CHRISTIAN FUCHS

COMMUNICATION AND CAPITALISM

A Critical Theory

Communication and Capitalism:
A Critical Theory

Christian Fuchs

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father Gerhard Fuchs (2 September 1948–9 October 2018).
Keep on rockin'!

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations Used in the book:

MECW: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Collected Works*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This book presents an introduction to the critical theory of communication. It asks:

What is communication?
What are communication's roles in society?
What does it mean to study communication critically based on a materialist approach (communicative materialism)?
What are the roles of communication in capitalism?
What alternatives are there to capitalist communication?

1.1. Marxist Theory

At the time of and in the years after the student rebellions of 1968, socialist politics and radical theory were flourishing. Activists and especially young people were seeking alternative ways of life and perspectives that pointed beyond capitalism and imperialist wars. The New Left was a movement for socialism that strongly influenced politics and culture in the 1960s and 1970s. Reading and interpreting Marx's theory was back then an important part of academia and activism. Activists tried to put Marx's theory into praxis.

But the 1970s also saw a major economic crisis and as a consequence the rise of neoliberal politics that aimed at the commodification of everything[1] Thatcherism and Reagonomics put the neoliberal theory of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman into practice and became the world's dominant political paradigm. Under the influence of neoliberal capitalism, society as a whole turned into a capitalist business and universities increasingly turned into business schools

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[1] See: David Harvey. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

operating under the control of neoliberal managers who have seen students as fee-paying customers yielding profits, knowledge as an instrument of capital, and academics as machines producing outputs, impacts, and grants. Under these conditions, Marx's approach was over decades presented as a failed theory and socialism as a failed model of society corresponding to Marxist theory.

The rise of new social movements, individualism, neoliberal pressures on the humanities and social sciences, the long legacy of Stalinism, a flexible regime of accumulation, globalisation, and informatisation all influenced the emergence of postmodern and post-structuralist theory. David Harvey argues that postmodernism is the ideology of a capitalism that has a flexible regime of accumulation.[2] In contrast to Marxist theory's focus on solidarity, class, modes of production, the economy, matter, labour, macro-analysis, totality, production and the dialectic, postmodern theory stresses difference, identity, networks, culture, language, micro-analysis, contextualisation/specificity, consumption, and articulation. Knowledge and communication have since the middle of the 20th century played an increasingly important role in the economy and society, which any theory of society must take into account. In his last interview, Stuart Hall said that the problem of the various versions of postmodern theory has been, however, that 'in its attempt to move away from economic reductionism, it forgot that there was an economy at all.'[3] As a consequence, postmodern theory has had an anti-Marxist bias.

In 2008, a new world economic crisis started. It suddenly became evident that capitalism is not the end of history. The consequence was a renewed interest in Marx's theory and in socialist politics. More and more people became convinced that Marx's theory has something important to tell us about contemporary society. Marx was not just a theorist of capitalism, but also a critical theorist of communication and technology.[4] Marx's thought is therefore an excellent starting point for a contemporary critical theory of communication and communication technology. A Marxist theory of communication aims at showing how capitalist communications work and what antagonisms such communication systems have, and it seeks to inform praxis that points beyond capitalist communications towards socialist communication. This book makes a contribution to such theoretical foundations.

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[2] David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

[3] Stuart Hall and Sut Jhally. 2016. Stuart Hall: The Last Interview. *Cultural Studies* 30 (2): 332–345. p. 337.

[4] See: Christian Fuchs. 2016. *Reading Marx in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge. Christian Fuchs. 2016. *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet.* London: University of Westminster Press. Christian Fuchs. 2019. *Rereading Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism.* London: Pluto Press. Christian Fuchs. 2020. *Marxism: Karl Marx's Fifteen Key Concepts for Cultural and Communication Studies.* New York: Routledge.

Stalinist versions of Marxist theory have indeed justified domination, have been deterministic, economic reductionistic, anti-humanist, and anti-democratic. But such interpretations have nothing to do with Marx himself and his theory. Prejudices against Marx build on such misunderstandings.[5] Marx's theory itself is a radical critique of any form of exploitation and domination. It advances a dialectic of necessity and chance, and of the economic and the non-economic. It promotes socialist humanism, and understands socialism as true and full democracy.

The Approach Underlying This Book

In the past twenty years, I have worked on the analysis of capitalism and communication. This work has taken the form of a significant number of publications, studies, and projects that have focused on particular problems and topics. I have used critical theory, empirical research, and ethics in these studies. One common feature in all of my works has been my interest in critical theory, which always takes Karl Marx' works and socialist politics as the starting point.

You cannot properly study communication without a simultaneous deep analysis of society as totality. Analyses of communication and society therefore necessarily interact in a critical theory of communication. Most studies in the field of communication studies (and most or even all other fields, even philosophy) are micro studies focused on single phenomena in single contexts. Marxist theory is a critical, interdisciplinary analysis of capitalism as totality. It is a true form of interdisciplinarity. It is based on a dialectic of general and concrete levels of analysis. It is universal and specific at the same time.

Marxist theory has been a constant influence and feature of my work. The concrete expressions of this interest have changed over the years. In earlier works, I often tried to combine Marxist theory and Hegelian dialectics with complexity theory and self-organisation theory. Complexity theory is a form of systems theory that analyses how order emerges from disorder.[6] Such systems are also called self-organising systems because as complex, dynamic systems they create changes from within themselves.

I later lost interest in complex systems theory because it is a very structuralist approach and has in the works of scholars such as Niklas Luhmann and Friedrich Hayek turned into neoliberalism. It is possible to 'translate' the categories of complexity theory such as self-organisation, bifurcation, chaos, order from disorder, etc. into dialectical philosophy and to combine them with a critical theory of society. In the years from 1998 until 2008, I devoted

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[5] Terry Eagleton. 2011. *Why Marx Was Right*. London: Yale University Press.
[6] See: Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers. 1984/2017. *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue With Nature*. London: Verso.

a great deal of thought to this task, which resulted in many publications (usually carrying the term 'self-organisation' in their title).

In a critical phase, the condition of a complex, self-organising system is undetermined. The parts of the system interact in such a way that something new emerges that is more than the sum of the system's parts. This process is also termed emergence. There are certain philosophical parallels between the concept of emergence and the dialectical notion of sublation (*Aufhebung*).[7] Aufhebung has a threefold meaning: elimination, preservation, and lifting up. In a critical phase (that is also termed bifurcation point in the theory of complex systems), a new quality of a system or a new system emerges. Particular old qualities are eliminated, other old qualities are preserved, and new qualities emerge on a new level of organisation.

But the possibility of combining dialectical philosophy and complexity theory does not undo the fact that evolutionary economists and other bourgeois thinkers (such as Hayek and Luhmann) have given bourgeois meanings to terms such as self-organisation.[8] They for example argue that the market is a self-organising system and thereby justify neoliberalism ideologically. To argue that we live in a self-organising market system sounds positive as if there were no social problems. The same can be said of the concepts of the information society and the network society. To argue, as Marxists do, that we live in an antagonistic capitalist system that because of its antagonisms is inherently crisis-prone, is in contrast critical because it signifies the existence of problems in the very categories that are employed.

I have become convinced that an update of Marx's theory and Hegelian philosophy in the 21st century is a viable approach for critical theory and that this approach does not need to borrow from complexity theory in order to be consistent and offer convincing explanations. Hegelian Marxism has a rich and diverse tradition and history that is today often forgotten, but possesses an immense intellectual and political wealth that 21st century critical theory can build on. There is a rich tradition of Marxist theory that can inform the critical study of society, communication, and culture. Because of the neoliberal turn and the postmodern turn, many Marxist approaches to the study of society, communication, and culture have been forgotten. I build on Marx and theories inspired by Marx in order to ground a Marxist theory of communication.

In the book at hand, I am less interested in discussing theories that justify or do not critically analyse capitalist society. Such theories dominate the mainstream of academia. 'Bourgeois' theories should of course be read and criticised, but dealing with them can also take away some of the already limited

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[7] Christian Fuchs. 2003. The Self-Organization of Matter. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 16 (3): 281–313.
[8] Christian Fuchs. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 2 and 3.

time we all have that can be used more productively for constructing our own, critical theories and working on our own critical analyses of society.

By working through a multitude of analyses of concrete societal and communication phenomena I have over the years developed a range of theoretical insights. These insights, concepts, and analyses have never been static, but have developed. Critical theory is itself dialectical. By working through various critical and bourgeois theories and working out analyses of a range of social phenomena (including privacy, surveillance, digital labour, social media, the Internet, authoritarianism, nationalism, protest, advertising, globalisation, imperialism, nature, sustainability, participation, democracy, the public sphere, culture, communities, etc.), I have established in different places and my mind some elements of a critical, dialectical theory of capitalism and communication.

The dialectic is a logic that refuses reduction of the world to single things and the either/or-logic practised so often in simplistic analyses. It uses the logic of both/and, and analyses the world as an open, dynamic totality that consists of a network of contradictions. In a contradiction, one moment exists as a distinct phenomenon with its own qualities and at the same time can only exist through another moment. The two moments of a dialectical relation are dependent and independent. They also interpenetrate each other. A dialectic is a dynamic, contradictory relation. If the dialectical relation is sublated ('*aufgehoben*'), then its contradiction collapses and a new phenomenon emerges that yet again is based on a dialectical relation.

In capitalism, the class antagonism between the capitalist class and the working class is an example of a social dialectic: Workers are compelled to produce commodities that capitalists own and sell in order to yield profits. In capitalism, workers cannot survive without being exploited by the capitalist class. Capital cannot exist without labour that produces commodities and profit. A sublation of the capitalist class antagonism means that a classless organisation of work and society is established. For example, in a self-managed, worker-owned company the class antagonism is sublated.

In the book at hand, the dialectic is applied to communication and capitalism.

This Book's Structure

The purpose of the work at hand is to present foundations of a critical theory of communication and capitalism. Each chapter covers one of the foundational themes of a critical theory of communication and relates communication to a particular key concept. The focus is on materialism (chapter 2), the materialist analysis of society (chapter 3), communication and society (chapter 4), capitalism and communication (chapter 5), communication technologies (chapter 6), communication society (chapter 7), political communication in the public sphere (chapter 8), ideology (chapter 9), nationalism (chapter 10), global communication and imperialism (chapter 11), the

commons (chapter 12), death and love (chapter 13), social struggles and alternatives (chapter 14).

The chapters of this book are organised in the form of three parts: Part I focuses on the foundations of communicative materialism (chapters 2, 3, 4), part II on communication in capitalist society (chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11), and part III on the materialist transcendence of communicative capitalism (chapters 12, 13, 14). Whereas part I analyses the foundations of the general materialist analysis of the world and society, part II further develops these foundations in order to work out an immanent critique of communication in capitalism. There is a dialectic of immanence and transcendence. Immanent critique requires transcendental critique, i.e. reflections on and struggles for alternatives beyond domination. Such endeavours need alternative societal frameworks, political praxis, class struggles, ethics, and metaphysics (metaphysics understood as the study of the trans-empirical). Part III deals with transcendental aspects of communicative materialism, which include the society of the commons, metaphysical reflections on death and love, and social struggles for alternatives.

I have revisited and updated theoretical ideas from earlier works. In doing so, I have focused on analysis on the level of society as totality. By working through theoretical moments, new theoretical moments have been added, while older ones have been contextualised, updated, or revised.

1.2. Critical and Marxist Communication Theory

The book at hand is a contribution to both theories of society and communication theory. Peter Golding and Graham Murdock point out that the mainstream of communication theory has historically been idealist and positivist. This mainstream has advanced the view that society's problems are 'a problem of communication', whereby it 'evacuates from analysis the key problems of power and inequality in structural relations without which social theory is barren'.[9] Such approaches have also often conceptualised communication systems (communications) as the key determinant of society, disregarding 'the social contexts of production and reception and their relations to the central institutions and processes of class societies'.[10]

A dialectical, critical theory of communication cannot simply be a theory of communication, but must at the same time be a dialectical, critical theory of society. It needs to understand how the antagonisms of class and domination interact with communication processes. Such a theory is therefore a critical societal theory of communication and a critical communication theory of soci-

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[9] Peter Golding and Graham Murdock. 1978. Theories of Communication and Theories of Society. *Communication Research* 5 (3): 339–356. p. 346.
[10] Ibid., p. 350.

ety, an approach that analyses the dialectics of communication and society in the context of society's antagonisms. This means that such a theory has to focus on communication in the context of society's antagonisms, class, domination, exploitation, power structures, production, labour, capital, ideology, the state, violence, wars, imperialism, international and global capitalism, authoritarianism, patriarchy, racism, fascism, inequalities, crises, social struggles, social movements, the public sphere, and quests for socialism. Understanding communication requires that we understand the 'grander narrative' of society.[11]

Three Marxist Theory Approaches

The main influences on this book's approach come from the intellectual traditions of Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Humanist Marxism, and critical political economy of communication. Humanist Marxism stresses the role of humans in society, of alienation in class societies, and of praxis in the struggle for a just world. The Frankfurt School complements this approach with a special focus on the critique of ideology. Marxist political economy of communication is an approach that has emerged in the field of media and communication studies. It analyses the relationship of communication to class, capitalism, domination, and social struggles. All three traditions of thought are based on Marx's theory. The approach used in this book has been influenced by elements from all three of these Marxist traditions.

What is Humanist Marxism?

But what is Humanist Marxism? It is an approach that is built on some core ontological, epistemological, and axiological principles:[12]

Ontology:
- Society is grounded in human practice and social production.
- Only humans themselves can achieve a humane society by their practical self-activity in social struggles. Praxis is a key aspect of achieving a humane society.
- Capitalism, class, and domination constitute a form of human alienation that makes visible a difference between how social life is and how it could potentially be.

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[11] Peter Golding. 2018. New Technologies, Old Questions: The Enduring Issues of Communications Research. *Javnost – The Public* 25 (1–2): 202–209. p. 208.

[12] Erich Fromm, ed. 1965. *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Epistemology:
- Marx's early writings, especially the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, are important intellectual foundations of Humanist Marxism.
- There is no epistemological break in Marx's works that led him away from humanism. Marx's later works are guided by the general principles formulated in his early works.
- Humanism requires an open form of theory, dialectic and praxis. Orthodoxies such as Stalinism turn socialism into a dogmatic, deterministic, mechanistic, reductionist, and quasi-religious practice.

Axiology:
- Given society's grounding in human praxis and social production, humans should be collectively in control of the conditions and results of their activity.
- Democratic socialism is the society adequate to humans. It is not limited to politics, but extends to the collective self-management of the economy and society. Democratic socialism is the foundation for the full realisation of humans' and society's potentials.

Critical Theory

Because they analyse and advance the sublation of class, exploitation, and domination, theories that are based on Marx are critical theories. But Critical Theory also denotes the approach of the Frankfurt School. The Institute for Social Research was founded in 1923 at Goethe University Frankfurt. In 1930, Max Horkheimer became the Institute's Director. He worked together with Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Otto Kirchheimer, Leo Löwenthal, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, and Friedrich Pollock on an interdisciplinary, critical theory of society. After Hitler and the Nazis had taken power in 1933, the members of the Institute, who were all Marxists with a Jewish family background had to flee from Germany and most of them went to the USA. They continued to run the Institute in the USA and edited a journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. In 1950, the Institute was reopened at Goethe University Frankfurt. While Horkheimer, Adorno, and Pollock returned to Germany, Marcuse, Neumann, Löwenthal, and Kirchheimer stayed in the USA.

Frankfurt School Critical Theory is a critique of instrumental reason. Instrumental reason is a logic that sees humans as an instrument for advancing domination. It dehumanises the human being and reduces humans to the status of things and machines. Therefore, technological rationality is another term for instrumental reason. Marx' concept of commodity fetishism and Georg Lukács' notion of reification exerted a large influence on the Frankfurt School. Critical Theory wants to uncover how the hidden mechanisms of domination and exploitation operate. Critical Theory wants to 'give a name to what

secretly holds the machine together. […] It seeks to raise the stone under which the monster lies brooding'.[13] Critical Theory's critique of instrumental reason operates on several levels:

- Critical Theory analyses how exploitation reifies humans in capitalism and in class societies in general.
- Critical Theory analyses authoritarian structures of the individual personality and in society.
- Critical Theory analyses fascism as the most extreme form of instrumental reason and capitalism.
- Critical Theory analyses the instrumentalisation of human consciousness as ideology and false consciousness.
- Critical Theory criticises perverted, dogmatic forms of Marxism such as Stalinism as forms of instrumental reason.
- Frankfurt School theorists oppose critical, dialectical reason to instrumental reason.

Critical Political Economy of Communication

Marx's main work *Capital* carries the subtitle 'A Critique of Political Economy'. It is a critique of capitalism, a critique of class societies, and a critique of intellectuals who have analysed capitalism in an uncritical manner. Friedrich Engels points out that political economy analyses 'the conditions and forms under which the various human societies have produced and exchanged and on this basis have distributed their products'[14]. Marx learned a lot from studying the works of 18th- and 19th- century classical political economists, such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Steuart, Jean-Baptiste Say, and John Stuart Mill. At the same time, Marx's works are a critique of classical political economy that often reifies capitalism and class societies as natural forms of society. Marx's own approach critically studies the production, distribution and consumption of commodities in capitalist society, capitalism's historical genesis and contradictions as well as the struggles taking place in this type of society.

Vincent Mosco understands political economy of communication as the 'study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually

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[13] Theodor W. Adorno. 1957. Sociology and Empirical Research. In Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot, and Karl R. Popper: *The Positivist Dispute in German* Sociology, 68–86. London: Heinemann. p. 68.

[14] Friedrich Engels. 1878. Herr Eugen Düring's Revolution in Science. In *MECW* Volume 25, 5–309. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 138

constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources'.[15] There are different traditions of the political economy of communication, such as the Marxist, the (neo-)Keynesian, the neo-classical, or the institutionalist approach. Overall, the political economy of communication is 'broadly marxisant'.[16] The political economy of communication has been institutionalised in the form of the International Association of Media and Communication Research's (IAMCR) Political Economy Section that was created in 1978[17], modules taught in universities, literature[18], studies, and journals such as *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* (http://www.triple-c.at) and *The Political Economy of Communication* (http://www.polecom.org).

Communication Theory Typologies

A critical, Marxist theory of communication can be situated in the field of communication studies via a discussion of communication theory typologies. There are both historical and logical typologies of communication theories. The first give a historical overview of theories, the second present logical distinctions of communication theories.

[15] Vincent Mosco. 2009. *The Political Economy of Communication.* London: Sage. 2nd edition. p. 24.

[16] Graham Murdock and Peter Golding. 2005 Culture, Communications and Political Economy. In *Mass Media and Society*, ed. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, 60–83. London: Hodder Arnold. p. 61.

[17] For a short history of this section, see: Janet Wasko. 2013. The IAMCR Political Economy Section: A Retrospective. *The Political Economy of Communication* 1 (1): 4–8.

[18] For overviews, see: Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*. Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, eds. 1997. *The Political Economy of the Media I & II*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, eds. 2011. *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco, eds. 2017. *Marx and the Political Economy of the Media*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books. Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco, eds. 2017. *Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books. Janet Wasko. 2014. The Study of the Political Economy of the Media in the Twenty-First Century. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 10 (3): 259–271. Jonathan Hardy. 2014. *Critical Political Economy of the Media. An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge. Paula Chakravartty and Yuezhi Zhao, eds. 2008. *Global Communications: Toward a Transcultural Political Economy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Dwayne Winseck and Dal Yong Jin, eds. 2011. *The Political Economies of Media*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Benjamin J. Birkinbine, Rodrigo Gómez, and Janet Wasko, eds. 2017. *Global Media Giants*. New York: Routledge.

Armand Mattelart and Michèle Mattelart[19] give a historical overview of some theories of communication. They argue that in the 19th century, society was conceived as an organism and communications as networks for the physical transport of commodities, thereby both enabling and constituting the emergence of mass communication. In the early 20th century, empiricist and functionalist communication research emerged. Further developments in 20th century communication theory that Armand and Michèle Mattelart discuss are information theory (the mathematical theory of communication, cybernetics), critical theory, structuralism, cultural studies, the political economy of communication, intersubjective communication theories, network theories, information society theories, and theories of globalisation and global media.

Other historical studies in communication theory and communication studies include those published by Hanno Hardt, Everett Rogers, Paddy Scannell, and Dan Schiller[20]. It is also very important to document the history of communication studies at the international level and in respect to non-Western countries.[21] The main insight that we can learn from such historical studies is that Marxist communication studies has struggled in an academic field dominated by traditional, instrumental approaches so that its representatives have again and again faced discrimination and attempts to marginalise their research.[22] The present work is part of critical communication research's struggles against the dominant, positivistic, uncritical, instrumental, capitalist, neoliberal logic of academia.

Logical typologies form the second approach to the meta-study of communication theories. Iulia Nastasia and Lana Rakow[23] distinguish communication

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[19] Armand Mattelart and Michèle Mattelart. 1998. *Theories of Communication: A Short Introduction.* London: Sage.

[20] Hanno Hardt. 1992. *Critical Communication Studies: Communication, History and Theory in America.* Abingdon: Routledge. Hanno Hardt. 2001. *Social Theories of the Press. Constituents of Communication Research, 1840s to 1920s.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Paddy Scannell. 2007. *Media and Communication.* London: Sage. Everett Rogers. 1994. *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach.* New York: The Free Press. Dan Schiller. 1996. *Theorizing Communication: A History.* New York: Oxford University Press.

[21] See: Peter Simonson and David W. Park, eds. 2016. *The International History of Communication Study.* New York: Routledge.

[22] See: John A. Lent, ed. 1995. *A Different Road Taken: Profiles in Critical Communication.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press. John A. Lent & Michelle A. Amazeen, eds. 2015. *Key Thinkers in Critical Communication Scholarship. From the Pioneers to the Next Generation.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[23] Diana Iulia Nastasia and Lana F. Rakow. 2004. *Towards a Philosophy of Communication Theories: An Ontological, Epistemological and Ideological Approach*: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association. New Orleans Sheraton, New Orleans. May 27,

theories according to the type of ontology (O), epistemology (E), and axiology (A) they use. They distinguish five major communication theory approaches: rationalism (O: idealism, E: rationalism, A: absolutism), functionalism (O: realism, E: empiricism, A: elitism), criticism (O: materialism, E: materialist dialectic, A: revolution), interpretivism (O: subjective nominalism, E: humanism, A: pluralism), postmodernism (O: solipsism/relativism, E: scepticism/constructivism, A: anarchy/post-ideology). Nastasia and Rakow argue that the Frankfurt School and Critical Political Economy belong in the third domain, the domain of critical theories. Consequently, the approach presented in this book belongs to this domain, as it draws on Marxist theory.

Robert T. Craig[24] lists and discusses seven theories of communication:

- the rhetorical approach
- semiotics
- phenomenology
- cybernetics
- socio-psychological approaches
- socio-cultural approaches; and
- critical theory.

These theories of communication differ by the way they theorise communication. Communication is conceptualised:

- as discourse (rhetorical approach)
- signs (semiotics)
- dialogue (phenomenology)
- information processing (cybernetics)
- interaction (social psychology)
- (re)production of social order (socio-cultural approaches)
- critique and discursive reflection (critical theory).

This book belongs to the last of these approaches. The tradition of critical communication theory theorises communication in the context of exploitation and domination, class and power, ideology, social struggles, and the quest for an alternative, non-dominative, classless society. Whereas some approaches forget about the role of exploitation and class and merely focus on domination, power, politics, and culture without analysing the role of exploitation, class, and the economy, a Marxist communication theory analyses communication in the context of the dialectic of class and domination and of capitalism as a societal totality that is grounded in the logic of accumulation and creates inequalities.

2004. http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/1/3/2/5/pages113255/p113255-1.php (accessed on 25 February 2020).

[24] Robert T. Craig. 1999. Communication Theory as a Field. *Communication Theory* 9 (2): 119–161.

James A. Anderson and Geoffrey Baim[25] characterise communication scholarship with the help of two axes: analytical research/empirical research, and foundational research/reflexive research. They characterise foundationalism as modernist, focusing on certainty, causality, closure, while reflexivity is understood as postmodernist, focusing on erasure, agency, indeterminacy. In Anderson and Baim's typology, analytical approaches privilege theory, frameworks, concepts, values, whereas empirical approaches privilege observation, measurement, presence, and experience. The result is four different approaches: the foundational-analytical approach, the reflexive-analytical approach, the foundational-empirical approach, and the reflexive-empirical approach. Marxist and critical theory approaches to communication are characterised as foundational-analytical, cultural Marxist approaches as reflexive-analytical. The problem with this typology is its undialectical nature that does not allow it to adequately classify dialectical approaches. Hegelian Marxist approaches stress the dialectics of object/subject, structures/agency, necessity/chance, continuity/discontinuity, society/individual, theory/empirical research, reason/experience, nature/culture, society/economy, etc. Anderson and Baim's typology cannot properly account for the dialectic, which is why they mischaracterise Marxist approaches to communication. Communication is a process that is embedded in the (re)production of society's dialectics. It is not surprising that in another publication, Anderson mischaracterises dialectical approaches by arguing that 'Hegel and Marx continued to submerge the individual',[26] although Marx spoke of a dialectic of the individual and society: 'Above all we must avoid postulating "society" again as an abstraction *vis-à-vis* the individual. The individual *is the social being.* His manifestations of life – even if they may not appear in the direct form of *communal* manifestations of life carried out in association with others – *are* therefore an expression and confirmation of *social life.* Man's individual and species-life are not *different,* however much – and this is inevitable – the mode of existence of the individual is a more *particular* or more *general* mode of the life of the species, or the life of the species is a more *particular* or more *general* individual life.'[27]

A dualistic typology of communication theories comparable to that of Anderson/Baim is Karl Erik Rosengren's[28] application of Burrell and Morgan's

[25] James A. Anderson and Geoffrey Baym. 2004. Philosophies and Philosophic Issues in Communication, 1995–2004. *Journal of Communication* 54 (4): 589–615.

[26] James A. Anderson. 1996. *Communication Theory. Epistemological Foundations.* New York: The Guilford Press. p. 86.

[27] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume 3*, 229–346. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 299.

[28] Karl Erik Rosengren. 1983. Communication Research: One Paradigm, or Four? *Journal of Communication* 33 (3): 185–207. Karl Erik Rosengren. 1993. From Field to Frog Ponds. *Journal of Communication* 43 (3): 6–17.

typology of social theories[29] to communication theory. Burrell and Morgan distinguish theories according to two axes: subjectivism/objectivism, radical change/continuity, resulting in four different paradigms: interpretivism (subjectivism/continuity), functionalism (objectivism/continuity), radical humanism (subjectivism/radical change), radical structuralism (objectivism/radical change). In a later publication, Rosengren[30] substituted the change/continuity axis for conflict/consensus. Rosengren characterises Critical Theory as radical humanism (subjectivistic/radical change) and Marxism as radical structuralism (objectivistic/radical change). There are structuralist versions of Marxism, such as Althusser's theory and the school of thought building on his approach, that disregard the dialectic of individuals and society, and therefore fit into the typology. But humanist, dialectical Marxist theories cannot simply be characterised as subjectivistic and focusing on radical change. They analyse, like Marx, the dialectics of agency and structures and continuity and change in class societies.[31] A crisis of capitalism is a point of discontinuity that opens up society for radical change. If emancipatory class struggles fail in such situations, then capitalist power can reconstitute itself so that there is a continuity of capitalism through change. Marxist dialectics does not fit into dualist typologies, but rather transcends such classifications. One key point that will be outlined in this book is that communication is a social and societal process, a dialectic that cuts across dualisms.[32] Communication is the process through which humans produce and reproduce society's dialectics.

In his seminal *Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail[33] frequently develops typologies that are an intersection of two axes that each have two poles for outlining communication phenomena and theoretical approaches. The result is quadruples of approaches and dimensions, i.e. typologies with four categories. McQuail applies the approach of quadrupling for meta-theorising

[29] Gibson Burrell & Gareth Morgan. 1979. *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis.* Aldershot: Gower.

[30] Karl Erik Rosengren. 2000. *Communication: An Introduction.* London: Sage. p. 8.

[31] See: Christian Fuchs. 2016. Herbert Marcuse and Social Media. In *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet*, 111–152. London: University of Westminster Press.

[32] See: Christian Fuchs. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies.* London: Routledge. Chapter 3. Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama. 1999. Thinking Dialectically About Culture and Communication. *Communication Theory* 9 (1): 1–25.

[33] Denis McQuail. 2010. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory.* London: Sage. Sixth edition.

media and communication theories,[34] theories of the consequences media and communication have for society,[35] theories of media and order;[36] theories of relations between media, culture and society,[37] relations between personal and mass media,[38] information behaviour,[39] media governance,[40] media types,[41] and media effects.[42] Such dualistic models certainly have heuristic relevance because they are an 'aid to the description and explanation of communication' and are 'a source of hypotheses, a guide to research, and a format for ordering the results of research'.[43] But a problem of dualistic typologies is that they cannot account for phenomena and approaches that transcend or are located between categories. They cannot explain communication's dialectics.

McQuail presents a typology of communication theories along two axes.[44] One axis distinguishes between media-oriented and society-oriented approaches, the other one between culturalism and materialism. The result is four approaches that McQuail calls media-culturalism, media-materialism, social culturalism, and social materialism. In another typology, McQuail presents theories of media and society as the intersection of two axes where one displays centrifugal or centripetal forces (resulting, respectively, in fragmentation or integration) and the other axis reflects a range running between optimism and pessimism.[45]

In the first typology, the distinction between materialism and culturalism is inept. Raymond Williams points out that culture is a realm of social production and therefore material.[46] Matter is not the opposite of culture. Culture is not immaterial. What McQuail probably means is either the distinction between subject/object or between culture/economy. But in neither case is there a strict dual separation because there are theories of the cultural economy, culture in

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[34] Ibid., p. 12.
[35] Ibid., p. 91.
[36] Ibid., p. 204.
[37] Ibid., p. 81.
[38] Ibid., p. 137.
[39] Ibid., p. 148.
[40] Ibid., p. 234.
[41] Ibid., p. 238.
[42] Ibid., p. 466.
[43] Denis McQuail. 2008. Models of Communication. In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach, 3143–3150. Malden, MA: Blackwell. p. 3143.
[44] McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, p. 12.
[45] Ibid., p. 91.
[46] Raymond Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also: Christian Fuchs. 2017. Raymond Williams' Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies 20* (6): 744–762.

the economy, the dialectic of subject/object, and the dialectic of media/society. In respect to the second typology, centrifugal forces cannot always be clearly separated from centripetal forces. These two forces often reach dialectically into each other. For example, flexible production and niche marketing create a variety of commodities so that capital accumulation in the culture industry works as the integration of diverse and individualised commodities that all have in common that they are products of cultural labour, that they are produced for and sold on the market, and that they objectify surplus labour that yields profit. In respect to the same typology, dialectical approaches transcend McQuail's distinction between media optimism and media pessimism by stressing that society and communications have a diversity of contradictory potentials and that whether communications have rather positive or rather negative effects in society depends on the results of social and class struggles. A dialectical critical theory transcends the dualisms that traditional communication theories define. The book at hand presents such an approach.

Communication and Capitalism: A Critical Theory is a contribution to both Marxist theory and to communication theory. I am convinced that communication studies can and has to learn important lessons from Marxist theory and that Marxist theory can be inspired by communication theory. But all too often communication is not taken seriously enough in Marxism and Marxism is dismissed and discriminated against in mainstream studies (not only, but also in communication studies).

The method of work I have adopted operates on two dimensions: It combines critical theory, empirical social research, and ethics. It tries to work through known and unknown Marxist approaches in order to update elements from them for a critical theory of communication. There is too much focus on the latest bourgeois trends in social theory (such as post-humanism, actor network theory, new materialism, etc.) that lets scholars forget that Marxism has a powerful interdisciplinary, dialectical methodology and makes knowledge matter politically.

1.3. Dialectical, Humanist Marxism and Communication Theory

The approach I present in this book stands in the tradition of Hegel and Marx. I have more recently added Aristotle to this line of thought because I have become convinced that Aristotle had a profound influence on Marx's works. Aristotle's philosophy has especially influenced Marx and humanist socialists such as Georg Lukács in respect to the dialectical notion of matter, the dialectical concept of essence, the dialectic of potentiality and actuality, the teleological ontology of production, technology (techne) as practice, use-value, exchange-value, the forms of value, the money form, as well as the ethics and politics of

the common good.[47] The line of thought Aristotle – Hegel – Marx that shapes my approach has been influenced by my engagement with the approaches of a range of critical theorists: Theodor W. Adorno, Günther Anders, Avicenna, Ernst Bloch, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Angela Davis, Erich Fromm, Lucien Goldmann, Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jürgen Habermas, David Harvey, Hans Heinz Holz, Horst Holzer, Max Horkheimer, C.L.R. James, Manfred Knoche, Henri Lefebvre, Georg Lukács, Rosa Luxemburg, Alasdair MacIntyre, Herbert Marcuse, Maria Mies, Thomas Nagel, Franz Neumann, Mogobe B. Ramose, M.N. Roy, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dallas W. Smythe, Edward P. Thompson, Mario Tronti, Claudia von Werlhof, Raymond Williams, and Slavoj Žižek.

Aristotelian, Dialectical, Humanist Marxism

Grounding an approach in Aristotelian, dialectical, Humanist Marxism is often brushed aside with the label 'Euro-centrism', assuming that European and Aristotelian thought has an inherently imperialistic character. Such arguments disregard the grounding of Aristotelian thought in African philosophy: Innocent C. Onyewuenyi[48] shows that Egyptian philosophy, mathematics, medicine, agriculture, law, and religion influenced Greek thought. Greek philosophers such as Thales had been to Egypt, where they were influenced by Egyptian philosophy. There are 'Egyptian origins of Greek philosophy and civilization'.[49] Egyptian philosophy also influenced Aristotle: 'Aristotle became acquainted with doctrines and ideas of the Egyptian priest-scholars which were not known to, and not taught by, Plato. Hence the richness and variety of speculations which appear in the Aristotelian corpus and his philosophical advance over

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[47] See: Ernst Bloch. 1963/2019. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left.* New York: Columbia University Press. Georg Lukács. 1984. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 13: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 1. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. Georg Lukács. 1986. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 14: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. George E. McCarthy. 1990. *Marx and the Ancients: Classical Ethics, Social Justice, and Nineteenth-Century Political Economy.* Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. George E. McCarthy, ed. 1992. *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth-Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity.* Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Scott Meikle. 1985. *Existentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx.* London: Duckworth. Jonathan E. Pike. 1999. *From Aristotle to Marx: Aristotelianism in Marxist Social Ontology.* Aldershot: Ashgate.

[48] Innocent C. Onyewuenyi. 1993. *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy.* Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.

[49] Ibid., p. 284.

Plato'.[50] The 'Aristotelian Left' developed Aristotle's philosophy in a materialist manner. Islamic philosophers Avicenna und Averroes, who conceived of matter as (self-)producing and dialectical, were important figures in this movement.[51]

Aristotle's philosophy is a 'mediating theory'.[52] The question of how phenomena are related is one of the foundational problems of philosophy. Aristotle's philosophy is a 'mediating theory', which stresses the middle between two extremes.[53] In contrast, a dialectic is constituted by two opposed poles that are identical and non-identical, i.e. contradictory, so that there is potential for the sublation of the contradiction between these two poles. The problem of mediation was solved dialectically by Hegel and Marx. Aristotle's philosophy, like those of Hegel and Marx, is triadic and stresses the relationship between two poles. For Hegel and Marx, the resolution of a contradiction is its sublation, which means the contradiction is dissolved and something new emerges. For Aristotle, the resolution of a contradiction is moderation and the assertion of the middle of two extremes. Aristotle's philosophy is a rudimentary, underdeveloped, and rather conservative form of the dialectic.

What is decisive about Aristotle's philosophy, however, is that it asks the question about mediation. It 'was Aristotle's immeasurable innovation in philosophy to have been the first to be aware of this problem of mediation'.[54] Whereas other philosophical approaches assume that the world is unmediated and preach a radical dualism and relativism, Aristotle's starting point is the mediation of the world, by which he created the foundations of dialectical philosophy. Today, radical relativism and radical unmediatedness (the fetishism of difference) take on the form of various poststructuralist approaches. Dialectical philosophy is today not just resistance against positivism, but also resistance against poststructuralism. For every theory of society, the problem of mediation is the problem of how the human subject and society's objects are related. In dialectical, Humanist Marxism, there is a subject/object dialectic, where human production is the decisive process in the reproduction of society. In communication theory, dualist thought takes on the form of the separation of production/communication, work/interaction, economy/culture, labour/ideology, production/consumption, etc. A dialectical theory of communication and society has to substitute these dualisms of communication for subject/object-dialectics.

For Aristotle, the dialectic is a method of discussion, asking questions, engaging with problems and giving answers that focuses on contradictions. The

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[50] Ibid., p. 285.
[51] Ernst Bloch. 1963/2019. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left*. New York: Columbia University Press.
[52] Theodor W. Adorno. 2001. *Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 36.
[53] Ibid., p. 36.
[54] Ibid., p. 43.

Aristotelian dialectic involves propositions 'which contradict the contraries of opinions that are taken to be reputable'.[55] The 'dialectic is a process of criticism'.[56] Aristotle must be credited for identifying that contradictions are an important principle and moment of dialectics. But his notion of the dialectic is limited to the realm of logic and arguments made in discussion. Hegel and Marx extended the dialectic's scope from the realm of argumentation and logic to society and nature, although differing with respect to the question what is the driving force of the dialectic. While for Hegel, spirit is the driving force, Marx stresses the materiality of the dialectic. Ernst Bloch points out that there are already foundations of dialectical materialism in Aristotle.[57] For Aristotle, matter is dynamic, productive potentiality (*dynámei ón,* δυνάμει ὄν, being-in-possibility), that is, the material cause from which concrete forms are produced through the efficient cause.

1.4. Anti-Humanism

Since the 1960s, anti-humanist social theory has flourished in various forms. This section gives a short overview of some important anti-humanist approaches. Dialectical, Humanist Marxism is critical of anti-humanism.

Louis Althusser's Negative Legacy

Although I am in favour of advancing and building on a broad range of critical theories, there are traditions that I think have done much damage to critical theory: Althusserianism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, as well as anti- and post-humanism. Althusser writes that 'the structure of the relations of production determines the places and *functions* occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places, insofar as they are the "supports" (*Träger*) of these functions'.[58] He disregards that human work recreates and changes the relations of production, human practices produce and reproduce social structures, and that class and social struggles have the potential to change and transcend such structures. Althusser neglects one side of the dialectic

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[55] Aristotle. 1984. Topics. In The *Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation Digital Edition*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton, 381–617. NY: Princeton University Press. §104a.

[56] Ibid., §101b.

[57] Ernst Bloch. 1963/2019. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left.* New York: Columbia University Press.

[58] Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar. 1968/2009. *Reading Capital.* London: Verso. pp. 198–199.

of structure and agency. He consequently describes his approach as an anti-humanist reading of Marx. The main problem of Althusserianism is that it has advanced the idea of the death of the human subject that has inspired several generations of scholars and has resulted in anti-humanist thought that under the disguise of being critical has advanced new forms of oppressive thought.

Luhmann, Barthes, Foucault

Niklas Luhmann advanced a politically conservative social theory that in some respects parallels that of Althusser. Luhmann argues in his social systems theory that humans are 'as psychic and as bodily systems […] sensors' in the environment of social systems.[59] For Luhmann, a social system is a connection of communications without humans that has a self-referential character, which means that communication produces communication. He makes communication structures into subjects, which does not consider that communication is a process produced by humans. Michel Foucault shares Roland Barthes' thesis of the death of the human subject[60] and reduces humans to functions of discourses: The 'subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse'.[61] By conceptualising discourse structures as determining society, Foucault advances a structuralist and functionalist concept of society. Foucault argues that structuralism ceaselessly functions to "unmake' that very [hu]man who is creating and re-creating his positivity in the human sciences'.[62] Foucault very much welcomed structuralism's anti-humanist intention to subordinate humans under structures, and practiced anti-humanism as his own programme.

Actor Network Theory, Posthumanism, Cyborgs

Actor network theory is a particular form of post-structuralism. Bruno Latour defines an actor network as 'assembly of humans and nonhumans'[63]. He sees

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[59]   Niklas Luhmann. 1995. *Social Systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 410.

[60]   Roland Barthes.1968/1977. The Death of the Author. In Roland Barthes: *Image Music Text*, 142–148. London: Fontana Press.

[61]   Michel Foucault. 1977. What Is An Author? In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, 113–138. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p. 138.

[62]   Michel Foucault. 1970/1989. *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human* Sciences. London: Routledge. p. 414.

[63]   Bruno Latour. 2004. *Politics of Nature. How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 69.

nonhumans (such as technologies, laboratories, instruments, materials, etc.) as social subjects and therefore, for example, speaks of '*the voices of nonhumans*'.[64] Latour and actor network theory obliterate the differences between humans and nonhumans by claiming that the latter are social actors. Latour's theory and related approaches are also called New Materialism[65], which is a vulgar understanding of materialism that does not conceive of matter as a dynamic process of (self-)production, but as things and objects.

Posthumanism is a version of New Materialism. It stresses a 'subject that works across differences'[66] and that 'subjectivity includes relations to a multitude of non-human "others".[67] Posthumanism stresses especially the subject position of cyborgs, which are hybrids of humans/technology or humans/non-humans achieved with the help of computer technologies, Artificial Intelligence, robotics, and genetic engineering. 'A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism'.[68] Some scholars argue that the predicted rise of cyborgs as advancing the end of patriarchy. Another argument in respect to cyborgs that scholars such as Ray Kurzweil advance is that cyborgs will make humans immortal.[69] Posthumanism is a version of naïve technological determinism and technological optimism that assumes that society and humanity radically change because of the rise of new technologies.

Postmodern theory has emerged in the post-Althusser climate. Its main offence against critical theory has been the advancement of anti-Marxism, which means the neglect and downplaying of the importance of class and capitalism in society and of Marx and approaches building on him in critical theory. Along with it have come reformist identity politics that fail to challenge the totality of exploitation and domination.

Technological Determinism: Marshall McLuhan and Friedrich Kittler

Techno-centric theories of the media, just like poststructuralism, decentre the role of humans in society. Marshall McLuhan's media theory and Friedrich Kittler's media history are two examples. McLuhan argues that print

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[64] Ibid., p. 69.
[65] Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, eds. 2012. *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies.* Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press.
[66] Rosi Braidotti. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity. p. 49.
[67] Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, eds. *Posthuman Glossary.* London: Bloomsbury Academic. p. 340.
[68] Donna Haraway. 1985/1991. A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century. In Donna Haraway: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, pp. 149–181. New York: Routledge. p. 149.
[69] Ray Kurzweil. 2005. *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology.* London: Viking. Ray Kurzweil and Terry Grossman. 2004. *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale.

technologies cause negative effects in society and that electronic media have positive effects. He argues that 'print causes nationalism' and 'created individualism and nationalism'.[70] Electronic technologies would have created a global village: 'But certainly the electro-magnetic discoveries have recreated the simultaneous "field" in all human affairs so that the human family now exists under conditions of a "global village"'[71]

Friedrich Kittler calls for an ontology that focuses on 'relations between things in time and space',[72] so that 'ontology turns into an ontology of distances, transmissions, and media'.[73] As a consequence, Kittler wrote a history of communication technologies without the history of society. For him, technology is itself an acting subject. Kittler postulates a straightforward determination of society and humans by media technologies: 'Media determine our situation';[74] 'technical media are models of the so-called human'.[75] While Lukács and the Frankfurt School warn against instrumental reason's logic of quantification colonising society, the humanities and the social sciences, Kittler welcomes, commends and propagates this development. Kittler's programme is the application of structuralism and the logic of machines, mathematics, and computer science to the humanities and society as well as to systematically contest 'the humanities' three elements: history, spirit, the human being'.[76] Kittler wrote these words in the introduction to a collected volume from 1980 that he edited and that holds the programmatic title *Exorcism of the Spirit from the Humanities* (in German: *Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften*). While the materialist, dialectical critique of society has the potential to sublate individualism and idealism in the humanities and social sciences, Kittler's exorcism is the worship of machines and therefore of capitalist reification and capitalism's fetish character, so that his approach means regression into mechanical materialism.

Interpreting technologies as subjects leads Kittler to argue that technologies act. He argues, for example, that wars are conducted between technologies and

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[70] Marshall McLuhan. 1997. *Essential McLuhan*, ed. Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone. London: Routledge. pp. 141, 157.

[71] Marshall McLuhan. 1962. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 31.

[72] Friedrich Kittler. 2009. Towards an Ontology of Media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 26 (2–3): 23–31. p. 24.

[73] Ibid., p. 28.

[74] Friedrich Kittler. 1999. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. xxxix.

[75] Friedrich Kittler. 2010. *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*. Cambridge: Polity. p. 36.

[76] Translation from German: Friedrich Kittler. 1980. Einleitung. In *Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften. Programme des Poststrukturalismus*, ed. Friedrich Kittler, 7–14. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schönigh. p. 8.

not by humans who aim at achieving or defending power: It 'has become clear that real wars are not fought for people or for fatherlands, but take place between different media, information technologies, data flows'.[77] John Durham Peters argues in this context: 'Agency Kittler tends to attribute to abstractions such as world war and not to living, breathing actors. He is not interested in audiences or effects, resistance or hegemony, stars or genres; he spends no time on subcultures, postcoloniality, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, or class'.[78] Kittler's approach is an 'antihumanist technological determinism'[79] that is characterised by 'hardware euphoria'.[80] McLuhan and Kittler are both technological determinists, to whom Raymond Williams' criticism applies that in techno-determinism 'intention […] is irrelevant'[81] and technology is presented 'as a cause'.[82]

Structuralism's Anti-Humanism

The types of approach just mentioned – Althusserian structuralism, Luhmann's system theory, Foucauldian discourse theory, poststructuralism, actor network theory, new materialism, posthumanism, McLuhan's media theory, Kittler's media history – share the assumption that society is not a realm of human practices organised as a dialectic of structures and agency. They rather reduce society to social, linguistic, or technological structures that are said to be independent of humans and their practices and to act as subjects. Structures are turned into subjects, which overlooks that structures are produced and reproduced by human practices that are conditioned, enabled, and constrained by structures. Anti-humanism is the core of the discussed approaches. In order to question economic, political, methodological, philosophical, and ideological individualism and idealism, structuralist and poststructuralist approaches fetishise structures. But they overlook that disrespect for and contempt of humans, the overemphasis on structures over practices, and the neglect of the dialectic of structures and practices can very easily have misanthropic political implications. Anti-humanism is undialectical.

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[77] Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, p. xli.
[78] John Durham Peters. 2010. Introduction: Friedrich Kittler's Light Shows. In Friedrich Kittler: *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*, 1–18. Cambridge: Polity. p. 5.
[79] W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen, eds. 2010. *Critical Terms for Media Studies.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. pp. xiii–xiv.
[80] Sybille Krämer. 2006. The Cultural Techniques of Time Axis Manipulation. On Friedrich Kittler's Conception of Media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (7–8): 93–109.
[81] Raymond Williams. 1974/2003. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Routledge. p. 130.
[82] Ibid., p. 131.

It misses society's dialectic of human practices and structures that Marx pinpoints in the following words: '*just as* society itself produces *man as man*, so is society *produced* by him.'[83] In contrast and opposed to anti-humanist theory, the task of the book at hand is to work out what roles communication plays in the dialectics of humans and society, practices and social structures, the individual and social systems.

The books that have most influenced my thought and from which I have probably learned most have been Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, *Capital*, and *Grundrisse*; Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Logic* (often referred to as 'Smaller Logic', which implies that the *Science of Logic* is more important, although the *Encyclopaedia Logic* is Hegel's most systematic and ultimate dialectical work and therefore constitutes his 'Universal Logic'), Herbert Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, and Georg Lukács' *Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins* (*Ontology of Societal Being*).

Neoliberal capitalism has turned in a negative dialectic into authoritarian capitalism and established the foundations of a new fascism. Democratic socialism is of course the only real counter-model to fascism and capitalism. In the situation of highest danger, the task is first and foremost to defend and advance humanism. Only through humanism can we reach socialism (and vice-versa). My approach taken in this book and in general can be characterised as dialectical, Humanist Marxism and humanist socialism.

The political task is and remains for the time being that we come together and through social struggles sublate communicative capitalism into a commons-based society and communicative commons. Humanism is only true and complete as a commons-based community of humanity. The commons can only become true as humanism.

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[83] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume 3*, 229–346. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 301.

Foundations of Communicative Materialism

CHAPTER 2

Materialism

Critical theories are materialist theories. Materialism neither means an approach that stresses determination by the economy nor one that stresses the role of things. Materialism stresses that the world is dynamic, dialectical, a relation, and a process – a form of contradictions that enable change and development. This chapter covers some foundations of materialist philosophy, namely the concept of matter (2.1) and the dialectic (2.2).

2.1. Matter

Aristotle[1] opposed the reductionist materialism of atomists such as Leucippus, Democritus, Empedocles, or Anaxagoras. Atomism reduces all being to atoms as a primary substance. Aristotle sees matter (*hylé*) as standing in a relation to form (*morphé*, *eîdos*). Matter and form together constitute essence. Form is 'shapeliness that is worked into the perceptible thing',[2] the 'what-it-was-to-be-that-thing'.[3] Matter is 'an item that is not in itself a something and is also not a quantity nor said to be any of the other things by which that which is is defined',[4] 'the first thing that is no longer said to be made-of-this in reference to any other thing'.[5]

Aristotle

Matter has the potential (*dynámei*) for change. For Aristotle, matter has the potential (*dynámei*) for change. In Hegelian terms, we can say that matter can

[1] Aristotle 1999. *Metaphysics*. Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press.
[2] Ibid., § 1033b.
[3] Aristotle. 1998. *Metaphysics*. London: Penguin. § 1035b.
[4] Ibid., § 1029a.
[5] Aristotle 1999. *Metaphysics*. Santa Fe, NM Green Lion Press. § 1049b.

form being-there (*Dasein*). It is being-in-possibility. As a consequence, matter is primary to form. Matter 'is in potency because it goes toward a form; but whenever it is at work, then it is in that form'.[6] For Aristotle, matter is other than for the atomists: Not static, but dynamic. Matter exists 'in those things of which there is a coming-into-being and a change into one another'.[7] In nature (e.g. stones, fires), matter is 'able to be moved by itself',[8] whereas in society (Aristotle mentions the example of dancing) it 'can be moved by other things',[9] (i.e. humans). Aristotle opposes the atomists' reductionist concept of matter: The totality that emerges from the connection and synergies of parts is not reduceable to them, i.e. the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Aristotle was one of the first dialectical materialists. Ernst Bloch[10] stresses that the Aristotelian Left argues that Aristotle defines matter as dynamic being-in-possibility (*dynámei ón,* δυνάμει ὄν), as objective possibility. According to Bloch, this Aristotelian concept of matter questions mechanistic materialism and can also be found in the works of Avicenna, Averroes, Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Schelling, Hegel, and Marx. For Marx and Engels, society is a material system, in which humans produce relations and processes that have contradictory character and form. Society is a developing totality.

Space and Time

Space and time are the two central dimensions in the organisation of matter. Space is the next-to-one-another of units of matter. We therefore say: A exists in a certain spatial distance from B. Time is the after-one-another of units of matter: C takes place before or after D. Time has to do with the change of particular forms of matter. Time is matter's form of existence. Since time is not static, but dynamic, it changes its form. On the one hand, one form of matter can over a longer period of time turn into a new organisational form of matter. On the other hand, all being-there (*Dasein*) differentiates its form. In inanimate objects such as stones change is slower than in living forms of being. Living beings are cell organisms whose cells reproduce and differentiate themselves. In society, humans change structures through action and communication so that structures condition and enable further action and communication. If one records the condition of a certain form of being, then waits, and then again records the object's condition, then one can at a certain level of organisation

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[6] Ibid., §1050a.
[7] Ibid., §1044b.
[8] Ibid., §1034a.
[9] Ibid., §1034a.
[10] Ernst Bloch, Ernst. 1972. *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. Ernst Bloch. 2018. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left.* New York: Columbia University Press.

observe change. Such changes are an indication that structures develop in time. Time is the development of being-there (*Dasein*) from one condition to the next. Time is the duration of a process, a sequence of events that form a process. It is irreversible, which means that something existent at a certain point of time has a certain condition and cannot return at another point of time into exactly the same condition.

Matter's Becoming

Matter changes continuously in time. It is dynamic. Time 'itself is this *becoming*, arising, and passing away'.[11] All forms of matter have a beginning and an end. Matter is eternal because it is being's form of being and there must always be something. Matter is the world's process-substance. Matter is universal: It has no beginning and no end. Therefore time also is eternal.[12] Time is the order and directedness of being into the past, present, and future. 'The *present, future,* and *past,* the dimensions of time, constitute the *becoming* of externality as such, and its dissolution into the differences of being as passing over into nothing, and of nothing as passing over into being'.[13]

   Matter's dialectic of space and time means that instances of being (*Dasein*, being-there) exist next to one another and after one another. 'Like time is the after-one-another of contents, space is the next-to-one-another of things'.[14] Forms of matter exist next to one another in space, where they condition each other mutually. The content of matter is a sequence of events, in which forms that exist next to one another pass into each other. Matter is the dialectical unity of spatial next-to-one-another and temporal after-one-another. Hegel therefore stresses that matter is the dynamic, dialectical unity of space and time: 'This *passing away* and self-*regeneration* of space in time and time in space, in which time posits itself spatially as place, while this indifferent spatiality is likewise posited immediately in a temporal manner, constitutes motion. To an equal extent however, this becoming is itself the internal collapse of its contradiction, it is therefore the immediately *identical* and *existent* unity of place and motion, i.e. *matter*'.[15] In the development of matter something new emerges out of the old so that the particular form of existence of the old being ceases but takes on a new form in the sublated existence. The dialectic of being and nothingness

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[11] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. 1970. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature. Volume I. Edited and translated by M. J. Petry.* London: George Allen and Unwin. § 258, Remark.

[12] Ibid., § 258, Addition.

[13] Ibid., § 259.

[14] Translation from German: Hans Heinz Holz. 2005. *Weltentwurf und Reflexion. Versuch einer Grundlegung der Dialektik.* Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler. p. 170.

[15] Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, §261.

is matter's dynamic of development through which it is a process-substance. 'Something becomes an other, but the other is itself a something, so it likewise becomes an other, and so on *ad infinitum*'.[16]

Matter, Interaction, Communication

Matter interacts but does not necessarily communicate. Stones do not communicate in a rockfall. They do not say to each other, 'Come on, let us together plunge down into the valley'. Rather, erosion, rainwater, meltwater, or living beings trigger the rockfall, in which rocks move simultaneously, collide, splinter, and finally come to a standstill and remain in a new formation on even ground. Interaction means that forms of matter impact each other. The stone does not know that it plunges, splinters, and comes to standstill. The situation is wholly different in a class society, in which the oppressed reach a point where they say to each other 'Let us overthrow the slave-master's rule, let us break his power so that his mastery comes to an end'; then we can speak of interaction as communication because there is an intentional engagement. Communication is goal-oriented understanding, which does not imply that only humans communicate. Other highly developed mammals such as dolphins, dogs, gorillas, chimpanzees, and elephants communicate, perceive, and react to each other's intentions, and learn from each other.[17] Humans, in contrast to other animals, communicate with practical rationality, use language in a complex manner and assess the condition of the world before, while, and after they act and communicate. Humans can evaluate, modify, and change their social action through communication.

Stones do not have to say anything to each other. They do not communicate. Higher mammals have to say something to each other in order to organise their sheer existence. They communicate pre-linguistically. In communication and work, humans evaluate, reflect on and anticipate the world. Marx analyses human activity's anticipatory character in the following manner: 'A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally'.[18]

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[16]   Ibid., § 93.

[17]   Alasdair MacIntyre. 1999. *Dependent Rational Animals. Why Human Beings Need the Virtues.* Chicago, IL: Open Court. pp. 50–51,

[18]   Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.* Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 284.

Society's complexity is reflected in the complexity of linguistic communication. Communication is, just like work, a moment of the human being's active production of the world, the production and reproduction of society. Humans produce society through reflexive, self-conscious, anticipatory and communicative action and in active communication.

Matter is the self-producing and self-reproducing process-substance of the world. One can ask and find out about any particular form of matter, when it begins and ends. But posing the same question about matter itself is not meaningful because something cannot emerge from nothing, but only from something else. Materialism is in this respect different from all religious ideology that believes in divine creation. Matter exists in religion, whereas the content of religion is belief in something that does not exist. Something always has to exist. Before and after each instance of matter, another instance of matter exists. Matter is eternal. It neither has a beginning nor an end. It develops. Matter is dialectical. But what is this dialectic all about? The next section will deal with this question.

2.2. The Dialectic

For Slavoj Žižek,[19] retroactivity is the temporal dimension of being's dialectical logic. Forms and entities of matter that are related contradict each other. They negate each other, which means that they at the same time exclude and require each other. Development means that there are moments when the negation is itself negated so that the contradiction turns into new qualities of being. After such a negation of the negation the result of development becomes the starting point of a new dialectical process. The dialectic is therefore endless, its result is posited as the presupposition and the beginning of a new dialectical contradiction. The positing of the end and the result as beginning and new point of departure is a moment of the dialectical logic that enables becoming.

Sublation (Aufhebung)

In a dialectical process, something emerges from something and at the same time something disappears into noting. Being sublates itself. Dialectical development is a sublation. 'Sublation' is the English translation of the German Hegelian term 'Aufhebung'. Sublation combines the words 'substitution' and 'elimination' into one. The German *Aufhebung* has three meanings, namely that something (a) is preserved, (b) eliminated, and (c) lifted to a new level. Matter is dialectical and the dialectic is materialist: The world has a dynamic

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[19] Slavoj Žižek. 2014. *Absolute Recoil. Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso.

material substance that is eternal. Matter exists forever. This substance is not static, but a process-substance that develops through negations of the negation, i.e. the sublation of contradictions so that something at the same time turns into nothing and something different. A contradiction is also called a 'negation' because in a contradiction between A and B, A negates (i.e. opposes) B and B negates A. A and B are opposed to each other. In the negation of the negation, a contradiction is negated, which means that it is opposed and challenged by a transformation that ruptures the contradiction.

In a sublation/negation of the negation, something emerges from something. This something is something different. Since this different being is something, being is preserved. Being continues and returns into itself through change. Change enables the continuity of being, and continuity enables dialectical change. Sublation preserves, eliminates, and produces new qualities. But it is just one dimension of the dialectic that something emerges from something. A new something has new qualities, which means that some aspects of being turn into nothingness. Production is not just the creation of something new (emergence), but also immergence, the disappearance of aspects of the old. This means that in dialectical development being also disappears into nothingness. In the process of being turning into new being, being-there (*Dasein*, = a concrete instance of being) turns into nothingness and not-being-there (*Nicht-daseiendes*), that is, possible being, turns into being-there.

The dialectic of the emergence of novelty and the elimination of the old is accompanied by the realisation of possibilities. Matter is, as Aristotle already stressed, being-in-possibility. The possibility can become actual being, it is not-yet-being (*Noch-Nicht-Sein*). By sublation, possibilities become real, real being-there. But not everything is possible. A human being with a cat's tail, twenty ears, and forty noses is not a real possibility, whereas a human being without a cat's tail and with two ears and one nose is a real possibility. There are spaces of possibilities. Every sublation creates a new space of possibilities that consists of the not-yet-being, of pure possibilities. In the sublation, possibilities that are not-yet reality turn into being-there (*Dasein*). Something must be possible to become actual – something cannot emerge from nothingness: 'nothing comes into being of the things that cannot be'.[20]

The Dialectic as Matter's Fire

Heraclitus lived from around 520 until 460 BC in Ephesus, so around one hundred years before Aristotle (384–322 BC). He was perhaps one of the first dialecticians. Religion is the opposite of the dialectic because it believes in God as matter's unmoved mover, which overlooks matter's capacity to move itself. Domination often mobilises ideology in order to make humans believe that

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[20] Aristotle. 1998. *Metaphysics*. London: Penguin. § 1003 a.

they cannot determine themselves and need determination by others. Domination always contains a religious element. In capitalism, religion is in the form of the commodity and commodity fetishism built into the structures of the economy. Heraclitus says: 'The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out'.[21] Heraclitus stresses that matter is eternal and that its eternity and continuity are constituted by its change. The dialectic is a fire that extinguishes and kindles itself. It is an absolute recoil that posits its own presuppositions.[22] The dialectic must burn like a fire so that matter's self-referentiality and self-production is possible, through which something constitutes its own identity and becomes something else so that a new contradictory difference is constituted that makes a difference in the world. The dialectic extinguishes a contradiction and thereby itself. But this extinction is at the same time the dialectic's self-kindling and the ignition of a new dialectical fire, in which the old is sublated and the new constitutes itself as a new contradiction. The dialectic is the absolute recoil by being a fire that continuously extinguishes and kindles itself.

The Dialectic as the Self-Organisation of Matter

Matter is a *causa sui*, the cause of itself. It has the capacity to organise itself and to thereby produce new forms and organisational levels of matter. In every transition from one organisational level of matter to the next one (for instance in the transition from inanimate to animate nature, from animals to humans, from capitalism to socialism, etc.), matter posits its own presupposition, namely the capacity to produce forms of matter and thereby itself.

The human being is a form of matter that has the quality of being conscious of its production of active relations. Humans together constitute and produce society by work and social interaction. Humans are organised at a level of matter that allows them to ask, 'What is the matter in society?'. They possess the capacity to actively reflect on the question of what society looks like, should look like, and how it should be changed. That humans consciously plan society does not mean that they always attain their goals successfully and that they do not make any mistakes. It rather means that humans and thereby also society have the evolving capacity of producing their own freedom and a society that is a realm of freedom from scarcity and a realm of freedom from necessity. Matter is the absolute recoil only through dialectical production as the fire that extinguishes and kindles itself.

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[21] Charles H. Kahn, ed. 1979. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus. An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 45 (§ XXXVII)

[22] See: Žižek, *Absolute Recoil.*

Consciousness and Reflection

Reflection is a form of consciousness that according to Georg Lukács plays a role in the 'active and productive being of the positing of causal relationships'.[23] In the animal world, the selection of a particular stick or stone as instrument is determined 'with biological necessity'.[24] Therefore, animal consciousness too is determined by nature. In the human world, the selection of a technology is determined by society and entails the reflection on alternative options of action and ways of attaining goals. In the work process, humans make conscious choices between alternatives so that the 'chain of causality'[25] is not constituted automatically, as in nature, but by conscious decisions. In society, development's chain of causality is 'a chain of alternatives'.[26] For example, when a programmer codes software, s/he must consciously decide what algorithms and data structures to use, what programming language is utilised, how comments are built into the code in order to make it readable, etc. In the work process, humans' reflective consciousness enables 'human self-control',[27] 'self-realization', 'self-founded being', and 'social being'.[28]

By saying that 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men – the language of real life',[29] Marx expresses that consciousness and communication are not just produced, but have their origin in work. Humans started to talk to each other because they had to say something about how the complexity of production could be organised. And they started to think because the complexity of a world brought about and organised by work made it necessary to denominate certain alternatives, forms, and actions.

The human being's consciousness is 'called into being in work, for work, and by work'.[30] Reality is not photographed into consciousness, but shaped by human goals and 'the social reproduction of life, originally by work'.[31] Consciousness and work are connected and autonomous. Consciousness alone constitutes neither behaviour nor work, but is a foundation of both. Consciousness plays an important role in society because it enables human beings to set goals

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[23] Georg Lukács. 1980. *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*. London: Merlin. p. 31.
[24] Ibid., p. 31.
[25] Ibid., p. 33.
[26] Ibid., p. 33.
[27] Ibid., p. 45.
[28] Ibid., p. 46.
[29] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1845/46. *The German Ideology, MECW Volume 5*, p. 36.
[30] Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*, p. 52.
[31] Ibid., p. 27.

and take a 'distanced and critical relationship' to themselves.[32] Activity always has aspects of awareness because humans reflect on the goals, means, and consequences of their practices. The world of ideas and changing the world are not independent, but part of the subject-object-dialectic that shapes work.

Matter and Mind

In materialist philosophy, there is nothing outside of matter because matter is the substance of the world. Speaking of the mind, information, knowledge, thoughts, aesthetics as 'immaterial' or 'non-material' is an indication of a non-materialist philosophy. The implication of such concepts is that either the mind is considered to be the world's substance and phenomena are reduced to the mind or that matter and mind are postulated as the world's two substances. Both assumptions are versions of philosophical idealism.

If something existed outside of matter, then the world would in the first and the last instance not have a sufficient ground. The philosophical Principle of Sufficient Reason says that everything that exists must have a reason/ground/cause. If matter and mind are in the last instance the world's two foundational substances and first principles, then one cannot answer the question of what matter and mind's common ground is. One has to leave this question unanswered or must assume that God created the world out of nothingness. There are two versions of this argument, namely that (a) God as a paranormal being is the ground of the two substances, or that (b) God as the absolute mind created matter. But there is no proof that God exists. Materialism avoids these problems with the insight that the whole world is material and that matter is the process-substance of the world. Matter is its own ground. It has the capacity to organise itself. Complexity theory confirms this insight.[33] Matter's capacity to self-organise is a sufficient ground for explaining the world's existence. Materialism does not need recourse to religion, esotericism, or other external factors in order to explain the world. It is a better explanation of the world than dualism and idealist reductionism – the two versions of idealism in metaphysics. Occam's Razor is a philosophical principle that says that a theory or approach is better than another one if it can provide an explanation based on fewer assumptions. Materialism requires fewer assumptions than dualism and reductionism to explain the world.

A commonly voiced criticism of materialism, also a Marxist materialism, is the claim that it disregards the 'immaterial world', does not grant autonomy to the mind, communication, and the world of symbols, and that it reduces these phenomena to production and matter. This argument overlooks that the world is dynamic: Everything that exists must have come into existence, which means

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[32] Ibid., p. 109.
[33] See: Christian Fuchs. 2003. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 16 (3): 281–313.

that it is a product. The world is not static, but is rather on specific levels of organisation always in movement. If something remains the same, then this is only possible because there is change on underlying levels of organisation. Reproduction requires and reproduces production. Production produces reproduction. Thoughts, symbols, and communication do not simply exist, but have to be produced and reproduced. Communication is not exchange, but the social production of shared meanings through which humans interpret each other, nature, society, and the social, economic, technical, political, and cultural world.

The materialist assumption that matter is process-substance that is its own cause and possesses the capacity for production and self-organisation, enables the dialectical explanation of the mind. The mind is an organisational level of matter that emerged in and in the context of the emergence of the human being and society. There would neither be humans nor the mind without the physical and biological world, on which the human world is built and from which it emerged. At the same time, the mind is different from organic and inorganic nature because the human being is a self-conscious, conscious, goal-oriented, moral, working being that we cannot find in nature.

The human brain produces the mental world of ideas. The mental world needs a physical medium in order to be able to exist. The analysis of how the brain works poses challenges to science. Today, we know from cognitive science and brain science[34] that thoughts are the emergent result of self-referential activity states in the brain's neural networks. A thought is not tangible, but is based on and emerges from the networked activities of the components of the brain, that is, a physical system. That the mind is material means that cognition emerges from the brain's dynamic, networked activities of production. The brain and the rest of the body stand in a dialectical connection. When a living being dies then its cognitive processes that are organised in its brain cease. No religion, esotericism or idealist philosophy is needed to explain the mind.

The Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary

One can now object and ask: Aren't dreams, fantasies, ideologies, the characters in a novel, myths, or the idea of God not immaterial because they do not seem to have a correlate and substrate in reality? And is the abstract, formal knowledge of theories, software or mathematics material or real?

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[34] See: Michael R. W. Dawson. 2013. *Mind, Body, World: Foundations of Cognitive Science*. Vancouver: UBC Press. Jay Friedenberg and Gordon Silverman. 2016. *Cognitive Science: An Introduction to the Study of Mind*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Third edition. José Luiz Bermúdez. 2014. *Cognitive Science: An Introduction to the Science of the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Second edition.

Just like all ideal phenomena, those just mentioned are material because specific humans or groups live them and express them. Every idea stands in a relation to a subject-matter, it not only has a form, but also content. Every mental content and idea stands in a relation to reality (the real), uses symbols (the symbolic), and has imaginary aspects (the imaginary). For Hegel, being-there (*Dasein*) and reality (*Realität*) are 'being with a *determinacy*' that is immediate and qualitative.[35] Reality is 'no longer merely something inner and subjective', but has 'moved out into being-there'.[36] Reality is an aspect of qualitative being. Something that has no reference to reality is not real being, but imaginary. Reality (*Realität*) and actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) are not the same. For Hegel, actuality is the dialectical unity of essence and existence.[37] Actuality is reasonable being.

A house that someone built is real just like the ideas that the builder or the person living in it has about it. The content of thoughts about how the not-yet built house should look are imaginary (so not real) because they refer to something non-existent. The mental image of the constructed house is imaginary, but nonetheless potentially real insofar as it is physically realisable. A dream about a chocolate house on the imaginary Chocolate Planet is material and exists in a real human subject, but it is imaginary and impossible and therefore lacks potential reality. Such a content of a dream is imaginary, unreal, impossible being. Our ideas can refer to the real, the imaginary, the possible, or the impossible. Thoughts are material and exist in real subjects, but do not always refer to real being, but also to non-real being, imaginations. Non-real being that imagination produces can either be potentially real (thus potential reality) or impossible (an image that cannot become reality). Consciousness is always material and stands in a relation to a real human subject, no matter if it is present in our brain as dream or idea or in externalised form in a book, a play, or a movie. In a certain way, the contents of consciousness always have a relation to reality as well as symbolic and imaginary aspects that depending on the form of consciousness have different roles and valences.

Dreams are about an imagined world, but they are also often symbols of real experiences as well as of conscious and unconscious desires that have a real existence in the human subject. There is a fictive world in a novel that is represented by the symbols in the book and thoughts in the brain that often say something about society's reality in a very indirect manner. Religion is an engagement with metaphysical aspects of reality in society such as origin, death, the meaning of life, the good and the evil (morals, ethics), and the

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[35] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. 1830/1991. *The Encyclopaedia Logic (with the Zusätze). Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences,* translated by Theodore F. Geraets, Wallis A. Suchting, and Henry S. Harris. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. § 90.

[36] Ibid., Addition to § 91.

