

READING MARX IN THE INFORMATION AGE

Renowned Marxist scholar and critical media theorist Christian Fuchs provides a thorough, chapter-by-chapter introduction to *Capital Volume 1* that assists readers in making sense of Karl Marx's most important and groundbreaking work in the information age, exploring Marx's key concepts through the lens of media and communication studies via contemporary phenomena like the Internet, digital labour, social media, the media industries, and digital class struggles. Through a range of international, current-day examples, Fuchs emphasises the continued importance of Marx and his work in a time when transnational media companies like Amazon, Google, and Facebook play an increasingly important role in global capitalism. Discussion questions and exercises at the end of each chapter help readers to further apply Marx's work to a modern-day context.

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A Media and Communication Studies
Perspective on *Capital Volume 1*

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Introduction

READING MARX IN THE INFORMATION AGE: A MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVE ON *CAPITAL VOLUME 1*

1 Why Should I read Marx? I'd Rather Go on Facebook and Have Some Fun There . . .

The reader of this book may ask: Why should I read *Capital Volume 1*? And what has it to do with communications? Marx obviously did not write it on a laptop; he did not have a blog and a Facebook profile and wasn't on Twitter. Such media have become ubiquitous in our lives; we use them for work, politics, and in everyday life. What many of them share is that they are organised by profit-oriented businesses. They are a manifestation of what Marx termed the "accumulation of capital". At the same time they enable us to inform ourselves, communicate, and maintain social relations. Information, communication, and sociality is their "use-value", which is a term that Marx uses for describing how goods satisfy human needs.

Communications companies do not always foreground that they are profit-oriented, but rather often only stress their use-value: Facebook, for example, says that it "helps you connect and share with the people in your life". Twitter argues it allows you to "connect with your friends—and other fascinating people". These claims are not untrue, but only one side of the story. Marx would say that they are ideologies that overstate or, as he says, "fetishise" use-value in order to distract attention from exchange-value, from the fact that communications companies are out to make lots of money. Marx still matters because we live in a capitalist communications world and many forms of communications spread ideologies and are organised as for-profit businesses. Capitalism is a somewhat different capitalism today than at the time Marx lived in the 19th century—it is global; finance, technology, transport, consumer culture and advertising plays a larger role, etc. Yet Marx already saw the foundations of all these phenomena and anticipated their future relevance. And he stressed that society is historical: Capitalism develops and obtains new qualities and discontinuities in order to reproduce its underlying foundational structures, the structures of capital accumulation. And Marx cared about ethics and politics: He was convinced that we need alternatives to capitalism because we do not live in the best possible world. So Marx would welcome the social side of contemporary capitalist media, but argue that they should be changed so that we can overcome their capitalist design and usage. And he would have supported struggles for such a different world.

So Marx has a lot of relevance to tell us about contemporary communications. In order to understand laptops, mobile phones, Twitter, Facebook, etc. we need to engage with Marx. He is an essential thinker for understanding the information and Internet age critically. So Marx and Facebook are not opposites. You cannot understand the second without the first and the first gives us

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a critical perspective on the second. This book is a companion for obtaining such an understanding. It is a step-by-step guide on how to read *Capital Volume 1* from a media and communication studies perspective.

Why Read *Capital* from a Media and Communications Perspective?

Many introductory books to Marx's *Das Kapital, Band 1 (Capital Volume 1)* have been written since the first edition was published in 1867. It is up to everyone's own judgment how feasible and helpful s/he finds a particular introduction to Marx's most widely read work. The book at hand has a somewhat different purpose. It is not another general introduction or accompanying guide. Its task is to provide assistance to the reader of Marx's *Capital Volume 1* for asking questions about the role of media, information, communication, the computer, and the Internet in capitalism. It provides an introduction and is an accompanying guide for reading *Capital Volume 1* for people interested in media and communication studies. It is a contribution to the foundations of the critique of the political economy of media, information, and communication.

Why is such a book needed? Why should one read Marx's *Capital* from the perspective of and with a focus on media and communication? Claims that we live in the information, knowledge, or network economy and society are often overdrawn and advance the view that we live in an economy/society that is completely new and has nothing in common with the 19th-century capitalism that Marx analysed. Such assertions often serve the purpose of communicating that new technologies have in capitalism created great economic opportunities for everyone and that the capitalist mode of production has inherent potentials for democracy, wealth, freedom, and stability. The history of capitalism is, however, a history of war, inequality, control, and crisis. Capitalism's reality undermines and puts into questions liberal ideology. Information society euphoria is one-dimensional and uncritical. One should be sceptical of it.

