

# 13

## Class and Exploitation on the Internet

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The term *social media* has been established to characterize World Wide Web platforms such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and microblogs. Such platforms are among the most accessed websites in the world and include Facebook, You-Tube, Wikipedia, Blogger, Twitter, LinkedIn, and WordPress. All online platforms and media are social in the sense of providing information that is a result of social relations. The notion of sociality underlying the now frequently employed term social media is based on concepts such as communication, community, cooperation, collaboration, and sharing. All too often, the term is used without differentiation or grounding in social theory.

This chapter challenges techno-optimistic versions of social media analysis by pointing out its limits. First, the notion of a participatory Internet is questioned by conducting an analysis of the political economy of selected corporate social media platforms. Next, an alternative theorization of social media that is based on Marx's class theory is offered. Finally, some thoughts about the need for an alternative Internet are presented.

Critical Internet studies is an emerging field of research. Trebor Scholz's conference *The Internet as Playground and Factory* has shown how important critical thinking about the contemporary Internet is and that there is a huge interest in critical political economy and theory relating to the Internet. Today, we are experiencing times of capitalist crisis, and it is no surprise that critical studies and critical political economy are celebrating a comeback after decades of post-modern, culturalist, and neoliberal domination of academia. Questions relating to class, labor, exploitation, alienation, and ideology have become paramount. The critical analysis of social media requires a critique of both ideology and exploitation. It also calls for practical proposals. Trebor Scholz (2008) has stressed that "the suggestion of sudden newness of social media is aimed at potential investors" and that web 2.0 is therefore primarily a marketing ideology. Jodi Dean argues that the Internet and other forms of communication in "communicative capitalism [are] rooted in communication without communicability" (Dean 2004: 281). Dean suggests that the Internet becomes a technological fetish that advances post-politics. Mark Andrejevic (2002: 239) speaks of "the interactive capability of new media to exploit the work of being watched." He argues that "accounts of exploitation do not necessarily denigrate the activities or the meanings they may have for those who participate in them rather than the social relations that

underwrite expropriation and alienation” (Andrejevic 2011: 283). These and other contributions are characteristic of the emergence of the field of critical Internet studies.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, we explicitly propose to re-actualize and “reload” Marxian theory. The task is to create a Marxist theory of the Internet.

## Participatory Web as Ideology

Henry Jenkins argues that, increasingly, “the Web has become a site of consumer participation” (Jenkins 2008: 137). He argues that blogs and other social media bring about a “participatory culture.” Benkler (2006), Shirky (2008), and Tapscott and Williams (2007) have made similar arguments.

Answering the question of whether the web is participatory requires an understanding of the notion of participation. In democracy theory, the term *participation* is mainly used and most prominently featured in participatory democracy theory (Held 2006). The earliest use of the term *participatory democracy* that I could trace in the literature is in an article by Staughton Lynd (1965) that describes the grassroots organization of the student movement. Two central features of participatory democracy theory are the broad understanding of democracy as encompassing areas beyond voting, such as the economy, culture, and the household, and the questioning of the compatibility of participatory democracy and capitalism.

A participatory economy requires a “change in the terms of access to capital in the direction of more nearly equal access” and “a change to more nearly equal access to the means of labor” (Macpherson 1973, 71). “Genuine democracy, and genuine liberty, both require the absence of extractive powers” (Macpherson 1973: 121). A participatory economy involves the democratizing of industrial authority structures. Consequently, an Internet platform can only be participatory if it involves participatory ownership structures. Such participatory economy is a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition for participatory democracy. Further factors include participatory learning and decision making. Platforms that are not built on a participatory economy model cannot be participatory.

Can Google, YouTube, and Facebook be considered participatory? Google is a corporation that is specialized in Internet search, cloud computing, and advertising technologies. It is one of the largest transnational companies in the world. Common points of criticism of Google are that the page rank algorithm is secret and that the search results are personalized, which is facilitated through close surveillance of the search behavior of users. Google also exploits and monitors users

**TABLE 13.1** Search Results for "Political News" on Google, August 19, 2011

Rank	Website	Type	Owner
1	<a href="http://politico.com">politico.com</a>	Corporate	Allbritton Communications
2	<a href="http://cnn.com">cnn.com</a>	Corporate	Time Warner

