations of production.

Capital's expanding exploitation of social labour brings with it a corresponding substitution of value accumulation imperatives for use value as the driving motivation for production, leading to a situation in which the social conditions that provide the basis for social production come to confront labour as the power of capital:

> "The forms of socially developed labour…appear as *forms of the development of capital*, and therefore the productive powers of labour built up on these forms of social labour – consequently also science and the forces of nature – appear as *productive powers of capital*. In fact, the unity of labour in co-operation, the combination of labour through the division of labour, the use for productive purposes in machine industry of the forces of nature and science alongside the products of labour – all this confronts the individual labourers themselves as something *extraneous* and *objective*, as a mere form of existence of the means of labour that are independent of them and control them.…And in fact all these applications of science, natural forces and products of labour on a large scale…appear only as *means for exploitation* of labour, as means of appropriating surplus-labour, and hence confront labour as *powers* belonging to capital." (Marx 1963, 390-392; emphasis in original)

The prescience and sagacity of Marx's thought to our contemporary situation cannot be emphasised strongly enough when considering the material presented in this paper, particularly in respect of the way capital has and continues to successfully appropriate the massive amounts of 'free' labour that sustain the content production and evaluation of the academic journal publishing industry. Put another way, capitalist control of academic publishing expedites the private expropriation of some or all of the value that is produced in common through the cooperative relationships inherent in scholarly production. Under the dominance of capitalist social relations, we thus witness a further instance of the social separation of the conditions of production from the control of the direct producers in service of capitalist valorisation.

Yet there is hope. The success of the open-access movement and models has demonstrated that there are viable alternatives to the capitalist control of academic publishing. However, as argued in the previous section, the dominant open-access regime suffers from inherent neutrality in respect of economic model that renders it susceptible to capitalist appropriation and exploitation. I have therefore suggested that we need to become more radical in our thinking and our actions in order to wrest control of academic publishing from the current capitalist oligarchs. Indeed, given the contemporary importance of information and knowledge to capitalist accumulation imperatives, the struggle against the enclosure of scholarly research represents a potentially critical element in the broader efforts to subvert capital. As Pirie (2009, 54) forcefully asserts, "[i]t would challenge the dominant fetishized understanding of informational systems that uncritically accepts the commodification of information. The undermining of corporate control in this sector must be understood as a dangerous threat to the stability of the regime as a whole." If nothing else, my hope is that this paper engenders further discussion, elaboration, and eventual implementation of strategies that return complete and common ownership of the products and processes of academic knowledge creation to the actual producers and users.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

References

Antelman, Kristin. 2004. Do Open-access Articles Have Greater Research Impact? *College and Research Libraries* 65 (5): 372-382.

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. *Framework of Agreed Principles on Federally Funded University Research between the Government of Canada and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada*. Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 2002. Accessed May 2, 2007. http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/reports/2002/frame_cadre_e.pdf

Bekelman, Justin E., Yan Li, and Cary P. Gross. 2003. Scope and Impact of Financial Conflicts of Interest in Biomedical Research: A Systematic Review. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 289 (4): 454-465.

Bell, Peter and Harry Cleaver. 2002. Marx's Theory of Crisis as a Theory of Class Struggle. *The Commoner* 5 (Autumn): 1-61.

Bergman, Sherrie S. 2006. The Scholarly Communication Movement: Highlights and Recent Developments. *Collection Building* 25 (4): 108-128.

Bergstrom, Theodore C. and Carl T. Bergstrom. 2004. Can 'Author Pays' Journals Compete with 'Reader Pays'? *Nature Web Focus*, http://www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/22.html

Bok, Derek Curtis. 2003. *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bonefeld, Werner. 1992. Social Constitution and the Form of the Capitalist State. In *Open Marxism*, edited by Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn and Kosmas Psychopedis. London, GB: Pluto Press.

Bonefeld, Werner. 2001. The Permanence of Primitive Accumulation: Commodity Fetishism and Social Constitution. *The Commoner* 2 (September): 1-15.

Bonefeld, Werner. 2002. History and Social Constitution: Primitive Accumulation is not Primitive. *The Commoner* March 2002. Accessed December 8, 2007. http://www.commoner.org.uk/debbonefeld01.pdf

Bosch, Stephen, Kittie Henderson, and Heather Klusendorf. 2011. Periodicals Price Survey 2011: Under Pressure, Times Are Changing. *Library Journal* 138 (8): 30-35.

Bostrom, Dana, Caroline Bruce, and Sean Flanigan, eds. 2007. *AUTM Canadian Licensing Survey: FY2005 Survey Summary*. Northbrook, IL: Association of University Technology Managers.

Burkett, Paul. 1999. *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Carroll, Michael W. 2011. Why Full Open Access Matters. *PLoS Biology* 9 (11), http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info:doi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.1001210.

Caulfield, Timothy and Colin Feasby. 1998. The Commercialization of Human Genetics in Canada: An Overview of Policy and Legal Issues. In *Socio-ethical Issues in Human Genetics*, edited by B. M. Knoppers. Cowansville, QC: Les Éditions Yvon Blais.

Clarke, Roger. 2007. The Cost Profiles of Alternative Approaches to Journal Publishing. *First Monday* 12 (12), http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2048/1906.

Conley, John P. and Myrna Wooders. 2009. But What Have You Done for Me Lately? Commercial Publishing, Scholarly Communication, and Open-Access. *Economic Analysis & Policy* 39 (1): 71-87.

Cullen, Rowena and Brenda Chawner. 2011. Institutional Repositories, Open Access, and Scholarly Communication: A Study of Conflicting Paradigms. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 37 (6): 460-470.

Davis, Phil. 2009a. Adventures in Open Access Publishing. In *The Scholarly Kitchen*.

Davis, Phil. 2009b. Open Access Publisher Accepts Nonsense Manuscript for Dollars. In *The Scholarly Kitchen*.

De Angelis, Massimo. 2001. Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital's "Enclosures". *The Commoner* 2 (September): 1-22.

De Angelis, Massimo. 2007. *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital*. London: Pluto.

Donovan, James M. and Carol A. Watson. 2011. Citation Advantage of Open Access Legal Scholarship. Athens: University of Georgia School of Law.

EBSCO. 2011a. Five Year Journal Price Increase History (2007-2011). Ipswich,MA: EBSCO.

EBSCO. 2011b. Serials Price Projections for 2012. Ipswich, MA: EBSCO.

Etzkowitz, Henry and Andrew Webster. 1998. Entrepreneurial Science: The Second Academic Revolution. In *Capitalizing Knowledge: New Intersections of Industry and Academia*, edited by Henry Etzkowitz, Andrew Webster, and Peter Healey. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Etzkowitz, Henry, Andrew Webster, and Peter Healey. 1998. Introduction. In *Capitalizing Knowledge: New Intersections of Industry and Academia*, edited by Henry Etzkowitz, Andrew Webster, and Peter Healey. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Eysenbach, Gunther. 2006. Citation Advantage of Open Access Articles. *PLoS Biol* 4 (5), http://dx.doi.org/10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.0040157.

Freeland Judson, Horace. 1994. Structural Transformation of the Sciences and the End of Peer Review. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 272: 92-94.

Gargouri, Yassine, Chawki Hajjem, Vincent Larivière, Yves Gingras, Les Carr, Tim Brody, and Stevan Harnad. 2010. Self-selected or Mandated, Open Access Increases Citation Impact for Higher Quality Research. *PLoS ONE* 5 (10): e13636. http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0013636

Giroux, Henry A. 2007. *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Glassman, Jim. 2006. Primitive Accumulation, Accumulation by Dispossession, Accumulation by 'Extra-economic' Means. *Progress in Human Geography* 30 (5): 608-625.

Government of Canada. 2007. Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

Greco, Albert N., Robert M. Wharton, Hooman Estelami, and Robert F. Jones. 2006. The State of Scholarly Journal Publishing: 1981-2000. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 37 (3): 155-214.

Hajjem, Chawki, Stevan Harnad, and Yves Gingras. 2005. Ten-year Cross-disciplinary Comparison of the Growth of Open Access and How It Increases Research Citation Impact. *IEEE Data Engineering Bulletin* 28 (4): 39-46.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David. 2006. *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. New York: Verso.

Hindmarsh, Richard, and Geoffrey Lawrence. 2004. Recoding Nature: Deciphering the Script. In *Recoding Nature: Critical Perspectives on Genetic Engineering*, edited by Richard Hindmarsh and Geoffrey Lawrence. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Houghton, John, Bruce Rasmussen, Peter Sheehan, Charles Oppenheim, Anne Morris, Claire Creaser, Helen Greenwood, Mark Summers, and Adrian Gourlay. 2009. Economic Implications of Alternative Scholarly Publishing Models: Exploring the Costs and Benefits. London: JISC.

Kenney, Martin. 1986. *Biotechnology: The University-Industrial Complex*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kranich, Nancy. 2004. The Information Commons: A Public Policy Report. New York, NY: Brennan Center for Justice.

Krimsky, Sheldon. 1991. *Biotechnics & Society: The Rise of Industrial Genetics*. New York: Praeger.

Krimsky, Sheldon. 2003. *Science in the Private Interest: Has the Lure of Profits Corrupted Biomedical Research?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Laakso, Mikael, Patrik Welling, Helena Bukvova, Linus Nyman, Bo-Christer Björk, and Turid Hedlund. 2011. The Development of Open Access Journal Publishing from 1993 to 2009. *PLoS ONE* 6 (6): e20961.

Levidow, Les. 2002. Marketizing Higher Education: Neoliberal Strategies and Counter-strategies. *The Commoner* January (3): 1-21.

Lievrouw, Leah A. 2004. Biotechnology, Intellectual Property, and the Prospects for Scientific Communication. In *Biotechnology and Communication: The Meta-technologies of Information*, edited by Sandra Braman. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mandel, Ernest. 1968. *Marxist Economic Theory*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Mandel, Ernest. 1975. *Late Capitalism*. Translated by J. De Bres. London, GB: NLB.

Marx, Karl. 1963. *Theories of Surplus Value: Part I*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital: A critique of political economy: The process of capitalist production as a whole*. Edited by F. Engels. Vol. III. New York: International Publishers. Original edition, 1894.

Marx, Karl. 1972. *Theories of Surplus Value: Part III*. Translated by J. Cohen. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, Karl. 1975. Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844). In *Early Writings*. New York: Vintage Books.

Marx, Karl. 1992. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by B. Fowkes. Vol. I. London: Penguin Books.

Marx, Karl. 1993. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by M. Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books.

Marx, Karl. 1994. Economic Manuscript of 1861-63 (Conclusion). In *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers.

McCabe, Mark J. 2002. Journal Pricing and Mergers: A Portfolio Approach. *The American Economic Review* 92 (1): 259-269.

McCartan, Patrick. 2010. Journals and the Production of Knowledge: A publishing Perspective. *British Journal of Political Science* 40 (2): 237-248.

McCarthy, James. 2004. Privatizing Conditions of Production: Trade Agreements as Neoliberal Environmental Governance. *Geoforum* 35 (3): 327-341.

McGuigan, Glenn S., and Robert D. Russell. 2008. The Business of Academic Publishing: A Strategic Analysis of the Academic Journal Publishing Industry and its Impact on the Future of Scholarly Publishing. *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship* 9 (3), http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v09n03/mcguigan_g01.html.

Merrett, Christopher. 2006. The Expropriation of Intellectual Capital and the Political Economy of International Academic Publishing. *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies* 20 (1): 96-111.

Mills, C. Wright 1951. *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morgan Stanley. 2002. Scientific Publishing: Knowledge is Power. London: Morgan Stanley Equity Research Europe.

Mulland, Asher. 2008. UK to Train 2,000 New PhDs: Multidisciplinary Centres with Business Ties to Produce Physicists and Engineers. *Nature News*, http://www.nature.com/news/2008/081205/full/news.2008.1279.html.

Munroe, Mary H. 2007. The Academic Publishing Industry: A Story of Merger and Acquisition. http://www.ulib.niu.edu/publishers/.

n.a. 2011. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. Budapest Open Access Initiative 2002 [cited 12 November 2011]. Available from http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.

n.a. 2012. *A Message to the Research Community: Elsevier, Access, and the Research Works Act*. Elsevier 2012a [cited 6 February 2012]. Available from http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/intro.cws_home/elsevierstatement.

n.a. 2012. *Registry of Open Access Repositories* 2012b [cited 15 February 2012]. Available from http://roar.eprints.org/.

Neill, Monty, George Caffentzis, and Johnny Machete. 2007. *Toward the New Commons: Working Class Strategies and the Zapatistas* n.d. [cited 28 August 2007]. Available from http://galmuri.co.kr/published/zap/mngcjm.html.

Newfield, Christopher. 2008. *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Norris, Michael, Charles Oppenheim, and Fytton Rowland. 2008. The Citation Advantage of Open-Access Articles. *The Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59 (12): 1963-1972.

Olssen, Mark and Michael Peters. 2005. Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy* 20 (3): 313-345.

Peekhaus, Wilhelm. 2010. The Neo-liberal University and Agricultural Biotechnology: Reports from the Field. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30 (6): 415-429.

Pirie, Iain. 2009. The Political Economy of Academic Publishing. *Historical Materialism* 17 (3): 31-60.

PLoS Medicine Editors. 2006. The Impact Factor Game. *PLoS Medicine* 3 (6), http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pmed.0030291.

Poynder, Richard. 2008a. The Open Access Interviews: Matthew Honan. In *Open and Shut?*

Poynder, Richard. 2008b. The Open Access Interviews: Richard Poynder Talks to Matthew Honan, editorial director, Bentham Science Publishers.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Shepherd, Jessica. 2009. Editor Quits After Journal Accepts Bogus Science Article. *The Guardian* June 18, http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jun/18/science-editor-resigns-hoax-article.

Sigurdson, Jon. 1993. Global Companies as Generators and Controllers of Knowledge: The New Challenge for Developing Countries. In *New Technologies and Global Restructuring: The Third World as a Crossroads*, edited by Claes Brundenius and Bo Göransson. London, GB: Taylor Graham.

Slaughter, Sheila and Gary Rhoades. 2004. *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Striphas, Ted. 2010. Acknowledged Goods: Cultural Studies and the Politics of Academic Journal Publishing. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7 (1): 3-25.

Ware, Mark and Michael Mabe. 2009. The STM Report: An Overview of Scientific and Scholarly Journal Publishing. Oxford: International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers.

Washburn, Jennifer. 2005. *University, Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of American Higher Education*. New York: Basic Books.

Whiteley, Robert, Luis L. M. Aguiar, and Tina Marten. 2008. The Neoliberal Transnational University: The Case of UBC Okanagan. *Capital & Class* 96 (Autumn): 115-142.

Yoxen, Edward. 1981. Life as a Productive Force: Capitalising the Science and Technology of Molecular Biology. In *Science, Technology and the Labour Process: Marxist Studies*, edited by Les Levidow and Bob Young. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

About the Author

Wilhelm Peekhaus
Employing critical, Marxist political economic analytical frameworks to his research, Wilhelm Peekhaus investigates social issues that traverse the boundaries between the analogue and the digital, the material and immaterial. As such, his current research agenda, which falls broadly within the field of information policy, interrogates issues such as the labour of academic publishing, and the ways that marginalized social groups in South Africa (poor farmers) harness knowledge and information and communication technologies in their struggles for development. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 600-617, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

The Problem of Privacy in Capitalism and the Alternative Social Networking Site Diaspora*

Sebastian Sevignani

Unified Theory of Information Research Group (UTI), sebastian.sevignani@uti.at

Abstract: In this paper, I examine the alternative social networking site Diaspora* from a Marxist standpoint. The investigation focuses on privacy, and contributes to a better understanding of this issue within the context of capitalism in general. First, I describe Diaspora*'s way of production by pointing out its alternative character as part of the free software and copyleft movement. Second, dominant theories of privacy related to individual control, exclusion, and property are introduced. Third, the problem of privacy in capitalism is described wherein dominant concepts of privacy will be contextualised on behalf of a critical political economy analysis that refers to the Marxian concept of ideology critique, Marx's differentiation between a societal sphere of production and a societal sphere of circulation, and his analysis of capitalist fetishisms. Fourth, taking into account the problem of privacy in capitalism, the alternative potential of Diaspora* is evaluated. Finally, a brief outline of a Marxist theory of privacy is proposed.

Keywords: Social networking sites, privacy, private property, surveillance, Marx, ideology, fetishism, critical Internet studies, alternative media

Acknowledgement: The research presented in this article was conducted in the project "Social Networking Sites in the Surveillance Society" (http://www.sns3.uti.at), funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): project number P 22445-G17. Project co-ordination: Prof. Christian Fuchs.