It is a wrong reaction to information society euphoria to belittle and ignore the role of information, the media, and communication in capitalism. If one looks at statistics that display the profits, revenues, capital assets, and stock market values of the largest transnational corporations in the world, then one sees that quite a few of them are located in economic sectors and branches such as advertising, broadcasting and cable, communications equipment, computer hardware; culture, entertainment, and leisure; computer services, computer storage devices, electronics, Internet platforms, printing and publishing, semiconductors, software, and telecommunications. The information economy may not be the dominant sector of capitalism; it is, however, just like other capitalist industries, of significance for understanding capitalism. Contemporary capitalism is an informational capitalism just like it is finance capitalism, imperialist capitalism, crisis capitalism, hyper-industrial capitalism (the importance of fossil fuels and the mobility industries), etc. Capitalism is a multidimensional economic and societal formation. Information is one of these dimensions. To study the role and contradictions of information in capitalism is an important undertaking and dimension of a critical theory of society.

Critique of the Political Economy of the Media and Communication

The critique of the political economy of the media and communication is one of the subfields of media and communication studies. It has resulted in a significant academic infrastructure that includes, *for example*, the following:

- introductory text books (Mosco 2009; Hardy 2014);
- an academic network of scholars (the International Association of Media and Communication Research's Political Economy Section);
- handbooks (Wasko, Murdock, and Sousa 2011);

- journals (*tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*—<http://www.triple-c.at>; *The Political Economy of Communication*—<http://www.polecom.org>);
- introductory readers (Mattelart and Siegelau 1979, 1983; Golding and Murdock 1997); and
- most importantly, an active community of scholars who have a political interest in a better world and an academic interest in understanding capitalism and communication. I have been fortunate to enjoy the company of and discussions with scholars in this community, from which I have learned a lot and for which I am very grateful. This community's continuous effort to maintain and develop the field of the critique of the political economy of media and communication is important and inspiring.

Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (1973) argued in their seminal article “For A Political Economy of Mass Communications” that critique of the political economy of communications means to critically study capitalism and communication: “The obvious starting point for a political economy of mass communications is the recognition that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations which produce and distribute commodities” (Murdock and Golding 1973, 205–206). “In addition to producing and distributing commodities, however, the mass media also disseminate ideas about economic and political structures. It is this second and ideological dimension of mass media production which gives it its importance and centrality and which requires an approach in terms of not only economics but also politics” (Murdock and Golding 1973, 206–207).

For Murdock and Golding, media in capitalism have a double role as fostering (a) commodification and (b) ideologies. This analysis corresponds to two important aspects that Marx points out as important for the critique of capitalism's political economy in *Capital Volume 1*:

- (a) *The logic of commodities*: “The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an ‘immense collection of commodities’; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form. Our investigation therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity” (125). The critique of the political economy of communication asks questions about how the commodity form shapes communications and the contradictions and struggles connected to it.
- (b) *Commodity fetishism*: Ideologies present phenomena such as commodities as endlessly existing and absolutely necessary for human existence. They discard that social phenomena are made by humans in social relations and can therefore be changed. Capitalist media are important spaces, where ideologies are constructed, disseminated, reproduced, contradicted, and contested.

It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (Marx 1867, 165)

Vincent Mosco in his seminal introductory book *The Political Economy of Communication* defines this field as “the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources” (Mosco 2009, 2). Janet Wasko (2014, 260) stresses that the critical political economy of the media and communication is concerned with the “allocation of resources within capitalist societies” in the context of media and communication and gives special focus to ownership, control, power, class,

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structural inequalities, contradictions, resistance, and intervention. Murdock and Golding argue that the approach of the critical political economy of communications analyses “the wider structures that envelop and shape everyday action, looking at how the economic organization of media industries impinges on the production and circulation of meaning and the ways in which people’s opinions for consumption and use are structured by their position within the general economic formation” (Murdock and Golding 2005, 61). It “starts with sets of social relations and the play of power. It is interested in seeing how the making and taking of meaning is shaped at every level by the structured asymmetries in social relations” (62). “What marks critical political economy out as distinctive is that it always goes beyond situated action to show how particular micro contexts are shaped by general economic dynamics and the wider formations they sustain” (62).

Mosco (2009) argues that the critique of the political economy of communication gives especially attention to three aspects of research:

1. Commodification: “the process of transforming things valued for their use into marketable produces that are valued for what they can bring in exchange” (Mosco 2009, 2). In the realm of the media, there is, for example, the commodification of content, audiences, labour, users, access, and technologies.
2. Spatialisation: “the process of overcoming the constraints of geographical space with, among other things, mass media and communication technologies” (Mosco 2009, 2). This dimension is linked to the media’s commercialisation, privatisation, liberalisation, and internationalisation (Mosco 2009, 15).
3. Structuration: “the process of creating social relations, mainly those organized around social class, gender, and race” (Mosco 2009, 2). Media in modernity matter in the context of class, gender, race, and their intersections.

