

## 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”.

Christian Fuchs

*Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, [christian.fuchs@im.uu.se](mailto:christian.fuchs@im.uu.se)*

**Abstract:** This paper presents reflections on the conference “Critique, Democracy and Philosophy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Information Society. Towards Critical Theories of the Information Society” that took place at Uppsala University from May 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, 2012. About 160 participants attended the conference. It featured 15 plenary talks in seven sessions, 15 paper presentation sessions organised in 5 slots that each had 3 parallel sessions. The conference was financially supported by the Swedish Research Council and organised by Uppsala University’s Department of Informatics and Media, the ICTs and Society Network (<http://www.icts-and-society.net>), the European Sociological Association’s Research Network 18: Sociology of Communications and Media Research (<http://www.europeansociology.org/research-networks/rn18-sociology-of-communications-and-media-research.html>), tripleC – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society (<http://www.triple-c.at>), the Unified Theory of Information Research Group (UTI), Aarhus University’s Department of Information and Media Studies, the Vienna University of Technology’s Institute for Design & Assessment of Technology, and Jönköping University’s School of Education and Communication.

**Keywords:** critique, critical theory, political economy, Critical Media and Communication Studies, Critical Internet Studies, information society, democracy, philosophy, ICTs and society.

The 1<sup>st</sup> ICTs and Society event took place in June 2008 at the University of Salzburg in Austria. The idea was to establish a network of experts interested in the study of digital media and the information society. There was a PhD student day and a round table discussion of approximately 40 representatives from different research centres specializing in the study of ICTs & society. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ICTs and Society event was a small event at the University of Trento in Italy in 2009. The 3<sup>rd</sup> event attracted approximately 70 scholars and was held at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3) at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) in Barcelona in 2010. It featured keynote speakers and workshops. In my view, the workshops did at this particular event not work so well for various reasons. The 4<sup>th</sup> conference took place at the University of Uppsala on May 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, 2012. It was the thus far largest ICTs and Society event. It was other than in earlier years organized in the form of a conference that featured 7 plenary sessions and 15 parallel sessions. Out of 187 submissions, 106 were accepted for presentation (acceptance rate: 56.7%).

In total, approximately 160 persons attended the conference. The organisers wanted to strike a balance between on the one hand achieving a critical mass of attendees and on the other hand not overstretching the number of participants. The latter means that an acceptance of all abstracts can easily result in a conference that features panels, in which the papers are not connected to each other and no overall conference theme and red thread is present. Many scholars visiting one of the large conferences (e.g. International Communication Association, International Sociological Association), report feelings of being lost in the chaos of topics and presentations that do not relate to each other and cover all imaginable topics. The main task of this conference was to reflect on the role of critique, critical theory, and philosophy in the information society and in relation to the Internet and social media. The panels were in my opinion quite coherent and were able to contribute to the overall task set for the conference. The parallel sessions focused on the following topics:

- Tales and Theories of Commodification and Ideology: Informational Capitalism and Capitalist Media Today
- A Thousand Foucaults? A Thousand Deleuzes? Foucauldian and Deleuzian Perspectives on Social Media and Technology
- Digital Culture and the Digital Everyday: Whole Way of Life. Whole Way of Struggles?
- Facebook: Tool of Democracy? Tool of Protest? Diaspora: Tool of Ideology? Tool of Communism?
- The Antagonistic Lives of Knowledge Workers: Creativity, Precarity, Exploitation and Resistance
- Rise or Demise of the Public? The Public Sphere, Regulation, and Governance in the Media Age

- Surveillance 2.0? Commodification, Policification, and Discrimination in the 'Surveillance Society'
- Democracy 2.0? Political Theories of the Internet
- Feminism 2.0? Gender and Family in the Age of Technoculture
- Reloading Karl Marx? Exploitation, Alienation, and Commodification in the Age of the Internet
- Philosophy and Ethics of Information: The Good and the Evil in the Information Society
- The Sociology and Political Economy of Consumption, Prosumption and Mobile Lifestyles
- Towards a Critical Theory of Social Media: The Dialectics of Empowerment and Disempowerment
- The Media – Alternatives and Commons: Towards a New Communism?
- Reason and Revolution Today: The Media in the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, and Beyond

