

There Is No Alternative: The Critical Potential of Alternative Media for Challenging Neoliberal Discourse

Linus Andersson

*School of Culture and Communication, Södertörn University, Huddinge, Sweden.
linus.andersson@sh.se*

Abstract: This article was written in order to contribute to a discussion about a critical definition of alternative media. Asking what role alternative media could play in challenging neoliberal discourse in an age where capitalism have become immune to criticism, it elaborates on the concept of “the alternative” and the media through three sections. The first section discusses neoliberalism and the connection between neoliberal doctrine and mainstream media. This connection is described as promoting “public amnesia”, financialization and economization of news journalism. The second section discusses alternative media from the perspective of new social movements and symbolic resistance, claiming that the symbolic resistance framework undermines the critical potential of alternative media, it also comments on some recent critical literature on neoliberalism and capitalism. The third section takes examples from artistic explorations of capitalism and television to propose how a distinction between social and formalist aspects of “the alternative” could inform a critical notion of alternative media.

Keywords: Alternative Media, Neoliberalism, Critical Theory

Acknowledgement: The author would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments on the manuscript.

Roughly ten years ago three books were published that became influential in the renewed interest in the study of alternative media (Atton 2002; Downing 2001; Rodriguez 2001). The past decade has witnessed not only the expansion of that field of research, but also considerable changes in the global media, global politics and economy. What is the role of progressive alternative media today, what significance has it and what challenges is it up to?

Looking around, it appears to be no alternatives. Not in political life; not in the economic sector; not in culture or the art world; not in the media. In political life, alternatives to the neoliberal administration which promotes as little public interference in the economic sector as possible have been if not absent, at least powerless in Europe for the past 20 years; in the art- and cultural sector, cultural institutions have during this period resigned from their function as cultural public spheres into becoming economic enterprises, as artists and cultural workers have turned “entrepreneurs” in the creative industries; and as for the media and communication, the heady visions of democratization through world wide web and social media seems rather to have developed into new forms of exploitation of labour and further colonization of the life-world.

This article sets out to ask how “the alternative” can be conceptualized and approached, especially in the context of the media. By “the alternative” I do not imply an alternative class-less society, as elaborated by utopian socialism or certain interpretations of Marxian theory (Ludes 2012), but more modest, the possibility of challenging neoliberal discourse and the possibility of a radical imagination (Haiven 2011).

The article is intended as a contribution to theory-development in the study of alternative media (e.g. Fuchs 2010; Sandoval and Fuchs 2010) and builds on the discussion of critical alternative media as promoting a radical imagination. Since “alternative” is a negatively defined term, the “norm” that this “alternative” is supposed to be an alternative to easily becomes a vague straw man. My approach in this article is to identify that straw man as neoliberalism, and especially neoliberalism’s relation to mass media. Consequently, alternative media is understood as a potential for a critical discourse, challenging neoliberalism. However, the neoliberal version of contemporary capitalism has often proved quite able to co-opt such criticism and incorporate disaffection into capitalism itself, which poses a challenge for progressive alternatives (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; McGuigan 2009; 2012).

Thus the question I wish to pursue in this article is: What role can alternative media possibly play as mediator of counter-hegemonic discourse in an age where capitalism seems to have become immune to criticism?

Drawing parallels to theory and criticism of new social movements, I argue that a critical understanding of alternative media might learn from experiences made in that field. Taking inspiration

from artistic engagements with neoliberalism and mass media, the article connects alternative media with the prospect of a radical imagination.

The article is divided into three sections: The first one is called “The only way”, and elaborates on the connection between neoliberalism and mass media; The second section is called “No Alternative”, and discusses new social movements, anti-capitalist protests and some recent theoretical critical assessments of political economy; and finally “Alternative media or media of the alternative”, that discusses formalist aspects of alternative media and relations to art.

1. The Only Way: Neoliberalism and Mass Media

In the spring of 2010 a group of European artists came together to address questions of contemporary (and historical) developments in capitalism in a project titled *There is no Alternative* (TINA). The title, referring to a statement originally attributed to Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s and a slogan in neoliberal economic and political discourse is a common point of reference for comments on development of political economy in a global context. The project and the exhibition took the statement serious and offered investigations into the financial market sided with historical narratives on speculative capitalism and performances about neoliberalism. The exhibition could be interpreted as both an illustration of how true the statement is today, as well as to point out that there are actual alternatives around and that the exhibition itself could be the starting point for thinking about alternatives.

The definition of neoliberalism that I use refers to what could be called the paradigm in contemporary capitalism that rests on principles of free markets; privatization, free trade and entrepreneurship (Harvey 2005). In the last couple of years neoliberalism has attracted a lot of critical investigation and discussion within social theory. Almost half (47%) of the 899 papers in the Social Sciences Citation Index with the term “neoliberalism” in the title were published after 2007 (SSCI accessed 2012-08-22). Probably this could be, at least partly, explained by two events. The first explanation is the translation into English of Michel Foucault’s (2008) lectures on the birth of biopolitics, which traces the origins of liberalism and presents a discussion of neoliberalism that has inspired new investigations into the topic. The second explanation would be the financial crisis and economic recession of 2007-8 that initiated public discussions about the scope and probable decline of neoliberal doctrine in U.S. and Europe. In the following I will look at some notions of neoliberalism and link them to a discussion about the mass media’s part in the neoliberal project.

What Thatcher’s statement about “no alternative” points to as the only possible way is the market-liberal capitalism where organizations like the WTO have reached dominance over national legislation. This has been paradigmatic for European political life over the past 30 years and have afflicted the development (and perhaps demolition) of public service and social welfare institutions in many countries. The expansion of the European Union and the Lisbon-treaty has strengthened the ideology of free markets and privatization of assets in recent years. Even though the world economic system shrugged because of the fiscal crisis of 2008 and many of the world’s central economies are still facing a disastrous situation, there seem to be little or no plausible alternatives on the agenda. The economic crisis required large-scale state interventions, but political power has made very few demands and capitalism seems unchallenged.