Mosco (2009, 2–4, 26–36) and Murdock and Golding (2005) stress that the critique of the political economy especially focuses on four methodological principles:

1. History: It is interested in the historical development of the economy and society, the dynamics and changes of capitalism, the history of the media, civil society, commodification, and the state, and how these dimensions interconnect.
2. Social totality: “Political economy has always believed that there is a big picture of society. [. . .] The political economist asks: How are power and wealth related and how are these in turn connected to cultural and social life? The political economist of communication wants to know how all of these influence and are influenced by our systems of mass media, information, and entertainment” (Mosco 2009, 4).
3. Moral philosophy: Political economy tends to argue for “extending democracy to all aspects of social life” (Mosco 2009, 4): politics, economy, workplace culture, everyday life, and the media. It asks “basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good” (Murdock and Golding 2005, 61). Today’s “leading mainstream economists are less averse to using moral language in their economic discourse. [. . .] it is chiefly the heterodox schools of thought, rooted in political economy, that take up the moral concern. [. . .] The Marxian and institutional traditions are steeped in debates over the place of moral philosophy” (Mosco 2009, 34).
4. Social praxis: The field is interested in studying and informing struggles that aim to change the world in order to create a better society.

The critique of the political economy of media and communication is a “Marxist theory of communication” (Smythe 1994, 258) and “broadly marxisant” in character (Murdock and Golding 2005, 61). Janet Wasko (2014, 260) writes that political economy of the media and communication

most often uses a “Marxist/neo-Marxist theoretical framework”. She concludes a review of the field in the 21st century: “As Jean Paul Sartre once said, ‘Marxism remains the philosophy of our time because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it’. A similar argument could be made for the study of political economy of the media” (Wasko 2014, 268).

Graham Murdock (2006, 3) argues that Marx is our contemporary and that a “properly critical analysis of the cultural landscapes of present-day capitalism must begin by engaging with three central themes in Marx’s writing—commodification, contradiction, and globalisation”. Murdock (2014b, 125) adds that such an analysis should “begin by engaging with Marx across the whole range of his writings”.

Vincent Mosco (2012) says that Marx’s writings are in a manifold way relevant for a critical understanding of communication. There is the

importance of [. . .] the Marx of *Capital* and political economy, for understanding global communication. Yet there is another Marx not unrelated to the first whose writing about culture and ideology featured in *The German Ideology*, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and other works of the younger Marx have inspired analysis and critique in cultural studies. It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the Marx of political economy and of cultural studies form pillars of critical communication study. [. . .] In addition to the Marx of political economy and the Marx of cultural studies, there is the Marx of his famous, and also infamous, notebooks *The Grundrisse* and the work of Marx the professional journalist. Indeed although Marx practiced journalism throughout his life, both *The Grundrisse* and the best of Marx’s journalism bridged the critical period between the earlier and later years of his career. (Mosco 2012, 571)

The critique of the political economy of media and communication has played a significant role in the field of media and communication studies and has helped to illuminate the role of the media and communication in capitalism. Marx’s works have had a major influence on it. This book is indebted to this tradition and understands itself as part of it.

Communications: Marxism’s Blind Spot

Aspects having to do with the role and contradictions of culture, information, communication, the media, and the Internet have been critically analysed by the field of the critique of the political economy of media and communication. They have, however, often not been taken seriously or seriously enough in Marxist theory. They have been considered as being superstructural, secondary, unproductive, mere aspects of circulation and consumption, determined or overdetermined by the base, immaterial, mere ideas, dependent, a support structure of exploitation, etc. This relegation and degradation of the realm of information was one of the reasons why the Canadian political economist of the media Dallas W. Smythe argued in 1977 that communications is the blind spot of Western Marxism. “The mass media of communications and related institutions concerned with advertising, market research, public relations and product and package design represent a blindspot in Marxist theory in the European and Atlantic basin cultures” (Smythe 1977, 1). This absence is also one of the reasons why the British Marxist cultural theorist Raymond Williams, in the same year as Smythe published his “Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism” article, coined the notion of “Cultural Materialism” in the book *Marxism and Literature* for stressing that “[c]ultural work and activity are not [. . .] a superstructure” (Williams 1977, 111). The significance of the cultural industry, the information economy, and information work have made evident that culture and communication matter, are material, and are part of capitalism’s productive economy (Fuchs 2015).