This conference has shown several important developments. The predominance of positivistic, administrative, uncritical research in studying the media, communication, ICTs, the Internet and the information society is challenged by scholars who are enthusiastic about and highly gifted in conducting critical research. There is a high presence of young scholars, many of them at the doctoral student level, who engage in the critical study of media and the Internet. Critical studies of media and the Internet, and that is for me a crucial result of this conference, are for many today Marxist studies of media and the Internet. There is a resurgent interest in the works of Marx. There are those for whom Marx never went away, and those, who as young scholars or students live in a time of global commodification are interested in engaging with, interpreting, applying and reloading Marx's works. Marx is back. He is running wild on academia, challenging its neoliberalism and administrative character. He is also running wild on society, expressing itself in numerous contemporary struggles against inequality and power asymmetries – struggles that bring back the dimensions of class and capitalism and united as a whole could constitute the foundations of a new society that is deeply rooted in participatory democracy.

The relative success of this conference has been enabled by the enthusiasm of the participants as well as by a grant provided by the Swedish Research Council that allowed to cover the keynote speakers' flights and some additional costs, the sustained help by volunteers, and a start-up grant I negotiated when I was appointed to Uppsala University. The conference fees and the grant did not cover the actual costs of this conference, but in this case it was possible to cover the deficit and to so keep the conference fee at a reasonable level. Conference organization requires resources and considerations of all kinds and is an art in itself.

The conference has also shown that there is a deep engagement with and interest in theory and philosophy. And this circumstance is present although or maybe even because neoliberal academia does not value theory (especially critical theory, ethics, and philosophy), states have continuously cut budgets for the social sciences and humanities, funds and celebrates mainly the most administrative and theory-disinterested scholars. It is therefore no surprise that Manuel Castells says that "books about books" that criticize other theories and ground theoretical fields of study advance the "deforestation of the planet" and should not be printed (Castells 2009, 6) – which is just another formulation for saying that deep theoretical and philosophical debates are crap. Castells is not only disinterested in theory and reifies domination (see Fuchs 2009), but also questions the legitimacy of critical theory. Furthermore, Castells argues that although he sees political action and projects as essential, the task of philosophers would be to interpret the world differently, not to change it (Castells 2010a, 395). He has "forbidden [himself] [...] normative prescriptions and political admonition" and focuses on the analysis of "the observed practice of societies" (Castells 2010b, 414f). Castells sees academia and politics as two autonomous systems that should not be linked and sees no space and role for ethics in the study of society. One can say that he considers academia and politics as Luhmannian functionally differentiated systems so that each has its own function in society independent from the other.

On the one hand, Castells own work is not free of political judgments, although they are to a certain extent problematic (so he for example analyses the Zapatista movement as similarly reactive as American militias and al-Qaeda, see Castells 2010b; he focuses on the analysis of the role of social media in the Obama election campaign 2008, but the choice of Obama as object of study is a political choice in itself, etc; see Fuchs 2009). On the other hand, politics and academia are not separate for a number of reasons. Academia is shaped by neoliberal political conditions and the commodification of research and higher education. Academic labour and knowledge work in general are shaped by a polarization between precariousness and managerialism so that a political-economic class relation is at the heart of higher education that is enmeshed into this line of stratifi-

