

Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism

Edited by

Christian Fuchs
Vincent Mosco



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

- List of Figures and Tables VII
About the Authors VIII
- 1 **Introduction: Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today** 1
Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco
 - 2 **Towards Marxian Internet Studies** 22
Christian Fuchs
 - 3 **Digital Marx: Toward a Political Economy of Distributed Media** 68
Andreas Wittel
 - 4 **The Relevance of Marx's Theory of Primitive Accumulation for Media and Communication Research** 105
Mattias Ekman
 - 5 **The Internet and "Frictionless Capitalism"** 133
Jens Schröter
 - 6 **Digital Media and Capital's Logic of Acceleration** 151
Vincent Manzerolle and Atle Mikkola Kjøsen
 - 7 **How Less Alienation Creates More Exploitation? Audience Labour on Social Network Sites** 180
Eran Fisher
 - 8 **The Network's Blindspot: Exclusion, Exploitation and Marx's Process-Relational Ontology** 204
Robert Prey
 - 9 **3C: Commodifying Communication in Capitalism** 233
Jernej A. Prodnik
 - 10 **The Construction of Platform Imperialism in the Globalisation Era** 322
Dal Yong Jin

- 11 **Foxconned Labour as the Dark Side of the Information Age: Working Conditions at Apple's Contract Manufacturers in China** 350
Marisol Sandoval
- 12 **The Pastoral Power of Technology. Rethinking Alienation in Digital Culture** 396
Katarina Giritli Nygren and Katarina L Gidlund
- 13 **The Problem of Privacy in Capitalism and Alternative Social Media: The Case of Diaspora** 413
Sebastian Sevignani
- 14 **"A Workers' Inquiry 2.0": An Ethnographic Method for the Study of Producers in Social Media Contexts** 447
Brian A. Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase
- 15 **Social Media, Mediation and the Arab Revolutions** 482
Miriyam Aouragh
- 16 **Marx in the Cloud** 516
Vincent Mosco
- Index** 537

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

Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco

‘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).

In the golden, post-war years of Western economic growth, the comfortable living standard of the working class and the economy's overall stability made the best case for the value of capitalism and the fraudulence of Marx's critical view of it. But in more recent years many of the forces that Marx said would lead to capitalism's demise – the concentration and globalization of wealth, the permanence of unemployment, the lowering of wages – have become real, and troubling, once again (New York Times Online, March 30th, 2014).

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, 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 1.1 that shows the average annual 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, 2008–2013. Choosing these periods allows observing if there has been a change since the start of the new capitalist crisis in 2008 and also makes sense because the 1968 revolt marked a break that also transformed academia.

Figure 1.1 shows that there was a relatively large academic article output about Marx in the period 1978–1987: 3659. Given that the number of articles published increases historically, also the interest in the period 1968–1977 seems to have been high. One can observe a clear contraction of the output of articles that focus on Marx in the periods 1988–1997 (2393) and 1998–2007 (1563). Given the historical increase of published articles, this contraction is even more severe. 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 average number of annual articles published about Marxism in the period 2008–2013 (269) has increased in comparisons to the periods 1988–2007 (156 per year) and 1988–1997 (239 per year). This circumstance is an empirical indicator for a renewed interest in Marx and Marxism in the social sciences as effect of the new capitalist

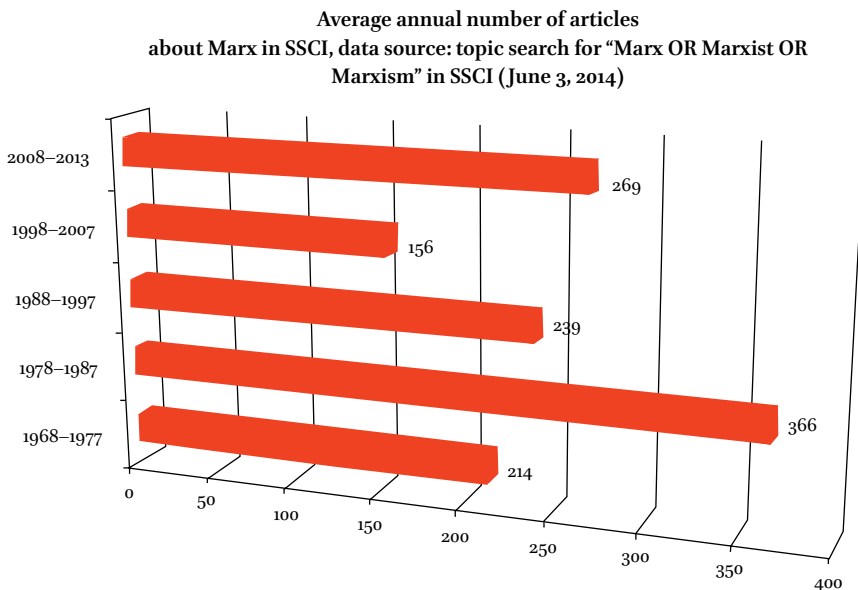


FIGURE 1.1 *Articles published about Marx and Marxism in the Social Sciences Citation Index*