I have in my life attended too many Marxist and critical studies conferences and talks where media and communication either played no or a subordinated role. One example suffices for illustration.

On May 31, 2013, David Harvey gave the lecture “From Rebel Cities to Urban Revolution” at the “Dangerous Ideas for Dangerous Times” Festival in London. The rather small room was jam-packed with hundreds of interested listeners. In the discussion section, I asked why it is that communication is a blind spot of Harvey’s Marxist theory of space and of much other Marxist theory although social spaces can only exist in and through human communication that is conditioned by and produces and reproduces social space. Harvey in his answer did not consider the relationship of space and communication, but rather said that the whole realm of media and communication is overstressed, that the Arab Spring was no Facebook revolution, but took place in the streets and on the squares. Harvey makes exactly the often-repeated Marxist mistake to dismiss the analysis of communication in capitalism because non-Marxists overestimate its role.

I have in my life also read too many Marxist books and articles in which media and communication play no or only a subordinated role. This is one of the reasons why as editors of the journal *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* (<http://www.triple-c.at>), Marisol Sandoval and I have tried to provide a space for the publication and discussion of critical analyses of communication in capitalism that make use of or are inspired by Marx’s works. *tripleC* is neither a general Media and Communication Studies journal nor a general journal in Marxist theory. It is, rather, interested in the intersection of Marxist/critical theory and the study of media, communication, and the Internet.

What Are Information, Media, and Communication?

The terms “information”, “media”, and “communication” are not self-explanatory. There is a tendency that they are separated, which has resulted in specialist fields such as information science, media studies, and communication studies. In my view, the study of these phenomena cannot and should not be separated. Any attempt at separation is artificial and tears apart phenomena that inherently belong, exist, and appear together. Matter is the process-substance of the world. It is a *causa sui*, a cause of itself: Matter produces and organises itself and has the capacity to create new levels of existence in the world. Given this assumption, it is not necessary to revert to religious, spiritualistic, or esoteric explanations of the existence of the world that assume an existence or creator of the world outside of matter. To assume that information is immaterial or exists outside of matter violates the philosophical law of ground that every phenomenon must have an adequate cause and foundation. If the world has two substances—matter and information/spirit—then there are two phenomena that are ungrounded, which violates the law of ground. If one assumes that a spiritual force—God—created matter, then this means that an external spiritual force is taken to be the ground of the world and that it created something out of nothing. No rational answers can, however, be provided to the question of who created God. Therefore also idealism and spiritualism are ungrounded and violate the law of ground. Information is part of the material world. It is matter in movement, the process-relationship and interaction of at least two material systems. Such interactions are productive in that they help re-creating the material systems, create new internal qualities of these systems, and they pose potentials for the emergence of new material systems in the world that emerge from the interactions of existing material systems.

Humans exist in society and society is re-created and sustained by humans. Society is a level of the organisation of matter. Information in society is the social interaction process of human beings. Humans are working and thinking beings who anticipate, make ethical judgments, create and re-create society. The human brain is a storage mechanism of cognitive information that in complex manners reflects the state of the world and the human interpretation and political and moral assessment of the world. In communication processes, parts of a human’s cognitive information are in symbolic form made available to at least one other human being. If there is reciprocity, then these other humans make parts of their interpretations of the world available to the human being who communicated in the first instance.

Communication creates changes of cognitive information of others once it is recognised—that is, new meanings, interpretations, and judgements emerge through communication. Cognitive information and communication are material: they change the status and activation patterns of the brain's neural network. We cannot touch and feel information because it is intangible and nonphysical. This does, however, not make it immaterial. We can observe the consequences of informational processes, how it brings about changes of meanings and interpretations of the world. Communication takes place with the help of media such as the air, which transmits sound; the Internet, television, and radio; books and other printed materials; electronic books, posters, stickers, paintings, artworks, etc. Wherever there is communication, there is a medium.

Media are structures that organise and enable communication. They mediate between humans and enable them to communicate. Human communication can take place in a rather ephemeral or in a more regularised manner. All communication produces changes of thought patterns. Sustained communication in addition has the potential to create new social systems and new emergent qualities of existing social systems. In such cases, humans don't just cognise and communicate, but they also cooperate: they collaboratively produce new social systems or new structural qualities of social system. Information is therefore a threefold nested process of cognition, communication, and cooperation (Hofkirchner 2013).