cation. Scholars do not choose their objects of studies, their ways of thinking, and their research methods independently of political attitudes. Universities are sites of struggles, as numerous contemporary student-led higher education occupation movements against the commodification of everything (including higher education) show. Academia, research, and higher education are highly political. Political thinking and action is therefore a responsibility of the academic – within and outside of academia and as a combination of both. Denying this responsibility is not only defeatist, it also legitimates the dominant powers that try to control and govern the information society based on neoliberal governmentality. Castells' network society approach is neither theoretical nor critical, it is an approach that invites everybody with one or another piece of analysis that can be picked out and fits particular agendas. The Castellian approach/non-theory fits well the mindset of neoliberal governmentality and the Californian ideology of Internet entrepreneurialism. Castells disavows socialism as a "naïve image of a reconciled human community" (Castells 2009, 13). The contemporary times of crisis require in contrast the vision of an alternative society, critical theory, and the critical analysis of capitalism in order to constitute active and struggling hope for betterment. Theory and philosophy enable reflection on the fundamental principles, possibilities, conditions, dynamics, contradictions, structures, actors, values, problems, and defects of society and contemporary society and about role of humans in society. Critical theory provides categories that allow the analysis of possibilities and realities of society, the identification of unrealized possibilities, foundations and principles of ethical, political, and critical judgement; assessment of the concrete conditions of existence, discourses about meanings of fundamental categories that describe the world, society, and human values, the identification of contradictions and dilemmas humans are facing in society, as well as reflections on conditions of action and politics.

The Uppsala conference has shown, other than desired by Castells, that there is a big interest in critical theories of society, the media, and the Internet. I compiled an incomplete list of some of the theorists and philosophers whose works were discussed vividly at the conference: Antonio Gramsci, Antonio Negri, Bernhard Stiegler, Carole Pateman, Chantal Mouffe, Crawford Macpherson, Dallas Smythe, Ernesto Laclau, Georg Lukács, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Gilles Deleuze, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Guy Debord, Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, Immanuel Kant, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Rancière, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard, Jürgen Habermas, Edward P. Thompson, Ferdinand de Saussure, Friedrich Nietzsche, Judith Butler, Louis Althusser, Karl Marx, Luc Boltanski, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Mario Tronti, Martin Heidegger, Max Horkheimer, Michael Hardt, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, Mike Davis, Paul Ricœur, Pierre Bourdieu, Pierre Proudhon, Radovan Richta, Raymond Williams, Roland Barthes, Rosa Luxemburg, Sigmund Freud, Slavoj Žižek, Theodor W. Adorno, Tiziana Terranova, Zygmunt Bauman.

This list is incomplete, but nonetheless shows a deep concern and vivid engagement in the interpretation and application of philosophy and critical theories to the communication realm of the media and the Internet. The conference not only showed the concern for theory that challenges the positivistic and administrative mainstream of Internet Studies and Media/Communication Studies. Theory and philosophy have had a clear trajectory at this conference and may in the future have such an emerging trajectory at a larger scale too – the interest in Marx and Marxism. The Marxian trajectory can provide a unity in the diversity of critical theories, forms of stratification and domination, and social movements. It allows us to see how forms of domination are in contemporary society connected to exploitation. It is encouraging and refreshing to see a high interest in the works of Marx and engaged debates about which Marxian concepts to apply in which ways for coming critically to grips with society and the media. No matter which competing answers we have for the newly emerged questions, it is important that we are asking the questions that Marx would ask today. These are questions like: Is it rent or surplus value that shapes social media? Is digital labour productive or unproductive labour? Does it involve exploitation and/or alienation and/or objectification and/or reification? What is the relationship between production and consumption and between commodification and ideology in the realm of digital media today? Is play labour exploited even if it is fun? What is the dominant class and what is the dominated class today and how does this relate to knowledge work? Do we live in a capitalist society and/or an information society? What is the role of media and technology in rebellions and revolutions? What are adequate strategies for transforming society, the media, and the Internet? Do projects like open access journals, FLOSS, file sharing, Wikipedia, WikiLeaks, Anonymous, watchdog organisations, etc constitute alternatives to capitalism or not and how can their alternative potentials be strengthened?

It is not an accident, but symptomatic, that we were sitting and standing at this conference in a jam-packed room in one of the parallel sessions listening to mainly younger scholars and PhD students debating Karl Marx, exploitation, alienation, and commodification in the age of the Internet

and that Marx and Marxism were recurrent overall themes in the plenary and parallel sessions. This is symptomatic for the arrival of new Marxian times. The task is to institutionalize this interest and to connect it to social struggles. It is also not accidental, but symptomatic for the times we live in, that there is a large interest in digital media, the Internet, and “social media” as objects of study.