From the research on neoliberalism one could distinguish between an *idealist* and a *materialist* definition and interpretation of the phenomenon. By idealist I mean the perspective where neoliberal doctrine is understood as a theory about the relations between politics and economy that was implemented in various degrees in the U.S. and Europe from the 1970s onward. This idealist interpretation treats neoliberalism as a mental conception, a set of ideas that became extremely influential (through the political course set out by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher) and that it was these ideas that determined the direction of the economy. The materialist perspective, on the other hand, sees the neoliberal doctrine as the theoretical superstructure of a more fundamental class conflict, and is thereby a more classical Marxist analysis. For this materialist interpretation the set of ideas that is connected with the notion of neoliberalism (free markets, privatization, and minimum state intervention) is rather like a strategic discourse, a rhetoric that, though influential, was not a determining factor for the politico-economical course.

In the article “The End of Neoliberalism”, Grantham and Miller (2010) equals neoliberalism with something like a worldview, similar to religion or nationalism, and their argument is that this worldview has come to an end due to the financial crisis and economic recession of 2008. They are representatives of the idealist interpretation of the concept neoliberalism that stresses the effect of mental conceptions over economic practice and material conditions. Put in Marxist terms one could say that in their understanding of neoliberalism, the super structure determines the base. Klein

(2006) is another example of this idealist understanding of how the concept of neoliberalism spread across the globe.

Harvey (2010a) offers a more materialist version of neoliberalism. In *The Enigma of Capital* he suggests that neoliberalism should be understood as a struggle for class domination of capital over labour:

“My view is that it [neoliberalism] refers to a class project that coalesced in the crisis of the 1970s. Masked by a lot of rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility and the virtues of privatization, the free market and free trade, it legitimized draconian policies designed to restore and consolidate capitalist class power. This project has been successful, judging by the incredible centralization of wealth and power observable in all those countries that took the neoliberal road. And there is no evidence that it is dead” (Harvey 2010a, 10).

With this understanding of neoliberalism, it is possible to say that the rhetoric of neoliberalism could come to an end (or develop into more pragmatic nuances), but that the material class struggle underlying it is far from threatened or questioned by a change in the official discourse.

I might have over-emphasized the polarity between these two positions and a more nuanced approach would be to suggest a dialectical relation between the ideas of neoliberalism and capitalism's advancements. This dialectics between the ideal and the material is already present in a famous quote from Marx's *Capital*: “But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally” (Marx 1867/1990, 284). Hence ideas could be understood as material and the idea of neoliberalism has been as real and present (and maybe even more so) in our everyday life as has been the class struggle underlying them. Given that, our everyday experience of neoliberalism would be a possible starting point for an understanding of what neoliberalism means, how it is implemented and neutralized. This is what has been done in media and communication studies' approach to neoliberalism.

1.1. The Role of the Media

When it comes to the media there is some consensus between Grantham and Miller (2010) and Harvey's (2010a) positions: they both hold the mass media at least partly responsible for the promotion and implementation of a neoliberal doctrine. There have been quite a few comments made on the relation between neoliberalism and the media, and as Couldry (2010) has pointed out, the relation of mainstream media in general to neoliberalism is much more complex than what one could hope to cover in a single article.

One could think of various possibilities to trace this connection. One approach would be to look at how neoliberalism has affected media- and cultural policy: In Europe the broadcast media would serve as an example of how neoliberal discourse on privatization and “freedom” motivated a re-regulation of media (and cultural) policy that introduced commercial radio and TV. Hallin (2008) picks up on this and argues that the mass media is one of the most important social institutions to have been subjected to what he calls “enclosure” by the market logic of neoliberalism (Hallin 2008, 43; Hesmondhalgh 2008). Another way of tracing neoliberalism's entrance into everyday life through popular media is Couldry's (2008) analysis of reality-TV that argues that “the cruelties” of neoliberalism are translated into “ritual that enacts as 'play' an acceptable version of the values and compulsions on which that cruelty depends” (Couldry 2008, 3). A third approach, which I will concentrate on in the following, is to focus on what has been said on news and business journalism's role in promoting neoliberalism. Here one can talk of the part played by the media in shaping collective memory, and the (uncritical) economization of news journalism.

Even though he mainly focuses on the class struggle part of neoliberalism, Harvey (2010a) touches on a fundamental experience when he points to the media's role in promoting what he describes as a public “amnesia”, an amnesia that makes the public forget and forgive the transgressions of the capitalist class and the destructive elements in the capitalist system. One could read into this statement the notion of “false consciousness” that prevailed in 1970's critique of ideology, but what Harvey is talking about is more manifest than that. Talking about how capital's advancements are framed in public discourse he writes:

“We are enjoined to rejoice in the rebound in stock values for the capitalists because it always precedes, it is said, a rebound in the 'real economy' where jobs for the workers are created and incomes earned. The fact that the last stock rebound in the United States after 2002 turned out to be a 'jobless recovery' appears to have been forgotten already. The Anglo-

Saxon public in particular appears to be seriously afflicted with amnesia. It too easily forgets and forgives the transgressions of the capitalist class and the periodic disasters its actions precipitate. The capitalist media are happy to promote such amnesia” (Harvey 2010a, 219).

The concept of public amnesia does not stop at forgetting systemic faults, but it also limits the possibilities for a radical imagination through forgetting memories of a radical past. Haiven (2011) has pointed to this political dimension of memory and remembrance in an era that has “conspired” toward a forgetting of radical memory (Haiven 2011, 60). Hence, a historical consciousness is a radical project.

The role of news and business journalism in the “making and breaking” of the financial crisis have been acknowledged by various scholars (e.g. Chakravartty and Schiller 2010; French et al. 2009; Grantham and Miller 2010; Lewis 2010). Their argument is that not only did business media play a role in legitimizing the financial processes that preceded the crisis of 2008, but also that “in the last three decades, stories prominent on the pages and screens of the globally integrated financial news media exerted a powerful form of symbolic violence, normalizing and depoliticizing what were not too long ago understood as fringe economic theories” (Chakravartty and Schiller 2010, 686). For Grantham and Miller (2010) too it is in the mass media’s version of “the financialization of everything” (Harvey 2005, 33) that the neoliberal influence reveals itself:

“Perhaps neoliberalism’s most pernicious impact on popular communication has been the financialization of news and current affairs [...]. The focus of “news” has become stock markets, earnings, profits, and portfolio management. Journalists stalk politics in order to discredit democratic activities that might restrain capital” (Grantham and Miller 2010, 176).