[37] Ibid., § 142.

world's future. Metaphysics is an engagement with phenomena and questions that we cannot immediately experience. It is an aspect of philosophy, but also subject-matter of our everyday thinking. Religion is the answer to humans' real need to find answers to metaphysical questions. Such questions often take on ritual forms as in the symbolic world of prayers, liturgies (ceremonies, rituals, church services), religious texts, pilgrimages, things (images, ritual objects, etc.), and so on. Such symbolic practices and things are dedicated to a purely imaginary world, the world of God, and the afterworld that promises answers to the world's metaphysical questions.

Ideology mostly deals with real political questions of society. Like religions, novels, and dreams, ideology has to a significant degree imaginary aspects. Ideology claims that there is a certain state of the world or that there is a particular solution to problems. However, these claims do not correspond to real conditions and do not pose real solutions. They obfuscate and legitimate domination. In ideologies, there are often scapegoats that are presented and imagined as symbols of societal problems, whose causes are real power relations that are obnubilated. Ideology presents the imaginary as reality.

Abstract theoretical and scientific entities such as a theory or software code refer to reality by describing or modelling aspects of the real world and/or by their use in society. The use of a language constituted by categories or artificial symbols (programming language, mathematical symbols, and formulas) is the symbolic level. Science usually makes the claim to represent reality truthfully. It does not want to provide imaginary presentations of the world, but rather wants to reveal and analyse how the world operates in reality. A computer game, in contrast, often resembles a novel because abstract code is used for portraying a fictive world. Positivist and bourgeois science often plays an ideological role in capitalism by legitimating and fetishising domination. Ideology is the imaginary aspect of bourgeois science. It is often present behind the consciousness of bourgeois science. In contrast, critical science uncovers the ideologies of bourgeois science and bourgeois thought, which constitute the subject matter of critique. Also, critical science has an imaginary component that, however, is non-ideological: It wants to show how society could look if it realised its potentials and abolished domination.

What are the implications of the presented considerations for communication? Communication is a material and real process that produces and reproduces social reality. In the communication process, human being A symbolically interacts with at least one other human being B (or a larger number of human beings), and B interacts symbolically with A. They make meaning of each other and interpret each other's actions. As a result, the humans involved in communication create or change social relations. Communication is the process of the production of sociality. That communication is productive of sociality is just another formulation for saying that humans cannot help but communicate when they encounter other humans. In communication processes, humans transfer interpretations of real and imaginary being and of

possible and impossible being in symbolic forms to other humans, who take such interpretations as the occasion for making certain interpretations of the world that refer to the Real, the Imaginary, the Possible, or the Impossible.

Ideological communication is communication that invents imaginary contents and claims that these contents are not imaginary and real in order to legitimate domination and dominative interests. Ideology critique is an important task of critical communication theory. Progressive politics is a communicative practice that is oriented on turning society's full space of possibilities into realities.

Ideology has effects on consciousness, but does not determine consciousness. By producing and using ideology, humans want to (re)produce false consciousness, which is consciousness that understands the world in a false manner and presents mere appearance as being. Ideologues present false reality, ideas that appear to be real, but are mere appearance. Ideologues aim at creating consciousness, in which the world's essence, actuality, and reality are hidden. Whether they can attain this goal is a question of societal circumstances and social struggles.

2.3. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise the main conclusions of this chapter as follows:

- Materialism stresses that the whole world is a complex of production, in which matter produces and organises itself and thereby develops. Materialism is opposed to idealist, dualist, and religious worldviews.
- Reductionist forms of materialism reduce the world to single parts and overlook that matter is process-like. The dialectic is opposed to this view. It comprehends matter as process-substance that develops through contradictions and sublations and produces new levels of organisation.
- The mind and human communication do not exist outside of matter, but are aspects of matter's human and societal form of organisation, in which humans create, reproduce, and change society's reality by reflective, self-conscious, social, and communicative action.

Based on the engagement with the concepts of matter and the dialectic that were presented in this chapter, the next chapter poses the question of what the foundations of a materialist theory of society look like.

CHAPTER 3

Materialism and Society

This chapter discusses the materialist analysis of society. Foundational questions of a materialist theory of society include those about the relationship of subject and object (section 3.1), the relationship of freedom and necessity (3.2), the forces and relations that shape human production (3.3), the relationship of economy and society (3.4), and the characteristics of modern society (3.5).

3.1. Subject and Object

Structuralism stresses how the mode of production, institutions, power, the state, ideology, and other structures determine, limit, and (re)produce the human being as subject, i.e. their thoughts and activities so that the human being is the bearer of structures that fulfil certain functions in society. Action- and practice-oriented approaches argue in contrast that humans as active beings produce, change, and reproduce society and its structures, whereby they make history. In classical sociology, the difference of these two approaches becomes evident in the approaches of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, action theory and structuralism/functionalism. Whereas Weber stresses that society is a complex of humans' social actions[1], Durkheim argues that social facts exist independent of the individual and exert external coercion on humans.[2]

Sociologists such as Anthony Giddens[3] boast that their approaches overcome the gap between action theory and structuralism. But this gap had already been

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[1] Max Weber. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

[2] Émile Durkheim. 1982. *The Rules of Sociological Method.* New York: The Free Press.

[3] Anthony Giddens. 1986. *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration.* Cambridge: Polity.

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overcome by Marx's dialectic. Marx wrote in 1844 in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*: '*just as* society itself *produces* man, so is society *produced* by him'.[4] The theory and philosophy that goes back to Marx is based on the dialectic of subject and object.

The starting point of the analysis of society is 'the existence of living human individuals'[5], who produce 'their material life'[6] in social relations in society. Society is a complex of production, which humans produce in social relations. What is matter in society, i.e. the organisation of matter in the realm of humans and society? Karl Marx gives an answer in *The German Ideology's* chapter on Feuerbach.[7] Society's materiality is production's sociality and societal character. Humans produce in society.

Society and Social Production

Marx says that society is a complex, in which humans produce the means for the satisfaction of their needs.[8] In society, humans produce the means required to 'sustain human life'.[9] 'But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing and various other things'.[10] A materialist approach to society does not mean that society is only about the production of food and drink. Rather, life, survival, and good life involve also 'various other things' such as friendship, love, politics, culture, engagement with others, etc. The decisive factor is that society is a complex in which humans consciously produce their life in a social and societal manner, i.e. in relation to each other. Production in society also involves the 'production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness'.[11] That ideas are 'interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men'[12] does not mean that the economy determines thinking, but rather that humans produce ideas in societal relations that in class societies are relations of domination. Consciousness and communication are embedded into societal relations that as a medium form 'the language of real life'.[13] Societal relations mediate the production of diverse structures.

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[4] *MECW Volume 3*, p. 298.
[5] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1845/46. *The German Ideology, MECW Volume 5*, p. 31.
[6] Ibid., p. 31.
[7] *MECW Volume 5*, pp. 27–96.
[8] Ibid., p. 42.
[9] Ibid., p. 42.
[10] Ibid., pp. 41–42.
[11] Ibid., p. 36.
[12] Ibid., p. 36.
[13] Ibid., p. 36.

In bourgeois sociology, Max Weber defined a social relationship as 'the behavior of a plurality of actors insofar as, in its meaningful content, the action of each takes account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms'.[14] But this insight was not new. Marx had already pointed out that the human world is made of societal relationships. In his critique of capitalism's political economy, Marx at the same time worked out a general sociology. In capitalism and society in general, everything exists in and through societal relations. The commodity, capital, labour, money, value, classes, exploitation, domination, capitalism, struggles, socialism, etc. are societal relations. So for example, Marx writes in *Capital* that 'capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things',[15] value is 'something purely soci[et]al',[16] and that the 'relative value-form of a commodity […] conceals a soci[et]al relation'.[17]

Marx wrote in 1845 in his sixth 'Thesis on Feuerbach' that the 'essence of man is […] the ensemble of the soci[et]al relations'.[18] In their everyday life, humans constantly enter into relations, they live in and through social relations that produce and reproduce society. Society is the totality of social relations between humans. Social systems are smaller totalities of social relations. They are connected via humans' social roles, relations, and activities. Humans' social relations are always societal relations because every human practice produces society as totality and society conditions and influences our thinking and practices.

Social relations can be ephemeral and transient, but can also become structures. A structure is a regularised social relation that through repetition and repeatability has continuity and a certain stability in space and time. Structures are not the spontaneous result of one-time actions, but can only emerge from continuous and repeated practices in particular spaces at particular times. Structures are the recursive result of human practices: In their social relations,

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[14] Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 26.

[15] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.* Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 932.

[16] Ibid., p. 149. Note that Marx frequently in his original German writings speaks of 'gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse', a term that has often been translated as 'social relations', although 'societal relations' is more precise. Whereas social relations are a micro-sociological phenomenon, societal relations are macro-sociological, focused on the totality of society, and are totalities of many social relations. When Marx in the German original speaks of 'gesellschaftlich' and the translation says 'social' instead of 'societal', I use the expression 'soci[et]al' in order to indicate that the translation is imprecise and that 'societal' is a better translation than 'social'.

[17] Ibid., p. 149.

[18] *MECW Volume 5*, pp. 4 & 7.
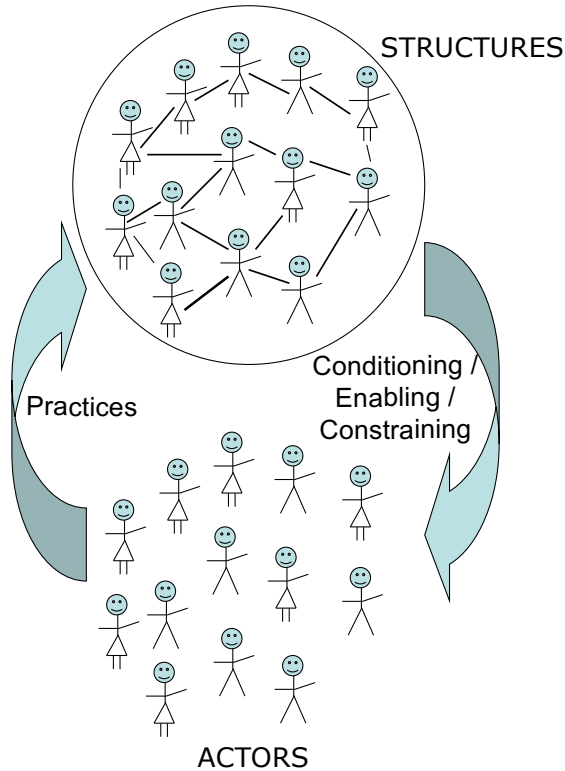
Figure 3.1: The dialectic of structures and practices.

humans produce and reproduce structures that condition, enable, and constrain further practices. Practices produce and reproduce structures that enable further practices that again reproduce structures, etc. In society, we find a dialectic of structures and practices, objects and subjects. Figure 3.1 visualises this dialectic. A social system is a complex of social relations that has spatial, temporal and membership boundaries. If important social relations that constitute a social system break down, the system comes to an end. Every social system is an ensemble of social relations organised in society. Society is a totality of social systems and at the same time also a totality of societal and social relations. Therefore, it is also a totality of human practices.

Human Beings as Species-Being

Marx calls the human being a species-being because it produces consciously in order to satisfy its needs ('free, conscious activity is man's species-character'[19]).

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[19] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume 3*, p. 276.

In this production, humans enter a metabolism with nature and engage with other humans. That the human being is a species-being means that it is a natural, sensual, social, societal, producing being. Existing as a species-being also entails that humans are thinking and communicating beings because production, thought, and communication can only exist in humans' common practices: 'In his *consciousness of species* man confirms his real *social life* and simply repeats his real existence in thought, just as conversely the being of the species confirms itself in species consciousness and exists for itself in its generality as a thinking being'.[20] Ludwig Feuerbach stresses that language and communication are part of the human species' essence: 'Language is nothing other than the *realization of the species;* i.e. the "I" is mediated with the "You" in order, by eliminating their individual separateness, to manifest the unity of the species'.[21]

To talk about human species-being means to assert that there is a certain universal essence of all human beings. All humans are social, societal and producing beings. Communication is part of production and at the same time goes beyond it. Humans produce social relations through communication (productive communication) and communicate in production. Constructivists frequently challenge any claim to universalism and human essence with the argument that universalism is often false universalism that excludes certain groups from being human or by stressing that human lives are different, contextual, local, incomparable and that any universalising claim disregards the differences of human needs and living situations. Martha Nussbaum warns that constructivism can easily result in an 'extreme relativism'[22] that justifies inequalities, oppression and exploitation in the name of anti-universalism, anti-essentialism, and difference. Scott Meikle argues that Louis Althusser has had a profound influence on the rise of contemporary anti-essentialism. Anti-essentialist relativism 'has been reproduced in all the sub-Althusserian vogues that have each had their moments […] since the 1960s'.[23] Nussbaum defends Aristotelian essentialism by arguing that basic human capabilities that define basic human needs form human essence. Human capabilities such as the ability and need for love, good health, a complete and good life, to live for and with others, etc. form a unity of diversity among human beings. They are universal needs and capabilities that take on different forms in different contexts.

The relationship of freedom to necessity is an important foundational question of social analysis. The next section focuses on this issue.

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[20] Ibid., p. 299.

[21] Ludwig Feuerbach. 1839. Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy. In *Ludwig Feuerbach: The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings*, 53–96. London: Verso. p. 63

[22] Martha Nussbaum. 1992. Human Functioning and Social Justice. In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism. *Political Theory* 20 (2): 202–246. p. 205.

[23] Scott Meikle. 1985. *Existentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx.* London: Duckworth. p. 8.

3.2. Freedom and Necessity

The approach of structuralist determinism assumes that economic or other structures necessarily lead humans to act in certain ways (such as bringing about revolutions) or necessarily result in the collapse of social systems. Voluntarist individualism assumes in contrast that humans are absolutely free, exist free from coercion, and can achieve anything they want to independent of society's structures. The first approach fetishises necessity, the second one freedom, spontaneity, and chance.

Georg Lukács criticises these approaches as constituting the 'bourgeois dilemma of voluntarism and fatalism',[24] in which they form 'necessarily complementary opposites'[25] of bourgeois thought. Structuralism fetishises necessity up to the level of mechanistic determinism, where humans have no freedom of action at all and no choices. Such approaches assume that humans are a hundred percent caught as character masks in pre-programmed modes of action. Voluntarism, in contrast, reduces society to the individual. It has an individualistic understanding of society, in which change is purely spontaneous and almost all changes are possible at any time. Lukács argues instead for a non-fatalistic and non-economistic theory[26] that is neither voluntarist nor individualistic. Such a theory must be based on the dialectics of subject/object, individual/society, politics/economy, practices/structures, chance/necessity.

Marx formulated such an approach in his work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where he writes that humans 'make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'.[27] Lenin applied this insight of Marx to the question of how and when fundamental change occurs in society: 'It is only when the "*lower classes*" *do not want* to live in the old way and the "upper classes" *cannot carry on in the old way* that the revolution can triumph. This truth can be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a nation-wide crisis (affecting both the exploited and the exploiters)'.[28] Structural crises shape the conditions of political practices. It is determined that there are certain reactions to crises in society. It is, however, undetermined whether or not the emergence of emancipatory political movements is part of these reactions to crisis. It is also not determined whether or not social struggles from below can be organised

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[24] Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness.* London: Merlin Press. p. 322.

[25] Ibid., p. 4.

[26] Ibid., p. 305.

[27] *MECW Volume 11*, p. 103.

[28] Vladimir I. Lenin. 1920. 'Left-Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder. In *Lenin Collected Works Volume 31*. Moscow: Progress. p. 85.

and critical consciousness emerge. For such developments to occur, the crisis must put the necessity of change on the political agenda (one '*cannot carry on in the old way*'); and in such a situation, the oppressed must *want* fundamental change (they '*do not want* to live in the old way'). Only then can emancipatory political practices (*praxis)* emerge.

The dialectic of subject and object constitutes the processual ontology of society and history. Structures (such as capital, markets, the state, ideologies, etc.) influence and condition human practices, whereby structures are produced and reproduced. Crises open up historical possibilities for fundamental changes of society, but it is not determined whether such changes will occur or how exactly they will look and develop. Such questions depend on whether the oppressed classes and groups develop collective critical consciousness, organise themselves politically, conduct class struggles and can assert themselves against countervailing political forces (such as ideological, psychological, structuralphysical and state represssion). A historically novel form of society emerges from crises, in which revolutionary praxis asserts itself against conservative forces.

Human self-consciousness enables freedom in necessity, i.e. human possibilities and options for action under conditions that are not self-chosen. Conscious human action enables a certain space of possibilities and is an aspect of relative chance.

Herbert Marcuse argues that capitalism's objective dialectic exists in the development of crises from structural contradictions. He says that in such situations, humans determine their own future and can make and write history by collective political praxis, which constitutes the societal dialectic's subjective dimension: 'The negativity and its negation are two different phases of the same historical process, straddled by man's historical action. The "new" state is the truth of the old, but that truth does not steadily and automatically grow out of the earlier state; it can be set free only by an autonomous act on the part of men, that will cancel the whole of the existing negative state'.[29] Necessity takes place 'only through societal praxis'.[30]

Capitalism's development and contradictions constitute a space of possibilities for the future development of society. In a crisis, the question becomes topical what the future should look like and what positive content (what Hegel terms 'determinate negation') shall be realised in the negation of the negation. The potential options for the future development of society are never realised with necessity and automatically. They depend on human praxis. Freedom is comprehended and realised necessity, the insight of having

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[29] Herbert Marcuse. 1941. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. New York: Humanity Books. p. 315.

[30] Translation from German: Herbert Marcuse. Zur Geschichte der Dialektik. In *Schriften Band 8*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. p. 224.

to act because there is the need for change. Ideological, structural and direct repression can limit and obstruct freedom, whereby alternatives are oppressed. But no matter how hopeless the situation seems to be, determinate negation, i.e. praxis in the midst of and against oppression always remains possible as the perspective for freedom.

Because society is a human complex of production, the concept of production needs to be further specified, which leads us to the notions of the relations of production and the productive forces.

3.3. The Relations of Production and the Productive Forces

Humans create products that satisfy their needs in social relations. They utilise their bodily and mental capacities that they develop through education. These capacities constitute the human being's production capacity. In the work process, these forces of the subject organise and utilise means of production – instruments and resources – in order to create new products to satisfy human needs. The human production capacity is the major productive force. It is supported by the human utilisation of organised natural forces (science, technology) in society and purely societal forces (methods of production, practical knowledge, work organisation, the mode of regulation, the culture of work).

The mode of production is 'a definite form of activity' of individuals, 'a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce'.[31] The system of the productive forces is a process, in which producing subjects work with objects of production. Humans do not produce alone, but only based on and in social and societal relations. The human being is not, like Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, a lonely producing being, but rather, like Robert Tressel's Frank Owen,[32] a socially and societally producing being that creates sociality and society. The productive forces are relations of production between humans, between humans and nature, and between humans and the means of production. The relations of production are social forces that organise the human production capacity and the means of production in the production process. Figure 3.2 shows the mode of production as the dialectic of the relations of production and the productive forces.

In capitalism, the mode of production is a relation between the organisational forms of capital, labour, and technology (productive forces) and the class relations, i.e. the capital-labour-relation. The class relations are societal

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[31] *MECW Volume 5*, pp. 31–32.

[32] See: Robert Tressell. 1914/2012. *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. London: Wordsworth.

Productive forces ⇔ Relations of production

Productive forces	Relations of production
Subject, production power/ capacities: Physical and mental capacities (production capacity) Means of subsistence/reproduction: individual, social, institutional	**Mode of ownership:** Production power/ capacities, means of production, products of work
	Mode of coercion: None Physical violence Structural repression Ideological and psychological repression
Object, means of production: Instruments of work: Body, brain, tools, machines, space-time Objects of work: Natural, industrial and informational resources	**Mode of allocation and distribution:** To each according to his/her needs, Exchange Exchange for achieving exchange-value, Exchange for maximization of exchange-value, Exchange for capital accumulation
Subject-object, products of work: Natural products Industrial products Services Informational products	**Division of labour (DL):** None (well-rounded individual) Housework/wage labour, gender-specific DL, physical/ mental labour, generalists/ specialists, politics: citizens/politicians, town/countryside, international DL

Figure 3.2: Dimensions of the productive forces and the relations of production.

relations that define who controls the ownership of the means of production and society's products and holds the power to make other groups produce goods and surplus products that are not owned by the immediate producers, but by the owning class. Class relations are a relation between a propertied and a propertyless class, in which the propertyless class is compelled to produce surplus products and surplus value for the propertied class.

The relations of production shape the mode of ownership that defines who owns and controls labour power, the means of production and the products to which degree (all parts, certain parts, no part), and who controls the mode

Table 3.1: The main forms of ownership in different modes of production.

	Owner of labour power	Owner of the means of production	Owner of the products of labour
Patriarchy	Patriarch	Patriarch	Family
Slavery	Slave master	Slave master	Slave master
Feudalism	Partly self-control, partly lord	Partly self-control, partly lord	Partly self-control, partly lord
Capitalism	Worker (owns but has to sell labour power)	Capitalist	Capitalist
Communism	Self	All (Workers' self-management)	Partly all, partly individual

of coercion that defends the relations of production, the mode of distribution that defines how products are distributed in society, and the division of labour. Class relations are relations of control and power that define who controls the means of production, the organisation of work, the products, distribution, politics and influential institutions.

Every economy produces a certain amount of goods per year. If there are no crises and the economy is oriented toward growth, then there will be a surplus product at the end of the year. The mode of ownership is the legal basis that defines who owns economic resources and the surplus product. Table 3.1 provides an overview of various modes of production (patriarchy, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, communism) that are based on particular forms of ownership and class relations.

The mode of coercion entails all practices, relations, structures, and institutions that aim at making humans accept domination and make them act in relations of domination. Methods used include physical repression (overseers, security forces, military, police), structural repression (markets, wage labour, legal protection of private ownership, etc.) and cultural repression (psychological repression that operates with fear, ideological repression that legitimates the existing order by making use of scapegoating and manipulation and thereby tries to distract from the real causes of society's problems and prevent societal changes). A free society does not need a mode of coercion.

The mode of allocation and distribution defines how goods are allocated and distributed. In a socialist society, each individual receives what s/he needs in order to satisfy his/her needs and lead a good life. In class societies, exchange regulates distribution: A certain amount of one product is exchanged for a certain amount of another product or for a particular amount of money. If you own nothing in an exchange-based society, then you cannot obtain goods and services. An exception are those products that are not traded, but are rather freely available. The wage-worker only possesses labour power and is therefore

compelled to sell this power on the labour market in order to survive. There are different ways of how exchange can be organised: general exchange without exchange-value, exchange in order to yield exchange-value (x commodity A = y commodity B), exchange for maximising exchange-value, and exchange for capital accumulation.

The division of labour defines who conducts what labour in the household, the economy, politics, and culture. Historically, the first divisions of labour were age- and gender-based. There was also a division of labour between hunters and gatherers. Later, the division between manual and mental labour, the division between housework and wage-labour, the division between planning and executing activities (management and labour), specialisation, the regional division of labour between towns and the countryside, and (in the context of the globalisation of production and imperialism) the international division of labour emerged. The emergence and development of the division of labour accompanies the development of class society A free society is a society without classes that is technologically highly developed and enables the sublation of the division of labour. As a consequence, humans are universally active and well-rounded individuals, live in general wealth and control the means of production collectively.

In capitalism, the productive forces stand in antagonism to the relations of production so that technological development creates the foundations of new forms of co-operation and co-operative ownership. But under the conditions of class relations, these developments result in ever newer forms of exploitation and precarious life. Only the transition to a post-capitalist mode of production can mitigate the antagonism.

A new mode of production sublates preceding modes. The latter are not fully eliminated, but can continue to exist within, shape, and be shaped by the new mode of production. For example, patriarchy and slavery are older than capitalism, but have continued to exist within capitalism in the form of the household economy that reproduces labour power and in the international division of labour.

The development of the productive forces takes place in the form of dialectical sublation. So, it includes a) lifting up, b) elimination, and c) preservation:

a) new qualities of the economy emerge;
b) aspects of the old mode of production disappear;
c) old modes of production continue to exist in the new mode of production
   and interact with the latter in particular forms.

Sublation can be more or less radical. The transition from capitalism to socialism means fundamental change. The question, however, is in this context whether such a transition is possible immediately. In the transition to a different mode of production, elimination and preservation can take on different degrees and are variable. There is no linear development of modes of production. New modes of

production can contain elements of old ones, dominance shifts are possible, in which a subordinated mode of production becomes dominant, etc.

The Role of the Body and the Mind in the Mode of Production

Means of production include the human body, the mind, mechanical technologies, complex machine systems, and combinations thereof. Particular organisational forms of space and time (i.e. production locales and production locations) are also means of production, at which and where production takes place at particular times. Necessary working time is the total working time required in a society to create the products needed for the life of a human. It depends on the development of the productive forces, i.e. the level of productivity. A particular sum of working hours is necessary per year in order to guarantee the existence and reproduction of society and humans. The production objects and products can be natural products (basic products), industrial products, services, information products, or combinations of these.

The productive forces are a system of production that creates goods and services that satisfy human needs. There are various modes of organising the productive forces, namely the agricultural productive forces, the industrial productive forces, and the informational productive forces (see table 3.2).

The human subject has a capacity for production that develops and depends on physical and mental skills. The interaction of the mental and the bodily capacities constitutes the human productive force. Reproductive work is work that sustains and reproduces human existence. It creates and organises the means of subsistence that humans need in order to survive. The means of subsistence are the means that humans require in order to live and satisfy their needs.

In capitalism, reproductive labour is to the largest degree and mostly unpaid. It reproduces wage labour, whereby the value of labour power and parts of commodities' value are created. Capital exploits reproductive labour as a free resource. The production of the means of subsistence takes place on three interacting levels of organisation: the individual, the social, and the institutional.

Table 3.2: Three modes of the organisation of the productive forces.

Mode	Instruments of work	Objects of work	Products of work
Agricultural productive forces	Body, brain, tools, machines	Nature	Basic products
Industrial productive forces	Body, brain, tools, machines	Basic products, industrial products	Industrial products
Informational productive forces	Body, brain, tools, machines	Experiences, ideas	Informational products

Table 3.3: Human needs and the means of subsistence.

	Mind and culture		**Body and nature**
Institutional needs	Educational institutions, health and medical care, research institutions, media, arts, leisure organisations, political organisations, associations	⬌ ✕	Health and medical care, workplace, organisations that enable bodily movement
Social needs	Social relations, communication, language, love, friend-ships, cooperation, care	⬌ ✕	Procreation, sexual relations, cooperation
Individual needs	Mental engagement, affects, knowledge, skills, creativity, mental health, self-esteem, self-respect, beauty, self-actualiza-tion, values, morals, purpose, meaning of life	⬌ ✕	Food, water, air, shelter, sleep, rest, affects, sexuality, bodily health, warmth

The human being has individual, social and institutional needs. Table 3.3 illustrates the means of subsistence that satisfy particular human needs.

The means of subsistence shown in table 3.3 are on the one hand (in the table's rows) ordered by the distinction between individual, social and institutional needs. On the other hand, they are organised (in the table's columns) based on the question of whether they are primarily oriented on nature and the body or culture and the mind. These two aspects cannot be strictly separated. Mind and body interact in the satisfaction of all needs and the production of all goods. But one can determine whether a particular product or activity has primarily a bodily or mental character. The human being requires the whole body, including the brain, in order to communicate. The brain is a special physical region of the body. But in communication, the uttered contents of consciousness are decisive, which is why communication can be classified as primarily a mental (but nonetheless material) phenomenon. The arrows in the table indicate that the single dimensions do not exist separately, but extend into each other and interact with each other. There are dialectics of mind and body, individual and group, groups and institutions, individuals and institutions.

Although the body and the mind as well as the organisational levels of the human being (the individual, the group/organisation, institutions, society) are to a certain degree independent, they also belong together. They cannot exist separately, constitute each other mutually, and thereby also each have a relatively

independent existence. In physical activity such as gardening, the human being combines creative thinking (about how the plants should be positioned, etc.) with bodily movement and physical effort. The condition and development of the garden is the occasion for the gardener's reflection on what improvements should be undertaken. The practical realisation of these reflections results in the physical differentiation of the garden's form.

The organisation of the satisfaction of needs takes place based on particular modes of production (see table 3.1). In modern society, capitalism is the dominant mode of production for the organisation of the satisfaction of needs. But patriarchy and individualistic, communal, public and civil society forms of organisation also play important roles. As part of the neoliberal mode of regulation that has since the 1970s become the dominant form of how capitalism is regulated, ever more realms of society, means of subsistence, and realms of reproduction have become shaped by the logic of the commodity and capital accumulation. Private ownership and capitalist control have become ever more dominant and resulted in accumulation by dispossession.[33] The separation of the body and the mind is an integral feature of the capitalist mode of production. It helps to organise the division of labour and the gap between management and labour, mental and physical labour, agriculture/industry/the informational economy, the town and the countryside. The separation of body and mind has traditionally also been important in the patriarchal, gender-specific division of labour. The dualism of body and mind plays a role in the legitimation of unequal power. Power relations deform and tend to destroy the dialectic of body and mind. Socialism is, among other things, also the dialectical reconciliation of the body and the mind.

Based on the philosophical foundations of economic analysis outlined in sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, we can in the next section discuss the relationship between the economy and society.

3.4. Economy and Society

Society

Certain Marxist theories describe culture, ideas, communication, information, knowledge, morals, and ideologies as parts of an immaterial superstructure that rests spatially on a material, economic base. It is also said that the superstructure started to temporally exist after the base. These assumptions can be explained by the fact that one wants to avoid the mistake of idealist philosophy and theory that explain the world as mental and hypostasise the world of ideas and

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[33] See: David Harvey. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. David Harvey. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

consciousness as a sufficient factor for society's changes. But one thereby under-estimates the realms of culture and politics.[34] The base/superstructure model is static and often reductionist: It explains changes purely economically. But bour-geois counter-models (such as postmodern theory or systems theory) are also flawed: They declare that culture or politics forms society's super-system. The effect is that the role of the economy, classes, and labour in society is disregarded or downplayed. Such approaches often also provide a multi-factor analysis that postulates that all subsystems of society are equally important. Such an analysis is often presented as being 'complex' and 'non-reductionist'. However, the prob-lem is that this approach cannot adequately ground society, and offers a dualist analysis in which society's parts are independent. This approach cannot explain what the common logic of modern society's moments is because it utilises the logic of diversity without unity that disregards the Principle of Sufficient Reason. It is crucial to neither underestimate nor overestimate the role of the economy in society. The base/superstructure problem poses the question of how non-economic realms and the economy are related. Marxist theory's strength is that it makes us aware of the importance of talking about the economy whenever we speak of politics and culture, and vice versa.

As one of the starting points of a critical theory of society, one can discern three interconnected and overgrasping (*übergreifend*) organisational levels and subsystems of society:

- The economy: The economy is a system in which humans in particular rela-tions of production create use-values that satisfy human needs.
- Politics: In the political system, humans take collective decisions that gov-ern and regulate society.
- Culture: Culture is the system whereby the human being is reproduced, which entails the reproduction of mind and body. 'Culture means the domain of social subjectivity – a domain which is wider than ideology but narrower than society, less palpable than the economy but more tangible than Theory'.[35] In the cultural system, humans make meaning of the world and develop their minds, bodies, and identities. Therefore, culture includes, for example, the educational system, medicine, psychology, science, the media system, sports activities, exhibitions, cycling, playing chess, eating, cooking, restaurants, playing an instrument, painting a picture, attending a

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[34] For a critique of reductionist versions of the base/superstructure-model and an alternative, cultural-materialist approach, see: Raymond Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Christian Fuchs. 2017. Raymond Williams' Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (6): 744–762. Christian Fuchs, 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

[35] Terry Eagleton. 2000. *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 39.

concert or football game, the architecture of a church and the practices of praying conducted in it; love, friendship and family as affectual practices and relations, morals, norms and ethics, etc. Culture is not just focused on the mind, thoughts, and ideas. It is at the same time about the engagement of the body and the mind.

Economy and Society

The philosopher Wolfgang Hofkirchner has conceptualised a stage model that explains the logic of how reality's organisational levels are connected. In a stage model, 'one step taken by a system in question – that produces a layer – depends on the stage taken prior to that but cannot be reversed! […] layers – that are produced by steps – build upon layers below them but cannot be reduced to them!'[36]. Emergence is the principle underlying a stage model:[37] Matter's organisational levels have emergent qualities, which means that the systems that organise themselves on a certain level are more than the sum of their parts, to which they cannot be reduced. Thus, an organisational level has new qualities that are based on the underlying levels, moments, and systems. A new organisational level of matter sublates underlying levels in the Hegelian sense of sublation as the unity of (a) uplifting, (b) preservation, and (c) elimination. The synergies of the moments of one organisational level result in the emergence of a new level that (a) has new, non-reduceable qualities, (b) means that specific qualities of the underlying levels are also present on the new level, where they are preserved, and (c) ensures that the new level feeds back onto the underlying levels so that
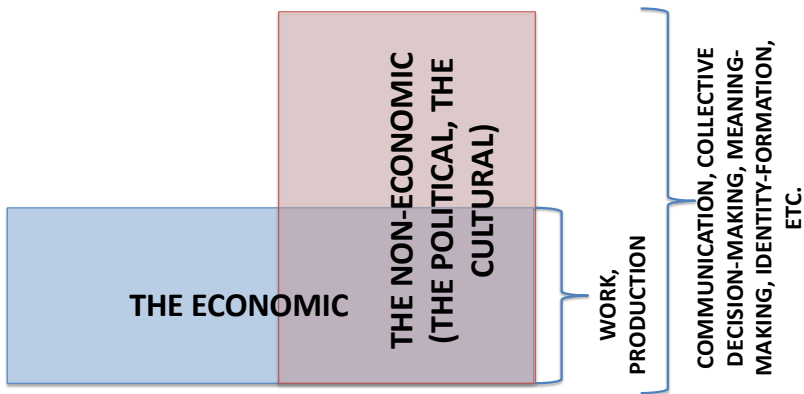
Figure 3.3: The relationship of the economic and the non-economic in society.

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[36] Wolfgang Hofkirchner. 2013. *Emergent Information. A Unified Theory of Information Framework*. Singapore: World Scientific. pp. 123–124.

[37] Ibid., p. 115.

they change and differentiate themselves so that their old state is eliminated. Figure 3.3 shows how the stage model's dialectical logic can be applied to explain the relation of the economic and the non-economic in society.

The non-economic is defined negatively by the fact that it doesn't only satisfy human needs. Formulated in a positive manner this means that politics and culture constitute the non-economic realm. In this realm, humans take collective decisions (politics) and interpret society and themselves (culture). It would, however, be a false conclusion if one separated politics and culture from the economy. The economy is the underlying organisational level sublated in politics and culture. Just like in the economy, we also find production and work in politics and culture, whereby the economic moment exists in culture and politics. But political and cultural production have emergent qualities. They are complexes of production with special qualities: In politics, humans produce collective decisions, whereby society is capable of acting. In culture, humans produce meanings as well as definitions of the self, whereby society and humans form identities. Collective decisions and identities are use-values, but use-values that have special, emergent qualities. Democracy as a political phenomenon and recognition as a cultural phenomenon are neither purely non-economic nor purely economic. Political and cultural moments are at the same time economic and non-economic: Production in society constitutes the universal moment of society, it creates society as totality. Production specialises itself in each realm of society and there takes on emergent qualities, such as the production of the public in politics and the production of identity in culture, two phenomena that have emergent qualities that are based on and at the same time go beyond the economy.

The passing of laws in parliaments is a form of production where we find not just the labour of parliamentarians, but also the labour of civil society organisations that oppose and protest against certain directions a law can take, the labour of consultants, researchers, party officials, administrators, archivists, PR professionals, etc.. A newspaper is a cultural artefact that offers and proposes certain interpretations of the world to citizens. Its reports offer an occasion for communication and reflection on the state of the world. In the production of a newspaper, we find the labour of journalists, printers, editors, designers, advertising and PR professionals, web designers, web programmers, social media experts, etc.

The law as political artefact and the newspaper as cultural artefact do not just have an economic aspect of work and production, but also emergent qualities that go beyond the economy and constitute particular roles in society. The law takes on the role of regulating human life in society according to particular rules. The newspaper has the role of informing humans about new developments in society ('news'). These are positive definitions that should not lead us to lose track of the fact that no complex of society is independent of real power structures. In societies that are shaped by domination and class structures, organisational levels as well as their complexes (subsystems) and organisations can play negative roles. For example, the law in a fascist state legitimates

racism and the extermination of political opponents. Or think of a racist capitalist tabloid that conducts disinformation by simplification, scandalisation, manipulation, right-wing propaganda, and agitation.

The materialist concept of social and societal production explodes the base/superstructure model that separates the economy from the non-economic. Materialism shows that the economic and the non-economic reach into each other and are shaped by the logic of production that is modelled on the form of human work as the general practice and model that creates the unity of society as dialectical totality.

But what is the role of communication in society? Communication is the social process of symbolic interaction through which various actors come together and enter relations in the production and use of objects (i.e. artefacts and social structures). In the production of use-values, humans co-ordinate themselves via communication processes. Also the use and application of these use-values is co-ordinated by communication.

Let us consider an example: Someone eats a meal prepared in a restaurant. The process of eating is a bodily activity that serves the human need of nourishment. If eating is organised as a social event, then it poses the possibility for socialising with friends, family, colleagues, etc. through communication at the occasion of a joint meal. The selection of the restaurant and the particular food and drinks chosen, as well as the clothes we wear at a dinner, have a symbolic character. These practices are symbols that communicate something about our status, our class membership, and our self-understanding and that thereby produce cultural distinctions.[38] Food is an object that nature and humans produce. Eating food not only reproduces the human body, but also sociality, status, reputation, and power. The practice of eating is at the same time biological, bodily, psychological, economic, social, cultural, and political. In the discussed example, communication turns food and drinks into objects that mediate the relation between humans. Since communication is the production of social relations and social systems, it plays an important role in all processes and systems in society.

When speaking of 'economy and society', we do not mean that the economy is not a part of society and that society merely includes politics and culture. Rather, society is a totality that is constituted by humans' economic, cultural and political practices. Production has its origin in the economy, but acts as a moment that creates society as totality. Production is 'the model for any social practice'[39] and 'the simplest and most elementary form of those complexes whose dynamic interaction is what constitutes the specificity of social

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[38] See: Pierre Bourdieu. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

[39] Georg Lukács. 1980. *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*. London: Merlin. p. 3.

practice'.[40] Production's dialectical character 'as model for social practice shows itself precisely in the way that this social practice in its more developed forms exhibits many departures from labour itself'.[41] There is an 'identity of identity and non-identity'[42] between work and other human practices.

Society's Flow

Society is a totality in which human practices produce and reproduce economic, political and cultural structures, systems and institutions that dialectically reach into each other. Such structures, systems, and institutions in turn condition, influence, enable, and constrain further practices. In Marxist theory, categories such as determination, mediation, typification, representation, illustration, homology, and correspondence have been used to describe the relationship between 'base' and 'superstructure'. But all of these categories separate the economic and the non-economic. Therefore, they are 'not materialist enough'.[43]

In his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', the structuralist Louis Althusser uses the metaphor of an edifice with different floors in order to describe the relation of base and superstructure.[44] He says that 'the great theoretical advantage of the Marxist topography, i.e. of the spatial metaphor of the edifice (base and superstructure) is simultaneously that it reveals that questions of determination (or of index of effectivity) are crucial [and] that it reveals that it is the base which in the last instance determines the whole edifice'.[45] The problem with Althusser's metaphor of the edifice is that it presents society as static and as mechanically programmed by the economy.

Whereas a house is built in an upright position, the steps of the house's staircase necessarily follow a transverse pattern so that one can walk up or down them. In a stage model, each level, for which the staircase is a model, has a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the underlying steps/levels. In contrast, in a house everything depends on the quality of the foundation. Althusser's model of society is reductionist and mechanistic.

The stage model presented in figure 3.3 conceives of society based on dialectical logic as the simultaneous identity and non-identity of moments that reach into each other and form a totality. But the model does not grasp society's

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[40] Ibid., p. 59.

[41] Ibid., p. 59.

[42] Ibid., p. 59.

[43] Raymond Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 97.

[44] Louis Althusser. 1969. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays.* New York: Monthly Review Press. pp. 127–186.

[45] Ibid., pp. 135–136.
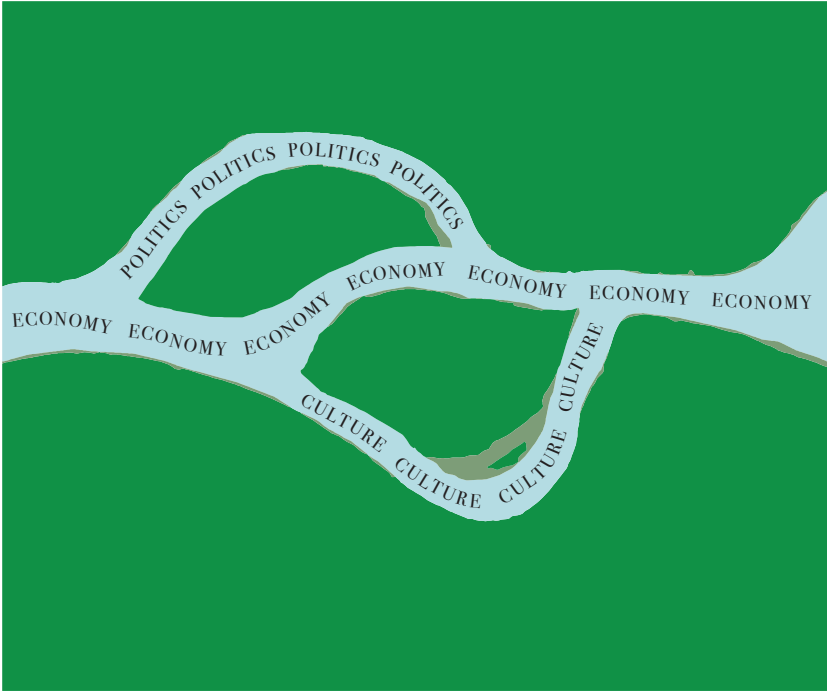
Figure 3.4: The flow of society's development.

dynamics and change. We therefore have to complement it with a flow model (see figure 3.4).

   If we conceive of society as a flow, then the economy is the main stream, from which politics and culture branch out as currents that have further spurs (i.e. subsystems) and flow back into the main stream, whose qualities they transform. Politics and culture differentiate themselves from the economy and take on their own flows of development that then flow back into the economy, whose flow they transform. Georg Lukács argues in this context: 'This means that if we imagine everyday life as a large river, then science and art [and culture and politics in general, CF] branch out as higher forms of reality's reception and reproduction that differentiate themselves, develop according to their specific aims, reach their pure form in the peculiarity that emerges from societal life's needs in order to then, because of their effects on human life, flow again into the river of everyday life. So, the latter constantly enriches itself with the human mind's highest results that it assimilates to its everyday, practical needs, whereof then again new branches of higher organisational forms emerge as questions and demands'.[46]

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[46]   Translation from German: Georg Lukács. 1963. *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen. 1. Halbband. Georg Lukács Werke Band 11.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. p. 13.

The metaphor of the river to represent change is an old philosophical theme. Plato reports in *Cratylus* that Socrates said in a dialogue: 'Heraclitus says somewhere that "everything gives way and nothing stands fast" and is '"likening the things that are to the flowing (*rhoē*) of a river"'.[47] Aristotle writes in *Metaphysics* that in the 'Heracleitian writings […] all perceptible things are always in flux'.[48] But Aristotle stresses that one must add that change always stands in a dialectical relation to continuity: 'there is something that persists' in change;[49] 'since a thing that is losing something has some of what it is losing, and a thing must already be something of what it is becoming'.[50]

Lukács sees society as the dynamic flows of everyday life. Society is the life of production, from which alternative currents and rivers flow out and into which they flow back in order to enhance production. He uses the river as a metaphor in order to describe how human production, cultural and political organisations are interconnected. Whereas the building is a purely spatial metaphor for society, the river is a spatio-temporal metaphor.

In dialectical philosophy, the world is contradictory and contradictions produce potentials for change. Lukács' metaphor of the river for society's dialectic stresses everyday life's dynamic character and the networks, processes, and, streams of human production. Rivers branch out and have the capacity to create new spurs, which metaphorically represents the productive and contradictory essence of dialectical processes and human activity in society.

That the economy is the main current of society's flows means that all of society is constituted by humans' dynamic, networked, interpenetrating, contradictory realms of production and reproduction. In society, humans produce social and societal relations, use-values, decisions, and meanings. In specific social systems, all of these aspects of production interact with each other in everyday life. Humans not only produce certain structures once, but reproduce them through communication processes, whereby they reproduce the realms of society and society as such. In society, humans produce structures and social relations again and again. They re-produce. Society's flow is the interaction of humans' interpenetrating processes of reproduction, whereby humans reproduce society as an open totality.

One must avoid idealising society and its flows. The Danube is no longer the 'beautiful blue Danube' that Johann Strauss' Danube-waltz denotes. Rather, the Danube today is a brown puddle. Rivers are today often polluted, drown the land, or dry up. The polluted river is a metaphor for capitalism and how capitalism endangers and pollutes humans' everyday life.

Communication is the process of the production of social relations and sociality. Humans do not produce alone, but collectively and in relation to each

[47] Plato. 1997. *Complete Works,* edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. § 402a, p. 120.

[48] Aristotle. 1999. *Metaphysics*. Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press. § 1078b.

[49] Ibid., § 1069b.

[50] Ibid., § 1010a.

other (which entails that in class societies they produce *against each other*). Everyday life is productive. And this production requires communication in the form of communicative production and the production of communication. In society, there is no communication without production and no production without communication. Communication and work, the social and the economic, are at the same time identical and non-identical.

The dialectic of production and communication exists in the forms of the production of communication and communication in production. The production of communication produces and reproduces social relationships that enable various forms of production. These various forms of production branch out in the flow of everyday life as dialectical spirals through which humans produce new qualities of society that flow into everyday life.

Based on the general foundations of the analysis of society elaborated thus far, the next section introduces a concept of modern society.

3.5. Modern Society

Figure 3.5 displays a model of modern society that is based on the insight that there is a dialectic of structures and practices in society and that society consists of organisational realms and levels that reach into each other. Modern society consists of the spheres of the state, the modern economy, and modern culture that reach into each other. In order to visualise this model in a manner that avoids aesthetic confusion, the cultural realm is shown as not overlapping with the political and the economic realms. This has only been done in order to leave enough space to make visible the public sphere. In reality, the three societal realms of culture, politics, and economy overlap and reach into each other.
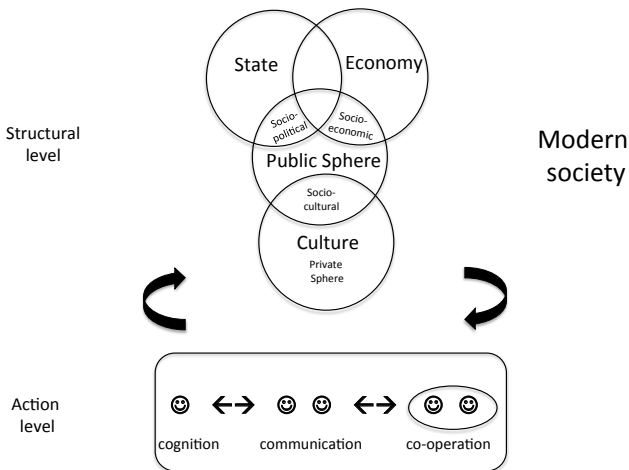
Figure 3.5: A model of modern society.

The public sphere is a mediating sphere, in which socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural groups act as interfaces between the three realms of society. The state is not the same as civil society, but rather consists of repressive state apparatuses, state-controlled parts of the economy (nationalised industries), and state-organised institutions (such as public schools, public universities, and public hospitals).

The capitalist way of organising production, distribution, and consumption is the dominant model of the modern economy. The capitalist economy is a system where money capital is accumulated, which is achieved by selling commodities produced by workers and making a profit. Workers are structurally compelled to sell their labour power to capital and to produce new goods by utilising means of production that are privately owned by capitalists. The capitalist economy's means of production, organisations, and products are not owned by the immediate producers. Since economic production is the model for politics and culture, the state and culture are in a capitalist society based on the model of the capitalist economy with which they share a common structural principle, namely the principle of accumulation. Accumulation takes on its particular forms in politics and culture, the accumulation of decision-power and meaning-making power. The modern political system is a bureaucratic state. In the version of the state as liberal, parliamentary democracy, there is a parliamentary competition of parties organised through elections. There are also basic freedoms guaranteed by the constitution (the freedoms of opinion, assembly, association, the press, movement, ownership, belief, thought, expression) as well as the state's monopoly of violence organised in the form of repressive state apparatuses (police, military, judicial system, prisons) that guarantee the reproduction of the existing order. In this version of politics, each party strives to accumulate as much decision-power as possible. In authoritarian forms of the state, such as fascism, there is a monopoly of political power controlled by a single party and its leader. There is absolute power. Furthermore, terror, nationalism, a strict hierarchical order, militarism, patriarchy, the politics of scapegoating, and the destruction of the labour movement characterise fascism. Modern culture consists of the private sphere and public culture. Modern culture is about the accumulation of definition-power, meaning-making power and reputation that are used in order to define, disseminate, reproduce, and challenge dominant meanings and worldviews. In capitalism, the single capitalist is compelled to try to amass ever more capital and profit in order to be able to survive. Accumulation is the logic of quantitative increases. The capitalist economy grows through the exploitation of labour. Accumulation combines quantification with instrumentalisation. The attempt to increase profit is combined with the instrumentalisation of human labour. The logic of accumulation has been transferred from the modern economy into modern politics and modern culture, where it takes on specific forms that have relative autonomy and emergent qualities. In the political systems, political actors try to increase and monopolise political power. They use election campaigns, the

media, public relations, the public sphere, war, violence, surveillance, control, etc. as means for instrumentalising other humans. In modern culture, actors try to increase their reputation and recognition by trying to instrumentalise human consciousness through ideology.

Modern society's three spheres are material because they are systems of production. Society is in general material: In society, humans produce social relations, structures, social systems and sociality whereby society can reproduce itself. In modern society, processes of production are at the same time processes of accumulation. Through the accumulation of power, classes create power imbalances.

Social Roles in Society

Jürgen Habermas[51] sees the following social roles as constitutive for modern society: employees, consumers, clients of the state, and citizens. But one can certainly add further roles, such as those of house workers, capitalists, immigrants, prisoners, etc.

The separation of spheres and roles is characteristic of capitalism. Another characteristic of the capitalist mode of society is the creation of power structures, in which humans take on social roles in power relations (between e.g. capital/labour, state bureaucracy/citizens, state/immigrants, etc.) and execute practices that result in the production and accumulation of power. Power is actors' control over means that enable them to determine structures as well as influence processes and decisions in their own interest. In the capitalist economy, humans act in the roles of capital owners and workers. In the modern political system, we find the roles of the politician and citizens. In modern culture, there are roles such as friends, lovers, family members, and consumers.

Modern society's differentiation into diverse spheres is accompanied by the creation of social roles, in which humans act in these spheres. In the public sphere, humans do not act in private, but in common and in ways that are visible to others. The public sphere is 'the common world' that 'gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other'.[52] In modern society's public sphere, groups organise based on the common interests of their members. In doing so, humans take on socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural roles. Table 3.4 provides an overview of social roles in modern society. Modern society is based on the separation of roles and spheres so that single roles compete with each other in power relations. As a consequence, the logic of the accumulation of power dominates and there are conflicts of interest over the control of property, decision-power, and definition-power that result in social

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[51] Jürgen Habermas. 1987. *Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
[52] Hannah Arendt. 1967/1981. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. p. 52.

Table 3.4: Societal roles in capitalist modernity.

Dimension of Society	Roles	Roles defined by the overlap of a societal dimension and the public sphere
Politics	**Political roles:** Citizen, politician, bureaucrat, political party member	**Socio-political roles:** Privacy advocates, electoral reform advocate, feminist activist, gay rights activists, anti-racist advocate, youth movement advocate, peace movement activist, anti-penitentiary advocate, human rights activist, anti-psychiatry activist, non-governmental organisation member/ activist, non-parliamentary political activist, student group member, anti-fascist activist, fascist activist, members of non-parliamentary leftist groups, members of non-parliamentary right-wing groups, etc.
Economy	**Economic roles:** Capital owner, entrepreneur, manager, employee, prosumer, self-employee, freelancer, peasant, cultural workers, etc.	**Socio-economic roles:** Labour activist, union member/activist, consumer protectionists, environmental activist
Culture	**Private roles** Lover, family member, friend, consumer, audience member, user	**Socio-cultural roles:** Sports group member, fan community member, parishioner, member of a sect or cult, member of a professional organisation, member of a voluntary associations, member of a self-help group, member of neighbourhood associations, etc.

struggles. In capitalist modernity, economic, political and cultural roles are organised in the form of classes, parties, political groups, and communities of interest that compete to control power.

Power

Power is human actors' capacity to influence society's relations. Power does not only exist in the political system. There are economic, political, and cultural forms of power (see table 3.5). Power means that actors control means and capacities that allow them to control structures and to influence processes and decisions in their interest.

Table 3.5: Three forms of power.

Dimension of society	Definition of power	Structures of power in modern society
Economy	control of use-values, property, and other resources that are produced, distributed, and consumed.	control of money, capital, and means of production
Politics	influence on collective decisions that determine and regulate aspects of the lives of humans in certain communities and social systems.	control of governments, bureaucratic and state institutions, parliament, military, police, political parties, lobby groups, civil society groups, sexuality, minorities, distinct groups in society, etc.
Culture	impact on the definition of moral values and meanings that shape what is considered as important, reputable, and worthy in society.	control of structures that define meaning and identities in society (e.g. universities, religious groups, intellectual circles, media organisations, academic associations, etc.).

3.6. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise the main results of this chapter:

- Society is the totality of complexes of production, in which the dialectic of human subjects and structural objects manifests itself. Production acts as a model through which society is produced as totality.
- The dialectic of the economic and the non-economic (politics and culture) is constituted through the operation of the economy in the form of production in the realms of politics and culture. But politics and culture have relatively autonomous, emergent qualities that are constituted by society's complexes and relations of production. The metaphor of a house or edifice does not adequately describe society's dialectic, whereas that of the flowing river grasps the dynamics of society's complexes of production.
- In modern, capitalist society, the dialectic of the economic and the non-economic is constituted by the logic of accumulation that shapes society. It brings about the accumulation of capital, decision-power and definition-power. As a consequence, capitalist society's realms have particular contradictory dynamics.
- In social theory, we find structuralist-functionalist and action-theoretic approaches. Marx in contrast assumed there is a dialectic of praxis and structures in history and the development of society, which constitutes

a dialectic of freedom and necessity. Especially in structural crises, this dialectic poses a question about the possibility of a fundamental change of society.

Based on the foundations of social theory outlined in chapter 3, the next chapter will ask: What is the role of communication in society?

CHAPTER 4

Communication and Society

What role does communication have in society? In order to give a materialist answer to this question, one must deal with the relation of communication and production/work/labour. This chapter focuses on this question by engaging with the notions of labour and work (section 4.1), the dialectic of communication and production (sections 4.2 & 4.3), and the relation of communication, knowledge and information (section 4.4).

Models of Communication

Denis McQuail outlines four models of communication:[1]

- communication as information transmission;
- communication as ritual through which humans express meanings and participate in society;
- communication as the creation of attention and publicity;
- communication as reception that requires the encoding and decoding of meanings.

Friedrich Krotz[2] argues that the information transmission model is the dominant model in media and communication studies. He conceives of communication as simultaneous information transmission and symbolic interaction that is at the same time an inner and an outer process, where humans agree on the definition of situations, where each subject imagines

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[1] Denis McQuail. 2010. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory.* London: Sage. Sixth edn. pp. 69–75.
[2] Friedrich Krotz. 2007. *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

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taking the role of the other subject, and where perspectives become entangled with each other.[3]

The position taken in this book on how to conceptualise communication is materialist, dialectical, and humanist. It stresses the fundamental role of social production in society that involves a dialectic of communication and production. In this dialectic of communication and production, there are sub-dialectics such as the dialectic of the internationalisation and externalisation of information, the dialectic of communication as practice and means of communication as structures, the dialectic of communication and society, the dialectic of subject and object, the dialectic of individual knowledge/social knowledge, the dialectic of societal structures/knowledge structures, the dialectic of cognition/communication, the dialectic of communication/co-operation, the dialectic of individual semiosis/ social semiosis, the dialectic of social semiosis/societal semiosis, the dialectic of individual psyche/the social character, the dialectic of authoritarianism and humanism, etc. Chapter 4 of the book at hand outlines the foundations of the dialectical-materialist-humanist approach to communication theory.

The Mediatisation of Society

In media and communication theory, a significant number of scholars have employed the notion of mediatisation to conceptualise the relationship of media and society.[4] Here are three definitions of mediatisation:

- Friedrich Krotz defines mediatisation as 'the transformation of everyday life, culture and society in the context of the transformation of the media'.[5]
- Stig Hjarvard gives the following definition: 'By the mediatization of culture and society we understand the process whereby culture and society to an increasing degree become dependent on the media and their logic. This process is characterized by a *duality,* in that the media have become *integrated* into the operations of other social institutions and cultural spheres, while also

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[3] Ibid., chapter 2.
[4] See for example: Friedrich Krotz. 2007. *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. Andreas Hepp. 2013. *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity. Stig Hjarvard. 2013. *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*. Abingdon: Routledge. Friedrich Krotz and Andreas Hepp. 2013. A Concretization of Mediatization: How Mediatization Works and Why 'Mediatized Worlds' Are A Helpful Concept for Empirical Mediatization Research. *Empedocles: Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 3 (2): 119–134. Friedrich Krotz. 2017. Explaining the Mediatisation Approach. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 103–118.
[5] Friedrich Krotz. 2017. Explaining the Mediatisation Approach. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 103–118. pp. 108–109.

acquiring the status of social institutions *in their own right.* As a consequence, social interaction – within the respective institutions, between institutions, and in society at large – increasingly takes place via the media'.[6]

- Andreas Hepp writes: 'Mediatization therefore deals with the process in which […] diverse types of media communication are established in varying contextual fields and the degree to which these fields are saturated with such types. […] [The focus is on] the question of how far changes in communication indicate the existence of socio-cultural changes'.[7]

These three definitions have a joint core, namely that mediatisation is the process by which media transform society, culture, everyday life, social institutions, social interaction, and social contexts so that sociality increasingly takes place via the media.

The concept of mediatisation is based on the notion of the medium. 'A medium, then, should be defined as a single object and a type of object which serves the existence, and the transformation and modification, of communication'.[8] A medium has aspects of practice; it consists of symbolic expressions and is a space of experience, and has aspects of structure, namely media technology and the medium as social institution.[9] Krotz argues that mediatisation, alongside globalisation, individualisation, and commercialisation, is a meta-process of modernity.[10]

The notion of mediatisation certainly foregrounds media systems over communication practices. But one cannot automatically assume that the mediatisation approach is structuralist, because mediatisation was partly developed together with a concept of communication[11] and there have been debates that have stressed the role of the human subject in mediatisation processes.[12]

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[6] Stig Hjarvard. 2013. *The Mediatization of Culture and Society.* Abingdon: Routledge. p. 17.

[7] Andreas Hepp. 2013. *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity. p. 68.

[8] Friedrich Krotz. 2014. Media, Mediatization and Mediatized Worlds: A Discussion of the Basic Concepts. In *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*, ed. Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Krotz, 72–87. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 79.

[9] Ibid., pp. 79–80.

[10] Friedrich Krotz. 2017. Explaining the Mediatisation Approach. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 103–118. p. 108. Friedrich Krotz. 2007. The Meta-Process of 'Mediatization' as a Conceptual Frame. *Global Media and Communication* 3 (3): 256–260.

[11] For example: Krotz, *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation.*

[12] See for example: Peter Gentzel, Friedrich Krotz, Jeffrey Wimmer, and Rainer Winter, eds. 2019. *Das vergessene Subjekt: Subjektkonstitutionen in mediatisierten Alltagswelten*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

The Critique of the Political Economy of Communication

Graham Murdock[13] argues that the mediatisation model

> pointedly ignores the primacy of capitalist dynamics in shaping the central contours of modernity. […] The leading urban centres of the contemporary world have been constructed around industrial, financial, trading, export and administrative hubs that service capital. Present patterns of globalisation have been indelibly marked by capitalist colonisations and imperialisms and their legacies. Under the relentless drive to maintain models of growth predicated on ever-increasing levels of personal consumption, conceptions of individuality have been progressively annexed by capitalism's core ideology of possessive individualism. Writers on mediatisation often include economic dynamics in their inventories of contemporary transformative processes under the heading of 'commercialisation', but shifts in the organisation of the media system since the mid-1970s are never located within a more comprehensive account of the wider transformation of capitalism and its multiple implications for the organisation of economic and symbolic power. This absence appears like a ghost haunting recent commentaries by leading writers on mediatisation. In their efforts to compile a more complete account of the elephant they have neglected to ask who owns and trains it and what it is doing in the room.[14]

Murdock stresses that 'we need to begin analysis with the dynamics of "deep capitalism" rather than "deep mediatisation"'.[15] Friedrich Krotz argues that 'in a capitalistic world all such metaprocesses depend on the economic dimension. Thus, commercialisation is the basic process providing stimulus to all action'.[16] Elsewhere he stresses that 'communication is functionalised and bound to the process of commodity exchange. The communicative reproduction of humans increasingly turns against them, which is what Marx called alienation'.[17]

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13 Graham Murdock. 2017. Mediatisation and the Transformation of Capitalism: The Elephant in the Room. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 119–135.

14 Ibid., p. 121.

15 Ibid., p. 130.

16 Krotz, The Meta-Process of 'Mediatization' as a Conceptual Frame, p. 259.

17 Translation from German: Friedrich Krotz. 2019. Wie konstituiert das Kommunizieren den Menschen? Zum Subjektkonzept der Kommunikationswissenschaft im Zeitalter digital mediatisierter Lebensweisen. In *Das vergessene Subjekt: Subjektkonstitutionen in mediatisierten Alltagswelten*, ed. Peter Gentzel, Friedrich Krotz, Jeffrey Wimmer and Rainer Winter, 17–37. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. p. 35.

The mediatisation approach has thus far not created in-depth analyses of communication and mediatisation in the context of capitalist society. The process of commercialisation only focuses on the exchange of commodities for money on markets, i.e. on what Marx terms the sphere of circulation. But there is also the sphere of commodity production, where human labour produces goods and services as commodities, which is why processes of commodification and capitalisation rank alongside commercialisation as key features of communication in capitalism. Capital is, as Manfred Knoche stresses, a structural transformer of the media.[18]

The economy is certainly, as Krotz stresses, a key aspect of capitalist society's organisation and transformation, but this holds true not just in respect to commodity circulation, but also in the context of production (work and labour) and consumption. The approach taken in the book at hand points out that beyond capitalism the economy is, as the realm of social production, the key foundation of society because all social relations are relations of production. Each sphere of society has emergent qualities that go beyond production and are grounded and based on social production. Commodification, capitalisation, commercialisation, individualisation, globalisation, and mediatisation are not the only meta-processes of modern society. In the realm of modern politics, there are processes of bureaucratisation, control, domination, and surveillance. And in the realm of culture, we find the process of ideologisation.

It should also not be forgotten that humans have the capacity to resist all of these processes of economic, political, and cultural alienation by processes of de-alienation and appropriation, i.e. through class struggles, political protests, and struggles for recognition (see chapters 8, 12, 14 in this book). The dialectical-materialist-humanistic approach to communication theory taken in the book at hand is based on a critical political economy of communication's assumption that 'without a sustained investigation of the dynamics and contradictions of marketised capitalism it is impossible to fully account for the driving forces propelling and organising mediatisation, to properly grasp their consequences for institutional and intimate life or to identify possible routes to challenge and change'.[19] In the analysis of the dialectics of media/communication and society, we need to give special attention to political economy, social production, ideology, alienation, class structures, social struggles, and emancipatory movements.[20]

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[18] Manfred Knoche. 2016. The Media Industry's Structural Transformation in Capitalism and the Role of the State: Media Economics in the Age of Digital Communications. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 14 (1): 18–47.

[19] Murdock, Mediatisation and the Transformation of Capitalism: The Elephant in the Room, p. 132.

[20] See also: Christian Fuchs. 2020. *Marxism: Karl Marx's Fifteen Key Concepts for Cultural and Communication Studies*. New York: Routledge.

4.1. Communication, Work, and Labour

Work and Labour

Figure 4.1 shows the etymology of the words 'labour', 'Arbeit', 'work', and 'Werk/ werken'. The term 'labour' goes back to the Latin word 'laborem' that means toil, hardship, and pain. The German word 'Arbeit' stems from the Germanic term 'arba' that signifies a slave. The English term 'work' and the German word 'Werktätigkeit' are linguistically related. They both go back to the Indo-European term 'uerg' that means doing, acting, creating, and having effects.

In German, the term *Werktätigkeit* (work) is today forgotten. Instead, the word *Arbeit* is used for both work in general as well as alienated labour. In English language use, often no differentiation is made between *work* and *labour*. This circumstance is true for both everyday life and academia. In capitalism, language use has become reified so that in both German and English one does not properly distinguish between alienated and non-alienated activity, so that alienated labour appears as the general model of activity.

Chapter 3 discussed the dialectic of subject and object and the concepts of the productive forces and the relations of production. Seen from the perspective of work, the productive forces are a system in which human work capacity (the mental and physical skills of the human being) are used in the work process. Humans in the work process employ objects as means of production in order to create new products. The means of production include already existing resources (the object of work) and technologies (the instruments of
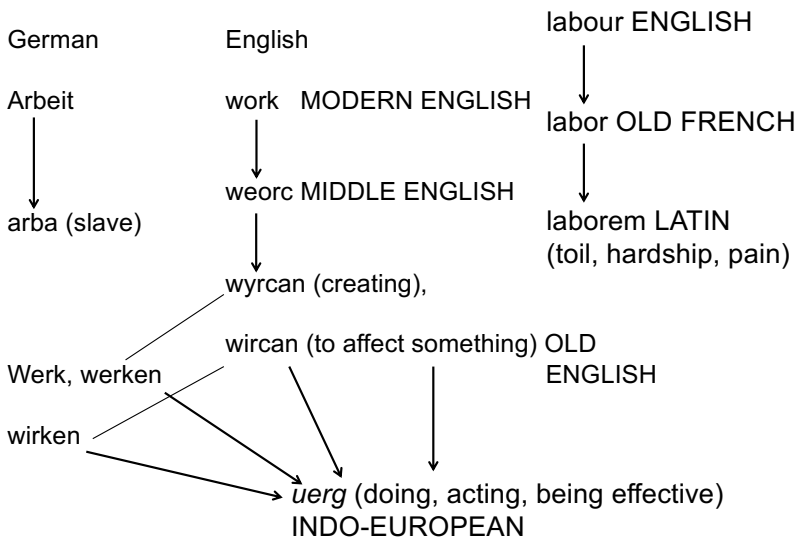
Figure 4.1: Etymology of the terms 'labour', 'work', 'Arbeit', and 'Werk'.

(Economic) subject-object:
Product of work as result of the work process

Work capacity and production power
(Subject)

Means of production (Object)

Object of work   Instruments of work

Relations of production
Other subjects
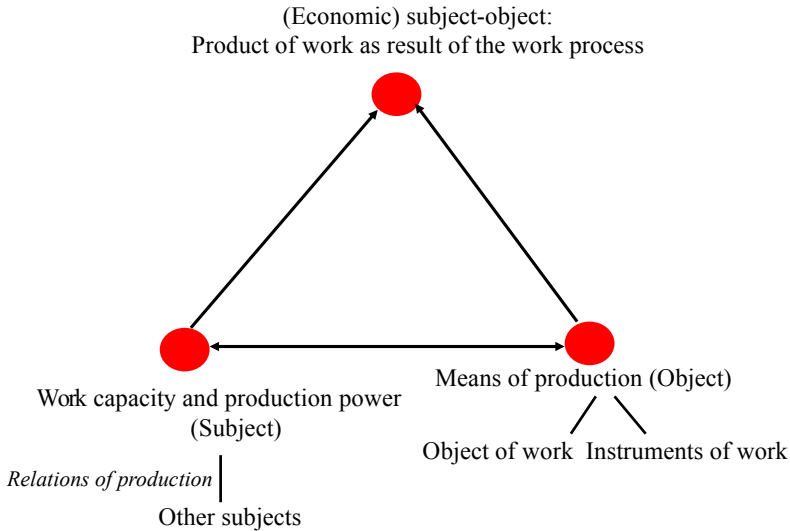
Figure 4.2: The dialectic of subject and object in the work process.

work). Humans work with instruments on resources in order to create new products. Work is a dynamic, dialectical process, in which human subjects utilise means of production in order to create new products (see figure 4.2). Humans work together in order to bring about the satisfaction of needs. Work works on society: It allows the satisfaction of needs. When referring to work in general, terms such as labour capacity, instruments of labour, objects of labour, or products of labour are often used. If more general processes are meant than concrete alienated activity in class relations, then it is better to speak of 'work' and 'production' than of 'labour'. Otherwise one risks fetishising labour and capitalism by making labour appear as the general model of the economy and society. Labour only exists in class relations. The term 'division of work' is nonsensical because the division of labour only exists in class relations and is sublated in a socialist society. Labour fetishism is the flip side of the fetishism of capital and commodities. In labour, humans forfeit their life for the dominant class. By being exploited and treated as things, they lose their humanity. In a socialist society, there is no labour, but rather self-determined work of well-rounded individuals.