It is indicative of the new Marxian times that the special issue “Marx is Back: The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today” that is co-edited Vincent Mosco and me and that will be published later in 2012 (registering and subscribing as reader to the journal *tripleC* enables receiving content updates, see <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/user/register>), attracted a large number of submissions, of which only a portion, namely nearly 30 contributions, will be published in the issue. An overview of the role of the use of Marxian concepts in Internet Studies will be given in a contribution titled “Karl Marx @ Internet Studies” (co-authored by Nick Dyer-Witheford and me) in a *New Media & Society*-special issue on “Internet Studies: State(s) of the Art(s)” (edited by Charles Ess and William Dutton).

Nicholas Garnham, who authored the book “Capitalism and Communication” (Garnham 1990), a milestone publication in Marxist Media and Communication Studies, has recently published a chapter titled “The Political Economy of Communication Revisited” (Garnham 2011) in the “Handbook of Political Economy of Communications” (Wasko, Murdock and Sousa 2011). He argues that current political economy of information and communication “is underpinned by a crude and unexamined romantic Marxist rejection of the market per se” (Garnham 2011, 42), is shaped by “antimarket fundamentalism” (Garnham 2011, 53), that “all approaches [besides critical political economy] have something to offer” (Garnham 2011, 60), and that the “whole theory of alienation that has been so influential upon Marxist and other ‘radical’ traditions of opposition to capitalism” (48) has to be rejected. The field of political economy would be associated with “a vague, crude, and unselfquestioning form of Marxism, linked to a gestural and self-satisfied, if often paranoid, radicalism” (Garnham 2011, 42). It would be “empirically questionable and theoretically and politically dubious” (ibid.). These passages are indicative for a turn from Marxism to liberal pluralism in a situation, where capitalism has resulted in deep inequalities, a global crisis, an intensification of struggles and their circulation, and a growing desire for change. Garnham’s goodbye to Marxism and his personal peace agreement with capitalism is not only out of joint with the experiences and works of many scholars who participated in and presented their work at the Uppsala conference, it is also out of joint with the political possibilities and requirements of the historical conjuncture we are experiencing today. A more suitable title for Garnham’s chapter would be “Revisiting, Revising and Abandoning the Marxist Political Economy of Communication”. Marxism is today revisited and applied in new forms by many scholars to new communications developments such as the Internet and social media; it is definitely neither revised nor abandoned, but rather renewed and reloaded.

The 1980s and 1990s and early 2000s saw a disappearance of the engagement with Karl Marx’s works and Marxism in the social sciences and humanities. There were multiple reasons for this development.

- The rise of neoliberalism and neoliberal class struggle from above.
- The commodification of everything, including the commons and public universities.
- The cultural turn in the social sciences and the rise of postmodernism.
- The lack of trust in alternatives.
- A low presence and intensity of struggles.
- In a climate of conservative backlash and commodification of academia, it was not opportune and conducive for an academic career and for academic reputation to conduct Marxist studies or to label oneself as a Marxist.

We are today witnessing the reappearance of Karl Marx, who keeps haunting capitalism like a ghost. There are several reasons for this development:

- The new world economic crisis has resulted in an intense interest in the analysis of capitalism.
- Neoliberal precariousness of work and life has brought about an interest in the critique of class and commodification.
- New new social movements like the anti-corporate movement, the global justice movement, and the Occupy movement have a focus on class struggle and connect non-class issues and class issues in a movement of social movements.
- The financialization of the economy has evoked interest in Marx’s concept of fictitious capital.
- New global geopolitical warfare has resulted in an interest in theories of imperialism.
- To understand contemporary revolutions and rebellions requires engagement with concepts of revolution, emancipation, and liberation.
- The reality and discourse of globalization has brought about interest in concepts of global capitalism.