This tendency of a preoccupation with “the economy” on a content level not only affects news journalism but entertainment as well, as *Jim Cramer’s Mad Money* on American CNBC is perhaps an extreme, yet figurative example of. This could be taken as evidence of the economy’s colonization of the public in the media – a colonization that marginalizes the possibility to recall radical events of the past, and to forget those transgressions of capitalism.

2. No Alternative: Capitalism’s Incorporation of Disaffection

In the previous section I pointed to instances where the media was understood to be a part of the problem: both in terms of reproducing a neoliberal ideology through developments in journalism and entertainment, and by limiting a radical imagination through “public amnesia”.

One way of seeking for an alternative to this tendency would be to turn to “alternative media” as a space that can maintain integrity and keep an oppositional position against a neoliberal agenda, and support a radical imagination. Alternative media could be described as ways of organizing, producing and using media outside of the established system, motivated by different norms, goals and ambition than those commercial or public organizations that we generally meet in our everyday media use. In other words: “Alternative media is a sphere that challenges the capitalist media industry. Alternative media are way [sic] of organizing and producing media that aim at creating critical content that challenges domination” (Fuchs et al. 2010, 199).

As I mentioned in the introduction, this object of study has attracted much interest from media scholars over the past decades, partly because of the explosion of alternative outlets due to the spread of the internet, and partly because of the interest in extra-parliamentary organizations and new social movements in the early 2000s. One way of framing the interest in alternative media is that it proposes the bridging of a gap between two critical traditions in media studies: political economy and cultural studies. Here was an approach and an object of study that took macro, structural-level critique into account while still acknowledging the agency on an actor-level. Obviously this resonates on the deep and long-standing discussion within the social sciences about structure and agency and where to locate social change on that scale. Atton and Couldry (2003) described the growing interest in alternative media against a backdrop of “loss of momentum through the 1990s of some other critical traditions within media and cultural studies (for example, ideological analysis) in a sea of methodological doubt and militant particularism” (Atton and Couldry 2003, 580).

A recurring theme in the literature on alternative media is that the concept lacks a proper definition (e.g. Fuchs 2010; Sandoval and Fuchs 2010; Bailey et al. 2008; Coyer et al. 2007). In some sense the problem with defining the term might derive from an uncertainty as to whether “alternative media” as a concept is an analytical construction, or if it remains on a spontaneous level, i.e. that scholarship has imported a term from common language (we somehow “know” what it is, but have trouble defining it) and that it has not left this common-sense-status.

This uncertainty has resulted in researchers replacing “alternative” with another, assumedly more precise, prefix, e.g. “radical” (Downing 2001), “community” (Howley 2005), “citizen” (Rodriguez 2001), “autonomous” (Langlois and Dubois 2005), “tactical” (Raley 2008), “critical” (Fuchs 2010). The benefit of this pluralism is that the problem with the notion of “alternative” (a negatively defined concept) does not need to be dealt with. However, this threatens to lead into a particularism that covers a crypto-ontology about mainstream and alternative that constitutes a fundamental ontology for these types of studies. What is missing (or perhaps present in its absence) is a discussion about the “alternative”.

In this discussion about “the alternative” we could benefit from a distinction between a social and a formalist notion of alternative.¹ In the field of the social and the political sphere, an alternative could be linked to such things as “an alternative worldview”, i.e. ideas and utopian visions about what a society could be. In the field of aesthetics, in art and entertainment, an alternative more often refers to “alternative modes of expression”, i.e. experimental forms, languages and “recodifications”. By keeping this distinction in mind it might be possible to think about what kind of alternative a media of the alternative might be. Partly this alternative connects with ideas and political demands by progressive grassroots and social movements.

2.1. New Social Movements and Symbolic Resistance

If we define alternative media as the media of social movements (as has been suggested by e.g. Dagon 2004; Downing 2001; Downing 2010), or a means for symbolic resistance, it is important to make clear what kind of social movements we are talking about. Otherwise there is a risk of ending up with something that looks like just another aspect of life style politics, where alternative media becomes the news output for the “alternative” segment of a target audience. Example of this could be found in Haiven’s (2007) critical account of *AdBusters* magazine that reveals how the criticism of capitalism that the magazine (and the movement) presents is ill informed in its activism and criticism of consumerism and capitalism. In the following I will point to aspects in the theory of new social movements and symbolic resistance that have been absorbed by the capitalism that it set out to criticize, and my concern is that we ought to find ways to think “the alternative” that do not fall into the same trap.

This critique is not intended for those popular oppositional uprisings of recent years that have mobilized in e.g. Chile and Mexico, or protests in Spain, Greece, and Great Britain that opposes budget cuts in higher education or resist harsh economical demands of the IMF, nor does it concern the successful revolutions in Northern Africa of last year. Rather it wishes to separate “the alternative” from a certain kind of western countercultural resistance with its roots in the 1960s and that have recurrently been “co-opted” or become a market niche in the capitalist market society.² To give an example: for someone engaged in the animal rights movement in Sweden it is probably easier to lead a “cruel free” life today than it was 30 years ago: vegetarian alternatives are common in restaurants and grocery stores (even at McDonald’s!). At the same time the total consumption of meat in the country increased by 33% between 1980 and 2010 (Jordbruksverket 2012). The paradox is obvious: a lifestyle dedicated to animal rights has been a commercial success, but the aim to decrease the slaughter of animals for food has apparently failed. This example resembles Thomas Pepper’s (1972) critique of the underground press in the U.S. of the 1960s and similar cases have been made about the anti-capitalist critique in the kind of symbolic activism associated with culture jamming (Heath and Potter 2004; McGuigan 2005).