In Humanist Marxism, authors use the concepts of class experience[21] and structures of feeling[22] in order to stress that subjectivity (including ideas,

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[21] Edward P. Thompson. 1978. *The Poverty of Theory & Other Essays*. London: Merlin. pp. 8–10, 164, 171.
[22] Raymond Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 128–135.

feelings, norms, beliefs, morals, values, traditions, and culture) is not just individual, but also collective. One has to add to these approaches the insight that there is a process that mediates between individual subjectivity and collective structures which is organised through communication.[23]

Teleological Positing

For Georg Lukács, society is a complex of complexes, in which humans posit the world teleologically. Teleological positing means that humans try to achieve particular, consciously set goals in the work process and employ certain means for doing so. The teleological positing of work means on the one hand the 'intervention into concrete causal relations in order to bring about the realization of the goal'[24] – 'the positing of a goal and its means'.[25] On the other hand, it means that there is a 'conscious creator'[26] in the work process. Teleological positing 'has the purpose to utilise a concretely determined individual context for the purpose of a concrete-individual goal'.[27] It is a 'consciously conducted'[28] social action that is capable of 'creating causal processes, modifying the otherwise merely spontaneously functioning processes, objects, etc. of being, to turn objectivities into being that did not exist before the work process'.[29]

  In this Marxist-Aristotelian concept of the economy, telos is not a force that exists outside of society, like Hegel's world spirit or Anaxagoras' *Nous*. Telos is rather a force that is immanent in society and emerges from humans' conscious orientation on production. Aristotle formulates this immanent

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[23] See: Christian Fuchs. 2019. Revisiting the Althusser/E.P. Thompson-Controversy: Towards a Marxist Theory of Communication. *Communication and the Public* 4 (1): 3–20. Christian Fuchs. 2017. Raymond Williams' Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (6): 744–762.

[24] Georg Lukács. 1980. *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*. London: Merlin. p. 67.

[25] Ibid., p. 22.

[26] Ibid., p. 5.

[27] Translation from German [„bezweckt, einen konkret bestimmten Einzelzusammenhang für die Zwecke einer konkret-einzelnen Zielsetzung nutzbar zu machen"]: Georg Lukács. 1984. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 13: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 1. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. p. 316.

[28] Translation from German [„bewusst vollzogene"]: Ibid., p. 54.

[29] Translation from German [„kausale Prozesse ins Leben zu setzen, die sonst bloß spontan funktionierenden Prozesse, Gegenstände etc. des Seins zu modifizieren, ja Gegenständlichkeiten seiend zu machen, die vor der Arbeit überhaupt nicht existierten"]: Ibid., p. 54.

concept of teleology as follows: 'everyone who makes makes for an end, and that which is made is […] an end in a particular relation, and the end of a particular operation'.[30] Marx says in a similar manner that the human being 'also realizes [*verwirklicht*] his own purpose' in work: 'Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. […] The simple elements of the labour process are (1) purposeful activity, that is work itself, (2) the object on which that work is performed, and (3) the instruments of that work'.[31]

In his works *Physics*[32] and *Metaphysics*[33], Aristotle discerns four interacting causes: the material cause (*causa materialis*), the efficient/moving cause (*causa efficiens*), the formal cause (*causa formalis*), and the final cause (*causa finalis*).

Wherever there is change, we can identify four dimensions that we can describe in the form of four questions: What from? Where from? What? Why? From what is the change made (material cause)? From where does the change emanate (efficient/moving cause)? What is happening to the basic materials and building blocks and what form is given to them (formal cause)? What is the goal and purpose, and why is there change (final cause)?

These four causes can be applied to the work process: Resources as the object of work constitute the material cause. The working human subject who possesses work capacity and the skills to employ the means of production constitutes the efficient/moving cause. The interaction of the subject and the object in work, whereby the object of work is brought into a new form, is work's formal cause. And work's final cause is the creation of particular products as use-values that satisfy certain human needs. Marx is an Aristotelian in respect to the distinction between the object, subject, process, and product of work. Also Georg Lukács' notion of teleological positing has an Aristotelian character. It particularly stresses the importance of consciously shaped final causes in human production.

Table 4.1. gives an overview of the four Aristotelian causes and applies them to work and communication. In communication, human subjects (efficient cause) in the communication process (formal cause) use certain means of communication in order to bring culture as the totality of ideas and meanings in society (material cause) into a new form so that specific social relations and society are (re)produced (final cause).

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[30] Aristotle. 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford World's Classics.* Translated by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press. § 1139b.

[31] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 284.

[32] Aristotle. 1991. Physics. In *Complete Works*, edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Book II, § 3.

[33] Aristotle 1999. *Metaphysics*. Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press. Aristotle. 1966. *Metaphysik*. Reinbek: Rowohlt. Book I, chapters 3 and 7.

Table 4.1: The four Aristotelian causes.

Cause	Questions	Work	Communication
Causa materialis: material cause	What from? Out of which?	Resources, materials	Culture as totality of ideas and meanings
Causa efficiens: efficient/moving cause	Where from? Whence?	Workers	Human subjects
Causa formalis: formal cause	What?	Work process (workers apply means of production in order to change materials and bring them into a new form)	Communication process
Causa finalis: final cause	Why? For the sake of which? (For what? For whom?)	Satisfaction of certain human needs	(Re-)Production of social relations and society

Left Aristotelianism

Monte Ransome Johnson points out that Aristotle distinguishes two dimensions of the final cause.[34] When asking the question of which goal there is, one needs to ask for what's sake something is done ('of which' = for what?) and for whose sake it is done ('for which' = for whom?). Aristotle draws a distinction between 'aims "for the sake of which", and beneficiaries "for whose sake".[35] For example, one can ask: What is the sake of the economy? Someone may answer: The task and final cause of the economy is to create wealth. But the question and its answer are incomplete because one needs to add the question: For whose sake is wealth created? In a capitalist economy, there is inequality between classes as the capitalist class owns the wealth that the working class produces. In capitalism, the economy is for the sake of profit and wealth owned by a few. In contrast, in a socialist society, wealth is created in order to benefit all. This example shows that there are different final causes according to the structure of society. In class societies, the final cause is based on instrumental reason, so that certain groups benefit by instrumentalising others and at the expense of the latter. In socialist societies, the final cause is based on the logic of the common good.

   Although Aristotle advanced the logic of the common good by arguing that friendship and justice have to do with sharing – 'the things of friends are

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[34] Monte Ransome Johnson. 2005. *Aristotle on Teleology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 66
[35] Ibid., p. 79.

common',[36] – he did not think this principle of the common good to the end in his own philosophy when arguing, for example, that domination, slavery, and patriarchy are natural.[37] The full implications of the logic of the commons were later developed by socialist thinkers such as Marx. In Aristotle's works, the justification of domination goes back to the false assumption in his *Politics* that 'the soul rules the body with the rule of a master'.[38] The rulers are identified with the soul and the ruled with the body. Class rule is indeed as old as the division between manual and mental labour,[39] but this circumstance does not imply that domination is natural. Ernst Bloch points out that there are two different political interpretations of Aristotle:[40] Right Aristotelianism, to which in the Middle Ages for example Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) belonged, separates matter and spirit. It downgrades the importance of matter in a Platonian manner and assumes that the spirit rules matter. Left Aristotelianism, to which for example Averroes (Ibn Ruschd, 1126–1198), Avicenna (Abū Alī al-Husain ibn Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā, 980–1037) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) belong, dialectically integrates mind and the formal cause into matter so that matter is seen as productive and self-producing. This assumption is a precondition for an interpretation of Aristotle that challenges domination and exploitation. Whereas Left Aristotelians such as Avicenna, Averroes, and Giordano Bruno 'first reduced the importance of Aristotle's separation of the forms on high from matter and then abolished it altogether, Aquinas dualizes the *formae separatae* and *form inhaerentes* to a degree far beyond Aristotle'.[41]

In *On the Soul* (*De Anima*), Aristotle stresses that matter is the potential from which concrete forms develop (see chapter 2 [section 2.1] in the book at hand). The implication for the human being is that the body is the potential for the soul. Matter is 'potentiality, form actuality. Since then the complex here is the living thing'; 'the soul […] is the actuality of a certain kind of body. Hence the rightness of the view that the soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body. That is why it is in a body, and a body of a definite kind'.[42] The soul is part of the human body

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[36] Aristotle. 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford World's Classics.* Translated by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press. § 1159b.

[37] Aristotle. 2013. *Aristotle's Politics.* Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Second edition. § 1254b.

[38] Ibid., §1254b.

[39] Alfred Sohn-Rethel. 1978. *Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology.* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

[40] Ernst Bloch. 1963/2019. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left.* New York: Columbia University Press.

[41] Ibid., p. 25.

[42] Aristotle. 1984. *On the Soul.* In *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation. Digital* Edition, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 1405-1517. §414a.

and has emergent qualities such as thought, sensation, reason, perception and memory. For Aristotle, matter is the 'fermenting substrate of possibility'.[43] The 'idealist-materialist Aristotle' has 'more robustly contributed to the notion of the fermenting, dialectical matter than Democritus.[44] Comparable to Aristotle, Marx understands the mind materially. Thought and communicated meanings are bound to the human subject. Marx formulates this circumstance in the following manner: 'It is impossible to separate thought from matter *that* thinks. This matter is the substratum ['Subjekt'='subject' in the German original] of all changes going on in the world'.[45] So, in *The Holy Family,* Marx speaks of a dialectic of thought and matter, i.e. of a dialectical solution to the mind body-problem that overcomes the Cartesian dualism. Thought has a material foundation, namely the human body and brain, and at the same time emergent qualities. Aristotle's dialectical concept of matter, in which the mind is dialectically grounded in the body's potentiality, contradicts his justification of slavery and patriarchy in his *Politics.* The latter book is based on the undialectical assumption that the mind and the body are separate.

Communication as Teleological Positing

Communication is not fundamentally different from production and work, because it produces and helps humans to reach certain goals, namely to inform themselves, reach understanding, form ideas, strengthen their imagination, be entertained, etc. There is a dialectic of production and communication, which means 'nothing other than: humans *produce communicatively* and *communicate productively*'.[46] Humans communicate productively (*producing communication*) because communication produces and reproduces social relations, social structures, social systems, institutions, society as totality, and human sociality. Work is not isolated and individual production, but a co-operative form of activity, where humans communicate in order to organise production (*communication in production*).

  Production/Work and communication reach dialectically into each other. Whereas communication is a specific form of production oriented on

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[43] Translation from German: Ernst Bloch, 1972. *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. p. 143.

[44] Translation from German: Ibid., p. 145.

[45] Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. 1845. *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company.* In *Marx and Engels Collected Works Volume 4,* 5–211. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 129.

[46] Horst Holzer. 2018. Communication & Society: A Critical Political Economy Perspective. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 16 (1): 357–401. p. 371.

understanding and socialisation, production is only social and societal through communication. Work has a communicative character, and communication has a work character. Work is a social relation in which humans co-operate in order to co-produce new realities through which human needs are satisfied. Communication co-ordinates the production process. Raymond Williams argues in this context that 'communication and its material means are intrinsic to all distinctively human forms of labour and social organization'.[47] The opposite is also true: Work is intrinsic to communication because production as the teleological positing of goals forms the model for all human practices in society. Therefore, production takes on a specific form in communication, namely the production and reproduction of sociality.

Communication is not just production, but also the foundation of the human understanding of the world. Through information and communication, we learn to know the world and other human beings' motivations and views. 'Understanding' does not necessarily imply moral agreement, but the recognition and comprehension of circumstances. Communication is production and at the same time, as orientation on understanding, also more than communication. It has emergent qualities. Conversely, production is as work communicative, but as production of specific use-values it is more than mere communication.

In his book *Politics*, Aristotle writes that 'man alone among the animals has speech'[48] (λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων). For Aristotle, humans are the zōon logon echon (ζῷον λόγος ἔχων). A widely used translation of this passage is that the human is a rational animal. Hannah Arendt and Charles Taylor, however, question this translation.[49] In Greek, λόγος (logos) denotes both utterance/speech and reason/rationality. The double meaning of logos applies to the essence of human beings. Humans are both communicative and rational beings. They are teleological beings, which means that they strive, through work and communication, to reach defined goals. Communication and production extend into each other in a dialectical manner. Rationality means that goals are identified and means are used to reach these goals. Production is the human process of rationality, the process by which humans try to reach defined goals. Communication is a form of rationality, namely the production of the human being's sociality, societalisation (*Vergesellschaftung*) and societality (*Gesellschaftlichkeit*). The German term *Gesellschaftlichkeit* is

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[47] Raymond Williams. 1980/2005. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso. p. 50.

[48] Aristotle. 2013. *Aristotle's Politics*. Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Second edition. § 1253a.

[49] Hannah Arendt. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. p. 27. Charles Taylor. 2016. *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press. p. 338. Charles Taylor. 2015. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 217.

often translated into English as sociality. I deliberately use the term 'societality' as translation of *Gesellschaftlichkeit* because it nicely indicates that *Gesellschaft* and *Gesellschaftlichkeit* focus on society as totality. We can best interpret Marx' pronouncement that the human being is 'by nature [...] a societal animal' ('gesellschaftliches Tier')[50] as meaning that a) humans (re)produce society and sociality through communicative action (communication as production) and that b) production is a process organised by communication that constitutes sociality and society (communication in production).

Avicenna comments that Aristotle's understanding of the human as 'the speaking (rational) animal' has also been called 'the "hylik" mind, that is to say the potential mind, thus likening it to the hyle, which is the potential matter'.[51] Avicenna thereby points out that communication, the capacity for language, and the mind are not independent of matter. The brain is a part of the human body that has specific vital potentials. It encompasses the potentials for thought, speech, and rationality that are enacted by specific individuals. Avicenna points out the productive, material character of the mind.

Mogobe B. Ramose[52] argues that a partial and particularistic interpretation of Aristotle's assumption that 'man is a rational animal'[53] that 'excludes the African, the Amerindian, and the Australasian'[54] has been an ideological foundation of 'colonization, racism, and slavery'.[55] This particularism has denied people of colour their humanity by assuming that 'the colonized are by definition without reason'.[56]

People of colour have not only been denied rationality, but also the status of communicative beings. Based on the argument that they are not rational, colonialism and racism have assumed that they have nothing important to say or that what they say is harmful, which is why they have been denied an equal right to speak and be listened to in the public sphere. Ramose argues that the only valid interpretation of Aristotle is that 'all human beings are rational animals'.[57] One must therefore also assume that *all humans* are communicating,

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[50] Karl Marx. 1867. *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band. MEW Band 23*. Berlin: Dietz. p. 346.

[51] Avicenna. 2018. *A Compendium on the Soul*. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/58186/58186-h/58186-h.htm, p. 69.

[52] Mogobe B. Ramose. 2003c. The Struggle for Reason in Africa. In *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. Pieter H. Coetzee and Abraham P.J. Roux, 1–9. London: Routledge. Second edition.

[53] Ibid., p. 1.

[54] Ibid., p. 2.

[55] Ibid., p. 3.

[56] Ibid., p. 3.

[57] Ibid., p. 4.

languaging beings. But it is also not sufficient to argue, as Charles Taylor[58] does, that the human being is the language animal: Humans are also purposefully, actively producing, working beings. They communicate in production and produce communication, which means there is a human dialectic of production and communication.

Viewed from both sides, production and communication are at the same time identical and non-identical, which is just another expression for saying that a dialectical relation exists between them. The next two sections will further discuss this dialectic by analysing the production of communication (4.2) and the role of communication in production (4.3).

4.2. The Dialectic of Production and Communication: The Production of Communication

The Productive Role of Communication in Society's Dialectic of Subject and Object

According to Lukács, work and production are the 'model for soci[et]al being'.[59] Therefore, human communication and language are also based on this model, which finds its expression in the production and reproduction of social relations by the application of language in communication. Communication is a particular form of teleological positing that organises teleological positings.[60]

Communication as a complex is not situated outside of the economy, politics, and culture, but is an inherent part of all production processes in all subsystems of society. Communication is also a meta-teleological positing that organises, produces, and reproduces social relations, whereby production becomes possible in social relations. Language is 'universal and ubiquitous in society [...] in that there is not a single complex in society's being that could exist and develop itself without language's mediating role'.[61] But just like communication, production also has a universal character in society because all human activities produce results.

By communicating, humans connect society's structures to their everyday experiences and their everyday experiences enter society's structures. That structures condition and enable human practices means that they enable

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[58] Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal.*

[59] Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour,* p. v.

[60] Georg Lukács. 1986. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 14: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. pp. 172–173.

[61] Translation from German [„gesellschaftliche Universalität und Ubiquität [...], indem es keinen einzigen Komplex im gesellschaftlichen Sein gibt, der ohne die Vermittlungsfunktion der Sprache existieren und sich weiterbilden könnte"]: Ibid., p. 180.

communication through which individuals inform themselves, network, and (re)produce social relationships. Society is inherently linked to the dialectic of structures and practices. And this dialectic also includes that communication mediates social relations. Communication mediates the dialectics of subject/object, actors/structures, individual/group, individual and groups/ organisations, individual and groups and organisations/institutions, individual and groups and organisations and institutions/society.

The mediation of human action implies 'leav[ing] behind the immediacy of empirical reality'.[62] Neither societal nor individual being are things-in-themselves, but exist only through mediation, i.e. through societal relations. Such mediation can only be achieved via communication. In the language of Hegel this means that society's being-in-itself is only possible as being-for-another. The human being is, as Marx says, 'the ensemble of the soci[et]al relations'.[63] Societal relations such as capital can in most cases continue to exist when a single worker or capitalist dies or leaves, because they can be replaced. Thus, societal relations are general. Social relations, in contrast, are concrete and interpersonal relations that humans enter in their everyday life. Peter works together with his colleagues Mary and Joseph. He has a conflict over working hours, overtime, and wage levels with manager Sandra. If Sandra leaves the company, the labour dispute will not necessarily come to an end, because she can simply be replaced by another manager who represents capital's interests and is similarly ruthless and brutal.

Social relations take place in everyday life at particular times and in particular locales. Communication as the mediating process that (re)produces social relations is an everyday phenomenon. Peter and his colleagues communicate that they hate overtime and think their wages are much too low by reporting their assessment to Sandra and their union, who are thereby compelled to react to this complaint. Sandra reacts according to capitalist interests. It is not entirely clear how the union reacts (appeasement, negotiations, escalation). Power relations are abstract societal relations that are instantiated, lived, executed, reproduced, and potentially questioned, challenged, and radically changed in and through communication processes in everyday life.

Communication is based on the fact that the human being is 'an answering being'.[64] But an answer presupposes questions. Therefore, the human being is also a questioning being. Humans ask questions about themselves and the

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[62] Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness.* London: Merlin Press. p. 162.

[63] *MECW* Volume 5, pp. 4 & 7.

[64] Translation from German [„ein antwortendes Wesen"]: Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband*, p. 339.

relations we find in nature and in society. Communication is a dialectic of questions and answers, so that posing questions results in the search for answers; society's transformation poses new questions, to which humans again seek answers, etc. The search for answers to questions posed by society is one of the general driving factors of society's transformation. Structures of domination are contradictory. Therefore, in class societies, the answers and solutions to questions are controversial, contested, and embedded into society's conflicts and social struggles.

Through everyday communication, humans (re)produce social structures that (re)produce societal structures that enable, condition, and constrain further communication processes in everyday life. Society is the totality of societal relations. Every societal relation emerges from and includes numerous social relations. A societal relation (such as the class relation between capital and labour) is a totality of particular social relations. So, for example, the class relation consists of numerous capitalist organisations, in which concrete workers face concrete capitalists in everyday life. Societal relations are not isolated, but moments that reach into other moments so that totalities emerges. A totality is not the same as totalitarianism. Every society is a totality of moments that reach into each other. A concrete moment of society is not particularistic, individualistic, or atomised, but rather a moment in a totality. A moment necessarily extends beyond itself by reaching into other moments. Society is a 'complex of complexes' that interact as moments and reproduce society.[65]

Communication produces meanings. Through communication, humans signify and interpret society, nature, themselves, and each other. But not every behaviour is communicative. Non-social behaviour is not communicative. If one sings alone in the shower or reflects alone on the world, then one reflects and produces symbols for oneself and does not communicate with other humans. There is no social context. The work of the professional singer, who sings for himself and others, is a social activity. In contrast, singing in the shower is often not a social activity. Of course, the matter is different if someone listens ('Stop making such a terrible noise while showering') and complains about or praises the shower songs ('You are a talented singer and should apply to a casting show such as *Idols* or *Got Talent*').

The boundary between individual and social behaviour is at the same time the boundary between non-communicative and communicative behaviour. Behaviour and communication are not two separate, but connected moments. There is a dialectic of the individual and the social: The individual is a social and societal being that can only individualise in relation to other humans. The social is a productive relation between individuals that produces and reproduces structures in social systems and society.

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[65] Translation from German [„Komplex aus Komplexen"]: Ibid., p. 155.
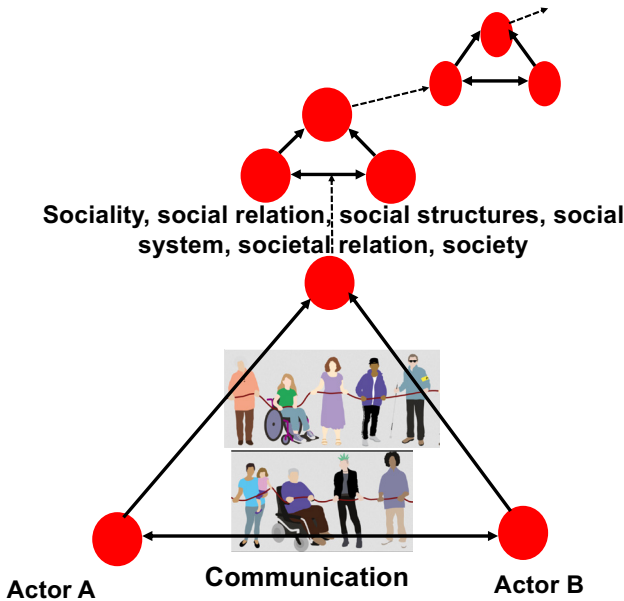
Figure 4.3: Model of communication as social and societal production process.

A Model of Communication as Social and Societal Production Process

Figure 4.3 shows a model of communication as social production process: In the communication process, humans produce the social that enters into ever newer communication processes that again create the social. Humans thereby constitute sociality as a dynamic process and open totality. The production of the social includes the production of social relations, social structures, social systems (groups, organisations, institutions, society's subsystems), societal relations, and society. Communication and sociality are dynamic processes that humans create in a retroactive, dialectical manner: Every end point of the production of communication/sociality is the starting point of further production. Society is a sphere that re-emerges constantly from the productive dialectic of structures and human practices, in which communication is the productive process of mediation. Through communication, humans co-produce and reproduce social structures that enable and constrain practices so that the dialectics of structures and practices, sociality, structures, and society reproduce themselves dynamically. Communication is the productive process of mediation that organises the dialectic of structures and practices as open totality.

Communication is not just a social process that produces positive outcomes of sociality. It is not automatically morally good. When there is a group of people who plan to enslave or exploit others, then they also have to communicate in order to realise their plan. 'Language is also used to create, alter, and break

connections between people'.[66] Humans not only communicate in order to produce and reproduce social relations, but also to change, end, or destroy social relations so that communication, along with the relations in which it takes place, comes to an end. Examples are a written notice of job termination or a divorce. Both end a social relationship and the regular communication processes taking place in it. War, genocide, and mass extermination are the most drastic examples of communicative action that kills humans but also thereby destroys their social relations. Acts of warfare, genocide, and extermination communicate hatred directed against certain groups.

Whereas positivist concepts of communication only stress how communication results in morally positive associations, fatalist notions focus only on how communication dissociates. However, communication is a dialectical social process that has potentials to produce diverse outcomes on a continuum that ranges from construction/destruction, peace/war, love/hate, association/dissociation, unification/separation, integration/disintegration, community/disparity, friendship/enmity, co-operation/competition, beginning/end, birth/death, etc. The opposite sides of these antagonisms are not just expressions of two different logics of society – the logic of instrumentalism and the logic of humanism – but they can also reach into each other. So, for example, companies co-operate in order to destroy competition and other companies, or soldiers co-operate in order to kill identified enemies. Communicating dissociation is communication as the production of the destruction of social relations. It is communication that announces the dissolution of communication. Just as there is general meta-communication (communication about communication, for example communication about the rules of communication, the code of conduct of an organisation), there is also negative meta-communication – communication about the disappearance of communication.

One implication of communication's mediating and socially productive role in social relations is that language and language use are contextual. At the level of semantics, the meaning of a single word depends on all the other words in the sentence. The meaning of a sentence depends on other sentences in the same paragraph and the overall text. Language and language use are also dependent on social and societal contexts: The state as society and organisation conditions the meaning that certain words and symbols and phrases take on. Communication is a practice that is part of the reproduction and change of social systems and society. Just as society shapes language and communication, language use and communication shape society. Humans who communicate do so as members of social systems and society. They communicate in various social and societal roles and contexts. Language and communication are thereby socially contextual practices.

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[66] Charles Taylor. 2016. *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press. p. 261.

Human communication is shaped by social contexts and (re)produces social contexts. One implication of the social and contextual character of language is that humans are not individual atoms, but social beings who exist in and through social relations. The larger context of communication extends beyond the immediate temporal and spatial presence of humans in face-to-face communication. In space, communication can extend beyond local space. In time, communication can transcend synchronous time via asynchronous communication and history via the recording of communication. Society is constitutive of communication, and communication is a constitutive factor of society. Constitution of and through communication includes both reproduction and differentiation.

Having discussed the production of communication, we will next discuss communication in production.

4.3. The Dialectic of Production and Communication: Communication in Production

Communication Structures

In the economy, humans produce physical and non-physical products that satisfy human needs. Economic production always has a symbolic and communicative dimension. In production, humans relate to each other communicatively in order to co-ordinate their activities. In class society, such co-ordination includes orders, control, and surveillance used by management for organising the exploitation of workers. The produced and reproduced structures such as commodities, capital, companies, markets, etc. symbolise the economy in society.

Communication in production also takes on the form of communication technologies. Means of communication are 'means of social production'[67] that play an 'inherent role in every form of production'.[68] Language, books, newspapers, the telegraph, the telephone, or the networked computer are examples of means of communication that transmit information across spatial distances. Recording technologies have the capacity to store information over time so that it is not just communicated in real time, but can also be communicated time-delayed as recording. Communication technologies play a role in the production, communication, consumption, storage, and recollection of information. In a more general sense, one can say that not only do communication technologies symbolise, store, and communicate, but that every structure in society symbolises the social, makes social action durable, and communicates information about power, wealth, influence, and status.

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[67] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p. 51.
[68] Ibid., p. 53.

Information and communication technologies enable the production, distribution, and consumption of goods to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries so that these processes can be co-ordinated and organised over distance. The storage of information enables surveillance of humans who execute information processes. The rise of the computer, databases, the Internet, and social media have created new possibilities for management to monitor and control workers.

A further aspect of communication in production is related to the qualities of the produced goods. On the one hand, engineers and assemblers produce communication technologies. On the other hand, workers' means of communication are also used as means of production for creating non-physical, informational, and communicative goods, i.e. information, social services, and social relations. Through scientific-technological progress, work to a certain degree distances itself from the production of natural objects.[69] Work is not just a process between humans and nature, but also one between humans, so that humans, by utilising technologies, produce physical, social, and informational use-values from natural, industrial and cultural resources (see table 3.2 in chapter 3, section 3.2: The Relations of Production and the Productive Forces).

In the course of society's history, the social, in the form of relations, intentions, experiences and knowledge, has increasingly become part of the objects, instruments, and products of work. As a consequence, production distances itself to a certain degree from nature. However, this does not mean that the production of information replaces the production and extraction of natural resources and the production of natural and industrial products, but that it complements these processes. A concrete example is that software is useless without hardware and power supply. Software as an information product interacts in its use and production with industrial products and natural products. Lukács distinguishes between two types of teleological positings, namely the ones that change nature and the ones that change the social. The development of labour and co-operation has resulted in the increasing importance of the second type in capitalism, namely of the complex of 'mental work'.[70]

Communication Work

Communication work (sometimes also termed 'knowledge work' or 'information work' or 'creative work') is a particular type of work that produces information. Every work is based on the dialectics of body/mind and physical/mental activities. But one can nonetheless decide whether a certain work has more of a bodily or a mental character. The miner and the philosopher are

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[69] See. Radovan Richta, ed. 1969. *Civilization at the Crossroads: Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution.* White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press.

[70] Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband*, p. 136.

two good examples for the distinction between physical work and knowledge work. There are of course also intermediate stages, such as the surgeon, whose work is at the same time a challenge for body and mind. Physical work creates products that are things that one can touch. Information is in contrast intangible (but not immaterial). Information stores and communicates meanings. It represents something for which it stands as a symbol. Communication work is a form of social production that creates information or information technologies. The production, communication, and interpretation of information takes place with the help of information technologies such as the computer. The production of information and communication technologies is part of communication work. Although such technologies are physical, they are key means for communication. The overlap of a subset of physical work and a subset of communication work constitutes the work that creates communication technologies. This type of work can be termed physical communication work. Information work is a mental type of communication work. It produces social meanings, symbols, contents, and information. Information work and physical communication work are two connected aspects of communication work. They create communication technologies respectively information. The stage model in figure 4.4 visualises the relationships just described.

Alfred Sohn-Rethel[71] has shown that the emergence of class society resulted in the division of manual and intellectual labour. In the course of the development of modern class society, the activities of managers, bureaucrats, planers, politicians, and consultants, who plan, execute, and control the accumulation of power, have been added as professions. Class rule means inequality and injustice. Wherever there is injustice, we find forms of management and control
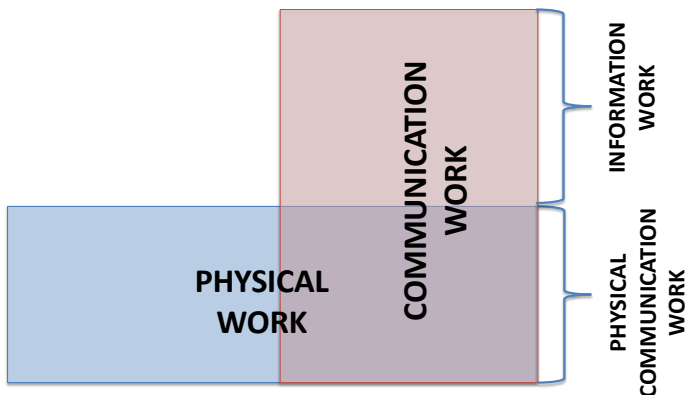

Figure 4.4: The relation of physical work and communication work.

[71] Alfred Sohn-Rethel. 1978. *Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology.* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

that try to make potential resistance unlikely. But it is short-sighted to limit the definition of communication work just to the organisation, the management, and the execution of domination. The rise of the culture industry has turned culture and communication to a certain degree into commodities. Cultural and communication workers produce communicative and cultural commodities such as music, films, software, advertisements, consultancy, information technologies, entertainment, etc. Communication work takes on 'proletarianised' forms. As a consequence, many immediate producers of communication goods are exploited in class relations.

The production of communication and communication in production are based on human knowledge and communicate information as particular content. The next section deals with the relation of communication, knowledge, and information.

4.4. Communication, Knowledge, and Information

Nature, Culture, and Communication

Humans differ from animals because they produce in a self-conscious, anticipatory, morally judging and societal manner. But how did the transition from animals to humans take place? Marxist theory argues that in the development of humans, there is a dialectic of the development of the body and the mind in and through the work process. It says that a central development was in this respect the emergence of upright posture and the related development of the grasping hand, which as a consequence led to the reversal of means and ends so that instruments were no longer used spontaneously, but consciously and with a plan, i.e. utilised as technologies. These developments led to the emergence of society.[72] Language and linguistic communication emerged in and through work because one had to co-ordinate complex processes in the organisation of hunting and production in general. When activity became more complex, co-operation became necessary, for which practical knowledge and its communication through language became necessary.[73] Work brought about the transition from animals to humans, society, and culture.

The boundaries posed by nature diminished over time so that work took on an ever more societal character and became detached from the direct transformation of nature, although humans of course stand necessarily in a

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[72] Friedrich Engels. 1876. The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man. In *MECW* Volume *25*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. pp. 452–464. Klaus Holzkamp. 1985. *Grundlegung der Psychologie*. Frankfurt: Campus. pp. 162–206.

[73] Ibid., pp. 224–231. See also: Christian Fuchs. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. London: Routledge. Section 3.2 (pp. 55–62).

metabolism with nature.[74] The retreat of the natural boundary expressed itself first in the reduction of the amount of agricultural labour and the increase of the amount of industrial labour. Since the second half of the 20th century, one can in developed countries observe a decrease in the amount of agricultural and industrial labour (i.e. manual labour) and a significant increase of service and information-producing labour.

Culture is the system of society in which humans produce meanings, subjectivity, and identities. Communication, in contrast, is the process of the production and reproduction of social relations. Wherever there is culture as a social relation, there is communication. And whenever we communicate, we produce culture.

Since the human being offers interpretations of the world to others in the communication process, social relations always have a cultural dimension. But this circumstance does not imply that culture is society's dominant system. Every social relationship has economic, political, and cultural dimensions. If one of these dimensions is dominant, then the relation belongs to a particular subsystem of society. In the workplace, humans produce commodities and class relations. We also find a culture of work and certain micro-political rules in the workplace, but a company is not part of the political or cultural system, but belongs to the economic system. All companies have economic, political, and cultural dimensions, but the economic one is dominant. Whereas communication is the social process of meaning production, culture is the system encompassing the totality of the relations of meaning production. Culture shapes, conditions, enables, and constrains our everyday communication that reproduces the cultural system and its structures.

Raymond Williams stresses the 'centrality of language and communication as formative social forces'.[75] Williams defines culture as a 'whole way of life'.[76] Culture includes lived culture, recorded culture, and traditional culture.[77] All three forms have 'characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate'.[78] For Williams, culture is a meaning-making system that consists of practices through which 'a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored'.[79] This means that wherever one communicates, there is culture, and culture must be communicated in order to be able to reproduce itself.

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[74] See: Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour,* pp. 17–18, 46, 76, 103, 118.

[75] Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p. 243.

[76] Raymond Williams. 1958. *Culture & Society, 1780–1950*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. xviii & 325.

[77] Raymond Williams. 1961/2011. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian. p. 70.

[78] Ibid., p. 62.

[79] Raymond Williams. 1981. *Culture*. Glasgow: Fontana-Collins. p. 13.

In the economy, where work produces goods in order to satisfy needs, purposes and goals are much more clearly defined than in culture, where we find a broad variation on issues concerning taste and the scope 'of desirable (or undesirable) reactions to societal matters of fact, situations, tasks, etc.'[80] Lukács remarks that 'on a specific level of production, the value of the labour product differs sharply according to whether it is immediately useful or not useful, whereas in artistic creation the field and possibilities of value and non-value are extraordinarily widely stretched and hardly determinable in advance'.[81]

In teleological positing, ideas are a guiding and goal-orienting force so that culture is immanent in work. In class societies, it is not the immediate producers, but the dominant class that defines the guiding principles of work. Humans define goals that are influenced by societal needs. Culture operates as the formation of meaning in the economy, just as the economy operates as production in culture. Therefore, culture is economic and non-economic and the economy is cultural and non-cultural.

Knowledge and Communication

In the process of cognition, humans perceive, recognise, and interpret the world. In our everyday life, we produce, in interaction with the world, new knowledge that is rarely completely new, but helps us in any case to co-ordinate our behaviour in the world.

Figure 4.5 visualises the production of knowledge. A human does not necessarily have to communicate with other human beings in order to create new knowledge. Individual observation produces new experiences that result in knowledge about the world. Knowledge is always knowledge of certain aspects of society and nature. Such contexts shape and condition, but do not determine the form and content of knowledge. Humans externalise parts of their knowledge of the world in the communication process. Humans gain knowledge of each other through communication. Through communication and co-operation and based on individual knowledge, social groups, organisations, social systems, and societies produce collective knowledge. Academic disciplines and fields such as philosophy or communication studies are examples of systems that produce collective knowledge. It is not single individuals and their

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[80] Translation from German [„gewünschter (oder unerwünschter) Reaktionen auf gesellschaftliche Tatbestände, Situationen, Aufgaben etc.“]: Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband*, S. 417.

[81] Translation from German [„auf je einer konkreten Produktionsstufe der Wert des Produkts der Arbeit sich scharf danach scheidet, ob es unmittelbar brauchbar oder unbrauchbar ist, während im künstlerischen Schaffen das Feld, die Möglichkeit von Wert oder Unwert außerordentlich weit gestreckt, im voraus kaum bestimmbar ist“]: Ibid., p. 535.
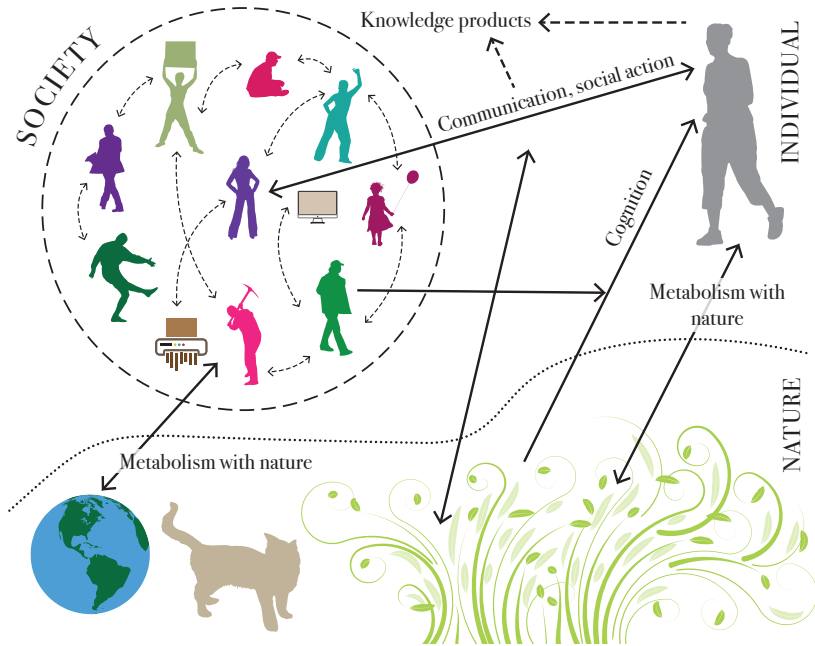
Figure 4.5: The production of knowledge.

individual academic knowledge that make up such a field. Rather, academic fields feature dominant paradigms, counter-paradigms, and discourses that take place in the academic public (publications, conferences, discussions, etc.).

While bourgeois sciences strive towards analytically describing class society, which creates knowledge for the sake of domination, critical research aims at producing academic knowledge that can contribute to the transformation and abolition of class domination. It aims at producing critical knowledge.

In heteronomous societies, knowledge structures represent class structures and structures of domination. There are struggles about the definition of such knowledge and what and how science should communicate in the public sphere. The class background of an individual does not necessarily dominate his/her consciousness. Marx and Engels came from bourgeois families, but their thought and practices were not bourgeois, but rather socialist. In class societies, there are struggles about knowledge, i.e. struggles about who formulates knowledge about the world in what ways. Individual knowledge, communication, and social knowledge have particular contents, in which the relations that humans enter in society and the relations they have to nature are manifested. Such manifestations are not photographic reflections, but rather complex, non-linear relations. So, for example, a painting stands in a particular societal context that shapes artistic production, at least in an indirect manner. Based on such a context, form and content can either be more realist depictions

of parts of nature and society, or abstractions. In both cases, the same or similar societal conditions shape the result. Based on particular contexts, artworks as knowledge structures can take on diverse forms and contents.

In the communication process, humans relate their knowledge to each other and reveal to each other how they interpret certain parts of the world, i.e. of society and nature. There is a dialectic of the individual, society, and nature. In the communication process, humans relate to each other in a symbolic way by sharing meanings they give to the external world.

Georg Lukács[82] analyses human cognition and knowledge with the concept of the signal system. Based on the works of Ivan Pavlov, he discerns various signal systems: Signal system 1 organises unconscious bodily movements and reflexes that are reactions to natural and bodily signals. This system has to do with the autonomic nervous system. Language is signal system 2 that humans employ for using spoken and visual words. This signal system is specific to the human being. Lukács criticises Pavlov for not seeing an inherent relation of work and language.[83] Signal system 1' is, like signal system 2, a system that operates with signals of signals.[84] Signal system 1' generalises signals of signals and makes them conscious.[85] It defines typical aspects of relations.[86] Lukács discusses as examples of phenomena produced by signal system 1' fantasies, thoughts, creativity, love, understanding, spontaneous decision-making, tactics, the aesthetic reception of arts and culture, or the knowledge of nature. By saying that 'signal system 1' especially serves human cognition'[87] and shapes psychological life,[88] it becomes clear that for Lukács, signal system 1' is the system of human cognition and the psyche, i.e. the processes in the human brain.

With the help of signal system 1', and based on existing knowledge and the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, humans produce new knowledge.[89] 'So we everywhere on relatively developed levels of society see a complex, contradictory co-operation of signal systems 1' and 2'.[90] Signal system 1'

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[82] Georg. Lukács. 1963. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 12: Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen. 2. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

[83] Ibid., p. 21.

[84] Ibid., p. 73.

[85] Ibid., p. 27.

[86] Ibid., p. 58.

[87] Translation from German [„Signalsystem 1' vor allem der Erkenntnis des Menschen dient"]: Ibid., p. 68.

[88] Ibid., p. 108.

[89] Georg. Lukács. 1963. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 12: Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen. 2. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. pp. 33–35.

[90] Translation from German [„So sehen wir überall auf relativ entwickelter Gesellschaftsstufe, eine komplizierte, widerspruchsvolle Zusammenarbeit der Signalsysteme 1' und 2"]: Ibid., p. 64.

transforms the signals (about forms and content) that humans obtain via signal system 2.[91] There is a dialectic of human cognition and communication: Humans relate to the natural world and society, perceive the world, and produce new knowledge.

The human brain transforms and processes signals perceived in the context of human behaviour. The human brain co-ordinates the interaction of the human being in its societal, social, and natural environment. In the communication process, humans externalise parts of their knowledge about the world and internalise knowledge from others. There is a dialectic of externalisation and internationalisation of knowledge in the communication process. With the help of signal system 1' humans produce knowledge about the world in the process of cognition. The communication process is organised with the help of signal system 2 (language). In it, humans engage with other humans whereby social relations and sociality are produced and reproduced. As a consequence, the human being is reproduced as a societal and social being. The signal systems enable the human being to act instinctively, reflect on the world, and communicate.

In the engagement with other humans, the human being acts not just as a societal, but also as a natural being (breathing, heartbeat, bodily movements, etc.). In the communication process, the human being's social and natural activities interact. This dialectic is evident in the way language works: Humans externalise knowledge from the brain with the help of bodily movements such as breathing in and out, the vibration of the vocal cords in the larynx; amplification of the sounds created in the vocal cords through the mouth, the nose and the throat; movement of the mouth, the lips and the tongue; non-verbal communication achieved by the movement of other body parts, etc.

Types of Knowledge

Society is organised in the form of production complexes that interact with each other, namely the economy, politics, and culture. In each of these systems, a specific structure is produced: In the economy, use-values that satisfy human needs; in the political system, collective decisions and rules; and in culture, meanings and identities. Also, particular types of knowledge are needed in order to produce structures in society's subsystems (see table 4.2).

There is a dialectic of knowledge structures and societal structures. In producing and reproducing societal structures, humans apply their individual skills and physical capacities and externalise them in the production of new structures. Thereby, new knowledge structures emerge together with societal

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[91] Ibid., p. 91.

Table 4.2: Types of individual and social knowledge.

	Societal Structures	Individual Knowledge ⟷	Social Knowledge
Economy	Use-values, means of production	Skills	Knowledge products
Politics	Rules, collective decisions	Political opinions and insights	Collective political worldviews
Culture	Collective identities and meanings	Identity, meanings	Collective identities, collective meanings

structures. In economic production, humans utilise their individual skills. There are also knowledge-based use-values such as music, software, databases, lessons, etc. In all social production, several humans are involved. If they co-operate directly, they produce a common understanding of the production process as social knowledge structure. In class societies, such joint understandings are often contested and contradictory. An example is that workers and management see different causes of their company's problems (management: 'unproductive workers'; workers: 'incompetent management that takes wrong decisions'). In the political system, humans act based on their political understanding of the world and political worldviews, which results in political rules and collective decisions that form societal structures as well as collective political worldviews that in class society have a contradictory and contested character. In the cultural system, humans produce collective identities and meanings based on individual identities and interpretations of the world. In culture, there is no difference between societal structures and collective knowledge structures. The dialectic of individual knowledge and social knowledge is part of the dialectic of structures and practices that is inherent in all societies and all social systems.

How are table 4.2 and figure 4.5 related? Individual knowledge is part of concrete human beings' subjectivity; whole societal structures and social knowledge are situated in society. Humans exist in and through society. Their production and communication processes also take place in society.

Information and Communication

Semiotics analyses the information process as process O – S – M, where an object O is represented by a sign S, to which a certain meaning M is given. The whole information production process O – S – M is also termed 'semiosis'. Semiosis is a dynamic process: Existing meanings are the starting point for further cognition and communication processes that produce new meanings
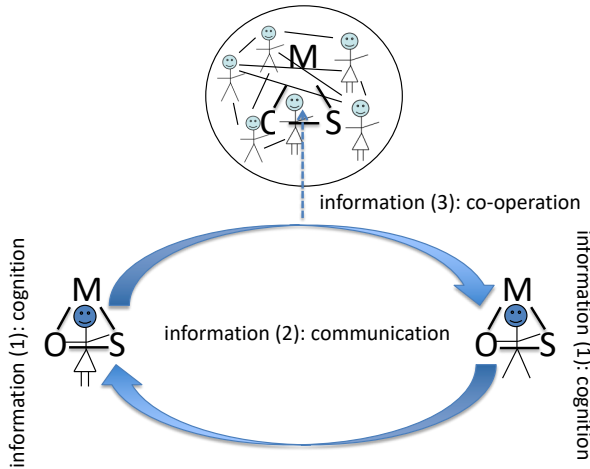
Figure 4.6: Model of semiosis/information production.

and reproduce and differentiate existing meanings. Old meanings are sub-lated, whereby new ones emerge. Semiosis is a dialectical process. Figure 4.6 visualises the semiotic process as a dialectic of cognition, communication, and co-operation.[92]

Semiosis consists of three interconnected semiotic processes:

1. *Individual semiosis* is a thought process, i.e. *cognition*, in which the individual interprets the world mentally.
2. There is a dialectic of individual semiosis and *social semiosis.* In social semiosis, humans convey interpretations of the world with the help of language. In the *communication* process, the world of meanings and inter-pretations of at least two persons changes. When X and Y communicate, then parts of the world of meanings M_x of person X become the object O_Y of the semiosis conducted by person Y. In a reciprocal manner, parts of the world of meanings of person Y – M_Y – become the object O_X of the semiosis conducted by person X. In social semiosis, the world of meanings of at least two persons changes in the communication process that takes place between them.
3. Many communication processes are ephemeral and do not result in substantial structural changes of society. But some social relations and

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[92] On the introduction of the distinction between cognition, communica-tion, and co-operation, see: Wolfgang Hofkirchner. 2002. *Projekt Eine Welt: Kognition – Kommunikation – Kooperation. Versuch über die Selbstorganisation der Informationsgesellschaft*. Münster: LIT.

communications transform society. This is for example the case when a new social system is created. In such a case, individual semiosis and social semiosis are the foundation for *societal semiosis*: In such a case, communication is organised as *co-operation*, where two or more humans work together so that new societal structures emerge or existing ones are differentiated. In the co-operation process, communication is the starting point of meaning-making and through which commonly produced knowledge structures emerge.

The production of information does not exist outside of matter. Neither is information a second substance that is independent of matter or stands in any relation to it. Information is a semiosis of semiosis and a dialectic of dialectics. It is a material process, through which systems are brought into certain forms (in-*form*-ation). Social relations, social systems, and society are complexes of production organised between humans. Information is in the context of humans a social and societal production process, a specific form of the organisation of matter.

Language is the result of humans' communicative activities over many generations. Just like every other human complex, information is oriented on the model of production and work (see table 4.3). The brain works in the cognition process. The body and the mind work together in the process of speaking. Humans work together in the co-operation process. Just like production in general, the production of information is a work process with concrete results and effects.

Figure 4.7 visualises that the processes of cognition, communication, and co-operation are mediated in a dialectical manner and together form the process of information production as type of work. Each of the three processes of

Table 4.3: Subject, object, and product (= subject-object) in cognition, communication and co-operation.

	Subject	Object of work	Instruments of work	Products
Cognition = human brain work	Human being	Experiences	Brain	Thoughts, cognitive patterns, ideas
Communication = human group work	Group of humans	Thoughts	Brain, mouth, ears	Meaning
Co-operation = collaborative human group work	Group of humans	Meaning	Brain, mouth, ears, body	Information products with shared and co-created meaning

Information products with shared and co-created meaning

CO-OPERATION

Human group ——— Meaning – Brain, mouth, ears, body

Meaning

Thoughts, ideas ———————— COMMUNICATION

Human group ——— Ideas, thoughts – Brain, mouth, ears, body

COGNITION

Human ——— Experiences – Brain
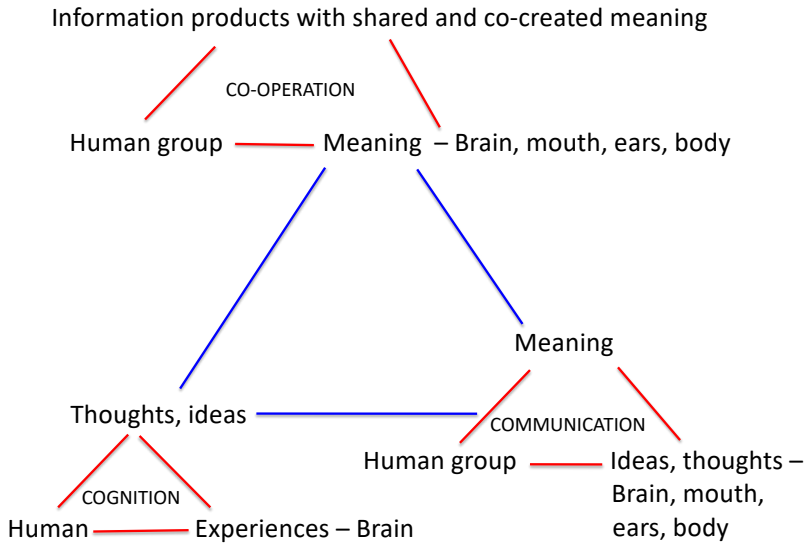
Figure 4.7: The information process as work.

cognition, communication, and co-operation is a form of work: In cognition, the brain works. Communication is based on cognition. It uses cognition's products, namely ideas and knowledge, as its object of production. Co-operation is based on communication and uses the products of communication – meanings – as its object. Information is a dynamic work process in which ideas, meanings, and knowledge products are created.

In every dialectical production process, there is a subject that works on objects in order to create new products. The product emerges from the subject's work that takes place with the help of objects, namely the object and the instruments of work that are used as means of production. New products become the foundation of further work. They become part of the object in new production processes. Production is thereby a dynamic, self-referential process (see figure 4.3).

The Human Psyche and Society

For Erich Fromm, the social character is a mediation between culture and the economy.[93] He defines the social character as 'the matrix of the character structure *common to a group*'.[94] We can conceive of the social character as a

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[93] Erich Fromm. 1965. The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory. In *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm, 207–222. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

[94] Ibid., p. 210.
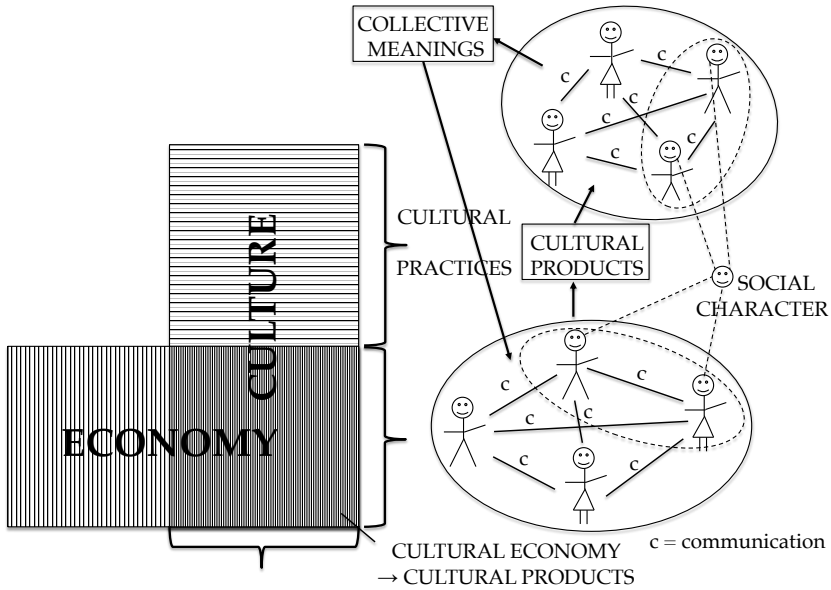
Figure 4.8: The relationship of the economy and culture and the role of the social character in society.

psychological totality that brings together a social group's common psychological features. Society's institutions shape the social character. So, a society's political economy, its class or economic structure, the education system, religion, traditions, etc. play a role.

The economy is the field of society where humans create use-values to satisfy their needs. Culture is the field where humans create meaning of the world. There is a dialectic of the economy and culture. This implies that these spheres interact and that they are at once identical and non-identical. The model in figure 4.8 visualises the relationships of culture and the economy. It also outlines the role of the social character and communication processes in society.

There is an economy inside and outside of culture. And there is a culture inside and outside of the economy. The cultural economy is the overlap of culture and society. In it, mental workers create cultural products. These cultural products are used as inputs for non-economic social practices (also cultural practices). Through cultural practices, humans co-produce collective meanings of the world. Communication is the process that supports humans in organising social relations. Communication is not simply an exchange of ideas taking place in a superstructure. Communication takes place in all dimensions and realms of society. All human practices are social and relational. Cultural products objectify ideas. When humans communicate ideas about cultural products in the cultural system, then cultural products can be the outcome. Ideas play a role in all fields of society, and therefore also in the

cultural system and the cultural economy. Ideologies, worldviews, philosophy, religion, etc. are examples of collective meanings. Collective meanings display an influence on other fields of society such as the economy. Social groups that have particular social characteristics operate in social systems. An example is that workers form a particular social group in the capitalist economy. Workers share the common characteristic that they are compelled to sell their labour power in order to survive. What Fromm terms the social character is a particular form of group whose members share particular psychological features. The social character is not limited to one social system. It operates in multiple social systems at once. Fromm identifies the authoritarian and the humanistic character as the two main forms of the social character. Social groups by definition have a particular social character. But there is no identity of social groups and social characters. There are different character types within the same social group. For example, workers can be authoritarian or non-authoritarian. Dominative groups are groups that dominate others. Their members always to a certain degree have an authoritarian character. For example, in order to become a manager or capitalist you have to have a certain desire or willingness to exploit and control others.

The social character is a mediation level in-between the individual psyche and society. The social character is formed by communication in multiple social systems. The social character is a character structure specific to a particular group in society. Communication forms and reproduces the social character. The social character and social structures condition, enable, and constrain an individual's practices and thoughts.

Erich Fromm sees humanism as the opposite of authoritarianism. He distinguishes between the humanistic and the authoritarian character, humanistic and authoritarian conscience, and humanistic and authoritarian ethics.[95] In authoritarianism, 'an authority states what is good for man and lays down the laws and norms of conduct', whereas in humanism the human being is 'both the norm giver and the subject of the norms'.[96] The human is an individual being and a species-being. The species of the human is a social and societal being. Individuals realise their possibilities only truly and fully when all human beings can realise all their possibilities truly and fully. Humanism does not simply mean the creation of a good life for the single individual, but the creation of the good life of all. Authoritarianism implies that an individual, a class or a group uses violent means in order to enforce a particularistic will against others. The authoritarian individual, class, or group sees its will as absolute. In contrast, a state of existence with a mass of unrelated individuals with unrelated wills results in an order of egoists who do not share anything

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[95] Erich Fromm. 1947/2003. *Man For Himself: An Inquiry Into the Psychology of Ethics.* Abingdon: Routledge.

[96] Ibid., p. 6.

Table 4.4: The authoritarian and the humanistic character in the economy, politics and culture.

	Authoritarian character	**Humanistic character**
Economy	The exploiter	The commoner
Politics	The dictator	The democrat
Culture	The ideologue/demagogue	The friend

and do not have anything in common. Neither authoritarianism nor individualism possess the humanistic dialectic of the individual and society.

Table 4.4 gives an overview of different social characters. The differentiation is grounded in the notions of the authoritarian and the humanistic character.

The typology shown in table 4.4 uses the distinction between society's economic, political and cultural realms. All three are fields of production, where teleological positing takes place: In the economy, humans create use-values in order to satisfy their needs. In the political system, humans produce collective decisions that are binding in society. In the cultural system, humans produce collective meanings in order to make sense of the world.

The exploiter instrumentalises, exploits, and uses others. The commoner fosters the common good in order to benefit all. The dictator uses violence in order to impose their will on others. The democrat engages and deliberates with others. Democrats together make collective political decisions. The ideologue aims at manipulating others. Friends help others.

In social relations in general, the humanistic character is loving, co-operative, and helpful to others, whereas the authoritarian character is destructive, indifferent, masochistic, and sadistic. In the economy, the humanistic character creates something, whereas the authoritarian character exploits, hoards, markets, and appropriates.[97] Building on Fromm allows us to define the (ideal type) authoritarian character as destructive, exploitative, and competitive in economic relations and aggressive and hateful in general. In contrast the humanistic character type is creative in the economy and co-operative and loving in general (see table 4.5). By productiveness in general we understand human beings' and society's capacity to realise their potentials. In contrast, the mode of having and authoritarianism are built on the guiding principle 'I take away from others what I need'.[98] It is therefore unproductive. Exploitation is the most rudimentary dimension of the mode of having and of authoritarianism. Exploiters do 'not expect to receive things from others as gifts, but to take them away from others by force or cunning'.[99] Exploitation is about economic appropriation. Its logic can shape all realms of society, including economic production, the world

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[97] Ibid., p. 82.
[98] Ibid., p. 59.
[99] Ibid., p. 46.

of knowledge (exploiters 'will tend not to produce ideas but to steal them'[100]), love, family life, etc.

Authoritarian and Humanistic Communication

Authoritarianism and humanism also matter in the domain of information: We can distinguish between humanistic knowledge/communication and authoritarian knowledge/communication (see table 4.6).

The *authoritarian economic organisation of information* is based on the class character of communication and knowledge production. The property-owning class is in control of the means of communication. The latter are organised as private property. The dominant class exploits knowledge and communication workers who produce knowledge and forms of communication. In capitalism, communication and knowledge are commodities whose sale yields profit. This means that they are part of the system of capital accumulation. The *humanistic economic organisation of information* means that the means of communication are under collective ownership and form a common good, which means that

Table 4.5: A variation of Fromm's general distinction of social character types.

	Authoritarian social character	Humanistic social character
Economic relations	Destructive, exploitative, competitive	Working, creating
Social relations in general	Aggressive, hateful	Loving, co-operating, helping others

Table 4.6: Authoritarian and humanistic forms of information.

	Authoritarian	Humanistic
Economic system	Knowledge and communication as commodities, exploitation of knowledge labour, means of communication as private property	Knowledge and communication as commons, co-ownership and co-production in self-managed knowledge-creating companies
Political system	Dictatorial control of knowledge and communication processes	Participatory knowledge and democratic communication
Cultural system	Ideological knowledge and communication	Socialist humanist knowledge and communication

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[100] Ibid., p. 47.

knowledge products are gifts and not commodities. Such common knowledge goods are produced in self-managed companies (co-operatives).

In the *authoritarian political organisation of knowledge and communication*, an individual or group is an authority who controls the state monopoly of the means of violence, the means of public communication, and the knowledge that is thereby produced and communicated. In Nazi Germany, the state controlled broadcasting. The regional radio companies were unified into one state company, the Reichs-Rundfunks-Gesellschaft (RRG, Reich Broadcasting Corporation). The Reichsrundfunkkammer (Reich Chamber of Broadcasting) registered all individuals who worked in the media industry. The media system was aligned with the Nazis' ideology ('Gleichschaltung'). The RRG controlled twenty aligned radio stations and one TV channel (Deutscher Fernseh-Rundfunk). In authoritarian political communication, humans are not able to listen to themselves. 'We listen to every voice and to everybody but not to ourselves. We are constantly exposed to the noise of opinions and ideas hammering at us from everywhere: motion pictures, newspapers, radio, idle chatter'.[101] In authoritarian communication, humans are compelled to listen to a leader (an ideology, system group or individual). Citizens are forced to follow the orders of the leader.

In the *humanistic political organisation of information*, the production of public knowledge and communication is democratically governed. Citizens and workers are represented in media organisations' decision-making structures. There is not a dictatorial, central control of voice, but rather everyday citizens have a public voice and reports focus on everyday people. 'To be able to listen to oneself is a prerequisite for the ability to listen to others'.[102] The *humanist organisation of political communication* implies that humans listen to themselves and to each other. They engage with each other.

In an *authoritarian cultural system*, there is the public communication of ideological knowledge. Ideological knowledge justifies exploitation and domination. With it, certain groups or individuals try to convince the public that exploitation and domination are good, necessary, natural, or unavoidable. Ideologues use strategies such as acceleration, brevity, dissimulation, distortion, lies, manipulation, personalisation, scandalisation, scapegoating, superficiality, etc. Ideologues create and disseminate false knowledge. They aim at creating and reproducing false consciousness. A *humanist cultural system* is non-ideological, i.e. a system in which humans create and communicate knowledge that supports human beings' capacities for critical, complex, and creative thinking. 'In the structure of having, the dead word rules; in the structure of being, the alive and inexpressible experience rules'.[103]

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101 Ibid., p. 121.
102 Ibid., p. 79.
103 Erich Fromm. 1976/2008. *To Have or to Be?* London: Continuum. p. 89.

The authoritarian organisation of knowledge and communication implies that information workers and their informational products are seen and treated as things. Such systems aim at the accumulation of information or the accumulation of hegemony, money, and power with the help of information. So, for example, authoritarian learning is having-oriented: Knowledge is seen as a thing. The learners have to learn knowledge by heart. Authoritarian teachers police learners with the help of marks and exams. 'Students are supposed to learn so many things that they have hardly time and energy left to *think*'.[104]

4.5. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise the main results of this chapter as follows:

- Communication and society are dialectically intertwined. Max Horkheimer says in this context: 'But language is at the same time, not merely as a universal means of communication, but also as a medium of expression, intertwined with society's real relations'.[105]
- Work is a dialectical process in which humans as subjects create products with the help of means of production (objects of work and instruments of work). Communication is not fundamentally different from production and work, because it produces meanings and helps humans to attain goals, namely to inform themselves and understand the world.
- There is a dialectic of production and communication. Humans communicate productively and produce communicatively. In the production of communication, humans produce and reproduce social relations, social structures, social systems, societal relations, society as totality, and human sociality. Moments of communicative production include the communicative co-ordination of production; the use of communication technologies in production, distribution and consumption; and communication work's production of knowledge goods.
- In the production process, humans interact with nature and with each other as societal subjects. In the course of society's history, the development of the productive forces resulted in the retreat of the natural boundary, whereby the production of knowledge and culture in the economy and the role of the economy in the cultural system became more important.
- The production of information is based on the dialectics of subject/object, individual knowledge/social knowledge, societal structures/knowledge

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[104] Fromm, *Man For Himself*, p. 56.
[105] Translation from German: Max Horkheimer. 1954. Karl Kraus und die Sprachsoziologie. In *Max Horkheimer Gesammelte Schriften Band 13: Nachgelassene Schriften 1949–1972*, 19–24. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 20.

structures, cognition/communication, communication/co-operation, individual semiosis/social semiosis, social semiosis/societal semiosis.
- Society shapes the human psyche in processes of socialisation. The social character is a level of mediation between the individual psyche and society. Humanism and authoritarianism are two antagonistic types of social character. A dominative and exploitative society is dominated by the logic of authoritarianism. We can also distinguish between authoritarian and humanistic communication.

Capitalism is modern society's dominant form. Production takes place in concrete societal relations. The same is therefore also true for the production of communication and knowledge. A critical theory of communication is therefore based on the analysis of the relation of communication, labour, and capitalism. The next chapter discusses aspects of this relation. It opens this book's second part that focuses on the analysis of communication in capitalist society.

Communication in
Capitalist Society

CHAPTER 5

Capitalism and Communication

The task of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the relationship of capitalism and communication. To do so, we need to understand what capitalism is all about and to relate it to communication. First, the process of capital accumulation and the question of what capitalism is will be discussed (section 5.1). Second, the role of labour in capitalism will be analysed (5.2). Third, it will be outlined that time plays a key role in capitalism (5.3). Fourth, the relation of the capitalist economy and communication will be discussed (5.4). And fifth, this chapter discusses the roles of communication in the capitalist economy as totality (5.5).

5.1. Capital Accumulation and Capitalism

Class

Class is a social and power relation in which the exploited class is forced to produce, with means that it does not own, goods that it does not own. The dominant class owns the means of production and the produced outputs. Class is defined by production and ownership. Chapter 3 (see table 3.1) gave an overview of various class relations that define different modes of production. In capitalism, the bodies of workers do not, like those of slaves, belong to an external owner. But given that they cannot survive without working, workers have to sell their labour power on the labour market in order to earn wages with which they can purchase commodities as means of life that sustain them. The capitalist class in contrast owns capital, means of production, companies, and the goods and profits created in them.

But class is not abstract. The definition of class position by one's position in the relations of production is lived in class relations in everyday economic life. Day in and day out, humans enter and leave factories, offices, their home offices, mobile offices, public spaces, etc. as workplaces where they produce commodities that are sold in order to yield profit from which capital and capitalists survive, and wages from which workers try to survive. Class as a class structure and relation always

has an objective character. But at the same time, these objective relations are lived by concrete humans through concrete practices so that the societal class relation between capital and labour is lived and communicated in everyday life. As a result, there is a dialectic of objective class structures (the general class relation between capital and labour) and class subjectivity (the living of class in everyday life). Class objectivity becomes subjectified in labour practices and class subjectivity becomes objectified in the production of commodities. Class relations and practices are established in and through communicative processes that mediate between society's structural class relation and class subjectivity (consciousness and practices). Politically, the important question is whether the working class is or is not politically conscious of its situation as working class, and whether or not it organises itself politically in class struggles against the disadvantages it inevitably has to face in capitalism.

Capitalists and workers are rational, conscious, purposeful, passionate beings, who are active subjects in the processes of the production and reproduction of capitalism. Labour contracts require the members of the working class to enter class relations, where their labour is exploited and produces a surplus that they do not own. Workers cannot simply refuse to work because the labour market is an institutionalised and structural form of repression that compels them to either sell their labour power or die. Marx speaks in this context of the labour market as the 'silent compulsion of economic relations'.[1] The capitalist 'proceeds to consume the commodity, the labour power he has just bought, i.e. he causes the worker, the bearer of that labour power, to consume the means of production by his labour. [...] First, the worker works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs; [...] Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the worker, its immediate producer'.[2]

Pierre Bourdieu[3] argues that class is not just an economic, but also a political and cultural relation that is defined by the amounts of economic capital (money, means of production), political capital (influence in social relations), and cultural capital (reputation) that an individual controls. Bourdieu rightly stresses that the principle of accumulation extends beyond the realm of the economy into politics and culture. But the danger of generalising the notions of class and capital to the two non-economic realms is that the special role of the economy in modern society and society in general is underestimated. The approach advanced in this book therefore prefers to limit the notions of capital and class to the economic realm, whereas power is the more general structure that is accumulated in all three realms of capitalist society. Erik Olin Wright takes the issue of the relationship

[1] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 899.
[2] Ibid., p. 291–292.
[3] Pierre Bourdieu. 1986. The (Three) Forms of Capital. In *Handbook of Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, 241–258. New York: Greenwood Press.

of the economic to politics and culture seriously, and has shown that political authority and culture in the form of skills and education play a role in the formation of class relations.[4] He argues that in addition to the question of whether or not one owns the means of production, the levels of authority and skills in the production process also play a role in defining class.

We can learn from Bourdieu that accumulation extends from the economy into politics and culture, whereas we can take from Wright the idea that politics operates in the form of authority in the production process and culture in the form of differentiated skills in the economy. As a consequence, those with higher authority and skills tend to have advantages in terms of the control of power in the economy over those with low authority and skills. Wright therefore speaks of organisational exploitation and skills exploitation.[5] What he means are surplus wages achieved due to advantages in skills and authority.

In the 20th century, the emergence of managers, and of a significant share of white-collar workers in the employment structure, has posed new questions for class theory. Managers are often not the main owners of the means of production, although many of them own stock in stock-trading corporations. In many cases, they are formally only employees receiving (high) salaries. But in so far as management's role is the organisation of exploitation of workers in the production of surplus value, managers certainly are part of the dominant class. White-collar workers produce services and knowledge. But that the product they produce is intangible and their labour therefore qualitatively different from that of manual workers does not imply that they form a different class. White collar workers who are forced to sell their labour power in order to survive certainly are also part of the working class. Freelancers are formally self-employed workers, who depend on short-term contracts to achieve income. The rise of the media, cultural and digital industries in conjunction with neoliberalism has made precarious freelancing quite a widespread phenomenon, which has led some to speak of the emergence of the 'precariat'.[6] In so far as freelancers do not employ others, their class position is not so different from wage-workers, because they are also compelled to sell their labour power in order to survive, although based on short-term contracts. They are part of the working class, although they could be considered a special faction.

Freelancers who own so much capital that they start employing others and are no longer single-person ventures, but companies with a workforce, a division of

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[4]   Erik Olin Wright. 1997. *Class Counts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[5]   Erik Olin Wright. 1989. A General Framework for the Analysis of Class Structure. In *The Debate on Classes,* ed. Erik Olin Wright, 3–43. London: Verso. Erik Olin Wright. Exploitation, Identity, and Class Structure: A Reply to My Critics. In *The Debate on Classes,* ed. Erik Olin Wright, 191–211. London: Verso. Erik Olin Wright. 1989. Rethinking, Once Again, the Concept of Class Structure. In *The Debate on Classes,* ed. Erik Olin Wright, 269–348. London: Verso.

[6]   Guy Standing. 2016. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

labour and ownership, turn from freelance workers into capitalists. Successive waves of automation have created structural unemployment. Are the unemployed a separate class? They are a reserve army of wageless workers-in-waiting, who do not possess capital and therefore form a faction of the working class.