Reading Marx's *Capital*

A Marxist theory and analysis of information, media, and communication is interested in these phenomena's contradictory roles in capitalism. Reading Marx's *Capital* can help us to understand these roles and to make sense of informational contradictions today. Marx wrote in German. For the non-German speaker, which is the majority of the world population, the question arises about which translation one should choose. *Capital* is without a doubt a difficult book. When you read this book as accompanying guide to an exploration of media and communication in Marx's *Capital Volume 1*, I recommend that you use Marx's original work in English, but also have a translation of it in your mother tongue at hand, which can help. My own mother tongue is German. I have read Marx both in German and English. I do, however, not write about Marx in German because this would relegate the availability of my guide to the small number of German-speaking critical scholars interested in media and communication. Native German speakers are unfortunately often not willing to read English because they expect in a cultural imperialist manner that everything should be translated into German. Sometimes this attitude hides the fact that many of them simply have problems speaking and reading English because the school system does not support good practice of foreign languages enough and there is a lack of practical engagement with non-German speakers. With some effort even the German speaker will, however, be able to follow the book at hand.

This companion uses the Penguin edition of *Capital I* as reference, which is in my view the best available translation, although it has imperfections. It also follows the structure of this edition. I cover the book chapter by chapter (except for part VIII, which consists of several short chapters that in the German edition form one single chapter). I have also included one additional chapter for Marx's appendix ("Results of the Immediate Process of Production") as well as two appendixes, which discuss communication aspects of Thomas Piketty's (2014) much discussed book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (appendix 1) and the role of knowledge and technology in the *Grundrisse*, the first draft of *Capital* (appendix 2). When I have read introductions and accompanying guides to Marx's *Capital*, I have always disliked the books that do not follow Marx's chapter structure. They make it difficult to follow the structure and sequence of Marx's thoughts. Most of the readers will read Marx's book chapter by chapter from the beginning to the end. Therefore a chapter-wise guide is most appropriate.

This is a book about Marx and not about Marxism. It is complex enough to come to grips with Marx's theory, which is why I tend to focus on explaining his arguments and do not extensively go

into explaining the history of the reception of specific concepts in Marxist theory. The latter is the task of books that focus on the history of Marxist theory, such as the *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism* (*Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*). I explain the connections of Marx's arguments to the realm of the media, technology, culture, and communications and for this purpose also make cross-references to thinkers who engage with these realms of study. The task of this book, however, is to focus closely on Marx's text and provide interpretative explanations that link the text to communication and the media. It does not provide an in-depth discussion of the history of the field of the political economy of media and communication, in which Marx plays a significant role. This book does not allow space for a closer engagement with the important history of and current developments in this field. I, however, strongly recommend to the reader interested in the issues addressed in this book, to participate and engage in discussions in the International Association of Media and Communication Research's (IMACR) Political Economy Section and to consult and contribute to current debates (for example, in the journals *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*—<http://www.triple-c.at>—and *The Political Economy of Communication*—<http://www.polecom.org>).

Communications phenomena develop quickly. Communicative capitalism stays the same at the most basic level in and through dynamic change and the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. This book therefore cannot and does not want to give a full account of current developments in communications. As I write this book, some of the significant communications developments taking place are as follows: big data, cloud computing, large-scale government surveillance revealed by Edward Snowden, maker culture, mobile advertising, social media, targeted online advertising, the quantified self movement, and the sharing economy. Such phenomena can come and go, whereas capitalism, communications and its contradictions have had a longer history. This book's aims to give a longer-term perspective so that it can still be read in 30 or 50 years from now. It draws on examples that are thousands of years old just like it gives examples from 19th-, 20th-, and 21st-century society.

The chapters in this book also provide exercises that help readers to further engage with Marx's ideas. They are provided at the end of each chapter. There are two kinds of exercises:

- Group exercises (G) are suited for supporting the discussions of a group engaging in reading Marx's *Capital Volume 1*. They are not time-consuming.
- Project exercises (P) are more time-consuming and allow the reader or a group of readers to conduct in-depth analyses of communications phenomena based on Marx's ideas.

The English Edition of Marx's *Capital*

One must note that the English translation of *Capital Volume 1* has 33 chapters, whereas the most commonly read German edition (MEW 23: Marx-Engels-Werke Volume 23) has only 25 chapters. Therefore also the numbering of chapters differs in the English and the German editions. The original 1867 German edition consisted of just six chapters. For the second, the 1872 edition, Marx introduced the structure consisting of 25 chapters. Moore, Aveling, and Engels changed this structure for the first, published in 1887, English edition. The Penguin edition has maintained this revised structure. The table below (Table 0.1) shows how the chapters in the English edition correspond to the ones in the German MEW edition.