Rank	Website	Type	Owner
3	<a href="http://foxnews.com">foxnews.com</a>	Corporate	News Corporation
4	<a href="http://msnbc.com">msnbc.com</a>	Corporate	NBC Universal
5	<a href="http://realclearpolitics.com">realclearpolitics.com</a>	Corporate	RealClear Holdings
6	<a href="http://nytimes.com">nytimes.com</a>	Corporate	New York Times Company
7	<a href="http://reuters.com">reuters.com</a>	Corporate	Thompson Reuters
8	<a href="http://bbc.co.uk">bbc.co.uk</a>	Public service	BBC
9	<a href="http://politics.co.uk">politics.co.uk</a>	Corporate	Adfero
10	<a href="http://cbcnews.go.com">cbcnews.go.com</a>	Corporate	Walt Disney

by selling their data to advertising clients. Half (50.12%) of all people using the Internet access Google,<sup>2</sup> and that is roughly 1.05 billion people, or almost 15% of the world population.<sup>3</sup> Google would not exist without these users, because its profits are based on ads targeted to searches, which means that the search process is value-generating. Google's more than 1 billion users are, however, largely lacking financial compensation. They perform unpaid, value-generating labor.

The stratification of the visibility of Google search results becomes evident if one searches for the term *political news* on Google: the main search results are news sites owned almost exclusively by big corporate media companies (see [Table 13.1](#))

Facebook is the most popular social networking service in the world.<sup>4</sup> Some points of criticism of the service are that it has a complex and long-winded privacy policy, and it is nontransparent to users which data are collected about them and how the data are used. Facebook users are not involved in decisions. Facebook fan groups are dominated by popular culture, with politics being a sideline. Oppositional political figures are marginalized (see [Table 13.2](#)). Facebook is dominated by entertainment. Politics on Facebook is dominated by established actors. Alternative political views are marginalized, and especially critical politics is not often found on Facebook. It is a more general feature of the capitalist culture industry that focuses more on entertainment because it promises larger audiences and profits.

Owned by Google, YouTube is the third most trafficked web platform in the world.<sup>5</sup> There have been some well-known political uses of YouTube, such as the video of the death of Neda Soltani in the 2009 Iranian protests and the video of the death of Ian Tomlinson at the London anti-G20 protests. YouTube is also a known haven for videos by human rights activists that would be censored elsewhere. However, the question arises about how much visibility YouTube really provides to progressives, at least compared to the numbers of views of other material that is shared

on YouTube. The list of the ten most viewed videos on YouTube (shown in [Table 13.3](#)) exemplifies how the corporate exploiters of surplus

**TABLE 13.2** The Most Popular Facebook Groups

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number of fans</i>
1	Facebook	Technology	50.7 million
2	Texas Hold 'Em Poker	Computer game	48.6 million
3	Eminem	Pop star	45.4 million
4	YouTube	Technology	43.6 million
5	Rihanna	Pop star	43.4 million
6	Lady Gaga	Pop star	42.4 million
7	Michael Jackson	Pop star	39.7 million
8	Shakira	Pop star	39.0 million
9	<i>Family Guy</i>	TV series	36.4 million
10	Justin Bieber	Pop star	34.8 million
41	Barack Obama	Politician	22.4 million
	Michael Moore	Socialist filmmaker	495,866
	Noam Chomsky	Socialist intellectual	325,325
	Karl Marx	Communist intellectual	186,722

Source: <http://statistics.allfacebook.com>, August 19, 2011.

**TABLE 13.3** The Most-Viewed YouTube Videos

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Video</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Views (in millions)</i>
1	Justin Bieber, <i>Baby</i>	Music	Universal	607
2	Lady Gaga, <i>Bad Romance</i>	Music	Universal	407
3	Shakira, <i>Waka Waka</i>	Music	Sony	383
4	Eminem, <i>Love the Way You Lie</i>	Music	Universal	371
5	<i>Charlie Bit My Finger—Again!</i>	Entertainment	Private user	367
6	Jennifer Lopez, <i>On the Floor</i>	Music	Universal	350
7	Eminem, <i>Not Afraid</i>	Music	Universal	266
8	Justin Bieber, <i>One Time</i>	Music	Universal	260
9	Justin Bieber, <i>Never Say Never</i>	Music	Universal	248
10	Thigh massage video	Entertainment	Private user	244

Source: <http://www.youtube.com>, August 19, 2011.

value-generating labor control YouTube's political attention economy. At first sight, YouTube's video category "News &

Politics,” which is one of fifteen categories, seems to be the bright political star on the YouTube firmament. A closer look, however, shows that the most viewed video in this category is one in which children sing the song “If You’re Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands.”<sup>6</sup> It is an open question whether politics really does make many people very happy today. Entertainment is sought after on YouTube and Facebook, whereas more overtly political clips are far less visible.