There are also groups of unremunerated workers that play important roles in capitalism. The largest of them are the houseworkers who perform reproductive labour that reproduces the labour power of the working class so that labour power can be sold as a commodity to capital. Other examples of unremunerated labour are modern slaves, audiences of advertising-funded media, and Facebook-users.[7] There are diverse groups of the unpaid labour force that differ in respect to the type of work, aspects of organisation, and the modes of coercion they face. In so far as unremunerated labour produces a commodity that is sold in a capitalist context, unremunerated workers are certainly part of the working class.

Taken together, we can observe that the class relation between capital and labour is constituted by two classes that consist of various class factions. The capitalist class consists of factions such as industrial capital, finance capital, small/medium/large capital, transnational capital, etc. So, capital and labour are on the one hand each objectively united and yet at the same time differentiated. In respect to the working class, Toni Negri speaks of the 'social worker' in order to indicate that exploitation and the working class are 'now extended throughout the entire span of production and reproduction',[8] so that there is a multitude of class factions that together form the working class as the multitude of 'all those who labour and produce under the rule of capital'[9] and 'all those whose labour is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction'.[10] Social workers include both wage-workers and non-wage workers who produce commodities and produce and reproduce capital. Mario Tronti describes the tendency and interest of capital to extend the capitalist factory 'over the whole society'.[11] 'It is capitalist development itself which tends to subordinate every political relation to the social relation, every social relation to the production relation, and every production relation to the relation of the factory – for only this allows it to begin, from

[7] For a detailed discussion, see: Christian Fuchs. 2017. Capitalism, Patriarchy, Slavery, and Racism in the Age of Digital Capitalism and Digital Labour. *Critical Sociology* 44 (4–5): 677–702.

[8] Antonio Negri 1982. Archaeology and Project: The Mass Worker and the Social Worker. In *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis & New Social Subjects 1967–83,* 199–228. London: Red Notes. p. 209.

[9] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude.* New York: Penguin. p. 106.

[10] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 52.

[11] Mario Tronti. 2019. *Workers and Capital.* London: Verso. p. 26.

within the factory, the inverse path: that is, the capitalist's struggle to disman-
tle and recompose in his own image the antagonistic figure of the collective
worker'.[12] In capitalism, not only the factory and the office but also spaces such
as the household, the family, the university, the city, the body, the brain, or
commercial, ad-driven media such as Facebook are spheres of the production
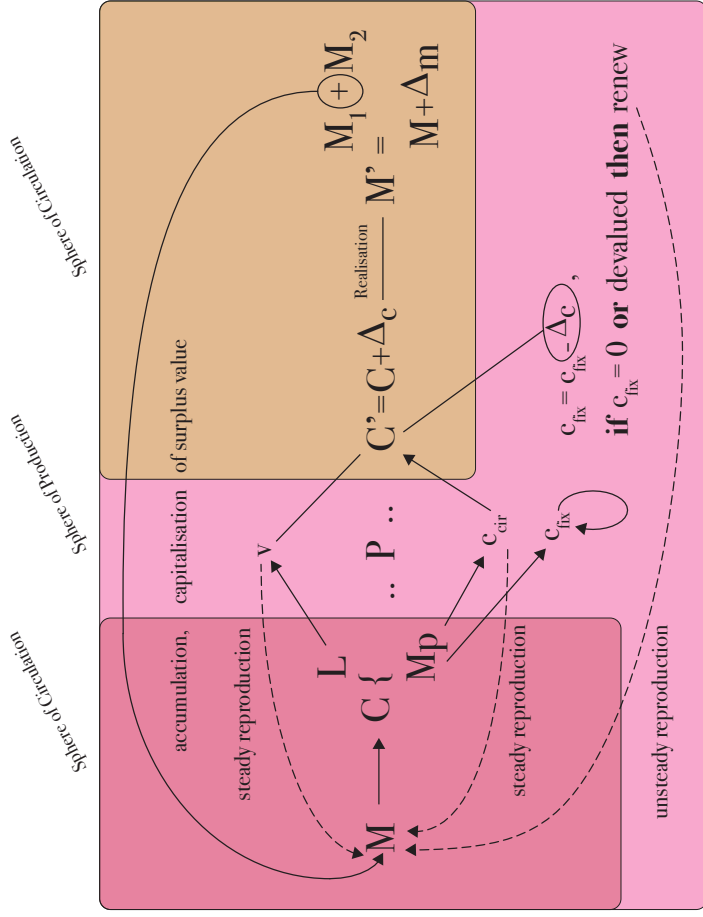of commodities. They are the social factories of capitalism.

Capital Accumulation

Figure 5.1 visualises the process of capital accumulation that forms the heart
and engine of the capitalist economy.

   The capitalist economy is a system of general commodity production. The
commodity is the cell form of how property is organised in the capitalist econ-
omy. Humans are forced to produce commodities that are sold on markets so
that corporations accumulate capital. Capital is money that turns into more
money. In the capitalist economy, many moments interact: money, the com-
modity, the exploitation of labour power, the means of production, commod-
ity production and capital. Emergent qualities emerge from this interaction.
They are more than the sum of the moments and more than any of the single
moments. This new quality is the process of capital accumulation. It is new and
emergent in comparison to other modes of production. If the commodity is the
capitalist economy's cell form, then the accumulation of capital constitutes
the entire economic body. Capital is a kind of body whose aim it is to increase
its size by forcing workers into exploitation so that they produce commodities
that are sold in order to yield profit.

   For Marx, the capitalist economy is the system of capital accumulation. It
takes the form: $M - C .. P .. C' - M'$: Capitalists buy with money M the commod-
ities C (labour power L, means of production Mp). In the production process P,
labour creates with the means of production a new commodity C'. C' contains
surplus value. If the commodity or an amount of commodities per financial
year can be sold successfully at a price higher than the investment costs, then
the surplus value is turned into a profit ($p, \Delta m$). The initially invested amount of
money-capital M is increased by the profit so that the accumulated amount
of money $M' = M + \Delta m$. Parts of M' (M_1) are used for paying interest to banks,
rent to rentiers who rent out property (such as land) to capitalists, bonuses to
managers, and dividends to stock owners. The other part of M' (M_2) is rein-
vested so that a new cycle of capital accumulation starts. The end point M' of a
capital accumulation cycle becomes the starting point of the next cycle. Capital
accumulation constitutes the dynamic character of the capitalist economy. It
takes on the form $M_1 - C_1 .. P_1 .. C_1' - M_1' = M_2 - C_2 .. P_2 .. C_2' - M_2' = M_3 - C_3$
$.. P_3 .. C_3' - M_3' = M_4 ....$

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[12] Ibid., p. 29.

Figure 5.1: The process of capital accumulation.[13]

Sphere of Circulation   Sphere of Production   Sphere of Circulation

accumulation,   capitalisation   of surplus value

steady reproduction

$$M \longrightarrow C \left\{ \begin{array}{c} L \\ Mp \end{array} \right. \ldots P \ldots \quad C' = C + \Delta_c \xrightarrow{\text{Realisation}} M' = \begin{array}{c} M_1 \!\!\!\bigoplus\!\!\! M_2 \\ M + \Delta m \end{array}$$

v

c_{cir}

c_{fix}

steady reproduction

unsteady reproduction

$$c_{fix} = c_{fix} - \Delta_c \,,$$
$$\text{if } c_{fix} = 0 \text{ or devalued } \textbf{then renew}$$

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[13] The figure is my visualisation of the capital accumulation process, as described in: Karl Marx. 1867. *Capital Volume One*. London: Penguin. Karl Marx. 1885. *Capital Volume Two*. London: Penguin.

c_{cir}: raw- and auxiliary-materials, operating supply items, semi-finished products,

c_{fix}: machines, buildings, equipment; circulating capital: c_{cir}, v; fixed capital: c_{fix}

Chapter 4 (see especially section 4.1 and figure 4.2) described the work process as a dialectic of subject and object, in which human subjects use their work capacity in order to employ means of production (objects of work, instruments of work) to create new products. In capitalism, the subject of production is the working class that is compelled to sell its labour power to capital in order to survive. In capitalism, the means of production are commodities. Marx speaks of the value of labour power and the objects of labour as 'circulating capital' because they are used up immediately in capitalist production and need to be renewed. Labour power's value is called 'variable capital' (v) because it creates new value: surplus value. The value of the objects of labour are termed 'circulating constant capital' (c_{cir}) because this value fully enters the commodity value in the commodity's production so that the objects need to be renewed in the next accumulation cycle. Instruments of labour (such as technologies) have a more durable character in the production process. Only part of their value is objectified in a commodity. The value of the instruments of labour is therefore termed fixed constant capital (c_{fix}). The instruments stay fixed in the capital accumulation process until they are superseded by better technologies or need to be replaced because of wear and tear or failures. Circulating constant capital and fixed constant capital together form the means of production, whose value is called constant capital (c).

Capitalism turns labour power and the means of production into instruments for the production and accumulation of capital. Capital is 'money breeding money, value breeding value'.[14] In the capitalist economy, production is the process of commodity production and capital accumulation. Work is organised as exploited labour in the class relation between labour and capital, where the work process' dialectic of subject and object is a class contradiction between capital and labour. In the capitalist system, workers are 'merely a machine for the production of surplus value' and capitalists 'merely a machine for the transformation of this surplus value into surplus capital'.[15] The capitalist is an 'extractor of surplus labour and an exploiter of surplus-labour'.[16]

The process depicted in figure 5.1 not only takes place in a single company, but also in an entire industry, a national economy, and the global economy. So, the model on the one hand describes single capital, but on the other hand also collective capital as class. And workers are an exploited class in this process at all of these levels, starting at the level of the company and going up to the levels of society and the global economy. Marx therefore speaks of the 'collective labourer',[17] which is the 'combined working personnel',[18] '*labour power socially*

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[14] Karl Marx. 1885/1978. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Two*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 160.

[15] Marx, *Capital Volume One*, p. 742.

[16] Ibid., p. 425.

[17] Ibid., p. 590.

[18] Ibid., p. 590.

combined,[19] the 'aggregate *worker*', whose '*combined activity* results materially in an *aggregate* product which is at the same time a *quantity of goods*'.[20] The 'activity of this aggregate labour power is its *immediate productive consumption by capital,* i.e. it is the self-valorisation process of capital, and hence, as we shall demonstrate, the immediate production of surplus value, the *immediate conversion of this latter into capital*'.[21] The development of the productive forces and of co-operation advances the collective character of workers as a co-operating workforce. 'The product is transformed from the direct product of the individual producer into a social product, the joint product of a collective labourer, i.e. a combination of workers, each of whom stands at a different distance from the actual manipulation of the object of labour'.[22]

Is Capitalism an Economic System or a Type of Society?

What is capitalism? Is it a mode of economic production? Or is it a particular type of society? For Marx, capital is self-expanding value that is accumulated in the form of monetary profit. Capital needs to grow permanently in order to survive, otherwise capital accumulation and the capitalist economy enter crisis. Capitalism's expansive character implies not only the exploitation of labour, but also the destruction of nature; the centralisation and concentration of capital; uneven geographical development of capitalism; imperialism; wars for capitalist expansion; the production of milieus of highly exploited, unremunerated labour; the depletion of non-renewable natural resources, etc. The capitalist economy's principle of accumulation shapes all of capitalist society. Capitalism is a type of society that is based on and operates within the principle of the accumulation of capital and power.

   Chapter 4 argued that production and work are the models of culture and the political system in society. In capitalist society, the principle of the accumulation of money-capital is the general model for production in society. Capitalist society forms a generalised sphere of accumulation. The drive to accumulate is not limited to money capital. In politics, we find the accumulation imperative in the form of the accumulation of political decision power. In the cultural system, we find the principle of accumulation in the form of the accumulation of cultural distinction, reputation, and definition power. In capitalist society, classes and social groups aim at accumulating economic power (money-capital), political power (decision-making power: influence on collective decision), and cultural power (definition power: reputation, influence on

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19 Ibid., p. 1040.
20 Ibid., p. 1040.
21 Ibid., p. 1040.
22 Ibid., p. 643.

the definition of worldviews, collective meanings and identities). Capitalism is not simply an economic mode of production. It is a societal mode of production, a societal formation. Capitalist society is grounded in and organised on the principle of accumulation.

The logic of accumulation creates power asymmetries and distributive injustices. In heteronomous societies, there is alienation: Dominant groups are in control of the products of work, whereas the immediate producers lack control and property. The dominant groups have the power to force others to work for them, appropriate ownership of the dominated class' labour products, impose their political ideology on collective decision-making, impose hierarchies of recognition and reputation, and achieve combinations thereof. Different groups and classes can control different degrees of economic power, cultural power, and political power. In capitalist society, money is a privileged form of power. It can more easily be transformed into political and cultural power than vice versa.

Accumulation logic structures the modern economy, politics, culture, private and everyday life, and the relationship of society to nature. Modern society's subsystems organise particular forms of the accumulation logic. They have their specific economics of production, circulation and distribution of power. In capitalist society, power takes on economic, political and cultural types of accumulation. Capitalism creates fundamental asymmetries of power and inequalities. It is Marx's achievement that he has unveiled the logic of accumulation that is *immanent* in capitalism. He has pointed out the immanent antagonisms and inequalities that capitalism's logic of accumulation produces.

We will next discuss an important aspect of capitalism: labour.

5.2. Labour and Capitalism

Working Conditions

To analyse the conditions of labour – i.e. the reality and experiences of exploitation that workers face in capitalism – one needs to discern among various dimensions of working life. Such dimensions of working conditions include what technologies are used and how they impact workers; the implications of the work organisation for workers' mental and physical capacities and health; aspects of the relations of production such as wages, contracts and labour-time; the quality of the working environment (labour spaces); aspects of labour control and surveillance; aspects of political organisation (unionisation, class struggles); and how state legislation shapes working conditions. Figure 5.2 visualises and table 5.1 summarises these dimensions. Table 5.1 also shows how the various dimensions are related to the work process' dialectic of subject and object (see figures 5.1 and 4.2)

Table 5.2 shows for each of the identified dimensions of working conditions what questions one should ask when conducting an analysis of concrete working conditions.
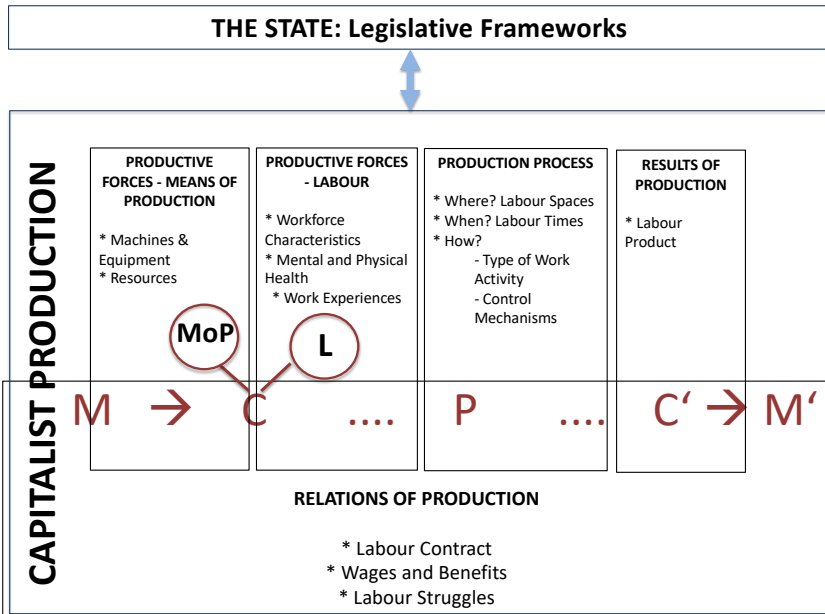
THE STATE: Legislative Frameworks

CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

PRODUCTIVE FORCES - MEANS OF PRODUCTION	PRODUCTIVE FORCES - LABOUR	PRODUCTION PROCESS	RESULTS OF PRODUCTION

* Machines & Equipment
* Resources
	* Workforce Characteristics
	* Mental and Physical Health
	* Work Experiences
		* Where? Labour Spaces
		* When? Labour Times
		* How?
		  - Type of Work Activity
		  - Control Mechanisms
			* Labour Product

MoP   L

M → C .... P .... C' → M'

RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

* Labour Contract
* Wages and Benefits
* Labour Struggles

Figure 5.2: Dimensions of working conditions.[23]

Table 5.1: Dimensions of working conditions.[24]

Dimension		Location of this dimension in work's subject-object-dialectic (see figures 5.1 and 4.2)
Productive forces – Means of production	Machines and equipment	Object: Instruments of labour
	Resources	Object: Object of labour
Productive forces – Labour	Workforce characteristics	Subject
	Mental and physical health	Subject
	Work experiences	Subject

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[23] This model was first introduced in: Marisol Sandoval. 2013. Foxconned Labour as the Dark Side of the Information Age: Working Conditions at Apple's Contract Manufacturers in China. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 11 (2): 318–347. Reproduced with permission.

[24] First introduced in: Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval. 2014. Digital Workers of the World Unite! A Framework for Critically Theorising and Analysing Digital Labour. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (2): 486–563.

Dimension		Location of this dimension in work's subject-object-dialectic (see figures 5.1 and 4.2)
Relations of production	Labour contracts	Subject-subject relationships: Relations of production
	Wages and benefits	Subject-subject relationships: Relations of production
	Labour struggles	Subject-subject relationships: Relations of production
Production process	Labour spaces	Object: Instruments of labour
	Labour times	Subject-subject relationships: Relations of production
	Work activity	Subject
	Control mechanism	Subject-subject relationships: Relations of production
Results of production	Labour product	Subject-object: Products of labour
The state	Labour law	Subject-subject relationships: Relations of production

Table 5.2: Dimensions of working conditions.[25]

Productive forces – Means of production	Machines and equipment	Which technology is being used during the production process?
	Resources	What resources are used during the production process?
Productive forces – Labour	Workforce characteristics	What are important characteristics of the workforce for example in terms of age, gender, ethnic background etc?
	Mental and physical health	How do the employed means of production and the labour process impact mental and physical health of workers?
	Work experiences	How do workers experience their working conditions?

(Contd.)

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[25] This model was first introduced in: Marisol Sandoval. 2013. Foxconned Labour as the Dark Side of the Information Age: Working Conditions at Apple's Contract Manufacturers in China. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 11 (2): 318–347. Reproduced with permission.

Table 5.2: *(Continued)*

Relations of production	Labour contracts	Which type of contracts do workers receive, what do they regulate?
	Wages and benefits	How high/low are wage levels and what are other material benefits for workers?
	Labour struggles	How do workers organise and engage in negotiations with capital and what is the role of worker protests?
Production process	Labour spaces	Where does the production process take place?
	Labour times	How many working hours are common within a certain sector, how are they enforced, and how is the relationship between work and free time?
	Work activity	What types of mental and/or physical activity are workers performing?
	Control mechanisms	What types of mechanisms are in place that control and monitor the behaviour of workers?
Results of production	Labour product	What kinds of products or services are being produced?
The state	Labour law	What regulations regarding minimum wages, maximum working hours, safety, social security etc are in place and how are they enforced?

Economic Alienation

For Marx, economic alienation means that capitalism's structures of the exploitation of labour in class relations turn the human being into something that is different from what it could be, from the capacities that are defined by the human being's essence as species-being. The human being as species-being is a social and societal being. Capitalism's exploitation of labour and private ownership of economic property cripples and destroys human beings' social character. Society is therefore, as capitalist society and as class society in general, incompletely social and not a fully developed society. The 'proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature'.[26] 'Species-being' is the translation

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[26] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume 3*, 229–346. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 277.

of the German term *Gattungswesen*.[27] The word *Gattungswesen* combines the species (*Gattung*) and essence (*Wesen*). So, the species-being means the essence of humans, i.e. that which all humans have in common. Species-being is the essence of the species, species-essence. Capitalism and class constitute the alienation of the human from its social essence. They dehumanise humans and make them less than human. By turning humans into a cog of the wheel of exploitation and domination, capitalism is an organised form of inhumanity and dehumanisation.

Capitalism's alienation of labour is a fourfold process:[28]

(1) the alienation of humans from nature;
(2) the alienation of humans from their activities and species-being;
(3) the alienation of humans from their bodies and minds that are part of the human essence;
(4) the alienation of the human being from the 'product of his labour, from his life activity'[29] and as a consequence from other humans and society.

Economic alienation in capitalism turns workers into double-free labour: 'Free workers, in the double sense that they neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production, as would be the case with self-employed peasant proprietors. The free workers are therefore free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own'.[30] Capitalism's double-free workers are not, like slaves, owned by the dominant class, but they face the 'freedom' of the market that means unfreedom for them: They can only survive by selling their labour power and are thereby compelled to enter class relations, in which their labour is exploited. So, capitalist 'freedom' is a freedom from slavery so that humans own their own bodies, but at the same time means the unfreedom of capitalist structures that makes humans sell their labour power in order to be able to obtain wages so that they can purchase commodities that allow them to live. In capitalism, the means of subsistence and the means of production are organised as commodities. Alienation is enshrined and objectified in capitalism's structures, so that the mass of humans cannot exist without being exploited in class relations.

Figure 5.3 visualises that economic alienation in capitalism means that the working class is alienated from itself as subject because it is forced to sell its

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27 Karl Marx. 1844. Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844. In *Marx Engels Werke (MEW) Band 40 (Ergänzungsband 1)*, 465–588. Berlin: Dietz. p. 518.
28 Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 276–277.
29 Ibid., pp. 276–277.
30 Marx, *Capital Volume One*, p. 874.

(Economic) subject-object:
Alienation from the product of labour

Alienation of labour
power (subject)

Alienation from the means of production (object)

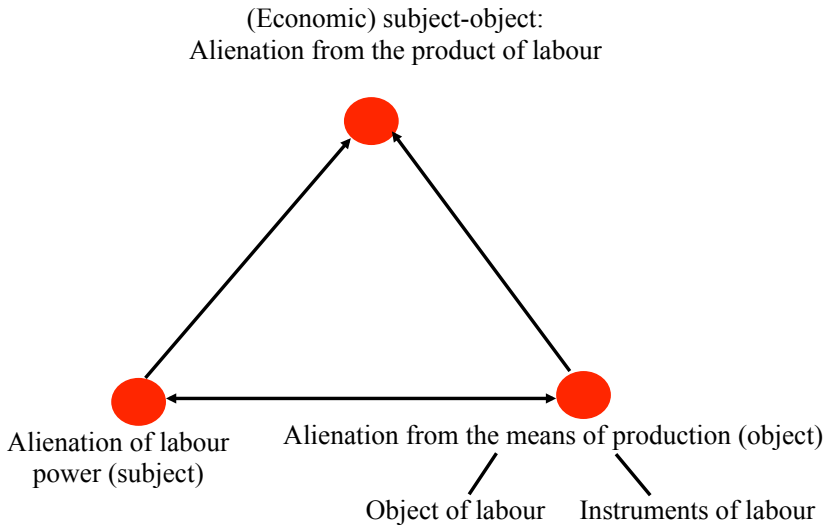Object of labour   Instruments of labour

Figure 5.3: Economic alienation in capitalism.

labour power, from the means of production (the objects and instruments of labour) that it does not own, and from the products it creates but which are owned by the capitalist class.

Marxian value critique is a critical theory of time in capitalism. The next section discusses the relationship of capitalism and time.

5.3. Capitalism and Time

The Role of Time in Capitalist Society

In capitalist society, elites control economic, political, and cultural power and try to accumulate power. Accumulation is a process organised in time: The goal of accumulation is that at moment t+1, a dominant actor increases their accumulated power in comparison to moment t. Social struggles can result in crises so that dominant groups cannot increase their power at moment t+1.

Time is an inherent feature of accumulation in the capitalist economy. The need to accumulate ever more capital can be achieved by absolute surplus value production, i.e. lengthening the working day. Relative surplus value production is another strategy. It increases productivity by creating and using scientific-technological innovations so that more commodities are produced in a specific time span than before. The average production time of commodities thereby decreases. Other strategies are designed to shorten the time it takes commodities to circulate on markets and to be distributed, or to shorten the life-span of commodities by inbuilt obsolescence or creating desires for new commodities

by marketing, advertising, and consumerism as ideological forms that manipulate human desires.

Credit, loans, the stock market, financial derivatives, and debt constitute finance capital that operates with the entitlement to payments made in the future: the entitlement to a part of future profits in the case of stocks, company credits, and derivatives; the entitlement to a share of wages paid in the future in the case of consumer credits and loans; the entitlement to a share of future wages or profits in the case of debt in general. Such finance mechanisms are based on the logic of buying time.[31]

Taken together, the capitalist economy needs the economic logic of acceleration that aims at producing, circulating, and consuming ever more commodities in less and less time.

The capitalist state is related to the capitalist economy. Governments face the danger of losing employment and taxes in their countries if companies relocate and outsource production. Therefore, governments are prone to implement company-friendly policies that support the exploitation of the working class. In capitalism, politics is also shaped by the logic of entertainment, sensationalism, personalisation, individualism, and advertising. As a result, there is often a lack of time in politics for debate and deliberation. Political decisions are made based on short-term logic with only the maximisation of power and voting shares in the next election in mind. As a consequence, politics in capitalist society undergoes acceleration based on a political acceleration logic that drives towards making and managing ever more decisions in ever-shorter time.

Capitalist culture is also shaped by the logic of cultural acceleration. This logic manifests itself in a pressure to be permanently active, to start new activities that one cannot finish because there is a lack of time. Furthermore, cultural speed manifests itself in high-performance sports and hobbies, fast food, fast lifestyles, consumer goods and electronics that have a short life-span and need to be updated frequently either because obsolescence is built in or consumers need to get the latest version in order to remain 'cool' and 'trendy'. Cultural acceleration means that ever more experiences are compressed into the available time. Hartmut Rosa writes that cultural acceleration has to do with the human fear of death that brings about 'panicked flight response'[32] in the form of an 'increase of the number of action episodes per unit of time'.[33] Although there are certainly anthropological dimensions of acceleration, one should not overlook that there is a specific capitalist logic of cultural acceleration: Advertising and consumerism manipulate human desires so that consumption is

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[31] Wolfgang Streeck. 2014. *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism.* London: Verso.

[32] Hartmut Rosa. 2013. *Social Acceleration. A New Theory of Modernity.* New York: Columbia University Press. p. 180.

[33] Ibid., p. 306.

accelerated by the creation of artificial needs that can only be fulfilled by purchasing ever more and ever newer commodities.

The logic of acceleration is a manifestation of capitalist society's logic of accumulation. The accumulation of economic, political, and cultural power is accompanied by specific forms of economic, political, and cultural acceleration. Figure 5.4 visualises capitalist society's logic of speed: In the capitalist economy, acceleration is expressed in the principle 'time is money'. In the capitalist political system, acceleration manifests itself in the principle 'time is strength and power'. In capitalist culture, acceleration takes on the logic of the principle 'life/time is short'. The three spheres of the economy, culture, and politics are not independent, but overlapping. In order to make figure 5.4 more easily understandable, the three realms of society are shown separately, although in reality they overlap and reach into each other. The connection of acceleration to capitalism is that the combined effect of the synergies between accumulation and the logic of acceleration is the existence of the structural pressure of having to accumulate ever more economic, political, and cultural power in ever less time. The capitalist implants the structural logic that the speed of the accumulation has to be increased for actors to survive competition. They either have to produce more in less time and thereby destroy their competitors, or be destroyed themselves. Capitalism is therefore based on a destructive logic of competition that is expressed in accumulation and acceleration.

Economic, political, and cultural acceleration are not based on three independent logics. Assuming they are independent is a dualist explanation that fails to identify their common ground. Just as production is the model of society in general, but is connected to emergent logics in society's subsystems, so
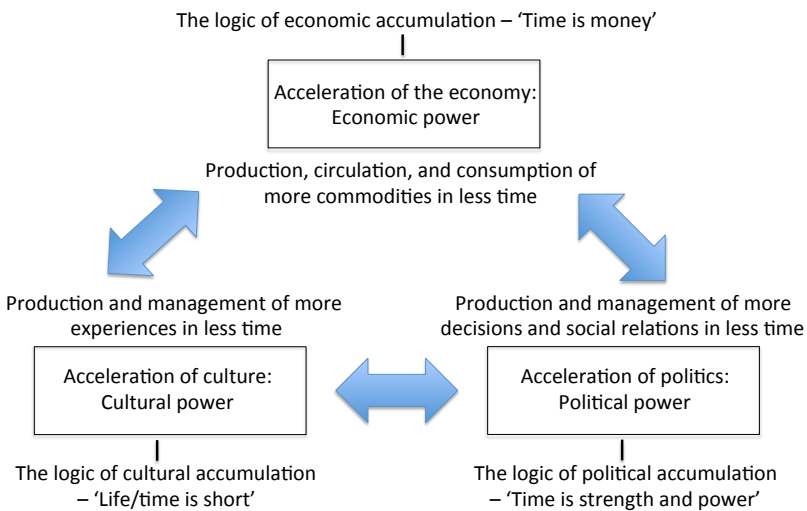

Figure 5.4: The logic of acceleration in capitalist society.

acceleration as a modern phenomenon is based in the capitalist logic of accumulation that has its roots in the capitalist economy's logic of capital accumulation. At the same time, each form of acceleration takes on an emergent form that has relative autonomy. The common logic of acceleration in capitalist society is that the logic of accumulation and the economic principle of 'more in less time' underpin acceleration. Marx writes in this context: 'Economy of time, to this all economy reduces itself'.[34]

There are three interrelations of the three logics of capitalist acceleration:

- Economy ⇔ politics: The accumulation of capital requires the state and politics to react to it in certain ways. An increase in the complexity and speed of the economy can accelerate the speed of decision-making in politics. The acceleration of politics can in turn shape the acceleration of economic processes.
- Politics ⇔ culture: The acceleration of cultural processes results in the production and consumption of more experiences per unit of time. As a consequence, the complexity of everyday life increases, which requires additional collective decisions to be made more quickly. Acceleration of politics means that more decisions are being taken per unit of time, which results in more bureaucracy and greater complexity of laws and regulations that people are confronted with in their everyday life. As a consequence, they are expected to deal with the rules of regulated everyday life in a more efficient manner.
- Economy ⇔ culture: The acceleration of the capitalist economy results in an increased number of produced and consumed commodities per unit of time. Along with the commodification of society comes the extension and intensification of consumer culture. Individuals are offered ever more commodities, and ever more realms of their everyday life are shaped by commodities. Consuming ever more commodities as part of everyday life is one of the consequences of the acceleration of the economy. And the acceleration of culture, the intensification of experiences, advances economic acceleration because the capitalist culture industry is interested in producing ever more cultural commodities that are consumed in accelerated everyday life.

The acceleration caused by capitalism can result in attempts to install and advance deceleration, historicity, preservation, and a sense of duration and permanence. Examples are slow food, online disconnection, digital detox camps, yoga and meditation retreats, slow life, etc. However, such reactions to acceleration mostly have an ideological character because they assume that there are individualist solutions to structural problems of society (such as in this case the lack of time). In the end, these endeavours not necessarily, but often create new spheres of capital accumulation, where humans pay for slowing down, in order to remain fit

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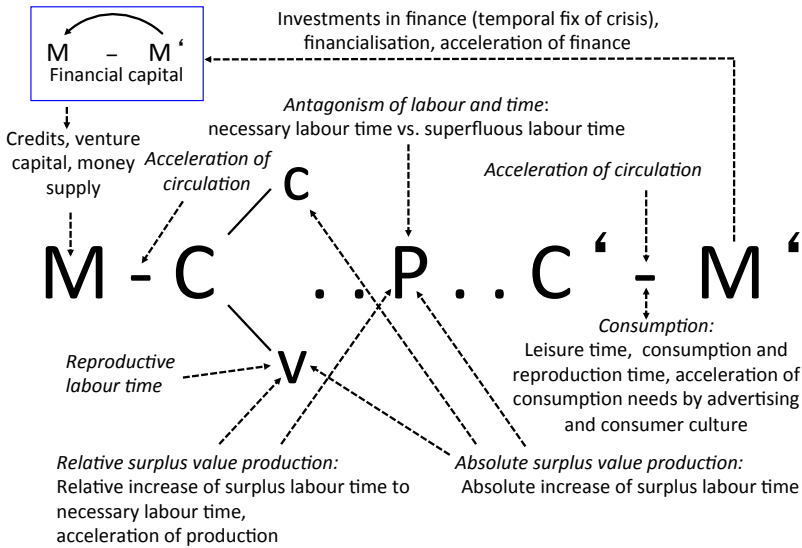[34] Karl Marx. 1857/58/1973. *Grundrisse.* London: Penguin. p. 173.

Figure 5.5: Time in the capitalist economy.

for everyday life in high-speed capitalist society. Only the abolition of capitalist society will allow humans to gain control of managing their time. 'For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then [in a socialist society] not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time'.[35]

The Role of Time in the Capitalist Economy

The turnover time of capital is defined as the total time one capital accumulation cycle takes, including the time it takes to invest capital, to buy means of production, the time the production of a new commodity takes, and the time the sale and transport of this commodity takes.[36] Turnover time consists of the production time and the circulation time of the commodity. Capitalism has 'been characterized by continuous efforts to shorten turnover times, thereby speeding up social processes while reducing the time horizons of meaningful decision-making'.[37] Figure 5.5 shows a model that visualises the roles of time in the capitalist economy.

Labour time involves both wage-labour time and reproductive labour time. *Reproductive labour time* is the time that is expended in labour that

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[35] Ibid., p. 708.
[36] Marx, *Capital Volume Two*, chapter 5.
[37] David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. p. 229.

reproduces labour power. Labour time tends to be gendered in capitalism: Women tend to have less leisure time than men, and have to engage more in reproductive labour such as household labour, and taking care of the children and the family.

Capitalist history is a history of struggles over labour time, including the struggle over the length of the working day. Capital is interested in maximising the 'labour power that can be set in motion in a working day'.[38] Absolute surplus value production is a politics of time by the capitalist class that lengthens the absolute hours worked for a particular wage. Relative surplus value production is a capitalist politics of time that changes the quality of the means of production (for example by the use of new technologies) in order to increase productivity, i.e. the amount of value and commodities produced per unit of time.

In capitalism, there is a dialectic of labour and time.[39] Two hours of abstract labour are always 120 minutes of the expenditure of human energy in the labour process. If productivity increases, then the amount of commodities produced in these 120 minutes increases. Therefore, the amount of average labour time crystallised in the single commodity decreases with increasing productivity. The dialectic of labour and time has resulted in the historical tendency that one hour of abstract (i.e. value-producing) labour tends to result in an increasing amount of use-values produced by concrete labour during this unit of time.

Capitalism's antagonism between productive forces and relations of production is also an antagonism between labour and time: The capitalist development of the productive forces increases the potential to end toil, reduce and minimise the normal working time, and increase the free time during which humans are active free from necessity. But at the same time, the development of the productive forces under capitalist conditions turns into the opposite of its potentials: labour is alienated, and some work long hours with lots of overtime whereas others are unemployed, precariously or temporarily employed. Under capitalist conditions, labour time is alienated labour time. Capitalism produces potentials of socialism, but simultaneously advances exploitation and the precarity of labour.

Finance is the economic realm of the production and circulation of money. The circulation of finance capital has historically accelerated through means such as bank accounts, bank transfers, credit and debit cards, electronic payments, algorithmic and networked trading on financial markets, cryptocurrencies, etc. Marx argues that finance capital follows the formula M (money) – M' (more money).[40] In finance capital such as consumer credits, mortgages,

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[38] Marx, *Capital Volume One,* p. 376.

[39] Moishe Postone. 1993. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination. A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 289–290.

[40] Karl Marx. 1894/1981. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Three*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. pp. 471, 515.

stock, bonds and derivatives, money results in more money via debt and the deferral of payments into the future. Finance capital is an entitlement to payments that are made in the future. These future payments are paid out of profits or wages. Because financial capital is a promise and option on money that does not yet exist and that one expects to create in the future, Marx speaks of finance capital as *fictitious capital*.[41] 'All these securities actually represent nothing but accumulated claims, legal titles, to future production'.[42]

But if the underlying securities intended to back the financial option on the future collapse (for example because a company goes bankrupt or someone becomes unemployed and so cannot pay back debt), then financial capital faces the threat of not yielding returns. On the stock market, the value of stock options is speculative and not connected to the actual profits a company makes, but to expectations about future profits. Financial derivatives turn specific resources (such as subprime-credits in the case of the financialisation of the US housing market that in 2008 triggered a world economic crisis) into highly speculative instruments traded on financial markets. Financial capital is highly prone to failure. Fictitious capital is the attempt of capital to overcome its problems of accumulation and to defer crisis into the future by a temporal fix.[43] Digital technologies and algorithmic trading of finance capital have helped to increase the speed of financial transactions, but have at the same time increased the risk of financial derivatives and the instability of the capitalist economy.

Based on the analysis established thus far in this chapter, we can in the next section examine the role of communication in the capitalist economy.

5.4. The Capitalist Economy and Communication

We will in this section discuss two interrelated dimensions of the relationship of communication and capitalism: (1) money as the language of commodities, (2) language and communication as commodities.

Money and Value as the Language of Commodities

Money is a particular structure that mediates the exchange of commodities in society. It is a generalised medium of commodity exchange. Such mediation is also a form of communication that has a peculiar character: Money advances exchange as a form of communication that is instrumental, non-verbal, mediated, anonymous, impersonal, abstract, fetishised (abstracted from direct social relations), reified, and void of meaning. Money's role in capitalism is

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[41] Ibid., p. 596.
[42] Ibid., p. 599.
[43] See: Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

to communicate the prices of commodities on commodity markets, which enables the values and prices of commodities to be abstractly equalised in the exchange process. Marx therefore speaks of value and money as the 'language of commodities':[44]

> We see, then, that everything our analysis of the value of commodities previously told us is repeated by the linen itself, as soon as it enters into association with another commodity, the coat. Only it reveals its thoughts in a language with which it alone is familiar, the language of commodities. In order to tell us that labour creates its own value in its abstract quality of being human labour, it says that the coat, in so far as it counts as its equal, i.e. is value, consists of the same labour as it does itself. In order to inform us that its sublime objectivity as a value differs from its stiff and starchy existence as a body, it says that value has the appearance of a coat, and therefore that in so far as the linen itself is an object of value [*Wertding*], it and the coat are as like as two peas. Let us note, incidentally, that the language of commodities also has, apart from Hebrew, plenty of other more or less correct dialects. The German word '*Wertsein*' (to be worth), for instance, brings out less strikingly than the Romance verb '*valere*', '*valer*', '*valoir*' that the equating of commodity B with commodity A is the expression of value proper to commodity A. *Paris vaut bien une messe!*[45]

In Marx's equation 20 yards of linen = 1 coat = 2 ounces of gold,[46] money has the role of making commodities commensurable and comparable in the exchange process by communicating prices.

The Reified Form of Language and Communication in Capitalism

Not only are money and value the language of commodities, but the logic of the commodity form, value and money – the logic of reification – also to a specific degree shapes language use in capitalism. Language in capitalism is twisted, ideological, and one-dimensional. Instrumental reason not only destroys the dialectic of co-operation as the essential encounter of humans in society, but also the mental and linguistic capacity of humans to think and communicate antagonisms. Where there is communication, but the actual antagonisms of society are not named by and in communication, truth is silenced.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno say in this context: 'The monologue of power replaces the dialectic so that talk is a mere appearance, but in

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[44] Marx, *Capital Volume One*, p. 143–144.
[45] Ibid., 143–144.
[46] Ibid., chapter 1, section 3.

reality everything is silent'.[47] 'Communication [in capitalism] makes people conform by isolating them'.[48] 'Propaganda turns language into an instrument, a lever, a machine'.[49] 'If public life has reached a state in which thought is being turned inescapably into a commodity and language into celebration of the commodity, the attempt to trace the sources of this degradation must refuse obedience to the current linguistic and intellectual demands before it is rendered entirely futile by the consequence of those demands for world history'.[50]

Herbert Marcuse argues that advertising, propaganda, ideology, commercial media, and the culture industry advance 'the systematic promotion of positive thinking and doing' and the 'concerted attack on transcendent, critical notions'.[51] The creation and spreading of one-dimensional language aim at making consumers buy commodities, workers accept and not challenge capitalism, and citizens approve of domination and ideology.

Two examples: Speaking of the 'entrepreneurial society' creates the impression that everyone is or can be a rich and successful inventor, but this neglects the fact that in capitalism only some are rich and successful, whereas others face precarity and the consequences of inequalities and exploitation. The term 'public relations' creates the impression that corporations and demagogues aim at neutrally informing the public about new developments. It is not communicated that economic propaganda aims at advancing the sale of commodities in order to yield profit, while ideological and political propaganda aim at the accumulation and centralisation of power.

The alternative is a dialectic, 'non-reified language, of communicating the negative',[52] 'two-dimensional, dialectical' thought and speech that names and criticises society's antagonisms. Marx's language is a form of dialectical critique: For example, when Marx speaks of classes and class society, then the implication is the political need for a classless society.[53] Naming capitalism's riddle as the exploitation of labour and the production of surplus value implies the demands to abolish exploitation and the private property of the

[47] Translation from German: Max Horkheimer. 1953–1955. Aristotelische Betrachtung über Zivilisation. In *Max Horkheimer Gesammelte Schriften Band 14: Nachgelassene Schriften 1949–1972*, 64. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 64.
[48] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. 1947/2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 184.
[49] Ibid., p. 212.
[50] Ibid., pp. xiv–xv.
[51] Herbert Marcuse. 1964/1991. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society.* London: Routledge. Second edition. p. 88.
[52] Ibid., p. 71.
[53] Ibid., p. 88.

means of production, and to replace class society by a commons-based society where humans own, produce, and decide together. 'The "bourgeoisie" is the subject of technical progress, liberation, conquest of nature, creation of social wealth, and of the perversion and destruction of these achievements. Similarly, the "proletariat" carries the attributes of total oppression and of the total defeat of oppression'.[54]

The categories of critical, dialectical language denominate negativity, i.e. the existing antagonisms. These categories at the same time denounce inequalities and demand alternatives. 'If, for instance, it is said that concepts such as wages, the value of labor, and entrepreneurial profit are only categories of manifestations behind which are hidden the "essential relations" of the second set of concepts, it is also true that these essential relations represent the truth of the manifestations only insofar as the concepts which comprehend them already contain their own negation and transcendence – the image of a social organization without surplus value. All materialist conceptions contain an accusation and an imperative. When the imperative has been fulfilled, when practice has created men's new social organization, the new essence of man appears in reality'.[55]

Table 5.3 shows examples of certain categories that Marx uses for describing the reproduction and affirmation of capitalism, domination, and class society. These categories are negative, i.e. antagonistic, because they always stand in a relationship to an alternative that in a transcendental manner points beyond exploitation and domination. Marx's affirmative categories point towards their own transcendence and their self-sublation, which is preceded by capitalism's sublation. Many of these categories are not automatically critical and can in non-Marxian forms of usage be turned into ideology that affirms capitalism. The point of Marxian categories is that they are always negative: as forms of critique they aim at informing praxis and class struggle that aim at establishing a classless society so that the very phenomena that the negative categories describe are sublated. In contrast, positivist categories affirm class and domination by lacking the perspective of class struggle and socialism.

Communication as Commodity

Information and the communication of information are peculiar commodities: Information is not used up in consumption, so there is no rivalry in consumption. If I buy an apple and eat it, someone else cannot eat the same apple. If I buy a song on Apple's iTunes Store, I can listen to it again and again and so can others at the same time. There is no physical wear and tear of information. Given

[54] Ibid., p. 103.
[55] Herbert Marcuse. 1936/1988. The Concept of Essence. In Herbert Marcuse: *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, 43–87. London: Free Association. p. 86.

Table 5.3: The dialectic of affirmative and transcendental categories in Marxian theory.

Affirmation	Transcendence
capitalism	socialism
class society	classless society
bourgeoisie	proletariat
exploitation	class struggle
private property	common property
commodity	gift: to each according to his needs
value-creation/valorisation process	production process
exchange-value	use-value
labour	work: from each according to his ability
abstract labour	concrete work
surplus labour time	free time
realm of necessity	realm of freedom
accumulation/circulation/reproduction of capital	crisis
ideology	critique
nationalism	internationalism
alienation	real appropriation

that information can be easily and cheaply copied, published, disseminated, and downloaded, it is difficult to exclude others from access. The peculiar character of information makes it harder to sell it as a commodity than other goods. So-called 'piracy' of information has accompanied the history of the culture industry and the digital industry in capitalism. Corporations have continually tried to find new ways of monitoring and controlling the spread of information commodities with the help of copyright protection technologies, the use of surveillance technologies, and the repression of the law that enforces copyright and punishes copyright infringements. There is a diversity of commodities and therefore capital accumulation models in the capitalist communication industry. Table 5.4 provides an overview.

The models shown in table 5.4 are not mutually exclusive. There are communication corporations that accumulate capital by combining several models. Think for example of Amazon: Amazon combines the sale of tangible and intangible goods via its online shop, hardware (Kindle), streaming services (Prime), content/advertising/subscriptions (*Washington Post*), ads (Amazon Advertising), and web- and cloud-hosting (Amazon Web Services).

Capitalist communication corporations differ by the type of labour they employ and the kind of commodity they produce and sell. Communication

Table 5.4: Models of capital accumulation in the capitalist communication industry.

Name of the Model	Examples	Commodity	Commodity-Producing Labour
Media content model	Microsoft, SAP, Adobe, Walt Disney, Universal Music, Sony Music, Warner Music, Springer, Elsevier, Pearson	Content (such as software, music, videos, films, texts, and other information)	Artists, content producers, software engineers
Media services model	Call centre and business services companies such as Atento, DialAmerica, Qualfon; advertising and PR service agencies such as WPP, Omnicom, Publicis Groupe, Interpublic, etc.	Media and digital services	Service workers
Advertising model	Facebook, Google, WPP, Omnicom, Tencent, Baidu	Advertising, attention, personal data	Audience, users (unremunerated audience labour and digital labour)
Hardware model	Apple, HP, Dell, Hon Hai Precision, Hitachi, Nokia, Sony	Technologies for the production, distribution, and consumption/use of information	Engineers, assemblers
Network model	AT&T, Comcast, Verizon, China Mobile, Deutsche Telekom, Telefónica	Access to communications networks (broadcasting, Internet services, telecommunications)	Technicians, service workers
Online retail model	Amazon, Alibaba, iTunes	Sale of all sorts of (physical and non-physical) commodities via online stores	Warehouse workers, Engineers, service workers
Subscription and streaming models	Netflix, Spotify, Amazon Prime	Access to libraries of digital content (music, films, books, etc.)	Technicians, service workers
Cloud storage model	Web hosting: GoDaddy, 1&1, Amazon Web Services; Cloud storage: Dropbox, Apple iCloud, Mega, Sync, Amazon Drive	Online storage space, web space	Technicians, service workers

(Contd.)

Table 5.4: *(Continued)*

Name of the Model	Examples	Commodity	Commodity-Producing Labour
Sharing economy platform model	Upwork, Uber, Airbnb, Deliveroo, Amazon Mechanical Turk	Rent for the conduct of a service whose sale is mediated via an online platform	Freelancers, crowdworkers, online service workers
Mixed models	Traditional newspapers that sell copies, subscriptions and ad space: e.g. Yomiuri Group (publishes *Yomiuri Shimbun* that with a circulation of almost 10 million is the world's largest newspaper), Gannett (*USA Today*), Dow Jones & Company (*Wall Street Journal*), Springer (*Bild-Zeitung, Die Welt*), etc.; Spotify (combines advertising and subscription to a music streaming service); Amazon (online retail, hardware [Kindle, Fire, Echo], content/advertising/subscriptions [*Washington Post*], web and cloud hosting [Amazon Web Services], streaming services [Prime, Music Unlimited] advertising [Amazon Advertising]); etc.	Sale of different communication commodities	Diverse communication workers

labour exploited by communication companies includes physical labour (e.g. the Chinese Foxconn workers who assemble iPhones or the Amazon warehouse workers) and mental/information/knowledge labour (e.g. the software engineer or designer programming and designing software for Adobe, the call centre agent answering inbound customer calls or trying to sell something in outbound calls). The commodities sold in the communication industry include physical commodities, especially hardware/media technologies, as well as intangible commodities: media services, advertisements, access to communications networks, the sale of (tangible and intangible) commodities in online

shops, access to content libraries, digital storage space, the collection of rent for services delivered via platforms, etc. The boundaries between the models of capital accumulation in the capitalist communication industry are fluid because many transnational media corporations are conglomerates that sell different types of communication commodities. Newspapers and magazines have traditionally used mixed models that sell copies, subscriptions, and advertisements. But some online companies such as Spotify also use a mixed model that sells ads as well as subscriptions.

Rupert Murdoch's media empire is a classic example of a conglomerate that produces and provides different communication products: content (News Corp owns newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Times*, *The Sun*, *New York Post*, *The Australian*, etc.; networks (Fox TV television networks, National Geographic television networks, Star TV, significant ownership share of Sky, etc.), advertisements (are presented in a range of owned media); some channels are subscription or pay-per-view etc. A media segment where Murdoch's empire has not been particularly economically successful is Internet platforms. So, for example, the purchase of the social networking site MySpace failed because of the rise of Facebook. News Corporation bought MySpace in 2005 for US$ 580 million and sold it in 2011 for around US$ 35 million.

The different types of labour that help produce information and communication products are organised in an international class relation – the international division of communication labour (see figure 5.6). Communication corporations exploit the labour of workers who produce different communication commodities (see tables 5.4 & 5.5), and locate production in regions and countries that allow them to maximise profits by exploiting labour as much as possible. The result is the international division of communication labour,[56] in which the product of a certain form of communication labour is the input of other communication labour. So objectively speaking, the communication workers of the world are united by the fact that they all produce for and are exploited by global communications corporations.

The following is an example of how the international division of communication labour works: In war-ridden regions such as the Congo, highly coerced workers extract minerals such as coltan, cassiterite, wolframite, gold, tungsten, tantalum, and tin that are the physical foundation of communication technologies. Often, this is done under slave-like conditions. Such minerals are turned

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[56] For the introduction of the concept of the new international division of cultural labour, see: Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell and Ting Wang. 2004. *Global Hollywood 2.* London: British Film Institute. For the introduction of the concept of the international division of digital labour, see: Christian Fuchs. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge. Christian Fuchs. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

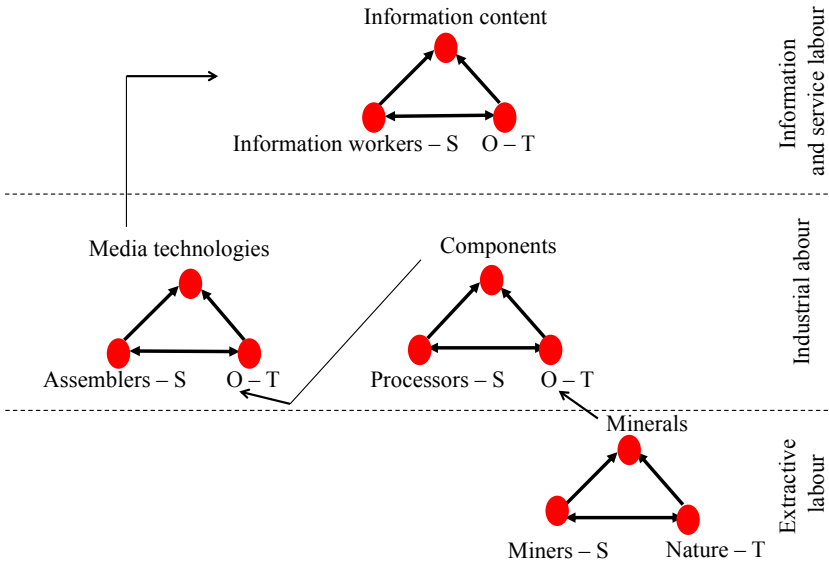INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION LABOUR

Figure 5.6: The international division of communication labour.

into components that assemblers in organisations such as Foxconn's factories in China turn into iPhones, laptops, consoles, desktop computers, tablets, printers, etc. Cultural workers such as the freelancers seeking short-term jobs on platforms such as Upwork use iPhones, Dell, or Apple computers, etc. as means of production in order to create cultural and digital content. Such computers use applications that are developed by software engineers working for companies such as Microsoft, Adobe, SAP, etc. When communication workers stop using their means of production, these communication technologies often end up as e-waste in developing countries, where they poison e-waste workers who disassemble them and the environment these workers live in. So, the products created by workers who are exploited by global communication corporations (such as Foxconn, Apple, Upwork, Microsoft, and Dell in the example), and the underlying forms of labour, are interrelated by the international division of communication labour.

This division of labour is a global class relation between diverse communication workers on the one side and global communication corporations on the other side. The latter exploit the former in order to yield massive profits. So, for example, in 2018 there were seven communication corporations among the world's twenty-five largest corporations: Apple (#8, profits of US$53.3 billion in 2017), Samsung Electronics (#14, US$41 bn), AT&T (#15, US$30.6 bn), Verizon Communications (#18, US$31.2 bn), Microsoft (#20, US$14.2 bn), Alphabet/Google (#23, US$16.6 bn), China Mobile (#25,

US\$16.9 bn).[57] These companies operate in the realms of software, advertising, communication hardware, telecommunications, online services, and cloud storage. Five of these seven global communication corporations have their headquarters in the USA, one is based in South Korea (Samsung), and one in China (China Mobile).

Table 5.5 shows the revenues of various sectors of the global communication industry in 2018. The data are estimations provided by various studies and statistical sources. According to this data, the largest communications sectors are software, telecommunications, tech services, advertising, television, and communications hardware.

Manfred Knoche has shown that the tendency towards a universal media system that has been advanced by digital media and the Internet is a con-

Table 5.5: Revenues of sectors of the global communication industry in 2018.[58]

Industry	2018	Data source
Software	US\$ 688 bn	Statista/Forrester
Telecommunications services	US\$ 643 bn	Statista/Forrester
Tech consulting and systems integration	US\$ 637 bn	Statista/Forrester
Broadband	US\$ 577.324 bn	McKinsey
Advertising	US\$ 539.664 bn	McKinsey
Tech outsourcing and hardware maintenance	US\$ 537 bn	Statista/Forrester
Television	US\$ 458.461 bn	McKinsey
Computer equipment	US\$ 367 bn	Statista/Forrester
Communications equipment	US\$ 341 bn	Statista/Forrester
Semiconductors	US\$ 267.500 bn	CSIMarket
Internet services and social media	US\$ 211.172 bn	CSIMarket
Book publishing	US\$ 118.08 bn	Statista/PwC
Video games	US\$ 114.214 bn	McKinsey
Newspapers	US\$ 111.246 bn	McKinsey
Music (including radio, recorded music, digital music)	US\$ 96.014 bn	McKinsey
Magazines	US\$ 47.566 bn	McKinsey
Cinema	US\$ 46.252 bn	McKinsey

[57] Data source: Forbes 2000 List of the World's Largest Public Companies, year 2018, http://forbes.com/global2000/list, accessed on 28 August 2018.

[58] Data sources: McKinsey & Company. 2016. *Global Media Report 2016.* London: McKinsey & Company. CSIMarket (https://csimarket.com/Industry

sequence of capital's accumulation drive.[59] The convergence of media technologies is the consequence of capital concentration and monopoly tendencies. But this tendency of the universal commodification of communication is also contradicted by the development of new non-commercial, non-profit, commons-based media. A universal media system, where the production, distribution, and consumption of information converges and is organised in one medium, has been realised with the rise of networked digital media such as the Internet. So-called 'social media' advance another form of convergence, namely the convergence of the production and consumption of information (prosumers, prosumption), labour time/leisure time, and of the private sphere and the public sphere.

The Advertising Industry

Most capitalist communication industries follow the classical pattern of capital accumulation M – C .. P .. C' – M': Workers produce a communication commodity, such as access to content, communication technologies, software, or communication services, that is sold to consumers in order to accumulate capital. Advertising is somewhat different. In economic terms, advertising is not just one of the major communication industries, but it also has a peculiar communication commodity. A commodity is a good that is sold for money, but advertising's content is not sold to consumers. Consumers do not pay for access to advertisements.

According to one study, global advertising revenue rose from £360 billion in 2010 to £540 billion in 2018 and will reach £602 billion in 2020.[60] In 2009, however, global advertising expenditure decreased by 10 percent.[61] The world economic crisis that started in 2008 resulted in a wave of bankruptcies and falling profit rates. As a result, there was less capital available for investments in advertising, and less appetite for expanding the level of commodity consumption among consumers. By 2011, global advertising revenue had again reached the same absolute level as in 2008.[62] The share of global advertising revenue in the global gross domestic product was 0.5 percent in 2010 and 0.6 percent in

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/Industry_Data.php), Statista (http://www.statista.com), accessed on 29 August 2018.

[59] Manfred Knoche. 2016. The Media Industry's Structural Transformation in Capitalism and the Role of the State: Media Economics in the Age of Digital Communications. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 14 (1): 18–47.

[60] McKinsey & Company. 2016. *Global Media Report 2016*. London: McKinsey & Company. p. 13.

[61] Ofcom. 2012. *International Communications Market Report 2012*. London: Ofcom. p. 21.

[62] Ibid.

2018, which is also the predicted figure for 2020.[63] So overall, the relative size of advertising expenditure has remained fairly constant in the last decade.

Advertising-funded communication corporations are a peculiar type of capitalist corporation. Advertising is a commodity ideology that tries to manipulate human needs and desires in order to advance the sale of commodities. Figure 5.7 shows the advertising industry's process of capital accumulation. Advertising-funded media include online media such as Google and Facebook, commercial TV channels such as CBS, NBC, ABC and Fox TV, and gratis newspapers such as *Metro* or *The Evening Standard*. Advertising-funded media offer a certain product gratis as a communicative 'free lunch'.[64] As they are not sold, these communication products are not commodities. Advertising-funded companies employ paid workers (variable capital v_1) such as journalists, writers, news anchors, moderators, public relations experts, technicians, etc. They also require a technological infrastructure (constant capital c_1) and resources to produce and disseminate their media products (production process P_1). The 'free lunch' is used to attract an audience (who are also users in the case of online media).

Dallas Smythe stresses that audience attention is the commodity (C') that advertising-financed media companies sell to advertisers in order to yield profit.[65] So the exchange going on in advertising-funded media is one between access to audience attention provided by media companies and money paid
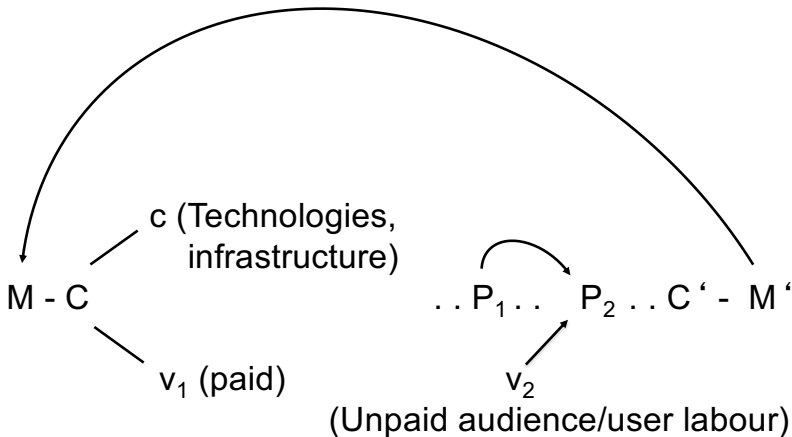
Figure 5.7: The advertising industry's cycle of capital accumulation.

[63] Data source: Global GDP data in current prices, US$: IMF Data Mapper, http://www.imf.org, accessed on 29 August 2018. Advertising revenue data according to McKinsey & Company, *Global Media Report 2016*.

[64] Dallas W. Smythe 1977. Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1–27. p. 5.

[65] Ibid.

for this access by advertisers (C' – M'). In principle, the greater a commercial medium's audience, the more it can charge for a single ad. Audiences produce attention to advertising and advertising-funded programmes (production process P_2). They are therefore audience workers, whose audience labour produces the value and profits of advertising-funded communication corporations. Advertising is exploitation of audience labour that produces attention and of users' digital labour that produces attention and personal data.

Advertising aims to foster consumerism ideologically so that crises of realisation, where commodities cannot be sold, can be prevented. Advertising is an ideological and class phenomenon. Digital advertising in online and mobile media differs from traditional broadcast and newspaper ads, in that it targets users individually. It constantly monitors users' online behaviours. It uses the big data generated from this economic surveillance for personalising ads. It uses algorithmic ad sales and audience selection mechanisms. It operates in the online environment, where audiences not only make meaning out of content (as do broadcast audiences) but act as prosumers (producing consumers of information) who produce social relations and user-generated content. The medium, content, or platform that is produced in process P_1 is not a commodity. In the production process P_2, the platform acts as fixed capital that enters the production of the audience's attention commodity as the means of production.

Figure 5.8 shows how ad-financed media are related to other companies. Regular companies make profit by the investment of money M so that commodities C' are produced and sold. Such sales yield capital M' that contains a profit. Part of the invested capital M is used for buying a) ad space from ad-financed media companies, b) ad campaigns from advertising agencies, and c) audience ratings from marketing and advertising research companies. There are separate cycles of capital accumulation in a) the advertising-financed media industry, b) the ad agency industry, and c) the ratings industry. These industries produce the following commodities: a) audience attention, b) ad campaigns and brands, and c) audience ratings. These industries are fuelled by ad investments made by regular companies throughout the capitalist economy. They have a diverse character and stem from all types of industries. Ad agencies also make investments. Crucial investments for them include the purchase of ad space from media companies in order to run ads for the ad campaigns they sell to other companies. Advertising-financed media sell their audiences' attention as a commodity to advertising clients. They also buy audience ratings from audience measurement companies.

The advertising industry has changed since the rise of the Internet. Advertising has become digital, targeted, personalised, algorithmic. Digital advertising operates based on big data and the real-time surveillance of online behaviour. Users of ad-based platforms generate content, data, meta-data, and social relations that enter ad targeting. As a result, audience labour has become the digital labour of prosumers (producing consumers).
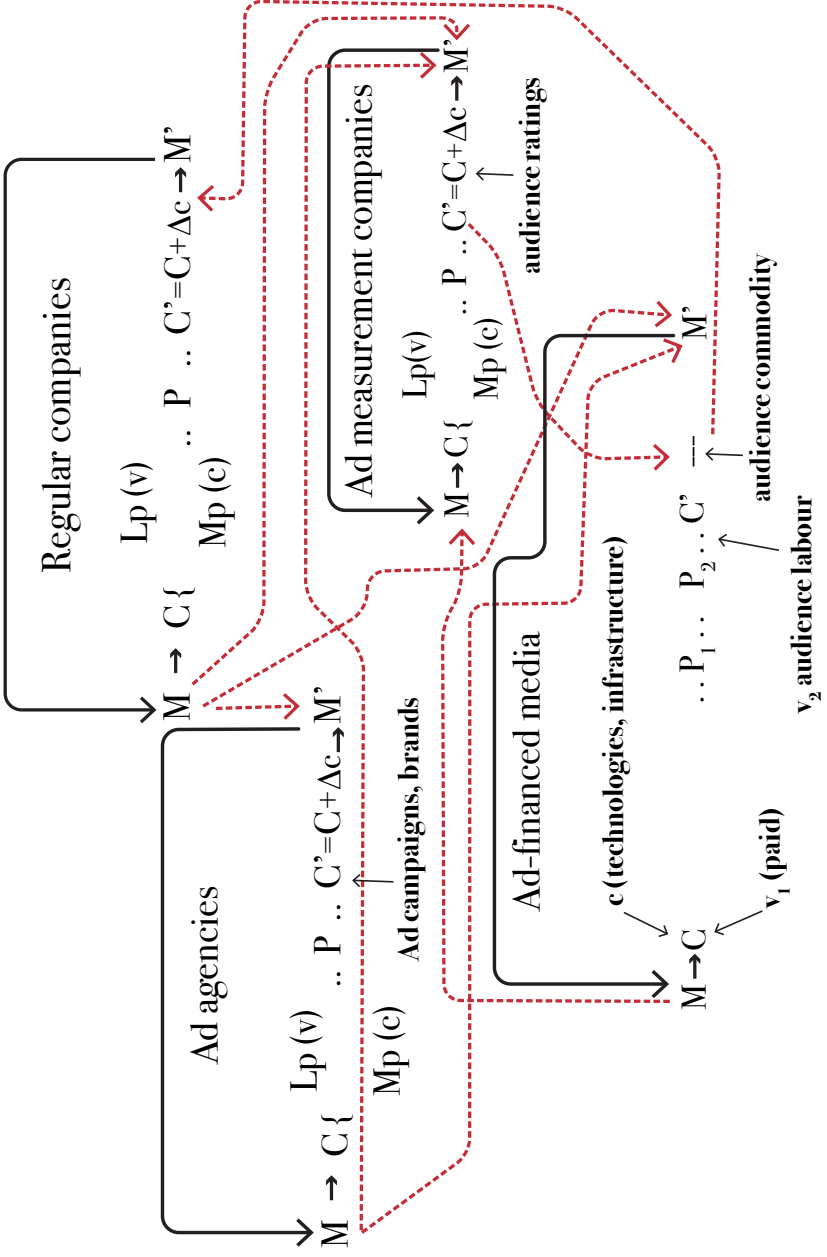
Regular companies

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{matrix} Lp\,(v) \\ Mp\,(c) \end{matrix} \quad .. \quad P \quad .. \quad C' = C + \Delta c \rightarrow M'$$

Ad measurement companies

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{matrix} Lp\,(v) \\ Mp\,(c) \end{matrix} \quad .. \quad P \quad .. \quad C' = C + \Delta c \rightarrow M'$$

audience ratings

Ad agencies

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{matrix} Lp\,(v) \\ Mp\,(c) \end{matrix} \quad .. \quad P \quad .. \quad C' = C + \Delta c \rightarrow M'$$

Ad campaigns, brands

Ad-financed media

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{matrix} c\ (technologies,\ infrastructure) \\ v_1\ (paid) \end{matrix} \quad .. \quad P_1 \quad .. \quad P_2 \quad .. \quad C' \quad --- \rightarrow M'$$

audience commodity

v_2 audience labour

Figure 5.8: The relation of ad-financed media companies to other companies.

Regular companies

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{array}{c} Lp\,(v) \\ Mp\,(c) \end{array} \ldots P \ldots C'=C+\Delta c \rightarrow M'$$

Ad measurement companies

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{array}{c} Lp(v) \\ Mp\,(c) \end{array} \ldots P \ldots C'=C+\Delta c \rightarrow M'$$

audience ratings

Ad agencies

$$M \rightarrow C \{ \begin{array}{c} Lp\,(v) \\ Mp\,(c) \end{array} \ldots P \ldots C'=C+\Delta c \rightarrow M'$$

Ad campaigns, brands

Mixed media company

c (technologies, infrastructure)

$$M \rightarrow C \ldots P_1 \ldots P_2 \ldots C'_1 \quad C'_2$$

v_1 (paid)

v_2

audience commodity

audience labour
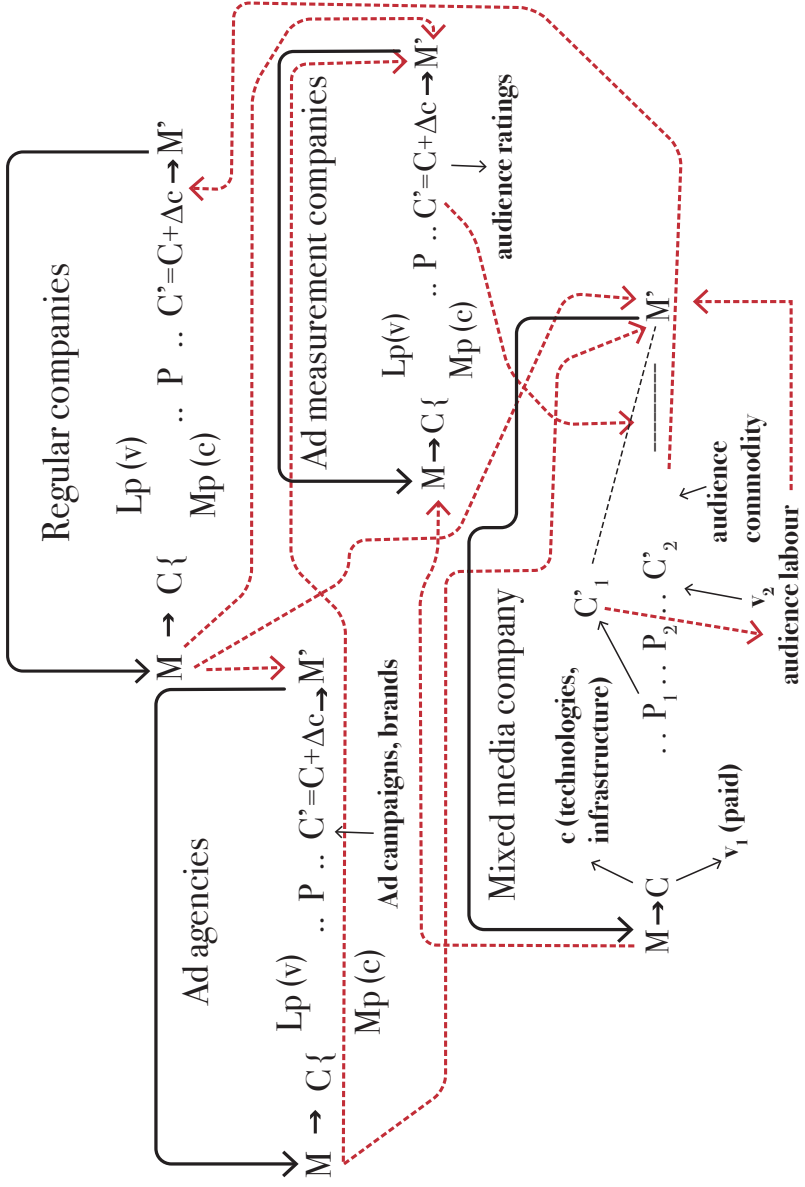
Figure 5.9: Capital accumulation in the mixed media industry that uses advertising as well as other accumulation strategies.
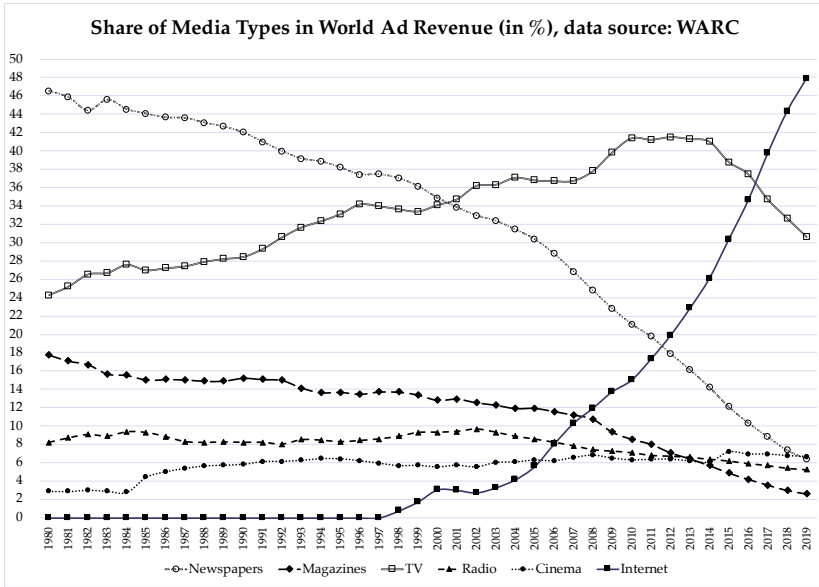
Figure 5.10: The development of different types of advertising in global ad revenue.