crisis. The question is if 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 the two books. 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 the two books is to contribute to overcoming this lack of systematic reading of Marx on communication and media.

The chapter in the two books "Marx and the Political Economy of the Media" and "Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism" make 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 two books demonstrate 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 chapters 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.

Most of the chapters in the two books are re-revised and updated editions of the special issue *Marx is Back: The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today* that was published in 2012 in the open access online journal *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* (Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 127–632, <http://www.triple-c.at>). The 28 updated chapters from the special issue are accompanied by updated version of three further articles published in *tripleC* (by Dal Yong Jin, Marisol Sandoval, and Christian Fuchs’ Dallas Smythe-article) as well as a new chapter by Vincent Mosco (“Marx in the Cloud”).

When putting together the *tripleC* special issue, we published a Call for Papers that much reflects the topics of the contributions in the two books and the special issue. It 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?

* 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?

Thomas Piketty's (2014) book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* shows empirically that the history of capitalism is a history of inequality and capital concentration. It has resulted in many responses and a public discussion of capitalism's problems (for an analysis of the reception of the book and its relevance for the political economy of the Internet see Fuchs 2014). Piketty's book is certainly not

the 21st century equivalent of Marx's *Capital* because it lacks solid theoretical foundations. Piketty also misinterprets Marx (see Fuchs 2014), which is not a surprise because when being asked about Karl Marx, Piketty said: "I never managed really to read it".¹ Piketty's book has however stressed the importance of political measures that weaken capitalist interests and the capitalist class and especially the role that global progressive tax on capital and wealth could play in this context. This political debate should be welcomed by Marxists because Marx and Engels themselves called in the *Communist Manifesto* for a "heavy progressive or graduated income tax" (Marx and Engels 1968, 51). Marx and Engels would today embrace and radicalise the idea of a global progressive tax on capital.

A Marxist theory of communication should "demonstrate how communication and culture are material practices, how labour 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 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 summarise 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).

1 Chotiner, Isaac. 2014. "Marx? I never really managed to read it" – an interview with Thomas Piketty. *New Statesman Online* May 6, 2014: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/05/marx-i-never-really-managed-read-it-interview-thomas-piketty>.

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 coordination of production in order to reduce constant and variable capital shares
- General: Communication technologies as means for the spatial expansion of capitalist production

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

The model in Figure 1.2 summarises 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.

TABLE 1.1 *A systematic account of the role of media in the Marxian circuit of capital.*

Circulation	Production	Circulation	Consumption
M – C (Mp, L)	..P. Media Technology as Means of Rationalization: s/v↑ The process of capital concentra- tion and centraliza- tion in the realm of the media	C' – M'	
	Knowledge workers as wage labourers in media corporations		
	Media as means of inter-organizational corporate communication and co-ordi- nation: v↓, c↓		
	Media for the spatial distribution and extension of capitalism	Media as carriers of advertisements Transmission media as forms of capital Media and trade globalization Media and spatial centralization of capital Media as carriers & diffusion channels of ideologies	
	Alternative media as negating forces in media production, circulation, and consumption		

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 1.1: 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 1.2 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 1.2 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 1.1. 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 1.1 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 1.2. 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 1.2 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.