In 2010, four young New York university students were listening to a speech by law professor and free software foundation advocate, Eben Moglen, entitled: "Freedom in the Cloud: Software Freedom, Privacy, and Security for Web 2.0 and Cloud Computing" (2010). Moglen, also known as the author of the dotCommunist Manifesto (Moglen 2003), a document where he, inspired by Marx, propagates a contradiction between free information and multi-national capitalism in the age of the Internet, describes in his speech the surveillance-based heteronomy that users face within an Internet controlled by large corporate monopolists. Corporations, such as Facebook and Google, are able to dictate "take-it-or-leave-it" terms and provide users with a dubious but working privacy-threatening deal: "I will give you free web hosting and some PHP [personal home page tools] doodads and you get spying for free all the time" (Moglen 2010). Moglen challenges the status quo by stressing that the situation need not be the way it currently is. Technological means that are currently available, he points out, provide us with a potential alternative to an Internet controlled by powerful centres. He calls upon his audience: "We're technologists, we should *fix it* [...]. You know every day that goes by there's more data we'll never get back. Every day that goes by there's more data inferences we can't undo. Every day that goes by we pile up more stuff in the hands of the people who got too much" (Moglen 2010).

The four students were inspired by Moglen's call to start developing an alternative social networking site (SNS), Diaspora*, that was soon and perhaps too soon celebrated as the potential Facebook-Killer. The euphoria comes, on the one hand, from Diaspora*'s quick success in fundraising. Via an Internet platform, they were able to raise 200,000 USD to get their project running. On the other hand, Facebook, the world's biggest SNS and second most frequented website, has faced several privacy problems as well as growing user discontent. By now, Diaspora* has been released to a broader public, it has ensured itself further funding and has built up an organizational structure, but the software is still in its alpha phase and remains a work in progress – at least in terms of its future and role in the struggle for a sustainable information society.

In the course of this paper, I describe Diaspora*'s way of production by pointing out its alternative character as part of the free software and copyleft movement. Second, dominant theories of privacy related to individual control, exclusion, and property are introduced. Third, the problem of privacy in capitalism is described wherein dominant concepts of privacy will be contextualised on behalf of a critical political economy analysis that refers to the Marxian concept of ideology critique, Marx's differentiation between a societal sphere of production and a societal sphere of circulation, and his analysis of capitalist fetishisms. Fourth, taking into account the problem of privacy in capi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

talism, the alternative potential of Diaspora* is evaluated. Finally, a brief outline of a Marxist theory of privacy is proposed.

1. The Alternative Social Networking Site Diaspora*

Apart from Diaspora*'s early stage of development, it looks similar and provides features akin to those of well-known commercial SNSs. In terms of social privacy, i.e. privacy relative to other SNS users (Raynes-Goldie 2010), Diaspora* allows users to specifically assign to different groups various access opportunities in terms of their own activities on the SNS. Diaspora* can be described not only as an alternative to existing SNSs in terms of these elaborate settings for social privacy or in its funding through donations instead of advertising, but also particularly in the fact that the site is fundamentally different in its infrastructure and mode of production. This difference holds important alternative consequences for its users. In describing this alternative SNS, it is useful to distinguish between two levels. One is the code level; here, we are interested in how Diaspora*'s software is produced, what the means to produce SNS looks like, and in which social relations they are embedded. The other level is the user level; here, we are interested in the use value of Diaspora*, such as its ability to satisfy users' need for privacy. We will see that on Diaspora* the user level interacts with the code level in an important manner.

Diaspora* is a distributed SNS, which means that uploaded user data are not stored and managed centrally. Unlike Facebook and Google+, which process user data in huge server parks, Diaspora* consists of a potentially unlimited number of interoperating servers that are locally distributed and not controlled by a single organisation. Theoretically, it is possible for everyone to operate such a "pod". Therefore, the Diaspora* project should be seen in the context of initiatives that seek to empower users to run personal, self-controlled servers easily. For instance, the Freedom Box initiative describes itself as "a project that combines the computing power of a smart phone with your wireless router to create a network of personal servers to protect privacy during daily life […]. The basic hardware and software components already exist. Our job is to assemble the right collection of social communication tools, distributed services, and intelligent routing in a package anyone can use to get the freedoms we all need right out of the box" (Freedom Box Foundation n.d.). Practically, however, there are a limited number of servers[1], hence the social network is not yet distributed widely. Nevertheless, the principle behind Diaspora* is aimed at this direction: "Get started on a community pod and then move all of your social data to a pod you control. Diaspora*'s distributed design means that you will never have to sacrifice control of your data" (Diaspora* n.d.a). The effect of this structure is that "as soon as it becomes public that a company is exploiting the data of the users of its pod, they move away and the company is dead (in that sector). So the product shifts from you being the product to the software being the product" (Diaspora* 2012).

Chopra and Dexter (2006) describe the traditional capital strategy to make profit in the informational economy: capital is closing the source code and this means excluding others from this code on behalf of private property rights. "In this model then, the 'means of production' remain with the corporate owner of the software, because the worker is unable to modify the code" (Chopra and Dexter 2006, 8). Due to the specific quality of the means of production, however, the production of informational goods, such as software code, comes potentially in conflict with capital interest for the following reasons:

- Information is produced and diffused by networks,
- information is hard to control in terms of accessibility and ownership,
- and as information is intangible, it can easily be copied and owned by many, which consequently undermines individual private property (Fuchs 2009, 76f.; see also Benkler 2006, 60).

Marx argues that the "social relations between the producers, and the conditions under which they exchange their activities and share in the total act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production" (Marx 1849/2006, 28). The Diaspora* software is produced and developed according to a mode of production that can be called "peer-production" (Benkler 2006, Bauwens 2005), which is a way of producing goods and services that relies on self-organizing communities of individuals who come together to produce a shared and desired outcome. Instead of being exchanged, outcomes and inputs of the working process are shared. Goods and services in peer-production are therefore not commodities, because "only the products of mutually independent acts of labour, performed in isolation" can become commodities (Marx 1867/1976, 57).

[1] See list at http://podupti.me/

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

In terms of forces and modes of production, Marx argues further that "at a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they had been at work before" (Marx 1859/1909, 12). The Diaspora* software, to which access is needed for users to set up their own pods, is (mainly) licensed under the GNU's Affero General Public License (AGPL). This license, provided by the Free Software Foundation, follows a principle called "copyleft". Copyleft says that code must be free software and works like this: "I make my code available for use in free software, and not for use in proprietary software, in order to encourage other people who write software to make it free as well. I figure that since proprietary software developers use copyright to stop us from sharing, we cooperators can use copyright to give other cooperators an advantage of their own: they can use our code" (Stallman 2010, 129). Copyleft uses existing property regimes to subvert them and uses the power of the right to property to avoid exclusive appropriation of software code (de Laat 2005; Wolf, Miller, and Grodzinsky 2009). It can be understood as a self-protecting measure for a specific mode of production and as an expression of the conflict that Marx has denoted. It is self-protecting for it requires any adaption of the free software code to be free software and licensed under the copyleft principle again. This clearly runs contrary to the capital strategy of excluding others in order to make profit. Copyleft suspends the capitalist logic within a limited realm because "the capital relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour" (Marx 1867/1976, 874).

In the case of Diaspora* and other free software, contributors really own the conditions for the realisation of their programming, thereby ensuring that work and the realisation of their work cannot be torn apart and alienated from each other. The distinction between being a consumer and producer is blurring within the realm of the Internet and SNS (Toffler 1980, Bruns 2008). So, users can become productive and contribute to the social network because they can, due to the freely available software, run their own pod or migrate from non-trustworthy pods to trustworthy ones. In the case of Diaspora*, we can see that the quality of the code level affects the user level and enables greater user control.

The previously quoted famous and controversial preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* also claims that "the sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness […]. With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations, the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic condition of production […] and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out" (Marx 1859/1909, 11f.). It is important to comment further on this quote. Marx says that the *entire relations of production* correspond with the social consciousness and ideas in different life spheres. He makes such claims from a very high level of abstraction; for him the passage is a guiding principle or a "leading threat" of investigation (Marx 1859/1909, 11). It is obvious that Diaspora*'s mode of production, apart from perhaps being a germ form of an alternative society (Fuchs 2009, 77), does not represent contemporary society's entire relations of production. Furthermore, Marx points in this quote to a potential asynchrony between economic foundation and ideological superstructures. Both constraints denote the importance of analysing these very ideological structures.

Commercial SNSs consistently come into conflict with privacy and have evoked several public outcries. These include complaints against the leading SNS, Facebook, such as the complaints by the Electronic Privacy Information Center, the complaints by Austrian students addressed to the Irish Data Protection Commissioner (Europe versus Facebook 2011), or the investigation by the Nordic data inspection agencies (Datatilsynet 2011), which led to Diaspora*'s apparent quick success and distinctive self-understanding as a result of its focus on privacy. Diaspora* describes itself as "the privacy-aware, personally controlled, do-it-all open-source social network" (Diaspora* 2010). Its self-understanding distinguishes Diaspora* from the practices and the nature of dominant SNSs such as Facebook and Google+, and highlights how the site frames itself as an alternative SNS.

In order to be able to evaluate which role privacy can play in an alternative SNS project, I need to explain what privacy commonly entails (section 2) and how it fits into capitalist society (section 3).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

2. Dominant Theories of Privacy: Individual Control, Exclusion, and Property

The starting point of the modern privacy debate was an article by Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis published in 1890. The motive for writing this article was an infringement during the wedding of Warren's daughter by the press. In this article, privacy is defined as the "right to be left alone" (Warren and Brandeis 1890/1984, 76). "The right to be left alone" is identical with the liberal core value of negative freedom (Rössler 2001, 20f.), and as such it determines most of the subsequent theoretical work on privacy and situates it within the liberal tradition. The plethora of values that are associated with privacy, such as the value of freedom, autonomy, personal well-being and so forth, mostly stem from this very kind of thinking. Serving these values, informational privacy is today most often defined either as control over the flow of information or over the access to information. For Alan F. Westin, "privacy is the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others" (Westin 1967, 7). Westin focuses on the control of information, which makes him a prototypical proponent of "control-theories" of privacy (Tavani 2008, 142f.). On the other hand, there are "access-theories" of privacy (Tavani 2008, 141f.). Gavinson, for instance, relates privacy "to our concern over our accessibility to others: the extent to which we are known to others, the extent to which others have physical access to us, and the extent to which we are the subject of others' attention" (Gavinson 1980/1984, 347). If we combine these two major strands of privacy approaches, one can speak of privacy as individual control over access to personal information (Moor 1997; Tavani 2008). Some authors challenge the non-determination of "privacy as control" definitions (e.g., Wacks 2010, 40f.; Solove 2008, 25); they argue that these theories fail to define the content of privacy. In fact, control theories deal with the "freedom to choose privacy" (Wacks 2010, 41), rather than a determination of the content to be deemed private. Here, privacy is what is subjectively seen as private; such theories, therefore, foster individuals' exclusive control over their data, and do not want to and cannot lay claim to privacy within a good society and a happy fulfilled life (Jaggar 1983, 174). Access theories differ on this point; these theories can denote a realm of privacy that is not at the disposal of the individual's choice by any means (Fuchs 2011b, 223). For instance, such determinations of privacy could include the agreement that individuals' bodies, homes or financial issues such as bank secrecy, are inherently private. In access theories, privacy is what is objectively private and, therefore, theories as these can conjure up constraints to individuals' control over their data in terms of certain values. It is crucial to understand that access theories may allow thinking about what privacy should be in a good society, but not as a matter of necessity. In fact, access theories of privacy are also most often situated within the liberal tradition and have a limited notion of societal issues as the stress is on the individual control aspect.

A resemblance between privacy and property is often noted in the literature (Lyon 1994, 186; Laudon 1996, 93; Brenkert 1979, 126; Habermas 1991, 74; Goldring 1984, 308f.; Lessig 2002, 250; Hettinger 1989, 45; Geuss 2001, 103; Sofsky 2007, 95f.; Solove 2008, 26-28; Moore 2008, 420; Kang 1998; Litman 2000; Westin 1967, 324-325; Varian 1997; Samuelson 2000), but has rarely been analysed critically (exception: Fuchs 2011b).

A broad notion that expresses its fundamental character for human life and fits in with various kinds of property, understands property as a social relation with regard to (tangible and/or intangible) things (Pedersen 2010c). Macpherson speaks about three possible forms: private property, state property, and common property. He points out that private property and state property are of similar structure, since in both the social relation with regard to things is exclusionary (Macpherson 1978, 5). Macpherson further remarks upon three shifts in the property notion, which took place when capitalism and market society appeared (Macpherson 1978, 9f.). These shifts include relevant – and, as we shall see, ideological – identifications: private property, based on a relation of exclusion, is taken for property as such; property in the consumable means of life is identified with property in producing these means of life; and property in producing the means of life is identified with a specific property in producing the means of life, namely property of the labour force. These shifts are not arbitrary; rather, Macpherson argues that they are needed by market society and capitalism (Macpherson 1978, 9). Nowadays, private property is commonly associated with four aspects: the right to use, to abuse, to alienate or exchange something, as well as the right to receive the fruits that the usage of something generates (Munzer 2005, 858). Private property can be or probably has always been constrained by state or society (Christman 1996). However, "it may be called an absolute right in two senses: it is a right to dispose of, or alienate, as well as to use; and it is a right which is not conditional on the owner's performance of any social function" (Macpherson 1978, 10).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

A relation of exclusion lies behind privacy as well as in the case of private property. I will now point to some similarities between both concepts on a phenomenological level. In the next section, the resemblance is then explored more systematically using Marxian theory.

Most often, privacy is defined as an individual's right against others and society (ensuring negative freedom), so one may conclude that an opposition against 'the common' lies behind the privacy discourse. In the age of the Internet, "just as the individual concerned about privacy wants to control who gets access to what and when, the copyright holder wants to control who get access to what and when" (Lessig 2002, 250). Consequently, there is much discussion about how, on the one hand, to understand, justify, and criticize intangible private property, and on the other hand, to analyse, welcome, or mourn the blurring between the public and private realm online (with respect to SNS: boyd 2007). Further similarities between privacy and private property can be found in their dependence on people's class status (Goldring 1984, 313; Papacharissi 2010). It makes an important difference if one has private property only in things that one needs for life, or if one has much more private property than he or she needs for life. There are rich private property owners who possess far more housing space than they can ever use. On the other hand, there are poor private property owners, being on welfare, who only possess their labour power. In terms of privacy, there are, for instance, people who rely on sharing the flat with other people that brings along several constraints in temporarily withdrawing from other people, or they may be forced to report their whole private life to state authorities (Gilliom 2001). However, there are people who have far more privacy. For instance, people who live in castles are well protected from any unappreciated intrusions, be they from other people, noise, or anything else. These people may be able to circumvent reporting their financial status to state authorities, using the law effectively on their behalf by means of tax and investment consultants. As much as private property, privacy is also good for different things depending on one's class status. In capitalism, all people rely on having private property in order to satisfy their material and cultural needs. For the rich and powerful, private property ensures that they have the right to own the means of production and use them for their own purpose. For the poor, private property is essential because only via private property can they reproduce their labour power and ensure that they will make ends meet. In capitalism, all humans also rely on having privacy in order to be competitive within a society that forces them to compete, and at the same time to allow for spaces of escape from that competition (Geuss 2001, 88). Rich and powerful people's call for privacy is not only about individuation, but moreover about ensuring the sanctity of their wealth while hiding its origin (one thinks of bank secrecy, for instance). The poorer people also call for privacy in order to protect their lives against overexploitation and other forms of powerful abuse by the rich (Demirović 2004).

Not surprisingly, we know of theories that draw consequences from the outlined close connection between the individualistic control theory of privacy and private property by conceptualising the right to privacy as a right to property (Laudon 1996, 93; Lessig 2002; Kang 1998; Varian 1997). Property, according to the previously outlined identifying processes, is for these authors always to be understood as private property. Privacy as property would strengthen the individual control of personal data (Laudon 1996, 93; 97) and would prevent privacy invasions that occur when personal data is accessed non-consensually (Laudon 1996, 99). The "privacy as property"-approach demands that "everyone possesses information about themselves that would be valuable under some circumstances to others for commercial purposes. Everyone possesses his or her own reputation and data image. In this sense, basing privacy on the value of one's name is egalitarian. Even the poor possess their identity. In the current regime of privacy protection, not even the wealthy can protect their personal information" (Laudon 1996, 102). Admittedly, with other political implications in mind, Lessig says, in the context of privacy as property, that "property talk [...] would strengthen the rhetorical force behind privacy" (Lessig 2002, 247). If privacy is property, then it becomes possible to speak about theft regarding the non-consensual usage of personal data (Lessig 2002, 255).

3. Privacy as Ideology and Privacy as Private Property: A Marxian Critique

In this section, I will use Marxian theory to analyse dominant notions of privacy. Thereby I refer to Marx's concepts of ideology critique, commodity fetish, and his differentiation between a societal sphere of production and a societal sphere of circulation. Marx's concept of ideology critique is used as an umbrella theory that includes his analysis of fetishisms as well as the differentiation between a sphere of production and a sphere of circulation.

First, I must clarify what I mean by ideology. In general, ideology has different meanings. The term can be used neutrally to denote a worldview or a system of ideas. It can be used positively as a class struggle concept in order to mark positions within a struggle of beliefs. It can also be used

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

denunciatively to dismiss ideas as negative or dogmatic, and the term can be used in the sense of the Enlightenment to point to an objectivity that is not yet present or known.