Figure 5.10 illustrates the rapid growth of Internet and digital advertising. Its share increased from 0.1 percent in 1996 to around percent in 2020, while in the same period the share of newspaper advertising decreased from 37.0 percent to around 5 percent. Commercialisation, tabloidisation, monopolisation, and digitisation have resulted in a crisis of journalism and newspapers.

Mixed-media companies combine different business models. For example, most newspapers and magazines sell advertising space, copies, and subscriptions. Figure 5.9 shows how mixed-media companies that use advertising as one of their capital accumulation strategies interact with other companies. Mixed media companies have at least a dual form of the commodity: Audience attention (C'_2) is sold to ad clients. At least one other commodity (C'_1) is sold to customers. C'_1 is often content, but can also be some other communication commodity such as communication technologies.

Brands are high-reputation commodities. They are consumed as part of a lifestyle and stand as symbols for a particular lifestyle that certain groups value morally. Many factors influence brand reputation: particular communities' structures, dominant trends in fashion and culture, structures of feeling, lifestyles, the reputation of celebrities and other public figures who consume certain brands in public, what kind of media reports there are about brands and companies selling brands, whether or not companies and their brands have been the subject of protest, and other power relations. Consumers' assessments of brands depend on the complexity of their life realities and experiences, the

structure of feeling of particular individuals, groups and classes, and the inter-action of these and other factors.

We have discussed some aspects of communication in capitalism. As a next step, a systematic analysis of communication in the totality of the capitalist economy will be presented.

5.5. Communication's Roles in the Totality of the Capitalist Economy

The capitalist communication industry forms a differentiated, open, intercon-nected whole, a totality that has dialectically interacting moments and interacts with other totalities in the capitalist economy. In capitalism, various industries and corporations interact with each other. For example, cultural conglomerates com-bine several capital accumulation models (see table 5.4), finance corporations provide loans and venture capital to communication corporations, etc. Together, communication corporations form a whole that changes dynamically and inter-acts with other parts of the economy and various institutions in society (such as the state, that regulates industry). The capitalist economy as totality is the context in which the capitalist communication industry operates. Table 5.6 identifies roles of communication in the totality of the capitalist economy. It identifies these roles in relation to the production, circulation, and consumption of commodities.

Figure 5.11 visualises the role of means of communication in the capitalist economy. The focus here is on the relation between the means of communication in the economy, not their relation to the political system and cultural institutions. The model identifies two major spheres of the media industry: the media content industry and the media infrastructure sphere. In the first, media content is pro-duced, in the second media technologies. Together, the two spheres in capitalism make up the totality of media capital: the capitalist communication and media industry. For the sake of clarity, the advertising industry and mixed media indus-try that was visualised in figures 5.7 and 5.8 has not been visualised separately in figure 5.11. In this figure, the ad industry has instead been subsumed into the media content industry. Advertisements are a peculiar kind of media content.

The dotted line in figure 5.11 shows a connection between audiences and the media content industry. It indicates that the advertising industry is a spe-cial type of the content industry, in which audience members are audience workers creating attention as a commodity, while users of ad-financed Inter-net platforms are digital workers creating attention, data, meta-data, and social relations as a commodity. These commodities are sold to advertisers who can then present ads to the audience/users. In the Internet's communication envi-ronment, audiences are not just consumers of information, but producers and active audiences, who produce content, data, and social relations. They are pro-dusers (producers and users) and prosumers (producers and consumers).

In processes of vertical media integration, there are mergers and acquisitions, or fusions so that at least two companies – at least one company operating in each of

Table 5.6: The role of the means of communication in the capitalist economy.

Circulation	*Production*	*Circulation*	*Consumption*
M – C (Mp, L)	.. P ..	C' – M'	
	Means of Communication as Means of Rationalisation: s/v↑		
	The process of capital concentration and capital centralisation in the realm of the communication industry		
Knowledge workers as wage labourers in communication corporations			
Media as means of inter-organisational corporate communication and co-ordination: v↓, c↓			
Means of communication used for the spatial extension of capitalism			
		Means of communication as carriers of advertisements	
		Transmission media as forms of capital	
		Means of communication and the globalisation of trade	
		Means of communication and the spatial centralisation of capital	
		Media as carriers and diffusion channels of ideologies	
Alternative media as negating forces in media production, circulation, and consumption			

the two media realms (the media content industry and the media infrastructure industry) – converge into one. Vertical integration blurs the boundaries between the two spheres of the media industry. Media concentration and horizontal integration means that there are mergers, acquisitions, and fusions within one industry. Such processes are inherent to capitalism and therefore also take place in the
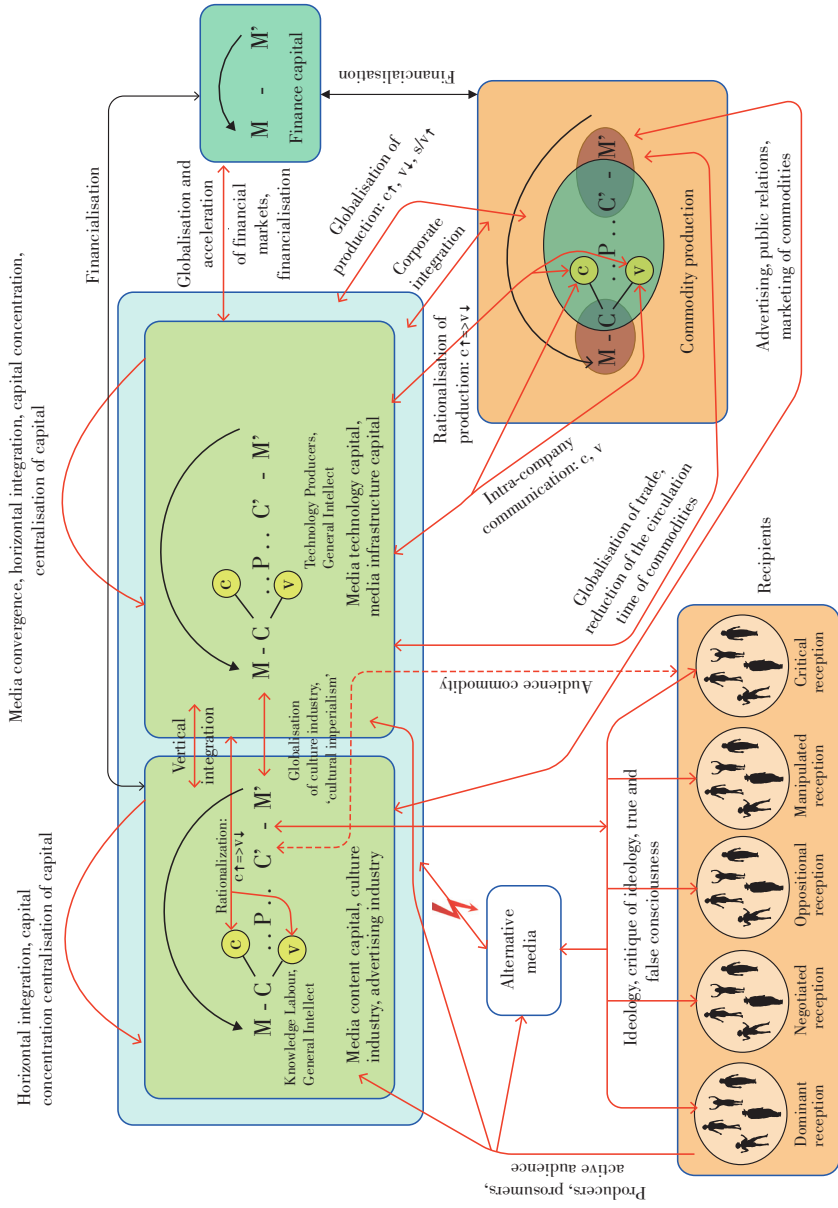
Figure 5.11: The capitalist communication industry and its relations to the capitalist economy.

two spheres of the capitalist media industry. The convergence of media technologies (e.g. the convergence of communication technologies for the production, circulation, and consumption of information in the universal information and communication technology of the Internet) takes place in the sphere of media infrastructure capital. The two spheres of media content capital and media infrastructure capital together advance the globalisation of the culture industry. In this context, questions of 'cultural imperialism' also play a role.[66] Imperialism is discussed in more detail in chapter 11 of this book.

Finance capital is capital in the form M – M', where more money is created out of money. It includes for example bank credits, credit cards, derivatives, loans, shares, stocks, and venture capital. Finance capital shapes all realms of contemporary capitalism. Financialisation means that finance capital diversifies its forms and that ever more spheres of life and of the economy come under the influence of finance capital and its derivatives. 'The strong wave of financialization that set in after 1973 [the 1973 economic crisis] has been […] spectacular for its speculative and predatory style'.[67] 'There have been several bouts of financialisation throughout capital's history (the latter half of the 19th century, for example). What makes the current phase special is the phenomenal acceleration in the speed of circulation of money capital and the reduction in financial transaction costs. The mobility of money capital relative to that of other forms of capital (commodities and production in particular) has dramatically increased. Capital's penchant for the annihilation of space through time has a large role to play'.[68] Financialisation has increased the susceptibility of capitalism to crises. For example, many capitalists need loans in order to make investments. In the capitalist communication industry, venture capital plays an important role. It injects capital into start-up companies that do not make profits. Often, these start-ups are then able to make an initial public offering on the stock market. The venture capital firms obtain special rights and status in the corporation. They play with an option on the future and expect to make large returns when the companies into which they invest venture capital manage to make profits. Venture capital plays an important role in the Silicon

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[66] See: Peter Golding and Phil Harris, ed. 1997. *Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalization, Communication and the New International Order*. London: Sage. Christian Fuchs. 2010. New Imperialism: Information and Media Imperialism? *Global Media and Communication* 6 (1): 33–60. Oliver Boyd-Barrett. 2014. *Media Imperialism*. London: Sage. Tanner Mirrlees. 2013. *Global Entertainment Media: Between Cultural Imperialism and Cultural Globalization*. New York: Routledge.

[67] David Harvey. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 147.

[68] David Harvey. 2014. *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 178.

Valley model of digital capitalism. Information and communication technologies have advanced the scope and speed of financial transactions. There is a mutual relationship of the capitalist media industry and finance capital.

In the bottom right corner of figure 5.10, we find accumulation processes in the conventional capitalist economy outside of the media sector and the finance sector. This realm is connected to the media industry through conglomeration, a form of mergers, acquisitions and fusions in which companies producing diverse commodity types are integrated. Communication technologies foster the rationalisation of production in the economy at large. The goal of rationalisation is to increase productivity, which expresses itself in an increase of the rate of surplus value (s/v, p/v), i.e. the relationship of monetary surplus value (= profit) to variable capital. Such an increase results in the production of more profit per unit of time through a qualitative change of the means of production. Communication technologies also influence the globalisation of the production, circulation, and consumption of commodities. The globalisation of capitalism in turn also advances the need for and development of new technologies. There is a dialectic of globalisation and the development of communication technologies. Communication technologies also support intra- and inter-company communication. Rationalisation, globalisation, and changes of corporate communication aim at increasing profits by reducing investment costs (both variable and constant capital) and fostering relative surplus value production (the production of more value, commodities, and profit per unit of time). The advertising and marketing industry forms a part of the media content industry. It influences the circulation of capital in the non-media industries. Advertising, PR, and marketing aim to increase the number of commodities sold and the speed of commodity sales and consumption by fostering corporate ideology and consumerism. Their task is to increase the probability that the value of produced commodities is realised into profit by sales processes.

Alternative media form a sphere of the media industry whose communication processes challenge the capitalist media sector. Alternative media are not oriented on profit. They help to create and disseminate critical content, and enable critical reflection on society. Alternative media challenge capitalism and domination.

Content disseminated through means of communication reaches audiences who then interpret it. The reception of information is visualised in the lower left section of figure 5.11. The model discerns five types of reception: In dominant reception, audience members by and large reproduce the meanings encoded into media content by the producers. In oppositional reception, they oppose the dominant encoded meanings and produce different meanings. In negotiated reception, there is a mixture of dominant and oppositional meanings. In his encoding/decoding model of the media, Stuart Hall distinguishes among these three types of decoding.[69] The problem, however, is that power structures

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[69] Stuart Hall. 1973. *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Papers #5. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

influence reception, so that not all forms of reception are equally likely. Factors such as the (un)democratic quality of the public sphere, available time, educational and skills structures, dominant political worldviews, class structures, personal experiences, etc. influence reception and what forms of reception are dominant. In capitalist society, we often find an asymmetrical distribution of the different forms of decoding of a particular content.

Discerning just these three forms of reception lacks the capacity to classify the interpretation of information in terms of true and false consciousness, which results in a relativist, uncritical theorisation of reception. Any reception that justifies domination or class relations is an expression of false consciousness. The falseness of consciousness refers to worldviews and interpretations that justify or evaluate conditions of class or domination positively and that limit the development potentials of humans and society. False consciousness is ideological consciousness. It often reifies reality by naturalising domination and exploitation, thereby overlooking that these phenomena are societal relations and have a historical character. If one limits reception possibilities to dominant, oppositional, and negotiated decoding, then in a situation where anti-fascism is the dominant worldview, fascist consciousness is oppositional reception and oppositional consciousness. In order to avoid such misapplications, we need to add two more forms of reception to the model: Critical reception is a form of interpretation of content where audience members critically reflect on society, and a type of consciousness that challenges exploitation and domination. Manipulated reception is an expression of false consciousness. It buys into ideologies, believes in and advances domination and class society.

Alternative media and media reception form a realm where ideologies are potentially challenged by critical consciousness, worldviews, and praxis, and where the capitalist mode of organising the communication system is potentially challenged. The capitalist media and communication system has a conflicted and contradictory character. There is, however, no guarantee of the success or even the existence of resistance or alternatives. The struggle against capitalism is hard toil. Alternatives often remain precarious, lack resources, develop internal contradictions, are short-lived, etc. The history of alternative media is a history of a lack of resources and precarious, self-exploitative labour.

5.6. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main conclusions:

- Capitalism is a class society in which the capitalist class exploits workers in order to accumulate capital and where the accumulation principle has the role of a general principle for the organisation of power structures. Capitalism is not just in the form of the capitalist economy an economic system, but is a type of society, a societal formation, whose structural principle is the logic of accumulation.

- Class society means economic alienation, where workers do not control and own the means of production and the products they create. They are alienated from themselves and their social and societal species-being. Capitalist society's logic of accumulation interacts and grounds the logic of acceleration. Dominant actors try to accumulate capital, political power, and cultural power by increasing the speed of the production, circulation and use of commodities, collective political decisions, and experiences.
- Information and communication are peculiar goods: It is hard to exclude others from access to information. Information is non-rivalrous in consumption. As a consequence, information can easily be copied and distributed as a gratis resource. Media capital reacts to this peculiar character of information by a range of capital accumulation models. Such models include the media content model, the media services model, the advertising model, the hardware model, the online retail model, the subscription and streaming model, the cloud storage model, the sharing economy platform model, and mixed models. These capital accumulation models have in common that they exploit labour in class relations in the context of information and communication. In each of them, a particular commodity is sold that has to do with communication. Strategies in the capitalist communication sector include for example the control and sale of access to pieces of information (such as a movie or a song), the sale of online subscriptions to content, the sale of access to libraries of content, the sale of licensed versions and copies of content; the sale of communication technologies needed for producing, circulating, and consuming content; the sale of advertising spaces, the sale of access to communication networks, the sale of content storage spaces (cloud computing, web hosting, etc.), charging rent for the use of certain platforms in order to deliver services, etc.
- The capitalist communication industry is a differentiated, open, interconnected totality: Different forms of communication labour exploited by communication corporations are related to each other in the form of the international division of communication labour. The communication sector interacts with other parts of the capitalist economy, such as regular companies and finance capital. Audience members act as recipients who interpret media content in various ways. In the case of advertising, audiences are workers who produce attention and the audience commodity. In the case of targeted online advertising, users are workers who produce online attention and the data commodity. Ad-funded media companies sell these peculiar commodities to ad clients, who in return for payments are enabled to present ads to audiences and users. The capitalist communication industry has a contradictory character. Alternative media and critical reception challenge capitalist communication.

A critical theory of communication needs to discern various types of the means of communication. The next chapter therefore deals with the question of how to discern among different social forms of communication.

CHAPTER 6

Communication Technologies: Means of Communication as Means of Production

Communication technologies are the means used in communication. This chapter discusses communication technologies from a materialist and critical theory perspective. To do so, the chapter introduces a typology of communication technologies (section 6.1), discusses communication technologies' roles in capitalism (6.2), and elaborates the notion of technological fetishism (6.3).

6.1. Types of Communication and Communication Technologies

John B. Thompson discerns three forms of communication: face-to-face interaction that is dialogical (e.g. a conversation with friends), mediated interaction that is dialogical (e.g. a phone call), and mediated quasi-interaction that is monological (e.g. mass media such as a radio and television broadcast or a newspaper article).[1] Building on and further extending Thompson's distinction to include digital communication, Andreas Hepp[2] distinguishes four types of communication: direct communication ('direct conversation with other people'), reciprocal media communication ('technically mediated personal communication with other persons [for instance, through the use of a telephone]', produced media communication ('the sphere of media communication classically identified by the concept of mass communication [newspaper, radio, TV]'), and virtualised media communication ('communication

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[1] John B. Thompson. 1995. *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity. p. 85

[2] Andreas Hepp. 2013. *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity. pp. 64–68.

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by means of "interactive systems" created for that purpose').[3] Friedrich Krotz, besides face-to-face communication, identifies three types of mediated communication: communication between humans via media (e.g. letters, telephone, online chat), communication with the media (e.g. television, the reading of texts), and interactive communication with robots and computers.[4]

Raymond Williams offers a somewhat different starting point for classifying communication and communication technologies. Williams draws a distinction between communication and communications.[5] Communication is the 'passing of ideas, information, and attitudes from person to person'.[6] Communications are 'the institutions and forms in which ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received'.[7] Communication is a process and practice that takes place in human society.[8] In contrast, communications are not practices, but rather structures, systems, institutions, and forms. Communication and communications stand in a dialectical relationship: Humans create social relations through communication. And they communicate by making use of the means of communication (communications). Communications only have a meaningful use if they are employed and put to use by humans in the communication process. Communications enable and condition communication. The development of new communications is a social process that involves various actors (scientists, engineers, practitioners, etc.) and that is organised through communication processes focused on research and development. Table 6.1 shows a typology of communications based on Raymond Williams' works.

Williams distinguishes between different social forms of communication. He identifies five forms of the means of communication: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, amplificatory communications, durative communications, and alternative communications. His typology differentiates between forms of communication that employ immediate human physical resources (verbal communication, non-verbal communication) on the one hand, and on the other hand, communications (= communication systems). Communications use non-human materials that human work produces. Communications

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[3] Ibid., p. 64.

[4] Friedrich Krotz. 2007. *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. pp. 16–17, 90.

[5] Raymond Williams. 1976. *Communications.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. Revised edition.

[6] Ibid., p. 9.

[7] Ibid., p. 9.

[8] Raymond Williams. 2014. *On Culture & Society: Essential Writings*, ed. Jim McGuigan. London: Sage. p. 175.

Table 6.1: Raymond Williams' typology of the means of communication[9]

Communication based on immediate human physical resources of the human body	Verbal communication	Spoken language, written language, poetry, songs, etc.
	Non-verbal communication	Body language, dance, postures, gestures, facial expressions, etc.
Communications based on non-human materials socially produces by human labour	Amplificatory communications	Megaphone, television, radio, cable and satellite television, etc.
	Durative communications (storage)	Seals, coins, medals, paintings, sculptures, carvings, woodcuts, written texts, printed texts, sound recordings, film, video, cassettes, discs, etc.
	Alternative communications	Alternative speaking, listening, seeing, recording featuring democratic communal use, self-management, autonomy, collective cultural production: e.g. free radio stations, etc.

include amplificatory communications, durative storage communications, and alternative communications.[10]

Williams shows how in the course of history the dominant class has taken control of durative and amplificatory communication systems. The consequence has been the concentration and monopolisation of the communications industry. Such communications monopolies have not just been monopolies of economic power, but also monopolies of voice and access.

Williams identifies some key features of communication and communications systems. His typology faces the problem of overlapping categories. Computer networks are examples of the overlap of categories that Williams identifies. A computer network has the capacity to *amplify* the visibility given to information online. Computer systems such as web hosting servers *store* content and meta-data. Individual computers in a computer network are *storage* media that store content as digital data that is transmittable at high speed.

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[9] Based on: Raymond Williams. 1980/2005. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso Books. pp. 53–63. Raymond Williams. 1981. *Culture*. Glasgow: Fontana-Collins. Chapter 4. This table was first introduced in: Christian Fuchs. 2017. Raymond Williams' Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (6): 744–762.

[10] For an overview of Williams' theoretical approach to communication, see: Christian Fuchs. 2017. Raymond Williams' Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (6): 744–762.

Computer networks form *alternatives* to human practices because they can record, store, and transmit information collected from human activities and thereby make information about society durable. Computer networks are often organised as commercial endeavours yielding profit. Most users pay money to profit-oriented Internet Service Providers for gaining access to networked resources and the Internet. But there are also *alternative*, commons-based computer networks (so-called 'community networks') that do not consider communications networks as commodities, but as common goods.[11]

Communication needs communications in order to organise the production, distribution and consumption of information. The production, distribution, and consumption of information can be based on nature, human practices, or technological systems. The computer network is a communication technology in which we find a convergence of the production, the distribution and the consumption of information. Digital technologies allow information to take on a universal format. In addition, the computer network enables the production, distribution, and consumption of information with the help of one technology. So, the computer and digitisation enable the convergence of the formats and organisation of communication. Another dimension of the universalisation of communication is that the computer enables consumers to be producers of information. The production and consumption of information converge in one technology. The computer is a universal machine for universal communication.

Traditionally, there was a distinction between machines that are means of production and media that are means of communication. Means of communication are means of production because when information is communicated, then recipients produce meanings by interpreting information. But the computer goes beyond this basic understanding of means of communication as means of production. The computer is different from television, the radio, the cinema, the newspaper, and the book in that it enables users to consume, produce, and publish information. Computer-mediated communication is not purely technological: Computer use is based on human activities (writing, typing, human speech, bodily movements) by which digital data is created. The computer is operated as a combination of the human body, the human mind, and computer technology. It combines several of the communication types identified by Williams. Technologically mediated communication helps to stretch communication over spatial and temporal distances. Communication technologies advance the spatio-temporal distanciation and globalisation of communication that disembeds communication from local contexts and re-embeds it into other contexts. Mediated communication is always based on and grounded in human bodily and mental activities.

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[11] See: Christian Fuchs. 2017. Sustainability and Community Networks. *Telematics and Informatics* 34 (2): 628–639.

Marisol Sandoval elaborated a systematic typology of communication technologies (see figure 6.1).[12] In contrast, most other media typologies are theoretically ungrounded and arbitrary. Sandoval relates different types of media to the processes of the production, distribution, and consumption of information. This distinction between production, distribution and consumption is characteristic of political economy approaches. In the case of communication and communications, information and symbols are the goods that are produced, disseminated, and consumed. To these three dimensions Sandoval adds a fourth, namely the prosumption (productive consumption) of information that is especially enabled by digital media. Like Williams, Sandoval distinguishes communication technologies based on the question of whether communication is organised with the help of the human mind and body or uses external technologies (in addition to the human mind and body). But Sandoval combines this distinction with a political economy focus. The result is a systematic typology of five types of communication technologies:

> In the first case no media technology is involved for production, distribution, or consumption. […] In the second case media technology is used for encoding content, but distribution and consumption is possible without media technology, as is the case with all print media. In the third case media technology is needed for both encoding and decoding of media content; distribution, however, takes place without the involvement of media technology. […] In the fourth case all stages of the media production, distribution and consumption processes are based on media technology. […] With computers and the Internet a fifth way of circulating media content has emerged, which allows the use of the same media technologies for both production and consumption of media content. These technologies can therefore be called media prosumption technologies. Based on these technologies a more interactive way of producing media content has emerged in which all users have the technological means to not only consume but also produce media content.[13]

Table 6.2 summarises the main dimensions of the five types of communication technologies identified in figure 6.1.

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[12] Marisol Sandoval. 2014. *From Corporate to Social Media. Critical Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility in Media and Communication Industries.* Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 42–50.

[13] Ibid., p. 48.
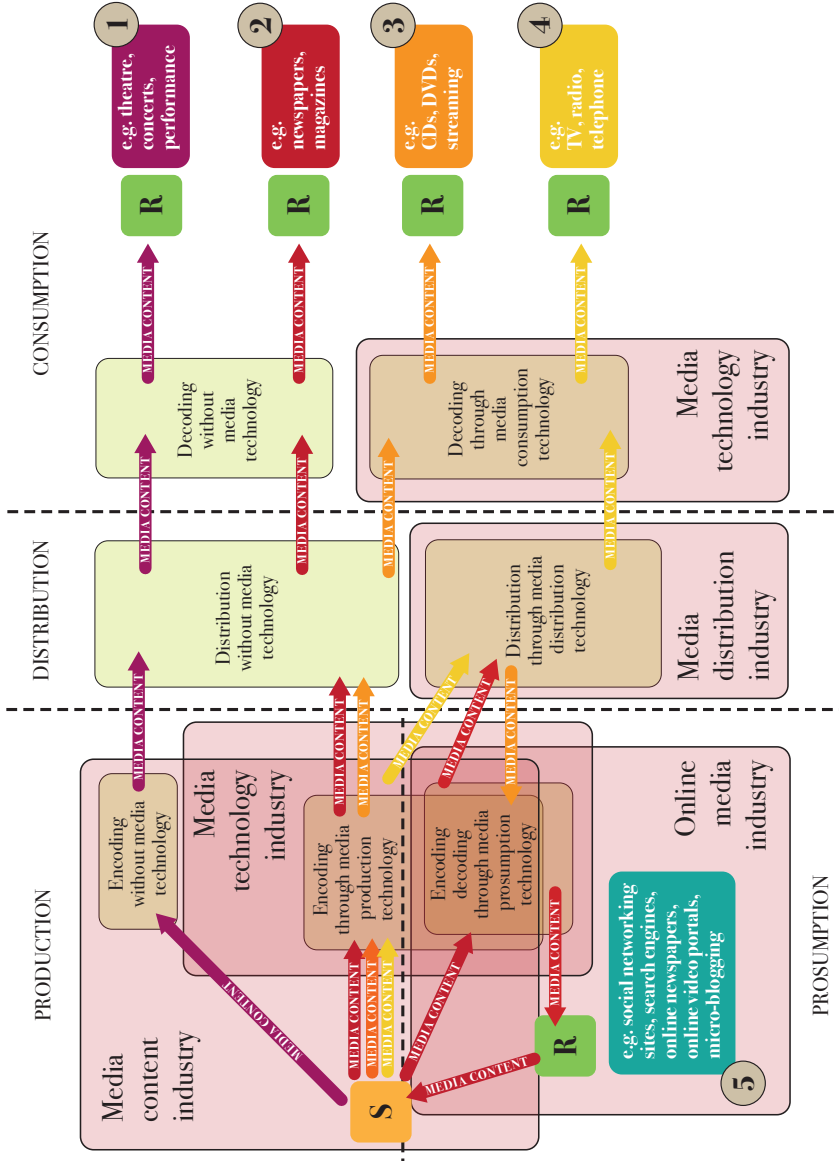
Figure 6.1: Five types of communication technologies.[14]

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[14] Based on: Sandoval, From Corporate to Social Media. Critical Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility in Media and Communication Industries. p. 47.

Table 6.3. presents a classification of communication technologies according to the senses and body parts primarily used for their production and reception. It also shows the way time and space are utilised.

Table 6.2: Five types of communication technologies.

	Role of mediation by technology	**Examples**
Primary communication technologies	Human body and mind, no media technology is used for the production, distribution, reception of information	Theatre, concert, performance, interpersonal communication
Secondary communication technologies	Use of media technology for the production of information	Newspapers, magazines, books, technologically produced arts and culture
Tertiary communication technologies	Use of media technology for the production and consumption of information, not for distribution	CDs, DVDs, tapes, records, Blu-ray disks, hard disks
Quaternary communication technologies	Use of media technology for the production, distribution and consumption of information	TV, radio, film, telephone, Internet
Quinary communication technologies	Digital media prosumption technologies, user-generated content	Internet, social media

Table 6.3: Forms of communication and communication technologies classified according to the role of human senses, the body, the mind, space, and time[15]

Communication	**Production**	**Reception**	**Formats**	**Time**	**Space**
Print/visual communication	Brain, hands	Brain, eyes	Newspaper, journal, books, pamphlets, leaflet, comics, satirical prints, flyers, visual art, graffiti, dress, textiles, pins, buttons, stickers, murals, etc.	Asynchronous	Distance
Audio communication	Brain, mouth	Brain, ears	Radio, telephone	Synchronous	Distance

(Contd.)

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[15] Based on: Christian Fuchs. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies.* London: Routledge. p. 93 (table 3.3).

Table 6.3: *(Continued)*

Communi-cation	Production	Reception	Formats	Time	Space
Audio communi-cation	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, ears	Face-to-face communication, Conversation, talks, lectures, singing songs	Synchro-nous	Presence
Audio communi-cation	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, ears, body	Concerts, choir, dancing	Synchro-nous	Presence
Audio communi-cation	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, ears, body	Sound recordings (records, music cassettes, CD, MP3, etc)	Asynchro-nous	Distance
Audio-visual com-munication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Theatre, perfor-mance, happening	Synchro-nous	Presence
Audio-visual com-munication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Film, video	Asynchro-nous	Distance
Audio-visual com-munication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Live television	Synchro-nous	Distance
Multi-media, computer, Internet communi-cation	Brain, hands, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Digital text, digital audio, digital video, real time text/audio/video chat, online radio, online TV, wikis, blogs, Internet art, etc	Synchro-nous or asynchro-nous	Distance

Next, we will discuss what roles communication technology has in capitalism.

6.2. Communication Technology's Roles in Capitalism

Technology is in general a means that humans use in order to achieve par-ticular aims such as survival, organisation, and making meaning and sense of the world. Domination and class are societal relations in which humans are not ends in themselves, but means and instruments. The word 'technol-ogy' goes back to the Greek word *technê* (τέχνη) – 'an art or craft'.[16] Since the

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[16] Raymond Williams. 1983. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press. Revised edition. p. 315

19th century, the word 'technology' has increasingly been used as meaning science and the application of science in the form of machines as systems of production.[17] The industrial revolution resulted in a changed meaning of the word 'technology' from subjective practices towards objects, things, and systems. It has undergone a reification.

For Aristotle, *technê* is one of the five powers of thought/the soul: *technê* (art), *episteme* (knowledge), *phronesis* (practical judgement), *sophia* (wisdom), and *nous* (intellect).[18] Aristotle understands *technê* as skilled making and defines it as 'a particular active condition involving reason that governs making' and 'involving a true rational understanding that governs making'.[19] He gives the example of the art of building a house. *Technê* is concerned with 'the process of coming into being', which means that it makes and creates something.[20] It is different from nature that makes itself or comes into being by necessity. In *technê*, 'the source is in the one who makes it and not in the thing that is made'.[21] So, Aristotle argues that the ground and rationality that governs *technê* comes from the maker/producer and not from an external source.

It is not a problem as such that technological systems have emerged as a means of production in modern society. The real problem is modernity's class character. The problem that workers face is that the means of production are not, as in the case of *technê,* collectively controlled and owned by themselves (self-managed companies), but are capital that the capitalist class owns. The historical transformation of technology from art towards technological systems has taken place in the context of the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, where the ownership of the means and results of production is privatised. As a consequence, capital controls technology, and all other means of production and the conditions of production are alienated from the immediate producers. Technology thereby acts as an alien system under the control of capital that is used as a means of exploitation, control, surplus value production and capital accumulation. In capitalism, the source of control of the means of production, including technology and the economy as a whole is not, as in *technê,* 'in the one who makes it', but in the one who owns it, the capitalist. In a socialist society, technology is collectively controlled by the immediate producers and therefore becomes a form of *technê.* Marx formulates this inversion in the following way: In the capitalist system,

> all means for the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Aristotle. 2002. *Nicomachean Ethics.* Translated by Joe Sachs. Indianapolis, IN: Focus. § 1139b.

[19] Ibid., § 1140a.

[20] Ibid., § 1140a.

[21] Ibid., § 1140a.
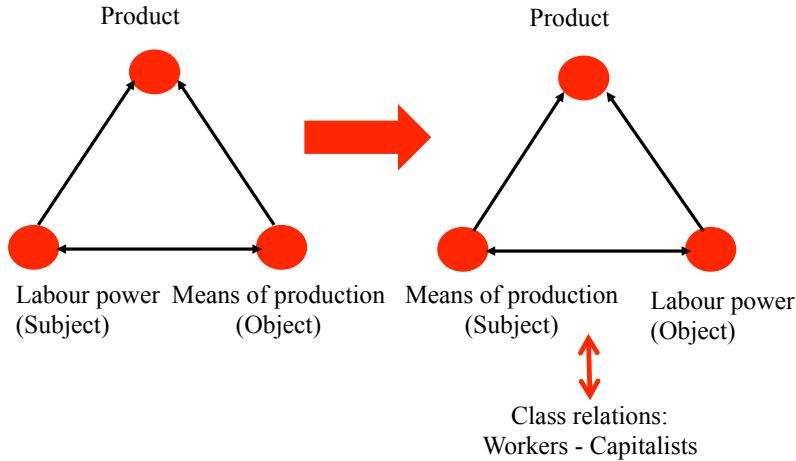
Figure 6.2: The inversion of means and ends and of subject and object in capitalism: Technology as capitalist means of domination and exploitation.

of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate [*entfremden*] from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time[22].

Figure 6.2 visualises the capitalist inversion of means and ends. The object – capital – acts as the subject and the workers are not subjects, but exploited objects of capital.

Because of the inversion of means and ends, labour is in capitalism '*absolute poverty*: poverty not as shortage, but as total exclusion of objective wealth'.[23] But without labour, capital cannot exist because labour produces capital. Therefore, labour has an immense power potential because it is 'the *general possibility* of wealth as subject and as activity'.[24] Labour therefore is a 'contradictory being'.[25]

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[22] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 799

[23] Karl Marx. 1857/58/1973. *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin. p. 296.

[24] Ibid., p. 296.

[25] Ibid., p. 296.

It is the subject of production, but at the same time the not-subject of the means of production that are owned by capital.

With the rise of modern technology under capitalist conditions, the logic of instrumental reason has become dominant.[26] Humans are instrumentalised in two ways: First, they are used by those in power as means for accumulating capital, power, and reputation. Second, ideologies aim at instrumentalising human consciousness by trying to manipulate and shape humans in such a way that they agree to, do not resist, and love their own oppression and exploitation. In *Capital Volume 1*, Marx describes in the chapter 'Machinery and Large-Scale Industry' how capitalist technology's rise was associated with the inversion of means and ends:[27] Technology became a means for the organisation of exploitation, control and surplus value production. Humans became an appendage to the machine, so that the objects as capital control the subjects. In capitalism, humanity is not the end, but humans are rather the means that as a resource is exploited with the help of technology for the end of capital accumulation. In capitalism, the workers in the labour process are not in control of the four Aristotelian causes: the material, the efficient, the formal and the final cause (see chapter 4, section 4.1). Capital controls and shapes these causes. Capital controls the means of production (material cause), management commands the workforce (efficient cause) and the workers' behaviour in the labour process (formal cause), and capital owns the final products that are not merely use-values, but predominantly commodities that yield profit in the capital accumulation process (final cause).

Knowledge workers use their brains, digital technologies, and other technologies as means of production. They have to be highly inventive and creative in order to produce artworks, designs, software, music, films, videos, images, animations, communication strategies, etc. Rosalind Gill characterises labour in the culture and digital industry as featuring self-determination and love of the work combined with short-term, precarious, insecure labour, a long-hours culture, low payments, and a lack of work-life-balance.[28] The content of labour may not feel alienated, but the conditions of labour are objectively alienated.

In conceiving the relationship between communication technologies and society, there are two extremes: Technological determinism reduces the relation to technology. It sees technology as the determining factor of society. Sociological determinism sees no relative autonomy of technological dynamics, but rather

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[26] Max Horkheimer. 1947/1974/2004. *Eclipse of Reason*. London: Continuum.

[27] Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*, chapter 15.

[28] Rosalind Gill. 2011. 'Life is a Pitch': Managing the Self in New Media Work. In *Managing Media work*, ed. Mark Deuze, 249–262. London: Sage. Rosalind Gill. 2002. Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Europe. *Information, Communication & Society* 5 (1): 70–89.

argues that effects are fully built into technology by humans and therefore are predictable and controllable. The alternative to these two approaches is a dialectic of technology and society that argues that technologies are produced by humans in society and that technologies enable and constrain production in society so that both technological and social dynamics are created by human practices, but because of their complexities are to a certain degree unpredictable. A similar dialectic concerns the assessment of the effects of technology on society: Technological optimists argue that technologies necessarily have positive effects on society, whereas technological pessimists hold that technologies create negative effects on society. Dialectical positions assume that technology in an antagonistic society has an antagonistic character and antagonistic effects. Technology does not have only one clearly determinable impact on society, but multiple ones that stand in contradiction.

There is also a dialectic of the exploitative and emancipatory aspects of technology's effects on society. In capitalism, technology plays a role as a means of relative surplus value production. It is also used as a means of control and surveillance. But technology in capitalism also advances the antagonism between the productive forces and the relations of production, so that germ forms of a commons-based society emerge that cannot be realised within capitalism. Within private property relations, this antagonism forms one of the factors contributing to economic crises. As a consequence, liberation from capital requires both the fundamental transformation of society and the redesign of technology. Modern technologies as such have the potential to reduce necessary labour time, abolish toil, increase the amount of self-determined free time beyond necessity, and help advance a good life and wealth for all. But under capitalist conditions, technology is a means of control and exploitation that advances the crisis-proneness and antagonisms of capitalism. Technology deepens the capitalist antagonisms that are ultimately all class antagonisms, but at the same time create socialist potentials. A negative dialectic mediates this dialectic of capitalist reality and socialist potentials of technology, so that technology in capitalism is a destructive force that deepens and advances exploitation, domination, precarious life and labour, unemployment, and crisis-proneness.

There are a number of important roles of technology in capitalism:

- *Dehumanisation*: Capitalism results in dehumanisation. It treats humans like dead objects, things, and machines for the production of capital.
- *Alienation*: The capitalist application of technologies interacts with labour's alienation. Workers are thereby appendages to the machine. Capitalist technology is alienated technology and class technology.
- *Fixed constant capital*: In capitalism, technology is fixed constant capital. It is a means for the production of relative surplus value, i.e. for the increase of productivity that goes along with an intensification of the exploitation of labour. Fixed constant capital is also employed as means of surveillance and control of workers.

- *Relative surplus value production*: A number of methods are used by capitalists in order to try to produce more commodities, value and profit per unit of time: co-operation, the division of labour, and machinery.[29] Technology plays a key role in capitalism as a means of relative surplus value production. It transforms the production process qualitatively.
- *The antagonism of productive forces and relations of production*: The antagonism between the relations of production and the productive forces is a source of crises of capitalism. Technology in capitalism is embedded into an antagonism between necessary labour-time and surplus labour-time. This antagonism on the one hand advances the potentials for communism and well-rounded individuality. On the other hand, it deepens the potentials and realities of crisis, precarious life and labour, unemployment, overtime, and the uneven distribution of labour time.
- *The general intellect*: Modern technology stands in the context of capitalism's need to increase productivity. Capitalism's need for technological advances and the increase of productivity has advanced the importance of science and technology and along with it of knowledge labour in the capitalist economy. Marx speaks in this context of the general intellect – 'general social knowledge' that becomes a direct productive force.[30] The increasing importance of knowledge and communicative labour in capitalism results from the development of the productive forces.
- *The division of labour*: Capitalist technology has a class character, which means that it is embedded in the relation between capital and labour and along with class relations into various divisions of labour: the international division of labour, the gender division of labour, the geographical division of labour between town and country as well as between developing and developed countries, the division of labour between labour and management, the division of labour between mental and manual labour, etc.
- *Social problems*: The capitalist employment of technology contributes to social problems such as overwork, unemployment, stress, workplace injuries, precarious labour, work surveillance, etc.
- *Technology and class struggles*: Technology does not determine society, but is rather embedded in class struggles. Technology is not the cause, but a means and result of social and societal change. The application of modern technology is contested. Its impacts are subject to the outcome of class struggles.
- *Contradictions of technology, the dialectic of technology and society*: Technology in capitalism has contradictory effects on the economy and society.
- *Technology and socialism*: Socialism requires highly productive technologies in order to abolish wage-labour and enable a post-scarcity society

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29 Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*, Chapters 13, 14 and 15.
30 Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 706.

that is built around freely determined activities beyond compulsion and necessity.

- *The globalisation and acceleration of capitalism*: In order to increase profitability, capital aims to accelerate the speed of production, distribution, and consumption. It also tries to locate production in places where the conditions of production are best in order to yield profit. The effects are the globalisation and acceleration of capitalism. The development of means of information and communication stands in a dialectical relation to the globalisation and acceleration of capitalism.

Technology also has an ideological role in capitalism. In the next section, we discuss this ideological role as technological fetishism.

6.3. Technological Fetishism

Capitalism's commodity structure has a particular ideological appearance that Marx terms the fetishism of commodities. Because capitalist transactions such as the sales process and consumption are mediated by commodities and money, humans do not immediately see the underlying social relations of production, i.e. the class relations, the labour processes, and the workers that underpin the production of commodities. The social relations of production disappear behind the thing-character of the commodity and money. The 'social relation between' humans takes on 'the fantastic form of a relation between things'.[31] That which exists in the capitalist economy – class relations, exploitation, exchange, etc. – therefore appears as 'socio-natural properties'.[32] Commodity fetishism is a structure that makes capitalism appear natural, unhistorical, and a necessity. It therefore has ideological implications. Commodity fetishism is an ideology of naturalisation built into the economic structures of capitalism.

Fetishism is not limited to the commodity and money, but extends into phenomena such as the state, labour, ideology, nationalism, and technology. Technological fetishism is an ideology that makes capitalist technology appear natural and without alternatives. In his book *History and Class Consciousness*, Georg Lukács describes how in capitalism, technologies are turned into fetish objects. He speaks of 'the exploitation for particular human ends (as in technology, for example) of […] fatalistically accepted and immutable laws'.[33] Technological fetishism distorts technology's 'true objective nature by representing its function in the capitalist production process as its "eternal"

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[31] Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*, p. 165.

[32] Ibid., p. 165.

[33] Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin. p. 38.

essence'.[34] Technological fetishism does not see and present capitalist technology as historical, changeable, antagonistic and a site of class struggles, but rather as unhistorical, unchangeable, one-dimensional, and unitary. Lukács explicates a critique of technological fetishism in his review of Nikolai Bukharin's book *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*. Lukács contests the idea that 'the development of society depends on technique' and argues against separating technology 'from the other ideological forms [as] a self-sufficiency from the economic structure of society'.[35] Such assumptions constitute a 'false "naturalism"' and technological fetishism.[36] Lukács analyses technological determinism as technological fetishism.

There are some typical characteristics of technological fetishism:

- *Autonomy*: Technology is presented as being a force that is autonomous from society's power structures. Technology is not situated in society as totality. Capitalist technology's situatedness in class structures, exploitation, and domination is neglected.
- *Subjectivity*: Technology is presented as a subject that acts. Human actors are neglected or their role is downplayed. The purpose of this ideological move is to reify technological developments as inevitable, unchangeable, unavoidable, and irreversible by presenting them as independent of human will and action.
- *Claims of revolution*: Technological developments are presented as revolutionary. It is assumed that they bring about rapid and fundamental changes of everything. The goal of this strategy of presentation is to ensure that humans do not question or attempt to reverse new technologies.
- *Technology as one-dimensional cause*: Technology is said to be the cause of changes in society. It is disregarded how power structures and social contradictions shape changes.
- *Technological optimism/pessimism*: Changes in society that stand in the context of technology are said to be either purely positive (technological optimism) or purely negative (technological pessimism).

Technological determinism presents machines as autonomous actors that determine the development of society. The optimistic version of technological determinism (technological optimism) is an ideology that propagates the love and worship of machines. Machines are presented as a modern version of God that is said to solve all problems. In technological pessimism, technology is presented as a modern worldly Satan that causes evils in society. In technological optimism, it is argued that machines have to result in positive developments of society. In technological pessimism, it is argued that machines necessitate negative features of society.

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[34] Ibid., p. 153.
[35] Georg Lukács. 2014. *Tactics and Ethics, 1919–1929*. London: Verso. p. 137.
[36] Ibid., p. 137.

Raymond Williams argues that technological determinism assumes that technologies drive history and society's development. Such accounts argue that '[t]he steam engine, the automobile, television, the atomic bomb have *made* modern man and the modern condition. In *technological determinism*, [...] [t]he new technologies are invented as it were in an independent sphere, and then create new societies or new human conditions'.[37] Williams stresses that the development and use of technology is shaped by 'social, political and economic intention'.[38] Such intentions 'set limits and exert pressures, but neither wholly control nor wholly predict the outcome of complex activity'.[39] For Williams, there is neither technological determination of society nor social determination of technology, but a relative unpredictability of technological and societal development, in which economic, political and ideological forces exert pressures and have conditioning influences. Technology as a complex system has dynamics that can sometimes result in unforeseen events such as technological failures and accidents. There is a dialectic of technology and society and a dialectic of chance and necessity of technological development.

In a truly free society, modern technology must be dialectically sublated (*aufgehoben*). In sublation, capitalist technology is at the same time eliminated, preserved and lifted to a new quality of existence. The sublation of capitalist technology and capitalism, and technology and society's redesign, would help to solve society's problems and heal its wounds. A truly free society has to abolish repressive uses of technology in general and communication technologies in particular. It needs to go from the repressive to the emancipatory design and use of technology.

In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács develops a critique of quantification. He argues that quantification is at the heart of capitalist society and therefore also of reified, bourgeois consciousness. It lies in the 'nature of capitalism to' reduce 'the phenomena to their purely quantitative essence, to their expression in numbers and numerical relations'.[40] It lies in the logic of accumulation that underpins capitalism that there is a structural need for dominant actors to increase the quantity of capital, power and reputation in order to remain dominant. The more the logic of accumulation and thereby commodification and bureaucracy come to control everyday life, the more there is a need to control and assess the status of the managed systems in order for the dominant groups to remain in power.

Capitalism uses the sciences in order to create methods for assessing and optimising investments, labour-time, capital accumulation, commodities, power,

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[37]   Raymond Williams. 1974/2003. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Routledge. pp. 5–6.

[38]   Ibid., p. 133.

[39]   Ibid., p. 133.

[40]   Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 6.

etc. Capitalism is the society of capital accumulation. The logic of accumulation also shapes politics and culture in capitalist society. Capitalist society is about the accumulation of capital, decision-power and reputation. In order to accumulate, one needs to evaluate the current status and existing quantities in order to implement strategies of growth. At the end of an assessment or measurement, there are quantifications that help to identify strategies for how to increase accumulation. Capitalism has to continuously develop new forms of rationalisation and production in order to increase productivity, reduce costs and accumulate capital. The history of capitalist technology is therefore a history of rationalisation and the development of ever newer methods of quantification.

The logic of computing and quantification is an anti-dialectical reductionism. The bourgeois belief in the power of quantification and the natural sciences is reflected in the ideology of mechanical determinism. Critical thought in contrast stresses human qualities such as, for example, humans' capacity to change the world and make it their common world that benefits all. That reification uses quantitative logic that stems from science does not mean that all science is reified or that we only can have reified technologies.

Reified technology is based on an instrumental logic of quantification so that its use means that capitalism or bureaucracy subsume human activities and destroy human solidarity. But modern technology has also created new capacities for humans to co-operate and for human socialisation. Socialist society and socialist technology do not mean that we abolish computers and calculations, but that we transform design so that technology is human-centred and humans collectively control its use and design. Quantification is then subsumed under humanism. Its goal then is that it helps enhance the flourishing of humans, society and nature. It then aims at enabling human beings to fully realise their individual and collective potentials.

Figure 6.3 shows three approaches for conceptualising the relationship of technology and society. Technological determinism assumes that technologies are the cause of changes in society and that technology determines changes in society. It reduces the relationship of society and technology to technology. There are techno-optimistic and techno-pessimistic versions of technological determinism. The approach of the social construction of technology is a type of social determinism. It assumes that causes and uses are socially designed into technology. Such an approach does not give enough attention to the relative unpredictability of technology's uses, consequences and impacts on society. Social construction approaches reduce the relationship of technology and society to society.

In dialectical approaches, technology and society stand in a contradictory relation. In antagonistic society, there are often antagonistic potentials and effects of technology's use on society, i.e. impacts that stand in contradiction to each other. Society enables, constrains, and conditions the invention process, the design process and the engineering of technology. Technology conditions society, society conditions technology. Society's

Technological/Media determinism:

Cause + = Techno-optimism   *Effect*

COMMUNICATION-TECHNOLOGY ———→ SOCIETY

-- = Techno-pessimism

Social construction of technology:

Effect   *Cause*
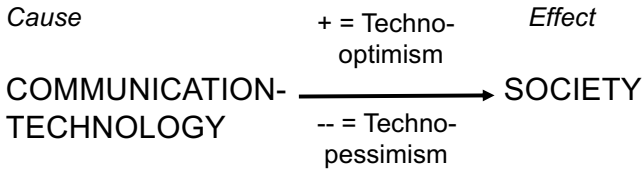
COMMUNICATION-TECHNOLOGY ←——— SOCIETY
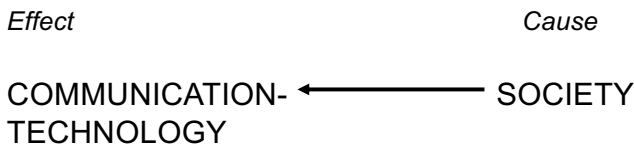
Dialectic of technology/media & society:

Cause   *Effect*
COMMUNICATION-TECHNOLOGY   ↗   ... SOCIETY

Effect   *Cause*
COMMUNICATION-TECHNOLOGY   ... ↙   SOCIETY
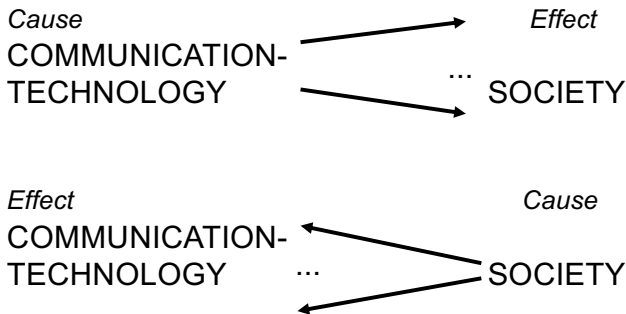
Figure 6.3: Three approaches to conceptualising the relationship of technology and society.

conditions, interests, power relations and conflicts influence what technologies can and do emerge. But the real effects of technologies on society are not programmed, because modern technologies are complex systems with interacting parts that can result in unpredictable synergies. Society is also a complex system that consists of many interacting moments and factors that influence the actual use of technology. That technology and society are complex systems means they consist of a multitude of elements that interact. Such complexity makes it unlikely that a technology has just one effect on society and that effects are pre-determined and fully predictable. Technology is a medium and structure that enables and constrains, but does not determine practices and their outcomes in society. Technological development interacts with society's antagonisms. A specific technology often has multiple potential effects on society. If there is a contradiction of technology,

then this means there are at least two contradictory tendencies. Often, there are multiple tendencies of technological effects on society that co-exist or stand in contradiction to each other. Which potentials of technology use are realised depends on society's power structures, how conflicts of interest and social struggles develop. The way conflicts and struggles shape (or in the case of their forestallment do not shape) the design and use of technology is an important aspect of the technology-society dialectic.

6.4. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main findings:

- Communication always involves the use of the human body and the human mind. In many cases, it also involves the use of communication systems (communications). One can distinguish different types of communication technologies based on the question of whether or not for each of the three dimensions of the production, distribution and consumption of information only the human body and mind or also communications are used.
- 'Technology' comes from the Greek word *technê* that designates the process of skilled making, where the making is shaped by the maker or group of makers. In capitalism, technology is a thing and means of production that is not controlled collectively by the workers, but by capitalists. Technology is fixed constant capital that is used as a means of exploitation, relative surplus value production, control and domination. Capitalism is based on a reversal of means and ends: Capital is the end that instrumentalises and exploits workers as a means for capital accumulation. Technology serves under the rule of capital as a means of exploitation and domination. In capitalism, technology is governed by instrumental reason.
- Technological fetishism is an ideology that presents technological systems as autonomous subjects that are the cause of changes in society, bring about revolutionary changes and have one-dimensional effects. Technological optimism and technological pessimism are two versions of technological fetishism. In the analysis of how technology and society are related, the dialectic of technology and society is an alternative to technological determinism and social constructionism.
- A socialist society entails the collective control of the immediate producers over the means of production, including technologies. Technology thereby turns from a means of exploitation into *technê* as a means that the producers collectively control, shape and use.

In the context of the analysis of communication in society, there is again and again talk about the information society or the communication society. The next chapter discusses whether and in what respect these categories make sense for a critical theory.

CHAPTER 7

Communication Society

In what kind of society do we live? Is it an information and communication society? Or a capitalist society? Or something different? This chapter discusses these questions. First, the chapter discusses a typology of information society theories (section 7.1). Second, it introduces a dialectical approach (7.2). Third, it deals with indicators and questions of measuring information and communication in capitalist society (7.3).

7.1. Information Society Theories

The increasing importance of the computer and knowledge work in the economy has led a significant number of scholars, experts and observers to make the claim that we live in an information/knowledge/network society.

   In the early 1960s, Fritz Machlup documented an increase of knowledge-producing occupations in the USA's total occupation and value creation during the first sixty years of the 20th century.[1] He introduced the notions of knowledge-producing workers/occupations/industries. Ever since Machlup's work, concepts of the information society have remained popular among analysts and observers of the role of information and communication in society. In the 1970s, Daniel Bell spoke of the emergence of a post-industrial society that 'is based on services'[2] in 'health, education, research, and government'[3] and where what 'counts is not raw muscle power, or energy, but information'.[4] In the 1980s, Alvin Toffler described the information society as third wave society

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[1] Fritz Machlup. 1962. *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[2] Daniel Bell. 1974. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting.* London: Heinemann. p. 127.

[3] Ibid., p. 15.

[4] Ibid., p. 127.

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that followed agricultural society and industrial society.[5] In the 1990s, Nico Stehr introduced the concept of the knowledge society, a 'society based on the penetration of all its spheres of life by scientific knowledge'.[6] In the light of the rise of the Internet and the World Wide Web, Manuel Castells argued that the information society took on the form of the network society. One 'of the key features of informational society is the networking logic of its basic structure, which explains the use of the concept of "network society"'.[7] 'As an historical trend, dominant functions and processes in the Information Age are increasingly organized around networks'.[8]

Theories of society and its phenomena can be classified by two questions: Does the theory put more focus on stressing the role of human subjectivity (including knowledge and practices) or objective structures in society? Does the theory conceptualise societal change more in terms of continuity or discontinuity? Combining answers to these questions yields a 2x2-matrix structure that helps to characterise theories of society. The basic distinction is between subjective discontinuous theories, objective discontinuous theories, subjective continuous theories, and objective continuous theories. Burrell and Morgan have termed these paradigms in social theory radical humanism (subjective, radical change), radical structuralism (objective, radical change), interpretive sociology (subjective, continuity), and functionalism (objective, continuity).[9] Figure 7.1 visualises this typology.

Although the basic distinctions of this typology are useful, they lack the insight that there are approaches where the separation between subject and object and between continuity and discontinuity is fluid. Dialectical approaches assume that subjects produce objects and objects produce subjects. Humans in social relations produce and reproduce society's social structures. Such structures condition, enable, and constrain human practices. Dialectical theories also stress that continuity is achieved through discontinuity and that there is continuity in discontinuity. The dialectical process of change as sublation is a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. Therefore, dialectical approaches need to be added as a fifth approach to the typology of social theories (see figure 7.2).

The typology outlined in figure 7.3 is suited for classifying theories and concepts that analyse the role of information, knowledge, and communication in society.

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[5] Alvin Toffler. 1980. *The Third Wave*. New York: Bantam.

[6] Nico Stehr. 1994. *Knowledge Societies*. London: Sage. p. 9.

[7] Manuel Castells. 1996/2000/2010. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Second edition with a new preface. p. 21.

[8] Ibid., p. 500.

[9] Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan. 1979. *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*. Aldershot: Gower.

Radical change

RADICAL HUMANISM   RADICAL STRUCTURALISM

Subjective   Objective

INTERPRETIVE   FUNCTIONALIST
SOCIOLOGY   SOCIOLOGY

Continuity
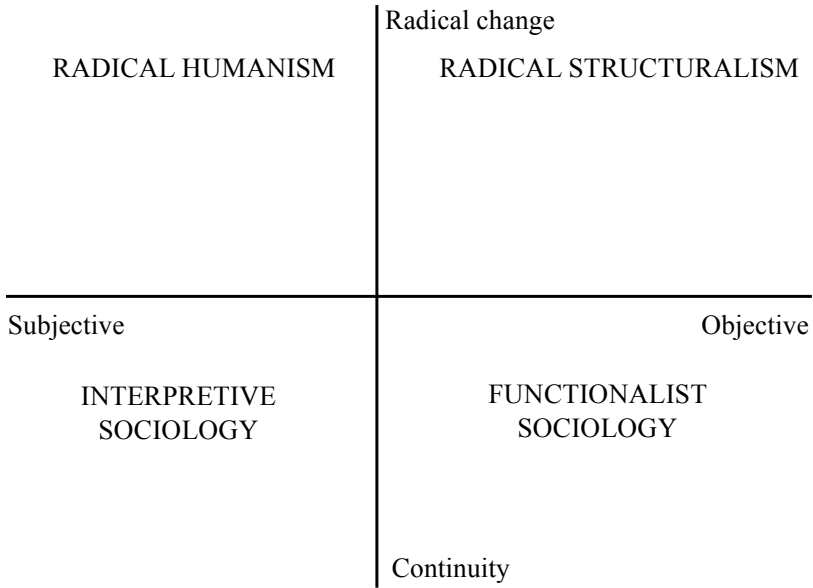
Figure 7.1: A typology of social theories based on the works of Burrell Gibson and Gareth Morgan.

Radical change

RADICAL HUMANISM   RADICAL STRUCTURALISM

DIALECTICAL
SOCIAL THEORY

Subjective   Objective

INTERPRETIVE   FUNCTIONALIST
SOCIOLOGY   SOCIOLOGY

Continuity
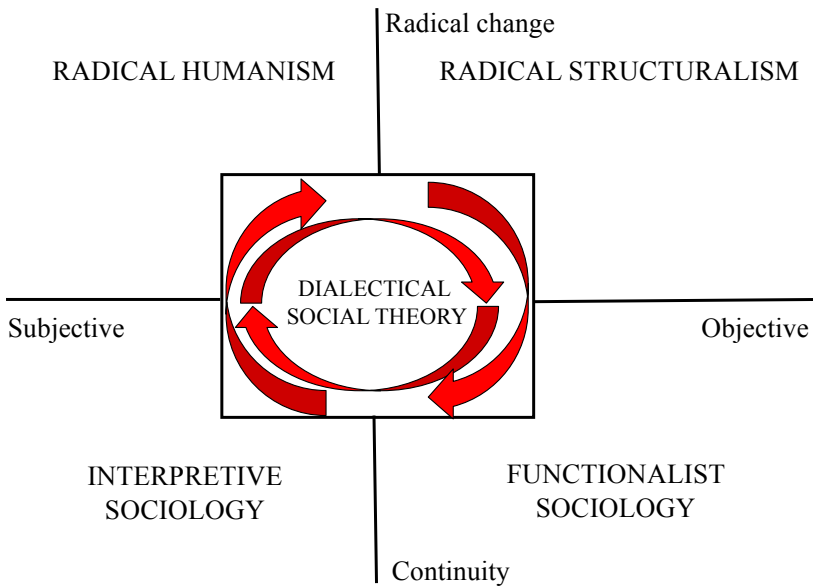
Figure 7.2: A revised typology of social theories.

Knowledge society,
post-industrial society,
postmodern society,
knowledge-based society

Radical change

Network society,
Internet society,
virtual
society,
cybersociety

Subjective

Information
capitalism,
communicative
capitalism

Objective

Immaterial labour,
cognitive capitalism,
semio-capitalism,
reflexive modernisation

Continuity

MP3 capitalism,
virtual capitalism,
informatic capitalism,
high-tech capitalism,
digital capitalism

Figure 7.3: A typology of information society theories.

Subjective discontinuous theories of the information society stress that knowledge and knowledge labour play a major role in contemporary society and that this society has been undergoing radical transformations so that the knowledge society is a new society. Example concepts are the knowledge society, the post-industrial society, the postmodern society, and the knowledge-based society. Objective continuous theories of the information society stress that digital information and network technologies play a key role in contemporary society, and claim that these technologies have radically transformed society into a new society they call, for example, network society, Internet society, virtual society, or cybersociety. Subjective continuous theories stress the continued importance of capitalism, modernity, class or labour, and argue that in the organisation of these phenomena knowledge, cognition, and reflexivity have become more important. Example categories that fall into this kind of theory are immaterial labour, cognitive capitalism, semio-and reflexive modernisation. Objective discontinuous theories argue that we do not live in a new society, but that information technologies have become more important. They speak, for example, of MP3 capitalism, virtual capitalism, informatic capitalism, high-tech capitalism, and digital capitalism.

Discontinuous theories prefix specific categories to macro-sociological terms (society, economy, etc.) in order to claim that society has been fundamentally transformed and that we therefore live in a new type of society. The problem with categories such as network society, knowledge society, and information society, however, is that they make contemporary society sound harmless and positive and often deny the continued existence of capitalism and class. But given the

world economic crisis that started in 2008, and the ubiquity of precarious labour, it is evident that exploitation, crisis, inequality, and capitalism continue to exist.

Continuous theories are to a certain degree sceptical about the assumption that radical change has taken place in society. They stress that we continue to live in a capitalist society, modern society, or class society. They normally consider that capitalism has been undergoing some changes but without being fundamentally transformed. One problem with such approaches is that they tend to be too focused on one dimension such as knowledge (e.g. cognitive capitalism), digital technologies (e.g. digital capitalism), finance (e.g. finance capitalism), globalisation (e.g. global/transnational capitalism), mobility (e.g. mobility capitalism, high speed capitalism), warfare (e.g. new imperialist capitalism), neoliberalism (e.g. neoliberal capitalism), etc. Capitalism is a multidimensional phenomenon, in which several dimensions exist and interact at the same time. In their extreme form, continuous theories argue that contemporary society does not differ from 19th century capitalism.

Whereas subjective information society theories stress the role of knowledge in society, objective ones foreground the role of information technologies in society. In the 20th century, societies experienced a growth of knowledge work and the emergence and increasing importance of computer-based technologies. One cannot really argue that one of the two phenomena has been more important, because labour and technologies are dialectically related as subject and object of production.

The next section discusses, based on the preceding analysis, the notion of communicative capitalism.

7.2. Information Capitalism, Communicative Capitalism

Capitalism is a dialectical system. It reproduces class and domination by changing the organisation of the economy, politics, and culture. These changes are not radical, but are certainly transformative at different levels of society's organisation. Through its in-built crises, capitalism experiences non-fundamental sublations that preserve the fundamental structures of capitalism by transforming society at the upper levels of its organisation. Marx sees capitalism's antagonisms and resulting crises as the source of dynamics that result in the differentiation of capitalism and the emergence of new accumulation regimes. Capitalism needs to change its organisation of the economy, politics, and culture in order to overcome crises and defer them into the future. Crises that are the outcome and source of 'periodic revolutions in value […] confirm what they ostensibly refute: the independence which value acquires as capital, and which is maintained and intensified through its movement'.[10] What can be

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[10] Karl Marx. 1885/1978. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Two*. London: Penguin. p. 185.

termed information or communicative capitalism is a dimension of capitalism that is based on the organisation of the productive forces and structures of economic, political and cultural production with the help of knowledge, communication and communication technologies. Information/communicative capitalism refers to the roles played by knowledge/communication work and communication technologies in capitalist society and its economic, political and cultural systems, practices, and processes.

Roy Bhaskar distinguishes different forms of sublation: real negation, transformative negation, and radical negation.[11] Sublations are not always equally fundamental, but can take place continuously and at an upper level of organisation (real negation), at a medium level from time to time (transformative negation), or at a fundamental level (radical negation). Bhaskar formulates the relation between these types of sublation as real negation $\geq$ transformative negation $\geq$ radical negation, which indicates that the real negation takes place at upper levels of organisation and the radical negation at the most fundamental level. Capitalism maintains continuity at the fundamental level of class and power relations by real negations (the production of new commodities, laws, ideological artefacts) and transformative negations (economic, political and ideological crises). A radical negation of capitalism means a social revolution that abolishes the capitalist mode of production, the capitalist state and capitalist ideologies.

Information capitalism is the outcome of capitalism's dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. Class, exploitation, labour, capital, commodities, surplus value, the state, and ideology are fundamental aspects of capitalist society. In information capitalism, these dimensions of capitalism are organised based on information production and information and communication technologies.

Therefore, phenomena such as information commodities, digital commodities, knowledge work, the mass media (television, newspapers, radio, cinema), the Internet, social media, and the computer shape social relations in contemporary capitalist society. Communication and communication technologies mediate the accumulation of capital, decision-making power, and definition and reputation-making power. The emergence of information capitalism can be dated to the time after the second world economic crisis that was also a crisis of the Keynesian welfare state and of welfare state ideology. Capitalism recomposed itself, which resulted in the rise and dominance of neoliberal politics and ideology, a flexible regime of accumulation, and information capitalism as a means of relative surplus value production and the globalisation of the economy, politics, and culture. The emergence of information capitalism was a transformational sublation of capitalism, not a radical one.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx predicted the emergence of information capitalism in the course of the development of the productive forces. He argues that capitalists have to strive to increase productivity in order to produce more commodities,

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[11] Roy Bhaskar. 1993. *Dialectic. The Pulse of Freedom*. London: Verso. p. 12.

capital, value, and profit per unit of time, and to be able to accumulate capital. The growth logic of the accumulation of capital results in the quest for relative surplus value production and innovations of fixed capital. By developing and using new technologies in production, the bourgeoisie hopes to increase productivity. As a consequence, there are waves of rationalisation and automation, and the organic composition of capital (c/v, the relation of constant and variable capital = the mathematical relationship of investments into resources, including technologies, to the wage costs per unit of time) increases. Together with new technologies, the role of science and knowledge labour in the economy increases because technologies need to be developed, managed and used, which requires professionals in science and the knowledge industries. 'The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real life process'.[12]

Marx anticipated the development that 'the entire production process' becomes 'the technological application of science'.[13] The 'transformation of the production process from the simple labour process into a scientific process [...] appears as a quality of fixed capital in contrast to living labour'.[14] Marx argues that knowledge in production (the general intellect) increases its importance to a degree where a transformative negation takes place; as part of this negation, qualitatively new knowledge-based productive forces emerge that form a new technological paradigm of capitalism. The rise of computing, computer networks, and knowledge labour in the context of global, neoliberal capitalism since the 1970s constituted the emergence of information capitalism. For Marx, the rise of the general intellect in information capitalism is the consequence of capital's need to innovate the productive forces in order to overcome crises (like the crisis of the mid-1970s), increase profits and the exploitation of labour, and form new spheres of commodity production and sales. The emergence of the 'information society' and information society discourse is the result of the development of capitalism.

Information capitalism is one of the dimensions of capitalism. But there are many capitalisms that in a unity of diversity constitute capitalism: finance capitalism, information capitalism, hyper-industrial capitalism, mobility capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, imperialism, etc. These dimensions of capitalism interact with each other. Capitalism is at the same time a general mode of production and exploitation and a specific realisation, co-existence and interaction of different types and forms of capitalist production and exploitation.

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[12] Karl Marx. 1857/58/1973. *Grundrisse.* London: Penguin. p. 706.
[13] Ibid., p. 699.
[14] Ibid., p. 700.

In order to decide what dimension of capitalism is dominant at a particular level of organisation, one needs to empirically study aspects of capitalist society, gather and analyse primary and secondary data. One example is the structure of transnational corporations (TNCs), i.e. corporations that produce and sell commodities internationally. Table 7.1 shows some relevant data.

In the data analysis, the mobility industries were defined as consisting of transportation, oil and gas and vehicles, and information industries as including telecommunications, hardware, software, semiconductors, advertising, Internet, publishing and broadcasting. FIRE stands for finance, insurance and real estate. The power of global capital is evident by the fact that the revenues of the world's largest 2,000 corporations account for about 50 percent of the global gross domestic product. A look at the structure of TNCs' profits shows that finance is the dominant sector, followed by roughly equal shares of the mobility industry, manufacturing and the information industry. Transnational capitalism is to specific degrees finance capitalism, mobility capitalism, hyper-industrial capitalism and information capitalism. These dimensions are

Table 7.1: Aspects of the world's 2000 largest transnational corporations: calculations based on data from Forbes 2000 list for the years 2004 and 2014, in billion US$; data source for world GDP: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (2003 and 2013, world GDP in billion US$).