The History of How Marx Wrote *Capital Volume 1*

One of the reasons why Marx set out to write up a systematic critique of the political economy of capitalism may have been the financial panic and economic crisis of 1857 (Wheen 2006, 27). He indeed sat down in 1857/1858 and wrote the political-economic *Manuscripts*, which were later published as the *Grundrisse* and form a kind of early draft of *Capital*. The *Grundrisse* were first published

TABLE 0.1 A mapping of chapters in the English and German editions of Marx's *Capital*

<i>Chapters in Capital</i> Volume 1 (<i>Penguin</i>)	<i>Chapters in Marx's Das Kapital (MEW)</i>
<i>Part One: Commodities and Money</i>	<i>Erster Abschnitt: Ware und Geld</i>
Chapter 1: Commodities	1: Die Ware
Chapter 2: The Process of Exchange	2: Der Tauschprozess
Chapter 3: Money, or the Circulation of Commodities	3: Das Geld oder die Warenzirkulation
<i>Part Two: The Transformation of Money into Capital</i>	<i>Zweiter Abschnitt: Die Verwandlung von Geld in Kapital</i>
Chapter 4: The General Formula for Capital	4: Die Verwandlung von Geld in Kapital
Chapter 5: Contradictions in the General Formula	4.1: Die allgemeine Formel des Kapitals
Chapter 6: The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power	4.2: Widersprüche der allgemeinen Formel
	4.3: Kauf und Verkauf der Arbeitskraft
<i>Part Three: The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value</i>	<i>Dritter Abschnitt: Die Produktion des absoluten Mehrwerts</i>
Chapter 7: The Labour Process and the Valorization Process	5: Arbeitsprozeß und Verwertungsprozeß
Chapter 8: Constant Capital and Variable Capital	6: Konstantes Kapital und variables Kapital
Chapter 9: The Rate of Surplus-Value	7: Die Rate des Mehrwerts
Chapter 10: The Working-Day	8: Der Arbeitstag
Chapter 11: The Rate and Mass of Surplus-Value	9: Rate und Masse des Mehrwerts
<i>Part Four: The Production of Relative Surplus-Value</i>	<i>Vierter Abschnitt: Die Produktion des relativen Mehrwerts</i>
Chapter 12: The Concept of Relative Surplus-Value	10: Begriff des relativen Mehrwerts
Chapter 13: Co-Operation	11: Kooperation
Chapter 14: The Division of Labour and Manufacture	12: Teilung der Arbeit und Manufaktur
Chapter 15: Machinery and Large-Scale Industry	13: Machinerie und große Industrie
<i>Part Five: The Production of Absolute and Relative Surplus-Value</i>	<i>Fünfter Abschnitt: Die Produktion des absoluten und relativen Mehrwerts</i>
Chapter 16: Absolute and Relative Surplus-Value	14: Absoluter und relative Mehrwert
Chapter 17: Changes of Magnitude in the Price of Labour-Power and in Surplus-Value	15: Größenwechsel von Preis der Arbeitskraft und Mehrwert
Chapter 18: Different Formulae for the Rate of Surplus-Value	16: Verschiedene Formeln für die Rate des Mehrwerts
<i>Part Six: Wages</i>	<i>Sechster Abschnitt: Der Arbeitslohn</i>
Chapter 19: The Transformation of the Value (and Respectively the Price) of Labour-Power into Wages	17: Die Verwandlung von Wert resp. Preis der Arbeitskraft in Arbeitslohn
Chapter 20: Time-Wages	18: Der Zeitlohn
Chapter 21: Piece-Wages	19: Der Stücklohn
Chapter 22: National Differences in Wage	20: Nationale Verschiedenheiten der Arbeitslöhne
<i>Part Seven: The Process of Accumulation of Capital</i>	<i>Siebenter Abschnitt: Der Akkumulationsprozeß des Kapitals</i>
Chapter 23: Simple Reproduction	21: Einfache Reproduktion
Chapter 24: The Transformation of Surplus-Value into Capital	22: Verwandlung von Mehrwert in Kapital
Chapter 25: The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation	23: Das allgemeine Gesetz der kapitalistischen Akkumulation
<i>Part Eight: So-Called Primitive Accumulation</i>	24: Die sogenannte ursprüngliche Akkumulation
Chapter 26: The Secret of Primitive Accumulation	24.1: Das Geheimnis der ursprünglichen Akkumulation
Chapter 27: The Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land	24.2: Expropriation des Landvolks von Grund und Boden
Chapter 28: Bloody Legislation against the Expropriated since the End of the Fifteenth Century. The Forcing Down of Wages by Act of Parliament	24.3: Blutgesetzgebung gegen die Expropriierten seit Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts. Gesetze zur Herabdrückung des Arbeitslohns