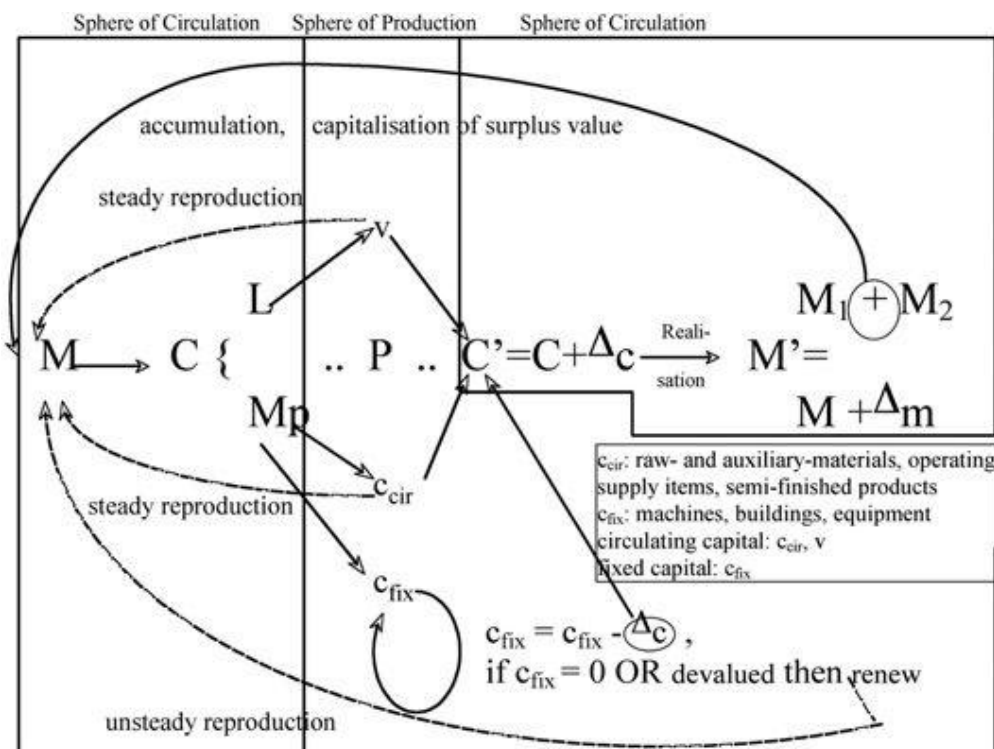
Based on participatory democracy theory, we argue that scholars who suggest that today’s Internet is participatory advance an ideology that simply celebrates capitalism without taking into account how capitalist interests dominate and shape the Internet. Web 2.0 is not a participatory system, and it would be better understood in terms of class, exploitation, and surplus value.

## Class and the Web

In 1994, Dallas W. Smythe called for a “Marxist theory of communication” (Smythe 1994: 258). Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (2005: 61) have argued that “Critical Political Economy of Communications” is critical in the sense of being “broadly Marxist.” Given the dominance of the Internet through capitalist structures, Marxist critical political economy and Marxist theory seem to be suitable approaches for the analysis of Internet prosumption in contemporary capitalism. Such an analysis is grounded in Marx’s model of the expanded reproduction process of capital accumulation.

In the three volumes of *Capital*, Marx analyzes the accumulation process of capital. This process, as described by Marx, is visualized in [Figure 13.1](#).

In the accumulation of capital, capitalists buy labor power and means of production such as raw materials and technologies to produce new commodities,



**FIGURE 13.1** The accumulation/expanded reproduction of capital

which are later sold with the expectation to make profit, which is partially re-invested. Marx distinguishes two spheres of capital accumulation: the circulation sphere and the sphere of production. In the circulation sphere, capital transforms its value form: First, money M is transformed into commodities (from the standpoint of the capitalist as buyer), the capitalist purchases

the commodities labor power  $L$  and means of production  $Mp$ .  $M-C$  is based on the two purchases  $M-L$  and  $M-Mp$ . This means that, due to private property structures, workers do not own the means of production, the products they produce, and the profit they generate. Capitalists own these resources. In the sphere of production, a new good is produced: the value of labor power and the value of the means of production are added to the product. Value takes on the form of productive capital  $P$ . The value form of labor is variable capital  $v$ , which can be observed as wages, the value form of the means of production constant capital  $c$  that can be observed as the total price of the means of production and producer goods.