Variable:	2004	2014
Total revenues	19 934 bn US$	38 361 bn US$
Total capital assets	68 064 bn US$	160 974 bn US$
Share of total revenues in world GDP	50.8%	51.4%
Total profits	760.4 bn US$	2927.5 bn US$
Total market value	23 755 bn US$	44 410 bn US$
Share of FIRE (finance/insurance/real estate) in total assets	70.8%	73.6%
Share of FIRE in total profits	32.7%	33.5%
Share of FIRE in total revenues	20.2%	19.8%
Share of information industries in total assets	5.9%	5.5%
Share of information industries in total profits	−0.8%	17.3%
Share of information industries in total revenues	11.3%	13.1%
Share of mobility industries in total assets	7.5%	6.9%
Share of mobility industries in total profits	22.4%	19.0%
Share of mobility industries in total revenues	21.4%	24.0%
Share of manufacturing in total assets	7.1%	6.9%
Share of manufacturing in total profits	28.3%	18.6%
Share of manufacturing in total revenues	21.1%	21.7%

interrelated: Finance invests venture capital into digital corporations so that they can operate on stock markets, which increases the financialisation and crisis-proneness of digital capitalism. Digital communication is also a medium that enables globalisation. As a result of the dialectic of digitisation and globalisation, the transport of people and commodities has increased. Communications and digital commodities are not immaterial or weightless, but require physical labour of miners and assemblers in the international division of digital labour, and massive amounts of energy to operate communications networks and communication technologies. Finance capitalism, mobility capitalism, hyper-industrial capitalism and communicative capitalism are organised as a dialectical unity in which these different moments interact and reach into each other. Capitalism is a dynamic, developing unity of diverse capitalisms.

Information capitalism is neither purely knowledge-oriented nor purely technology-based, neither purely subjective nor purely objective in character. Information is a process that relates subjective knowledge and communicative practices to objective structures, networks and technologies that store and disseminate information. Information structures condition, enable and constrain information practices that produce and reproduce information structures. There is a dialectic of information practices and information structures. Therefore, to speak of knowledge or cognitive capitalism is to focus too much on human cognition, while terms such as digital or high-tech capitalism foreground too much the role of structures and technologies. Given that information and communication are processes that connect the subjective and the objective dimensions of semiosis (information practices/work and information structures, the communication process and communication technologies), the best way to grasp the dialectic of subject and object is to speak of information capitalism and communicative capitalism. The quest of capital to increase productivity and create new spheres of accumulation has resulted in information and communication labour constituting a significant share of employment and value-added in advanced economies. The rise of such labour has been accompanied by the increasing importance of information and communication technologies in the production and circulation of commodities, and that of information commodities in society. Information labour and information technology stand in a dialectical relationship. There is a similar dialectic of information labour and information commodities.

The Fundamental Question of the Present Structure of Society

Theodor W. Adorno argued in 1968 that the 'fundamental question of the present structure of society' is 'about the alternatives: late capitalism or industrial society'.[15] Today, Adorno's question can be reposed in a slightly altered form:

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[15] Theodor W. Adorno. 1968/2003. Late Capitalism or Industrial Society? The Fundamental Question of the Present Structure of Society. In *Can One Live*

Do we live in capitalism or an information society? Adorno rejected the dualism the question implies and formulated a dialectical answer:

> In terms of critical, dialectical theory, I would like to propose as an initial, necessarily abstract answer that contemporary society undoubtedly is an industrial society according to the state of its *forces* of production. Industrial labor has everywhere become the model of society as such, regardless of the frontiers separating differing political systems. It has developed into a totality because methods modeled on those of industry are necessarily extended by the laws of economics to other realms of material production, administration, the sphere of distribution, and those that call themselves culture. In contrast, however, society is capitalist in its *relations* of production. People are still what they were in Marx's analysis in the middle of the nineteenth century […] Production takes place today, as then, for the sake of profit.[16]

Paraphrasing Adorno, we can give a similar answer to the question 'Do we live in a capitalist or an information society?': Contemporary society is an information society according to the state of its *forces* of production. In contrast, however, contemporary society is capitalist in its *relations* of production. People are still what they were in Marx's analysis in the middle of the 19th century. Production takes place today, as then, for the sake of profit, and to achieve this end it to a certain extent makes use of knowledge and information technology in production.

   The question about what society we live in relates to both the productive forces and the relations of production. The informational productive forces are an organisational mode of the productive forces that are based on the role of the computer and knowledge in production. The informational productive forces stand in a dialectic with class relations. Knowledge work and information technologies have transformed and continue to transform class relations so that new forms of exploitation of knowledge labour (such as various forms of digital labour) emerge. But information technology has also advanced the potentials for the production of common information and digital goods that are not commodities and that are available to everyone without payment (the communicative commons, the digital commons). So, information capitalism has produced the seeds of its own negation. There is an antagonism between informational, networked productive forces and digital and informational class relations. This antagonism becomes evident in phenomena such as intellectual property rights vs. digital gifts/non-commercial Creative Commons, for-profit

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After Auschwitz?, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 111–125. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 111.

[16] Ibid., p. 117.

open access vs. non-profit open access, ad-funded for-profit Internet platforms vs. non-profit Internet platforms, digital capital vs. digital commons, capitalist platforms vs. platform co-operatives, etc.

Georg Lukács deals with the issue of knowledge labour in a 1919 article titled '"Intellectual Workers" and the Problem of Intellectual Leadership'.[17] He writes that intellectual workers are not an independent class. Those 'who, like manual workers, are able to participate in production only by means of their labour power (white-collar workers, engineers, etc.' differ 'sharply from those whose intellectual work is only an accessory to their bourgeois status (major share-holders, factory owners). The class distinction between these two groups is so clear to the objective observer that it is impossible to bring them together under one heading, as the class of "intellectual workers".[18] Those "intellectual workers" who participate in production therefore belong (*with an unclear class consciousness, at best)* to the same class as the manual workers'.[19] Intellectual workers are not 'a *homogeneously structured class*, since even within their ranks a clear division into oppressors and oppressed' can be found.[20]

In the information society discourse, one commonly distinguishes between the agricultural sector, the manufacturing sector, and the service sector.[21] Information/communication/knowledge workers are in this discourse often placed in the service sector. But there is a problem with this categorisation: it assumes that managers, who control workers, and the workers controlled by managers, who produce knowledge commodities sold for profit, are part of the same class. The class aspects of knowledge labour are complicated by freelancing: Freelancers sell their labour power with one-time contracts that are often short-term. Most of them do not have enough capital to employ others. There is a high share of freelancers among knowledge workers such as data inputters, software and web developers, designers, translators, writers, personal assistants, editors, and proof-readers. Such freelancers are part of the working class because they sell their labour power in order to survive. As long as freelancers do not own businesses that, besides the freelancer herself/himself, also employ others, they are part of the working class. Journalists mostly work as freelancers or wage-workers. Because of their position in the production process, they are part of the working class. But journalists, consultants, researchers, etc. often serve, as Lukács writes, 'material, ideological and power interests' when they

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[17] Georg Lukács. 1919/2014. 'Intellectual Workers' and the Problem of Intellectual Leadership. In *Tactics and Ethics, 1919–1929*, 12–18. London: Verso.
[18] Ibid., p. 12.
[19] Ibid., p. 13.
[20] Ibid., p. 13.
[21] See: Frank Webster. 2014. *Theories of the Information Society.* Abingdon: Routledge.

justify capitalism in their analyses, reports, writings, recommendations, etc.[22] When doing so, they are just like managers betraying the working class, and are thereby part of the capitalist class. Only the critical journalist is a full member of the working class.

An important question that arises in the context of critical social analysis is how one can measure informational capitalism. The next section deals with this issue.

7.3. Information Society Indicators: Measuring Information Capitalism

Information society indicators are measurements of the informational productive forces. They assess to what degree certain aspects of the productive forces are information-based or based on alternative modes of organisation such as agriculture or manufacturing. Such indicators include, for example, the percentage share of workers in information industries in the total work force, the percentage share of information occupations in the total work force, the percentage share of information industries in total value-added, the wage share of workers in information industries (the share of their wages in total revenues in the industry), the percentage share of information companies in the world's largest 2000 corporations' combined capital assets or combined profits or combined market value, the percentage share of information industries in the combined total foreign direct investment inflows or outflows or instock or outstock, the percentage share of information products in total exports or imports, etc.

An important distinction can be drawn between indicators measuring occupation-wide shares and those measuring industry-wide shares. So, for example, one can measure the percentage share of wages that is paid to knowledge workers who as their occupation create knowledge in the total economy's wages (occupation approach), or the share of wages in the total economy's wages that is paid out in industries that create informational goods (industry approach). In the first approach, one includes labour that is an informational activity, but does not necessarily result in an informational commodity (e.g. the labour of a web designer who is employed to maintain the website of a sausage factory), whereas the second approach includes all labour that contributes to the creation of an information commodity (e.g. the labour of a caretaker or a cleaner who works for a software company).

Such indicators help to show to what degree the productive forces are based on information and on other resources. Indicators measuring informational productive forces are a measure of the role of information in the economy and a

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[22] Lukács, 'Intellectual Workers' and the Problem of Intellectual Leadership, p. 13.

measure of the absence of aspects of physical production (agriculture, the manufacturing of physical goods, non-information-based services, etc.). The notion of information capitalism does not imply that capitalism is only informational, but rather indicates a degree, share and tendency that can be measured. To decide to what degree capitalism is information-based one needs to conduct empirical research, analyse statistical data and create relevant indicators.

Such an analysis should not be limited to the productive forces. It is also important to analyse the social relations of production and aspects of capitalism's class structure. Indicators are, for example, the size of the working class, the size of the capitalist class, the size of intermediary classes and the number of the unemployed;[23] the wage share, the profit share, the relation of the poorest groups to the richest groups (measured for example as the 90:10-ratio of income or wealth inequality), the relation of the growth of wages to the growth of profits, the development of particular corporations' or industries' profits, the development of profits on the world level and in certain nation-states, global gross capital formation, listed companies' market capitalisation, etc.

One should take a modest approach in the analysis of informational capitalism. Information and communication are an important dimension of capitalism, but not the only one. The analysis of capitalism should always relate diverse moments to each other in a dialectical manner. So, for example, both those analysing communication and those analysing finance should take the relationship of communications and finance into account.

A further task of empirical research is the combination of class analysis and information society analysis. Such analysis has two dimensions, namely the analysis of the class character of informational activities and resources and of the informational dimensions of class. An example is the analysis of wages and working conditions in specific information industries, on the one hand, and percentage share of information labour in the total number of wage-workers or freelancers, on the other.

Such research should be both quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative class analysis of information labour and informational analysis of class focuses on the study of workers' experiences of exploitation. Knowledge workers are particularly affected by an ideology that is known as the new spirit of capitalism. The new spirit of capitalism is an ideology that promises to workers unalienated work that allows them to lead self-fulfilling working lives similar to many artists, celebrities or journalists.[24] Empirical studies indicate that knowledge workers in media, creative, cultural and digital industries experience their labour as highly creative, self-determined and self-fulfilling. But at the same

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[23] See: Erik Olin Wright. 1997. *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[24] Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello. 2005. *The New Spirit of Capitalism.* London: Verso.

time their labour is often precarious.[25] Rosalind Gill provides a summary of the main features of knowledge labour in the cultural and media industries.[26] Such labour's characteristics typically include:

1. love of the work,
2. the entrepreneurial aspiration to innovate and pioneer,
3. short-term, precarious and insecure labour,
4. low pay/income,
5. long hours,
6. workers' need to constantly develop their knowledge and skills,
7. DIY learning,
8. informality,
9. inequalities in respect to class, gender, age, ethnicity and disability,
10. lack of time and resources for planning the future.

Creative labour often *appears* to be less alienated than manual and other forms of labour. Its reality, however, often differs from the promises and the ideological discourse surrounding creative labour. It is often organised as precarious labour that lacks social, job and income security. The ideology of the new spirit of capitalism can result in creative workers' reified consciousness so that they do not see themselves as workers, but as actual or aspiring entrepreneurs, are hostile to unionisation, and see precarity as an individually, not a capitalistically caused condition. '[S]pecialist employees, technical personnel, clerical workers and so on swell the ranks of the working class – even if they are not "blue-collared", and their status is not absolutely clearly defined, so that often they have illusions about it themselves'.[27] The new spirit of capitalism has helped constitute a new form of alienation that appears to be unalienated. Whether workers can resist this new ideology depends on various factors, including whether or not they collectively organise themselves and can develop critical consciousness that lets them see the capitalist reality behind the false appearances.

In the time period from 1970 until 2016, the share of agriculture/hunting/forestry/fishing in the world GDP decreased from 9.1% to 4.2%. The share of manufacturing decreased from 24.9% to 16.0%. And the share of the service sector increased from 51.5% to 64.0%.[28] Such an indicator operates purely on the level of

[25] See: Richard Maxwell, ed. 2016. *The Routledge Companion to Labor and Media*. New York: Routledge.
[26] Rosalind Gill. 2011. 'Life is a Pitch': Managing the Self in New Media Work. In *Managing Media Work*, ed. Mark Deuze, 249–262. London: Sage.
[27] Radovan Richta et al. 1969. *Civilization at the Crossroads. Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution*. White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press Inc. p. 248.
[28] Data source: UNCTAD Statistics, http://unctadstat.unctad.org/, accessed on 29 August 2018.

Table 7.2: Aspects of the global working class: data in millions.[29]

	1991	2019
Total labour force	2,395.1	3,531.7
Total employment	2,260.1	3,342.5
Wage workers	995	1,811.1
Own account workers	739.9	1,081.2
Contributing family workers	466.5	345.1
Unemployment	134.9	189.2
Employers	60.6	105.1
Employment in agriculture	979.3	850.7
Employment in manufacturing	522.5	743.3
Service employment	758.3	1,748.4
Persons not in labour force (excluding those aged below 15)	1,247.9	2,202.5

the productive forces. For a critical theory, indicators that combine class analysis and analysis of the productive forces are more interesting. An important question is how many proletarians there are today in the world and in which sectors of capitalism they are exploited. Today, there are more workers in the world than ever before, but they may be less politically organised than ever before. The tables that follow provide an overview of relevant data from the International Labour Organization (ILO). Table 7.2 provides some basic indicators.

The ILO defines employment as the sum of all paid employees, including wage-workers, own-account workers (those who work on their own account in self-employment, but do not employ others), and contributing family workers (those who work as own-account workers in family-operated organisations run by someone in the same household). The definition includes full-time as well as part-time employees. The labour force variable adds the unemployed to the number of employees. If we take the labour force variable as constitutive of the size of the working class, then in 2019 there were more than 3.5 billion workers in the world, which means an increase of 47.5 percent in the size of the working class since 1991. In contrast, the class of employers, with slightly more than 100 million members in 2019, was comparatively small, but very powerful because of the capital it controls. 52.3 percent of the world's active workers are service workers, 22.2 percent are manufacturing workers, and 25.5 percent are agricultural workers. 2.2 billion people aged 15 or above are not active in the labour force.

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[29] Data source: ILO World Employment and Social Outlook, http://www.ilo .org/wesodata

The world population was around 7.7 billion in 2019, of which 3.88 billion individuals were biologically male (50.4 percent) and 3.81 billion biologically female (49.6 percent).[30]As noted above, the world's population not active in the labour force amounted to 2.2 billion in 2019, excluding 1.97 billion children aged 0–14.[31] If we assume that the poor are part of the working class and retired people to the roughly the same share have the same class status as those who are economically active (105.1 million employers, 3.5317 billion workers: 2.9%/97.1%), then it is a good estimate that at least 2.1 billion individuals currently not in the labour force are part of the working class because they are either poor or retired workers. This brings the estimation of the total size of the global working class to 5.7 billion in 2019. The world's 2 billion children are left out of this calculation because their future class trajectory is not necessarily determined by the class status of their parents.

The largest human group is the universal group of humans that in 2019 consisted of around 7.7 billion individuals. The second largest group is not the one of men, women, children, or aged people. In 2019, there were 3.9 billion men, 3.8 billion women, 2 billion children, and 702 million people aged 65+.[32] Seventy-four percent of the world's population were in 2019 part of the working class. The working class is the largest sub-group of humanity. It is, with 5.7 billion people, larger than all other sub-groups. So, there is empirical evidence that class is more substantial than sex, gender, age, ethnicity, etc. There are of course diverse forms of oppression in the world that are interrelated. But the working class is the world's largest group of the oppressed. Exploitation is the form of domination that affects the largest number of people in the world.

Tables 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 combine the analysis of the working class with geographical data and sectoral economic data related to the productive forces.

Global agricultural labour has decreased from around 1 billion in 1992 to 850 million in 2019, a fall of 14.2 percent. This decrease has been significant in both the developing and the developed world. In 2019, 97% of the world's agricultural workers were located in developing countries and just 3% in developed countries, which shows the uneven geographical development of industrialisation and informatisation in the world. The developing world is much more agriculture-based than the developed world. In China, the number of agricultural workers has decreased from 349.1 million in 1992 to 117.3 million in 2019, a fall of 66.4 percent. China has in the past decades been simultaneously industrialised and informatised at very high speed. The country's productive forces have turned from a predominantly agricultural economy into a service- and manufacturing-based economy. The number of Chinese manufacturing workers has grown by 9 percent to 197 million in the period from 1992 until

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[30] Data source: World Bank Data, http://databank.worldbank.org/
[31] Data source: World Bank Data, http://databank.worldbank.org/
[32] Data source: World Bank Data, http://databank.worldbank.org/

Table 7.3: Global agricultural employment, in millions.[33]

	1992	2019
Total:	991.3	850.7
Region:		
Eastern Europe	22.5	12.1
Northern, Southern and Western Europe	13	6.8
USA	3.4	2.5
Canada	0.6	0.4
Australia and New Zealand	0.6	0.5
Japan	4.2	2.2
South Korea	2.8	1.3
Singapore	0.0	0.0
UAE	0.1	0.0
Total developed world:	**47.2**	**25.8**
Arab states (without UAE)	4.2	6.7
Northern Africa	13.6	18.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	122.4	226.8
Central and Western Asia	18.6	15.2
South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific (without Australia, New Zealand and Singapore)	119.9	101.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	42.5	41
Southern Asia thereof India:	265 208.7	286.3 208.9
Eastern Asia (without Japan and South Korea) thereof China:	358.1 349.1	128.7 117.3
Total developing world:	**944.3**	**825**

2019. Chinese service labour saw a massive growth during the same period from 120 to 442 million workers, a growth rate of 269 percent.

   The number of the world's manufacturing workers increased from 529.5 to 743.3 million during the analysed period, a growth of 40 percent. So, at the level of the global working class, it is not true that there has been de-industrialisation. De-industrialisation rather affected the developed world, where in total more than 25 million manufacturing jobs have disappeared. In developing countries, there was a significant growth of manufacturing. The growth

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[33] Data source: ILO World Employment and Social Outlook, http://www.ilo .org/wesodata

Table 7.4: Global manufacturing employment, in millions.[34]

	1992	2019
Total:	529.5	743.3
Region:		
Eastern Europe	49.8	38
Northern, Southern and Western Europe	55.8	44.6
USA	29.3	29.4
Canada	2.9	3.7
Australia and New Zealand	2.4	2.8
Japan	22.6	16.3
South Korea	7	6.5
Singapore	0.5	0.5
UAE	0.3	2.5
Total developed world:	**170.6**	**144.3**
Arab states (without UAE)	4.1	11.7
Northern Africa	8.5	19
Sub-Saharan Africa	16.2	44.4
Central and Western Asia	11	19.1
South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific (without Australia, New Zealand and Singapore)	27.9	70
Latin America and the Caribbean	37.3	62.9
Southern Asia thereof India:	65.7 49.5	167.3 124.1
Eastern Asia (without Japan and South Korea) thereof China:	188.3 181.1	204.7 197.2
Total developing world:	**359.0**	**599.1**

rate there was 67 percent. Since the 1970s, many large corporations have out-sourced the manufacturing of their commodities to developing countries in order to increase their profits. The consequence was the creation of Taylorist labour with high exploitation under poor working conditions. Labour in the service sector increased massively in both the developing and the developed world. The increase during the analysed period amounted to almost a billion workers worldwide. In 2019, there were around 1.7 billion service workers in the world.

[34] Data source: ILO World Employment and Social Outlook, http://www.ilo .org/wesodata

Table 7.5: Global service employment, in millions.[35]

	1992	2019
Total:	**782.5**	**1,748.4**
Region:		
Eastern Europe	70.3	85.4
Northern, Southern and Western Europe	104.5	152
USA	88.8	125.5
Canada	9.6	15
Australia and New Zealand	6.5	11.6
Japan	38.2	46.2
South Korea	9.9	19
Singapore	1	2.8
UAE	0.6	3.9
Total developed world:	**329.4**	**461.4**
Arab states (without UAE)	10.7	29.1
Northern Africa	13.7	30.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	43.1	128.6
Central and Western Asia	17.7	38.1
South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific (without Australia, New Zealand and Singapore)	52.5	155.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	88.4	190.5
Southern Asia Thereof India:	98.8 72.4	259.2 182.8
Eastern Asia (without Japan and South Korea) Thereof China:	128.3 120.0	456.2 442.6
Total developing world:	**453.2**	**1,287.0**

Tables 7.6 and 7.7 provide some data on the size and geographical distribution of the capitalist class.

The number of employers increased from 62.9 million in 1992 to 105.1 million in 2019, a growth of 67 percent. Although the number of employers shrank in developed countries, there was significant growth in developing countries. China accounted for over 40 percent of new employers that emerged during that period, which is an indication that rapidly industrialising and informatising capitalist countries not only create a new proletar-

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[35] Data source: ILO World Employment and Social Outlook, http://www.ilo .org/wesodata

Table 7.6: The global distribution of employers, in millions.[36]

	1992	2019
Total:	**62.9**	**105.1**
Region:		
Eastern Europe	6.1	2.6
Northern, Southern and Western Europe	9.9	8.8
USA	5.6	5.7
Canada	0.8	0.9
Australia and New Zealand	0.6	0.8
Japan	1.4	1.3
South Korea	0.6	1.5
Singapore	0.1	0.2
UAE	0.0	0.2
Total developed world:	**25.1**	**22.0**
Arab states (without UAE)	0.6	2.1
Northern Africa	3.4	4.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.8	10.7
Central and Western Asia	1.6	2.9
South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific (without Australia, New Zealand and Singapore)	4.1	10.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	7.5	13.8
Southern Asia thereof India:	7.9	12.4
Eastern Asia (without Japan and South Korea) thereof China:	7.6	26.4
Total developing world:	**37.5**	**83.1**

iat, but also a new bourgeoisie. The number of corporations listed on the stock market increased from 25,277 in 1992 to 43,520 in 2019, an increase of 72 percent. In 2009, the world's total number of corporations decreased absolutely, which was an effect of the new world economic crisis. China was in this respect not affected by the crisis. Its number of corporations continued to increase and multiplied by a factor of 2.5 during the time period between 1992 and 2019.

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[36] Data source: ILO World Employment and Social Outlook, http://www.ilo.org/wesodata

Table 7.7: The number of companies listed on stock markets.[37]

	1980	**1992**	**2006**	**2009**	**2017**
World	17,273	25,277	43,084	42,520	43,039
East Asia and Pacific	3,356	5,323	12,378	13,207	18,148
EU	5,822	6,006	10,213	10,240	N/A
Euro area	2,842	3,691	6,409	6,250	5,470
North America	6,288	8,167	8,939	8,518	7,627
OECD	15,494	18,933	26,067	25,718	22,624
Latin America and Caribbean (excl. high income)	697	1,009	835	871	842
Arab World	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,249	1,172
Middle East and North Africa (excl. high income)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	984
South Asia	N/A	2,781	5,883	6,030	6,483
China	N/A	N/A	1,421	1,604	3,485

7.4 Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main conclusions as follows:

- In the discourse on the information society, there are continuous, discontinuous, subjective and objective approaches. Whereas some see society as continuously capitalist without large changes, others argue that the information society is a radically new society. Whereas some approaches focus on knowledge in society, others stress the role of information and communication technologies. The dominant version of information society theory, which includes concepts such as the network society, the post-industrial society or the knowledge society, is a bourgeois ideology that describes society in positive-sounding terms. It thereby ignores the negativity of class and capitalism that the world's workers have to face in everyday life.
- A dialectical theory conceives of contemporary society as unity in a diversity of various capitalisms, of which information and communicative capitalism is one dimension. Whereas the productive forces have increasingly become based on information, knowledge and service labour, such changes have helped reproduce capitalism's class relations. Contemporary society is to a specific degree informational at the level of the productive forces. And society is capitalist at the level of the relations

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[37] Data source: World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/

of production and power. There is a dialectic of object (information and communication technologies) and subject (knowledge, knowledge labour) in information capitalism.

- The working class is in the 21st century as large as it has ever been. With almost 6 billion members it is humanity's largest group, which shows the importance of class in global capitalist society. The structure of labour has been changing: There has been a significant decrease of agricultural labour in the world that has taken place in the centre, periphery, and semi-periphery countries. It also affects the Global South. While there has been de-industrialisation in the West during the past decades, the Global South has experienced a growth of manufacturing labour because of transnational corporations' global outsourcing practices. Service labour has shown very rapid growth in both the developing and developed world.

Radovan Richta was a Czech philosopher. At the time of the Prague Spring in 1968, when the Czech Republic tried to introduce democratic, human-ist socialism under Alexander Dubček, Richta headed a group of researchers that studied the potentials of the scientific and technological revolution for the advancement of democratic, humanist socialism. The results were published in the Richta-Report *Civilization at the Crossroads. Social and Human Impli-cations of the Scientific and Technological Revolution*.[38] Today, this report is a forgotten and overlooked aspect of information society theory. But it remains highly important and topical.

Richta was critical of the capitalist shaping and use of science and informa-tion technology. He argued, based on Marx, that a commons-based, demo-cratic, humanist society needs scientific and technological foundations. 'Marx implied before the event that the changes we know today as the scientific and technological revolution would be an integral part of the communist transfor-mation of society'.[39] Socialism requires 'a new, technical basis in the shape of the fully implemented automatic principle'.[40] The 'chances of carrying out the scientific and technological revolution to the full lie with a society advancing towards communism. And, on the contrary, for a society pursuing this aim and "whose fundamental principle is the full and free development of every indi-vidual" it is essential to advance by degrees beyond the traditional industrial system and the industrialization model of growth to the scientific and techno-logical revolution'.[41]

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[38] Radovan Richta et al. 1969. *Civilization at the Crossroads. Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution*. White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press Inc.

[39] Ibid, p. 17.

[40] Ibid., p. 52.

[41] Ibid., p. 53–54.

Richta sees the potential of the scientific and technological revolution that led to the emergence of the computer in helping to create a society beyond necessity that abolishes toil and maximises free time: 'If the age of science and technology sees the true potential of leisure to lie in the diversified cultivation of human abilities, the abstract antithesis of leisure and work will be overcome as soon as work is transformed into creative activity. At this divide the time available to man which has been released for human development will take the place of "working time" as the measure of *social wealth*'.[42] Richta reminds us that democratic, humanist, information and communicative socialism is the only true alternative to information capitalism. 'Harnessing science and technology within a unified social context, promoting the effective interest of all in raising the productivity of social labour, […] creating and asserting all human abilities – these are the potential means […] of victory for the new social principles within civilization as we know it today. With them socialism and communism stand or fall'.[43] Society is at a crossroads, where transforming the world 'to the benefit of man is obliged to rely on the delicate compass of science and the power of creative thought'.[44]

Capitalism's political economy not only includes economic production, circulation, and consumption, but also political power relations. The next chapter will shift the analysis from the economic to the political level. It will focus on the political system, political communication, and the public sphere.

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[42] Ibid., p. 177.
[43] Ibid., p. 278.
[44] Ibid., p. 278.

Political Communication in the Public Sphere

We have already seen in chapter 3 that the public sphere is a kind of interface of society that mediates between different spheres. When citizens are engaged in politics as part of non-government organisations, movements, and practices, and when they discuss politics in public, then they are part of the public sphere. In this chapter, we will analyse political communication in the public sphere in more detail.

Political protests take place in the public sphere. In the past decades, there has been much talk about the role of new social movements (such as the environmental movement, the gender equality movement, the LGBT movement, the animal rights movement, etc.) in politics. Many liberal and conservative observers have in this context argued that the labour movement is outdated, no longer plays an important role in politics and social struggles, and that new social movements have replaced the labour movement in social struggles. If the question about social movements is framed in this way, then it is one about the relationship of the economic and the non-economic, class and non-class, exploitation and domination. Given the importance of this question, we will in section 8.1 discuss the relationship of capitalism and domination. Section 8.2 discusses the notion of the public sphere and how it relates to political communication.

8.1. Capitalism and Domination

Alienation

In chapter 5, the notion of economic alienation was discussed. Alienation is a process that extends beyond the economy and therefore deals with domination in general. Marx introduced the notion of economic alienation in capitalism, but he also pointed out that there is alienation in the realms of politics and

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ideology: 'It is indeed *estrangement* which matters in the so-called Christian state, but not *man*. The only man who counts, the *king*, is a being specifically different from other men, and is moreover a religious being, directly linked with heaven, with God. The relationships which prevail here are still relationships dependent on *faith*'.[1] 'Political emancipation is at the same time the *dissolution* of the old society on which the state alienated from the people, the sovereign power, is based.'[2]

Marx indicates that dominative ideologies (such as religion, nationalism, neoliberalism, etc.) are an alienation of human consciousness, and that political rule that is detached from citizens constitutes political alienation. For Marx, alienation is on the one hand domination as exploitation and on the other hand a universal form of domination, where humans do not control the systems, organisations and structures in which they live day in and day out.[3] Class relations alienate humans from the conditions, process, and products of work. The state alienates humans from collective political decision-making. Ideology alienates them from cultural meaning-making.

The basic feature of alienation is that humans are not in control of structures that shape their lives. In a class society, humans do not control the means of production. In a dictatorship, they do not control political decision-making. And in an ideological culture, they do not control worldviews and the definition of reality.

David Harvey argues that alienation is a universal process he terms universal alienation because it extends beyond production into the realisation of economic value, distribution, consumption, politics, everyday life, culture, social conditions, etc.[4] In all types of alienation, asymmetric power confronts humans so that they are not in control of certain objects that shape their lives (nature, the means of production, the means of communication, the political system, the cultural system, etc.). As a consequence, they have disadvantages in society.

Alienation includes the lack of control over an activity that results in externalised products. This lack of control means the non-existence of the collective ownership of property and the lack of influence on political decisions and meaning-making. Appropriation and reconciliation (of humans with their

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[1] Karl Marx. 1844. On the Jewish Question. In *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW) Volume 3*, 146–174. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 158.

[2] Ibid., p. 165.

[3] See: Christian Fuchs. 2018. Universal Alienation, Formal and Real Subsumption of Society Under Capital, Ongoing Primitive Accumulation by Dispossession: Reflections on the Marx@200-Contributions by David Harvey and Michael Hardt/Toni Negri. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 16 (2): 454–467.

[4] David Harvey. 2018. Universal Alienation. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 16 (2): 424–439.

conditions of existence) are the opposite of alienation. In becoming reconciled with society by appropriation, humans collectively take control of the structures that affect their lives. In the economy, alienation means that the dominant class exploits the labour of the dominated class. In the political and the cultural system, alienation takes on the form of political and ideological domination. Domination is defined as one group having advantages at the expense of others and controlling means that allow it to shape society in its own interest against the interest of powerless groups.

Communication is, like all production and behaviour in society, purposeful. It has the goal of producing understanding of the world. This does not mean that understanding implies consensus and agreements. Communication is not necessarily morally good, liberating, and enlightening. Phenomena such as psychological warfare and media manipulation are forms of communication just like political protests against fascism or care for the sick, elderly, and children. There are alienated and non-alienated forms of communication.

In his book *History and Class Consciousness,* Georg Lukács introduced the term reification in the context of alienation. He thereby expresses that in alienation, humans are treated like and reduced to the status of things and objects. They are robbed of their humanity. Reification is a form of objectification that takes on dominative and class character: 'Only when the objectified forms in society acquire functions that bring the essence of man into conflict with his existence, only when man's nature is subjugated, deformed and crippled can we speak of an objective societal condition of alienation and, as an inexorable consequence, of all the subjective marks of an internal alienation'.[5]

Reification is the process that creates alienation. Alienation is a particular state resulting from alienation. Reification is the process of exploitation and domination, whereas alienation is the status of being alienated, i.e. exploited and dominated. Practically speaking, process and result, practice and structure, cannot be separated, so alienation and reification are used in a quite synonymous manner. Appropriation is a process in which humans struggle to control their essence. It is not a return to an original status that historically once existed and was then lost, but is the struggle for the realisation of conditions that are immanent to society itself. Society's essence comprises the positive potentials that enable a good life for all. The ethical standards of society are not externally imposed, but are defined by the potentials of society itself. In class societies, social struggles are conflicts about the realisation of potentials that lie on the continuum between alienated conditions on the one hand and appropriated conditions on the other hand.

Tables 8.1 and 8.2 provide typologies of alienation and appropriation in society's three subsystems (the economy, politics, culture).

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[5] Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin. p. xxiv.

Table 8.1: A typology of alienation.[6]

FORMS OF ALIENA-TION	Subject (experiences, emotions, attitudes)	Intersubjec-tivity (social agency and communica-tion)	Object (structures, products)	Struggles
Economic alienation	Work dissatisfaction	Lack of control/aliena-tion of labour power: exploitation	Lack of control/ alienation of the means of production and output: propertylessness	Individual: anti-capitalism Social: Unionisation, class struggles
Political alienation	Political dissatisfaction	Lack of control/ alienation of political power: disempower-ment and exclusion	Lack of control/ alienation of decisions: centralisation of power	Individual: politicisation Social: social movements, protests, parties, revolutions
Cultural alienation	Cultural discontent	Lack of control/ alienation of influential commu-nication: insignificance of voice, disrespect, malrecogni-tion	Lack of control/ alienation of public ideas, meanings and values: centralisation of information	Individual: cultural literacy Social: struggles for recognition

Alienation means conditions under which humans do not collectively control the relations, structures and systems that shape their lives. As a result, these relations, structures, and systems have an instrumental character. They are governed by instrumental reason. Appropriation means that humans collectively seize control of the conditions that shape their lives and that common goods exists, i.e. conditions where all benefit. Alienation is also a form of appropriation, in which the dominant class expropriates the products created

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6   This typology was first introduced in: Christian Fuchs. 2016. *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet*. London: University of Westminster Press. Chapter 5.

Table 8.2: A typology of appropriation.[7]

FORMS OF APPROPRIATION	Subject (experiences, emotions, attitudes)	Intersubjectivity (social agency and communication)	Object (structures, products)	Struggles
Economic appropriation	Self-realisation	Self-control of labour power: self-management	Self-control of means of production and products: democratic socialism	Individual: anti-capitalism Social: Unionisation
Political appropriation	Active citizens	Self-control of power: people power	Self-control of decisions: participatory democracy	Individual: politicisation Social: social movements, protests, parties, revolutions
Cultural appropriation	General intellectuals	Self-control of influential communication: involvement, mutual under-standing, respect and recognition	Self-control of public ideas and values: cultural public sphere	Individual: cultural literacy Social: struggles for recognition

by the subordinated class and appropriates these products.[7] Exploitation is the 'capitalist mode of appropriation'.[8] Commoning is the alternative mode of appropriation indicated in table 8.2. It is characteristic of the commonist mode of appropriation. In capitalism, '*[a]ppropriation* appears as *estrangement*, as *alienation*',[9] whereas commonism is the 'real *appropriation*' of the '*social* (i.e., human) being'.[10] It is the 'appropriation of *human* life'.[11]

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[7] This typology was first introduced in: Christian Fuchs. 2016. *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet*. London: University of Westminster Press. Chapter 5.

[8] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 929.

[9] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume 3*, p. 281.

[10] Ibid., p. 296.

[11] Ibid., p. 297.

The models outlined in the two tables above are based on the dialectic of subject and objects: Human subjects produce and reproduce objects that condition the subjects' practices. Communication mediates this dialectic. These three dimensions (subject, the object, mediating communication) form the three columns of tables 8.1 and 8.2.

Exploitation is the economic form of alienation. Political domination is the political form of alienation. Cultural domination (cultural imperialism = unity without diversity, cultural fragmentation = diversity without unity) is cultural alienation. Humans' appropriation of the societal conditions, in contrast, means a commons-based economy, participatory democracy, and unity in diversity.

An alienated economic system is a class system where workers are exploited. A self-managed economy, in contrast, is one where humans produce, control, and own property in common. An alienated political system is a centralised bureaucracy, where bureaucrats rule citizens. In participatory democracy, citizens have the resources, time, and skills needed to take meaningful collective decisions. An alienated cultural system is one where a privileged group controls the means of collective meaning making and definition power. In a commons-based cultural system, humans have the real possibility to be general intellectuals, they co-produce meanings of the world, recognise each other's identities, and implement a unity in diversity of identities and lifestyles.

Human subjects experience the world in social action. In doing so, they have certain feelings about the world. They can experience and assess objective alienation as alienated or as non-alienated. Objective alienation can result in feelings of alienation, but does not necessarily do so. Slaves do not automatically hate their slave-master. Some alienated individuals love alienation and those who dominate them. But objective alienation always contains potentials for resistance and feelings of alienation.

Subjective alienation may remain a pure individual expression. But it can also take on collective political forms that advance class struggles, political protests, and struggles for recognition. Such struggles can be the foundation of a commons-based social system and a commons-based society. But there is no guarantee that social struggles will succeed. Overcoming alienation establishes at the subjective level self-realising activity, active citizenship, and general intellectuality. But humans can also feel non-alienated in advancing alienated conditions. Struggles for appropriation are only truly emancipatory if the aim is social structures where all benefit, feel and are at home.

The Instrumental Reason of Capitalist Communications

Capitalist communication systems (communications) are instrumental systems and alienated in a threefold way:

1. They treat humans as consumers and objects of advertisements and bourgeois ideology.

2. In capitalism, culture and communication take on the commodity form. There is a range of communication commodities in whose production cultural workers, audiences, and users are exploited (see table 5.3 in chapter 5).
3. In capitalism, there are classes, dominant groups, and ideologues who communicate ideologies that aim at instrumentalising consciousness so that humans accept, justify, and sustain domination and exploitation. Capitalist communication technologies are means of advertising, commodification, and ideology. Capitalist communications instrumentalise communication work and human consciousness.

Domination is instrumental rationality and is mediated by instrumental communication. Co-operative rationality is the antagonist of instrumental reason. It is a form of rationality that informs teleological positings in such a manner that the aim of practices is the establishment of conditions that benefit all. Co-operative rationality in the last instance aims at participatory democracy and the common good, whereas instrumental rationality results in particularism and in the last instance in fascism. Co-operative communication is communication that mediates co-operation and the quest for the creation of common goods.

In class societies there is a history of antagonism between instrumental and co-operative rationality. Dominant classes and groups develop ever newer methods of exploitation and domination that instrumentalise humans so that particular groups benefit at the expense of others. Resistance and alternatives do not always and not automatically emerge, but there is also a history of struggles for alternatives that are informed by co-operative rationality.

Class and Domination

Data cited in chapter 7 shows that the working class is the largest dominated group in the world. Class therefore has a special status in capitalist society. Class and class politics are more foundational than identity and identity politics. Class inequality cannot be overcome without the overthrow of capitalism.

Women have conducted the majority of reproductive labour that includes labour such as child-rearing, care, education, cooking, laundry, shopping, cleaning, etc. Reproductive labour reproduces labour power so that workers are capable of being exploited by capital. Reproductive labour produces a gratis resource for capital. It is therefore not exploited by wage workers, but by capital. Productive labour produces value and commodities that are sold to accumulate capital. Houseworkers produce and reproduce labour power that is sold as a commodity to capitalists. Therefore, reproductive labour is a type of productive labour. In patriarchal class societies, there is a division of labour where certain types of labour that are unpaid, low paid, or precarious are the domain of women and the more privileged forms of labour are the domain of men. Ideologically this division is justified by a naturalisation of dualisms such

as mind/body, culture/nature, creator/creature, rational/emotional, individual/ social, active/passive, public/private, aggressive/weak, war/peace, etc.

Maria Mies writes that women are in capitalism subject to three types of exploitation: 'they are exploited […] by men and they are exploited as house-wives by capital. If they are wage-workers they are also exploited as wage-workers'.[12] Rosa Luxemburg argues that in capitalism, milieus of ongoing primitive accumulation are 'indispensable for accumulation' and that capital proceeds 'by eating […] up' the labour conducted in such milieus.[13] Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof interpret housework and labour in the Global South as milieus of ongoing primitive accumulation in Luxemburg's understanding.[14] In these milieus, we find the super-exploitation of non-wage-labour in order to enable capital accumulation. The exploita-tion of non-wage-labour ensures the reproduction of labour power. By primi-tive accumulation is meant 'overt violence, with the aim of robbery wherever, whenever, and against whomever this is "economically" necessary, politically possible, and technically feasible'.[15] Capitalism has an inherently imperialistic character and has a necessary drive to create new spheres of exploitation, com-modification, and accumulation. Women, colonies, and nature form 'the main targets of this process of ongoing primitive accumulation'.[16]

Neoliberal capitalism has extended the inner colonies of accumulation so that the precarious labour that has traditionally been typical of housework-ers has become widely spread. Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, and von Werlhof term this process housewifisation.[17] Housewifised labour has characteristics of housework such as 'no job permanency, the lowest wages, longest work-ing hours, most monotonous work, no trade unions, no opportunity to obtain higher qualifications, no promotion, no rights, and no social security'.[18] It is the 'source of unchecked, unlimited exploitation'.[19] Housewifised labour means the 'superexploitation of non-wage labourers [. . .] upon which wage labour exploitation then is possible'.[20] It is the 'externalization, or ex-territorialization of costs which otherwise would have to be covered by the capitalists'.[21]

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[12] Maria Mies. 1986. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books.

[13] Rosa Luxemburg. 1913/2003. *The Accumulation of Capital.* New York: Routledge, p. 363

[14] Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof. 1988. *Women: The Last Colony*. London: Zed Books.

[15] Ibid., p. 102.

[16] Ibid., p. 6.

[17] Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, von Werlhof, *Women: The Last Colony*. Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale.*

[18] Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, von Werlhof, *Women: The Last Colony*, p. 169.

[19] Mies, *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a* Worldscale, p. 16.

[20] Ibid., p. 48.

[21] Ibid., p. 110.

Racism emerged as a consequence of European colonialism in America, English colonialism in Ireland, and the African slave trade.[22] Racism is linked to imperialism. Racism has justified colonialism and unequal exchange, as well as the oppression and exploitation of people in colonial countries and of immigrants.

David Roediger argues, based on W.E.B. Du Bois' work, that 'the pleasures of whiteness could function as a "wage" for white workers. That is, status and privileges conferred by race could be used to make up for alienating and exploitative class relationships'.[23] This theoretical approach can be generalised: White supremacy or any other type of racism has the role of cultural or ideological power. It allows white workers and the white bourgeoisie to distinguish themselves from people of colour and to exert power over the latter. Masculinity is a form of ideological power that makes men distinguish themselves from others and exert power. Whiteness and masculinity are ideologies that aim at the accumulation of cultural power that manifests itself in reputation, status, and social distinction. Masculinity and whiteness are patriarchal and racist ideologies. They sustain a type of bio-politics in which the body is a space of politics and where cultural power is accumulated.

David Roediger's work shows that the motivation of masculinity, whiteness, racism, nationalism, and other ideologies is the goal and desire of individuals to make up for the exploitation and domination (= alienation) that they experience. As a consequence, politics is not focused on fighting the dominant class, but on scapegoating underdogs. The pleasure derived from oppression and exploitation is a cultural 'wage'. Political advantages derived from oppression and exploitation are a political 'wage'. Ideological power is used to attain economic and/or political power – better economic positions, higher wages, more income, and increased political influence. Racism, nationalism, sexism, and other ideologies function as means for the creation of economic and political wages. Such ideologies can create economic, political, and cultural surplus-'wages' that are economic, political, and cultural forms of power. Ideology, culture, and authority result in surplus wages in the economy. Ideology and politics in capitalist society are systems of accumulation in which political and cultural surpluses are accumulated. The surplus that ideology produces is not just surplus pleasure and enjoyment in the suffering of others, but also economic, political, and cultural power.

In capitalist society, the logic of exploitation informs forms of domination, including racism and patriarchy. This relation expresses itself in the form of political and ideological wages. Production is the general model of society. In capitalism, exploitation's logic therefore shapes domination, whereas particular forms of domination (racism, patriarchy, etc.) do not necessarily shape exploitation, although they frequently have an influence on the organisation

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[22] Audrey Smedley. 1998. 'Race' and the Construction of Human Identity. *American Anthropologist* 100 (3): 690–702.

[23] David R. Roediger. 2007. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* London: Verso. Revised edition. p. 13.

of class relations. Capitalism needs to exploit labour and therefore there are constantly renewed strategies of how to increase exploitation. Ideology serves as justification for exploitation. It also distracts attention from exploitation or communicates justifications of domination and exploitation that hide the actual power and class relations.

The public sphere is an important aspect of political communication. It will be discussed in the next section.

8.2. Communication in the Public Sphere[24]

The Public Sphere

Jürgen Habermas defines the public as a sphere that is 'open to all'.[25] 'We call events and occasions "public" when they are open to all, in contrast to close or exclusive affairs'. The public sphere has in essence the task of engaging citizens in 'critical public debate'.[26] The public sphere needs communication systems for political debate. The logic of the public sphere is independent of economic and political power: '[l]aws of the market [...] [are] suspended' as are the 'laws of the state'.[27] Habermas argues that the public sphere is not just a sphere of public political communication, but also a sphere that is free from state censorship and from private ownership. It is free from particularism and instrumental reason.

Habermas discusses key characteristics of the public sphere:[28]

- The public sphere is a realm for the formation of public opinion.
- In a true public sphere, all citizens have access.
- The public sphere enables political debate in unrestricted fashion (freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression and publication of opinions) about matters of general interest.
- The public sphere enables political debates about the general rules governing social relations.
- Private property, influence, and skills enable individuals to be heard in the bourgeois public sphere. Workers have been excluded from these resources.

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[24] This section is partly based on material that was first published as part of the following article: Christian Fuchs. 2014. Social Media and the Public Sphere. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (1): 57–101.

[25] Jürgen Habermas. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 1.

[26] Ibid., p. 54.

[27] Ibid., p. 36.

[28] Ibid., pp. 122–129, 136; and: Jürgen Habermas. 1989. The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article. In *Critical Theory and Society. A Reader*, ed. Stephen E. Bronner and Douglas Kellner, 136–142. New York: Routledge.

This is evident, for example, in the lower rates of access of working class-children to higher education, and their lower completion rates.

- The bourgeois class only serves and advances its own particular interests that are profit interests and not the common interest.
- Marx saw communism as the public sphere and as an alternative to the bourgeois state that serves class interests. This is evident in his analysis of the Paris Commune (March–May 1871) as a specific kind of public sphere.

In capitalist society, the economy is a separate sphere that is based on commodity production and wage-labour. The realm of the economy is mediated by the household, where reproductive labour takes place. The notion of the private is in capitalism split into the sphere of the private ownership economy and the intimate family. The public sphere connects culture, the economy, and politics, and thereby creates intersections of society's subsystems.

Liberal ideology postulates individual freedoms (of speech, opinion, association, assembly) as universal rights. The particularistic and stratified character of capitalist class society undermines these universal rights. It creates inequalities and therefore unequal access to the public sphere. There are two immanent limits of the bourgeois public sphere that Habermas discusses:

- The limitation of freedom of speech and public opinion: if individuals do not have the same level of formal education and material resources available, then this can pose limits for their participation in the public sphere.[29]
- The limitation of freedom of association and assembly: big political and economic organisations 'enjoy an oligopoly of the publicistically effective and politically relevant formation of assemblies and associations'.[30]

Habermas argues that as a consequence of these limits, the bourgeois public sphere is colonised and feudalised. It is not a true public sphere, but a class-structured political space. The public sphere is a concept of immanent critique for criticising the shortcomings of societies. Habermas does not necessarily say that it exists everywhere, but only that it should exist. Immanent critique compares proclaimed ideals to reality. If it finds out that reality contradicts its own ideals, then it becomes clear that there is a fundamental mismatch and that reality needs to be changed in order to overcome this incongruity. The bourgeois public sphere creates its own limits and thereby its own immanent critique.

Public spaces and public spheres cannot only be found in the West. The claim that the public sphere is a Western-centric concept is therefore short-circuited. Such a claim also poses the danger of justifying undemocratic regimes that are opposed to the West in the name of challenging Western-centrism and

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[29] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 227.
[30] Ibid., p. 228.

Euro-centrism. The public teahouse is an old cultural practice and space in many parts of the world, such as in China, Japan, Iran, Turkey, and the UK. Di Wang compares the early 20th century Chinese teahouse to the British public houses.[31] It is a common space, where people from all walks of life go for different purposes. The Chinese word for teahouse is 茶館(*cháguǎn*). Chengdu (成都) is the capital of the Southwestern Chinese province Sichuan (四川). 'Teahouses in Chengdu, however, were renowned for their multiclass orientation. One of the "virtues" of Chengdu teahouses was their relatively equality'.[32] Women were first excluded, but by 1930 fully accepted. These teahouses were not just cultural spaces, but also political meeting points, where political debates took place and political theatre pieces were performed, which attracted not only citizens, but also government spies. Wang discusses the role of the Chengdu teahouses during the 1911 Railroad Protection Movement. Public meeting places are spheres of civil engagement that can turn into political spaces of communication and protest.

The various Occupy movements that emerged after the world economic crisis that had started in 2008 were movements where protest and the occupation of spaces converged. They created self-managed public spheres of political communication. This creation of public spheres took place not only in the West, but in many parts of the world in times of global capitalist and social crisis. A common aspect of these protests was that many of them used the tactic of making space public and political, and that these protests took place in a common crisis of society. Resistance is as old as class societies, so public spheres have been formed as resisting publics throughout the history of class societies. The public sphere exists wherever humans gather to collectively organise and voice their anger with and discontent over exploitation and domination.

Communication and the Public Sphere

Communication technologies circulate ideas in public to a broad range of people. They are systems for publishing, for making information public. Media systems and media organisations address people with particular contents. They speak to them as private individuals in their cultural role, as members of communities of interests in the socio-cultural sphere, as citizens or politicians in the political realm, as activists in the socio-political sphere, as owners, managers, or employees in the economic system, and as members of economic interest groups in the socio-economic realm. Confronted with content provided by the media, humans communicate about these contents. Figure 8.1 shows the interactions of the media systems in capitalism's public sphere. Media create public information (news, entertainment, user-generated content etc). They

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[31]   Di Wang. 2008. The Idle and the Busy. Teahouses and Public Life in Early Twentieth-Century Chengdu. *Journal of Urban History* 26 (4): 411–437.

[32]   Ibid., p. 421.
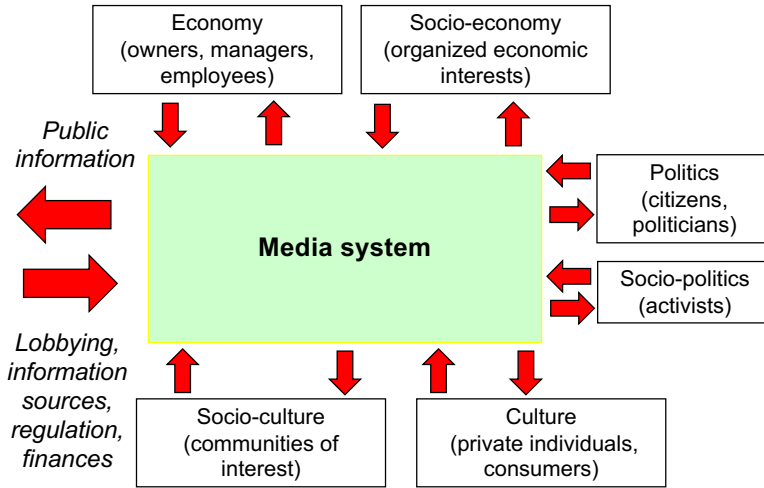
Figure 8.1: The role of the media system in the public sphere.

confront humans in their social roles with information that supports them in making meaning of the world. In order to create cultural content, workers in the media system rely on humans in various social roles as information sources. In capitalism, these information sources tend to be asymmetrically distributed, with politicians, governments, parties, celebrities, experts, companies, and managers playing a significantly more important role than everyday citizens. The media system also requires inputs from the economic system (financing in the form of loans, money paid for content or audiences, subsidies, donations) and the political system (laws, regulation).

Table 8.3 distinguishes two levels of the organisation of the media and introduces a distinction between capitalist media, public media and civil society media.

The media system has a public role for making information public. Public culture is, however, mediated by political economy and ownership structures:

• *Capitalist media* are companies that are privately owned by single individuals, families, or shareholders. They are culturally located in the public sphere, but at the same time they are part of the capitalist economy. Therefore they produce not only public information, but also capital and monetary profit by selling audiences/users and/or content.
• *Public service media* are funded by or with the help of the state and/or are created and maintained by a specific statute. They are a public service that plays the role of providing political, educational and entertainment information to citizens. They are as organisations located in relation to the state system that does not control but rather enable them.

Table 8.3: Two levels and three political economies of the media.[33]

	Capitalist media	**Public service media**	**Civil society media**
Political economy (ownership)	Corporations	State-backed institutions	Citizen-control
Culture (public circulation of ideas)	Content that addresses humans in various social roles and results in meaning-making	Content that addresses humans in various social roles and results in meaning-making	Content that addresses humans in various social roles and results in meaning-making

- *Civil society media* are full parts of the public sphere. They are economically related to the state if they receive public subsidies. Often, they stand in an antagonistic relation to the capitalist economy and governments because as alternative media they tend to reject for-profit and commercial logic and they tend to express alternative points of view that challenge governments and corporations. Civil society media are media that are run, owned, and controlled by citizens as common projects. They express alternative points of view on the level of culture and have alternative organisation models at the level of political economy.

Media make information public on their cultural level, but only some of them are publicly controlled on the economic level by state-enabled institutions or civil society, whereas capitalist media are profit-making corporations based on private ownership.

There are several ways in which capitalist media limit the public sphere:

- *Media concentration*: There is a tendency for market competition to result in concentration. In the commercial media landscape, the mechanism of the advertising-circulation spiral enforces media concentration.
- *Commercialised and tabloidised content*: Advertising-financed media tend to focus more on entertainment than news, documentaries, and educational programmes, because this content is better suited to attracting advertisers.
- *Power inequalities*: There are power differentials in commercial media that disadvantage individuals and groups that do not have significant shares of money, political influence and reputation, and disempower their voices and visibility:

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[33] Based on: Graham Murdock. 2011. Political Economies as Moral Economies. Commodities, Gifts, and Public Goods. In *The Handbook of the Political Economy of Communications*, eds. Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock and Helena Sousa, 13–40. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

a) Private media ownership gives owners the possibility to influence media content.
b) For-profit and advertising logic makes media organisations dependent on market and commodity logic, and prone to exclude voices that question these logics.
c) There is an educational and economic gap that can privilege educated and wealthy individuals in the consumption of demanding and time-consuming culture.

When analysing whether certain communication systems constitute a public sphere, one should take into account both the level of political communication and the level of political economy. This allows specific questions to be asked that can help to determine whether we can speak of the existence of a public sphere.

(1) Analysis of the political economic dimension of mediated communication:
(1a) Ownership:
   Is there a democratic ownership of the media organisation and communicative resources?
(1b) Censorship:
   Is there political and/or economic censorship?
(1c) Exclusion:
   Is there an overrepresentation of viewpoints of corporate elites or of uncritical and pro-capitalist viewpoints? To what degree are critical viewpoints present?
(1d) Political content production:
   Who can produce content? How visible, relevant, and influential is the produced content?
(2) Analysis of political communication:
(2a) Universal access:
   How relevant/frequently used are political communication sites or political communication forums/features/contents within more general platforms? Who has access and who uses the sites for political communication (class, income, education level, age, gender, ethnicity, origin, etc.)? How relevant is political communication in relation to other forms of information and communication (for example, as pure entertainment)?
(2b) Independence:
   How independent are the sites and discussions from economic and state interests?
(2c) Quality of political discussion:
   How valid (right, true, truthful, understandable), inclusive, attentive, sincere, reflexive and inclusive is political discussion?

Public Service Media

There has been a tradition of public service broadcasting in Europe and other parts of the world that has been a crucial dimension of the modern media system in the 20th and 21st centuries. Slavko Splichal gives a concise definition of public service media (PSM): 'In normative terms, public service media must be a service *of* the public, *by* the public, and *for* the public. It is a service *of* the public because it is financed by it and should be owned by it. It ought to be a service *by* the public – not only financed and controlled, but also produced by it. It must be a service *for* the public – but also for the government and other powers acting in the public sphere. In sum, public service media ought to become "a cornerstone of democracy"'.[34]

Table 8.4 introduces a model of public service media that operates on three dimensions. There are economic, political, and cultural dimensions of public service media: organisation, participation and content. On each level, there is the production, circulation, and use of a specific good that is organised in line

Table 8.4: A model of public service media.

Sphere	Media	Production	Circulation	Use
Culture: social meaning	Content	Independence, unity in diversity, educational content	Cultural communication and debate	Cultural dialogue and understanding
Politics: collective decisions	Participation	Independence, unity in diversity (representation of minority interests and common affinity and reference points for society), political information	Political communication and debate	Political dialogue and understanding
Economy: property	Organisation and technology	Public ownership	Non-profit, non-market	Universal access, universal availability of technology

[34] Slavko Splichal. 2007. Does History Matter? Grasping the Idea of Public Service at its Roots. In *From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media. RIPE@2007*, ed. Gregory Ferrell Lowe and Jo Bardoel, 237–256. Gothenburg: Nordicom. S. 255.

with the logic of public service. So, for example, public ownership of PSM is an economic aspect of the means of communicative production.

On the economic level, PSM are means of production, circulation, and consumption of public information. PSM's means of production are publicly owned. The circulation of information is based on a not-for-profit logic. Consumption is made available in principle to everyone by giving citizens easy access to PSM's technology and information. On the political level, PSM make available inclusive and diverse political information that can encourage political debate and the achievement of political understanding. On the cultural level, PSM provide educational content that has the potential to support cultural debate and the achievement of understanding in society.

Critical Media and the Counter Public Sphere

Alternative media can stimulate public debate. It is not their non-'mainstream' character that makes them alternatives. They are also not alternative because of their small scale. Alternative media can be local or small-scale media, but do not have to be. Alternative media are critical media.

Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's book on the proletarian and bourgeois public sphere gives attention to left-wing media.[35] Negt and Kluge are interested in the question of how the Left can control the intellectual means of production and create counter-ideas. Negt and Kluge stress how important it is for the Left to have its own critical organisations that are independent from capitalism, i.e. both from capitalist ideologies and capitalist ownership. Some approaches include right-wing media into the concept of alternative media. Negt and Kluge in contrast see all media that are not part of the Left as standing outside of the proletarian public sphere.

Negt and Kluge's notion of a counter public sphere stresses the importance of the collective control of the means of communication and the need to communicate critical content. The concept of the proletarian public sphere and its media is 'idea against idea, product against product, production sector against production sector'.[36] The proletarian public sphere puts a stress on organisations, models, and production that challenge capitalist ownership and communicate ideas that challenge capitalism, class, and domination. Critical media form the content and communicative dimension of the counter public sphere.

Alternative media are often part of or sympathetic to protest movements. But not all critical media are necessarily connected to social movements. There are cases where we have critical media, but no large critical public sphere, protests and

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[35] Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge. 1993. *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

[36] Ibid., p. 80.

social movements. All alternative media together constitute the alternative public sphere, that is, a sphere of protest and critical politics. As an oppositional force this sphere is vital for democracy. The counter public sphere opposes the corporate media, corporate media monopolies, and monopolies of political opinions.

When speaking of the proletariat, many think only of industrial labour. Negt and Kluge's book was first published in 1972. Since then, the proletariat has changed: Service and knowledge labour have grown significantly. We have witnessed the rise of neoliberal capitalism that has included a weakening of labour vis-à-vis capital. We need to update our notion of the proletariat. Michael Hardt and Toni Negri have coined the notions of the multitude[37] and the 'social worker'.[38] These two concepts foreground the commodification of and extraction of value from society's commons. The commons have become an important aspect of surplus value production. The notions of the exploited class, the working class and the proletariat are not restricted to industrial labour, but also include, for example, houseworkers, knowledge workers, migrant workers, precarious self-employment, precarious workers, retirees, students, the unemployed, and workers in developing countries. The proletariat are all those who produce goods and commons that are appropriated by capital. Capital exploits the producers of the commons.

Critical media are the multitude's media. They are media operating in the counter public sphere. They express the experiences and actual or ascribed consciousness of the dominated class. Critical media come out of political struggles and class struggles. In the 1980s/1990s/2000s, there was much political focus on identity politics struggling for the recognition of marginalised groups or the recognition of nature as a moral and not just an economic value (the environment). After the new world economic crisis that emerged in 2008, it became evident that class is not outdated. Class has always been a major feature of capitalist society. The postmodern Left has again and again belittled the importance of class.

The proletarian public sphere, just like the proletariat itself, will not exist forever. It aims at its own self-sublation, at a society without classes and without class-based communication. Certain scholars and activists have criticised unified notions of the public sphere. They argue that women, gays and lesbians, and ethnicities have been excluded from the public sphere. Therefore, they claim, it is more promising to struggle in multiple subaltern counter publics against oppression. They consider the unification of the public sphere as dangerous. But a real danger lies in fragmentation and micro

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[37] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Penguin.

[38] Antonio Negri. 1988. Archaeology and Project. The Mass Worker and the Social Worker. In *Revolution Retrieved. Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects 1967–83*, 203–228. London: Red Notes.

struggles that do not attack the totality. The danger of pluralistic publics without unity is that in struggles they will focus on mere reformist identity politics that do not challenge the totality of capitalist society that negatively affects the lives of all subordinated groups. In an egalitarian society, common communication spaces are needed to guarantee cohesion and solidarity in a strong democracy. Postmodernists and post-Marxists put so much emphasis on difference that they overlook how difference can easily become repressive and a form of new oppression that claims to challenge old oppression, but only means plurality without unity. The counter public sphere and an egalitarian public sphere should be based on unity in diversity. We need unity in diversity in order to be able to establish a society of the commons and participatory democracy.

What is the best role of alternative media in the counter public sphere? It is better and more effective if there are just a few widely accessible and widely consumed critical media than many small-scale special interest alternative media. The risk of the latter is the fragmentation of the communication of struggles. Emancipatory struggles include that social movements and critical media try to initiate large-scale political communication. If they do not manage to do so, then they are often ignored or are self-contained, fragmented, irrelevant, precarious, and politically unimportant and ineffective.

8.3.   Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main conclusions as follows:

- The analysis of political communication in the public sphere poses the question as to how capitalism and domination are related. Alienation is not just an economic phenomenon, but economic, political, and ideological in character. It operates at the level of the human subject, societal structures, and mediating communication processes. Exploitation, i.e. economic alienation, acts as a model of political and ideological alienation. In capitalism, exploitation and domination are based on the logic of accumulation. Political and ideological alienation aim to establish surpluses in authority and distinction that act as political and ideological wages that enable a surplus of pleasure, enjoyment, power, real wages, and income.
- The public sphere is a realm of political communication that allows the democratic participation of all. Its openness is constrained by economic, political, and cultural power asymmetries. Because capitalism is based on such asymmetries, its bourgeois public sphere is necessarily limited, colonised, feudalised, and just a pseudo public sphere. The media system operates in the public sphere as a system of political information that provides inputs for political communication. Capitalist media limit the public sphere in many respects, and hamper democratic communication.

- Public service media and critical alternative media are two approaches that have the potential to challenge capitalist media. Both models face many problems and limits and are not immune to the subsumption of communication under the logic of capitalism and domination. But they have often been and continue to be starting points for discussions about and the organisation of alternatives to capitalist communication. Although they offer no guarantees, they do contain potentials for a democratic public sphere.

Political communication is in capitalism closely related to ideology. The next chapter focuses on the critique of ideology.

CHAPTER 9

Ideology

Dominant classes' and groups' rule is not guaranteed, but needs to be reproduced. All class societies are therefore based on violence and repression. Repression includes physical violence, structural repession, and ideological repression. Ideology is a strategy of reproducing domination and exploitation that operates in the realms of communication, culture, psychology, emotions, and beliefs. This chapter focuses on the concept of ideology from a critical theory perspective. It asks: What is ideology? How does ideology operate and work? In an attempt to answer these questions, the chapter first discusses the reification of consciousness (section 9.1). Second, it discusses the question of how ideology should be defined (9.2). Third, the relationship of communication and ideology is outlined (9.3). Fourth, some aspects of ideology critique are presented (9.4).

9.1. The Reification of Consciousness

Georg Lukács introduced the notion of reification. It is derived from Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. 'The essence of commodity-structure' is that 'a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a "phantom objectivity", an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people'.[1] 'The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of "ghostly objectivity" cannot therefore content itself with the reduction of all objects for the gratification of human needs to commodities. It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man'.[2]

Lukács bases this understanding of reification on a passage in *Capital*'s section on the fetish character of the commodity, in which Marx speaks of

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[1] Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin. p. 83.

[2] Ibid., p. 100.

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commodities as having a '*gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit*'.[3] Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling translated this term as 'unsubstantial reality'.[4] In contrast, Ben Fowkes translated it as 'phantom-like objectivity'.[5] The second translation is superior because it is more literal. One could also employ the phrases 'spectral objectivity' or 'ghostly objectivity'. Spectres, phantoms, and ghosts are schizophrenic beings: They are present and absent at the same time. Marx uses the metaphor of the ghost for the commodity in order to express that the commodity's value is absent and present at the same time: It appears as the commodity's price, but at the same time value's substance, namely the labour time it takes workers on average to produce the commodity, is not visible, but hidden. Thereby also the class relations, in which commodities are produced, are hidden. The thing-like character of the commodity, money, and price veils class relations. 'History becomes fossilised in a *formalism* incapable of comprehending that the real nature of socio-historical institutions is that they consist of *relations between men*'.[6] Marx's critique of the political economy constitutes a 'consciousness of consciousness' and a critical 'theory of theory'. It 'dissolves the rigid, unhistorical, natural appearance of social institutions; it reveals their historical origins'.[7]

The commodity and capital accumulation are based on the exploitation of labour power. In class societies, there are structures that degrade humans so that they are forced into exploitation that fosters capital accumulation. They produce commodities owned by and turned into capital by the dominant class. The commodity also has a commodity aesthetic, namely commodity fetishism that makes the labour that the commodity contains subjectively disappear. Ideology operates in a similar manner to commodity fetishism. In ideology, exploitation and domination are presented as natural, static, unchangeable, thing-like.

Class societies are based on a division of labour. In capitalism, the divisions between capital/labour, brain/hands, urban/rural, production/reproduction, local/global, etc. mediate capitalist production in such a manner that commodity producers and consumers do not experience how the entire commodity is produced. The way we experience capitalism in our everyday life is by the sale of our labour power, the purchase of commodities, and the use of money. We

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[3] Karl Marx. 1867/1890/1962. *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band: Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals. MEW Band 23*. Berlin: Dietz. p. 53.

[4] Karl Marx. 1867. *Capital Volume I. MECW Volume 35*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 48.

[5] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 128.

[6] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 48.

[7] Ibid., p. 47.

do not experience the class relations that are hidden behind the commodities that we buy in the supermarket or on Amazon. Ideology is built into capitalism's very structures. Not only is ideology fetishist, but also commodity fetishism is ideological: Social relations that can be changed by humans appear as natural and without alternative.

In capitalism, there are two particular features of ideology:

(1) The ideological structure of commodity fetishism: Producers and consumers cannot experience class relations and commodity production in their totality. Commodities and money as things hide class relations. Commodity fetishism means that capitalism's economic structures are ideological.

(2) The fetishist structure of ideology: Ideologies naturalise domination and exploitation. Ideology is a dimension of capitalism that is necessary for the latter's legitimatisation. The 'veil drawn over the nature of bourgeois society is indispensable to the bourgeoisie itself. […] the need to deceive the other classes and to ensure that their class consciousness remain amorphous is inescapable for a bourgeois regime'.[8]

Max Horkheimer characterises the role of ideology in class society: 'One can distinguish two functions of ideology, justification […] and concealment'.[9] Lukács' notions of reification and reified consciousness build on Marx's notion of fetishism. For Lukács, reified consciousness is false consciousness. It 'obscures the historical, transitory character of capitalist society'. Ideology makes society's underlying relations appear as 'timeless, eternal' and 'valid for all social formations'.[10] In capitalist ideology, there is no dialectic and totalities are dissolved and reduced into small parts. The whole is presented as the '"sum" of the parts', and as a consequence 'isolated parts' appear as 'a timeless law valid for every human society'.[11] Lukács argues that ideology is not timeless, but rather a feature of any class society: Ideology presupposes 'societal structures, in which different groups and conflicting interests act and strive to impose their interest onto the totality of society as its general interest. To put it shortly: The emergence and diffusion of ideologies appears as the general characteristic of class societies.'[12]

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8 Ibid., p. 66.
9 Translation from German: Max Horkheimer. 1957. Ideologie [I]. In *Max Horkheimer Gesammelte Schriften Band 14: Nachgelassene Schriften 1949–1972*, 272–273. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 273.
10 Ibid., p. 9.
11 Ibid., p. 9.
12 Translation from German [„Die Hauptfrage ist demnach, daß das Entstehen solcher Ideologien Gesellschaftsstrukturen voraussetzt, in denen verschiedene Gruppen und entgegengesetzte Interessen wirken und

Ideology has to do with the reification of consciousness, which poses the question of how to define ideology. The next section gives attention to this issue.