(Continued)

TABLE 0.1 Continued

<i>Chapters in Capital Volume 1 (Penguin)</i>	<i>Chapters in Marx's Das Kapital (MEW)</i>
Chapter 29: The Genesis of the Capitalist Farmer	24.4: Genesis der kapitalistischen Pächter
Chapter 30: Impact of the Agricultural Revolution on Industry. The Creation of a Home Market for Industrial Capital	24.5: Rückwirkung der agrikolen Revolution auf die Industrie, Herstellung des inneren Marktes für das industrielle Kapital
Chapter 31: The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist	24.6: Genesis des industriellen Kapitalisten
Chapter 32: The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation	24.7: Geschichtliche Tendenzen der kapitalistischen Akkumulation
Chapter 33: The Modern Theory of Colonization	25: Die moderne Kolonisationstheorie
Appendix: Results of the Immediate Process of Production	

in German in 1939–1941 and did not become more widely known before a more popular version was put out in 1953.

In 1858, Ferdinand Lassalle arranged the contact between Marx and the Berlin-based publishing house Duncker, and Marx planned a six-book edition of the critique of the political economy of capitalism (Wheen 2006, 29). Poverty as well as Marx's and his family members' illnesses delayed the delivery of the first planned manuscript from autumn 1858 until 1859 (Wheen 2006, 29–31), when Duncker published the German version of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie)*. Marx's work on the sequel to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that became *Capital Volume 1* was interrupted by an intellectual feud with Karl Vogt, unsuccessful plans to return to Germany, poverty, visitors, and illness, as well as the formation of Marx's engagement in the International Working Men's Association (Wheen 2006, 31–35).

So Marx wrote *Capital Volume 1* in the midst of poverty and illness (such as liver troubles, boils, and carbuncles, which made it difficult for him to sit and write; see Wheen 1999, 294; 2006, 35). Some of the boils that covered Marx's body had to be removed by a surgeon and he even removed some of them himself with a razor (McLellan 2006, 311). He wrote about this fact to Engels on February 20, 1866:

As regards the carbuncles, the position is: Concerning the upper one, from my long practical experience I was able to tell you that it really needed lancing. Today (Tuesday), after receiving your letter, I took a sharp razor, a RELICT OF DEAR LUPUS, and lanced the cur myself. (I cannot abide doctors meddling with my private parts or in their vicinity. Furthermore, I have Allen's testimony THAT I AM ONE OF THE BEST SUBJECTS TO BE OPERATED UPON. I always recognise what has to be done.) The sang brûlé, AS MRS LORMIER SAYS, spurted, or rather leapt, right up into the air, and I now consider this carbuncle buried, although IT STILL WANTS SOME NURSING. (MECW 42, 231)

This paragraph is not just one of the more obscure passages in Marx and Engels's collected works, but also shows that Marx wrote *Capital Volume 1* at a time when he had severe health problems.

Sam Shuster (2008), who was professor of dermatology at Newcastle University, analysed the passages in Marx's correspondences where health issues are discussed. The common assumption is that Marx had a liver disease and boils, and that his death was caused by tuberculosis. Shuster concludes that it is likely that Marx suffered from hidradenitis suppurativa. He says that when Marx wrote *Capital*, "his hidradenitis was at its worst" (Shuster 2008, 3).

Hidradenitis suppurativa (sometimes known as acne inversa) is a painful long-term skin disease that causes abscesses and scarring on the skin—usually around the groin, buttocks, breasts and armpits. [...] It causes a mixture of red boil-like lumps, blackheads, cysts, scarring and channels in the skin that leak pus. [...] Some of the lumps may become infected with bacteria, causing a secondary infection that will require antibiotics to treat. HS is very painful.¹

The disease causes heavy pain and open wounds that do not or only badly heal, and it can lead to death. If Shuster's interpretation is right, then this means that Karl Marx wrote *Capital* under heavy pain stemming from a rare disease. It is therefore even more impressive that he managed to write such a masterpiece with high analytical and literary quality.

Marx often was not pleased with what he had written and therefore reworked it (McLellan 2006, 308). He delivered *Capital Volume 1*'s manuscript in person to the Hamburg-based publisher Meissner in April 1867 (Wheen 1999, 295). Marx had signed the contract with Meissner in March 1865 (McLellan 2006, 311). In September 1867, Meissner published 1,000 copies of *Capital Volume 1* as the first edition (McLellan 2006, 316).