There are various accounts that tell us how symbols and representations have become increasingly important for understanding social and political power under postmodernity (e.g. Duncombe 2002). One important aspect of this is the notion of “new social movement”, and Melucci’s (1997) approach to social movement studies, an approach that took representations and symbolic action into consideration and inspired a cultural turn in social movement research. This was sided with the works of Eyerman and Jamison (1991) who with their cognitive approach offered new insights into the youth movements of the 1960s. This turn is usually described in terms of a shift of interest towards post-material values and a step beyond sociological definitions of class relations. One could argue that social movements replaced class as the agents in the discourses on social change. Where Marx and Engels had claimed that all social history is the history of class struggle, social movement theory proposed a more liberal, non-determinist or non-evolutionist perspective of how

¹ It is possible to find parallels between this and the distinction made by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) between social and artistic critique in the anti-capitalist movement of the 1960s.

² There are various accounts of this tendency of “co-optation”, or capitalism’s incorporation of criticism. For a general historical account, see Cross (2000). A more specific case of counterculture and information industry can be found in Turner (2005).

societies change (Sztompka 1993, 274 ff.). The social class is historically determined while the social movement has to be mobilized out of singular agents. This turn from class formations to social movements is ambiguous. It may provide a more flexible form of analyzing social change than the structural explanations had done, but it runs the risk of losing the big picture in the ambition to stress the agency found in the actors, it also comes close to a discourse that stresses individuality similar as can be found in neoliberalism (Haiven 2007).

Since new social movements are conscious of a symbolic dimension it is motivated to take a more detailed look into the idea of resisting symbolic power through “challenging the codes” (Melucci 1997). The idea that representational systems and symbols construe an important locus for activism found theoretical support both in postmodern thinking about the importance of signification, and in new social movement theory. McGuigan (2005) has referred to this tactics as “radical subversion”. He presents a quite sceptical account of culture jamming where it is questioned whether it can present any real critical effect or political impact at all. Some of his criticism is interesting to take part of as it might also have relevance for a definition of alternative media.

The reason for McGuigan’s scepticism lies not only in culture jamming being an idealistic movement working in the realm of signification, but also because it is “elitist and, to many, either downright offensive or simply unintelligible” (McGuigan 2005, 438). It is easy to imagine how culture jammers attacks on consumerism could be interpreted as an attack on the lifestyle of “ordinary people” rather than on the system that makes consumerism a necessity. Since consumption is an integral part of everyday life it is difficult to find large popular support for a movement that opposes it. And, as Haiven (2007) has shown, the individualistic character of this kind of activism is close to neoliberalism.

Culture jamming was a child of the 1990s and seemed to have vanished, or lost its relevance a decade into the 2000s, but interestingly enough, Adbusters – the spearhead of the international culture jamming movement managed to spark a new kind of anti-capitalist protest when the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon entered the public in the fall of 2011. To many, this was seen as a return of a political momentum from the 1990s, lost since 2001.

Various publications (Taylor et al. 2011; Chomsky 2011; van Gelder 2011) have praised the novelty of this movement and as it spread from Wall Street over the world, the term “occupy” became a new slogan for anti-capitalist resistance. The Occupy movement offers something different than culture jamming as it takes the symbolic to the physical. It also differs from culture jamming in that its address is populist rather than elitist. Pointing out the finance capital as the main problem has been a successful strategy of both leftists and right-wing populists during the 20th century, and it is perhaps easier to sympathize with a movement of “the 99%” than with people who make you feel bad about your consumption habits.

But does this mean that the occupy-movement has resolved the contradictions of earlier versions of symbolic resistance? This is hard to say, but one could look to some interesting tendencies. First, there are cases where the populism has made some traditional leftist activists nervous because it is unclear who you are marching (camping) with. Especially in those cases where hackers network Anonymouse and the Occupy-movement have made common efforts.³

Secondly, the stress on the urban makes occupy practices (as well as some recent comments from David Harvey (2012) about the city as locus of radical social change) vulnerable to the fetishisation of urban life that is at the core of gentrifying processes in contemporary society. Again, as with McGuigan’s (2005) critique of culture jamming, the popular tendencies of the argument risk facing the same fate as did much of the critique of the 1960s (Rancière 2010; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Heath and Potter 2004). The urban character of the occupy-movement could easily be adopted (co-opted) by the same kind of urban development-lingo about “creative class” (Florida 2005) etc.

Alternative sources of information, knowledge and culture are indeed important in order to challenge the ideological standstill in the official media discourse and invoke a radical imagination. But there is also a risk that the abundance in alternative voices made possible by new media technologies leads to what Dean (2009) has described as “psychotic media”: communicative capitalism’s abundance of alternative voices and talk without response.

Dean has introduced the concept of communicative capitalism, referring to “the materialization of ideals of inclusion and participation in information, entertainment, and communication technologies in ways that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism” (Dean 2009, 2). Dean points to weaknesses of alternative media definitions that over-stress the participation-aspect and the transformed social relation between the producer and the audience is at fore (as in Bailey et al. 2008,

³ One example from Sweden was how Anonymous fronted anti-feminist attacks on a small independent theatre’s staging of Valerie Solana’s SCUM Manifesto (see <http://anonopssweden.blogspot.se/2011/11/opscum.html>).

and Atton 2002). Over the last decade we have seen how many of those features previously attributed to alternative media have become part of everyday mainstream media use. What is left of the concept “alternative media” if every media practice resembles it? It’s engagement with progressive social change?

It is in line with this argument that we should read Fuchs’ (2010) call for a Marxist theory of alternative media. His argument is that the theoretical approaches applied on alternative media studies have stressed process and action aspects of alternative media, understanding them as self-organized, citizen-controlled, self-managed etc. Hence they have been treated more in terms of their organization than on the form and content level. He suggests a shift in focus from process and organization to “critical product content that formulates visions of an alternative beyond capitalism” (Fuchs 2010, 188). This is what Fuchs believes should be required from a critical theory of alternative media.