In the sphere of production, capital stops its metamorphosis so that capital circulation comes to a halt. A new value  $V'$  of the commodity is produced, which contains the value of the necessary constant and variable capital and surplus value  $\Delta s$  of the surplus product. Surplus value is generated by unpaid labor. Capitalists do not pay for the production of surplus; therefore, the production of surplus value can be considered as a process of exploitation. The value  $V'$  of the new commodity after production is  $V' = c + v + s$ . The commodity then leaves the sphere of production and again enters the circulation sphere, in which capital conducts its next metamorphosis: By being sold on the market, it is transformed from the commodity form back into the money form. Surplus value is realized in the form of money value. The initial money capital  $M$  now takes on the form  $M' = M + \Delta m$ ; it has been increased by an increment  $\Delta m$ . Accumulation of capital means that the produced surplus value is partly reinvested/capitalized. The end point of one process  $M'$  becomes the starting point of a new accumulation process. One part of  $M'$ ,  $M_1$ , is reinvested. Accumulation means the aggregation of capital by investment and exploitation in the capital circuit  $M-C. P. C'-M'$ , in which the end product  $M'$  becomes a new starting point  $M$ . The total process makes up the dynamic character of capital. Capital is money that is permanently growing due to the exploitation of surplus value.

Commodities are sold at prices that are higher than the investment costs so that profit is generated. For Marx, one decisive quality of capital accumulation is that profit is an emergent property of production that is produced by labor but owned by the capitalists. Without labor, no profit could be made. Workers are forced to enter class relations and to produce profit in order to survive, which enables capital to appropriate surplus. The notion of exploited surplus value is the main concept of Marx's theory, by which he intends to show that capitalism is a class society. "The theory of surplus value is in consequence immediately the theory of exploitation" (Negri 1991: 74) and, one can add, the theory of class is a consequence of the political demand for a classless society.

Many Marxist class concepts are wage labor-centric (see, e.g., Wright 1997). Marxist feminism has argued that unpaid reproductive labor can be considered as an inner colony and milieu of primitive accumulation of capitalism (Mies 1986; Mies,



Bennholdt-Thomsen, and von Werlhof 1988; Werlhof 1991) and is a class in itself. Antonio Negri uses the term *social worker* to argue that there is a broadening of the proletariat that is “now extended throughout the entire span of production and reproduction” (Negri 1982: 209). Later, Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) transformed the notion of the social worker into the concept of the multitude. These approaches remind us that, given the complexity of capitalism, we need a multifaceted and dynamic class concept that, in addition to wage labor, also includes groups such as the unemployed, house workers, migrants, people in developing countries, precarious workers, students, public servants, and precarious self-employees in the concept of class. All of them create the commons of society, and users of corporate social media are part of this expanded notion of the proletarian class.