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

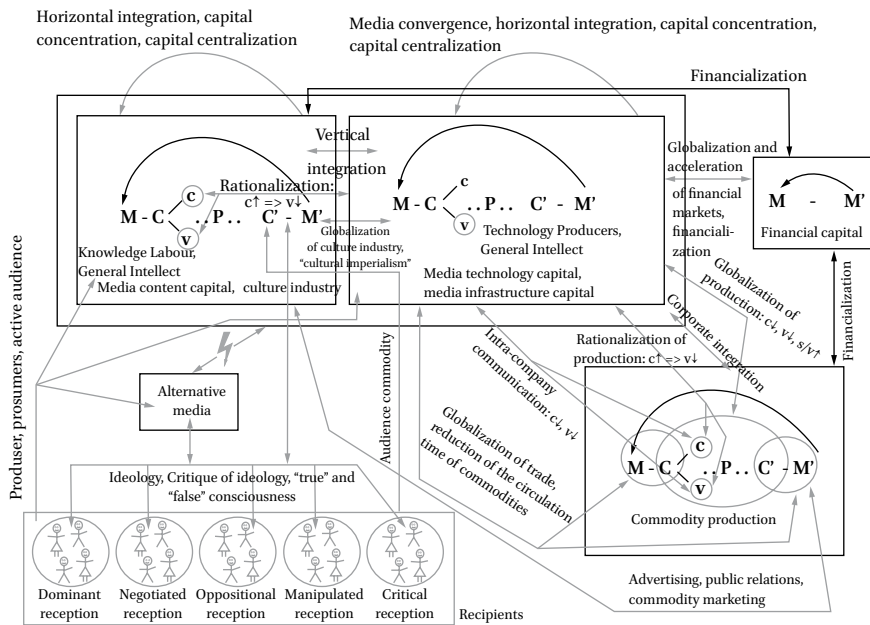


FIGURE 1.2 *The processes of media production, circulation, and consumption in the capitalist economy.*

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.

Marx’s analysis of the media in capitalism visualized in Figure 1.1 can be summarized in the form of four major dimensions. The chapters in our two books reflect a categorisation of the role of the media in capitalism and study these dimensions each to a specific extent.

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. 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 the two books show, 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. The chapters in the two books 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 chapters published in the 2 books *Marx and the Political Economy of the Media* and *Marx in the Digital Age* 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 chapters in the two books 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 chapters in the two books, we counter each of the anti-Marxian prejudices with a counter-claim that is grounded in the analyses presented in the two books 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 devastation 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 homogeneous 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)

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.

Overview of the Book *Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism*

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. He also gives an overview of important debates and concepts relating to digital labour.

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.

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.

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.

Vincent Manzerolle and Atle Mikkola Kjösen 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.

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 as both 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.

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 A. 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.

Dal Yong Jin discusses the notion of cultural imperialism in the age of the Internet. He holds that this concept has continued importance for understanding how corporations dominate the Internet. He argues that predominantly Western and especially US companies dominate the Internet and that the only alternatives (such as Chinese platforms) are no alternatives because they use the same logic of capitalism and targeted advertising as Western capitalist platforms. Jin coins the notion of platform imperialism for understanding the structure of the contemporary Internet in the context of the new imperialism.

Marisol Sandoval shows that behind the clean surface of Apple computers, iPads and iPhones lies a dirty world of work and exploitation. She introduces based on Karl Marx's works a typology and systematic method for analysing dimensions of labour that she applies to the study of the labour involved in the production of Apple computers. Her analysis shows that the highly exploitative work conducted by Chinese workers in the Foxconn assemblage factories contradict how Apple presents itself. She deconstructs Apple's corporate ideology and shows how the company's imperialist and capitalist character makes Apple socially irresponsible. She grounds foundations of the Marxist concept of corporate social irresponsibility that can be opposed to the corporate ideology of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

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.

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*.

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.

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 producers in the Workers' Inquiry 2.0.

Vincent Mosco analyses the political economy of cloud computing and big data analysis. Cloud computing involves the external storage of users' data so that it can be accessed in a mobile manner. Mosco shows that cloud computing and big data's political economy involves an interlocking of digital capitalism and the surveillance state, is ideologically connected to digital positivism, has negative ecological impacts, is a threat to knowledge labour, and has resulted in new forms of cloud marketing and advertising. At the same time, new forms of resistance to capital accumulation in the digital age have emerged that pose the question of the Internet can be turned from a commercial profit machine into a democratic resource.

The two books *Marx and the Political Economy of the Media* and *Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism* show 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 the books as well as the large interest in other related activities in Marxist Communication Studies (as e.g. the 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; Fuchs and Sandoval 2014), 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.

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. 2014. Thomas Piketty's Book "Capital in the Twenty-First Century", Karl Marx and the Political Economy of the Internet. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (1): 413–430.
- 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: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 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.
- Fuchs, Christian and Marisol Sandoval, eds. 2014. *Critique, Social Media and the Information Society*. New York: Routledge.
- 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.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1968. *Selected Works in One Volume*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- 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.
- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- 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.