3.1. Marx's Concept(s) of Ideology

Marx has never outlined what he exactly understands by ideology; rather, there are different concepts of ideology notable in Marx's texts. Consequently, Marxist theory has developed different notions of ideology (Rehman 2007; Koivisto and Pietilä 1996; Žižek 1995; Eagleton 1991). I think that Marx's complete works show that he is committed to a concept of ideology that wants to enlighten through criticism (Rehmann 2007, 215), and I want to suggest a critical notion of ideology that includes three interacting aspects: a sociological, an epistemological, and a political dimension. All these aspects can be found in Marx. I propose that the problem of ideology consists of a specific form of human association that evokes a false consciousness as well as a structure of political domination.

Ideology as false consciousness is often associated with Marxist theory and its interest in enlightenment. Frederick Engels wrote in a letter to Franz Mehring that "ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness" (Engels 1893). Obviously, ideology has to do with falseness and this is its epistemological aspect. However, it is often forgotten that Marx connects the question of truth strictly to human practice. Within the *Theses on Feuerbach* he expressed this very well: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question" (Marx 1845-46/1998, 569). If the point is not only to interpret the world but to change it, as Marx suggested in the same manuscript (Marx 1845-46/1998, 571), then it becomes clear that ideology stops existing only if its societal preconditions cease to exist. For society, this demands changing practices and cannot be achieved solely through alternative "true" thinking. Marx interlinks epistemological questions of truth to sociological questions of human association and practice. In *The German Ideology,* Marx and Engels investigate forms of ideology along the modern division of labour between brain and hand. They introduce the societal role of the ideologist. Ideologists are removed from material production and can therefore imagine a "false" thinking which is detached from these processes (Marx and Engels 1845-46/1998, 67f.). Regarding *The German Ideology*, Terry Eagleton points towards a curious fusion of that epistemological aspect of ideology and a political definition (1991, 79f.), because Marx and Engels situate the labour division also in the context of class society and political domination. They argue that:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (Marx and Engels 1845-46/1998, 67).

Marx's talk of social relations here again points to the sociological aspect of ideology, and so we can reasonably claim that Marx's concept of ideology stems from a form of human association that evokes false consciousness and a structure of political domination.

3.2. Objective Forms of Thought as Societal Impingement Structures of Privacy Ideologies

If we do not assume a break in Marx's works but rather recognize a certain continuity, then we can understand his most important work, *Capital*, as a clarifying application of previously developed categories, such as ideology and others. At the same time, it might also be seen as a narrowing since it focuses on the field of economy. In terms of ideology, we can indeed find narrowing clarifications of that concept. Within *Capital*, as I shall outline and contextualise in terms of privacy, the specific form of sociological association is commodity exchange which gives rise to epistemological falseness and political domination. The epistemological falseness consists of naturalising human-made relations, where political domination is maintained through the appropriation of societal-produced surplus by the capitalist.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

In *Capital*, Marx analyses "forms of thought which are socially valid, and therefore objective, for the relations of production belonging to this historically determined mode of social production, i.e. commodity production" (Marx 1867/1976, 169). These forms of thought tend to be dominant patterns of thinking, since commodity production and exchange are dominant in society. The process of commercialization of ever more spheres of life and human activities, such as education, media, ecology, human biology, and personality, is ongoing today and this means that ever more knowledge, content, natural resources, (genetic) codes, and personal data appear as exchangeable commodities. Critical philosopher Theodor W. Adorno argues that it is the principle of commodity exchange that determines the whole development of society (Adorno 2002, 31f.; 43; 112) or even human fatality (Adorno 1972, 209). Marx himself states that specific capitalist forms of thought influence "all the notions of justice held by both the worker and the capitalist, all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, all capitalism's illusions about freedom, all the apologetic tricks of vulgar economics" (Marx 1867/1976, 680). At the same time, one has to be careful not to universalise these forms of thought too much; it is important to stress that Marx highlights those forms of thought that have relevance for people in their role as marketers. While commodification plays a key role within ever more fields of activity, we are not only marketers. A second limitation of Marx's assertion is that we cannot expect to know everything about ideologies by only analysing forms of thought. Wolfgang Fritz Haug has suggested understanding Marx's investigations in *Capital* as societal impingement structures that are taken as a basis by and interact with the concrete work of ideologists (Haug 1987). I will try to mark points of intersection where objective forms of thought meet ideological privacy theories. Both privacy and property theories build on basal premises which are unquestioned because they originate from the marketer's common sense behaviour. Such forms of thought affect privacy and property theories, but the opposite is also true: privacy and property theories contribute to maintaining these forms of thought and the related forms of capitalist association. In the following, what objective forms of thought look like is explained and how they can be related to privacy and property.

3.3. Marx's Fetish Argument: Deciphering Objective Forms of Thought

Fetishism is used to denote inversions between subject and object, between humans and human-made things or relations. According to Haug (2005, 161), investigating fetishisms means examining where man-made things exercise force over man. Marx addresses several fetishisms within *Capital*, starting with *commodity fetishism*. Marx observes that today, "the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'" (Marx 1867/1976, 125), so that "only the products of mutually independent acts of labour, performed in isolation" are meaningful to be exchanged (Marx 1867/1976, 57). Commodity exchange presumes a certain historical development of the division of labour. Obviously, there are different companies producing essential things, to which I do not contribute. The way to get these things is to exchange them for money. In this sense, we are all marketers. Marx asks the question of why an exchange of so many different things, such as shoes, video games, personal data, etc. is possible at all: what makes them comparable and exchangeable? He finds an answer while analysing the specific sociality of private and isolated production that, however, appears as strictly non-social because there is no direct agreement or planning among producers over what and how much to produce.

Marx speaks of the differentiation between "abstract" and "concrete" labour as the crucial point for understanding the sociality of commodity production (Marx 1867/1976, 131-137). Any labour, however spent in isolation or in cooperation, produces use value that is valuable because it satisfies human needs. Such labour can be named "concrete" labour, as it contributes immediately to that end. However, when things are produced for exchange, then they have also an exchange value. Where does this exchange value come from? There must be a kind of labour, he named it "abstract" labour, that produces this value. As Marx's term suggests, abstract labour and the value that it produces are not tangible; rather, he argues that it originates from an abstraction: when two products are exchanged, a third moment, namely the exchange value that makes them comparable, arises. This happens just as one can speak of apples and strawberries as fruits, where the term "fruits" has the role of the mediating third that makes apples and strawberries comparable. The term "fruits" is an abstraction for apples and strawberries. In contrast to apples and strawberries, which are eatable and embody use value, the category "fruits" has no concrete use value. Marx says that exchange value originates within an abstraction; however, this abstraction is of an uncommon quality. It is not an abstraction in mind; rather it is an abstraction that evolves from the marketers' activities. The exchange process then can consequently be called "abstraction in reality", in contrast to common abstractions in mind. The "comparable becoming" of isolated and private

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

workers within the exchange process, or in other words the value creation, is only possible because societal standards assert themselves within the exchange process. Otherwise, without comparison, no exchange would be possible at all. Such standards can be found in the amount of labour that is, on average, necessary to be spent to produce something (Marx 1867/1976, 129f.). The average necessary amount of labour, of course, clearly depends on the state of technology and the machines that are available for production. For instance, company A produces umbrellas and it takes 45 minutes to produce a piece, while company B has introduced new machines and is able to produce the same piece in 15 minutes. If both companies would exchange their products then both of them would recognize that the value of umbrellas consists of 30 minutes labour time. But the companies do not know the value of their umbrellas before the exchange takes place, because they do not cooperate. Value does not appear before the exchange takes place; it can never be predicted beforehand (Marx 1867/1976, 166). The labour that is spent privately with a company has value only in relation to labour spent in the whole society (in all companies), and there is no institution that organizes the labour that is spent in the whole society. Companies A and B recognize the value of their products (30 minutes average necessary labour time) when they are exchanging their umbrellas. They receive the value in exchange for the umbrellas. For them, to be concerned with "how much of some other product they get for their own" (Marx 1867/1976, 167), it is obvious that their umbrella *has* this value as a property instead of it being built within a societal abstraction process (Marx 1867/1976, 187). The fact that labour creates value and that value is only recognisable in exchange and then determines further production is what Marx means when he speaks of the "phantom-like quality of value" (Marx 1867/1976, 128). He says:

"The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the societal characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers" (Marx 1867/1976, 164f.).

The societal dimension of value creation is thus effectively "hidden" for marketers, but asserts itself behind people's backs (Marx 1867/1976, 135), because exchange value must be in the marketers' interest. They have exchange value and selling in mind when they start to produce and enter markets. Therefore, they adjust their activities according to the expected exchange value (Marx 1867/1976, 167).

The commodity fetish, which means that value is objectified in things, breaks the ground for a more highly developed fetishism, the *money fetish*. When value appears as a property of things, it is possible to imagine a specific commodity that objectifies value: money. Within money, exchange value and use value fall into each other; the use value of money is the exchange. The transition to independence of the law of value then becomes very concrete, and at the same time, the social quality of value becomes more "hidden". The fetish is thus perfected, and in fact, it is increasingly perfected in the further establishment of the capital relation. Ultimately, it appears that invested money itself begs money (capital fetish). I will come back to the capital relation in the following discussion.

3.4. Privacy and the Mutual Recognition of Private Property Owners

According to the premises of Marx's ideology theory, specific practices are related to specific forms of thought. In terms of the idea of a universal right to private property, Marx argues that marketers must "recognize each other as owners of private property. This juridical relation, whose form is the contract, whether as part of a developed legal system or not, is a relation between two wills which mirrors the economic relation" (Marx 1867/1976, 178). In the *Grundrisse,* Marx outlines this in detail. The mutual recognition of private property owners implies equality and freedom that are "not only respected in exchange based on exchange values but, also, the exchange of exchange values is the productive, real basis of all *equality* and *freedom.* As pure ideas they are merely the idealized expressions of this basis; as developed in juridical, political, social relations, they are merely this basis to a higher power" (Marx 1857-58/1983, 170).

Freedom is given within commodity exchange, as "individual A feels a need for the commodity of individual B, he does not appropriate it by force, nor vice versa, but rather they recognize one another reciprocally as proprietors, as persons whose will penetrates their commodities. Accordingly, the juridical moment of the Person enters here, as well as that of freedom, in so far as it is contained in the former. No one seizes hold of another's property by force. Each divests himself of his property voluntarily" (Marx 1857-58/1983, 169). Equality is given, since "only the differences between their needs and between their production give rise to exchange and to their social equation in exchange; these natural differences are therefore the precondition of their social equality in the

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

act of exchange, and of this relation in general, in which they relate to one another as productive" (Marx 1857-58/1983, 168).

From the mutual recognition as private property owners, only formal equality between people can be deduced; the social status is not affected here. Also, freedom appears as very formal here. In *Privacy: A Manifesto*, Wolfgang Sofsky puts it this way:

"Exchange among private individuals is the basis for equality and freedom. Trading partners recognize each other as equals. Each accepts the other as a subject with his own will. The sales contract that they agree to does not establish equality of status or property but rather a voluntary relationship between peers. We should not expect more from a society that shields people from the pressure of the community and is supposed to put a protective distance between them" (Sofsky 2008, 85f.).

In addition to freedom and equality, a third aspect is set within the commodity exchange, namely self-interest: "Individual A serves the need of individual B by means of the commodity a only in so far as and because individual B serves the need of individual A by means of the commodity B, and vice versa. Each serves the other in order to serve himself; each makes use of the other, reciprocally, as his means […] That is, the common interest which appears as the motive of the act as a whole is recognized as a fact by both sides; but, as such, it is not the motive, but rather proceeds, as it were, behind the back of these self-reflected particular interests, behind the back of one individual's interest in opposition to that of the other" (Marx 1857-58/1983, 169f.).

In summary, Marx's differentiation between two societal spheres that are necessarily interwoven (Marx 1885/1992, 131f., 139, 190) may be helpful also for the theory of ideology. One sphere is about producing things and the labour that has to be spent on it. The other sphere is where the produced things circulate among people, i.e. the market. Equality, freedom, and self-interest appear in the latter.

"It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour power, are determined only by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law. Their contract is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple Owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage. The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each pays heed to himself only, and no one worries about the others. And precisely for that reason, either in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an omniscient providence, they all work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal, and in the common interest" (Marx 1867/1976, 280).

By employing Marx's theory, I have thus far shown that the properties of the dominant privacy notion – competitive individualism, exclusive control, exchangeable private property – have their very origin in the commodity exchange. The commodity exchange hides human sociality. Value appears as property of things and not as a social relation. Hence, it is important to own things for realising their value. But sociality asserts itself behind people's back and establishes pressures to perform that are not controlled by the individuals. They perceive themselves as competitors.

C.B. Macpherson (1962) detected the great influence of the outlined objective forms of thought within the most influential philosophical and political thinking, from Hobbes to Locke, and labelled it "possessive individualism". Possessive individualism denotes a kind of thinking *and* a social practice. Within capitalism it is useful and necessary that the individual perceives herself or himself as essentially "the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society" (Macpherson, 1962, 263) and enters "into self-interested relations with other individuals" (Macpherson 1962, 263). The value associated with privacy comes from these kinds of objective forms of thought. Admittedly, there has been much critique of this kind of privacy (Habermas 1991, 74; Lyon 1994, 186, 196; Etzioni 1999, 194), but for the evaluation of these critiques, it is important to keep in mind that privacy's origin in possessive individualism is not arbitrary; rather, this style of privacy originates from material, capitalist practices. There are also several newer privacy theories that do not proceed from the liberal individualistic point of view (for instance: Solove 2008, 91-98); however, the dominant mode of production in society remains bound to that point of view. We cannot simply define privacy differently without leaving social practices as they are.

3.5. The Political Aspect: Privacy and Class Domination

Ideology was defined as a specific form of human association that evokes a false consciousness and a structure of political domination. I have shown that it is in the associational form of commodi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ty exchange that ideology is falsified and thus makes privacy one-sided and individualistic. But what about the political dimension of ideology? I am stuck for an answer that addresses why ideology and therefore ideological notions of privacy are tied to implicit class domination and are therefore problematic. Marx gives an answer to this question within his capital theory. It is important to stress that there is a logical unity between the value theory and capital theory in Marx. The unity exists because commodity exchange and exploitation take place in capitalist reality at the same time. This means that commodity exchange and its objective forms of thought are necessarily interwoven with capitalism, i.e. we cannot separate them. And it also means that the dominant notion of privacy is related to the maintenance of political domination.

Marx describes capital as self-processing value (Marx 1867/1976, 257); in short, 'M-C-M': in the sphere of circulation, money (M) is invested for a specific commodity production (C) and results then, if the sale was successful, in more money (M'). Why are investments profitable? Marx gives the following answer. Self-processing value is possible due to the commodification of the workforce. The workforce is a certain commodity as it is able to produce more value than it costs to reproduce. For instance, food and opportunities for regeneration, such as free time, sleeping, etc. that have to be produced, are reproduction costs of the workforce. The difference between these costs and the surplus produced by workers is appropriated by the buyers of the workforce. In this manner, capitalists are steadily able to appropriate the societally-produced surplus by workers. They become therefore richer and more powerful than workers. Consequently, a structural class division in society becomes inevitable.

Why is such appropriation legitimate? It is legitimate because the principle of equivalence, "do ut des", "I give that you may give", no one cheats anyone, remains intact and therefore the mutual recognition as private property owners is not affected. On the contrary, fair commodity exchange – and therefore the ideological notion of privacy – is presupposed for a capitalist class society. Not surprisingly, class society affects the privacy issue, as argued in section 2.

Marx argues that besides commodity exchange, i.e. labour performed privately and in isolation, capitalism needs to work out "a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour" (Marx 1867/1976, 874). In the prehistory of capitalism, this separation took place through a violent process of expropriation of great segments of the population, to which Marx refers as "primitive accumulation of capital" (Marx 1867/1976, part eight). Thereby, workers were set free, but this "liberation" was of ambiguous character. It resulted in a dual sense of freedom (Marx 1867/1976, 270-272), namely, workers are free of personal dependences, for instance, from their overlords in feudalism, but also free from the ownership of the condition for the realisation of their labour. Workers are on the one hand free to engage in contracts. This freedom is precisely the freedom of commodity exchange. On the other hand, workers are forced to engage in contracts and to sell their labour power on the markets to make ends meet. This freedom is also set in commodity exchange as it is a freedom to choose regardless of one's social status. Hence, workers are forced to maintain their status as a subaltern class because the capitalist can steadily appropriate the societal surplus that is produced by the workers (Marx 1867/1976, 729f.). This fair exploitation process is, according to Marx, a structural reason for domination in society.

The capitalist quality of society as class society is expressed by the right to have others work for you and the right to private property in labour's terms of realisation. These rights are identified with the right to private property in general in an ideological manner (Macpherson 1978). Today's unitary legal frameworks for different sorts of private property are only possible because commodity exchange and appropriation of societally produced surplus are not divisible (Römer 1978, 140). The universal right to private property, to use, abuse, alienate or exchange something, and the right to receive the fruits that the usage of something generates, does not matter if only the things owned are needed for life, or the conditions within which labour can be realised (means of production) are private property, or if private property is extended to the labour force (Munzer 2005, 858).

