

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

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of tripleC – Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society.

Edited by Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco

In light of the global capitalist crisis, there is renewed interest in Karl Marx's works and in concepts like class, exploitation and surplus value. Slavoj Žižek argues that the antagonisms of contemporary capitalism in the context of the ecological crisis, the massive expansion of intellectual property, biogenetics, new forms of apartheid and growing world poverty show that we still need the Marxian notion of class. He concludes that there is an urgent need to renew Marxism and to defend its lost causes in order to render problematic capitalism as the only alternative (Žižek 2008, 6) and the new forms of a soft capitalism that promise, and in its rhetoric makes use of, ideals like participation, self-organization, and co-operation, without realizing them. Žižek (2010, chapter 3) argues that the global capitalist crisis clearly demonstrates the need to return to the critique of political economy. Göran Therborn suggests that the "new constellations of power and new possibilities of resistance" in the 21st century require retaining the "Marxian idea that human emancipation from exploitation, oppression, discrimination and the inevitable linkage between privilege and misery can only come from struggle by the exploited and disadvantaged themselves" (Therborn 2008, 61). Eric Hobsbawm (2011, 12f) insists that for understanding the global dimension of contemporary capitalism, its contradictions and crises, and the persistence of socio-economic inequality, we "must ask Marx's questions" (13).

This special issue will publish articles that address the importance of Karl Marx's works for Critical Media and Communication Studies, what it means to ask Marx's questions in 21st century informational capitalism, how Marxian theory can be used for critically analyzing and transforming media and communication today, and what the implications of the revival of the interest in Marx are for the field of Media and Communication Studies.

Questions that can be explored in contributions include, but are not limited to:

- * What is Marxist Media and Communication Studies? Why is it needed today? What are the main assumptions, legacies, tasks, methods and categories of Marxist Media and Communication Studies and how do they relate to Karl Marx's theory? What are the different types of Marxist Media/Communication Studies, how do they differ, what are their commonalities?
- * What is the role of Karl Marx's theory in different fields, subfields and approaches of Media and Communication Studies? How have the role, status, and importance of Marx's theory for Media and Communication Studies evolved historically, especially since the 1960s?
- * In addition to his work as a theorist and activist, Marx was a practicing journalist throughout his career. What can we learn from his journalism about the practice of journalism today, about journalism theory, journalism education and alternative media?
- * What have been the structural conditions, limits and problems for conducting Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Research and for carrying out university teaching in the era of neoliberalism? What are actual or potential effects of the new capitalist crisis on these conditions?

- * What is the relevance of Marxian thinking in an age of capitalist crisis for analyzing the role of media and communication in society?
- * How can the Marxian notions of class, class struggle, surplus value, exploitation, commodity/commodification, alienation, globalization, labour, capitalism, militarism and war, ideology/ideology critique, fetishism, and communism best be used for analyzing, transforming and criticizing the role of media, knowledge production and communication in contemporary capitalism?
- * How are media, communication, and information addressed in Marx's work?
- * What are commonalities and differences between contemporary approaches in the interpretation of Marx's analyses of media, communication, knowledge, knowledge labour and technology?
- * What is the role of dialectical philosophy and dialectical analysis as epistemological and methodological tools for Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Studies?
- * What were central assumptions of Marx about media, communication, information, knowledge production, culture and how can these insights be used today for the critical analysis of capitalism?
- * What is the relevance of Marx's work for an understanding of social media?
- * Which of Marx's works can best be used today to theorize media and communication? Why and how?
- * Terry Eagleton (2011) demonstrates that the 10 most common held prejudices against Marx are wrong. What prejudices against Marx can be found in Media and Communication Studies today? What have been the consequences of such prejudices? How can they best be contested? Are there continuities and/or discontinuities of prejudices against Marx in light of the new capitalist crisis?

All contributions shall genuinely deal with Karl Marx's original works and discuss their relevance for contemporary Critical Media/Communication Studies.

Eagleton Terry. 2011. *Why Marx was right*. London: Yale University Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 2011. *How to change the world. Marx and Marxism 1840-2011*. London: Little, Brown.

Therborn, Göran. 2008. *From Marxism to post-Marxism?* London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2008. *In defense of lost causes*. London: Verso.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2010. *Living in the end times*. London: Verso.

Editors

Christian Fuchs is chair professor for Media and Communication Studies at Uppsala University's Department of Informatics and Media. He is editor of the journal tripleC – Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society. His areas of interest are: Critical Theory, Social Theory, Media & Society, Critical Political Economy of Media/Communication, Critical Information Society Studies, Critical Internet Studies. He is author of the books "Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies" (Routledge 2011) and "Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age" (Routledge 2008, paperback 2011). He is co-editor of the collected volume "The Internet and Surveillance. The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media" (Routledge 2011, together with Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund, Marisol Sandoval). He is currently writing a book presenting a critical theory of social media. <http://fuchs.uti.at>

Vincent Mosco is professor emeritus of sociology at Queen's University and formerly Canada Research Chair in Communication and Society. Dr. Mosco is the author of numerous books on communication, technology, and society. His most recent include *Getting the Message: Communications Workers and Global Value Chains* (co-edited with Catherine McKercher and Ursula Huws, Merlin, 2010), *The Political Economy of Communication*, second edition (Sage, 2009), *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite* (co-authored with Catherine McKercher, Lexington Books, 2008), *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society* (co-edited with Catherine McKercher, Lexington Books, 2007), and *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (MIT Press, 2004). He is currently writing a book on the relevance of Karl Marx for communication research today.

Publication Schedule and Submission

Structured Abstracts for potential contributions shall be submitted to both editors (christian.fuchs@im.uu.se, moscov@mac.com) per e-mail until **September 30th, 2011 (submission deadline)**. The authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to write full papers that are due five months after the feedback from the editors. Full papers must then be submitted to tripleC. Please do not instantly submit full papers, but only structured abstracts to the editors. The abstracts should have a maximum of 1 200 words and should be structured by dealing separately with each of the following five dimensions:

- 1) Purpose and main questions of the paper
- 2) Description of the way taken for answering the posed questions
- 3) Relevance of the topic in relation to the CfP
- 4) Main expected outcomes and new insights of the paper
- 5) Contribution to the engagement with Marx's works and to Marxian-inspired Media and Communication Studies

Journal

tripleC (cognition, communication, co-operation): Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society, <http://www.triple-c.se>

Focus and Scope: Critical Media-/Information-/ Communication-/Internet-/Information Society-Studies

tripleC provides a forum to discuss the challenges humanity is facing today.

It publishes contributions that focus on critical studies of media, information, communication, culture, digital media, social media and the Internet in the information society. The journal's focus is especially on critical studies and it asks contributors to reflect about normative, political, ethical and critical implications of their research.

Indexing: Scopus, EBSCOHost Communication and Mass Media Complete, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

Open Access: tripleC is an open access journal that publishes articles online and does not charge authors or readers. It uses a Creative Commons license (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License) that allows reproduction of published articles for non-commercial purposes (without changes of the content and only with naming the author). Creative Commons publishing poses a viable alternative to commercial academic publishing that is dominated by big corporate publishing houses.