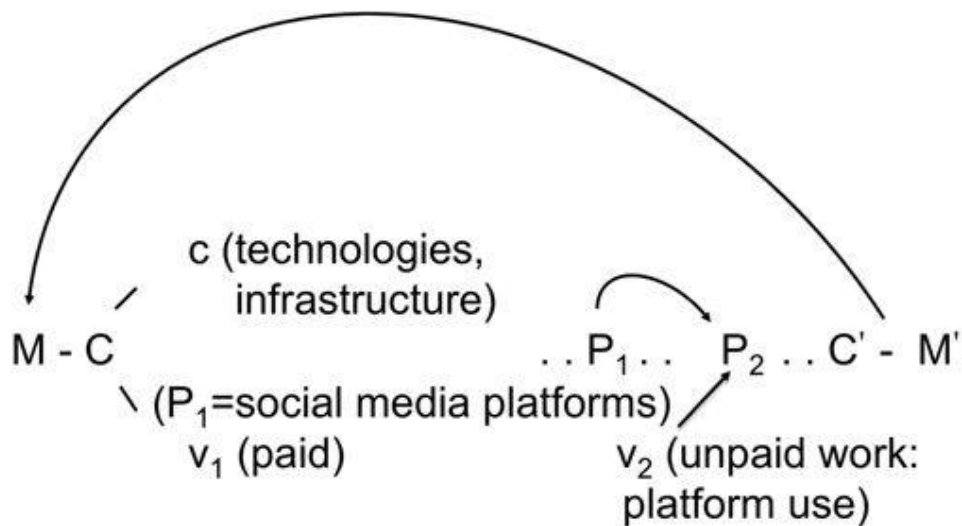
Dallas Smythe suggests that, in the case of media advertisement models, the audience is sold as a commodity to advertisers: “Because audience power is produced, sold, purchased and consumed, it commands a price and is a commodity.... You audience members contribute your unpaid work time and in exchange you receive the program material and the explicit advertisements” (Smythe 1981/2006: 233, 238). With the rise of user-generated content, freely accessible social networking platforms that yield profit through online advertisement, the web seems to come close to accumulation strategies employed by capital on traditional mass media such as television or radio. Individuals who upload images, write wall posts or comments, send messages to their contacts, accumulate friends, or browse profiles constitute an audience commodity that is sold. The difference between the audience commodity on traditional mass media and on the Internet is that, in the latter case, the users are also content producers; they engage in constant, often creative, activity, communication, community building, and content production. Alvin Toffler introduced the notion of the prosumer in the early 1980s, which refers to the “progressive blurring of the line that separates producer from consumer” (Toffler 1980: 267). Due to the permanent activity of the recipients and their status as prosumers, we can say that, in the case of corporate social media, the audience commodity is an Internet prosumer commodity. The conflict between cultural studies and critical political economy of the media about the question of the activity and creativity of the prosumer has been resolved in relation to web 2.0: On Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, users are fairly active and creative, which reflects cultural studies insights about recipients, but this active character is the very source of exploitation, which reflects the emphasis of critical political economy on class and exploitation.

That people are more active on the Internet than they are in their reception of TV or radio content is due to the decentralized structure of the Internet, which allows many-to-many communication. Due to the permanent activity of the recipients and their status as prosumers, we can say that, in the case of corporate social media, the audience commodity is an Internet

prosumer commodity. The conflict between cultural studies and critical political economy of the media about the question of the activity and creativity of the audience has been resolved in relation to web 2.0: on Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, users are active, which confirms insights of cultural studies about recipients, but this engaged and dynamic behavior of the audience is the very source of exploitation, which reflects critical political economy's stress on class and exploitation.

[Figure 13.2](#) shows the process of capital accumulation on corporate social media platforms that are funded by targeted advertising. Social media corporations invest money ( $M$ ) for buying capital: technologies (server space, computers, organizational infrastructure, etc.) and labor power (paid employees). These are the constant capital ( $c$ ) and the variable capital  $v_1$  outlays. The outcome of the production process  $P_1$  is not a commodity that is directly sold, but rather social media services that are made available without payment to users. The waged employees who create social media online environments that are accessed by users produce part of the surplus value. The audience makes use of the platform for generating content that they upload (user-generated data). The constant and variable capital invested by social media companies ( $c, v_1$ ) that is objectified in the online environments is the prerequisite for their activities in the production process  $P_2$ . Their products are user-generated data, personal data, and transaction data about their browsing behavior and communication behavior on corporate social media. They invest a certain labor time  $v_2$  in this process. Corporate social media sell the users' data commodity to advertising clients at a price that is larger than the invested constant and variable capital. The surplus value contained in this commodity is partly created by the users and partly by the corporations' employees. The difference is that the users are unpaid and therefore infinitely exploited. Once the Internet prosumer commodity that contains the user-generated content, transaction data, and the right to access virtual advertising space and time is sold to advertising clients, the commodity is transformed into money capital, and surplus value is realized into money capital.

For Marx (1867), the profit rate is the relation of profit to investment costs:  $p = s / (c + v) = \text{surplus value} / (\text{constant capital (= fixed costs)} + \text{variable capital (= wages)})$ . If Internet users become productive web 2.0 prosumers, then, in terms of Marxian class theory, this means that they become productive laborers who produce surplus value and are exploited by capital, because, for Marx, productive labor generates surplus. Therefore, not only are those who are employed by web 2.0 corporations for programming, updating, maintaining the software and hardware, and performing marketing activities exploited surplus value producers, but also the users and prosumers, who engage in the production of user-generated content. New media corporations do not (or hardly) pay the audience for the production of content. One accumulation strategy is to give them free access to services and platforms, let them produce content, and accumulate a



**C' = Internet prosumer commodity** (user-generated content, transaction data, virtual advertising space and time)  
most social media services are free to use, they are no commodities.