In terms of privacy, Niels van Dijk (2010, 64) points to an interesting difference in legislation between Europe and the U.S. While in the U.S. tradition, personal data is predominantly seen as a commodity and therefore exchangeable (privacy as property), in Europe there is "little room for propertization of personal data" (van Dijk 2010, 64), because privacy is conceptualized as a persona right and important for the individual's dignity (McGeveran 2009; Shepherd 2012). But human dignity is generally seen as inalienable. In the discussion on the question whether privacy should or should not be alienable, exchangeable, and tradable on the markets, it is crucial to understand that in capitalism any commodification process presupposes rights that cannot be alienated or exchanged. The labourer must not become a slave, cannot alienate his or her whole person because this would reverse the double freedom of the labourer (Pateman 2002, 33). This is a feature of

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

capitalist progress in comparison to previous forms of society. According to Marx, this means that domination, which still exists, is mediated through basic freedoms of the individual. Macpherson (1962, 264; see also Pateman 2002) argues that alienability of the labour force presupposes itself a universal, inalienable right of self-ownership that originates from the practice of commodity exchange and contains, as already outlined, the circulation sphere-based rights of freedom, equality, property, and self-interest (Marx 1867/1976, 280). In terms of privacy, I conclude that approaches to privacy as an inalienable right may be helpful but are ultimately not sufficient to be an alternative to capitalist class domination particularly if they operate with the notion of autonomy and privacy as self-possession.

Carole Pateman argues that the double freedom assigned to the worker in capitalism is a "political fiction" (Pateman and Mills 2007, 17f.) since the inalienable part of the individual that enters into employment contracts cannot be separated from the individual's alienable aspects. When employers buy work force, it is demanded that the worker brings in his or her knowledge, skills, etc., which in fact is his or her person. Labour cannot be separated from person-being and person-becoming (Marx 1976, 283). The same applies to privacy and personal data. It is a fiction to assume that users can exchange their personal data and that this exchange would not affect their person, which also has to be conceptualised as non-alienable in order to speak meaningfully of free and voluntary exchanges on privacy markets. Pateman argues that contracts, although entered voluntarily, enable superiority and subordination. Hence, there is also a subordination of the users at stake when they accept commercial SNSs' terms of use. Such subordination is a precondition for exploitation and class domination ultimately. Ellerman refers to this fiction as a "person-thing mismatch" (Ellerman 2005, 463) as if aspects of personality could be alienated like things. The political fiction of severability of person and work force or person and personal data can easily be understood as ideology and fetishism in the sense that I have outlined it here.

Whereas privacy can, though ought not, be seen as an inalienable right, private property reasonably cannot (Andrew 1985, 529; Pateman 2002, 20-21; Litman 2000, 1295-1297). The closer privacy comes to private property, the more privacy is alienable or exchangeable, becoming itself a commodity. It does then not only contribute to the capitalist ideology, but also directly to exploitation. In Table 1, I summarise what we can learn from Marx in terms of understanding privacy in (informational) capitalism.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">ideology

societal sphere of circulation</td><td>privacy as aspect of self-ownership/ privacy as inalienable right</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">equal and free private property owners</td></tr>
<tr><td>labour force commodity</td><td>privacy as private property/ privacy commodity</td></tr>
<tr><td>societal sphere of production</td><td>classical exploitation</td><td>new forms of exploitation</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">appropriation of societally produced surplus and class domination</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1: Ideological privacy and privacy as commodity in capitalism

Dominant theories of privacy, focussing on individual control and exclusion of others, are ideological as they originate from commodity exchange while hiding individuals' sociality. They are part of circulation sphere-based objective forms of thought that contain the mutual recognition of marketers as free and equal private property owners. Such freedom, equality, and lastly privacy, however, do not contradict exploitation and class division in society that take place in the sphere of production. In a circular movement, class status has then again a constraining effect on freedom, equality, and privacy. If privacy may be seen as exchangeable private property, privacy itself can in addition to labour force become a commodity and therefore part of the exploitation process. It contributes then directly to class divisions in society. Such newer forms of exploitation, based on economic

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

surveillance, are described shortly in the next section, where Diaspora* is compared to profit-oriented SNSs, such as Facebook and Google+.

4. Evaluating Diaspora*'s Alternative Potential

As the privacy issue is a core issue in Diaspora*'s self-image, evaluating Diaspora*'s alternative potential must include not only evaluating its mode of production, but also a critical evaluation of privacy as a whole. In the following, I will interlink both issues.

Christian Fuchs has outlined how we can analyse capital accumulation on SNSs in Marxian terms (Fuchs 2012, 143-146). Facebook's and others' capital accumulation strategy is mainly based on the targeted advertising business model, which means that they engage in exchange contracts with the advertising industry. The owner buys technical infrastructure, such as server parks and software components, as well as labour force, such as accountants, software developer, etc, and produces the SNS on which users can interact. While people use the site for different reasons, such as getting news, providing information, staying in touch with friends, making new relations, or organising events, they produce a wide range of data. These data, which include for instance socio-demographic information and consumer preferences deduced from users' browsing behaviour, are then sold to advertisers. Whereas traditional forms of advertising are directed to broad groups of potential buyers, targeted advertising is tailored for exactly defined and differentiated groups, or even single consumers. This demands more detailed, exact, and differentiated knowledge of the users' needs and (buying) behaviour, which can be provided by the owner of SNSs. The SNSs' business model is based on the secondary use of user interaction for commodification and valorisation purposes (Smythe 1989; Fuchs 2011a). The economic reason why profit-oriented SNSs develop massive systems of user surveillance and store "literally everything", as a Facebook employee has admitted (Wong 2010), lies therein. Users' interests in privacy can only be considered where the need for privacy does not inhibit SNSs' profit interests. In fact, commercial SNSs commodify users' privacy. They often do it without users' explicit consent, when they hide their profit-orientation behind the social value of networking. Today, SNSs are increasingly compelled to respect users' privacy through legal investigations, public pressure initiated by privacy movements, and alternative SNSs such as Diaspora*, but this does not mean that commercial SNSs have to abjure the targeted advertising model. Commercial and advertising funded SNSs need users who have control over their data and are able to exchange their privacy for the usage of the platform voluntarily by agreeing to the terms of use. For them, in order to maintain newer forms of exploitation, the challenge is not to fight against privacy at all; rather, they can support privacy if it is – as an analogy to labour force - related to private property, and hence alienable or exchangeable. It seems that simply upholding privacy is not the right move in order to challenge surveillance (Nock 1993, 1; Lyon 2005, 27; Stalder 2002).

Diaspora* breaks with this advertising model based on privacy as commodity; hence, it protects its users and their personal data from exploitation: "Yet our distributed design means *no big corporation will ever control Diaspora*. Diaspora* will never sell your social life to advertisers, and you won't have to conform to someone's arbitrary rules or look over your shoulder before you speak" (Diaspora 2011c; emphasis in original). Gary T. Marx reminds us that "privacy for whom and surveillance of whom and by whom and for what reasons need to be specified in any assessment" (Marx 2012, vii). Due to its distributed infrastructure and its funding model that is not based on advertising, one can argue that Diaspora* practically provides an alternative concept of privacy (Fuchs 2012, 153f.). Diaspora* sees "privacy as collective right of dominated and exploited groups that need to be protected from corporate domination that aims at gathering information about workers and consumers for accumulating capital, disciplining workers and consumers, and for increasing the productivity of capitalist production and advertising" (Fuchs 2011b, 232).

While I agree that Diaspora* practically avoids commodification of privacy and the exploitation of users, I nevertheless see some constraints for an alternative non-ideological notion of privacy that follows from my preceding analysis. Not only is treating privacy as commodity a problem but it should also be taken into account that conceptualising privacy as an aspect of self-ownership is ideological and cannot be separated from exploitation in capitalism. In fact, although Diaspora* is directed against newer forms of exploitation of users' privacy, its recourse to privacy remains bound to exploitation in general as it confirms exploitation's ideological premises – the possessive individualistic ideology. I shall provide evidence for such a claim.

In its various self-descriptions Diaspora* prominently states: It "is the social network that puts *you in control of your information*. You decide what you'd like to share, and with whom. *You retain full ownership of all your information*, including friend lists, messages, photos, and profile details" (Diaspora* n.d.b; my emphasis). Here, two aspects are intertwined: Diaspora* refers to a specific

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

notion of privacy ("puts you in control of your information") and relates the promise of user control to property ("You retain full ownership of all your information").

Dominant privacy theories stress the individual's control over access to personal information and are deeply rooted in people's minds and their practical role as marketers. Privacy-aware users, who see commercial SNSs as associated with privacy invasive behaviour, are surely attracted by Diaspora*'s privacy statement. One consequence of privacy theories stressing the individual control aspect is that they avoid objective constraints of the individual's power to control and decide. The public good finds no consideration here. Another alternative SNS in the making, TheGlobalSquare, which is associated with the "occupy" movement (Roos 2011), also relates to the privacy discourse. It makes more substantial claims about what privacy is and what it is not: "Individuals have a right to privacy as part of the rights they brought from a state of nature [...]. Organizations and actions which affect the public are not protected by any such rights" (Marsh 2012). Here, individual control is not seen exclusively and this example proves that Diaspora* could also behave differently in its recourse to the value of privacy. As far as I can see, in its various self-descriptions, Diaspora* does not propose any qualification of privacy that can constrain exclusive individual control and is therefore likely to fit into the dominant theories of privacy. Diaspora* mobilises the power of the individuals and their privacy – for which they think that they owe nothing to society – against economic surveillance. So, it challenges successfully the economic foundations underlying privacy threats, but does not challenge privacy as a possessive individualistic concept.

On the contrary, Diaspora*'s focus on privacy is accompanied by stressing the relevance of ownership. Concepts of ownership or private property support the exclusive and individualistic notion of privacy. Here again, Diaspora* reacts to commercial SNSs. Facebook, for example, states in its terms of use that users grant Facebook "a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP [intellectual property] content that you post on or in connection with Facebook" (Facebook 2011). In the case of Diaspora*, such a license is not possible. However, in the same passage, Facebook also states that "you own all of the content and information you post on Facebook, and you can control how it is shared through your privacy and application settings" (Facebook 2011). Is the notion of ownership then so appropriate for an alternative to capitalist SNSs? I think it is not and the relationship between privacy as commodity (the Facebook license for instance) and privacy as an aspect of self-possession (Diaspora*'s notion), which has been outlined above, gives grounds for holding a sceptical view. Diaspora*'s vision of privacy protection is, as outlined in the first section, essentially based on the individual opportunity to change pods/SNS-provider. Users need ownership of their data in order to migrate them from pod to pod: "And because your information is yours, not ours, *you'll have the ultimate power* — the ability to move your profile and all your social data from one pod to another, without sacrificing your connection to the social web" (Diaspora 2011c; emphasis in original). Assuming that Diaspora* will never be able to outdo Facebook in terms of provided features and network effects in the view of the majority of SNSs users, users may then voluntarily decide to sell their privacy on Facebook or Google+ and they are indeed able to do this as they have exclusive control and ownership of their privacy. Exactly, these premises of the privacy commodity exchange are also propagated by Diaspora*. The dominant theoretical privacy concept cannot provide reasons why users should not behave like this.

At this point of Diaspora*'s evaluation, it may be useful to remember Marx's "leading threat" of investigation expressed in the previously quoted passage from the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* where he refers to the relation between the entire economic foundation of society and the more or less rapidly transforming superstructures within which humans become conscious of conflicts and fight them out. The focus on privacy, as it is dominant in capitalism, may result from Diaspora*'s multi-faceted embeddedness in capitalist structures.

There is capital accumulation related to copyleft. On the one hand, copyleft products can be used for free in order to produce non copyleft products. For instance, machines that produce umbrellas can be operated on behalf of free and copyleft software. The producer of umbrellas does not have to pay for that kind of software although it contributes as means of production to his or her capital accumulation. In this case, an intensive exploitation of the labour that was once spent on the copyleft product takes place. The producer of umbrellas saves the money that he or she would otherwise have to pay for the machine's operating software. On the other hand, copyleft products are attractive for users as they cheap, widely cheaply accessible and have a high quality since a huge pool of co-operative labour builds them. Copyleft products are also often more flexibly adaptable to specific purposes. This appeal can be used for capital accumulation indirectly. Commercial firms may offer services that are related to copyleft products. For instance, a producer of umbrellas pays another firm that collects and aggregates suitable copyleft components for running umbrella-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

producing machines. In this case, it is not the labour spent on producing the copyleft product that contributes directly to capital accumulation, but rather the labour spent on collection and service. I argue that copyleft production is indeed opposed to capital accumulation. However, at the same time, it allows for newer forms of exploitation that can be much more intensive - the producer of umbrellas pays nothing for the use of copyleft products, but these products enable him to realise surplus through selling the umbrellas.

A major problem in this context is that copyleft is not the dominant principle of production; rather, it can be understood as an expression of a transforming economic foundation in a partial realm and therefore capital accumulation can behave parasitical to copyleft production. Diaspora*'s mode of production is bound to the immaterial or informational realm. In terms of political economic theories of this realm, it can be differentiated in terms of three approaches, as Fuchs (2009, 79) argues. A neoliberal position wants to take back peer-production by enforcing intellectual private property rights and the principle of exclusion. A social democratic position sees advantages in initiatives such as Free Software and Diaspora*, but seeks to establish a kind of dual economy. Pedersen calls this position "information exceptionalism". Informational exceptionalists reject property rights in the intangible realm, but do not challenge them in the tangible realm: "The market is good for humanity, as long as it behaves nicely in cyberspace" (Pedersen 2010b, 105). A way to explain the difference between the two positions is to understand informational exceptionalists as representing a distinct group of capital interests. While there are corporations making profit by enforcing intellectual private property rights, there are other corporations, such as Google, which gain profits without enforcing intellectual property rights but are ultimately dependent of private property rights in the tangible realm (Söderberg 2002).

A third position mentioned by Fuchs (2009, 79) aims to transcend capitalism and sees the intangible realm as a germ form of a new mode of production for the whole society – also within the tangible realm. At the same time, this position always stresses the fragility of peer-productions by pointing to their dependence on dominant capitalist social relations (Barbrook 1998/2005). In terms of Diaspora*'s mode of production, the following argument made by Söderberg can be applied. It is "a prerequisite of free programming [...] that those involved are sustained outside of market relations. Hackers are generally supported financially in diverse ways – by their parents, as students living on grants, as dropouts getting by on social benefits, or even employees within computer companies – and their existence is linked to the burgeoning material surplus of informational capitalism" (Söderberg 2002). Also, the donation funding system applied by Diaspora* remains embedded in capitalist structures. The value objectified in money donations has to be produced in capitalist structures. Capitalists themselves may donate out of idealistic reasons, but probably most of the donations stem from wage labourers. One can glean from an interview with the Diaspora* founders that there are different meanings among the project team on whether Diaspora* will and should make money in the future (Nussbaum 2010). Software contributors to Diaspora* cannot live without an income and the project's fund of donations is finite (Diaspora* 2011a), which is a general problem that all alternative media are facing. Hence, "the team has spoken to venture capitalists and others who want in on the project, although so far, they have remained independent", as reported in a New York Magazine article on Diaspora* (Nussbaum 2010).

Interestingly, in this context of capitalist embeddedness, Diaspora*'s mode of production itself offers at least a gateway to suspend the copyleft principle and allows capital accumulation more directly. Besides using a copyleft license (GNU Affero General Public License), which makes it and all adoptions of it free software and ensures or even extends the alternative mode of production, Diaspora* also uses a compatible but different kind of license (MIT/x11 license). The difference between both licenses is that the latter is not "viral" or self-protecting. That means Diaspora is allowed "to license general-use components of the Diaspora™ Software (e.g., parsers for standard formats, libraries implementing standard protocols, etc.)" not protected by copyleft (Diaspora* 2011b). Indeed, the software code cannot be used directly for proprietary and profit-generating reasons, although indirectly it can (Fitzgerald 2006, de Laat 2005).

The preceding evaluation of Diaspora* has shown that the project and its alternative mode of production are open to be exploited by capitalist modes of production and capital strategies in the informational age (Chopra and Dexter 2006).

Diaspora* performs practically an alternative concept of privacy that protects users from commodification, but at the same time does not aim at an alternative to a possessive-individualistic privacy notion. As such, this is not contradictory and may rest with Diaspora*'s multi-faceted - wilfully or not – embeddedness within capitalist structures that are dominant in society and remain dominant in people's minds. However, in order to strengthen the alternative quality of Diaspora* and other non-commercial SNSs, the privacy issue and its possessive individualistic capitalist coin-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

age should be rethought and not simply be permitted to enter the discourse about alternative SNSs.