2.2. The Alternative: From Particularism to Communism

It is indeed difficult to outline alternatives. Sharp critics of contemporary politics, economics and culture often fall short on the task of presenting the visions of an alternative route. Couldry (2010) makes an effort to think about culture and politics after neoliberalism through the concept of voice. In his analysis neoliberalism has set limits to the possibilities for humans to give account of themselves and their place in the world. His ambition is to use voice as a way of saving the idea of democracy from its neoliberal implications and he does so through a critique of neoliberal economics and politics, but also through an analysis of the connections between neoliberalism and mainstream media. One could, however, object to his approach by saying that it may go beyond neoliberalism but it does not go beyond capitalism.

In fact, there is evidence that suggests that any attempts at proposing an alternative to capitalism is futile, since such alternatives are effectively neutralized under what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have labelled “the new spirit” of capitalism. In line with this argument, McGuigan (2012) asks:

“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?” (McGuigan 2012, 430)

Similar claims have been made by Simon Critchley (2011) who suggests that we are living through a long anti-1960s, a four decade long reaction against utopianism. Part of this is explained by the incorporation of disaffection into capitalism itself (McGuigan 2009, 1). Capitalism has become immune to criticism, in the same fashion as communicative capitalism creates a post-democratic pseudo public where all kinds of critique may be voiced without any consistent response. This is also the challenge for alternative media: how remain a critical alternative when the target of criticism seems unaffected, or in some cases even strengthened by the criticism?

Harvey (2010a) has stressed how the importance for an alternative movement is to produce alternative mental conceptions. Some believed that the aftermath of the financial crisis would serve as an opportunity for imagining such alternatives. Thus was the interpretation made by Grantham and Miller (2010) who suggested that the crisis, with its ties to the media, would bring forth the possibility of an alternative:

“If this latest failure undermines neoliberalism, as we suspect, then the death of Yanqui journalism, destroyed by its own weapon of financialization, will bring into being a new world of popular communication. We can only guess what that will look like – but we must fight for its future” (Grantham and Miller 2010, 176).

Given the various setbacks of the political left in Europe over the last decades, it may however seem as if the TINA prophecy has been proven right (e.g. the 2009 election to the European parliament where the socialist and leftist groups lost over 20 mandates from the previous period). Many commentators of contemporary politics have noted this lack of momentum in the European left and absence of a strong oppositional movement to the political and economic doctrine of neoliberalism. Some of these commentators do actually go further and insist on pointing to the fact that perhaps the problem is not to be found in neoliberalism but in the capitalist system itself.

While the lack of political opposition to neoliberalism, the theoretical produce in traditional leftist thinking has thrived in recent years, as well as an upsurge of titles on Marx and Marxism (e.g. Eagleton 2012; Hobsbawm 2011; Jameson 2011). One event that was influential for this develop-

ment was the publication of Hardt and Negri's trilogy *Empire*, *Multitude* and *Commonwealth*. In the closing passage in *Empire*, Hardt and Negri made the bold move to write: "biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution remain together, in love, simplicity, and also innocence. This is the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 413). From thereon we can see how the notion of communism resurfaces in the literature, not at least with titles such as *The Idea of Communism* (Zizek and Douzinas 2010). This phenomenon would in itself be an interesting object of study; have perhaps the 20 years that passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union made it legitimate to again speak of communism? Or have 30 years of neoliberalism radicalized the opposition? In any way, what those books offered, as well as commentators such as Harvey, Badiou and Zizek, is a return to an attempt to do theory with a capital "T", and draw a "big picture" meta-perspective of political economy on a global scale. At the centre of these books is a developed and thorough critique of contemporary capitalism and even the reintroduction of the concept of communism.

Badiou (2008) introduced the notion of the "communist hypothesis" in an essay in *New Left Review* where he claimed that the communist hypothesis is a regulatory function rather than a programme and that:

"As a pure idea of equality, the communist hypothesis has no doubt existed since the beginnings of the state. As soon as mass action opposes state coercion in the name of egalitarian justice, rudiments or fragments of the hypothesis start to appear. Popular revolts – the slaves led by Spartacus, the peasants led by Müntzer – might be identified as practical examples of this 'communist invariant'. With the French revolution, the communist hypothesis then inaugurates the epoch of political modernity" (Badiou 2008, 35).

The task of leftists today, says Badiou, is to determine where in the history of this communist hypothesis we find ourselves. Zizek (2009) elaborates on this in *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, and in a similar way Harvey points to the original meaning of being communist: "as those who understand the limits, failings and destructive tendencies of the capitalist order" (Harvey 2010a: 259). This identification of the alternative with communism suggests a path somewhat different than the social movement theory of the 1990s. If the ideas of the 1990s often stressed the spontaneous, carnivalesque and symbolic dimensions to a politics of cultural resistance (Cohen 1993; Duncombe 2002), the books referred to above suggest a sterner version of critique of capitalism. Whether this is a consequence of "big theory" or an expression of a radicalization of the alternative remains unclear but the fact that the "spectre" has reappeared in political philosophy is quite interesting. We could then ask the question whether "the alternative" should be understood as equal to communism.

Also in the field of media and communication studies, calls for a more elaborate social theory have been made (e.g. Hesmondhalgh and Toynbee 2008), claiming that the field for all too long have existed in a backlash of the heavily theorized 1970s, and therefore avoided to get involved in big picture theory. This ambition is visible in the field of alternative media research as well. As Sandoval and Fuchs (2010) have argued, a minimum criterion for a critical alternative media would be to produce a content that points at "the unequal, dominative and non-participatory character of contemporary society" (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, 146).

3. Alternative Media and Media of the Alternative

From the argument presented in the previous section it may appear as if "the alternative" is synonymous to communism, and that a media of the alternative consequently would simply be a communist media. Even though it might be possible to sketch out a normative notion of something like a media that strives for equality and create commons, I would rather add another notion of "alternative" to the discussion, one that presents an alternative to neoliberal enclosure of cognitive resources, as might be found in the realm of art. Artistic interventions have a privileged position when it comes to explore and experiment with forms and expressions. However, I will argue that even if it may be productive, it is not unproblematic to include an artistic dimension in the definition of alternative media.