9.2. What Is Ideology?

Terry Eagleton notes six understandings of ideology: (a) ideology as ideas, (b) ideologies as class experience, (c) the legitimatisation of class interest, (d) the legitimatisation of the dominant class' interest, (e) the legitimation of a ruling class or group's ideas by distortion and dissimulation, (f) false consciousness.[13]

If ideology just means ideas or experiences of a class, then there is no difference between knowledge and ideology. Ideology is then a general sociological category describing an anthropological feature of humans and society. Such a concept is not meaningful for a critical theory of society that needs a way of signifying attempts to manipulate consciousness. Therefore, a combination of understandings (d), (e) and (f) is appropriate for a critical theory of society. False consciousness on the side of the dominated class or group is not a necessary element of ideology. Ideology is not simply and not necessarily dominated groups' state of consciousness. Exploiting and dominant classes mostly have false consciousness. But growing up in the bourgeoisie does not imply you have false consciousness, as the examples of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx show. Ideology is a process. Dominative classes or groups communicate their dominant ideas and others react to it or do not react to it in particular ways. Dominant ideas certainly impact culture, both the culture of the dominant and the subordinate classes. But it is not pre-programmed what these changes will look like.

Definitions of ideology vary on a continuum where ideology is defined as worldview on the one end and as false consciousness on the other. Marxists do not agree on the question of whether or not we should speak of socialism as an ideology. For esample, while Lenin agrees to a definition of socialism as ideology, Lukács disagrees. Lenin says: 'the only choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology'.[14] For Lukács, ideology exists only in class societies: 'The emergence and diffusion of ideologies appears as the general characteristic of class societies'.[15] General theories of ideology form one end of the continuum. Ideology critique can be found at the other end.

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bestrebt sind, diese der Gesamtgesellschaft als deren allgemeines Interesse aufzudrängen. Kurz gefaßt: Entstehen und Verbreitung von Ideologien erscheint als das allgemeine Kennzeichen der Klassengesellschaften"]: Georg Lukács. 1984. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 13: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 1. Halbband.* Darmstadt: Luchterhand. p. 405.

[13] Terry Eagleton. 1991. *Ideology: An Introduction.* London: Verso. pp. 28–31.

[14] Lenin. 1902. What Is To Be Done? In *Lenin Collected Works 5*, 347–529. Moscow: Progress Publishers. p. 384.

[15] Translation from German: „Entstehen und Verbreitung von Ideologien erscheint als das allgemeine Kennzeichen der Klassengesellschaften", in:

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno are critical of approaches that advance a general definition of ideology. Horkheimer says about such definitions that they 'thoroughly purge from the ideology concept the remains of its accusatory meaning'.[16] Theodor W. Adorno writes that the general theory of ideology uses 'the terminology of social criticism while removing its sting'.[17] Thinkers such as Horkheimer and Adorno want to use ideology critique as a method of critical theory and see ideology as a concept of critique, which is why they oppose the general definition of ideology. Mario Tronti argues that '*any ideology is always bourgeois*'[18] and that 'Marx's thought' is 'not the *ideology* of the workers' movement but its *revolutionary theory*'.[19]

The critical notion of ideology is normative. It distinguishes between true and false consciousness and practices. Based on such an understanding, ideology justifies the power of one group or individual, the way that groups or individuals exploit or dominate others. Ideology manifests itself in artefacts, belief systems, concepts, ideas, institutions, meanings, phrases, practices, representations, sentences, systems, texts, thoughts, and words that are employed to misrepresent or distort reality. Ideology is a reified and mystified semiotic representation of the world.

Ideology is not purely abstract. It is also concrete and lived. This means that in the world of labour, there are ideological workers who create and reproduce ideology. Marx writes that ideological workers are 'the thinkers of the [ruling] class', its 'active, conceptive ideologists'. They 'make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of [their] livelihood'.[20]

A critical concept of ideology rejects solipsism and is based on moral realism. Moral realism means that humans can analyse and understand the world's reality and the real causes of complex problems. Ideology critique is the deconstruction of falsehood, of knowledge that is presented as truth but is deceptive. The term socialist moral realism implies that dominative and exploitative societies negate humans' general interests. Seen from a political point of view, such societies should therefore be abolished and replaced by a societal formation that benefits all economically, socially, politically and culturally. Such a society of the commons is a socialist society.

Georg Lukács. Georg Lukács. 1986. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Zweiter Halbband. Georg Lukács Werke Band 14*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. p. 405.

[16] Translation from German: Max Horkheimer. 1972. *Sozialphilosophische Studien*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 28.

[17] Theodor W. Adorno. 1981. *Prisms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 38.

[18] Mario Tronti. 2019. *Workers and Capital.* London: Verso. p. 6.

[19] Ibid., p. 7.

[20] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1845/46. *The German Ideology, MECW Volume 5*, p. 68.

Ideology defines an exploitative class' or dominative group's aims, actions, identity, membership, norms, resources, and values. There is always a relationship to a subordinated class or group. The power of the dominative group or exploitative group is justified and naturalised by the use of particular ideological strategies.

Ideology is an information process. There is the being-in-itself of ideology, the individual identity of a particular group that justifies its domination or exploitation of others. This identity includes aspects such as aims, practices, membership, norms, resources, etc. The subordinated group also has such an identity. So, the being-in-itself of the dominative group is dialectically related to the being-in-itself of the subordinated group (being-for-another as class relationship). The dominative group's being-in-itself is affirmed and the subordinated group's status as dominated or exploited is not talked about, is denied, or is in another way downplayed. Ideology suggests particular measures to change reality in particular ways that in the end just uphold the asymmetric power relation between the two classes or groups.

The power conflict is reproduced so that at some level of reality something new emerges that, however, fails to fundamentally change the old power relation. Ideology makes definitions of individual groups, defines a relationship and suggests how this relationship should be organised. In racist and xenophobic ideology, (a) a 'native' group is defined, (b) an outsider/immigrant group is defined, (c) a particular relationship between them is claimed (e.g. by falsely claiming that immigrants are lazy, are destroying the dominant culture, are criminals, etc.), and (d) specific measures are suggested (e.g. the deportation or killing of the outsiders). Ideological labour defines such identities, relations, and measures, and communicates these definitions and claims publicly in society.

Ideological labour's semiotic strategies often define in-groups and out-groups that are posited against each other. This can be done in a number of ways by employing the following strategies or combinations thereof:[21]

1. Positive information about the in-group is communicated;
2. Negative information about the out-group is communicated;
3. Positive information about the out-group is downplayed or suppressed;
4. Negative information about the in-group is downplayed or suppressed.

Ideology aims at treating humans like machines, which means that it wants to make them behave like automata. Ideology wants to manipulate human beings so that they take on the interest of the dominant group or class. The goal is that the dominant group or class benefits at the expense of the

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[21] Teun A. van Dijk. 1998. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage. pp. 397–398.

subordinated groups. The Frankfurt School also characterises ideology as technological rationality and instrumental reason.[22] Ideology aims at instrumentalising human behaviour and human consciousness in the interest of the dominant class or groups. Ideology does not always work. But in class society, dominant classes and groups constantly try to communicate ideology in an attempt to uphold their power.

Instrumental action is a peculiar type of purposeful action. It tries to instrumentalise human beings so that systems of exploitation and domination are reproduced. Socialism is also based on purposeful action. But socialism implies purposeful action that is non-instrumental and co-operative, and that fosters the common interest that benefits all/the many.

The concepts of instrumental reason and technological rationality are based on Lukács' notion of reified consciousness. And Lukács bases the concept of reified consciousness on Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. Ideology tries to reify consciousness by presenting society as something that cannot be changed. Ideology also tries to treat human consciousness as a thing. It tries to turn humans into machines and Pavlov's dog. But society is a complex of social relations, which means that humans can change it.

For example, xenophobic ideology advances the idea that immigrants are by nature lazy 'parasites' and that their lifestyle is by nature incompatible with the hegemonic national one. The behaviour of 'foreigners' is presented as being determined by their nationality, not by the totality of social relations. No individual has by nature egoistic character features. Human beings in a society can therefore find ways to live together, learn from each other and become friends. Racist ideology reifies humans and reduces them to a specific nature with the aim of fostering division, hatred, exclusion, discrimination, conflict, war and in the last instance, annihilation.

By trying to treat humans as machines or as beings with automatic reflex reactions, ideology dehumanises human beings and society. It denies human beings their status as human. It fosters suffering, exclusion, domination, exploitation and extermination. By fostering one-dimensional cognition and communication, it wants to deny human beings the full capacity to think and act. Ideology's instrumental reason fosters undialectical practices, consciousness and communication. It tries to make consciousness, communication and practices simplistic and based on stereotypes and other forms of irrationality.

Ideology needs to be communicated in order to be effective. The next section focuses on the communication of ideology.

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[22] Max Horkheimer. 2004. *Eclipse of Reason*. London: Continuum. Herbert Marcuse. 1941. Some Social Implications of Modern Technology. In *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 1*, ed. Douglas Kellner, 39–65. London: Routledge.

9.3. Communication and Ideology

Ideology means a dialectical relation of communication and fetishism. Ideology communicates fetishistically and fetishism is a form of ideological communication. Commodity fetishism as a principle of capitalism means that 'the communicative character of commodities and the commodity character of communication act as the basis for an *illusory synthesis of society as a whole*. This synthesis is illusory because it does not result from a consciously and collectively organised interaction with nature, but is merely an expression of a mode of production, in which the *societalisation* of working subjects only ever happens retroactively, only after work has been done, so to speak. And in line with this, it is experienced as a *quasi-natural*, *fateful destiny*, and not as an *artificial* and thus *changeable* social reality'.[23]

The Communicative Character of Commodity Fetishism

Price information communicates the monetary value of a commodity. In capitalism, there is a particular form of capitalist communication, in which things appear to speak to humans. Commodity sales dehumanise communication. In exchange, humans hardly communicate directly, but rather only through the mediation of money. The commodity form is one of capitalism's media of communication. It veils the social relations by which humans communicative productively and produce communicatively. The commodity form speaks in terms of things and price. It thereby has a reifying and fetishist character. The commodity form is a communication of prices. But by communicating the price of a commodity it also communicates the ideology that the commodity and capital are natural forms for organising society. The commodity form of communication (advertising, mental labour power, access to communication networks, information and knowledge, communication technology, etc. as commodities) can also easily take on the appearance of a natural form of communication. Non-commodified communication is thereby marginalised.

Fetishism is a form of communication. It is a communication form particular to class societies. In it, the social is treated like a thing, and reification as a natural feature of society. Symbols in society appear to be communicating. But they are only symbols because social labour conducted in social relations turns them into symbols. The sellers of goods communicate to us through commodities and markets. But the thing-like character of commodities hides class and

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[23] Horst Holzer. 2018. Communication & Society: A Critical Political Economy Perspective. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 16 (1): 357–401. p. 382.

exploitation. The fetishism of commodities empties out meanings from commodities. The result is a void. Advertising fills this void by creating artificial commodity meanings, commodity ideology that tries to make consumers buy certain commodities. They are promised by ads that their lives will be magically improved if they buy and consume certain commodities. Commodity fetishism disables the direct communication between the immediate producers of commodities. As a result, the producers organised in the form of a division of labour cannot speak to each other and it becomes more difficult for them to organise themselves politically. They can only unite through political organisation that supports them in formulating political demands vis-à-vis capital.

Treating culture and communications as commodities results in inequalities of communication power. Powerful organisations are able to reach many more people than weaker ones, whose messages may remain unheard. Alternative approaches such as public service media and community media try to overcome such limits, but face their own problems within capitalist society.

The dominant class tries to control the means of cultural production (the means of communication) and its contents in order to communicate ideology. Cultural workers thereby partly become ideological labour that produces, organises and communicates ideology in public.

The Fetishist Character of Ideological Communication

Ideology is a communication process, where a dominative class or group tries to impose its morality on others. How successful or unsuccessful such ideological attempts are, depends on many factors that have to do with how power is distributed in society. When the dominant class mobilises resources such as money, the means of communication, political influence, reputation, etc., then it increases the probability that there will be positive responses to its ideology. The outcomes of the ideological communication process are neither programmed nor arbitrary, but depend on power dynamics and social struggles.

Fetishism makes power appear natural. In the economy, fetishism means that money and commodities are naturalised. In political fetishism, political positions and structures like the state are naturalised. In cultural fetishism, social status and reputation are naturalised. As a result, society seems to be a collection of things and powerful elites. Money, commodities, political offices, and status communicate power and are symbols of power. But fetishism hides that these phenomena do not simply exist, but only exist because they are the result of the contradictions of power.

The economic, political, and cultural struggles of workers, citizens and subjects in general have the potential to abolish alienation and establish a different order.

Labour and ideology are inherently connected: Ideological labour is ideology-producing and ideology-communicating labour. Just as there is an ideology of labour, in capitalism we also find ideological labour. Ideology is a semiotic level of domination and exploitation. Through ideology, humans practise the production and spread of information and meanings in the form of ideas, belief systems, artefacts, systems, and institutions so that domination and exploitation are justified or naturalised.

Semiosis is the process by which humans ascribe meaning to objects and incorporate these meanings into their everyday practices. Ideology is a form of semiosis that takes place at the levels of the individual, social organisation, and society. It justifies, naturalises, and defends domination, and also tries to contain resistance. Ideology wants to make the public believe that society as it is – a system of domination and exploitation – is free, fair, just and good. Ideology spreads ideas that aim at making individuals question those who question the dominative status quo. An ideology is a particular form of socially produced knowledge. It is a knowledge product that aims at justifying asymmetric power, exploitation, and domination. To achieve this, reality is distorted, misrepresented, or depicted in a one-dimensional manner.

Ideology creates a difference between how the world is and how it appears. Ideology hides. It veils how society truly is behind appearances that are false. But these false appearances are communicated as the truth and as natural. Ideology often presents a simplistic and one-dimensional picture of the world that hides the latter's complexity. Ideology veils and tries to naturalise asymmetric power, exploitation, and domination.

Communication is work. The implication is that in a class society, a subset of communication work is ideological labour. And insofar as there is work that questions ideology, there is also the work of critique. Ideological labour produces and reproduces ideologies. Critical cultural workers produce critiques and critical knowledge. Ideology reifies language so that humans in a reified society also speak and communicate based on reified language.

Given that labour is organised in class relations, the dominant class needs ideologies to justify why alienation exists. They try to alienate the human mind in order to justify and uphold alienation in the interest of the dominant class. In capitalism, the foundation of ideology is that the object masks and veils the subject. For example, capital accumulation results in monetary profit that veils that this profit does not have its origin in money, but in a class relation of exploitation through which capital extracts surplus value from labour. Ideology is instrumental communication, an ideological communicative strategy of the ruling class and dominant groups that reproduces asymmetric power and class structures and tries to persuade others not to question these structures by means such as manipulation, displacement, ignorance, mystification, veiling, or the organisation of fantasies and desires.

Responses to Ideological Communication

The dominated classes, groups and individuals do not automatically see through ideology and develop critical consciousness. But neither will they necessarily succumb to false consciousness. Ideology's results are not certain. But given that there is a power asymmetry between the dominant and the subordinated class, the probability that critical consciousness will develop is on average lower than the probability that false consciousness will develop. An exception is when the subordinated groups, classes and individuals can empower themselves in ways so that they question ideologies. Subordinated classes, groups and individuals answer to ideology either in a positive manner (affirmation, hegemony), negatively (critique, counter-hegemony), or in a mixed manner.

The reactions to ideology are not determined by the ideological workers who on behalf of dominant groups create and communicate ideologies. There are different possibilities of how individuals and groups react to ideology. They can be conscious or not conscious of ideology, or something in between. They can follow, resist, partly follow, or question an ideology. In *Capital Volume 1*, Marx writes in the context of commodity fetishism that the latter works with the logic 'They do this without being aware of it'.[24] Slavoj Žižek says that ideology today operates in a cynical manner so that the individuals know that ideology exists, but nonetheless follow it. It would use the logic 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it'.[25] But the reasons why humans question or do not question ideology have to do with psychological hopes and fears.[26] For Žižek, humans follow ideology if it results in surplus enjoyment. Ideology is always false, but how humans react to it has a lot to do with their accumulated experiences and therefore their subjectivity, their processes of doing and knowing.

Table 9.1 displays sixteen reactions to ideology. Žižek's version of ideology is one of these sixteen possibilities and therefore is by no means the only way in which individuals can react to ideology. The first and second columns display constellations where humans reproduce ideology fully or partly, whereas in columns three and four we find cases where they do not follow or even resist ideology. But these sixteen reactions to ideology do not necessarily have the same likelihood. How likely each of them is depends on the reality of power structures and power struggles. It is rather unlikely that humans resist ideology by accident when they are conscious of it, but it is more likely that when resisting it they are also aware of and opposed to ideology.

The critique of ideology advances emancipatory knowledge. The next section deals with ideology critique.

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[24] Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.* London: Penguin. pp. 166–167.

[25] Slavoj Žižek. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* London: Verso. p. 25.

[26] Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 1. Halbband*, p. 643.

Table 9.1: Possible responses to ideological communication.

Action → ↓ Knowledge	Following ideology	Following parts of ideology	Not following ideology	Resisting ideology
Not conscious of ideology	They do not know it, but they do it.	They do not know it, but they partly do it.	They do not know it and they do not do it.	They do not know it and they resist it.
Conscious of ideology	They know it, but still, they are doing it.	They know it and they partly do it	They know it and they do not do it.	They know it and they resist it.
Partly conscious of ideology	They partly know it, but still, they are doing it.	They partly know it and they partly do it.	They partly know it and they do not do it.	They partly know it and they resist it.
Critically conscious of ideology	They oppose it and they do it.	They oppose it and they partly do (not) do it.	They oppose it and they do not do it.	They oppose it and they resist it.

9.4. Ideology Critique

Dominative Knowledge and Emancipatory Knowledge

Modern society is a competitive society. It fetishises competition. Structures for the accumulation of money, political influence, and reputation are the result. And structures of accumulation produce winners and losers so that conflicts of interest and power are inherently built into them. Emancipatory knowledge can emerge from social struggles that question the asymmetric distribution of power. Knowledge is a form of power that can emanate from emancipatory struggles. Such struggles have potentials to foster emancipatory knowledge that questions dominative knowledge.

Georg Lukács analysed the structure and nature of class consciousness. He defines class consciousness as 'the appropriate and rational reactions "imputed" [*zugerechnet*] to a particular typical position in the process of production'.[27] Imputed/ascribed/attributed class consciousness (*zugerechnetes Klassenbewußtsein*) has an objective character.[28] Class consciousness' objective dimension is defined by an individual's position in the relations of production. Class consciousness is not simply the actual consciousness of a class or an individual

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[27] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 51.
[28] Ibid., p. 323.

belonging to a class (the subjective class consciousness of a class as group or an individual belonging to that class). Objective class consciousness is the 'objective possibility' of consciousness, the 'thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were *able* to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society. That is to say, it would be possible to infer the thoughts and feelings appropriate to their objective situation'.[29] Lukács also uses the notion of false consciousness. He defines it as that which 'by-passes the essence of the evolution of society and fails to pinpoint it and express it adequately'.[30]

Revolutionary class consciousness 'does not happen of itself, either through the mechanical evolution of the economic forces of capitalism or through the simple organic growth of mass spontaneity'.[31] Voluntarism and individualism assume that critical consciousness emerges spontaneously. Fatalist approaches assume that critical consciousness is the automatic effect of structural crises of capitalism. Lukács argues in contrast to both positions that a crisis of capitalism constitutes a space of potentials so that the future development of society is not determined. In such moments and phases of crisis, the future is shaped by social struggles that depend on the question of whether and to what degree the subordinate classes organise themselves, do not organise, or follow ideologies (capitalist ideology, fascist ideology, etc.).

Table 9.2 presents a typology of different forms of ideological knowledge and critical knowledge. Individuals in specific social relations produce and reproduce concrete knowledge structures. Knowledge workers produce knowledge as products that play a particular role in the economy and outside of it in other parts of society. The table also indicates what ideological and critical producers of knowledge there are and the types of social knowledge they create.

Specific workers create ideological and critical knowledge. The production of knowledge takes place in organisations and institutions, where we find not just knowledge workers but also other workers. Let us consider a school: There are teachers and pupils who directly engage with knowledge. But there are also associated workers such as cleaners, policy makers, cooks preparing meals, caretakers, etc. The production of ideologies and critiques takes place in broader institutional and organisational contexts. The analysis of knowledge production needs to avoid cultural idealism. It should be based on a materialist approach that analyses the relations of different types of labour and work in one organisation and part of the economy, the interconnection of different parts of the economy, and the interconnection of economy and society.

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[29] Ibid., p. 51.

[30] Ibid., p. 50.

[31] Georg Lukács. 2009. *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought*. London: Verso. p. 27.

Table 9.2: The production of ideological and emancipatory knowledge.[32]

Realm of society		Ideological, dominative knowledge	Critical, emancipatory knowledge
Economy		*Capitalist companies:* knowledge commodities	*Non-capitalist organisations:* knowledge commons
Politics	Politics: government, parliament	*Dominant or oppositional parties and politicians:* political ideologies of inequality, domination and repression/violence	*Critical parties, politicians, intellectuals:* political worldviews of equality, participation and peace
	Politics: civil society	*Repressive social movements, NGOs and activists:* political ideologies of inequality, domination and repression/violence	*Emancipatory social movements, NGOs and activists:* worldviews of equality, participation and peace
	Politics: International relations	*Nationalists:* nationalist ideology	*Anti-nationalists, internationalists:* global unity in diversity
Culture	News media	*Uncritical journalists:* one-dimensional, biased reports	*Critical journalists:* critical, engaging reports
	Arts and entertainment	*Actors, entertainers, directors, artists:* tabloidised, one-dimensional culture	*Actors, entertainers, directors, artists:* engaging, dialectical culture
	Personal and gender relations	*Hellbenders:* hate, sexism	*Altruists:* love, care, solidarity
	Belief systems, ethics, philosophy and religion	*Demagogues:* conservatism	*Public intellectuals:* progressivism
	Science and education	*Administrative scholars and teachers:* administrative knowledge	*Critical scholars and teachers:* critical knowledge
	Intercultural relations	*Racists, divisionists:* racism, fundamentalism	*Universalists:* intercultural understanding, transculturalism

Counter-hegemonic work – the work of critique – challenges the hegemony of ideologies and ideological workers. Antonio Gramsci argues that radical

[32] Source: Christian Fuchs. 2016. *Critical Theory of Communication. New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas*. London: University of Westminster Press. p. 100.

social change requires the 'intense labour of criticism'.[33] Cultural workers' opposition to ideological workers and the ideologies they create is a process of class struggle in culture. In cultural class struggles, critical workers create knowledge that aims at advancing care, critique, emancipation, equality, love, participation, socialism, and unity in diversity. Their critical knowledge challenges ideologies such as authoritarianism, conservatism, fascism, hatred, liberalism, nationalism, one-dimensionality, racism, sexism, etc. The outcomes of cultural struggles are, like the results of all social struggles, not pre-determined. Critical and ideological knowledge are fluid and dynamic. It might be the case that, for example, one article in a newspaper is critical and the one next to it is ideological. But in general, ideological and critical knowledge are clustered in certain media and institutions so that for example the overall amount of knowledge in a newspaper is either more or less critical. Institutions, in which knowledge is created, have their own internal and external contradictions. Internal contradictions include contradictions between dominant and subordinate groups in an organisation. External contradictions include contradictions between an institution and other institutions, contradictions between certain groups in society into which an organisation is embedded, etc.

Consent to exploitation and domination is created in the political and the cultural system. In these systems, counter-hegemony that questions ideology and the dominant classes and groups can also be established. Gramsci says in this context that the 'crisis of the ruling class's hegemony' emerges when this class 'has failed on some major political undertaking […] for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses […] have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution'.[34] Lenin, in a manner comparable to Gramsci, writes that radical transformation only takes place when 'the "*lower classes*" *do not want* to live in the old way and the "upper classes" *cannot carry on in the old way*'.[35]

The creation and reproduction of social knowledge is dialectical in multiple respects:

- In social systems, there is a dialectic of general social structures and knowledge structures.
- In social systems, there is also a dialectic of social knowledge and individual knowledge.

[33] Antonio Gramsci. 1988. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs. London: Lawrence and Wishart. p. 58.
[34] Ibid., p. 218.
[35] Vladimir I. Lenin. 1920. 'Left-Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder. In *Lenin Collected Works Volume 31*. Moscow: Progress. p. 85.

- The conflicts about power in dominative systems are also reflected on the level of knowledge as conflicts between dominative (ideological) and emancipatory (critical) knowledge. In antagonistic systems, knowledge is contested.
- In asymmetric societies, struggles over the definition and control of knowledge are not egalitarian, but unequal. More powerful actors who control money, influence, reputation, or structures of violence can mobilise these resources in struggles over the definition of knowledge.
- There is no absolute certainty that critical knowledge can be formed. Critical actors, movements, and groups are in capitalist society structurally disadvantaged. Critical knowledge is therefore less likely to occur than ideological knowledge. But there is always the possibility that social struggles will result in critical knowledge, critical consciousness, and progressive social change.

9.5. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise the main findings and conclusions of this chapter as follows:

- Ideology and fetishism stand in a dialectical relationship: Ideology is built into capitalism's commodity structures. The capitalist relations of the production of commodities veil the class relations that the immediate producers enter. Via commodity fetishism, ideology is built into capitalism's economic structures. Ideology as the project of defending the ruling class' and dominant groups' interests operates in a fetishist manner. It tries to naturalise domination, exploitation, and the ruling class by methods such as scapegoating, distortion, dissimulation, misrepresentation, and manipulation. Ideology aims at the reification of dominated groups' consciousness. If ideology succeeds, then it creates false consciousness.
- Ideology tries to instrumentalise humans and their consciousness in the interest of domination and exploitation. It is based on instrumental reason and technological rationality. Ideology stands in a dialectic of communication and commodities. Commodity fetishism has a communicative character, and capitalist communication has a fetishist structure. Fetishism encompasses the communicative character of commodities, through which capitalism is naturalised. The commodity character of communication advances the spread of ideologies via the culture industry. Ideology hides the true essence and state of the world behind false appearances, and communicates these false appearances as truths and nature.
- Responses to ideology are not predetermined. Dominant classes and groups control more resources than subordinated classes and groups, which gives them advantages in ideological struggles over meaning. Ideological labour is labour that organises the production and diffusion of ideology. Ideological workers produce ideological knowledge. Ideology critique is

an activity that questions ideology and unveils how ideology works. The antagonism between emancipatory knowledge and ideology exists in the capitalist economy, capitalist politics, and capitalist culture. Ideologues are ideological workers who produce, disseminate, and reproduce ideologies. Critics are people who question ideology. Critique is always possible, but never guaranteed. There is a political economy of resource asymmetry inherent in capitalist society that poses structural disadvantages for alternative movements, alternative structures, and emancipatory knowledge.

The next chapter will discuss a particular kind of ideology, namely nationalism.

CHAPTER 10

Nationalism, Communication, Ideology

The nation-state is the bounded, territorial, legislative, military aspect of capitalist society. But the nation does not just have a political dimension, but also a cultural, ideological, and communicative one. Nationalism is a peculiar modern ideology that justifies the building and maintenance of nation-states. It creates a political and cultural outside. Those humans belonging to this outside are excluded from membership status of the nation. The existence of this outside justifies the inside. Nationalism plays a necessary role in the ideological reproduction of capitalism and class. This chapter asks: What is nationalism? How is nationalism communicated? It studies the relationship of nationalism, communication, and ideology. First, the chapter discusses what nationalism is (section 10.1). Second, the relationship of nationalism and racism is outlined (10.2). Third, right-wing authoritarianism, authoritarian capitalism, and fascism are analysed (10.3). Fourth, the focus is on the communication of nationalist ideology (10.4).

The approach to nationalism taken in this book is grounded in the works of Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, the Frankfurt School, Eric Hobsbawm, and C.L.R. James. These are critical, Marxist approaches to the study of nationalism that stress the ideological character of nationalism. My book *Nationalism on the Internet: Critical Theory and Ideology in the Age of Social Media and Fake News*[1] offers a broad introduction to Marxist and critical theory approaches to the study of nationalism, including an engagement with authors such as Theodor W. Adorno, Kevin Anderson, Benedict Anderson, Étienne Balibar, Otto Bauer, Erica Benner, Michael Billig, Partha Chatterjee, Vivek Chibber, Horace B. Davis, Mike Davis, Karl Deutsch, Michael Forman, Erich Fromm, Ernest Gellner, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Eric J. Hobsbawm, C. L. R. James, Karl Kautsky, Vladimir I. Lenin, Michael Löwy, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Marx, Tom Nairn, Franz Neumann, Jyoti Puri, Karl Renner, David Renton, David Roediger, Edward W. Said, Anthony D. Smith, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Josef Strasser, Pierre-André Taguieff, Klaus

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[1] Christian Fuchs. 2020. *Nationalism on the Internet: Critical Theory and Ideology in the Age of Social Media and Fake News.* New York: Routledge.

Theweleit, Raymond Williams, and Ruth Wodak. The book *Nationalism on the Internet*, my book *Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in The Age of Trump and Twitter,*[2] the e-book *Nationalism 2.0. The Making of Brexit on Social Media,*[3] and some of my essays[4] present case studies of how nationalism and other authoritarian ideologies are communicated over social media. The chapter at hand presents the main aspects of the theoretical approach that I take for the analysis of nationalism and the communication of nationalism.

10.1. Nationalism

What is Nationalism?

Nationalism is a particular ideology that tries to distract attention from capitalism, the class conflict, and the societal causes of social problems. Ideology is not purely based on economy and politics. A political-economic crisis does not necessarily lead to false, ideological, or critical consciousness as mass phenomena. Other factors such as struggles over ideology, class struggles, symbolic power, and the personal, everyday, and psychological experiences and desires of individuals play a role and interact with economic and political factors.[5]

Nationalism is not a natural feature of humanity and society. In English, the term 'nationalism' emerged in the 18th century and became commonly used during the 19th century.[6] The emergence of nationalism as a

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[2] Christian Fuchs. 2018. *Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter*. London: Pluto Press.

[3] Christian Fuchs. 2018. *Nationalism 2.0. The Making of Brexit on Social Media*. London: Pluto Press.

[4] Christian Fuchs. 2016. Racism, Nationalism and Right-Wing Extremism Online: The Austrian Presidential Election 2016 on Facebook. *Momentum Quarterly – Zeitschrift für sozialen Fortschritt* (Journal for Societal Progress) 5 (3): 172–196.

[5] Christian Fuchs. 2016. Red Scare 2.0: User-Generated Ideology in the Age of Jeremy Corbyn and Social Media. *Journal of Language and Politics* 15 (4): 369–398. Christian Fuchs. 2017. Fascism 2.0: Twitter Users' Social Media Memories of Hitler on his 127th Birthday. *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 6 (2): 228–263. Christian Fuchs. 2018. Racism, Nationalism and Right-Wing Extremism Online: The Austrian Presidential Election 2016 on Facebook. In *Critical Theory and Authoritarian Populism*, ed. Jeremiah Morelock, 157–206. London: University of Westminster Press. Christian Fuchs. 2018. 'Dear Mr. Neo-Nazi, Can You Please Give Me Your Informed Consent So That I Can Quote Your Fascist Tweet?'. Questions of Social Media Research Ethics in Online Ideology Critique. In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, ed. Graham Meikle, 385–394. Abingdon: Routledge.

[6] Raymond Williams. 1983. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press. Revised edition. pp. 213–214.

Table 10.1: The number of nation-states and empires with more than one million inhabitants.[7]

Year	Number
1700	24
1800	26
1900	87
1939	56
1989	130

phenomenon in society and as a common linguistic term coincided with the creation of the nation-state in modern society. In modern society, the nation takes on the form of the nation-state, the national economy, and cultural institutions that are organised within the nation-state. National spaces, such as the national economy, the nation-state, and national culture, have a boundary that defines the inside and the outside of the nation. This means that all nations define their membership. They include citizens and exclude others.

Table 10.1 provides an overview, for certain years, of the number of nation-states in which more than one million individuals lived. The building of new nations took off in the 19th century, which shows that the nation-state is a modern invention. The nation-state stands in the context of capitalism, imperialism, modernity, and imperialist warfare. Eric Hobsbawm speaks of the period between 1789 and 1848 as the Age of Revolution.[8] The French Revolution was the decisive political event during that time. Hobsbawm argues that politics at that time did not embrace nationalism and the idea of building nation-states based on the principles of 'ethnicity, common language, religion, territory, and common historical memories'.[9] In the Age of Revolution, nations were understood as national economies. Hobsbawm argues that the modern nation-state emerged together with imperialism during the Age of Empire that started around 1875.

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[7] Data sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by _population_in_1700, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries _by_population_in_1800, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries _by_population_in_1900, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries _by_population_in_1939, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries _by_population_in_1989 (accessed on 5 February 2019).

[8] Eric J. Hobsbawm. 1992. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Second edition. Chapter 1.

[9] Ibid., p. 20.

Nationalism foregrounds that there are differences of culture, language, or 'race' in society. 'The basis of "nationalism" of all kinds was the same: the readiness of people to identify themselves emotionally with "their" "nation" and to be politically mobilized as Czechs, Germans, Italians or whatever, a readiness which could be politically exploited'.[10] Hobsbawm says that in the 19th and 20th centuries, the rising influence of theories of social Darwinism and race advanced racism and anti-Semitism.

Theories of nationalism differ according to whether they see nationalism and the nation as necessary features of society and nature or as historical features of certain forms of society that are class societies and dominative societies. The first type of theories of nationalism are fetishist theories. The second type of theories are critical theories of nationalism. For fetishist theories, the nation and nationalism are natural aspects of society. For critical theories, the nation and nationalism are constructed, fabricated, illusionary, ideological, or invented. In nationalist ideology, a national group is fetishised. It is categorically distinguished from outsiders, enemies, immigrants, refugees, etc. who are seen as not belonging to the nation. Nationalism presents such outsiders of the nation negatively (for example as aliens, criminals, intruders, parasites, etc.) in order to deflect attention from class conflicts and inequalities.

'Nation' is not a simple word. Its meaning is not always clear. On the one hand, the nation is often understood as the territorial nation-state. But on the other hand, the notion of the nation also often refers to national identity. Nationalism is an ideology that operates on the level of national identity and defines who should be considered as belonging to the nation and who should be excluded. National identity is always defined and defended against outsiders. Essentialist approaches imply that war is unavoidable because the friend/enemy logic of the nation in the last instance leads to warfare. Such essentialist theories see humans as inherently negative, warmongering beings. Essentialising nationalism means a fetishism of militarism, destruction, and warfare. The idea of the defence of the nation has created arms races that threaten life on Earth with nuclear extinction.

Repression is a means for the reproduction of class societies. Slave-holding societies are characterised by slave-masters' private ownership of slaves, the means of production and the products the slaves create. Slave-holding societies' class structure is defended with physical violence and the right of the slave-master to kill the slave. Physical violence also exists in various forms in capitalism. But structural and ideological repression play more important roles in capitalism. Ideological repression fetishises and naturalises class structures. It

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[10] Eric J. Hobsbawm. 1989. *The Age of Empire 1875–1914*. New York: Vintage Books. p. 143.

tries to persuade workers and others that their exploitation and domination is acceptable, natural, necessary, etc. Nationalism often tries to construct feelings of togetherness and a common national cause between the capitalist class and subordinated classes. Nationalism thereby diverts attention from class structures. Modern class societies *require* nationalist ideology to justify exploitation and domination.

The enemies that nationalism constructs are defined as inner enemies and/or outer enemies of the nation. Examples of inner enemies are immigrants, minorities, refugees, or socialists. Other nations and international groups are typically defined as outer enemies of the nation. As a consequence, nationalism legitimates not just the nation-state's class structure, but also the nation's wars and imperialism. Militarism, law and order politics, war and imperialism are often justified by the argument that they defend 'national security' or the 'national interest'. Another line of justification is that a certain nation is superior to other groups that are presented as being 'backwards', 'barbarian', 'primitive', 'uncivilised', 'underdeveloped', etc. Nationalism has an immanent potential to advance militarism and warfare.

Karl Marx on Nationalism

Marx not only spoke of commodity fetishism in the economy, but was also a critic of political fetishism. Nationalism is one of the political and ideological fetishisms of modern society. Marx analysed how ideology diverts attention from class structures. In 1870, he provided an analysis of how nationalism distracts the working class from struggling against the capitalist class by spreading hatred against migrant workers and the colonies. He gave in this context particular attention to Ireland. His analysis of nationalism and xenophobia still holds true in contemporary capitalism:

> Ireland is the BULWARK of the *English landed aristocracy*. The exploitation of this country is not simply one of the main sources of their material wealth; it is their greatest *moral* power. […] And most important of all! All industrial and commercial centres in England now have a working class *divided* into two *hostile* camps, English PROLETARIANS and Irish PROLETARIANS. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who forces down the STANDARD OF LIFE. In relation to the Irish worker, he feels himself to be a member of the *ruling nation* and, therefore, makes himself a tool of his aristocrats and capitalists *against Ireland,* thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He harbours religious, social and national prejudices against him. […] This antagonism is kept artificially alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the

disposal of the ruling class. *This antagonism* is the *secret of the English working class's impotence,* despite its organisation. It is the secret of the maintenance of power by the capitalist class. And the latter is fully aware of this.[11]

Marx in this passage analyses many features of nationalism that can also be found today: the scapegoating of foreign workers for capitalism's social problems; the belief in national superiority and natural rights of nations; the ideological claim that not capital, but foreign workers are the cause of low wages; the distraction of attention from capital's interest in exploiting workers and lowering wages in order to increase profits; the claim that foreigners are socially, culturally, or biologically inferior; the role of the media in spreading nationalism; the working class' acceptance of the capitalist class' ideologies; and the deflection of attention and hatred from class struggles towards foreigners.

In *Capital Volume I*, Marx argues that emancipation requires solidarity between the exploited workers in different contexts, including issues of colour and geography. 'Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin'.[12] He points out that the formal abolishment of slavery in the USA helped advance more radical demands of the US working class movement, specifically the demand for the eight-hour working day. The point is that class solidarity that emancipates one group in one context is an impetus for class struggles and radical demands in other contexts. Different struggles can enrich each other through solidary action. This requires unity in diversity of social struggles.

Rosa Luxemburg on Nationalism

Rosa Luxemburg analyses nationalism as a 'misty veil' that 'conceals in every case a definite historical content'.[13] She saw nationalism as 'a metaphysical cliché'.[14] Luxemburg opposed the idea that nations have a right to self-determination. She says that such an argument 'ignores completely the fundamental theory of

[11] Marx, Karl. 1870. Letter of Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt, 9 April 1870. In *Marx Engels Collected Works Volume 43*, 471–476. London: Lawrence & Wishart. pp. 473, 474, 475.

[12] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 414.

[13] Rosa Luxemburg. 1976. *The National Question: Selected Writings*. New York: Monthly Review Press. p. 135.

[14] Ibid., p. 110.

modern socialism – the theory of social class'.[15] Nationalists see the nation as 'a homogeneous social and political entity'.[16]

Luxemburg argues that workers do not need a nation as fatherland: 'The workers' fatherland, to the defense of which all else must be subordinated, is the socialist International'.[17] 'I feel at home in the entire world, wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears'.[18]

Luxemburg argues that the nation-state and nationalism are tools of imperialism and exploitation. Nation-states 'are today the very same tools and forms of class rule of the bourgeoisie as the earlier, non-national states, and like them they are bent on conquest'.[19] The nation constitutes 'a tool of domination (or control) and conquest'.[20] She points out the ideological character of nationalism. Nationalism helps the bourgeoisie to divert the attention of subordinated classes from their exploitation and domination. It constructs a fictive unitary interest of capital and labour by opposing them to enemies of the nation. The First World War made the dangers of nationalism evident. Nationalism fosters hatred between the members of nation-states and brings about terrible wars. Luxemburg wrote that the First World War was the 'world's explosion of nationalism'.[21] In capitalism, nationalism, militarism, and warfare are closely connected.[22]

Fictive Ethnicity

By constructing the nation as a fictive community and mythic collective, nationalism diverts attention from class structures. '[R]acism and Anti-Semitism are substitutes for the class struggle'.[23] '[B]lood, community, folk, are devices for hiding the real constellation of power'.[24] Nationalism is a reactionary form of

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[15] Ibid., p. 135

[16] Ibid., p. 135.

[17] Rosa Luxemburg. 1970. *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks.* New York: Pathfinder. p. 477.

[18] Rosa Luxemburg. 2013. *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, ed. Georg Adler, Peter Hudis and Annelies Laschitza. London: Verso. p. 376.

[19] Luxemburg, *The National Question*, p. 172.

[20] Ibid., p. 175.

[21] Translation from German [„Weltexplosion des Nationalismus"]: Rosa Luxemburg. 1918. Fragment über Krieg, nationale Frage und Revolution. In *Rosa Luxemburg Gesammelte Werke, Band 4*, 366–373. Berlin: Dietz. p. 370.

[22] Rosa Luxemburg. 1913/2003. *The Accumulation of Capital.* London: Routledge. Chapter 32.

[23] Franz Neumann. 1944/2009. *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944.* Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee. p. 125.

[24] Ibid., p. 464.

collectivism that claims that it can overcome the problems posed and caused by capitalism and capitalist globalisation.

Étienne Balibar has in the context of the analysis of nationalism introduced the notion of *fictive ethnicity*.[25] Fictive collectives are constructed, in which humans are 'represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community'.[26] Balibar distinguishes two types of fictive ethnicity[27]. In the first one, school, education, and other forms of socialisation construct a national linguistic community. In the second version, a fictive community based on blood ties is constructed, a racial community. This means that there are culturalist and racist-biologistic versions of nationalism.

Nationalism's origins go back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It originated as an anti-Enlightenment movement. Nationalism is on the one hand a political movement and on the other hand an ideology. The biologistic version of nationalism is inherently racist because it assumes the existence of different races that stem from blood-ties. Cultural nationalism is also essentialist because it assumes that nations necessarily exist and have to come into existence based on shared culture.

Nationalism appeals to the authoritarian personality. Nationalists feel empowered to give meaning to their lives by defining themselves against others. Nationalists expect psychological, economic, political, or ideological advantages from nationalist ideology. The reasons why individuals follow certain ideologies often have to do with alienation and anxieties. Following an ideology such as nationalism allows the channelling of aggression, discontent, and frustration. Nationalists derive pleasure from nationalist ideology. Ideology creates a kind of psychological 'wage', a psychological surplus used to compensate for the lack of satisfaction, desire, and pleasure. Ideologies such as nationalism are not just a wage because they can create surplus desire, they can also be sources of higher monetary income (economic wage), more political influence (political wage), or surplus reputation (cultural wage).

In imperialist nationalism, immigrants, minorities, or other countries are defined as the primary enemy. In anti-colonial nationalism, the imperial power is seen as the enemy. Imperialist nationalism includes the ideology of national superiority of one country over another country, region or group. But the danger of all nationalism is that it ideologically obscures class structures and can thereby easily justify class society. The danger of shifting from the dominance of one nationalism to another in one country is that one merely from the rule of one class to the rule of another one without questioning class society as such.

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[25] Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1991. *Race, Nation, Class*. London: Verso. pp. 49, 96–100.

[26] Ibid., p. 96.

[27] Ibid., pp. 98–105.

C.L.R. James was a Marxist humanist. He stood for socialist humanism and internationalism that fosters dignity, equality, and justice. Marxism stands for internationalism: 'Mankind must leave behind the outmoded bourgeois class and all the obstacles which the national state now places in the way of an international socialist order. THAT IS MARXISM. It says: no longer the national political state but an international social order'.[28]

Key Aspects of Nationalism

There are some key features of nationalism:

- *Political movement and ideology, nation-state, and national consciousness:* Nationalism is both a political movement and an ideology. It aims at building and defending a nation-state that is a territory for national citizens. Nationalism has a spatial dimension (the nation-state) and an ideological dimension (national consciousness, national belonging). The spatial dimension is the claim to a certain environment organised as living space. Nations do not exist outside of nationalism and are always related to (actual or desired) nation-states.
- *Ideology:* As ideology, nationalism constructs a difference between 'Us' and 'Them'. The ingroup is defined as a race or a cultural community, a common nation-state or a common national economy. Nationalism always claims control over a certain space to organise a national society, including a national economy, the nation-state, and a national culture. Nationalism needs to construct national and national identity as ideologies. Nationalism claims a certain homogeneity of society and thereby overlooks society's complexity.
- *The dialectic of nationalism and xenophobia/racism:* There is an inherent connection between nationalism on the one side and xenophobia/racism on the other side.
- *Political fetishism*: Nationalism fetishises the nation and thereby distracts from class structures. Nationalism often scapegoats certain groups and steers hatred against outsiders.
- *Division*: Nationalism divides dominated classes so that they hate each other and tend to overlook their common opponent.
- *Distraction*: By constructing a national unity of opposing classes and steering hatred against outsiders, nationalism distracts attention from class structures.
- *Hegemony*: If oppressed and exploited groups or individuals follow nationalism, then they tend to advance the domination or exploitation of others and also often accept and agree to their own domination or exploitation.

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[28] Cyril Lionel Robert James. 2013. *Modern Politics*. Oakland, CA: PM Press. p. 92.

Nationalism is imposed from the top by powerful groups, but in order to work also needs hegemony from below, i.e. consent by the exploited classes and dominated groups. The imposition of nationalism from above is not always successful. It can only work if nationalism from above is combined with hegemony from below.

- *The media*: Uncritical media often support and advance nationalism.
- *The reproduction of capitalism*: Nationalism is a strategy for the legitimation and reproduction of the ruling class' interests.
- *Forms of nationalism*: Nationalism is directed against inner or outer enemies. Nationalism is inclusive when it aims at justifying exploitation. Nationalism is exclusive when it justifies extermination or exclusion. There is biological nationalism and cultural nationalism.
- *Militarism*: Nationalism often calls forth militancy and militarism. Militarism is directed against groups within society (internal militarism) or takes on the form of imperialist wars (external militarism).
- *Crisis:* A crisis means that the future of society is uncertain. In crises of society, nationalism and right-wing authoritarianism are likely to emerge or grow in the case that the political Left is weak.

Nationalism and racism are related concepts. The next section discusses their relationship.

10.2. Nationalism and Racism

One of the most frequently employed nationalist and racist claims is that immigrants destroy 'our' jobs and cause the deterioration of wages. This claim is a good example of how nationalism is connected to capitalism. Nationalism deflects from the need for class struggles by focusing attention on immigrants and other groups who are said to threaten the nation.

In certain forms of ideology, immigrants from the South and the East and Muslims are scapegoated. In biological racism and nationalism, biological differences are proclaimed. In cultural nationalism and racism, it is claimed that foreigners have a culture that is alien to national culture. It is then often concluded that because of biological or cultural differences, cultures should remain separate or that immigrants and refugees should be kept out or put out.

Étienne Balibar points out that nationalism and racism stand in a dialectical relationship.[29] 'Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism […] and nationalism emerges out of racism'.[30] Racism is nationalist in that it calls for the preservation of a nation's proclaimed biological or cultural purity.[31] Racism

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[29] Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*. p. 50.
[30] Ibid., p. 53.
[31] Ibid., p. 59.

'constantly induces an excess of "purism" as far as the nation is concerned: for the nation to be itself, it has to be racially or culturally pure'.[32]

Balibar identifies various forms of racism: internal racism (directed to groups within a nation), external racism (directed towards groups that stand outside a nation), auto-referential racism, hetero-referential racism, institutional racism, sociological racism, exclusive racism, and inclusive racism.[33] The goal of the 'racism of *extermination* or elimination (an "exclusive" racism)' is to 'purify the social body of the stain or danger the inferior races may represent'. The aim of the 'racism of *oppression* or exploitation (an "inclusive" racism)' is 'to hierarchise and partition society'.[34] Colonialism is a form of exploitative racism. Nazi-fascism is a form of exterminatory racism.

Inclusive racism plays in capitalism the role of suppressing wages. Exclusive racism steers desires to exclude or exterminate objects of hatred, which allows discontented groups and individuals to direct their aggression against minorities, which distracts from the causes of exploitation and domination. Both nationalism and racism are forms of political fetishism. Exploitation that is motivated and justified by racism operates close to the economy. Racist and nationalist ideology relates culture and the economy. Racism is a capitalist strategy that wants to 'minimize the costs of production' and 'the costs of political disruption (hence minimise – not eliminate, because one cannot eliminate – the protests of the labour force)'.[35]

New Racism

The distinction between biological and cultural forms of racism is sometimes signified by the use of the terms 'racism' and 'xenophobia'. In these terms racism is defined as a purely biologistic ideology. In contrast, Étienne Balibar uses the term 'new racism' for the cultural form in order to stress that there are continuities as well as differences between the culturalist and the biologistic forms:

> The new racism is a racism of the era of 'decolonization' […] [It] fits into the framework of 'racism without races' […] It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but 'only' the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions; in short, it is what P-A. Taguieff has rightly called a *differentialist racism*.[36]

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[32] Ibid., pp. 59–60.
[33] Ibid., pp. 38–39.
[34] Ibid., p. 39.
[35] Ibid., p. 33.
[36] Ibid., p. 21.

Balibar bases his understanding on Pierre-André Taguieff. Taguieff argues
that racism fetishises difference 'either by scientistic biologization or by eth-
nicization or "culturalist" fixing'.[37] He differentiates between racism 1 and
racism 2. Racism 1 proclaims the superiority of one 'race' over another because
of biological differences. Racism 2 argues that there is a cultural incongruity of
groups or nations and that differences should be preserved. 'Naturalization is
therefore either *biologizing* or *culturalist'*.[38] Both forms of racism often have
similar conclusions, namely that borders should be shut, that migration should
be discouraged and that the mixture of cultures is undesirable.

  Auschwitz was a negative factory, where Jews were killed. 'Auschwitz was
a factory to "destroy value"'.[39] Anti-Semitism emerges in capitalism from the
structure of commodity fetishism. Anti-Semitism is 'a particularly pernicious
fetish form'.[40] Fascist and Nazi ideology often defines finance capital as Jewish
and distinguishes between productive capital (industry) and unproductive cap-
ital (finance, circulation). Anti-Semitism ideologically interprets this dualism
by claiming that productive capital is national capital and unproductive capital
is Jewish. Such an ideology sees capital and industry as productive and circula-
tion and finance as 'parasitic'. The antagonism between capital and labour and
the unproductivity of capital are denied by claiming that there are productive
and unproductive forms of capital and biologising this proclaimed difference.
Anti-Semitism is a short-circuited pseudo-critique of capitalism. It neglects
capitalism's totality and its class structure.

  Authoritarianism and fascism are related to nationalism. The next section
discusses these political phenomena.

10.3. Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Authoritarian Capitalism, Fascism

The Frankfurt School introduced the notion of authoritarianism to critical
theory.[41] Authoritarians live and think hierarchically and have a sadomasochis-
tic personality: They enjoy exerting power and domination over weaker groups

[37] Pierre-André Taguieff. 2001. *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and Its Dou-
bles. Minneapolis*, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 200.

[38] Ibid., p. 207.

[39] Moishe Postone. 2003. The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth
Century. In *Catastrophe and Meaning. The Holocaust and the Twentieth Cen-
tury,* ed. Moishe Postone and Eric Santner, 81–114. Chicago, IL: The
University of Chicago Press. p. 95

[40] Ibid., p. 95.

[41] Erich Fromm. 1936. Sozialpsychologischer Teil. In *Studien über Autorität
und Familie*, 77–135. Lüneburg: zu Klampen. Erich Fromm. 1941/2001.
The Fear of Freedom. Abingdon: Routledge. Theodor W. Adorno, Else

and individuals and subjugate themselves to leaders who are more powerful than themselves.

A Model of Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Figure 10.1 presents a model of right-wing authoritarianism. It consists of four aspects:

1. Authoritarian leadership: Right-wing authoritarianism propagates and uses top-down leadership by authoritarian figures;
2. Nationalism: Right-wing authoritarianism propagates the existence and superiority of a nation. It constructs a national 'Us' which deflects attention from class structures.
3. The friend/enemy-scheme: Right-wing authoritarianism defines the nation in opposition to outsiders whom it presents as enemies and danger. The friend/enemy-scheme is strictly dualistic and defines one side of the constructed divide ('Us', 'We') as friend and the other side ('Them') as enemy. The analysis of authoritarianism by Adorno et al. found out that 'ethnocentric hostility toward outgroups is highly correlated with ethnocentric idealization of ingroups'.[42]
4. Patriarchy and militarism: Right-wing authoritarianism is conservative. It propagates conservative gender roles and idealises soldiers and the army. The patriarchal dualism between strength and weakness is generalised as a principle of society. The soldier as a symbol of strength is defined as the ideal-type citizen. Society is presented as a realm full of dangers and as being under constant threat. As a consequence, it is proclaimed that the nation must be ready to defend itself with violence and warfare. In this ideology, there is often a fetishisation of nature and the body.

The four dimensions of right-wing authoritarianism interact. Right-wing authoritarianism uses nationalism and the friend/enemy-scheme in order to distract attention from class structures and the causes of inequalities. Nationalism is the construction of a fictive ethnic 'we'-identity. It defines the inner identity of the nation. Authoritarian leadership is the organisational principle of the nation. Top-down leadership is fetishised. In a right-wing authoritarian society, authoritarian leadership is often not only the organisational principle of the political system, but also of the economic system, cultural organisations and everyday life. The friend/enemy-scheme creates scapegoats and thereby relates the nation to an outside enemy. An 'Us'/'Them'-difference is constructed.

Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

[42] Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, p. 113.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)
Individual ⬌ Group ⬌ Institution ⬌ Society

RWA's social role: Deflection of attention from structures
of class, capitalism, and domination

'WE'
= Leader ➡ People

Authoritarian Leadership
(in economic, political
and cultural systems)

'WE'

Nationalism
(political fetishism,
constructs fictive ethnicity)

Friend/Enemy-Scheme

'THEY'

Patriarchy & Militarism

'WE' ⬌ **'THEY'**

**Authoritarian, Right-Wing
Extremist, Fascist
Ideological Practice**

**Anti-Fascist, Socialist
Praxis, Communication**

Figure 10.1: Model of right-wing authoritarianism.

Militant patriarchy militarises this difference by identifying violent means such
as law and order policies, warfare, terror, extermination, or imperialism as ways
for of dealing with the identified enemies. The closer these means are to terror
and extermination, the more right-wing authoritarianism turns into fascism.

Right-wing authoritarianism is a principle for the organisation of human
practices. It is an ideological practice that can take place at various levels of
society: the individual, the group, organisation, institutions, and society as a

whole. The existence of right-wing authoritarianism on one of these levels is based on its existence on all underlying levels. When we talk about whether or not something is right-wing authoritarian, right-wing extremist, or fascist, we must always be clear about what level of society we are talking about. One must be clear whether one is referring, for example, to a fascist individual, a fascist political movement/party/group, a fascist institution, or a fascist society. So, for example, fascist individuals can exist in a democratic society.

The three fundamental levels of the organisation of right-wing ideology are the micro-level (individuals), the meso-level (groups/organisations/institutions), and the macro-level (the totality of society). Right-wing authoritarianism takes place at these levels. We can therefore distinguish between right-wing authoritarian individuals, right-wing authoritarian groups/organisations/institutions, and a right-wing authoritarian society. Right-wing extremism and fascism intensify right-wing authoritarianism so that new qualities emerge. Right-wing extremists justify violence against their enemies. Fascists favour practising terror and extermination as political methods. Fascism relies 'upon terror, i.e., the use of non-calculable violence as a permanent threat against the individual'.[43] Right-wing authoritarians do not necessarily favour the use of terror and building a violent police state, but right-wing authoritarianism has the negative potential to turn into fascism. A fascist society cannot exist without fascist individuals, fascist groups, and fascist institutions. For Franz L. Neumann, fascist society is the Behemoth, a monster that abolishes the rule of law and institutionalises violence that is used against identified enemies.[44]

Authoritarian Capitalism

Authoritarian capitalism is a particular form of capitalism in which the state is used in a repressive manner to advance the interests of the capitalist class, which includes law and order politics, militarism, the destruction and repression of any opposition and critique, etc. The boundary between the state and capital is blurred. The state intervenes in the economy in the interest of capital. Fascism is always capitalist, it is a specific type of authoritarian capitalism. All fascisms are a form of authoritarian capitalism, but not all authoritarian capitalisms are fascist, although they have fascist potentials. Authoritarian capitalism limits political freedom, fascism destroys political freedom.

Authoritarian capitalism uses its authoritarian leadership structures and state power to shape the economy and society and enforce the interests of the capitalist class. Authoritarian capitalism is a society in which the aspects of right wing-authoritarianism (authoritarian leadership, nationalism, the friend/

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[43] Franz Neumann. 1957. *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. p. 245.

[44] Neumann, *Behemoth*.

enemy-scheme, militant patriarchy) are turned into principles for the organisation of society.

Right-Wing Extremism and Fascism

The term 'a right-wing extremist society' is rather uncommon. One rather speaks of right-wing extremism at the level of political groups. Right-wing extremism is certainly an ideology and a type of political movement, but it is not a specific form of society. Right-wing extremism and fascism can both exist at the level of individuals, groups, institutions, and society. But only fascism can also be organised as a type of society. Right-wing extremists have a radical rhetoric and propagate repression as a method for dealing with political opponents. But their radicalness is mostly limited to communication, ideology, political style, and repression in symbolic forms. Fascists use physical violence and terrorism in order to harm their enemies. Fascism is a radicalisation of right-wing extremism, but the boundary between the two is blurred.

August Thalheimer was one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) (KPO), which was an anti-Stalinist split-off party from the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). The KPO opposed the Stalinists' politics of defining the Social Democrats as social fascists and as the communists' main enemy. The Stalinists thereby underestimated the danger of the Nazis. Thalheimer[45] defines fascism based on a reading of Karl Marx's 'The Civil War in France'.[46] He argues that fascism is a form of Bonapartism. Marx uses the term Bonapartism in his analysis of the reign of Napoleon III in France.[47] Napoleon III came to power in 1851 with the help of a coup. Bonapartism means that the state is absolute and 'seem[s] to have made itself completely independent'.[48] The absolutist state is not an exclusive feature of fascism, but can be found in a range of political systems, including for example the absolutist monarchy. In fascism, absolute state power is established by the use of repressive state apparatuses (the police, the military, paramilitary forces) to enforce capitalist rule with the help of terrorist means. Marx also stresses that nationalism plays a role in Bonapartism as an ideological mechanism that deflects attention from class structures: Bonapartism 'professed to save the working class by breaking down Parliamentarism, and, with it, the undisguised subserviency of Government to

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[45] August Thalheimer. 1930. On Fascism. In *Marxists in Face of Fascism*, ed. David Beetham, 187–105. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[46] Karl Marx. 1871. The Civil War in France. In *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW), Volume 22,* 307–359. New York: International Publishers.

[47] Marx, Karl. 1852. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW), Volume 11,* 99–197. New York: International Publishers.

[48] Ibid., p. 186.

the propertied classes. It professed to save the propertied classes by upholding their economic supremacy over the working class; and, finally, it professed to unite all classes by reviving for all the chimera of national glory'.[49] Bonapartism is a form of dictatorship that among other elements also uses nationalism. One of the possibilities of how the working class can react to Bonapartism is that it buys into, as Marx says, the 'chimera of national glory'.

Thalheimer understands Bonapartism as 'the autonomisation of the executive power'; it is 'the open dictatorship of capital' that results in 'subordination of all remaining social classes under the executive'.[50] Fascism always has a Bonapartist element, namely 'the political subordination of the masses […] to the fascist power. […] Fascism, like Bonapartism, seeks to be the benefactor of all classes'.[51]

Right-wing authoritarian ideology tries to appeal to individuals, groups, and classes who have experienced social downgrading in society or are afraid of downclassing. Such ideological appeals can be especially successful when the political Left is weak.

It has often been claimed that far-right groups, movements, and parties represent and are made up by individuals from the so-called middle class that some also term the petty bourgeoisie, but fascists and the far-right have always also tried to appeal to blue-collar workers and other groups in society. Ideologies such as nationalism and racism try to mobilise a broad following by constructing a broad unity under the ideological flag of nationalism and advancing hate against imaginary enemies so that political attention is distracted from class structures. All forms of right-wing ideology and practices try to hinder working class struggles by advancing nationalism. There is no anti- or non-nationalist right-wing ideology.

Fascism is a form of dualistic ideology and politics that aims to exterminate one side of the proclaimed dualism. So, for example, the Nazis constructed a dualism between Aryan industrial capitalism that they presented as productive and Jewish financial and circulation capital that they presented as unproductive.

Anti-fascism challenges the ideology and practices of fascism, authoritarian capitalism, right-wing extremism, and right-wing authoritarianism. It is a form of praxis, which is to say a form of socialist practice. Socialism is consequently the only answer and counter-power to fascism and all other forms of right-wing authoritarianism. Socialism has the potential to uncover and deconstruct the true causes of society's problems and to get rid of these problems by overcoming class, capitalism, and domination.

Because right-wing authoritarianism tries to deflect attention from the true causes of society's problems by nationalism and the friend/enemy-scheme,

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[49] Marx, The Civil War in France, p. 330.
[50] Thalheimer, On Fascism, p. 189.
[51] Ibid., p. 190.

socialism is the adequate praxis-oriented response that sheds light on the root-edness of social problems in power, exploitation, and domination, and offers perspectives that transcend capitalism, domination, and class.

Nationalism needs to be communicated in order to be effective. The next section deals with the communication of nationalism.

10.4. The Communication of Nationalist Ideology

Nationalism can only be effective by being communicated in public. The communication of nationalism requires specific events, practices, symbols, and communication systems. The communication of nationalism takes place both in everyday life and as the staging of extraordinary events (parades, commemorations, wars, etc.).

Nationalism is communicated with a dialectic of content and form. The communication of nationalism has at the level of content a particular structure of ideology. Nationalist ideology is communicated in certain social forms. Table 10.2 presents various types of nationalist ideology that operate at the level of content. There is biological nationalism, economic nationalism, political nationalism, and cultural nationalism. All nationalist ideology is based on the distinction between the nation ('Us') and an enemy of the nation ('Them'). The typology presents ideal types. Concrete expressions of nationalism often combine various types or elements of these types.

Social Forms of Communicating Nationalism

In chapter section 6.1 of chapter 6, Marisol Sandoval's typology of communications was introduced. In table 10.3, this typology is applied to the communication of nationalism.

Marisol Sandoval distinguishes between five types of communication that correspond to five ways in which nationalism is communicated. The table also identifies examples of nationalist entities, nationalist social relations/practices, and nationalist events. It relates these social forms to the five types of communications. By entities we understand particular systems, namely human beings, social systems, and non-human systems, that enter into the communication process. All of these entities play a role in the social relations between humans, in which humans communicate and produce the social and society. Events are routinised social practices and routinised social relations that take place at particular points of time at specific places. Such events tend to be regularly repeated. Entities, practices, and social relations are necessary features of the communication of nationalism. Nationalism is not necessarily communicated on the occasion of particular events, but is rather also part of everyday life. But nationalist events are public symbols where nationalism is expressed in

Table 10.2: Types of nationalism's ideological discourse structure. Communicating Nationalism: Types and Structures of Nationalist Ideology.

Type	Definition	Examples for nationalist we-identity	Examples for nationalist other-presentation
Biological nationalism	Nationalism that relates to biology, nature, blood and soil. It proclaims the superiority of and pride in an invented national 'race' and the inferiority of other 'races'.	'Our people are by nature hard-working, decent, peaceful, rational, winners, inventive, creative, superior, etc.'	'They look different from us', 'They are by nature aggressive, dirty, criminal, lazy, noisy, smelly, ill-adapted, violent, etc.'
Economic nationalism	Nationalism that relates to society's economic system and resources. It proclaims the superiority of and pride in aspects of the national economic system (labour, capital, commodity types and industries, productivity, technologies, entrepreneurship, etc.) and the inferiority of competing economies.	'Our economy is particularly competitive', 'Our workers are decent and hard-working individuals proud of their skills and industriousness', 'Our companies and entrepreneurs are particularly inventive and creative', 'German jobs for the German people!', 'Buy British!'.	'They take away our jobs/benefits/houses/educational or health care opportunities/etc.', 'They degrade our social system/wages/education system/pension system/welfare system/health care system/housing system, etc.'
Political nationalism	Nationalism that relates to society's political system and power structures. It proclaims the superiority of and pride in aspects of the national political system and the inferiority of other political systems.	'We are proud of our political values of freedom and our long political history of freedom and human rights', 'We are proud of our heroes and army who have fought for the defence of our nation', 'We are proud of our government/head of state/political system/monarch', 'We have to fight for and maintain our independence and sovereignty from foreign political influences', 'I love my country and my flag. I'd die for them'	'They come from an authoritarian country that shapes their political worldview and behaviours', 'They do not know/respect Western political values', 'They are used to a political system dominated by crime', 'They are criminals/do not follow our laws'

(Contd.)

Table 10.2: *(Continued)*

Type	Definition	Examples for nationalist we-identity	Examples for nationalist other-presentation
Cultural nationalism	Nationalism that relates to society's cultural system. It proclaims pride in and the superiority of national culture and the inferiority of foreign cultures.	'We can be proud of our traditions, arts, artists, language, intellectuals, scientists, achievements in sports, celebrities, philosophy, education system, cuisine, etc.', 'We have won the World Cup', 'We can be proud that our team won and because of its superiority defeated the others'.	'They have different values and morals', 'In their culture it is usual to…', 'They speak a different language/have different habits/ways of behaviour/mentality/symbols/traditions/etc.', 'They destroy our language/culture/traditions/character/etc', 'They come from a culture of aggression/laziness/criminality/etc', 'They have a different lifestyle', 'They do not want to adapt', 'It is customary in their culture to treat women badly', 'They have too many children', 'They wear strange clothes', 'They have bad food tastes/habits', 'Their food stinks', 'Their religion does not belong here and threatens our culture. It is inherently disrespectful, violent, terrorist, etc.'

Table 10.3: Social forms of nationalism (media types, entities, social relations/practices, events).

	Entities (examples)	Social relations and social practices (examples)	Events (examples)
Primary media (human body and mind, no media technology for production, distribution, reception): theatre, concert, performance, interpersonal communication	National heroes, soldiers, national mottos, head of state, president, prime minister, ministers, government, parliament, ministries, public authorities, national performing artists, national celebrities, entertainers and athletes, national museums, national sports teams, national anthem, national flag, formal national language/print language, typical national dishes, folk dance, folk music	Teaching, learning, and speaking the formal national language (print language), participation in national events, basic military service, conscription, fighting as a soldier in a war; the work of parliament, parliamentary committees, ministries, and other public institutions; participation in elections, attending and organising sports events, attending and organising artistic performances, attending and organising national museums/exhibitions, singing the national anthem, speeches on the occasion of national events, government campaigns, flag rituals, cooking and eating typical national dishes, folk dancing, listening to or performing folk music	National events (ceremonies, commemorations and festivals), national day, wars, bank holidays, parliamentary sessions, elections and election campaigns, state opening of parliament, sports events, national theatre and other art performances, national food festivals, national price ceremonies, folk dance festivals and events, folk music events and festivals, art exhibitions, etc.
Secondary media (media technology for production): newspapers, magazines, books, technologically produced arts and culture	National flags, national emblems and symbols, military and other national uniforms, national monuments, national artworks, public buildings, coins, bank notes, national money, stamps, national seals, national badges and medals, passport, maps, government publications, national literature and philosophy, national press, national history books, national language text books and dictionaries, national encyclopaedias, national visual and fine artworks, national museums, libraries and archives	Writing for the national press (journalists), reading the national press, reading of national literature and government-publications, waving the national flag; wearing national uniforms, emblems, symbols, badges, medals, etc.; using one's passport at border controls, working in or using government buildings, building or looking at national monuments, use of national currency/coins/bank notes for commodity purchases, organising or attending exhibitions of national fine arts, reading national literature and philosophy	Press reports on national events, national sporting events, parliamentary sessions, national political events, national artistic or other cultural events, national economy, etc.; national fine arts exhibitions; public reading events

Table 10.3: *(Continued)*

	Entities (examples)	Social relations and social practices (examples)	Events (examples)
Tertiary media (media technology for production and consumption, not distribution): CDs, DVDs, tapes, records, Blu-ray disks, hard disks	Recordings of national politics, national economic developments and national culture distributed on storage media	Production and consumption of contents focused on national politics, national economic developments and national culture distributed on storage media	Events where recordings of national politics, national culture or national economic developments are shown (e.g. cinematographic presentation of the newest movie of an acclaimed national filmmaker, national film festivals, etc.)
Quaternary media (media technology for production, distribution and consumption): TV, radio, film, telephone, Internet	National radio and television (state broadcaster, public service broadcaster), national film, national telephone and Internet infrastructure, web pages operated by national institutions and nationalists	Producing and consuming broadcasts on national radio and television, use of national telephone and Internet infrastructure; production, distribution and consumption of national institutions' and nationalists' web content	Broadcast of national events, national sporting events broadcasts, broadcasts of parliamentary sessions, broadcast news about national events, broadcast of national artistic or other cultural events, web content created by national institutions on the occasion of national events, etc.
Quinary media (digital media prosumption technologies, user-generated content): Internet; social media	Nationalist and nation-related user-generated web sites, blog posts, wikis, pages and groups on social networking sites, threads on discussion boards and mailing lists, videos distributed on video platforms, micro blog posts, images spread via image sites, memes, etc.	Online production, distribution and consumption of user-generated nationalism and nation-related user-generated content	User-generated nationalist content on the occasion of national/nationalist events

a particular intense manner. When nationalism is communicated, nationalist entities, nationalist practices or nationalist events act as symbols of nationalism. The communication of nationalism often operates as banal nationalism that uses nationalist symbols in everyday life.[52]

10.5. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main results and conclusions as follows:

- Nationalism is an ideology that came into existence with the rise of imperialism from 1875 onwards. It essentialises an invented biological or cultural community that is distinguished from outsiders/aliens who are defined as enemies of the nation. Nationalism is a political form of fetishism. It fetishises biology and cultural differences. Nationalists produce and reproduce fictive ethnicity. Nationalism is both an ideology and a political movement.
- There is a biologistic and a culturalist version of nationalism. Nationalism and racism stand in a dialectical relation. Both inclusive and exclusive racism play a role in capitalism. Nationalism and racism help create and justify realms of super-exploitation, where migrant workers are exploited. And they distract attention from capitalism and class by scapegoating foreigners.
- Right-wing authoritarianism is an ideological and political form that combines authoritarian leadership, nationalism, the friend/enemy-scheme, patriarchy and militarism. Right-wing extremism and fascism are intensifications of right-wing authoritarianism. Fascist society puts the dimensions of right-wing authoritarianism into practice by using terror as its method. Right-wing politics is organised on different levels: individuals, groups/movements, institutions, society. An upper level presupposes the preceding ones, whereas a lower level does not determine the upper levels. For example, there can be fascist individuals, parties and movements in a non-fascist, democratic society.
- The communication of nationalism is based on a dialectic of content/ideology and social form. At the level of content, nationalism takes on a particular semiotic and linguistic discourse structure. At the level of the structure of ideology, we can distinguish between biological, economic, political, and cultural nationalism. Nationalism is communicated through different social forms and operates on the levels of symbolic entities, social relations and practices and events.