5. Conclusion

Diaspora* challenges commodity production; hence, it challenges capital accumulation in the realm of SNSs. Its alternative and cooperative mode of production provides, according to ideology theory, a base for thinking about an alternative notion of privacy. I have argued that an alternative notion of privacy demands grounding in alternative material practices since the dominant notion of privacy is associated with commodity exchange. Thinking about an alternative notion of privacy instead of abandoning it is relevant and worthy as privacy, although predominantly occupied by possessive individualistic concepts such as exclusion and private property, also represents the basal human need of individuality that cannot be meaningfully denied by any alternative form of society. As far as I can see, there is no positive Marxist theory of privacy and I cannot provide one here. Marx's focus on a negative critique of capitalism first and foremost aims to abolish social structures that inhibit human potentials and creativity. Following this tradition, Fuchs (2011b) and Allmer (2011) provide some critical remarks for a socialist notion of privacy. I tried to apply myself Marx's negative critique on capitalist ideology and private property to privacy, following the often mentioned connection between both of the latter terms.

However, an alternative vision of privacy must contain more than an opposition to societal relations of inequality; rather it should constructively theorise the value of privacy alternatively and based on a "social conception of individuality" (Pateman 1989, 136). It is an important theoretical task to reflect on an alternative relation between the individual and society and various approaches that take seriously the critique of individualistic privacy notions are taking this path (for instance: Solove 2008, 91-98; Cohen 2012). Unfortunately, these approaches do not engage with Marx's profound analysis of capitalist domination structures. In his fetish analysis, Marx has shown that the individual, following the commodity exchange induced assumption that he or she owes nothing to society, cannot get rid of society. Society asserts itself behind individuals' backs and predetermines their behaviour. Accepting and consciously shaping sociality would be the better option. Taking privacy as an individual claim that excludes others and is raised against society from the outset thus makes no sense at all. Privacy can only be a "societal license" (Etzioni 1999, 196). It is a collective task on how best to satisfy individual privacy needs, such as a home, being alone, silence, reflection, recreation, freedom of expression and decision-making, personal and intimate relations, trust and respect, secrecy, and protection from harm. Pure subjective control theories of privacy should be rejected. Instead, comprehensive democratic structures are required to enable individuals to effectively shape their privacy license in association with others. However, privacy is then not my property and I cannot exchange it and contract it out; it is then a collectively achieved individual value that I can only claim as a member of society. Understanding privacy as an aspect of self-possession then makes no sense. It should be conceptualised as an inalienable collective right.

Objective notions of privacy as an outcome of conscious association are needed, and Diaspora* has practically developed one: it is based on the idea of privacy for SNS users that challenges economic surveillance. As a consequence, the idea of the exploitation of users and the commodification of data, as done by Facebook and Google+, is rejected. Contributors to Diaspora* are associating themselves consciously, not mediated by commodity exchange, but on behalf of copyleft. They have created an objective notion of privacy in and through their practices. This is vital since a basal assumption of Marx was that there would be no individuality, freedom, autonomy, and privacy as long as there is systematic exploitation and class domination in society. It turns out that what is easier to accept as a starting point for theory, i.e. a societal concept of privacy, is much harder to achieve for Diaspora*, although some consequences of this concept are already realised in Diaspora*'s opposition to exploitation. Diaspora* provides an alternative to privacy commodification and user exploitation, but its struggle is fought out on the ideological battlefield of privacy which is not a neutral one, and is rather predetermined by possessive individualistic thinking that objectively contradicts Diaspora*'s alternative goals. Diaspora* refers to ownership and individual control exactly because these are the most powerful means of action in capitalism. I have introduced views, such as informational exceptionalism, that welcome changes in the intangible mode of production, but do not challenge capital accumulation in general. Sticking to possessive individualistic premises, albeit in terms of privacy, may ultimately refer to an immanent transformation of capitalism that reproduces the overall system rather than to a real alternative to it.

The challenge for a Marxist theory of privacy and for alternative SNSs, such as Diaspora*, is to thoroughly disentangle privacy from private property (Goldring 1984, 321f.) in such a way that privacy neither appears as a commodity itself nor contributes to the ideological premises of commodi-

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

ty production and capital accumulation. A material base for such thinking can already be found in Diaspora*, copyleft, and projects of a similar nature.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1972. Society. In *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals*, edited by Robert Boyers. New York: Schocken.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1976. On the Logic of the Social Sciences. In *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, edited by Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot, and Karl R. Popper, 105–122. London: Heinemann.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. *Introduction to Sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Allmer, Thomas. 2011. A Critical Contribution to Theoretical Foundations of Privacy Studies. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society* 9 (2): 83–101.

Andrew, Edward. 1985. Inalienable Right, Alienable Property and Freedom of Choice: Locke, Nozick and Marx on the Alienability of Labour. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 18 (3): 529–550.

Barbrook, Richard. 1998. The Hi-Tech Gift Economy. *First Monday* Special Issue 3. http://www.firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1517/1432

Bauwens, Michel. 2006. The Political Economy of Peer Production. *Post-autistic Economics Review* 37: 33–44.

Benkler, Yochai. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

boyd, danah. 2007. Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What? *Knowledge Tree* 13. http://www.danah.org/papers/KnowledgeTree.pdf

Brenkert, George G. 1979. Freedom and Private Property in Marx. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8 (2): 122–147.

Bruns, Axel. 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*. New York: Peter Lang.

Chopra, Samir and Scott Dexter. 2006. The Political Economy of Open Source Software. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.sci.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~sdexter/Pubs/chopra-dexter-TC05-paper.doc

Christman, John. 1994. *The Myth of Property: Toward an Egalitarian Theory of Ownership*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, Julie E. 2012. *Configuring the Networked Self: Law, Code, and the Play of Everyday Practice*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Datasilnet. 2011. Questions to Facebook from the Nordic DPA's. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.datatilsynet.no/upload/Dokumenter/utredninger%20av%20Datatilsynet/Letter%20with%20questions%20to%20Facebook%20from%20nordic%20countries%20endellig.pdf

Demirović, Alex. 2004. Hegemony and the Paradox of Public and Private. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.republicart.net/disc/publicum/demirovic01_en.htm

Diaspora*. n.d.a. The Diaspora* Project. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://diasporaproject.org/

Diaspora*. n.d.b. JoinDiaspora* blog entry "What is Diaspora*". Accessed October 23, 2011. http://blog.joindiaspora.com/what-is-diaspora.html

Diaspora*. 2010. Flyer about Diaspora*. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://blog.joindiaspora.com/2010/04/24/awesome-flyers-are-here.html

Diaspora*. 2011a. Diaspora* blog entry "Diaspora* is Back in Action". Accessed February 25, 2012. http://blog.diasporafoundation.org/page/2

Diaspora*. 2011b. Diaspora* Contributor Agreement. Accessed February 25, 2012. https://github.com/Diaspora/Diaspora/wiki/New-CLA--12-13-10

Diaspora*. 2011c. Diaspora* blog entry "Diaspora* Means a Brighter Future for All of Us". Accessed March 6, 2012. http://blog.diasporafoundation.org/page/5

Diaspora*. 2012. The Official Diaspora* Wiki entry "Why Client Side Encryption is a Bad Idea". Accessed February 25, 2012. https://github.com/Diaspora/Diaspora/wiki/Why-client-side-encryption-is-a-bad-idea

van Dijk, Niels. 2010. Property, Privacy and Personhood in a World of Ambient Intelligence. *Ethics and Information Technology* 12 (1): 57–69.

Eagleton, Terry. 1991. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso.

Ellerman, David. 2005. Translatio Versus Concessio: Retrieving the Debate About Contracts of Alienation with an Application to Today's Employment Contract. *Politics & Society* 33 (3): 449–480.

Engels, Frederick. 1893. Letter to Franz Mehring from July 14, 1893. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1893/letters/93_07_14.htm

Etzioni, Amitai. 1999. *The Limits of Privacy*. New York: Basic Books.

Europe versus Facebook. 2011. Complaints against 'Facebook Ireland Limited'. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.europe-v-facebook.org/EN/Complaints/complaints.html

Facebook. 2011. Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. Accessed March 6, 2012. https://www.facebook.com/legal/terms

Fitzgerald, Brian. 2006. The Transformation of Open Source Software. *Management Information Systems Quarterly* 30 (3): 587–598.

Fredom Box Foundation. n. d. Flyer about the FreedomBox. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://freedomboxfoundation.org/doc/flyer.pdf

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Information and Communication Technologies and Society: A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. *European Journal of Communication* 24 (1): 69–87.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011a. Web 2.0, Prosumption, and Surveillance. *Surveillance & Society* 8 (3): 288–309.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011b. Towards an Alternative Concept of Privacy. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society* 9 (4): 220–237.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. The Political Economy of Privacy on Facebook. *Television & New Media* 13 (2): 139-159.

Gavinson, Ruth. 1980. Privacy and the Limits of Law. In *Philosophical Dimensions of Privacy: An Anthology*, edited by Ferdinand Schoeman, 346–402. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geuss, Raymond. 2001. *Public Goods, Private Goods*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Gilliom, John. 2001. *Overseers of the Poor: Surveillance, Resistance, and the Limits of Privacy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goldring, John. 1984. Privacy and Property. *The Australien Quarterly* 56 (4): 308–324.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1991. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 1987. Outlines for a Theory of the Ideological. In *Commodity Aesthetics, Ideology and Culture*, edited by Wolfgang Fritz Haug, 59–99. New York: International General.

Haug. 2005. Vorlesungen zur Einführung ins "Kapital". Berlin: Argument.

Hettinger, Edwin C. 1989. Justifiying Intellectual Property. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 18 (1): 31–52.

Jaggar, Alison. 1983. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Totowa: Rowman & Allanheld.

Kang, Jerry. 1998. Information Privacy in Cyberspace Transactions. *Stanford Law Review* 50 (4): 1193–1294.

Koivisto, Juha and Veikko Pietilä. 1996. Ideological Powers and Resistance: The Contribution of W. F. Haug and Projekt Ideologie-Theorie. *Rethinking Marxism* 9 (4): 40–59.

de Laat, Paul B. 2005. Copyright or Copyleft?: An Analysis of Property Regimes for Software Development. *Research Policy* 34 (10): 1511–1532.

Laudon, Kenneth C. 1996. Markets and Privacy. *Communications of the ACM* 39 (9): 92–104.

Lessig, Lawrence. 2002. Privacy as Property. *Social Research* 69 (1): 247–269.

Litman, Jessica. 2000. Information Privacy/Information Property. *Stanford Law Review* 52 (5): 1283–1313.

Lyon, David. 1994. *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lyon, David. 2005. *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Macpherson, Crawford B. 1962. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Macpherson, Crawford B. 1978. The Meaning of Property. In *Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions*, edited by Crawford B. Macpherson, 1–13. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Marsch, Heather. 2012. A Proposal for Governance: Privacy and Transparency. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://wlcentral.org/node/2445

Marx, Gary T. 2012. Foreword: Privacy Is Not Quite Like the Weather. In *Privacy Impact Assessment*, edited by David Wright and Paul de Hert, v–xiv. Dordrecht: Springer.

Marx, Karl. 1849/2006. Wage-labour and Capital. In *Wage-labour and Capital & Value, Price, Profit*. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1857-58/1983. Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie. In *Marx Engels Werke (MEW)*, Band 43. Berlin: Dietz. English translation accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Grundrisse.pdf

Marx, Karl. 1859/1909. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company.

Marx, Karl. 1867/1976. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume One*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1885/1992. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume Two*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1845/1998. Theses on Feuerbach. In *The German Ideology Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of the Political Economy*, 569–571. Amherst: Prometheus.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. 1845-46/1998. The German Ideology. In *The German Ideology Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of the Political Economy*, 27–658. Amherst: Prometheus.

McGeveran, William. 2009. Disclosure, Endorsement, and Identity in Social Marketing. *University of Illinois Law Review* 2009 (4): 1105-1166.

Moglen, Eben. The dotCommunist Manifesto. Accessed March 20, 2012. http://emoglen.law.columbia.edu/my_pubs/dcm.html

Moglen, Eben. 2010. Freedom in the Cloud: Software Freedom, Privacy, and Security for Web 2.0 and Cloud Computing. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.softwarefreedom.org/events/2010/isoc-ny/FreedomInTheCloud-transcript.html

Moor, James H. 1997. Towards a Theory of Privacy in the Information Age. *Computers and Society* 27 (3): 27–32.

Moore, Adam D. 2008. Defining Privacy. *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39 (3): 411–428.

Munzer, Stephen R. 2005. Property. In *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Craig, 858–861. London: Routledge.

Nock, Steven. 1993. *The Costs of Privacy: Surveillance and Reputation in America*. New York: de Gruyter.

Nussbaum, Emily. 2010. Defacebook: Four Young Friends Who Are Out to Create a Very Different Sort of Social Network. *New York Magazine*, September 26, 2010. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://nymag.com/news/features/establishments/68512/

Papacharisi, Zizi. 2010. Privacy as a Luxury Commodity. *First Monday* 15 (8). Accessed February 25, 2012. http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/3075/2581

Pateman, Carole. 1989. *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pateman, Carole. 2002. Self-ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10 (1): 20–53.

Pateman, Carole and Charles W. Mills. 2007. *Contract and Domination*. Cambridge: Polity.

Pedersen, J. Martin. 2010a. Free Culture in Context: Property and the Politics of Free Software. *The Commoner* 14: 49–136.

Pedersen, J. Martin. 2010b. Properties of Property: A Jurisprudential Analysis. *The Commoner* 14: 137–210.

Pedersen, J. Martin. 2010c. Free Software as Property. *The Commoner* 14: 211–286.

Raynes-Goldie, Kate. 2010. Aliases, Creeping, and Wall Cleaning: Understanding Privacy in the Age of Facebook. *First Monday* 15 (1). Accessed February 25, 2012. http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2775/2432

Rehmann, Jan. 2007. Ideology Theory. Historical Materialism 15 (4): 211–239.

Römer, Peter. 1978. *Entstehung, Rechtsform und Funktion des kapitalistischen Privateigentums*. Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Roos, Jerome. 2011. The Global Square: An Online Platform for Our Movement. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://roarmag.org/2011/11/the-global-square-an-online-platform-for-our-movement/

Rössler, Beate. 2001. *Der Wert des Privaten*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Samuelson, Pamela. 2000. Privacy as Intellectual Property? *Stanford Law Review* 52 (5): 1125–1173.

Shepherd, Tamara. 2012. Persona Rights for User-generated Content: A Normative Framework for Privacy and Intellectual Property Regulation. tripleC 10 (1): 100–113.

Smythe, Dallas W. 2006. On the Audience Commodity and Its Work. In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*, edited by Durham G. Meenakshi and Douglas Kellner, 230–256. Malden: Blackwell.

Söderberg, Johan. 2002. Copyleft Vs. Copyright: A Marxist Critique. *First Monday* 7 (3-4). Accessed February 25, 2012. http://www.firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/938/860

Sofsky, Wolfgang. 2008. *Privacy: A Manifesto*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Solove, Daniel J. 2009. *Understanding Privacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Stalder, Felix. 2002. Opinion: Privacy Is Not the Antidote to Surveillance. *Surveillance & Society* 1 (1): 120–124.

Stallman, Richard M. 2010. Copyleft: Pragmatic Idealism. In *Free Software, Free Society: Selected Essays of Richard M. Stallman*, 129–131. Boston: Free Software Foundation.

Tavani, Herman T. 2008. Informational Privacy: Concepts, Theories, and Controversies. In *The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics*, edited by Kenneth Einar Himma and Herman T. Tavani, 131–164. Hoboken: Wiley.

Varian, Hal R. 1997. Economic Aspects of Personal Privacy. In *Privacy and Self-regulation in the Information Age*, edited by National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Washington: NTIA.

Wacks, Raymond. 2010. *Privacy. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Warren, Samuel and Louis Brandeis. 1890. The Right to Privacy. In *Philosophical Dimensions of Privacy: An Anthology,* edited by Ferdinand Schoeman, 75–103. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Westin, Alan. 1967. *Privacy and Freedom*. New York: Atheneum.

Wolf, Marty. J., Keith W. Miller, and Frances S. Grodzinsky. 2009. On the Meaning of Free Software. *Ethics and Information Technology* 11 (4): 279–286.

Wong, Phil. 2010. Conversations About the Internet #5: Anonymous Facebook Employee. Accessed February 25, 2012. http://therumpus.net/2010/01/conversations-about-the-internet-5-anonymous-facebook-employee/3/

Žižek, Slavoj, ed. 1995. *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso.

About the Author

Sebastian Sevignani
studied media and communication, philosophy, and theology at the University of Salzburg. He obtained a master's degree in communication studies in 2009. From 2007 until 2010, he worked at the University of Salzburg's Department of Communication Studies as a scholar in the Media Economics Research Group. He has started working on his doctoral thesis, which focuses on the problem of privacy in (informational) capitalism. Sebastian is a member of the Unified Theory of Information Research Group (UTI) and of the working group "Public Policy and the Regulation of Surveillance" of the European Cooperation in Science and Technology Action "Living in Surveillance Societies (COST Action IS0807)". He is a member of the editorial team of tripleC: Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

tripleC 10(2): 618-632, 2012
ISSN 1726-670X
http://www.triple-c.at

Marx As Journalist: Revisiting The Free Speech Debate

Padmaja Shaw

Professor, Department of Communication and Journalism, Osmania University, Hyderabad 500044, India. padmajashaw@gmail.com

Abstract: Marx was a practicing journalist for most of his adult life. He was editor, columnist and special correspondent at different times and his journalistic work provided significant inputs for his later theoretical work. Marx, through his engagement with the political revolutions of 19th century Europe, developed one of the finest arguments in defence of free speech and the need for expanding bourgeois democratic freedoms in the process of transition to socialism. This paper describes the role of the Marxist parties and intellectuals in India in using and expanding the democratic freedoms available in India. The paper concludes that there is a gap between Marx's ideological position on free speech and the praxis of Marxist parties. In contemporary India, there is urgent need to protect free speech, fight censorship and strengthen independent constitutional authorities that are governed by democratic principles.