Capital and Hegel's Dialectical Philosophy

In presenting Marx's categories, I in this book frequently refer to Hegel's dialectical philosophy in order to show how it shaped Marx's thought. Representatives of a systematic dialectic, such as Christopher Arthur (2004), Tony Smith (1990), and Kozo Uno and his followers (Sekine 1998), have attempted to parallelise Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Capital* (see Table 0.2).

Given that Arthur and Uno have come up with fairly different interpretations of the Hegel–*Capital* parallelisation, one can have doubts that Marx sat down with the idea in mind to construct *Capital Volume 1* in exact correspondence to Hegel's *Logic*. But he certainly had Hegel in mind, used specific Hegelian dialectical categories for explaining particular aspects of capitalism, and developed his categories that analyse capitalism based on Hegel's dialectic as a method for analysing capitalism's ontology. Alex Callinicos (2014, 129) argues that Marx “extracted categories from the *Logic* to set them

TABLE 0.2 Attempts to logically map Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Capital* (based on Sekine 1998; Arthur 2004, 108–109; Bidet 2005, 122)

<i>Hegel's Logic</i>	<i>Arthur: Marx's Capital</i>	<i>Sekine/Uno: Marx's Capital</i>
I. BEING	COMMODITY	CIRCULATION
a. Quality	Exchangeability of commodities	Commodity
b. Quantity	Quantity of commodities exchanged	Money
c. Measure	Exchange-value of commodities	Capital
II. ESSENCE	MONEY	PRODUCTION
a. Ground	Value in itself	Production of capital
b. Appearance	Forms of value	Circulation of capital
c. Actuality	Money	Reproduction
III: CONCEPT	CAPITAL	DISTRIBUTION
a. Subjective concept	Price list	Price, profit
b. Objective concept	Metamorphoses of money and commodities	Rent
c. Idea	Self-valorisation	Interest

to work, but in a fairly pragmatic way”. Marx thereby did, however, not progressively move away from Hegel, as Callinicos (2014, 157) says. He rather stayed throughout his whole life influenced by Hegel’s dialectical philosophy and so in *Capital* dialectically related categories that constitute capitalism’s ontology so that they do not independently stand on their own, but are connected to each other in a dialectical manner. Tony Smith (1990) in his book *The Logic of Marx’s Capital* presents an interpretation that uses interconnected Hegelian triangles for showing how Marx analysed capitalism’s dialectical ontology, but he does not attempt to exactly map *Capital*’s structure to the structure of Hegel’s *Logic*. Marx “nowhere even hinted that he derived the specific content of his theory through taking a category from the Logic and directly translating it into an economic category. If anything remotely like this had been his procedure, somewhere or other he most likely would have mentioned it” (Smith 1990, 44). Smith like Callinicos (2014, 115) holds the view that Marx took from Hegel the dialectical method of developing categories in a systematic and connected manner:

Reading *Capital* as a dialectical theory is a matter of grasping this specificity of categories and their connections. The logic of the content must be allowed to develop within the theory. [. . .] *Capital* is also a systematic theory of categories. Despite all the profound differences that separate Marx and Hegel, *Capital* nonetheless can be termed a ‘Hegelian’ theory from this perspective. (Smith 1990, 45)

Hegel and Marx both insisted that a systematic dialectical theory must be governed by the ‘inner nature’ of what is being examined, the ‘soul of the object’. It would be an amazing coincidence if there were a one-to-one mapping of each step in the two systematic progressions unless Hegel’s and Marx’s projects were in some crucial respect the same project. Defenders of this view disagree among themselves about what this ‘crucial respect’ might be. (Smith 2014a, 36)

Marx Is Alive as Long as Capitalism Is Alive . . .

Capital Volume 1 is one of the books that has been most discussed, most declared dead, and most revived. There have again and again been claims about what is wrong in Marx’s analysis. Continued interest and surges of waves of reading initiatives have, however, shown the continued relevance of Marx’s book. Crisis, exploitation, and inequality have remained continuous features of modern society. As long as they persist, there will be interest in Marx’s analysis of capitalism because people are looking for explanations and ways to overcome the problems they are confronted with. Media, information, and communication matter in this context because they form a particular industry of capitalism and culture is a means for the public communication of ideologies that justify exploitation and domination as well as for the critique of capitalism. Reading Marx’s *Capital* from a media and communication studies perspective can help us to understand and criticise capitalist media and can inform struggles for an alternative, democratic communication system that is not controlled by capitalist companies, but the people themselves.

Note

- 1 NHS: Hidradenitis suppurativa. <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hidradenitis-suppurativa/Pages/Introduction.aspx> (accessed on July 7, 2014).

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