- Mediatization, ICT, and knowledge work have created attention for Marx's philosophy of technology and his concept of the General Intellect.
- A new generation of precariously working university scholars and students expresses interest in Marxian theory that can relate to their own working conditions and the life conditions of contemporary times.
- The capitalist crisis has resulted in discussions about participatory democracy and democratic communism as alternatives to capitalism.

Michael Burawoy wrote in a reflection on the question, when the right time has come for conducting critical/Marxist social science: "How often have I heard faculty advise their students to leave public sociology until after tenure – not realizing (or realizing all too well?) that public sociology is what keeps sociological passion alive. If they follow their advisor's advice, they may end up a contingent worker, in which case there will be even less time for public sociology, or they may be lucky enough to find a tenure-track job, in which case they have to worry about publishing articles in accredited journals or publishing books with recognized university presses. Once they have tenure, they are free to indulge their youthful passions, but by then they are no longer youthful. They may have lost all interest in public sociology, preferring the more lucrative policy world of consultants or a niche in professional sociology. Better to indulge the commitment to public sociology from the beginning, and that way ignite the torch of professional sociology" (Burawoy 2007, 40).

When is the right time for Marxist social science, Marxist Media and Communication Studies, and Marxist Internet Studies? Do we have to wait? We cannot wait. All times are the right times as long as injustice exists in the world. Times of crisis are more-than-right times; they are urgent times. Critical social science requires networks, passion, courage, and commitment. The Uppsala conference can make us confident, in all of these respects, although we certainly have to be self-reflective and self-critical.

The enthusiasm for this conference was already visible in the pre-conference discussions on the ICTs and Society mailing list (see <http://www.icts-and-society.net/ mailing-list-archive/>). At the conference, we had a large number of keynote speakers, which is an asset as such, at the same time we were somewhat rushed in the parallel sessions from one paper to the next and in switching from the parallel sessions to the plenary sessions with only short breaks in-between. This has resulted from the dilemma that increasing the number of parallel sessions or the duration of the conference increases attention and discussion time, while also increasing costs (for all because it makes a price difference if you stay 3 or more nights in a Swedish accommodation). The dilemma also involves the circumstance that increasing formal discussion times in the framework of three days decreases the number of possible presentations, which decreases the number of participants because many scholars depend on giving a presentation for obtaining funding. In the future a combination of the traditional conference format with more discursive formats (including workshops, round tables, single ignite talks as discussion openings) may be a way forward. This conference was an analysis of the state of the art that we need to continue to build and debate.

Quite some of us also used Twitter as one means of information and communication during the conference. There are differing attitudes towards Twitter use at conferences. On the one hand, the 140 characters of a Tweet are a typical expression of the lack of attention and focused debate that characterizes the commodification of political culture today. One cannot have a real debate based on a format of 140 characters. Twitter encourages immediate response, whereas a conversation requires listening, reflection, and time. On the other hand, Twitter can be a first means of contact between conference participants, can be used for disseminating links that can support discussion, and can be used as means for igniting offline meetings and discussions. So I tend to think about Twitter use at conferences like about e-learning: It should not substitute debates, but rather can initiate, if used in the right way, social contacts and debates.

I want to provide brief summaries of some of the arguments set out in the plenary talks. These summaries are surely not complete and are based on my own notes taken during the conference.

In the opening plenary, *Vincent Mosco* focused on the critical and Marxist study of labour, media, and communication today. He pointed out the return of the interest in Marx (although for many Marx never was away) and the importance of Marx as a) political economist, b) cultural theorist, c) journalist, and d) of Marx's work "The Grundrisse" for critically understanding media and communication today. He showed that numerous scholars contribute to Marxist studies of media and communication today. The central question would not be what the next big technology would be, but rather if knowledge workers of the world will unite. Convergence would not only be a process at the level of technology, organizations, and the labour process, there would rather also be trade union convergence that would be needed for strengthening the labour side in class struggles. Vinnie pointed out examples for trade union convergence in communication industries in Western count-

ries, China, and India. The crucial question would be: Will knowledge workers of the world unite democratically and for democracy?