Keywords: Bourgeois democracy, Free speech, Indian left politics, Indian press, Marxism, Socialism

Acknowledgement: I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. G. Haragopal, eminent human rights activist and retired professor of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, for his comments on this paper.

1. Introduction

All of 169 years after Karl Marx began his career as a journalist in Europe with a brilliant defence of free speech in 1842, in 2011 a fresh debate has arisen on free speech as it is understood and practiced all over the world. While the people fighting repressive regimes are struggling to win basic freedoms of life, liberty, association and speech, the people in liberal democracies are demonstrating on the streets their sense of outrage at the loss of those very freedoms of life, liberty, association and speech that globalised capitalism has taken away.

Analysts have likened the current global crisis of capitalism to the conditions prevailing across Europe at the time of the revolutions of 1848. The 20th century consensus about bourgeois-democracy being the most stable formation is being challenged.

Throughout history, the relationship between democratic struggles and the goals of establishing working class control over production have remained problematic and sometimes have been lost sight of. While it is the thesis of Marxian analysis that the problem lies in the capitalist mode of production and its unbridled quest for profits, which tries to prevent the inevitable emergence of working class as a dominant force, twentieth century saw the unprecedented use of media as instruments for promoting the interests of global capital.

Media industries have played a major role in building and sustaining the prevailing social consensus around the notion of bourgeois-democratic stability. The gradual corporatisation of media has made them an integral part of the circuit of capitalist production, and major players in creating and sustaining capitalist societies. Given this, can we expect the corporate media industry to protect the rights of the people? Are the 'free' media institutions in democratic societies providing space for working class struggles? Is it possible for the journalist working for a media corporation to question the basic premises of bourgeois democracy?

It is necessary to revisit Karl Marx's works to understand his conception of free speech, both for the ideological framework he has developed as well as for the remarkable and radical role he played as a journalist all his adult life. Marx has written extensively as a journalist on every important issue for a good part of the 19th century (1842 to 1865) covering the revolutionary awakening that gripped much of Europe and elsewhere. During these years he edited *Rheinische Zeitung*, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung,* contributed to a variety of papers both in German and in English, which included *The People's Press, Die Presse, Neue Oder Zeitung,* and several other papers including around 487 (125 by Engels, jointly with Engels 12, singly 350) articles for *The New York Tribune* as

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

its Europe correspondent. Though while he was writing for *The New York Tribune,* since the English language translation of the Communist Manifesto was still not available, Marx was not known widely as the author of the revolutionary document in the English speaking world (Ledbetter 2007). Marx's column in *The New York Tribune* was welcomed because of its concern with people's issues, that matched founder Horace Greeley's stated objective for starting the *Tribune* as a sensible counter to the frivolous penny press of his time (Emery and Emery 1954, 124).

Three major aspects that Karl Marx deals with in his journalistic writings have a deeply contemporary resonance in countries like India: freedom of speech and censorship, the press as a part of free trade, and the role of media in bourgeois democracies. This paper will present Marx's major arguments on all the three issues and will then examine the role of left parties and intellectuals in India, a bourgeois democracy that constitutionally guarantees free speech.

2. Free Speech And Censorship

In the 1840s, much of Europe was ruled by despotic monarchs. Journalists and writers were constantly subjected to stringent censorship, as most of the countries had no traditions of free speech or a Bill of Rights that guaranteed any rights. (Padover 1974, xi). In 1841, the Prussian cabinet issued a censorship decree that expanded the scope of the existing censorship edict, to suppress anything that was critical of the "fundamental principles of religion and offensive to morality and good will".

Karl Marx, a young Hegelian at 24, burst on to the political scene of Germany with his incisive analysis of freedom of speech and censorship. In a series of articles published in *Rheinische Zeitung* between May 5 and 19, Marx posed an impassioned challenge to the pronouncements of the elected representatives of the Sixth Rhineland Landtag on censorship:

> "The censorship law … is not a law, it is a police measure; but it is a *bad police measure*, for it does not achieve what it intends, and it does not intend what it achieves. … The censorship makes every forbidden work, whether good or bad, into an extraordinary document, whereas freedom of the press deprives every written work of an externally imposing effect". (Padover 1974, xiii)

Marx's opposition to censorship was not driven by any desire for an unregulated press. He argued for press laws that would be administered by independent judiciary:

> "… censorship … makes arbitrariness into a law. ... Just as a press law is different from a censorship law, so the *judge's* attitude to the press *differs* from the *attitude of the censor.*
> ... The independent judge belongs neither to me nor to the government. The dependent censor is himself a government organ ... The judge has a *definite* press offence put before him; confronting the censor is the spirit of the press. The judge judges my act according to a definite law; the censor not only punishes the crime, he *makes* it … The censorship does not accuse me of violating an existing law. It condemns my opinion because it is not the opinion of the censor and his superiors. My openly performed act, which is willing to submit itself to the world and its judgment, to the state and its law, has sentence passed on it by a hidden, purely negative power, which cannot give itself the form of law, which shuns the light of day, and which is not bound by any general principles".
> *"A censorship law is an impossibility* because it seeks to punish not offences but opinions, because it cannot be anything but a *formula for the censor,* because no state has the courage to put in general legal terms what it can carry out in practice through the agency of the censor. For that reason, too, the operation of the censorship is entrusted not to the courts but to the police." (Italics in original) (Marx 1842a)

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Describing true censorship as criticism that is the very essence of freedom of the press, Marx argued that censorship is criticism as government monopoly, but that the government wants to apply it in secrecy and does not itself want to suffer any criticism (Marx 1842b). Drawing a further distinction between press law and censorship he wrote:

> "In a press law, freedom punishes. In a censorship law, freedom is punished. The censorship law is a law of suspicion against freedom. The press law is a vote of confidence which the press gives itself. The press law punishes the misuse of freedom. The censorship law punishes freedom as misuse. ... Thus press law, far from being a repressive measure against freedom of the press, is merely a means to discourage repetition of violation through a penalty. … Laws are not repressive measures against freedom, any more than the law of gravity is a repressive measure against movement. ... Rather, laws are positive, clear, universal norms, in which freedom has won an impersonal, theoretical existence independent of the caprice of any individual. … Press law is the legal recognition of freedom". (Marx 1842c)

About freedom of the press, he wrote:

> "The free press is the ubiquitous vigilant eye of a people's soul, the embodiment of a people's faith in itself, the eloquent link that connects the individual with the state and the world, the embodied culture that transforms material struggles into intellectual struggles and idealises their crude material form. It is a people's frank confession to itself... It is the spiritual mirror in which a people can see itself, and self-examination is the first condition of wisdom". (Marx 1842d).

For Marx, the press is the "most general way for individuals to communicate their intellectual being. It knows no reputation of a person, but only the reputation of intelligence" (Marx, 1842e). Marx believed that a revolutionary movement must participate in public life and educate the proletariat and that it is necessary to protect free speech, as newspapers are the primary instruments of public communication (Hardt 2000).

Writing on widespread distress in Mosel province, Marx explained the need for a free press:

> "To solve difficulties, the administration and the administered need a third element, which is political without being bureaucratic, an element that does not derive from bureaucratic presuppositions, that is, civic without being directly entangled in private interests and their needs. This complementary element, composed of a political head and a civic heart, is a *free press* (italics in original). … The "free press," as it is the product of public opinion, also produces public opinion, and it alone has the power to make a special interest into a general interest. .. It alone has the power to alleviate the misery, if for no other reason than that it distributes the feeling of misery among all" (Marx 1843).

By October of 1842, Marx became the editor of *Rheinische Zeitung*, his genius widely recognized. As editor of the paper, with regular contributions from Engels and other young Hegelians, Marx led a crusade for a unified Germany and championed working class issues. A significant aspect of Marx's early practice of journalism was his relentless effort to fight back all attacks on free speech, whether from state decrees or from lead articles in rival papers of the time like *Kölnische Zeitung*, which wielded significant influence among the conservative Christian readership of the province. Marx would use his incisive logic and biting wit to expose the hypocrisy of the rival newspapers, which supported various forms of repression of the Prussian state.

However, the two papers Marx edited between 1842 and 1849, *Rheinische Zeitung* and *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, were hounded by the governments of the time and finally shut down. After the closure of *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx left Germany, but returned in 1848 after the revolutionary changes to start *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. In a point-by-point refutation of the Prussian Press Bill

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

introduced by post-revolutionary Prussia, Marx exposed how the new bill was in glaring contradiction to press freedom:

> "From the day this law goes into effect, the officials can commit any despotism, any tyranny, any illegality, with impunity; they can coolly flog or order to be flogged, arrest and hold without a hearing; the only control, the press, has been made ineffective… Indeed, what remains of freedom of the press if that which *deserves* public contempt can no longer be held up to public contempt?" (Marx 1848)

In a typical example of his sharp wit, he adds: "He (Herr Hansemann) should also declare it punishable to expose the officials to public ridicule besides penalising their exposure to public contempt. This omission might otherwise be painfully regretted".

Well before moving to Britain, Marx would mercilessly expose the deliberate attempts at anti-working class propaganda by some of the German newspapers. Marx demolished the 'curious things' *Neue Berliner Zeitung* reported on the leaders of the Chartist movement in England, (Marx 1848). In the prevailing context of authoritarianism and censorship, Marx also exposed the rights violations perpetrated by officials.

In 1849, Marx was compelled to leave Germany. He lived the rest of his life in London. He reported for *The New York Tribune* as Europe correspondent from August 1851 to February 1862. The *New York Tribune* grew rapidly and became the largest circulated English daily selling 300,000 copies. Marx was a leading and widely read economic journalist of his time. (Musto 2008, 163).

3. On Free Trade And Free Press

Individuals and investors espousing various ideological streams of the time owned the 19th century press in Europe and elsewhere. The issue of the status of free press and whether it can be subsumed under the general notion of "freedom of the trades" was debated in the legislatures of the time. Marx subjected the idea to detailed analysis. He argued: "freedom of the trades is only freedom of the trades and no other freedom, for in it the nature of the trade forms itself unhindered according to its own inherent rules; freedom of the courts is freedom of the courts, if the courts promote the inherent rules of the law, and not those of another sphere, such as religion. Every definite sphere of freedom is the freedom of a definite sphere…" (Marx 1842f). He said, to defend the freedom of a sphere, it has to be conceived in its essential character, not in its external relationships. "… *is the press* free which degrades itself to the level of a trade? The writer, of course, must earn in order to be able to live and write, but he must by no means live and write to earn. … *The primary freedom of the press lies in not being a trade*. The writer who degrades the press into being a material means deserves as punishment for this internal unfreedom the external unfreedom of censorship, or rather his very existence is his punishment." (Marx 1842g; italics in original).

Marx, however, acknowledged that the press is also a trade, but it is not the business of the writer, but those of the printers and book dealers. Through a clear definition of the freedom of the press, Marx has charted a road map for using the spaces provided by liberal democracy for expanding the freedoms of the individual. Prof Haragopal[1] (2012) says that rights define limits of freedom. In the bourgeois conception, the individual is seen as egoistic and confrontational and therefore there is a need to define the limits of freedom. When society is seen as a collective, such a limiting definition is not required. Human rights activists believe that individual freedom has to be reconciled with the collective freedoms and the two are not necessarily antagonistic.

Marx's analysis of press freedom and the status of the press as a trade have special significance to the politics of the left in bourgeois democratic countries like India, where the left has continued to play a constant if not significant role in the polity. Before discussing the left's role in expanding democratic freedoms through the press, a brief overview of the status of left politics in India is necessary.

[1] Personal interview, 16 March, 2012. Prof G. Haragopal, a political philosopher, eminent human rights activist, has retired as professor of Political Science from the University of Hyderabad.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

4. The Left In India

By the time India attained independence from British rule in 1947, there was a prominent left of centre political strand in the anti-colonial struggle. The 1917 Russian revolution influenced and inspired sections of the anti-colonial struggle (Nair 2009) in addition to the movement that was beginning to take shape by 1920s under Mahatma Gandhi. Within the Indian National Congress itself, there were power centres of various ideological hues: bourgeois democratic thinking represented by Gandhi himself and Fabian socialism, represented by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India. Outside this circle, there were radical and revolutionary groups all over the country that were challenging the British rule with armed insurgencies of various intensities.

As elsewhere in the world with the left, the need to work with bourgeois-democratic form as the basis and from this to achieve socialist goals was the challenge in India too (Nair 2009). In the anti-colonial struggle in India, some of the Marxist groups provided the intellectual and ideological basis and worked with the Gandhian/mainstream bourgeois mobilization, but radical revolutionary groups operating outside this sphere of influence carried out armed insurgencies in various parts of the country (Rajimwale 2009a).

India had 565 princely states before Independence. An autocratic Nizam ruled the Hyderabad state, considered the world's richest kingdom at that time. The repressive feudal regime gave rise to radical left-wing politics. At the cusp of national independence in 1947-48, an uprising, called the Telangana armed peasant struggle[2], under the leadership of the left took control of over 3000 villages and began to implement radical reforms, the first of which being redistribution of land to the poor, then providing for schools and healthcare. (Pucchalapally 1971a).

However, the armed struggle was brutally suppressed by the newly independent Indian state using the Indian army, calling it "police action" (Pucchalapally 1971b). The police action was used to restore the redistributed land to the feudal lords, while promising land reforms to appease the people (Pucchalapally 1971c). The Communist parties were banned in 1948 and several of the leaders went under-ground. The armed struggles in Telangana, in Kerala and in Tripura, have been inspiring episodes in the history of the Indian communist movement but the following phase gave rise to several debates.

Firstly, when democratic elections were held in Andhra Pradesh, many of the communist leaders of the peasant movement got elected to the legislature with large majorities. In one of the southern states, Kerala, the first Marxist government in India came to power in 1957 through the electoral process (Rajimwale 2009b). Two decades later in eastern India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was elected to power in West Bengal in 1977 and was re-elected to power thereafter for 34 years in succession till 2011. The argument, therefore, of the possibility of the left attaining political power through democratic elections has remained significant, at least in some parts of India, while the constraints of the bourgeois democratic framework on elected left governments is still a matter of debate.

Secondly, strengthened by the electoral experience, Marxist groups that believed in using the bourgeois democratic base to achieve socialist objectives questioned the feasibility of taking on the might of a well-armed state through an armed struggle. The mainstream Marxist parties that have joined electoral politics consider the armed struggle adventurism. Earlier in 1964, this led to a formal split between the communist parties that espoused the revolutionary path and those that preferred democratic methods of achieving socialist goals. The revolutionary armed groups have splintered into several smaller groups since but have expanded their reach and presence significantly.

In 1967, another armed peasant insurgency from the Naxalbari area of West Bengal brought back radical left politics into the political discourse in India. This continues in various forms and levels of intensity in large parts of central India called the "red corridor", where some of the groups control the political and economic life in these areas. Some reports estimate that the Maoist influence has spread from an estimated 56 of India's 626 districts in 2001 to more than 200 districts by

[*] A detailed analysis of the armed struggle is available at: http://www.scribd.com/doc/15379761/Telangana-Peoples-Armed-Struggle-19461951-Part-One-Historical-Setting. P Sundarayya, an active participant/ideologue of the armed struggle, was General Secretary of CPIM

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

2010 (The Economist[3] 2010). They are also implementing radical left reforms such as redistribution of land, collectivization, literacy and health care for the people, in order to establish prototype communities. However, the state has been using special armed forces and special Acts to contain and repress these groups over the last 60 years with steady loss of life on both sides.

In contrast, the Communist parties that participate in the electoral politics have found that there has been a steady erosion of their political base among the proletariat as all the other political parties also have their own trade unions and student wings. The process of the "jobless economic growth" of the Indian economy since Independence, the breaking up of the industrial enclaves of textile, jute and other manufacturing activities that provided ideological coherence to trade unionism, the neo-liberal economic policies implemented since 1991, further contributed to the erosion of the proletarian base. The more insidious process of co-opting the vocabulary and mobilization techniques of the communist parties by the centrist and even the radical right groups has added to confusion about left identity in popular perception.

Other than the formally identifiable groups of the left, there are a large number of Marxist intellectuals, journalists, academicians, lawyers, judges, civil liberties activists and even bureaucrats, who like to characterize themselves as the "independent left". This is necessitated because in the left movement in India, groups have identified themselves with the Russian communists, with Maoism, Leninism, Trotskyism, Stalinism and so on. The independent left provides a vibrant ongoing critique and direction to the left movement in general, without espousing any later interpretations of Marxism.