This is by no means the first time a suggestion to look at formalist aspects of alternative media has been made. For instance, Atton (2002) includes form and aesthetics in his influential typology of alternative media (Atton 2002, 27). Another example is Clemencia Rodriguez, who in a comment on the video-blog *Future of the Book's* special on alternative media in 2007, stated: "More and more I am convinced that we need to value the revolutionary potential of expression, re-

codification, re-invention of languages to express experience"⁴. Rodriguez' comment finds a counterpart in Coyer et al. (2007) who suggested that "any truly 'alternative' media work will need to transform the medium itself, change the way in which it is used, and find alternative styles and alternative languages in which to express itself, if it's 'alternativeness' is to be maintained" (Coyer et al. 2007, 91).

Underlying these claims is the presumption that there is a connection between aesthetical forms and social action. Through its form, alternative media might realize a critical perception that supposedly reaches deeper than does merely a critical content. Fuchs (2010) suggests a definition of alternative media as critical media through a typology of five qualities. Two of those concern formalistic aspects of alternative representations:

"The second quality of critical media is negation at the form level. The form of critical media products challenges human consciousness so that imagination is potentially advanced and suppressed possibilities of development can potentially be imagined" (Fuchs 2010, 181).

This bears echo of the notion of a "radical imagination" (Haiven 2011), and Harvey's (2010a) call for alternative mental conceptions. On a more concrete level, the formal aspects of critical media are elaborated in aesthetical terms:

"The fourth quality of critical media is dialectical realism at the form level. Dialectical realism (form) means that the form involves rupture, change, non-identity, dynamics, and the unexpected" (Fuchs 2010, 182).

It might however be appropriate to make a few comments on these suggestions, as both quotes imply a quite instrumental notion of perception. What is absent from the first quote is what we could call a sociological sensitivity in the notion of aesthetic experiences. Bourdieu (1996; 1984) has in numerous work convincingly shown how the ability to "advance imagination" through aesthetic perception is the product of social disposition tied to what in Bourdieu's terms are referred to as cultural capital and habitus.

In the second quote Fuchs exemplifies what could be called "stylistics" of critical media. This list of features bears much resemblance to alternative aesthetics of high modernism and the historical avant-garde, features that in e.g. television studies have been declared stock goods in commercial mainstream television (Caldwell 1995; Butler 2010).

Still there are some parts of Fuchs' proposal that might prove useful for advancing the theoretical work on alternative media. Acknowledging the formalistic aspects is one way of circumventing the dead end in critical media theory set up by the "participatory turn" in mainstream media (i.e. the rise of "convergence culture" and the "prosumer"), where many of the characteristics once ascribed to alternative media now have become part of everyday mainstream media consumption.

On a theoretical level, the introduction of a formalist aspect into the discussion about alternative media's role in promoting a "radical imagination" of the alternative comes across an interesting inconsistency in the meaning of the word alternative. Where it's social connotations concern an alternative mental conception, or view of the world, the more aesthetical connotations are tied to an advanced stylistics of modernism and avant-gardism, an alternative with a purpose of being anti-popular.

There is reason to claim that critical assessment of neoliberal policies are found more in the artistic realm than in the (mainstream) media. As we have noted in previous sections, the mass media has been held partly responsible for the endeavour of promoting neoliberalism (by "public amnesia", financialization of news). While journalism seems to have resigned from the task of scrutinizing the effects of political implementations, contemporary art has shown an increased interest in social and economical issues. Let me return to the exhibition "There is No Alternative" that I mentioned earlier:

"Following the collapse of communism TINA [There is no alternative] has become something of a slogan, embodying the neo-liberal viewpoint that the only viable economic and political system is global free market capitalism, coupled with the renewal of the creed of individualism. The aim of the project is to challenge the clearly hegemonic intent of Thatcher's statement 'TINA' and examine the contradictory relationship between capitalism and the idea of liberty from a historical perspective" (Plender 2010).

Thus opens the folder for the "There is no alternative" art exhibition that took place in Stockholm, Sweden in the spring of 2010 and that included artists from a wide range of European coun-

⁴<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2007/12/11/deconstructing-television-from-within-the-alternative-aesthetics-of-paper-tiger-television> (accessed September 3, 2012).

tries to explore capitalism in its present guise. In a way the program from the exhibition responds to what I earlier suggested for a critical definition of alternative media. We found in the section on neoliberalism and mass media that the role played by the media in promoting neoliberalism could be summed up as “public amnesia”, and financialization of journalism. What many of the art works in the “There is no alternative”-exhibition did was precisely to historicize capitalism and discuss the experience of neoliberalism in everyday life. Some examples of this include (quotes from the exhibition catalogue):

“Unnar Örn: ‘Capital Drive’

As the title would seem to imply, the works deal with the representation of the seemingly forward motion of capitalism. Based on archival imagery and language appropriated from the promotional brochures produced by Sweden’s national bank (Riksbanken) as well as banks in Iceland and the USA between the 1930s and 1970s, Unnar Örn explores both how these institutions chose to describe their activities and represent their own history”.

“Petra Bauer: ‘Swedish Stories – Part Three: How Can I Resist the Neoliberal Development?’

In this third part, she [Bauer] will reflect on the role reality TV programmes play and will demonstrate how she thinks they are connected to the country’s recent political development as the welfare state model is being dismantled. Using examples of programme’s such as ‘Swedish Idols’ and the American ‘Extreme Home Makeover’, Bauer explores the idea that these shows represent a kind of citizenship training; teaching subjects how to develop the characteristics necessary for a neo-liberal society”.

What Bauer’s work wishes to show is similar to Couldry’s analysis of reality TV’s place in the neoliberal society (Couldry 2010; 2008). But what these examples also show, are alternative forms of framing and problematize the relationship between culture, neoliberalism and capitalism. However, while these works deal with the content matter of political economy we should also look at instances where artists address communication and media.