In the second talk of the opening plenary, *Graham Murdock* analysed consumption, ideology, and exploitation in the time of digital commodities. Commons would be material and imaginative spaces, common resources, relations, and rights. The enclosure of the commons would involve privatization, exclusion and expulsion. It would be a historical process that today also affects digital media. In addition, the promotional complex would have enclosed everyday life. Exploitation would be a structural category defined by asymmetric exchange that today also affects web 2.0 prosumers, whose time, attention, personal data, talent/skills, education/training and materials are exploited. Given exploitation's structural character, it would still be exploitation, even if people like it (as e.g. on Facebook). Alongside the commodification and commercialization of culture, digital gift economies and revived public institutions would have emerged. There would be three forms of the media economy that are based on commodities, public goods, and gifts.

*Gunilla Bradley* focused in her talk on foundations of Social Informatics and ICT ethics. She pointed out foundations of convergences that shape contemporary society: the convergence of computers, media, and telecommunications that forms ICTs, the convergence of the public, the home, and work that forms a life environment, the convergence of values, labour/markets, and technology that forms globalization, and the convergence of private roles, public roles, and professional roles that forms life roles. These structural changes form the foundations of the information society. Threats such as global war and crisis would today threaten the information society so that it is important to uphold the vision of a good information and communication society.

*Wolfgang Hofkirchner* analysed potentials and risks for establishing a global sustainable information society. He distinguished three types of commons: common property in the economic-political system, common decisions in the political-cultural system, common values in the cultural system. The commons would be threatened by crises that advance particularism and fragmentation, fundamentalisms, authoritarian rule, financialization, the unequal distribution of wealth, the colonization of body and nature, the military-industrial complex, big businesses, and meaningless technologies. Social media would have ambiguous impacts on society. The greatest ambiguity would today be the one of the enclosure and movement for the reclaiming of the commons. Society would be in a great bifurcation, in which the outcome and future of society is undetermined, and that reactualizes the choice situation between barbarism and socialism.

*Charles Ess* discussed digital media ethics and philosophy in 21<sup>st</sup> century information society. He pointed out that in the West there are developments away from privacy as individual entity towards group privacy, a movement from private property to collective property (e.g. open source, FLOSS, Pirate Bay), and from the individual self towards the relational self. In the East, there would be opposite tendencies. Digital media would enhance the emergence of hybridization that also affects the self so that an emotional-relational self would have emerged. Commodification would threaten privacy, autonomy, dissent, and freedom. In this situation, critical thinking and digital media ethics would be of high relevance.

*Christian Christensen* analysed the role of WikiLeaks in contemporary society, especially the role of transparency and its relation to the mainstream media. He argued that WikiLeaks was facing the choice between spreading its leaks via alternative media and thereby facing the problem of elite access and via mainstream media, which pose a censorship risk. WikiLeaks would be about making power transparent and would have mainstreamed transparency. Slavoj Žižek would overestimate the power of WikiLeaks and underestimate the power of cooptation.

*Peter Dahlgren* discussed social media and the civic sphere in the context of crisis, critique and the future of democracy. He argued that there are both optimistic and pessimistic views about the role of the Internet and society. Excessive pessimism should be avoided. Besides Marx's concept of critique, there would also be the one of Kant that focuses on epistemological critique and questions like: What do we know? How do we know? What can we know? Such a form of epistemological criticism would highlight discrepancies. Critique would have lost its punch today due to the decline of the left and the rise of neoliberalism. There would be a return of critique today without a central focus on class. The battles between culturalists and political economists in the 1990s would have been unproductive. One should avoid excessive inner-academic battles and focus on the complementarities of left scholarship. One would need less critique and more creative ways to engender hope, including the creation of sites of political participation.