The "parliamentary left" that comprises a set of left parties, which run left coalitions in some states and work together in parliament, face criticism from the "independent left". The "independent left" groups say that these parties lack internal democracy and are moulded on the discredited legacies of Stalinism. The "independent left" groups feel that the electoral loss and decline of left parties need not necessarily mean the decline of the Left in India. They feel that "the Left outside the parliament, the left as a culture of democracy and resistance, a network of movements and organisations, and a new more vigorous set of campaigns will *continue to flourish"* (Menon 2011).

The left groups that are engaged in the armed insurgencies have despised mainstream democratic struggles as irrelevant to the achievement of socialist goals. They question how an elected government can bring about radical transformation when it is compelled to work within the rigid framework of bourgeois democracy – with bureaucracy, judiciary and legislative processes that are designed to deny the rights of the working class.

5. Journalism And The Left

The presence of the left in journalism in India is as complex a tapestry as the larger canvas of the left political sphere. Its presence can be understood as the project of keeping the working class struggles in public discourse as a counter to the manufactured consensus around bourgeois democratic stability. The nature of left interventions in the media and understanding which kind of intervention helps in expanding the democratic values inherent in the Marxist praxis will provide lessons for the future.

There are three sources for the left of centre input in journalism in India: 1. The periodical publications by Marxist parties; independent left-of-centre entities; recently, web sites and party-run TV news channels, 2. "Left-leaning" intellectuals writing in mainstream newspapers and magazines, 3. Journalists working for national and regional media organizations.

"Left-leaning" is used here to broadly signify those who research and write about agrarian and industrial class struggles, political economy critique of state policy, the capitalist development paradigm and large-scale displacement of communities, the critique of caste and religious identity politics, human and civil rights issues, globalization and its consequences, the critique of capitalism and its impact on lives of the common people, etc. However, the writers identified below may not define themselves as "left leaning" or Marxist.

The journalists certainly would not like to be labeled as left or Marxist, as social concern without an ideological tag is their primary source of credibility. But there are several journalists who have

[3] The news item describes the nature of conflict accompanied by a detailed map of areas under Maoist influence.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

distinguished themselves by reporting on important political and economic developments from a left perspective.

5.1. Publications By Marxist Parties, Independent Left-Of-Centre Entities

5.1.1. Marxist Party Periodicals

The Marxist parties bring out printed publications – newspapers, magazines, and journals – as an integral part of their activities. Both the mainstream communist parties (Communist Party of India [CPI] and Communist Party of India Marxist [CPIM]) publish daily newspapers in English and in Indian languages in addition to periodicals meant for women's groups, students, industrial and agricultural workers.

The orientation of the publications is primarily to explain the "party line" and to spread information on mobilisation programmes. The parties are rigidly structured and hierarchy-bound, without much possibility of open debate on ideological issues. Therefore, it is rare to see party-run newspapers rigorously debating ideological issues. They concentrate on strategic positions the party will take in response to specific issues of the day. Because they are seen as tools for propaganda, none of them are widely circulated though they are quoted from when the party line is in debate in mainstream media. Both the mainstream media and the state agencies monitor these publications. The Marxist parties also maintain websites with historical and contemporary information. In 2011, the CPIM launched a TV news channel in Kerala.

Most of the splinter groups of the radical left maintain an active publications programme of booklets and pamphlets. The publications are intended primarily to inform the cadre but also to send a message to the outside world about their ideological position.

5.1.2. Independent Left Publications

Weekly publications like *Mainstream*, started in 1962 by the veteran Marxist and journalist Mr Nikhil Chakravartty, represent the independent left publications that are open to shades of left-of-centre opinion (Goyal 1998).

Economic and Political Weekly (Economic and Political Weekly website 2012) that has been published since 1949 (earlier known as Economic Weekly), is a unique publication that has been a platform for consistent and vibrant independent left scholarship. Academicians, journalists, human rights activists and others write both analytical commentaries on contemporary issues and well-researched academic articles on social, cultural, political and economic matters that affect working class.

Mainstream and *Economic and Political Weekly*, both are published in English and have circulation among intellectuals and academicians. Neither of the publications has a popular base, but both have been economically viable mainly supported by subscription revenues and some non-commercial advertising. The founders of both the magazines have passed away but the new editors are carrying forward the traditions and the spirit of the publications.

In the new media era, Kafila (Kafila website 2012) is a collective blog by "independent left" intellectuals that began in October 2006. It has provided an independent platform for debate on contemporary issues. There are several other such publications/websites with similar spheres of circulation such as *Frontier* (Frontier website 2012) published from Kolkata and *Counter Currents* (Counter Currents website 2012) that have been sites for voicing dissent against the mainstream.

5.2. Left-Leaning Intellectuals Writing For Mainstream Newspapers And Magazines

There are a number of scholars and academicians who have been writing from a left perspective on politics and economics in India, sometimes through regular columns for newspapers and magazines. *The Hindu* and *Frontline*, both from a major publishing house from Southern India, Kasturi and Sons, has provided a platform over the years for left-leaning academicians and journalists. *The Hindu* is a 134-year-old newspaper based in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It publishes out of 13 cities and has a circulation of 4.06 million (The Hindu Website 2012). It has a formidable reputation for integrity and professionalism.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Frontline is a news magazine from the same publishing house and carries substantial number of in-depth analytical articles on a wide variety of topics. N Ram, who was the editor-in-chief of the group and edited both *The Hindu* and *Frontline* for several years, who had made no secret of his allegiance to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), has provided space for left-leaning writers like Praful Bidwai, CP Chandrashekhar, Jayati Ghosh, Aijaz Ahmed, a Marxist literary critic and Vijay Pershad, a Marxist historian. The magazine gives regular space to issues related to the working class, workers in unorganized sector, and issues of the tribal people (Frontline magazine 2012).

Others like Ashok Mitra, academicians like Utsa Patnaik and Prabhat Patnaik also have a significant presence in mainstream media. The columns written by some of the scholars are syndicated and publish in several newspapers and magazines. The widely circulated national newspapers and magazines have been providing spaces occasionally for multi-perspective debate, left of centre views being an important part of it.

5.3. Journalists Working For National And Regional Media Organizations

There are two categories of journalists, who have been active in the media: 1. Journalists working for the mainstream English media that occupy a large mind-space among the urban elite; 2. Journalists who work for the language press with very large circulations among a particular language group.

5.3.1. Mainstream English Language Media

The total circulation of newspapers in India is 329 million copies. There are 82,222 registered newspapers in India (RNI website 2012). In both magazine and newspaper journalism, there have been several journalists in India, who have consistently addressed people's issues and used the news columns for building critical awareness about important issues in politics and economy of the nation.

Prominent among them is Vinod Mehta, till recently the editor-in-chief of the *Outlook* group, who describes himself as "left-liberal" (Mehta 2012a). During his distinguished career as a journalist, Mehta has broken major stories on anti-people policies of the state and cases of corruption, abuse of power and mis-governance. The stories have had national impact. The stories on industrial action by unions and special economic zones that were carried by *Outlook* also give a more rounded perspective, giving adequate space for the workers' point of view. The magazine *Outlook* also gave extensive space to the radical left opinion of Arundhati Roy, the Booker prize-winning author and activist. In an interview with Bhatt, Mehta said: "I am a Left Liberal, so *Outlook* is a Left Liberal magazine… I make sure … the inequality of our people is reported. The government cannot say that market forces are going to determine anything and everything. We have a broad vision of what India should be like and we try, and I emphasise this word, we try in our publication to promote that idea" (Mehta 2012b).

Palagummi Sainath has been reporting on the agrarian crisis, the impact of globalization on the agrarian sector, the widespread rural distress leading to the suicides of thousands of farmers and handloom weavers. P Sainath is the Rural Affairs Editor of The Hindu. He has published a best-selling book, *Everyone Loves a Good Draught*, a compilation of a series of his reports on rural distress from various parts of rural India. Sainath was working with the largest circulated multi-edition newspaper, *The Times of India*, when he toured the rural areas in the country on a *Times* fellowship and published 84 op-ed reports (Thakurta 2012, 504).

Sainath says that the media in India are politically free, but are imprisoned by the profit motive of their proprietors. He says that in the worst of newspapers one might still find spaces where they talk of poverty and agrarian distress, but for that people have to die in sufficiently large number to merit the news space (Palagummi 2011). He says that almost anything that is worthwhile in journalism is born out of dissent. No establishment journalist has ever been considered great (Palagummi 2008).

Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, who has worked with newspapers such as the *The Telegraph* and news magazines like *India Today*, is also a television commentator. Thakurta published major investigative stories on corporations and filed court cases to challenge the state and its relationship

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

with the corporations. The 2G spectrum allocation controversy is the latest of such investigations, which is still unravelling in Indian courts.

Thakurta[4] (2012) says that communism has never been a pejorative in Indian politics as is the case elsewhere. Mainstream newspapers owned by big corporate entities like *The Times of India* or *The Telegraph* of Kolkata give space to left columnists and journalists even as the newspapers take a recognisable anti-left stand editorially.

Other than the journalists quoted here, there are many others who have been reporting on working class issues as well as environment, gender, trade unions, agrarian crisis and foreign affairs, shaping public opinion on policy issues.

5.3.2. Language or Vernacular Journalism

The Indian vernacular or language press has grown rapidly with improving literacy in the country. The largest circulated newspaper in the country is *Dainik Jagran*, a Hindi language newspaper with a circulation of 16.4 million copies. Other major language papers are *Dainik Bhaskar* (Hindi), *Eenadu* (Telugu), *Malayala Manorama* (Malayalam). In fact, *The Times of India* is the only English language paper that figures among the top ten papers in India. Since India is geographically divided based on the predominant language spoken in each region, the newspaper circulation is usually understood to cater to both the geographical area and the linguistic groups.

Apart from the staff reporters on the payroll, the language newspapers depend heavily on the informal networks of stringers who provide wide access to the far corners of each state. In Andhra Pradesh state, there are close to 9,000 stringers working for the newspapers.

Both the major left parties, CPI and CPIM run their own daily newspapers in addition to other publications. In addition to the party publications for their internal circulation, the radical left revolutionary groups have also developed access to the stringers of mainstream newspapers initially, and later the party cadre themselves began working as stringers and rural reporters with newspapers.

A study (Kasanagottu 1996, 202) says: "The cadres/supporters, sympathisers of left wing groups infiltrate the newspaper organisations. Former activists today occupy higher positions in the newspaper offices. … The cadres also infiltrate the grassroots rural stringer network. These stringers are the major contributors of naxal[5] news in the columns of newspapers".

Kasanagottu states that newspaper managements also willingly or unwillingly recruit people associated with various Naxalite groups (Marxist-Leninists and sometimes also loosely referred to as Maoists) for two reasons. Firstly, the left wing sympathisers/activists have literary flair that can be exploited by newspapers. Secondly, the journalists' contacts with Naxalites make sensational stories possible, which would otherwise be difficult to get.

A study by Stevenson (2000, 228) says that some journalists have joined the Naxalites and some Naxalites have joined the ranks of journalists. Naxalites join a mainstream profession like journalism generally for reasons of personal safety. In Godavarikhani, a Staff Reporter of *Vishalandhra* (paper run by the Communist Party of India) joined the Jana Rakshana Samithi (roughly meaning, People's Protection Association). Later, he left the movement and started a Telugu weekly. However, he was killed in an "encounter"* with the police.

Stevenson adds: "On the other hand, there are a sizeable number of stringers and contributors (no staff reporters) in each district who were earlier with the Naxalite movement and have surrendered. This only indicates how the press provides a cover for such activists and the power the press wields in society". He says, the left cadres believe that the law enforcement personnel are generally careful with journalists as it can lead to negative publicity.

This has been a major source of conflict between the state and media in the state's battle against left wing insurgencies. In states, where the insurgency has been long-term and low intensity for decades, many journalists have lost their lives on suspicion of being Maoist informers.

[4] Personal interview, 17 Jan

[5] 'Naxal' refers to the radical left groups who are waging an armed insurgency against the Indian state. The movement began in a place called Naxalbari in West Bengal in 1967.

* An 'encounter' is a euphemism for field executions by the security forces of the state. This has been a routine strategy of the state to 'deal' with left-wing extremist groups and their sympathisers in civil society.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

As many of the groups have been banned for several decades now, the journalists have been sources of information for the general public on the one hand and targets for state reprisals on the other. There are also instances when the revolutionary groups suspect their journalist conduits of being informants of the police and subject them to repression. The journalists working at the lowest rung of journalism, representing a wide range of ideological perspectives, are faced with pressures from both the security establishment of the state and the left groups (Lankesh 2010). Nevertheless, they open up spaces for left opinion in mainstream language journalism.

6. Free Speech And Commercial Media In India

The press in India has been working within the bourgeois liberal tradition. But within the intellectual and structural constraints of that system, there have been spaces for left-thought to articulate its position. If sometimes it is the ideology of the owners, sometimes it is the editor who makes these spaces available.

A more interesting phenomenon is the spaces created by the competitive market forces. According to Paranjoy Guha Thakurta[6] (2012), when he offered a major investigative story to a news magazine, the story was turned down as the magazine just came out of a battle with the business group that was the subject of the news story. Thakurta offered the story to a widely circulated business daily from a powerful media house, which immediately picked up the story. Apart from the competitive edge, many journalists believe, it is easier for a major newspaper/media house to confront the power of the state and the corporations than for a smaller newspaper. The very diversity of the media industry makes space for dissent and debate possible, for whatever reason.

Another senior journalist, Mahesh Vijapurkar[7] (2012), who worked with major newspapers like the *Indian Express* and *The Hindu* since the mid-1970s said that in his career, the editors never discouraged publication of a story because of a threat to their commercial interests. They merely ensured that public interest was served by the stories and that information was verified adequately before it was published. This was also reiterated by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta[8] (2012), who said that both the corporate media houses and the editors of newspapers he has worked with gave considerable freedom to the journalists, as long as the information put out is sufficiently vetted and verified.

Interestingly, there are different perceptions among the journalists interviewed on the sources of threat to free speech in India. Sevanti Ninan[9] (2012) says that journalists treat corporate issues with caution, sometimes because of the advertising clout of the corporations, but often also because the journalists have internalised the neo-liberal ideology. She also feels that the journalists may not see any of this as a free speech issue.

Mahesh Vijapurkar says the threat to free speech in India comes mostly from the internal dynamics of the media industry. According to him, top leadership of television networks instructing their reporters to hype up news stories on lean news days and to give opinion with news, poses a greater threat to credibility of news media. He also believes that the state or the politicians do not pose much threat to free speech because the privately owned media provide a powerful platform for them, despite the occasional transgressions.

In a similar vein, Vinod Mehta says: “Corruption is at the top, unfortunately, at the editor’s level. It is at that level the agenda of a paper is decided. They have been compromised, have taken favours, have other interests and they are the people who have betrayed the profession”.

A common factor among some of the senior journalists like Mehta, Thakurta and Sainath, who have built their reputation by writing on political and economic issues taking an anti-imperialist, anti-globalization stand, is also their faith in democracy and the role of journalism in enlarging opportunities for dissent and debate. Their contribution to keeping the left debate alive is as significant as the role of independent left journals like *Mainstream* and *Economic and Political Weekly,* as their

[6] Personal interview, 20 January.

[7] 17 February. Telephone interview. Mahesh Vijapurkar has worked for *The Hindu* for over 30 years and worked with *DNA* as fault finder.

[8] Personal interview, 20 January.

[9] Email interview. Sevanti Ninan is a senior journalist, columnist and editor of a media watch website *The Hoot.*

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

publications are also more accessible to the general reader. The advertising agenda of their publications does not seem to impinge on their functioning as independent journalists, perhaps because there is a strong constituency for left opinion among readers.

It must be recognised, even if some journalists have bent to the commercial or political influences, the profession still has space for independent journalism.

The journalists working at the suburban and district levels have also kept up the news flow from remote locations about both the activities of the state and the left wing groups. However, they often bear the brunt of intolerance of dissent from the radical groups and repression of the state. In the heartland of Indian democracy, in the red corridor areas, affected states have promulgated draconian Newspeak laws like the Public Securities Acts, that allow arbitrary arrests of not only the activists of banned left political outfits, but also a complete blackout of information. Journalists are not allowed to enter some of these areas where paramilitary Special Forces are in control. Public intellectuals[10] who raise human rights questions are arrested or have to face the threat of anachronistic sedition laws.

The commercial media are compelled to pay heed to public perceptions, if only to survive in the marketplace. It is this that facilitates reporting of state repression in the red corridor and arrests and assassinations of human rights activists in conflict areas in the mainstream media. To that extent, the mainstream media play an adversarial role. This is not to say that all reportage is unbiased and fair. The framing of the issues, the state machinery, politicians, bureaucracy, and the corporations using the media for "spin" is another debate. However, in a free speech environment, the truth surfaces on one platform or another and reaches the public, even when the news filters[11] are constantly at work.