There is a parallel movement to this exploration of capitalism that consists of artistic interventions and investigations into the mass media. Not only does the approach in the works cited above resemble the critical “readings” of popular culture of American Alternative TV-collective Paper Tiger Television (Halleck 1984), but among the participants in the TINA-exhibition, at least three of them have earlier been engaged in projects about the media, and especially television. Olivia Plender, Katya Sander and Petra Bauer have all contributed to the Swedish public access show Good TV, hosted by artists, and was aired between 2004 and 2008. Good TV was a project interested in the symbolic power -- political and aesthetic -- of television in contemporary society. And it was not alone in this endeavour, there seemed to be a current among artist around 2005 that turned to television in order to explore questions of representational forms and aesthetical power.⁵ The early 2000s was also the time when the Italian TeleStreet-movement appeared and began pirate transmissions in the borderland between social and formalist critique of contemporary media culture (Ardizzoni 2010).

These examples of television alternatives might at first seem arbitrary and haphazardous, insignificant marginal phenomena, but I would argue that they present a good example of the dialectics between a social and a formalist definition of “alternative”. A strong benefit with these artistic approaches to television is that they radically negate what could be called the populist impulse of TV. Instead of building transmission around the ideal construction of an audience of “the people” they allow for a complexity in content and form that promotes ambiguity rather than redundancy. Instead of claiming objectivity by providing its audience with stories that are already familiar and confirms established norms they can allow themselves to be subjective and encourage critical abilities of the viewer.

If we were to take Sandoval’s and Fuchs (2010) requirement a step further, artistic interventions in television show us how the media can promote contradictions and complexities and thereby also engage its viewer in a critical assessment of mainstream mass media. That would be an alternative media that not only produce a critical content but also present tools for a radical imagination.

⁵ I have elaborated on this phenomenon and the forms of critique involved in television produced by artists in Andersson (2012).

4. Conclusions

I began the article with the statement that there is no alternative. No alternative in politics, economy, culture, art and media. In response to this I asked what role progressive alternative media could play in promoting a radical imagination against neoliberalism.

My inquiry took its departure from a definition of neoliberalism and the connection between neoliberalism and media. While complex, this connection was concentrated on two things: first the promotion of “public amnesia” where capitalist transgressions are effectively removed from public debate; and secondly the uncritical financialization of news journalism that resigns from the task of critically scrutinizing economic development. An alternative media approach to this would then be a type of media discourse that emphasize historical contextualization, and a critical scrutiny of economic policy.

In the section called “No alternative” I discussed some critical approaches to “new social movements” and symbolic resistance. I argued that a definition of alternative media as media of social movements becomes vulnerable to the type of criticism raised against new social movements. I also discussed the “alternative” in relation to recent writings in critical theory and how the notion of communism has entered that discussion.

The third section dealt with formalist approaches to “the alternative” and how some examples of art works have addressed questions of neoliberalism and capitalism as well as media (e.g. television). “The alternative” could be discussed in social and formalist terms, where the former denotes the alternative worldview, and the latter refers to alternative modes of expression.

The (re)introduction of the notion of communism into the critical discourse is an example of defining an alternative in social terms, and it might suggest a new linguistic agency in the critique of neoliberalism. When Margaret Thatcher announced that “There is no alternative”, it was motivated by the end (or near end) of communism. Since then the idea of communism has been marginal and politically impossible. Perhaps the works cited in this article points to a radicalization of the critique of capitalism and that alternative media, or a media of the alternative, will tap into that radicalization.

On the formalist aspects I pointed to some artistic projects that addressed capitalism, neoliberalism, culture and the media. Although there are limits to art’s possibilities for encouraging a radical imagination (e.g. it’s elitist and exclusive realm), initiatives such as the exhibition “There is no alternative” and the public access show “Good TV” are examples of how social issues could be addressed in a form that is almost as complex as the issues themselves. That possibility for complexity could be a second contribution to a media of the alternative.

This distinction between a social and formalist understanding of alternative might bear resemblance to Boltanski’s and Chiapello (2005) concept of social and artistic critique of capitalism. Part of their argument is that the disintegration of these two aspects of criticism laid the foundation to the present situation where capitalism seems immune to criticism. This is visible in the criticism of post-material new social movements that points to how they too often have become absorbed by the system it was set out to challenge. A further task for a media of the alternative would be to avoid becoming too closely associated with such a project where it may find itself an easy target for criticism against countercultural resistance (e.g. Haiven 2007; McGuigan 2005; Heath and Potter 2004).

References

- Andersson, Linus. 2012. *Alternativ television. Former av kritik i konstnärlig TV-produktion* [Alternative Television: Forms of Critique in Television Produced by Artists] [diss.] Örebro: Örebro Studies in Media and Communication.
- Ardizzoni, Michaela. 2010. Neighbourhood Television Channels in Italy: The Case of Teletreet. In *Beyond Monopoly: Globalization and Contemporary Italian Media*, edited by Michaela Ardizzoni and Chiara Ferrari. Plymouth: Lexington.
- Atton, Chris. 2002. *Alternative Media*. London: Sage.
- Atton, Chris, and Nick Couldry. 2003. Introduction. *Media, Culture and Society* 25 (3): 625-645.
- Bailey, Olga Guedes, Bart Cammaerst, and Nico Carpentier. 2008. *Understanding Alternative Media*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Badiou, Alain. 2008. The Communist Hypothesis. *New Left Review* 49: 29-46.
- Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. 2005. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Stanford: University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Butler, Jeremy G. 2010. *Television Style*. London: Routledge.
- Caldwell, John T. 1995. *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television*. New Brunswick: Rutgers.
- Chakravarty, Paula, and Dan Schiller. 2010. Neoliberal Newspeak and Digital Capitalism in Crisis. *International Journal of Communication* 4: 670-692.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2011. *Occupy*. London: Penguin.