User data and the users are the social media commodity.

**FIGURE 13.2** Capital accumulation on corporate social media platforms that are based on targeted advertising

large number of prosumers that are sold as a commodity to third-party advertisers. A product is not sold to the users, but, rather, the users are sold as a commodity to advertisers. The more users are on a platform, the higher the advertising rates can be set. The productive labor time that is exploited by capital involves the labor time of the paid employees and all of the time that is spent online by the users. For the first type of knowledge labor, new media corporations pay salaries. The second type of knowledge is produced completely for free. The formula for the profit rate needs to be transformed for this accumulation strategy:

$$p = s / (c + v_1 + v_2),$$

where  $s$  = surplus value,  $c$  = constant capital,  $v_1$  = wages paid to fixed employees, and  $v_2$  = wages paid to users.

The typical situation is that  $v_2 = > 0$  and that  $v_2$  substitutes  $v_1$  ( $v_1 = > v_2 = 0$ ). If the production of content and the time spent online were carried out by paid employees, the variable costs would rise and profits would therefore decrease. This shows that prosumer activity in a capitalist society can be interpreted as the outsourcing of productive labor to users (in management literature, the term *crowdsourcing* has been established to describe this phenomenon; see Howe 2008), who work completely for free and help maximize the rate of exploitation ( $e = s / v$  = surplus value / variable capital) so that profits can be raised and new media capital may be accumulated. This situation is one

of infinite exploitation of the users. The wages paid to users for their surplus value generation equal zero, so that the rate of exploitation converges toward infinity. This means that capitalist prosumption is an extreme form of exploitation, in which the prosumers work completely for free. Marx (1867) distinguishes between necessary labor time and surplus labor time. The first is the time a person needs to work in order to create the money equivalent for a wage needed for buying goods that are needed for her or his survival. The second is all additional labor time. Users are not paid on corporate social media (or for consuming other types of corporate media); therefore, they cannot generate money for buying food. All time spent on corporate social media services is surplus labor time.

Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) reported that Chinese Foxconn workers who produce iPhones, iPads, iPods, MacBooks, and other information and communication technologies face the withholding of wages, forced and unpaid overtime, exposure to chemicals, harsh management, low wages, unsafe work environments, and lack of basic facilities.<sup>7</sup> In 2010, eighteen Foxconn employees attempted suicide, and fourteen of them succeeded.<sup>8</sup> SACOM describes Foxconn workers as “iSlave Behind the iPhone.”<sup>9</sup> In February 2012, Foxconn announced a 25% salary increase.<sup>10</sup> This shows, on the one hand, that civil society pressure and struggles can improve working conditions and, on the other hand, that corporations, due to the drive to raise profits immanent to capitalism, do not automatically care about the lives of their employees, which presents an ongoing challenge for civil society and watchdog groups to monitor corporate irresponsibility and corporate crime. Given the frequent lack of resources among such groups, the monitoring is cumbersome and incomplete and shows the limits of and inhumanity built into the capitalist system. This example shows that the exploitation and surveillance of digital labor—labor that is needed for capital accumulation with the help of Internet communication technologies—is in no way limited to unpaid user labor but includes various forms of labor—user labor, wage labor in Western companies for the creation of applications, and slavelike labor that creates hardware and some software in economic developing countries under inhumane conditions. Digital labor is based on the surveillance, blood, and sweat of superexploited labor in economic developing countries. Post-Fordism does not substitute Taylorism, but it looks more like an even bloodier form of Taylorism.

## **Toward a Communist Internet in a Communist Society**

We are living in times of crisis, unrest, and global transformations. Some observers have argued that understanding and mastering these times requires the “renaissance of Marxist political economy” (Callinicos 2007: 342). “Once again the time has come to take Marx seriously” (Hobsbawm 2011: 419). Göran Therborn has argued that the “new constellations of power and new possibilities of resistance” in the 21st century require retaining the “Marxian idea of human emancipation from exploitation, oppression, discrimination” (Therborn 2008: 61).