Though the mainstream commercial media provide spaces for the dissenting voices, the commercial content drowns out these voices, leading to a significant debate in recent times on the need to rein in commercial interests in the media, the role and desirability of press laws and censorship to preserve democratic values. There was a vociferous debate on mainstream media about the Indian state's attempt to censor intermediaries providing online services like Google, Facebook and Twitter. But a similar debate was not raised by either the "parliamentary left" or by the mainstream media about the blanket censorship and blackout of information in the red corridor areas and other "insurgency areas" of North-Eastern India or Kashmir.

The newspapers and publications of the left parties are moulded on the agit-prop mode and are clearly perceived as tools of propaganda both by the general reader and the parties themselves. The parliamentary left has deep ideological disagreement with the radical left groups waging a prolonged armed struggle against the state. But this has also stopped them from opposing vigorously the censorship and draconian laws that are being used by the bourgeois state. In the long-term, this can severely shrink the democratic spaces that are already eroding rapidly. The parliamentary left parties have been unable to encourage rigorous theoretical debate on issues because of what Prof Prabhat Patnaik (2011) in his incisive analysis calls "empericisation". He explains:

> "What distinguishes a communist party is not that it does not 'soil its hands' with mundane, everyday politics, …but that its process of engagement even at this level is imbricated by its project of transcending capitalism, informed by a consciousness of what Lukacs[12] (1924) had called 'the actuality of the revolution'. …If this theory linking the 'here and now' to the overall project of transcendence is absent from the praxis engaged in 'here and now', then we have a process of empericisation of the movement. … Such empericisation in the context of our polity gives rise to at least

[10] Dr Binayak Sen, a paediatrician working among the tribal communities was under arrest for several years and is given bail by the Supreme Court recently. Arundhati Roy, the author-activist was threatened with arrest for her views on Kashmir, under sedition laws.

[11] Noam Chomsky enumerates five filters in his discussion of the Propaganda Model in "Manufacturing Consent": Ownership of the medium, funding sources, sources, flak, anti-communist ideology.

[12] Lukacs, Georg (1924): *Lenin: A Study of the Unity of His Thought*, re-published by New Left Books, London, 1970.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

> three kinds of tendencies: first, it gives rise to the range of 'sins' attributed to the party by its opponents … such as careerism, 'satrapism', bureaucratism, and bossism at the local level. Secondly, it gives rise to a tendency to 'adjust' to given situations to prevent losses, instead of carrying it forward as a part of revolutionary praxis. This in turn entails a process of alienation of the party from the 'basic classes' that it is supposed to struggle for, viz, the workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, and the rural poor. The 'party interests' are seen in isolation from, and as being distinct from, the interests of the basic classes, and for the defence of the 'party interests' immediate, 'here and now' measures are thought of and resorted to, which may well diverge from the interests of the basic classes. Third, empericisation leads to a shrinking of the distance between the communist party and the other political formations"

In a contemplative piece about Com. K. Damodaran, one of the founders of the communist party of Kerala, his son K.P. Sasi (2012) gives insights into the working of the communist parties in India at various stages of recent history. It reveals the lack of democratic functioning, ideological helplessness battled by even the senior leadership in the left parties. Part of the problem also arises because of the failure of the left governed states in achieving visible transformation towards greater democratic freedoms or significantly better governance or material conditions.

Both the critiques reveal that there has been a gap between the ideological position of Marx and the practice of Marxism in India. Both these critiques show the need for the left parties of all shades to negotiate with and expand the scope of bourgeois freedoms, much like Marx, and to create conditions for transcending capitalism and imperialism. If within the parties there is no scope for free speech and democratic debate, it would not carry conviction to assert rights against the state and capital when those agencies choose to limit them. It is important to identify basic guiding principles and to institutionalise them, to adopt and strengthen positive features of liberal democracy in the transition to socialism and its transformed social content.

Freedom of the press is an essential part of the philosophical tradition of Marxism and has been an important instrument in Marxist praxis. According to Draper (1974a, 101-124): "For Marx, the fight for democratic forms of government – democratization in the state – was a leading edge of the socialist effort; not its be-all and end-all but an integral part of it all".

Draper (1974b, 118) also discusses what Marx refers to as the "Democratic Swindle". According to Draper, "Marx (in a letter to Engels on 14 September 1864) calls the United States "the model country of the democratic swindle" not because it was less democratic than others but for precisely the opposite reason. The fact that the US had developed the formal structure of the constitutional republic in the most democratic forms meant that its bourgeoisie likewise had to develop to its highest point the art of keeping the expression of popular opinion within channels satisfactory to its class interests... Marx or Engels analysed bourgeois-democratic politics as an exercise in convincing a maximum of the people that they were participating in state power, by means of a minimum of concessions to democratic forms." In India too, the formal structures of democracy have been in place for long but the bourgeoisie and capital have successfully "swindled" democracy in practice.

Therefore, the debate around bourgeois democracy versus socialist democracy is also significant for free speech. According to Sudipta Kaviraj:

> "Democracy in principle (or as a whole) is not bourgeois – either in the sense of being conferred by the bourgeoisie on their people, or in being won by the struggles of the bourgeoisie. The general form of democracy today is a result won by proletarian and radical struggles to widen the narrow circle of political rights under liberal capitalism. It would be a great pity if democracy is not historically separable from the capitalist social form. In any case, the Marxian criticism of bourgeois democracy is not that capitalism realises democracy and that it is bad. Rather that what is bad about capitalism is that it does not realise democracy. As long as unequal classes exist, democracy must remain formal. This implies that when classes disappear, (under socialism) or nearly disappear, can the formal apparatuses of democracy enjoy real conditions of success" (Kaviraj 1989, 50-58).

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

An important aspect of Marx's discussion of democracy was his views on bureaucracy. Marx understood that a bureaucracy could "own" a state as its private property and that when it did, it would make a fetish out of internal hierarchy and external secrecy. The democratic right to change policy, and own the state becomes possible when the citizens and workers, without risking anything can command those who carry out technical and administrative functions. If not, the bureaucracy tends to own the state as its private property (Harrington). In other words, the bureaucracy acts as an instrument of this "democratic swindle".

Marx's argument about free speech and censorship early in his career as a journalist was in opposition to the draconian Prussian laws of censorship that were being used as instruments to retard democratization. But when he founded the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* with the support of liberals of Cologne who later became legislators and began to compromise their ideological positions for remaining in power, Marx was both brutal and relentless in his criticism. But his paper was shut down because of the censorship edicts of the time that he was challenging.

But in India, the Constitutionally guaranteed right to free speech, the diversity of voices in media has provided spaces for challenging the prevailing bourgeois consensus primarily because political parties market their policies in "public interest".

On the other hand, material reality of people has made radical politics inevitable in some parts of India, and sections of mainstream media misrepresent this reality, much as what Marx describes as the role of the British press in war-mongering during American Civil War, while the people were opposed to it (Marx, 1861). Marx also describes the nature of ownership and political pressures on the media, while recognising the honourable exceptions like *The Spectator, The Examiner* and *MacMillan's Magazine* in this article. The cartelization, the political ownership and emergence of oligopolies in Indian media industries is a looming threat to free speech.

In the later part of his life, Marx was living and working in Britain where censorship was not as problematic as it was in Germany of 1840s. During this phase, Marx was finding ways of using the freedoms available under bourgeois democracy to expand freedoms of the working classes. Marx, while engrossed in writing some of his classic works during this phase, used the newspaper columns to interpret the unfolding historical events from a class perspective. Whether as editor, correspondent or as opinion writer, it was fairly common to see Marx openly criticise newspapers by name, by specific pieces or stand taken by a newspaper on issues. Marx would subject them to logical, detailed criticism in an effort to provide the reading public with an alternate explanation. It is rare in Indian journalism to see criticism of rival papers, either ideologically or to challenge unethical practices[13].

In the Indian context, though diversity of media industry aided by an independent judiciary and enabling legislations like the Right to Information Act has made exposing abuse of political, bureaucratic and corporate power possible, the interventions of the media tend to evoke different responses from the state depending on the perceived power of media to influence large segments of public opinion. When English language media with a large urban educated audience challenge the state, the state is compelled to respect the constitutional rights of the media to freedom of expression. In case of local media houses working in the hinterlands, the state cracks down heavily. Any transgressions by the regional language media (as in insurgency areas of the red corridor) are severely punished or suppressed by a slew of legislations that enable the state to suspend fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Many journalists have been shot dead in 'encounters'. In fact, over the years, this dual strategy has been adopted routinely by Indian state, giving India an image of a vibrant democracy, while great abuses of human rights also occur in large pockets of the country. It is also reflected in the perceptions of the senior journalists from national media who feel that the state is not as much of threat to free speech as the internal problems of the industry and the journalists' lack of integrity.

[13] In case of the "paid news" scandal that engulfed big media in India during the last parliamentary elections, several regional and national journalists wrote about and publicly denounced the practice of newspapers giving favourable coverage to rival candidates on hard news columns after accepting huge unaccounted-for payments. Press Council of India instituted a committee (with Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and Srinivas Reddy) to enquire into the affair. The report names several major newspapers indulging in this practice.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

The parliamentary left and the independent left have a greater role in challenging these tendencies of the bourgeois state. The independent left along with the journalists and left intellectuals working in the mainstream media are better placed to take up the challenge, because of their perceived independence and integrity. The parliamentary left faces more difficulties as the parties had opportunities to hold office through democratic elections and have been unable to unambiguously demonstrate the benefits that an elected Marxist government can yield, either through policies or through day-to-day issues of bureaucratic management.

According to Harrington, Marx defined socialism in the most profound sense of the word as the "truth of" bourgeois democracy, as democracy stripped of the structural limitations imposed on it by capitalist class society. The exposure of journalists at the ground level to the might of the state often make it possible for the mainstream media to exert pressure for asserting rights and policy change. The mainstream media in India have been a powerful presence in the political space of left politics, both as its critics and as its champions. The looming threat today is the consolidation of ownership, which till now has been diverse.

It is for the political entities of all hues that label themselves as Marxists, to recognise this truth and to work for the deepening and strengthening of democracy in India. The press is the most potent instrument for deepening democratic values and the wider and deeper engagement of the left in the critical segments of the media that are widely read, heard and seen is essential to this process.

7. Conclusion

Transcending the structural limitations of bourgeois democracy is the task before the left. Indian polity accepts a set of democratic ground rules and independent agencies like the judiciary and the Election Commission have been playing an important role in controlling both executive and corporate power to an extent. Sections of media have been a potent instrument and ally for both judiciary and the Election Commission in India.

Revisiting the free speech debate in the context of Marx's analysis makes it clear that it is necessary to ensure that independent constitutional authorities like the judiciary and the Election Commission are strengthened; strong press laws are enacted and enforced without curtailing freedom of the press; and censorship is challenged in all its forms, as it puts arbitrary power in the hands of the bureaucracy. The Indian experience also indicates that independent journalism that highlights the interests of the working class, despite the challenges it faces, can play a significant and historical role in politics of democratization and liberation.

References

Counter Currents website. 2012. http://www.countercurrents.org/aboutus.htm

Draper, Hal. 1974a. Marx on Democratic Forms of Government. In *The Socialist Register.* Accessed December 9, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1974/xx/democracy.html

Economic and Political Weekly website. 2012. http://beta.epw.in/about_us/

Emery, Michael, and Edwin Emery. 1954. The Press and America. NY: Prentice-Hall.

Frontier website. 2012. http://sites.google.com/site/frontierweekly/aboutfrontier

Frontline magazine. 2012. Accessed January 25, 2012. http://www.frontlineonnet.com/

Goyal, D.R. 1998. Remembering Nikhil Chakravartty. *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXIII (29). July 18. 1911.

Hardt, Hanno. 2000. Communication is Freedom: Karl Marx on Press Freedom and Censorship. *Javnost - The Public* 7 (4): 85-100. Accessed November 26, 2011. http://javnost-thepublic.org/article/pdf/2000/4/6/

Kafila website. 2012. http://kafila.org/about/

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 1989. Perestroika: Reflections on the Theory of Power. *Social Scientist* 17 (194-195). July-August, 50-58.

Ledbetter, James. 2007. *Karl Marx: Dispatches for the New York Tribune*. Edited by James Ledbetter, xix. NY: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1842a. On Freedom of the Press: Censorship. *Rheinische Zeitung*, 135, Supplement, May 15. Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch05.htm

Marx, Karl. 1842b. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication. In *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship*, edited and translated by Saul Padover, 27. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Marx, Karl. 1842c. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication. In *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship*, edited and translated by Saul Padover, 29. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Marx, Karl. 1842d. On Freedom of the Press: Censorship. *Rheinische Zeitung*, 135, Supplement, May 15. Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch05.htm

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Marx, Karl. 1842e. As a Privilege of Particular Individuals or a Privilege of the Human Mind? *Rheinische Zeitung*, May 12. Accessed December 10, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/free-press/ch04.htm

Marx, Karl. 1842f. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication. In *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship*, edited and translated by Saul Padover, 39. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Marx, Karl. 1842g. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication. In *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship*, edited and translated by Saul Padover, 40-41. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Marx, Karl. 1848. The *Neue Berliner Zeitung* on the Chartists. *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, June 24. Accessed December 10 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/06/24b.htm

Marx, Karl. 1848. The Prussian Press Bill. *Neue Rheinische Zeitung,* July 19. Accessed December 12, 2011. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/07/20a.htm

Marx, Karl. 1843. The Mosel Region and the Cabinet Order of December 24, 1841. In *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship,* edited and translated by Saul Padover, 77. NY: McGraw-Hill

Marx, Karl. 1861. The Newspapers and the Opinion Of The People. *Die Presse,* 25 December. Accessed March 25, 2012. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1861/12/31.htm

Mehta, Vinod. 2012a. Interview with Sheela Bhatt. Accessed January 26, 2012. http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-corruption-unfortunately-is-at-the-editor-level/20120130.htm

Mehta, Vinod. 2012b. Interview with Sheela Bhatt. Accessed January 26, 2012. http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-corruption-unfortunately-is-at-the-editor-level/20120130.htm

Menon, Nivedita. 2011. 'End of the Left' in India? Statement by Leftists after Recent Election Results. 24 May. *KAFILA*. Accessed January 25, 2012. http://kafila.org/2011/05/24/end-of-the-left-in-india-statement-after-recent-election-results/

Musto, Marcello. 2008. *Karl Marx's Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years late.* Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Nair, Somasekharan K. G. 2009. Indian Communists versus Marxism-Leninism. *Mainstream.* XLVII(34) 8 Aug. Accessed February 2, 2012. http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article1558.html

Padover, Saul. K. 1974. *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship*. Edited and translated by Saul Padover, xi. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Padover, Saul. K. 1974. *Karl Marx On Freedom Of The Press & Censorship,* edited and translated by Saul Padover, xiii. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Palagummi, Sainath. 2011. Interview with NewsClickin. 22 June. Accessed January 25, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&NR=1&v=bu9W53Skr28

Palagummi, Sainath. 2011. Interview with NewsClickin. 22 June. January 25, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QewCqpgBiuw&feature=related

Pucchalapally, Sundarayya. 1971a. *Telangana People's Armed Struggle, Part 2.* 27-35. Accessed on February 5, 2012. http://www.scribd.com/doc/15380676/Telangana-Peoples-Armed-Struggle-19461951-Part-Two-First-Phase-and-Its-Lessons

Pucchalapally, Sundarayya. 1971b. *Telangana People's Armed Struggle, Part 2.* 42. Accessed February 5, 2012. http://www.scribd.com/doc/15380676/Telangana-Peoples-Armed-Struggle-19461951-Part-Two-First-Phase-and-Its-Lessons

Pucchalapally, Sundarayya. 1971c. *Telangana People's Armed Struggle, Part 2.* 35-36. Accessed February 5, 2012. http://www.scribd.com/doc/15380676/Telangana-Peoples-Armed-Struggle-19461951-Part-Two-First-Phase-and-Its-Lessons

Rajimwale, Anil. 2009a. Ajoy Ghosh: The Creative Marxist. *Mainstream.* XLVIII (1) 26 Dec. Accessed February 2, 2012. http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article1843.html

Rajimwale, Anil. 2009b. Ajoy Ghosh: The Creative Marxist. *Mainstream.* XLVIII (1) 26 Dec. Accessed February 2, 2012. http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article1843.html

RNI website. 2012. Accessed January 25, 2012. https://rni.nic.in/

Thakurta, Paranjoy Guha. 2012. *Media Ethics.* N. Delhi: Oxford.

The Economist. 2010. Maoist Insurgents in India: More Bloody and Defiant. 22 July. Accessed January 25, 2012. http://www.economist.com/node/16650478

The Hindu Website. 2012. Accessed January 25, 2012. http://www.thehindu.com/navigation/?type=static&page=aboutus

About the Author

Padmaja Shaw
graduated with a Masters degree in Journalism from Osmania University, India, and an MA (Telecommunications) from Michigan State University, USA. She completed a PhD in Development Studies and has been teaching at the Department of Communication and Journalism, Osmania University, India, since 1988. She has two tracks of interest: Broadcast production and political economy of communication. She contributes regularly to a media watch website, The Hoot, and writes a regular column in a local English language daily newspaper, The Hans India.

CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.