- Cohen, Abner. 1993. *Masquerade Politics: Explorations of the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Couldry, Nick. 2010. *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism*. London: Sage.
- Couldry, Nick. 2008. Reality TV, or the Secret Theater of Neoliberalism. *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 30(1): 3-13.
- Coyer, Kate, Tony Dowmunt, and Alan Fountain, eds. 2007. *The Alternative Media Handbook*. London: Routledge.
- Critchley, Simon. 2011. Is Utopianism Dead? *The Harvard Advocate*, Winter 2011.
- Cross, Gary. 2000. *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dagron, Alfonso Gumucio. 2004. The Long and Winding Road of Alternative Media. In *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*, edited by John Downing. London: Sage.
- Dean, Jodi. 2009. *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Downing, John, ed. 2010. *The Encyclopaedia of Social Movement Media*. London: Sage.
- Downing, John. 2001. *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. London: Sage.
- Duncombe, Stephen. 2002. *The Cultural Resistance Reader*. London: Verso.
- Eagleton, Terry. 2012. *Why Marx was Right*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Eyerman, Ron, and Andrew Jamison. 1991. *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. Pennsylvania: University Press.
- Florida, Richard. 2005. *Cities and the Creative Class*. New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. Houndmill: Palgrave.
- French, Shaun, Andrew Leyshon, and Nigel Thrift. 2009. A Very Geographical Crisis: The making and Breaking of the 2007-2008 Financial Crisis. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 2: 287-302.
- Fuchs, Christian. 2010. Alternative Media as Critical Media. *European Journal of Social Theory* 13 (2): 173-192.
- Fuchs, Christian, Matthias Schafranek, David Hakken, and Marcus Breen. 2010. Capitalist Crisis, Communication and Culture: Introduction to the Special Issue. *tripleC* 2 (8): 193-204.
- Grantham, Bill, and Toby Miller. 2010. The End of Neoliberalism. *Popular Communication* 8 (3): 174-177.
- Haiven, Max. 2011. Are Your Children Old Enough to Learn About May '68. *Cultural Critique* 78: 60-87.
- Haiven, Max. 2007. Privatized Resistance: AdBusters and the Culture of Neoliberalism. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 29 (1): 85-110.
- Halleck, Deedee. 1984. Paper Tiger Television: Smashing the Myths of the Information Industry Every Week on Public Access Cable. *Media, Culture and Society* 6 (4): 313-318.
- Hallin, Daniel C. 2008. Neoliberalism, Social Movements and Change. In *The Media and Social Theory*, edited by David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee. London: Routledge.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, David. 2012. *Rebel Cities: A Guide to the Vexed*. London: Verso.
- Harvey, David. 2010a. *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism*. London: Profile.
- Harvey, David. 2010b. Organizing for the Anti-Capitalist Transition. *Interface* 2 (1): 243-261.
- Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: University Press.
- Heath, Joseph, and Andrew Potter. 2004. *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Hesmondhalgh, David. 2008. Neoliberalism, Imperialism and the Media. In *The Media and Social Theory*, edited by David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee. London: Routledge.
- Hesmondhalgh, David, and Jason Toynbee, eds. 2008. *The Media and Social Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 2011. *How to Change the World: Tales of Marx and Marxism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Howley, Kevin. 2005. *Community Media: People, Places and Information Technologies*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Jameson, Fredric. 2011. *Representing Capital: Reading of Volume One*. London: Verso.
- Jordbruksverket. 2012. Livsmedelskonsumtion och näringsinnehåll. Jordbruksverkets statistiska rapporter 2/2012 [Food Consumption and Nutrition: Dept. Of Agriculture Statistical Reports]. Accessed October 4, 2012. http://www.jordbruksverket.se/webdav/files/SJV/Amnesomraden/Statistik%2C%20fakta/Livsmedel/Statistikrapport2012_1/Statistikrapport2012_1/201201..pdf
- Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Picador.
- Langlois, Andrea, and Frédéric Dubois, eds. 2005. *Autonomous Media: Activating Resistance and Dissent*. Montreal: Cumulus.
- Lasn, Kalle. 1999. *Culture Jam*. New York: Quill.
- Lewis, Justin. 2010. Normal Viewing Will Be Resumed Shortly: News, Recession and the Politics of Growth. *Popular Communication* 8 (3): 161-165.
- Ludes, Peter. 2012. Updating Marx's Concept of Alternatives. *tripleC* 10 (2): 555-569.
- Marx, Karl. 1990/1867. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume One*. London: Penguin.
- McGuigan, Jim. 2009. *Cool Capitalism*. London: Pluto.
- McGuigan, Jim. 2012. The Coolness of Capitalism Today. *tripleC* 10 (2): 425-438.
- McGuigan, Jim. 2005. The Cultural Public Sphere. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 8 (4): 427-443.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1997. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Pepper, Thomas. 1972. The Underground Press: Growing Rich on the Hippie. In *Mass Media and Society*, edited by Alan Wells. Palo Alto: National Press.
- Plender, Olivia. 2010. There is No Alternative. Exhibition catalogue from There is no Alternative at Konsthall C, Hökarängen, March 11- May 16 2010. Online version in Swedish. Accessed March 13, 2012. <http://www.konsthallc.se/uploaded/There%20is%20no%20alternative.pdf>
- Raley, Rita. 2008. *Tactical Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2010. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso.

- Rodriguez, Clemencia. 2001. *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizen's Media*. Cresskill: Hampton Press.
- Sandoval, Marisol, and Christian Fuchs. 2010. Towards a Critical theory of Alternative Media. *Telematics and Informatics*. 27 (2): 141-150.
- Sztompka, Piotr. 1993. *The Sociology of Social Change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Taylor, Astra, and Keith Gessen, eds. 2011. *Occupy! Scenes from Occupied America*. London: Verso.
- Turner, Fred. 2005. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Bran: The Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago: University Press.
- Van Gelder, Sarah. 2011. *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Zizek, Slavoj. 2009. *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*. London: Verso.
- Zizek, Slavoj, and Costas Douzinas, eds. 2010. *The Idea of Communism*. London: Verso.

About the Author

Linus Andersson

will defend his PhD-thesis in media and communication studies in October. He is affiliated with Södertörn University, Sweden. The thesis analyses forms of critique in television produced by artists. Andersson has published work on alternative media, social movements and media aesthetics. He is currently involved with a project about political extremism and the internet.