*Nick Dyer-Witford* analysed Cybermarxism and cycles and circuits of struggle in 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism. He argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a global *Gesamtarbeiter* (collective worker) - *Weltgesamtarbeiter*. There would today be a transnational commodity chain with precarious, feminized and migratory labour at its core. ICTs would tie together the global worker and the

global commodity chain. Digital media would have been a condition of possibility of the current global crisis. The four wheels of struggle would be North American and European struggles against austerity measures, the Arab spring, struggles of Chinese migrant workers, and peasant struggles in Latin America. Today's activism would involve people, who make use of digital media in their everyday lives. Social media would be a commodification apparatus, but also enable free association and digital activism. Chaos tendencies would today include high relative immiseration, geopolitical conflicts, and the ecological crisis. The question of our age would be if these crises could be overcome by establishing a new society. Students would play an important role in contemporary struggles. The task for critical academics would be to defend and deepen spaces for the critical analysis of the media and society.

*Christian Fuchs'* topic was the critique of the political economy of social media and informational capitalism. He pointed out complementarities between Frankfurt School Critical Theory and Critique of the Political Economy of the Media. It would be a false prejudice that both approaches are pessimistic and neglect agency and subjectivity. Contemporary society would be among other things an information society on the level of the productive forces and capitalistic on the level of the relations of production. Both Manuel Castells' and Henry Jenkins' approaches would be flawed and lack the capacity to analyse the Internet and the information society critically. Digital labour would involve three elements: ideological user coercion, alienation of ownership and control, expropriation of value. Unpaid digital labour would be a manifestation of the emergence of a social factory and factory planet. The play labour of Internet prosumers would be based on the super-exploitation and enslavement of workers in developing countries. The notion of the participatory web would be an ideology. Revolutions would not be made on Twitter or Facebook, these would rather be tools for rebellions that emerge from and question actual power relations and materialize themselves in spaces like Tahrir Square, Syntagma Square, Puerta del Sol, Plaça Catalunya, or Zuccotti Park. Needed would be an alternative Internet that can only be established by struggles that strengthen the commodification of the commons.

*Margareta Melin* gave attention to the re-negotiation of journalistic work and strategies of resistance against precariousness and discrimination such as e.g. the strategy of flight as fight. She stressed the existence of struggles over symbolic power, in which the white, protestant, male elite would try to defend its hegemony of the newsrooms fiercely. Men that have various strategies to defend their hegemony would dominate journalism and online journalism. Women in journalism would have developed various strategies to react to this situation: the imitation of male strategies, freelance journalism in order to better integrate the professional and private role, the creation of separate feminist journalistic spaces and projects, and the appropriation of new media for struggles. Feminist resistance could make use of new media (such as blogs) in a playful way in order to constitute the strategy of flight as fight.

*Catherine McKercher* presented foundations and results of a feminist political economy of labour and communication in precarious times that feature precarious work conditions. She pointed out that although most journalism students are female, men dominate newsrooms, especially in leading positions. But what happens with the other female students of journalism? Many of them would be freelancers and precarious workers. Precarious labour in journalism would be based on piece-work and piece-wages. There would be a pressure to work for free, e.g. in the form of unpaid internships that last longer than in former times. Women would conduct three quarters of all unpaid internships. News media would use social media like Twitter and user-generated content for obtaining content without payment. Examples are CNN iReporter and the Huffington Post. The notion of participatory journalism would be exposed as ideology by the exploitation of unpaid workers. Resistance would be necessary and include boycotts, protests, unionization of freelancers, or lawsuits.

*Tobias Olsson* analysed the "architecture of participation" of social media and whom it benefits. He first pointed out that and why web 2.0 constitutes an architecture of participation and that it is unclear who benefits from it. It could either be an architecture of participation for corporations, for consumers/prosumers, or for citizens. A very common claim would be that social media allow customers to participate and result in a more democratic economy. The three different positions would be hard to combine. More empirical research would be needed about participation on social media. Tobias presented research results about Swedish social media platforms and analyzed which forms of participation they employ. He concluded that corporate models are more frequent, whereas consumer- and citizen-oriented models would occur sometimes.