Luc Boltanski (2011: 11) argues that critique in the era of neoliberalism lacked an alternative political project, but that today it is time for critique to discuss capitalism’s “replacement by less violent forms of utilization of the earth’s resources and ways of organizing the relations between human beings that would no longer be of the order of exploitation. It could perhaps then restore the word communism” (Boltanski 2011: 159). Looking for an alternative mode of organizing social relations is the context for the discussion of an alternative Internet. Like Boltanski, also Slavoj Žižek (2010) and Alain Badiou (2010) have argued for the establishment of democratic communism as alternative to crisis capitalism.

Raymond Williams argued that there is an inherent connection of commons, communism, and communication. To communicate means to make something “common to many” (Williams 1983: 72). Communication is part of the commons of society. Denying humans the ability to communicate is like denying them the right to breathe fresh air; it undermines the conditions of their survival. Therefore the communicative commons of society should be available without payment or other access requirements for all and should not be privately owned or controlled by a class.

The era of neoliberalism has been based on the privatization and commodification of the commons. Capital exploits the commons for free (without payment), whereas all humans produce the commons and are thereby exploited. To achieve a just society, one needs to strengthen the commons of society. A democratic communication infrastructure requires strengthening the communication commons. The task is to advance communist media and a communist Internet in a democratic and participatory communist society.

Both Wikipedia and WikiLeaks are shining beacons of a commons-based Internet and a political, networked public sphere. In contrast to corporate social media, the exploitation of free labor is substituted by voluntary user labor, the profit imperative by nonprofit organizations, the provision of advertising by common knowledge accessible to the world for free, and depoliticized content by a certain degree of political information and debate.

WikiLeaks is not as popular as established mainstream media. It is ranked at position 28,016 in the list of the world's most accessed web platforms.<sup>11</sup> It therefore depends on corporate mass media such as the *New York Times* or *Spiegel* for news distribution, which are prone to manipulation and political as well as economic censorship. Political economy poses limits for alternative media.

Communism, for Marx and Engels, has three central elements: (1) cooperative forms of production, (2) common control of the means of production, and (3) well-rounded individuality. These three qualities can also be found on the communist Internet. On the communist Internet, humans cocreate and share knowledge; they are equal participants in the decision-making processes that concern the platforms and technologies they use; and the free access to and sharing of knowledge, the remixing of knowledge, and the cocreation of new knowledge creates and reproduces well-rounded individuality. A communist Internet requires a communist society.

Communism is not a condition in the distant future; it is present in the desires for alternatives expressed in struggles against the poverty in resources, ownership, wealth, literacy, food, housing, social security, self-determination, equality, participation, expression, health care, and access that are caused by a system of global stratification that benefits some at the expense of many. Communism is "not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself" but rather "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx and Engels 1844: 57). It starts to exist as movement everywhere, where people resist capitalism and engage in struggles for alternatives. On the Internet, Wikipedia and the Diaspora Project can, to a certain extent, be communist cells entangled into antagonistic relations with capitalism. The communist potentials of such projects are often not consciously seen by those working in them and often have a mystified character, but they are potentials nonetheless that if consciously pursued can lead to significant struggles. Communism starts in struggles that can eventually lead to a revolution of those who do not own property, by those who do not own the economy, politics, culture, nature, themselves, their bodies, their minds, their knowledge, technology, and so on. Communism needs spaces to materialize itself as a movement. Struggles can manifest themselves in the form of noncommercial Internet projects, watchdog projects, public search engines, the legalization of file sharing, or the introduction of a basic income. The context of contemporary struggles is the large-scale colonization of the world by capitalism. A different world is necessary, but whether it can be built remains uncertain. It will be solely determined by the outcome of our struggles. Contemporary struggles are an indication that the world is dreaming of something that it needs to become conscious of in order to possess communism in reality.

## Notes

1 For an explanation of the foundations of this field, please see Fuchs (2008, 2009, 2011).

2 In a three-month period, according to [alexa.com](http://alexa.com), accessed on September 13, 2011.

3 Data source for global Internet users is from [Internetworldstats.com](http://Internetworldstats.com), accessed on September 13, 2011.

4 "Facebook, Inc.," *New York Times*, June 22, 2012, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/facebook\\_inc/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/facebook_inc/index.html).

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10 David Barboza, "Foxconn Plans to Lift Pay Sharply at Factories in China," *New York Times*, February 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/technology/foxconn-to-raise-salaries-for-workers-by-up-to-25.html>.

11 According to [alexa.com](http://alexa.com), August 19, 2011.

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**14**

**Acts of Translation**

Organized Networks as Algorithmic  
Technologies of the Common

*Ned Rossiter and Soenke Zehle*