*Trebor Scholz* focused on the analysis of the Internet as playground and factory. He argued that digital labour does not feel like labour, but the fact that Facebook has a market value of almost 100 billion US\$ would show that it is based on the expropriation of value created by play workers.

There would be various forms of digital labour: waged, unwaged, emotional, co-innovative, no collar, public-spirited, data provision, geo-spatial, gameified, affective, mobile. Commercial-, peer- and governmental surveillance would constitute the violence of participation. Political strategies against the expropriation of digital labour would be technical (promote data portability), legal (expand labour legislation to the Internet), social (unionization, hacking, jail breaking, decentralization), or education-based.

*Mark Andrejevic* analysed the uses of exploitation, the digital enclosure, and the personal information economy. He argued that the contemporary Internet is characterized by the digital enclosure, a process in which users are separated from the ownership of their data so that a privatization takes place. Surveillance would be at the heart of the digital enclosure. The arising problems would however not simply be about privacy or targeted advertising, but exploitation. A survey among Australians showed that the more targeted ads are, the less people agree to be tracked and profiled. Exploitation would be a crucial concept for the analysis of corporate social media. The concept of exploitation would be important because a) it analyses how seemingly freely agreed upon wage labour is structured by coercion, b) it points towards forms of separation, c) it allows an ethical critique of coercion, the capture of value, and alienation. The use of the exploitation concept for the analysis of social media would be linked to the engagement with Marx.

In the concluding talk, *Andrew Feenberg* discussed how to philosophically think about the Internet as well as the role of the political strategies of the great refusal and the long march in Internet politics. He first made four observations about how Marx thought of technology:

- a) Marx was a social constructivist who saw science and technology as the outcomes of societal developments.
- b) Technology is a concrete object that is a unity of diverse elements.
- c) The appropriation of the productive forces enables the enhancement of individual capacities.
- d) Technologies (and other phenomena) have basic functions that take on certain meanings in certain cultural and economic circumstances.

The Internet would have antagonistic technical codes. One of it would be the Internet as consumption model that is based on non-hierarchical markets, broadcasting for delivery, data storage for data mining, and online community as data source. Another one is the Internet as community model, which is based on non-hierarchical communication, anonymity, broadcasting for mobilization, data storage for history, and online communities. These two models would contradict each other. Andrew Feenberg asked Herbert Marcuse's question about political strategy: Should there be a great refusal or the long march through the institutions in order to defend and enhance the second model of the Internet?

Great refusal or long march? New Marxian Communication and Internet Studies is the great refusal of a field that has during the past decades become more uncritical and administrative. We have to together start the long march as great refusal.

## References

- Burawoy, Michael. 2007. For Public Sociology. In *Public Sociology*, edited by Dan Clawson, Robert Zussman, Joya Misra, Naomi Gerstel, Randall Stokes, Douglas L. Anderton, Michael Burawoy, 23-64. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 2009. *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 2010a. *End of Millennium*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with a new preface.
- Castells, Manuel. 2010b. *The Power of Identity*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with a new preface.
- Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Some Reflections on Manuel Castells' Book "Communication Power". *tripleC – Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 7 (1): 94-108.
- Garnham, Nicholas. 2011. The Political Economy of Communication Revisited. In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock and Helena Sousa, 41-61. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Garnham, Nicholas. 1989. *Capitalism and Communication*. London: Sage.
- Wasko, Janet, Graham Murdock and Helena Sousa, ed. 2011. *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

## About the Author

### *Christian Fuchs*

Christian Fuchs is chair professor in Media and Communication Studies at Uppsala University. Together with Wolfgang Hofkirchner, he founded the ICTs and Society Network in 2008. He is editor of tripleC and chair of the European Sociological Association's Research Network 18- Sociology of Communications and Media Research. He is author of the books "Internet and Society. Social Theory in the Information Age" (2008), "Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies" (2011), and "Social Media. A Critical Introduction" (forthcoming). <http://www.fuchs.utl.at>