Nationalism stands in an antagonistic relation to globalisation. Capitalist globalisation has advanced and deepened social problems, to which nationalism is an ideological reaction. The next chapter discusses the relationship of globalisation and communication.

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[52] Michael Billig. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage, p. 6.

Global Communication and Imperialism

Since the 1990s, 'globalisation' has been one of the most frequently used keywords in politics and academia. The basic claim is that societies have become more global and that we now live in a global society. It is often said that communication technologies play an important role in globalisation. A critical theory of society needs to engage with globalisation and internationalisation. Globalisation sounds very positive, but in reality, global capitalism has resulted in the increasing wealth of transnational corporations, an increase in the exploitation of workers, and nation-states that compete to implement tax breaks for capital. This chapter approaches the topic of globalisation and global communication based on the concept of the new imperialism and critical globalisation studies.[1] First, the chapter engages with the notion of space (section 11.1). Second, the focus is on global space and globalisation (11.2). Third, the relationship of capitalism and globalisation is analysed (11.3). Fourth, the chapter sheds light on the connection of communication, capitalism, and globalisation (11.4).

11.1. Space

In chapter 1, it was argued that space is a fundamental aspect of matter. Matter is based on a dialectic of space and time. Space has to do with the next-to-one-another of concrete existences. In capitalism, space has to do

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[1] See: David Harvey. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Richard P. Appelbaum and William I. Robinson, eds. 2005. *Critical Globalization Studies*. New York: Routledge. Leslie Sklair. 2002. *Globalization: Capitalism and Its Alternatives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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with the next-to-one-another of workers, workers and capitalists, political actors, private individuals, commodities, accumulated capital, accumulated power, and the relations between such entities. Globalisation has stretched the distance between such social entities, but at the same time has enabled them to interact and communicate over a distance.

The two most influential Marxist theorists of space are Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. Harvey has built on and extended Lefebvre's theory into a distinct form of Marxist geography that studies capitalism's spatial relationships as well as urban, regional, international conflicts, and class struggles. Both Lefebvre and Harvey build on the tradition of Humanist Marxism.

The Production of Social Space

One of Henri Lefebvre's key ideas in his most widely read work *The Production of Space* is that humans not only produce social relations and use-values, but in doing so also produce social space.[2] The social relations of reproduction organise personal relations, sexual relations, family relations, and the reproduction of labour power. These relations of reproduction form, together with the relations of production, social space.[3] Space is neither a container[4] nor a thing[5]. Social space is at the same time a means of production and a social product.[6] There is a dialectic of social space and human action.

When humans enter social relations, they produce and reproduce the social. And as part of this process they create meanings. They make meanings of one another and of society. Social systems are regularised social relations between humans. They have a regular existence in space and over time. They have some continuity, which means they occur again and again in some locales. There are economic, political, and cultural dimensions of all social systems. But a certain dimension is dominant. A workplace is an economic system, but there are also processes of governing the workplace (politics) and particular philosophies and cultures of work. Social systems are based on the dialectic of action and structures. Structures are particular properties of social systems that make the latter durable and continuous. They dialectically interact with practices by enabling and constraining the latter and being produced and reproduced by practices. Institutions play a role in society at large. They are social systems organised on a large scale. Institutions contain multiple social systems. Examples of institutions include the education system, the health care system, the legal system, the market system, the parliamentary system, etc.

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[2] Henri Lefebvre. 1974/1991. *The Production of Space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
[3] Ibid., p. 32.
[4] Ibid., p. 94.
[5] Ibid., p. 73.
[6] Ibid., p. 85.
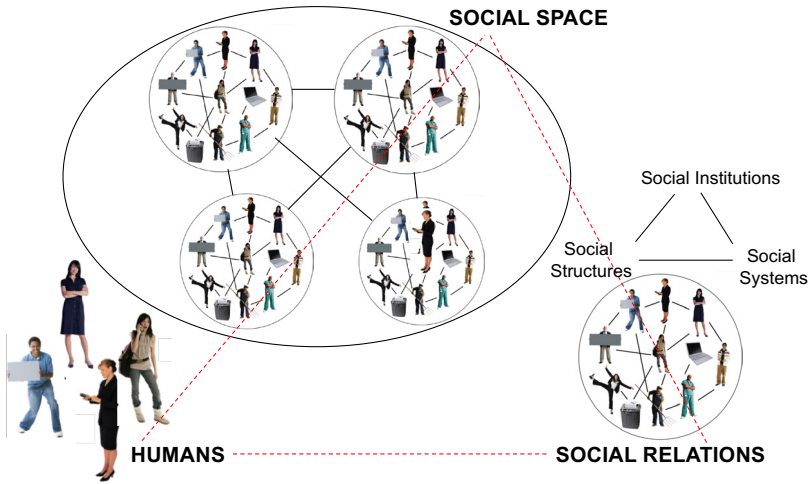
Figure 11.1: The dialectic of humans – social relations – social space.

Social spaces bring together social institutions, social practices, social relations, social structures and social systems within a bounded realm. All social systems are organised in space, have their own space, and are part of larger social spaces. Lefebvre argues that human beings create and reproduce social relations and thereby produce social space. He therefore speaks of the production of social space. Social space is a bounded collection (i.e. an organisation with boundaries) of multiple subjects, objects and social relations.

Figure 11.1 shows the dialectic relationship of social space, social relations, and human beings.

Human beings create social relations. These relations have boundaries (a spatial start and end) and are organised as social spaces. Humans in social relations create and reproduce social structures. These structures condition social practices. All societies have key institutions. Human beings create and reproduce social relations, social structures, groups, organisations, social systems, institutions, and social spaces. These social entities enable and constrain social practices. And they are the result and medium of social practices.

Lefebvre established a theory of society and social space. He did not, however, clearly outline the role of communication in society. A social system does not of necessity break down if a certain individual no longer participates in it. Another human being might take on the same social role. If for example a programmer in a software company leaves, they may be replaced by another software engineer with comparable qualifications.

Social systems and social spaces abstract from individuals that are part of these systems. They are not simply abstract, however, but are embedded into human being's everyday lives. Social systems and spaces are lived in the routines of

practical life. Communication is the concrete process of how humans live in social systems and social spaces in everyday life. In everyday life, humans employ certain means of communication (codes, languages, information technologies, communication technologies). The means of communication enable and constrain the production and reproduction of social space and the social in general. Human beings create social relations. In doing so, they make sense of each other and of the social world and thereby reproduce the social that conditions communication. Communication is the production and reproduction of structures, social relations, social systems, and social institutions that constitute social spaces. Communication therefore is also the process of the production of social space.

Spatial Practices, Representational Space, Spaces of Representation

Table 11.1 summarises the main dimensions of social space that Lefebvre identifies.

In Lefebvre's approach, conceiving, perceiving, and living social space are rather separate processes. But social life brings together these processes of mental perception, mental conceptions, and social practices in social, communicative relations. Perception and conception are mental processes that result in information. But they are also material and social practices because they are part of society. When we perceive something, we form mental conceptions of the world. Conceiving is a form of perceiving by which we create information about the world. Social life is the process of the conception, perception, and production of society in social relations. Perception, conception, and living are social processes. The three levels of social space that Lefebvre identifies reach into each other dialectically.

How can we make sense of table 11.1, that shows Lefebvre's main insights about space, in relation to figure 11.1 that visualises a model of social space? Spatial practices are practices that produce and reproduce social space. These social spaces are made up of social structures, social systems, and social institutions. Social spaces are the objects of spatial practices. They produce and reproduce practices and enable and constrain spatial practices. The production of social space results in social relations and social structures, and along with these also the production of knowledge that symbolises social relations and practices. This is Lefebvre's dimension of the representation of space. Representations are forms of knowledge that represent practices and inform the creation of society's structures, individual knowledge, and social knowledge. Representations are the symbolic and knowledge dimension of societal structures. Individual and social knowledge is knowledge oriented on individual and collective actors. Humans, through social practices, produce and reproduce individual and social knowledge at the level of the individual and the group, and societal structures and representations at the levels of society's subsystems and society as totality. Representations are forms of mediation operating at the level of social relations, where they help to organise social relations and communication processes.

Table 11.1: Lefebvre's three levels of social space.[7]

	Spatial Practice	**Representations of Space**	**Representational Space**
Subjects	Members of society, family, working class	Experts, scientists, planners, architects, technocrats, social engineers	Inhabitants and users who passively experience space
Objects	Outside world, locations, spatial sets, urban transport routes and networks, places that relate the local and the global, spaces of everyday life, desirable and undesirable spaces	Knowledge, signs, codes, images, theory, ideology, plans, power, maps, transportation and communications systems, abstract space (commodities, private property, commercial centres, money, banks, markets, spaces of labour)	Social life, art, culture, images, symbols systems of non-verbal symbols and signs, memories
Activities	Perceiving, daily routines, reproduction of social relations, production	Conceiving, calculation, representation, construction	Living, everyday life and activities

Table 11.2 gives an overview of representations of space and spaces of representation in society in general and in capitalism in particular. In capitalism, representations have an antagonistic character. Price and money mediate practices in the economy, bourgeois laws in the political system, and bourgeois norms and morals in culture. But at the same time, such practices are challenged by the logic of gifts, socialist political and legal frameworks, and socialist norms and morals. Representational spaces are systems of signs, totalities of representations. They operate at the level of society's subsystems and interact with other subsystems at the level of society as totality. In society in general, structures of distribution are economic representational spaces, modes of regulation political representational spaces, and moral systems cultural representational spaces. In capitalism, representational spaces take on the form of the market system in the economy, the legal and state system in politics and the bourgeois moral system (ideology) in culture.

Society has a social, an informational and a spatial dimension, and these interact. Table 11.3 shows three organisational aspects of these three dimensions, namely the levels of humans, social relations, and social systems.

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[7] Based on information from: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 32–33, 38–43, 362, 50, 116, 233, 288.

Table 11.2: Types of individual and social knowledge (building on table 4.1 from chapter 4).

	Societal Structures	Individual Knowledge	Social Knowledge	Representations of space	Representations of Space in Capitalism	Representational Space	Representational Space in Capitalism
Level of society	Society as totality	Individual	Groups	Social relations	Social relations	Subsystems of society, society as totality	Subsystems of society, society as totality
Economy	Use-values, means of production	Skills	Knowledge products	Forms of economic mediation	Price, money (alternative: logic of gifts)	Structures of distribution	Market system
Politics	Rules, collective decisions	Political opinions and insights	Collective political worldviews	Political rules	Laws codified by the state, oppositional legal framework	Modes of regulation	Bourgeois legal system, bourgeois state
Culture	Collective identities and meanings	Identity, meanings	Collective identities, collective meanings	Norms and morals	Bourgeois and socialist norms and morals	Moral system	Bourgeois moral system

Table 11.3: The social, knowledge and spatial dimensions of society.

Social dimension	Information dimension	Spatial dimension (social space)
Humans, human practices	Individual knowledge	Spatial practices
Social relations	Social knowledge, representations	Representations of space
Social systems	Culture	Representational spaces

Table 11.4: David Harvey's typology of space.[8]

	Physical space (experienced space)	Representations of space (conceptualised space)	Spaces of representation (lived space)
Absolute space			
Relative space (time)			
Relational space (time)			

Absolute, Relative and Relational Space

In the essay *Space as Keyword*, David Harvey draws on Lefebvre to create a typology of social space.[9] He arrives at a matrix of space by distinguishing between absolute, relative, and relational space as one dimension and between physical space, representations of space, and spaces of representation as the second dimension (see table 11.4).[10] What Harvey adds to Lefebvre's analysis of space is the distinction between absolute, relative, and relational space.

Harvey gives an example to explain the first set of distinctions. Giving a talk requires a room that has physical walls as borders of the physical space. It requires not just David Harvey or another speaker, but also an audience whose members occupy specific places in the room at a particular time and

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[8] Based on: Harvey, Space as Keyword, 105–106.
[9] David Harvey. 2005. Space as a Key Word. In *Spaces of Neoliberalization*, 93–115. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
[10] Given the theoretical framework of this book (see chapters 2 and 3 on materialism), I have substituted Harvey's term 'material space' for the term 'physical space'.

so sit or stand at particular distances from each other and Harvey. Relational space means that the audience members 'bring to the absolute space and time of the talk all sorts of ideas and experiences culled from the space-time of their life trajectories'.[11] Harvey sees communication as an aspect of relative space: 'I try to communicate across the space through a medium – the atmosphere – that refracts my words differently'.[12] Audiences are positioned at relative distances in space from the producers of information. Modern means of communication allow these spatial distances to be transcended, such that the relativity of space no longer matters in the communication process and one can speak from and hear each other at every point on the Earth. Communication extends to relational social space and in fact plays a crucial foundational role there: Only via communication can humans enter social relations with others and make meaning of the social world.

Based on the concept of space, we can next deal with global space.

11.2. Global Space and Globalisation

Since the 1990s, globalisation has been one of the most mentioned keywords and most discussed topics in the public sphere. For some, globalisation is the ultimate remedy for global problems. For others, it is a catchword for describing a phase of increased capitalistic exploitation. There are both radical optimists and radical pessimists in the globalisation discourse. Hyperglobalisers argue that globalisation is a radical novel phenomenon and that the emerging global society marks a discontinuous and radical break with prior forms of society. Globalisation sceptics argue that globalisation is a myth and that there are no fundamentally novel qualities within society.

Large social systems require a permanent interaction between a more local and a more global level for their reproduction. Such systems from time to time enter phases of crisis and transformation, where more global systems emerge in order to try to overcome the contradictions at higher spatial levels of organisation. In a globalised social system, (economic, political or cultural) processes in different locations, regions, countries, and parts of the world interact with each other. Globalisation is the stretching of social relationships in space-time. A globalising social system enlarges its border in space-time. As a result, social relationships can be maintained across greater temporal and spatial distances. In a global system, practices, social relations, social structures, and social systems are organised over a large distance. Global processes are necessarily

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[11] Ibid., p. 99.
[12] Ibid., p. 98.

Table 11.5: Three forms of globalisation.

Economy	Spatio-temporal enlargement of economic structures and practices of production, distribution and consumption
Political system	Spatio-temporal enlargement of power- and decision structures and political practices
Culture	Spatio-temporal enlargement of normative structures and practices

integrated with local processes: The global influences the local, the local influences the global. Therefore, some observers have spoken of 'glocalisation'.[13]

The history of society has been accompanied by the globalisation of social organisation. In social life, humans at certain points are confronted with problems that cannot be overcome because of the limited availability of capacities, resources, and solutions at the local or another spatial level. They therefore try to solve these problems by extending the organisation of social systems to more global levels. Phases of social crisis can result in phases of globalisation. But society can also de-globalise to a certain extent so that the level of globalisation declines.

The spatial organisational levels of society extend from the local level over intermediate levels to the global level. The range of spatial levels includes the individual as starting point, local immediate relationships (family, friendships, colleagues, etc.), local intermediary structural relationships (local city council, local community organisations, etc.), transmediary (national) structural relationships (the state, national markets), international structural relationships (international agreements, regional political blocs, international political organisations, etc.), and global/transnational structural relationships of global reach (the Internet, the world market, the idea of human rights, etc.). Table 11.5 outlines three forms of globalisation.

Globalisation is not new, but a feature of the history of society and humankind. Historical examples of globalisation include the world religions; empires such as the Roman Empire, the British Empire, or the Han Empire; the world market; large population movements such as the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and imperialism; and the system of submarine cables established in the middle of the 19th century that formed the first global system of communication. The transatlantic cable of 1866 reduced the time of transmission of information between London and New York by over a week.

Based on the notion of global space, the next section will engage with global capitalism.

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[13] Roland Robertson. 1992. *Globalization: Global Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.

11.3. Capitalism and Globalisation

Global Spaces of Capitalism

Immanuel Wallerstein argues that the capitalistic world-system has been a global system ever since its emergence in the 16th century.[14] He stresses that capitalism is a world system because it requires a global division of labour and a world market for achieving profit.[15] The political structure of the capitalistic world system is based on a hierarchical, segmented division between central states, semi-peripheral states, and peripheral states. There is unequal exchange in the capitalistic world system that results in the appropriation of surplus value produced in the global economy by capital located in the core. Already Marx stressed the global character of capitalism: 'The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country'.[16]

Capital accumulation processes M – C .. P .. C' – M' require:

1. labour power
2. means of production (raw materials, technologies, infrastructure)
3. commodity markets
4. capital, capital investment

Capital drives beyond national boundaries and organises itself on a transnational scale in order to find:

1. cheap(er) labour,
2. cheap(er) means of production,

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[14] Immanuel Wallerstein. 1974. The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System. Concepts for Comparative Analysis. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16(4): 387–415: 'It was only with the emergence of the modern world-economy in sixteenth-century Europe that we saw the full development and economic predominance of market trade. This was the system called capitalism. Capitalism and a world-economy (that is, a single division of labor but multiple polities and cultures) are obverse sides of the same coin. One does not cause the other. […] Capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world-economy and not of nation-states. It is a misreading of the situation to claim that it is only in the twentieth century that capitalism has become "world-wide"' (pp. 391, 401).

[15] Immanuel Wallerstein. 1974. *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York. Academic Press

[16] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1848. Manifesto of the Communist Party. In *MECW Volume 6*, 477–519. p. 488.

3) commodity markets, and
4) investment opportunities.

Capital has certain economic, social, spatial and temporal limits. In situations of crisis, it tries to overcome this limit by shifting its own boundaries. 'Capital is the endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier'.[17] But new conditions of capitalism's political economy again find their immanent antagonistic limits so that capitalism again tries to re-organise itself. If such a reorganisation is successful, then it encompasses qualitative differentiations in the mode of exploitation and regulation.

When capitalism enters crisis, it often reaches certain temporal and spatial limits. Overcoming these limits is the search for overcoming crisis. To accumulate capital, capitalist organisations need (a) labour power; (b) means of production (raw materials, technologies, infrastructure); (c) commodity markets; (d) capital investments and money that should be accumulated (capital). The globalisation of capitalism is a strategy that aims at cheapening the availability of the means of production, including labour-power, acquiring access to additional markets, and creating opportunities for investing capital and exporting capital. The globalisation of capitalism is often mediated by transport technologies and communication technologies. The latter are the result and the medium of capitalism's globalisation.

Capitalism is a society that aims at accumulating capital and power. It tries to organise the sale of commodities, political governance, and the exploitation of labour across spatial and temporal distances. Transport and communication technologies enable capital to overcome spatial distances and to reduce the amount of time this crossing of distances takes. Capitalism is also necessarily accompanied by acceleration. Acceleration in capitalism means the accumulation of economic, cultural, and political power in less time than before. In the economy, acceleration means the production, distribution, and consumption of more commodities in less time. In the political system, acceleration means that more decisions are taken in less time. And in culture, acceleration means that more experiences are organised in less time than before. Capitalism's logic of accumulation advances acceleration, globalisation, and financialisation. Hartmut Rosa has established a theory of acceleration, in which he argues that modernity brings about the acceleration of time.[18]

Given the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism, space and time are also strategies for overcoming crises. David Harvey speaks in this context of temporal fixes, spatial fixes, and spatio-temporal fixes.[19] 'The spatio-temporal "fix" […] is a metaphor for a particular kind of solution to capitalist crises through temporal

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[17] Karl Marx. 1857/58/1973. *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin. p. 334.
[18] Hartmut Rosa. 2013. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
[19] David Harvey. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

deferral and geographical expansion'.[20] Capitalism tries to defer its crises into the future and geographically into other parts of the world. But it can only overcome and defer crisis temporarily. And certain spaces are never fully crisis-free. Crisis always returns in new forms and versions because the crisis is immanent to capitalism. The rise of new technologies is in capitalism bound up with capital's establishment of spatio-temporal fixes for stagnating accumulation.

David Harvey interprets Rosa Luxemburg's concept of ongoing primitive accumulation as accumulation by dispossession, the central feature of neoliberal capitalism.[21] Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, and von Werlhof argue from a feminist perspective that capitalism requires milieus of primitive accumulation for its reproduction.[22] Capital cannot exist without making use of unpaid resources stemming from nature, nonwage/unremunerated labour (such as housework), and the periphery. 'Women, colonies and nature' are 'the main targets of this process of ongoing primitive accumulation'.[23] They form inner colonies of capitalism. The inner colonies transform the very nature of capitalist production so that housewifised labour that is 'a source of unchecked, unlimited exploitation' emerges.[24] The precarious reality of the houseworker, the unemployed, and the Global South has been taken as a model for the qualitative transformation of capitalism into neoliberal capitalism. Primitive accumulation thereby not only forms inner colonies of capitalism, but also qualitatively transforms wage-labour and capitalism's core relations. Mario Tronti stresses that the extension of exploitation from the factory and the office to society not only means the constitution of capitalism's social factories and the social worker, but also the capitalist 'process of internal colonisation'.[25]

The capitalist economy is imperialistic. In original primitive accumulation (that is also termed the formal subsumption of society under capital), capital tries to subsume specific social relations. It creates inner colonies of capitalism that are spheres of accumulation. As a reaction to crises, capitalism tries to produce new spaces of influence and accumulation. Capitalism's inner milieus do not simply exist, but need to be reproduced in order to avoid resistances. Original primitive accumulation undergoes a repetition within capitalism. It therefore turns into the process of ongoing primitive accumulation. At certain times, particular inner colonies of capitalism turn into models of accumulation so that capitalism is qualitatively transformed. As a consequence, a new capitalist

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[20] Ibid., p. 115.

[21] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*.

[22] Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof. 1988. *Women: The Last Colony*. London: Zed Books.

[23] Ibid., p. 6.

[24] Maria Mies. 1986. *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books. p. 16.

[25] Mario Tronti. 2019. *Workers and Capital.* London: Verso. p. 32.

regime of accumulation or a new phase of the development of capitalist society emerges. Such processes are also termed the real subsumption of society under capital: Realms of ongoing primitive accumulation and the formal subsumption of society under capital become new dominant organisational models. Alternative spaces can emerge from social struggles that turn against and oppose original primitive accumulation and ongoing primitive accumulation. These are spaces that transcend the logics of capital and capitalism.

The New Imperialism as the Globalisation of Neoliberalism: A New Phase of Capitalist Globalisation

In the early to mid-1970s, capitalism experienced economic, political and ideological crises that brought about a shift from Fordist mass production to post-Fordist flexible accumulation in the economy, from Keynesianism to neoliberalism in politics, and from national culture to global culture. Compared to the phase from 1945 until 1975, since the mid-1970s there has been a significant growth of the share of global trade (imports and exports) and foreign direct investment in the global GDP. The number of transnational corporations in the economy and of international non-government organisations, international political agreements (especially free trade agreements), and regional political unions has significantly grown. The EU and North America have dominated foreign direct investments and international trade. Southeast Asia has played a particularly important role as a recipient of FDIs and as an exporting region. China has become a major export country. In the global space of the capitalist world system, the international division of labour takes on a global form so that workers who produce different parts of a commodity in different places are not aware of each other, cannot communicate with each other, and cannot so easily organise themselves.

David Harvey argues that capitalism has been undergoing a new phase of globalisation that encompasses four interconnected developments: (1) financial deregulation, (2) a new wave of technological innovation, (3) the rise of the Internet, (4) technological innovation that has continuously cheapened transport and communications.[26] Some features of these developments are the offshoring of production, global migration, hyper-urbanisation, the emergence of neoliberal competition states, global environmental, and political problems and risks, the global cultural antagonism of Jihad vs. McWorld, spatial agglomeration, global cities and uneven geographical development.

The classical era of imperialistic development at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was characterised by massive outward capital investments of Western countries. Winseck and Pike argue that

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[26] David Harvey, 2000. Contemporary Globalization. In *Spaces of Hope,* 53–72 Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

the global expansion of communications companies such as for example Western Union, Eastern Telegraph Company, Commercial Cable Company, Atlantic Telegraph Company, and Marconi in the years 1860–1930 created a close relation between communication, globalisation, and imperialism.[27] The era of Fordist capitalism that followed was characterised by *relatively* self-sustaining national economies in comparison to the era of imperialism. If one compares the Fordist mode of capitalist development to the post-Fordist mode, one finds a large increase of capital export and new qualities of global production such as joint ventures, strategic alliances, participative management, and diffused and outsourced forms of global production.

The rise of global neoliberalism was accompanied by the rise of global consumerism in culture. The domination of a global capitalist model that originated in the USA has, to name only one consequence, resulted in the search for national and religious identities. The global fetishism of capital has resulted in the global fetishism of the nation and religion. The Western fetishism of capitalist unity that is frequently defended and enforced by violent means, as was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan, has called forth a fundamentalist fetishism of difference and separation. Benjamin Barber speaks in this context of an antagonism between Jihad and McWorld.[28] This antagonism is the outcome of global capitalism. It found a culmination point in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda and ISIS have practised the globalisation of terrorism as a form of political globalisation. A new vicious global cycle of violence, terrorism, warfare, and radicalisation emerged. The political antagonism between religious fundamentalism and neoliberal capitalism as two options has been aggravated by the weakness of left-wing forces and the bourgeoisification of social democracy in the 20th century, the lack of the political presence of socialism as an alternative vision and model, and the betrayal of socialism by Stalinism and Maoism. Global socialism as humanist unity in diversity is the only viable alternative to global capitalism and global fundamentalism.

The New Imperialism

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, capitalism experienced a transition from competitive capitalism to imperialism. Marxist thinkers such as Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg coined the notion of capitalism as imperialism. For Lenin, imperialism is 'capitalism at that stage of development at which the domination of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the

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[27] Dwayne Winseck and Robert M. Pike. 2007. *Communication and Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press.

[28] Benjamin Barber. 1995. *Jihad VS. McWorld*. New York: Times Books.

division of the world among the international trusts has begun: in which the division of all the territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed'.[29] Rosa Luxemburg sees imperialism as the violent expansion of the accumulation of capital into particular geographical spaces. Capital wants to 'mobilise world labour power without restriction in order to utilise all productive forces of the globe'.[30]

Lenin lists five features of imperialism:

1. monopoly capital;
2. finance capital plays an important role;
3. there is a significant degree of capital export (= foreign direct investments);
4. imperialism includes conflicts over the control of territories that take on various forms of economic and political control, including wars;
5. imperialism features struggles over influence between certain capitalist powers.[31]

For Lefebvre, the primary spatial contradiction is that between fragmented and globalising space.[32] Capitalism globalises so that it can achieve strategic advantages in its accumulation processes. But accumulation also requires the creation of specialised spaces that are instrumentalised. Capitalism results in fragmented spaces that are interconnected at various spatial levels (locally, nationally, internationally, globally). For Lefebvre, this spatial antagonism corresponds to the antagonism between the relations of production and the productive forces at the spatial level:[33] Abstract space is created with the help of certain means of production. That space is abstract means that it is a realm of abstract labour that creates value, which implies class relations and exploitation, domination and instrumentalisation. Abstract space is for Lefebvre imperialist and constitutes an antagonism between central spaces and peripheral spaces. Capitalism's logic wants to 'occupy all space'.[34]

David Harvey and Michael Hardt/Toni Negri have suggested using the terms the new imperialism[35] and Empire[36] instead of globalisation to characterise

[29] Vladimir I. Lenin. 1917. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. In *Lenin Collected Works Volume 22: December 1915–July 1916*, 185–304. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 266–267.

[30] Rosa Luxemburg. 1913. *The Accumulation of Capital*. p. 343.

[31] Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. p. 266.

[32] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 355.

[33] Ibid., p. 357.

[34] Ibid., p. 219.

[35] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*.

[36] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

global neoliberal and financial capitalism's globalisation and universalisation of the commodity form and capitalist rule. 'Globalisation' is a harmless-sounding term that is not suitable as a key category of a critical theory of society. Whereas globalisation sounds positive, the categories of 'the new imperialism' and 'Empire' sound unsettling and exploitative.

Empirical analysis shows certain key features of the new imperialist capitalism in the phase from 1975 until 2008 (when the new world economic crisis started):[37]

- *Capital concentration* took place in the economic realms of services, manufacturing and finance.
- *Monopoly capital* shaped information sectors (including communications technologies, publishing and telecommunications), but also other sectors such as finance. Financialisation, hyper-industrialisation, (the importance of the automobile and fossil fuels), and the relevance of information/communication were three key aspects of global capital. Finance was the dominating dimension.
- *Finance capital* dominated the capitalist economy. This dominance expressed itself through the influence of venture capital, insurance companies, banks, investment funds, financial derivatives, high-risk financial speculation, and the deregulation of finance markets. Financialisation is the attempt to overcome problems of accumulation by deferring crises into the future and creating speculative financial bubbles that promise short-term financial gains on the financial markets, but contain high risks of crisis.
- *Capital export* increased during the period from 1975–2008 in comparison to the phase of capitalist development that lasted from 1945 until 1975. Transnational corporations (TNCs) became a new important feature of the economy. Sectors such as finance, information/communication, mining, quarrying, petroleum, and trade were important realms of capital export. Finance dominated both world trade and the export of capital. But TNCs do not operate entirely globally. Their employees, managers, owners, sales, and profits have a headquarters in a particular nation-state, from which they operate transnationally. There is a link between the national and

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[37] For a detailed theoretical and statistical analysis, see: Christian Fuchs. 2009. *A Contribution to Critical Globalization Studies*. Centre for the Critical Study of Global Power and Politics Working Paper CSGP 09/8. Peterborough, Canada: Trent University. http://fuchs.uti.at/wp-content/uploads/CriticalGlobalizationStudies.pdf

international activities of TNCs. Transnationalism is not a total quality of TNCs, but a tendency and capital strategy.

- The world was *economically and spatially divided* between developing and developed countries in the most recent phase of global capitalism that lasted from 1975 until 2008. Seventy percent of the FDI inflows were located in developed countries, 30 percent in developing countries. Sixty-five percent of world imports were located in developed countries, 35 percent in developing countries. Europe was the major source and destination of capital exports. Large parts of Africa and Latin America were excluded from the investment of capital. Asia and especially China were important destinations of capital exports. China was indeed the major country for capital exports. After 1945, North America's importance in capital export diminished. China become a more important player in foreign direct investments. By 2008, around 10 percent of all capital exports stemmed from China. In the phase from 1975 until 2008, Europe was the world's most importing region. Asia exceeded North America's share of world imports. North America's role in commodity exports declined, whereas Europe turned into the world's largest exporting region of commodities. North America's share in world exports decreased from around 30 percent in 1945 to about 10 percent in 2008. Asia became the world's second largest export region. China became the leading Asian trade country and the most important developing country in exports and imports.
- The *political division of the world* was an inherent feature of the new imperialism, which resulted in wars about the territorial, economic, political, and ideological control of certain spaces, regions, countries, and parts of the world.

Capitalism Since the 2008 Economic Crisis

In 2008, the financial crisis of the US housing market triggered a new world economic crisis. As a consequence, the global GDP decreased from US$ 64.4 trillion in 2008 to US$ 60.1 trillion in 2009, which meant a shrinking of the world economy by 5.2 percent. The crisis of the US housing market had to do with the use of subprime mortgages, a high risk financial derivate. But the financialisation of the housing market was not the cause, but rather a symptom of the global economic crisis. The underlying issue is profitability problems in the entire capitalist economy that capital tries to offset by financialisation.

Figure 11.2 shows that since 2008, the share of newly undertaken annual capital exports in the global GDP has significantly decreased. It increased from 0.5 percent in 1970 to a peak of 3.8 percent in 2007. In 2017, it was at a level of 1.8 percent. There was a similar trend in world trade: World exports peaked

Share of World's FDI Outflows in Global GDP, in % (data sources: UNCTAD, WDI)
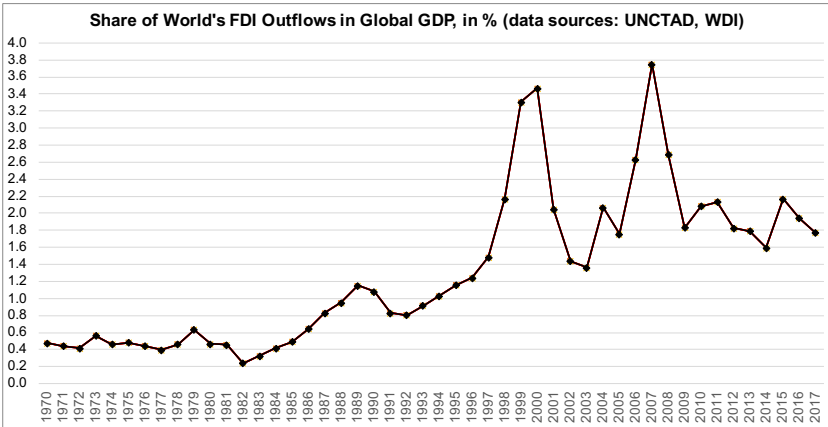
Figure 11.2: The share of the world's FDI outflows in the global GDP.

Share of World Exports in Global GDP, in % (data sources: UNCTAD, WDI)

Figure 11.3: The share of the world's exports in the global GDP.

at a level of 31.1 percent of the global GDP in 2008. In 2017, the level was 28.2 percent. Whereas in the phase from 1975 until 2008, the world economy became more global, there have been tendencies of de-globalisation since 2008. This does not mean the end of global trade and capital investment, but rather its continuation at a slower pace, with phases of relative contraction, and under the increased use of higher tariffs.
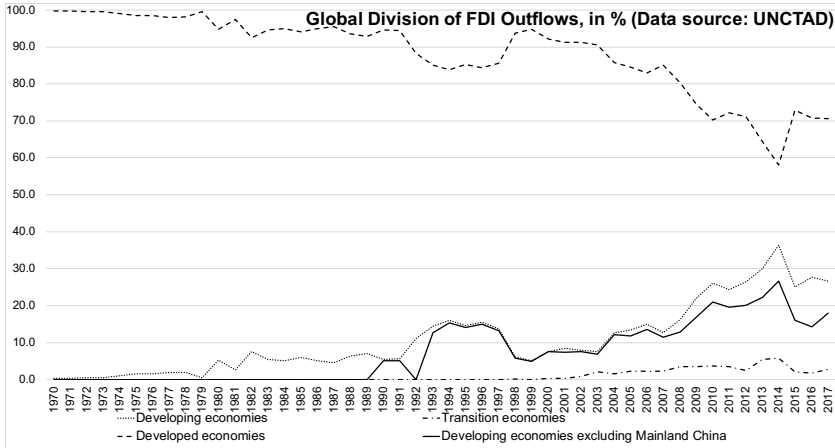
Figure 11.4: The global division of foreign direct investment outflows.

Figure 11.4 and table 11.6 show that Western economies have since the 1970s continued to dominate global capital investments. But developing economies' share in the world's capital export decreased from above 80 percent in the years before 2008 to 58.0 percent in 2014. Simultaneously, the share of developing countries in the world's capital export increased from 5.2 percent in 1980 to 36.3 percent in 2014. The most significant development is the rise of Chinese capital as global investor. In 2017, Chinese capital (including capital in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) had a share of 15.3 percent in the world's foreign direct investment outward flows (see table 11.6; Mainland China: 8.7 percent, Hong Kong 5.8 percent). Since 2014, one can observe a significant change: Developed countries have increased their share of the world's capital export from 58.0 percent in 2014 to 70.6 percent in 2017, while the share of developing countries decreased from 36.3 percent in 2014 to 26.6 percent in 2017. The USA increased its share from 18.1 percent in 2007 to 23.9 percent in 2017 and Japan's share rose from 3.4 percent to 11.2 percent, while the dominant European countries' (UK, Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands, Italy) shares continued to decline. The USA has continued to be the world's largest exporter of capital.

Figure 11.5 and table 11.7 analyse the global structure of capital imports as foreign direct investment inward flows. The shares of developing and developed countries developed in a wave-like pattern, where the overall share of developed countries was larger than that of developing countries, except for the year 2014. The most significant development since the 1970s has been the rise of China as a dominant country in the receipt of foreign direct investments. Brazil and Singapore have also played significant roles in capital imports. In 2017, China accounted for 17.1 percent of foreign direct investment inflows. Relatively cheap manufacturing labour has attracted Western capital to China. The USA's role in attracting FDI inflows decreased from 1980 until 2007, but

Table 11.6: Countries with the largest shares of the world's FDI outflows. Listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

Country	1970	1980	2007	2017
Canada	6.6%	7.9%	3.0%	5.4%
China (incl. Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan)	N/A	0.3%	4.7%	15.3%
France	2.6%	6.0%	5.1%	4.0%
Germany	7.6%	9.0%	7.9%	5.8%
Italy	0.8%	1.4%	4.4%	0.3%
Japan	2.5%	4.6%	3.4%	11.2%
Netherlands	9.3%	9.3%	2.6%	1.6%
Spain	0.3%	0.6%	6.3%	2.9%
United Kingdom	11.9%	15.1%	15.5%	7.0%
United States	53.7%	37.0%	18.1%	23.9%
British Virgin Islands	N/A	N/A	2.3%	5.0%

Table 11.7: Countries with the largest shares of the world's FDI inflows, listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

Country	1970	1980	2007	2017
Australia	6.7%	3.4%	2.2%	3.2%
Belgium	2.4%	2.8%	4.9%	0.1%
Brazil	3.0%	3.5%	1.8%	4.4%
Canada	13.8%	10.7%	6.2%	1.7%
China (incl. Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan)	0.9%	0.1%	8.0%	17.1%
France	4.7%	6.1%	3.4%	3.5%
Germany	5.8%	0.6%	4.2%	2.4%
Italy	4.7%	1.1%	2.3%	1.2%
Netherlands	4.8%	4.6%	6.0%	4.1%
Singapore	0.7%	2.3%	2.2%	4.3%
United Kingdom	11.2%	18.6%	9.3%	1.1%
United States	9.5%	31.1%	11.4%	19.3%
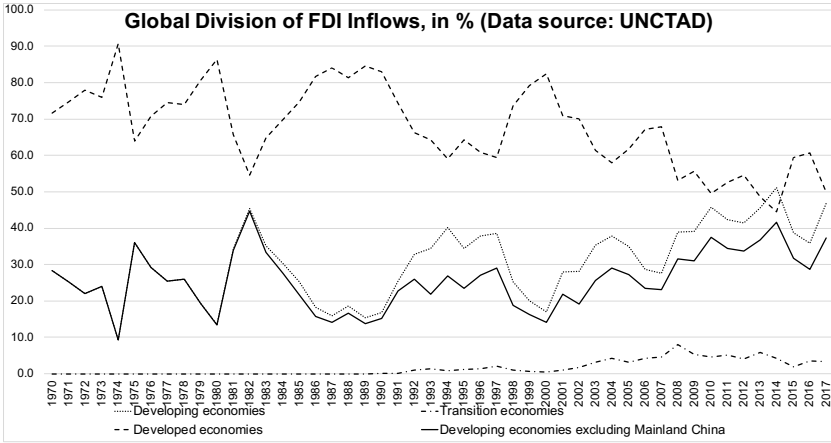
Figure 11.5: The global division of foreign direct investment inflows.
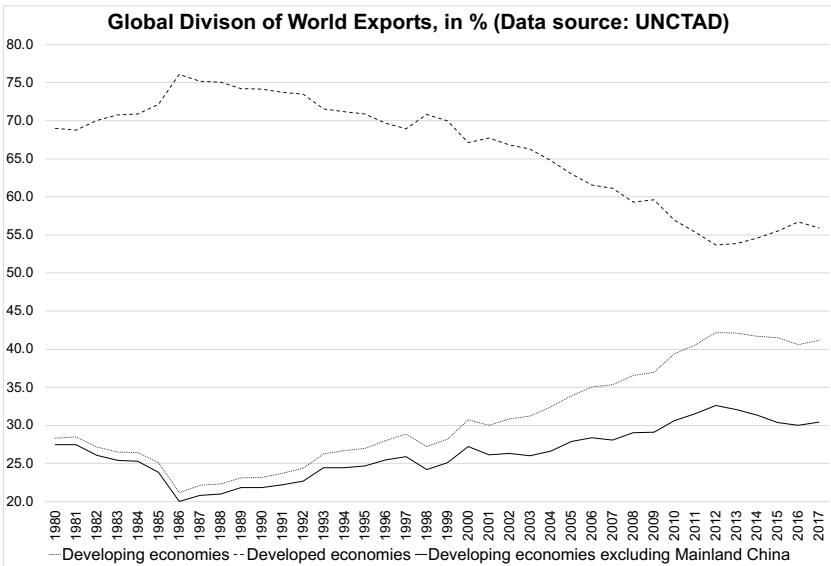
Figure 11.6: The global division of world exports.

has since increased from a share of the world's FDI inflows of 11.4 percent in 2007 to 19.3 percent in 2017.

Figure 11.6 and table 11.8 present data on the structure of world exports. Developed countries have been dominant in world exports, although their share decreased from 76.1 percent in 1986 to 53.7 percent in 2012, while the share of developing countries increased from 21.2 percent to 42.2 percent.

Table 11.8: Countries with the largest shares of world exports. Listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

	1980	2007	2017
China	2.0%	11.2%	15.4%
France	6.4%	4.3%	3.5%
Germany	9.4%	8.6%	7.6%
Italy	4.1%	3.5%	2.7%
Japan	6.2%	4.6%	3.8%
United Kingdom	6.1%	4.4%	3.5%
Saudi Arabia	4.5%	1.4%	1.1%
United States	11.4%	9.6%	10.2%
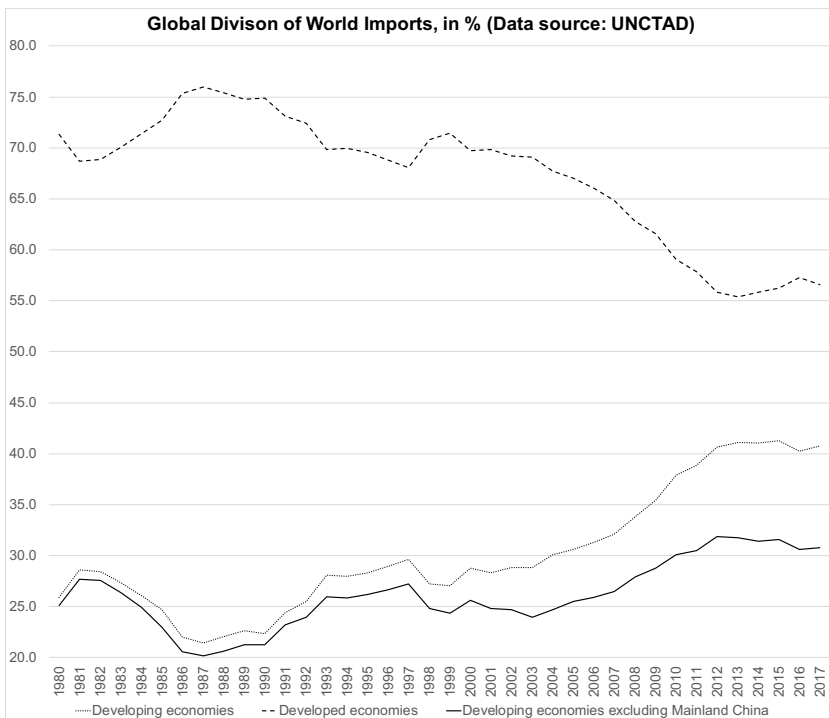
Figure 11.7: The global division of world imports.

There has been a slight counter-tendency since 2012: The share of developed countries increased to around 56–57 percent in the years 2016/2017, while the share of developing countries decreased to levels of around 40 percent. China

Table 11.9: Countries with the largest shares of world imports. Listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

	1980	2007	2017
China	2.0%	9.4%	14.5%
France	6.5%	4.5%	3.8%
Germany	9.6%	7.4%	6.6%
Italy	4.6%	3.7%	2.5%
Japan	6.6%	4.3%	3.8%
United Kingdom	5.6%	5.0%	3.7%
United States	12.2%	14.0%	13.1%

has become the world's largest exporter: It increased its share of world exports from 2.0 percent in 1980 to 15.4 percent in 2017. The USA increased its share from below 10 percent until 2007 to levels slightly above ten percent. Germany is, after China and the USA, the world's third largest exporter of commodities. It has continuously played an important role in the world economy as an export-oriented country.

Figure 11.7 and table 11.9 present data on the structure of world imports. Developed countries have dominated world imports, although their share of world imports decreased from 76.0 percent in 1987 to 55.4 percent in 2013, while the share of developing countries increased from 21.5 percent to 41.1 percent over the same period. This trend has reversed slightly since 2014 when the developed countries' share rose slightly and reached a level of 57.3 percent in 2016. The most significant development in world imports since 1980 has been that China increased its share from 2.0 percent in 1980 to 14.5 percent in 2017, which makes it the world's largest importer. The USA has had a continuously high share of world imports and was in 2017 the world's second largest importer. The USA's share slightly dropped from 13.4 percent in 2015 to 13.1 percent in 2017.

The capitalist economy continues to operate to a significant degree at the global level, although there has been a certain de-globalisation trend of capital export and foreign trade since the world economic crisis started in 2008. China plays an important role as the world's largest exporter and importer, and as the world's second largest importer and exporter of capital (after the USA).

Since 2008, the USA has extended its dominance of the world's capital export and capital import. It has slightly reduced its share of world imports while slightly increasing its share of world exports. Combined, the USA had a trade deficit of US$ 811 billion in 2017.[38] In the early 1980s, the US trade deficit

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[38] Data source: UNCTAD Statistics: Trade balance indicators

was around US$ 20 billion.[39] Mainland China's trade surplus was US$ 476 billion in 2017, making it the country with the largest trade surplus, followed by Germany with a surplus of US$ 299 billion. Other large export-oriented countries with a large trade surplus are Ireland (US$ 121 bn), Korea (US$ 120 bn), Russia (US$ 115 bn), and the Netherlands (US$ 102 bn).[40]

Authoritarian Capitalism

Crises of the capitalist economy, the state and ideology are often phases of instability that trigger the emergence of new qualities of capitalist society that sublate the previous regime of accumulation, mode of regulation, and the disciplinary and ideological mode. Since the start of the world economic crisis in 2008, there has been an increased level of criticism of free trade from the Left and the Right. Socialists' critique of neoliberalism, capitalist globalisation, and free trade agreements has a much longer history and has persisted since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s. Socialists argue that the globalisation of neoliberalism is a strategy for increasing profits by lowering wage costs through outsourcing, privatisation of public services and resources, the dismantling of welfare and the legal protection of workers, and fostering competition. Far-right forces in contrast argue that economic globalisation, migration, and free trade have resulted in a new economic power of non-Western states such as China and have hampered Western capital and labour. They present globalisation as a threat to the economic, political, and cultural cohesion of the nation-state.

Far-right demagogues and parties advance xenophobia and nationalism as answers to global capitalism. Socialists in contrast argue for regulating and properly taxing global and national capital, advancing the global solidarity of workers and trade unions in class struggles against capitalism, improving the wage level and welfare of all workers, strengthening welfare politics locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, and uniting the workers of all lands in the struggle against capital. The far-right wants to protect national capital and does not care about the exploitation of workers at the national and international level. It presents non-Western nations and cultures as enemies and propagates the idea that there is a national interest. By arguing that there is a political, economic, and cultural conflict between nations, attention is diverted from the significance of the global class conflict between capital and labour. Whereas the far-right advances nationalist and xenophobic politics as answers to the problems of global capitalism, the Left argues for global socialist politics.

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

In the years after the new world economic crisis started, the politics of right-wing nationalism were strengthened much more than socialist politics. As part of it, a particular version of protectionism that included increasing tariffs was strengthened. The clearest sign of the rise of right-wing authoritarian capitalist politics was Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election. Authoritarian capitalism is not an end of neoliberal capitalism, but a sublation and continuation of it that adds new qualities, namely a strong dominance of nationalism, xenophobia and racism, authoritarian leadership, friend/enemy politics, and repressive political rhetoric and politics directed against identified enemies.[41]

Donald Trump outlined his basic economic thinking in an economic policy speech during his election campaign in 2016:

> America's annual trade deficit with the world is now nearly $800 a billion a year – an enormous drag on growth. Between World War II and the year 2000, the United States averaged a 3.5% growth rate. But, after China joined the World Trade Organization, our average growth rate has been reduced to only 2 percent. Predatory trade practices, product dumping, currency manipulation and intellectual property theft have taken millions of jobs and trillions in wealth from our country. It is no great secret that many of the special interests funding my opponent's campaign are the same people profiting from these terrible trade deals. […] We are going to start with NAFTA, which is causing so much damage to our country. We will entirely renegotiate NAFTA into a deal that will either be good for us or will be terminated until a brand new and productive deal can be signed. […] Next, I am going to instruct my Treasury Secretary to label China a currency manipulator, and to apply tariffs to any country that devalues its currency to gain an unfair advantage over the United States.[42]

Donald Trump's economic strategy encompasses the reduction of the USA's level of imports and aims to increase its role in the export of commodities and capital, to try to weaken China's role in capital and commodity exports, to use the state to massively reduce the US corporation tax level and, and to help American capital to commodify public resources and services. His economic policy is based on the ideological belief that there is not a capitalist class contradiction between capital and labour, but a national contradiction

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[41] For a detailed analysis, see: Christian Fuchs. 2018. *Digital Demagogue. Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter*. London: Pluto.

[42] Donald Trump 2016. Speech on Jobs and the Economy. 15 September 2016. http://time.com/4495507/donald-trump-economy-speech-transcript/, accessed on 11 September 2018.

between American capital and labour as a united nation with one interest on the one side, and foreign nations on the other side. 'America First' means for Trump anti-immigrant and anti-refugee politics, the scapegoating of immigrants, refugees, and people of colour, and the use of state power to deepen the exploitation of American and other workers and the dominance of the export of capital and commodities. Trump believes in a Keynesian neoliberalism, where the state uses its legislative power and taxpayers' money in order to support US capital's interests, privatisation, US capital's seizure of control of public resources, its dominance on international markets and international capital investments. In order to achieve this aim, Trump introduced increased tariff levels in 2018. These tariffs include, for example, a 25 percent general tariff on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminium (with exemptions for Argentina, Australia, Brazil and South Korea), 30 percent on solar panels, a variable tariff ranging between 16 and 50 percent on washing machines, and tariffs on thousands of different Chinese products. Other countries imposed retaliatory tariffs on US exports. For example, the EU introduced higher tariffs on aluminium, boats, clothing, cosmetics, steel, and washing machines from the USA.

Based on the notion of global capitalism outlined above, we can next discuss the role of communication in global capitalism.

11.4. Communication, Capitalism, and Globalisation

The Dialectic of Communication and Globalisation in Capitalism

The use of communication technologies that transcend spatial boundaries is nothing new. The Romans established a system of postal communication. The printing press was invented in the 15th century, enabling the circulation of written texts beyond local spaces. Nineteenth century industry enabled the disentanglement of communication from physical transport. Messages no longer had to be physically transported from one location to another. The first global system of communication was established through submarine cables used for telegraphing messages. In the 20th century, global communication was extended, intensified, and accelerated. Technologies such as telephone networks, the radio, TV, satellite communications, the digital revolution, the computer, the Internet, and fibre networks supported this development.

Marx stresses the relationship of economic globalisation and communication technologies: 'If the progress of capitalist production and the consequent development of the means of transport and communication shortens the circulation time for a given quantity of commodities, the same progress and the opportunity provided by the development of the means of transport and

communication conversely introduces the necessity of working for ever more distant markets, in a word, for the world market'.[43] Means of transport and communication are 'the weapons for the conquest of foreign markets'.[44]

Communication technologies are the medium and outcome of the globalisation of capitalism. They extend the temporal and spatial distances over which communication is possible, so that local processes are influenced by global ones and vice versa. Communication technologies simplify global communication and world trade. They advance globalisation and the outsourcing and flexibilisation of production; they are a medium of the territorial restructuring of capitalism. The generation of networks of production that are typical of transnational corporations has been made much easier by digital communication technologies. Communication technologies are also a result of the economic movements of restructuring that are a typical feature of capital. In order to optimise the accumulation of capital, capital has to increase productivity and the speed and reach of the production, circulation and consumption of commodities. As a consequence, capital strives to develop new means of production and communication. Shipping, the railway, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, the automobile, the aircraft, the computer, and the Internet have been the result of capitalism's drive to accumulate capital and accelerate and globalise the economy in order to optimise capital accumulation.

The Role of Communication Technologies in Time-Space Compression

David Harvey argues in this context that there is a 'history of successive waves of time-space compression generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation with its perpetual search to annihilate space through time and reduce turnover time'.[45] 'I use the word "compression" because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us'.[46] Harvey argues that the capitalist crisis of the mid-1970s resulted in the rise of a flexible regime of capital accumulation together with a new phase of time-space compression that included the rise of new communication technologies. The 'time horizons of both private

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[43] Karl Marx. 1885/1978. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Two*. London: Penguin. p. 329.

[44] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 579.

[45] David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford. Blackwell. p. 307.

[46] Ibid., p. 240.

and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider and variegated space'.[47] 'Given the pressures to accelerate turnover time (and to overcome spatial barriers), the commodification of images of the most ephemeral sort would seem to be a godsend from the standpoint of capital accumulation, particularly when other paths to relieve over-accumulation seem blocked. Ephemerality and instantaneous communicability over space then become virtues to be explored and appropriated by capitalists for their own purposes'.[48]

Capitalism requires new technologies and forms of organisation that accelerate and flexibilise production in order to function. The history of capitalism is a history of globalisation and of the technological acceleration of transportation (of data, capital, commodities, people) that makes the world a smaller place in the sense that it increasingly mediates social relationships more efficiently so that it appears as if distances are disappearing. Technological progress has resulted in an increasing separation of the movements of information from those of its carriers. The movement of information has gathered speed at a pace much faster than the travel-speed of bodies.

Competition drives capitalists to seek ever-cheaper and new spaces of production: 'The coercive laws of competition push capitalists to relocate production to more advantageous sites'.[49] The globalisation of production lengthens the turnover time of capital – the total time it takes to produce and sell commodities – because the commodities have to be transported from one place to another. As a consequence, capitalism strives to develop technological innovations in transport and communications in order to speed up the production and distribution of commodities and the circulation of capital. 'Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself'.[50]

Communications and globalisation stand in a dialectical relation. Communication technologies shape society's transformation of space and time. And the transformation of space and time shapes the emergence of, the need for, the development and the use of communication technologies. Marx summarised these processes in the following words: 'Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus, the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it'.[51]

Information storage is the precondition of communicating information over spatial and temporal distances and from one generation of humans to later

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[47] Ibid., p. 147.
[48] Ibid., p. 288.
[49] David. Harvey. 2006. *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. London: Verso. p. 98
[50] Marx, *Grundrisse,* p. 173.
[51] Ibid., p. 524.

generations. Information technologies that have played a role in society include, for example, archives, arts, the book, Blu-ray discs, CDs, the cinema, cloud storage, computer-mediated communication, computers, the database, digital hard drives, DVDs, FTP, human memory, the Internet, libraries, lists, myths, newspapers, radio, records, schools, servers, tapes, the telegraph, the telephone, timetables, traditions, TV, universities, writing, etc.

Each communication technology is connected with a certain organisation of time and space. Synchronous communication means that humans communicate with each other at the same point of time. Asynchronous communication means that sending information and reading or responding to it take place at different points of time. Communication between humans can take place in one locale (face-to-face) or in such a manner that humans are located in different physical places. Communication technologies on the one hand enable the distancing of communication in space and time so that asynchronous communication and communication from different physical spaces become possible. But on the other hand, communication technologies also allow the construction of common social spaces that integrate and re-embed communication that has been spatially and/or temporally distanced. With the help of communication technologies, humans can travel to distant places and stay connected with each other. Communication and transport technologies enable the mobility of humans and resources.

'Cultural Imperialism'

Cultural imperialism has often been analysed as meaning the dominance of US-style capitalist mass culture and consumerism throughout the world. Terms such as Americanisation, McDonaldisation, CocaColonisation, or Disneyfication have been used as synonyms for this understanding of cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism is a more general term than media imperialism. Besides the media it also includes sports, food, religion, clothing, etc. Herbert Schiller spoke in the late 1960s of the emergence of an American empire that propagates commercial culture and the American way of life, especially through the means of film, radio and television.[52]

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[52] Herbert. Schiller. 1969/1992. *Mass Communications and American Empire.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Updated second edition. For an overview of the debate on cultural imperialism, see: Peter Golding and Phil Harris, eds. 1997. *Beyond Cultural Imperialism. Globalization, Communication, and the New International Order.* London: Sage. Daya Kishan Thussu. 2019. *International Communication: Continuity and Change.* London: Bloomsbury Academic. Third edition. Oliver-Boyd Barrett and Tanner Mirrlees, eds. 2020. *Media Imperialism: Continuity and Change.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

But capitalism has changed since the 1960s. In the context of the rise of neoliberal capitalism and the new imperialism, Schiller revised his own approach to argue that the decisive development has been the 'enormous growth of transnational corporate power'.[53] Transnational corporations globalise the capitalist model, profit making, capital accumulation, privatisation (of communications and other services), inequality, advertising, cultural sponsorship, public relations and consumerism. The universalisation of capitalism is not the consequence of American culture, but of the imperialist logic that is built into capitalism in general.

Non-Western media corporations are hardly 'distinguishable from the same services at the disposal of American-owned corporations'.[54] 'What is emerging, therefore, is a world where alongside the American output of cultural products are the practically identical items marketed by competing national and transnational groups'.[55] For example, Brazilian soaps have the same purpose as US soaps – to sell commodities produced by 'transnational corporations who advertise in Brazil as well as in the United States'.[56] The new imperialism's main cultural antagonism is not between Western and non-Western culture, but between capitalist and non-capitalist culture. Both the West and the Global South are prone to neoliberalism.

Some observers argue that Western flows of global culture are counter-balanced by contra flows emerging from the Global South, including Bollywood, Nollywood, Japanese video games, Brazilian and Mexican telenovelas, news provided by Al-Jazeera, CCTV, and Russia Today, etc. However, others argue that one must also consider the global distribution of power (profits, audiences, influence, market shares, etc.) in the analysis of global cultural flows and counter-flow. A counter-flow of culture is not a counter-flow because it comes from a certain nation or region, but can only be a counter-flow if its content is critical and its social form is non-capitalist. Not any nation or block of nations, but only socialism is a counter-flow to capitalism.

It is more important to show that the new imperialism and global capitalism encompass a global digital, cultural, and communicative capitalism than to try to show that global culture is imperialist (hypothesis of media/cultural imperialism). New imperialism is not predominantly a media or information imperialism because such an assumption implies that media and information are today the most important features of capital concentration,

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[53] Herbert I. Schiller, 1991. Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era. In *International Communication. A Reader,* ed. Daya Kishan Thussu, chapter 14. Oxon: Routledge. p. 252.

[54] Ibid., 249

[55] Ibid., 254

[56] Ibid., 255

capital export, world trade, and warfare, which clearly is not the case.[57] Media and information do play an important role in new imperialism, but they are articulated with finance capital and the continued importance of fossil fuels.[58] The latter is a resource that has motivated imperialist warfare. Media are characterised by qualities of imperialism such as concentration and transnationalisation, which allows speaking of the imperialistic character of the media within the new imperialism, but not of the existence of media imperialism.[59]

11.5. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main results:

- Space enables the next-to-one-another of entities. A social space is a bounded combination of social relations, structures, practices, social systems, and institutions. Humans produce social space by spatial practices in social relations. Social practices and social structures are represented in informational structures. Representations of space and representational space are therefore important dimensions of social space. Society has a social, an informational, and a spatial dimension, and these dimensions interact. Absolute, relative, and relational space form three types of space.
- Globalisation is an aspect of society's history. There are economic, political, and cultural dimensions of globalisation. Capital drives beyond national boundaries and organises itself on a transnational scale in order to find: (1) cheap(er) labour, (2) cheap(er) means of production, (3) commodity markets and (4) investment opportunities. New transport and communication technologies are the medium and outcome of the globalisation of capitalism. Globalisation and de-globalisation often emerge as features of society as a result of crises.
- After the crisis of capitalism in the mid-1970s, a new phase of capitalist development emerged. Neoliberalism and corporations' global outsourcing of labour in order to yield higher profits by lowering their wage costs have been an integral feature of this phase of capitalist development that can best be termed new imperialist capitalism. In comparison to the phase from 1945–1975, there has been a significant increase in the global activities of

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[57] See: Christian Fuchs. 2010. Critical Globalization Studies and the New Imperialism. *Critical Sociology* 36(6): 839–867. Christian Fuchs. 2010. New Imperialism: Information and Media Imperialism? *Global Media and Communication* 6(1): 33–60. Christian Fuchs. 2016. Digital Labor and Imperialism. *Monthly Review* 67(8): 14–24.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

large corporations, foreign direct investments, world trade and global financial flows.

- China has become the world's largest exporting and importing country and a major recipient of foreign direct investment. The Chinese economy has rapidly developed from the dominance of agriculture to the dominance of manufacturing and services.
- The world economic crisis of 2008 triggered a new phase of capitalist development. It did not end neoliberalism, but in parts of the world brought about a shift towards authoritarian capitalism that is combined with neoliberalism. This form of capitalism features nationalism, xenophobia, hierarchical leadership, and coercive state politics. Its nationalism distracts attention from class conflicts. It also encompasses a tendency towards the de-globalisation of the economy, Keynesian neoliberalism, opposition to free trade agreements, and protectionism. The only viable alternative to authoritarianism is a socialist politics of worldwide working-class solidarity.
- Communication technologies are medium and outcome of the globalisation of capitalism. There is a dialectic of modern communication technologies and the globalisation of production and circulation. The rise of networked computing technologies stands in the context of a flexible regime of accumulation and a new phase of time-space compression. The notions of culture and media imperialism are in certain respects limited because they encompass the danger of nationalist idealisations of non-Western capitalism. Not any nation or block of nations and their culture and media/culture industries, but only socialism is a counter-flow to capitalism.

Capitalist globalisation as the universalisation of capitalist logic and the commodity form at society's global level brings up the question of whether there are alternatives. The next chapter will focus on this issue by discussing aspects of the communication commons. It opens this book's third part that analyses transcendental aspects of communicative materialism, namely the commons, love/death, and struggles for alternatives.

PART III

The Materialist Transcendence of Communicative Capitalism

CHAPTER 12

Communication Society as Society of the Commons

Marxism is not just a critique, but also has a vision of a good society – a society of the commons. This chapter argues that a true communication society is a society of the commons. First, it introduces the idea of communication as societal commoning (section 12.1). Second, it discusses the foundations of Marxist ethics (12.2). Third, it outlines some aspects of the ethics of the commons and the communication commons (12.3).

12.1. Communication as Societal Commoning

The word 'communication' comes etymologically from the Latin words *communicare* and *communicatio*. *Communicare* is a verb that means that something is made into a common or is shared. It also means to inform someone. Class societies are societies where the means of production are controlled by one class. In a society of the commons, there is common control of society. In the economy, common control means common control of the means of production. In the political system, common control means common decision-making. And in culture, common control means that there is recognition of everyone. In such a society, humans communicate, decide, speak, own, decide, and live in a common manner so that everyone benefits.

   A communication society that is truly communicative is not simply a society in which humans communicate or an information society where information is a key principle of organisation. In a true communication society, the existence of communication corresponds to its essence. In a true communication society, the etymological origin of communication is restored. It is a society of the commons in the sense of communication as sharing and making something common. Commoning is the key principle of organisation. A communication

society is a society that humans control in common. In such a society, communication is not just the production of sociality, but society's general principle. In a communication society, *communis* (community) and *communicare* (making something common) are identical. A true communication society is a society of the commons. It is a commonist society. Communications are in such a society commons-based, i.e. communication systems whose '*primary freedom* [...] *lies in not being a trade*'.[1]

Democratic Communications

Democratic communications (= democratic communication systems) are an important dimension of a society of the commons. In the book *Communications*, Raymond Williams distinguishes between different forms of communication systems, namely authoritarian, paternal, commercial, and democratic organisational forms of the media.[2] Authoritarian, paternal, and commercial communications are organised and systemic forms of how instrumental reason is communicated. In authoritarian communications, there is political control of communication. In paternal communications, there is cultural control of communication. In commercial communications, there is economic control of communication. In authoritarian communications, the media are controlled, manipulated, or censored by the state. In such systems, the 'purpose of communication is to protect, maintain, or advance a social order based on minority power'.[3] Paternal communications are a particular form of authoritarian communications that have 'a conscience: that is to say, with values and purposes beyond the maintenance of its own power'.[4] Authorities try to impose moral values on audiences with the help of ideology. In commercial communications, control and authority is exercised via commodity logic: 'Anything can be said, provided that you can afford to say it and that you can say it profitably'.[5] Authoritarian, paternal, and commercial communication instrumentalise communication and humans in order to dominate humans and society.

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[1] Karl Marx. 1842. Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly. First Article. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication of the Proceedings of the Assembly of the Estates. In *MECW Volume 1*, 132–181, p. 175. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

[2] Raymond Williams. 1976. *Communications*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. pp. 130–137.

[3] Ibid., p. 131.

[4] Ibid., p. 131.

[5] Ibid., p. 133.

Democratic communications use the logic and rationality of co-operation. There is true freedom of speech that enables humans to speak. Democratic communication systems are 'means of participation and of common discussion'.[6] Williams envisions a cultural and communicative democracy, in which local community media, cultural co-operatives, and public-service media work together. He imagines 'new kinds of communal, cooperative and collective institutions'.[7] Williams argues that important means of production should be publicly owned and given for use to self-managed organisations, which need to make sure that there is a diversity of political opinion and that state control of opinions is avoided.[8] 'The idea of public service must be detached from the idea of public monopoly, yet remain public service in the true sense'.[9]

Instrumental communications stand in an antagonism to co-operative, democratic communications. In order to find out how democratic and co-operative a communication system is, one needs to ask how far and to what degree it is collectively controlled and advances critical reflection and critique. In order to weaken the capitalist control of communications, cultural class struggles are needed. In a socialist society, democratic communications are prevalent in the communication system. In such a society, 'the basic cultural skills are made widely available, and the channels of communication widened and cleared, as much as possible'.[10]

Williams criticises commercial communications in the following manner: 'All the basic purposes of communication – the sharing of human experience – are being steadily subordinated to this drive to sell. […] The organization of communications is then not for use, but for profit'.[11] The 'commercial has been steadily winning'.[12] The same tendency continues to exist in society today. Only cultural class struggles can question the corporate colonisation of the communication system. But why are communication commons the adequate form for organising communication? In order to provide an answer, we need to engage with critical ethics.

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[6] Ibid., p. 134.

[7] Raymond Williams. 1983. *Towards 2000*. London: Chatto & Windus. p. 123.

[8] Raymond Williams. 1979. *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*. London: Verso Books. p. 370.

[9] Williams, *Communications*, p. 134.

[10] Raymond Williams. 1958/1983. *Culture and Society: 1780–1950. New York: Columbia University Press*. p. 283.

[11] Williams, *Communications*, p. 25.

[12] Ibid., p. 137.

12.2. Foundations of Critical Ethics

The Human Being's Social Essence

Aristotle defines essence as a 'primary thing', one that is 'not articulated by attributing one thing to another'.[13] The essence of something is 'the substance which is peculiar to it and belongs to nothing else'.[14]

Communication is not automatically good. It can be embedded into both good and evil practices. A fire brigade communicates when saving lives. Terrorist suicide bombers communicate when organising their killings. Communication exists in all social relations. It underpins all social relations. Its purpose is the organisation of social relations.

Psychological studies have shown the existence of what is called the '9-month revolution': Babies start behaving socially because they experience care and recognition. As a consequence, they identify attachment figures to whom they relate.[15] Care, solidarity, co-operation, altruism, and recognition are essential aspects of human development. Violence in contrast harms human development. Society and human beings cannot develop without care and co-operation, but they can develop and only truly develop without violence. Marx formulates this circumstance by saying that the 'individual is *the social being*'.[16]

Co-operative reason and instrumental reason are the two most fundamental logics of society. Instrumental reason dominates in class societies. A level of co-operation is needed in all societies, which makes co-operation society's logic of essence. Instrumental logic and action instrumentalises humans in order to foster domination and the benefit of some at the expense of others. The logic of co-operation aims at creating benefits for all and the collective control of society.

Herbert Marcuse argues for a Marxist understanding of essence: 'A theory that wants to eradicate from science the concept of essence succumbs to helpless relativism, thus promoting the very powers whose reactionary thought it wants to combat'.[17] Society's truth does not automatically come into existence. This truth is immanent in society as such because humans desire a good life

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[13] Aristotle. 1999. *Metaphysics.* Translated by Joe Sachs. Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press. § 1030a.

[14] Aristotle. 1933. *The Metaphysics: Books I–IX*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick. London: William Heinemann Ltd. § 1038b.

[15] Michael Tomasello. 2008. *Origins of Human Communication.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[16] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume* 3 (pp. 229–346). p. 299.

[17] Herbert Marcuse. 1936. The Concept of Essence. In *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, 43–87. London: Free Association. p. 45.

and are only guaranteed an individual good life if everyone can lead a good life. Although tensions are often present between different exploited and dominated groups, they have a common interest in overcoming oppression and establishing a society that benefits all. Their interests are also variegated because the oppression of each group has particularities and is contextualised. Emancipatory politics therefore needs to act as unity in diversity in the interests of the oppressed.

Whereas working class politics stresses unity and solidarity, new social movements politics has often foregrounded the differentiated experiences of domination and differentiated contradictions of social struggles. The result was the rise of identity politics that has often ignored class politics. The new capitalist crisis of 2008 and rising inequalities have shown that class politics remains highly relevant and that identity is related to class.[18] Markers of identity such as disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, location, socialisation, gender, education, religion, health, and age are connected to ownership, production, distribution, and consumption.[19]

Hegel argues that the essence of something is often different from its appearance and existence. Something is true if its existence and its essence correspond to each other. Herbert Marcuse has built Hegel's notion of essence into his Marxist theory. He argues that essence has to do with the possibilities of humans and society. A true society realises these possibilities. The possibilities of humans and society depend on the status of the productive forces, political power, culture, the level of productivity, ownership structures, etc. The essence of humans and society has to do with what they can be.

Critical ethics has to do with what can exist and what should exist so that toil, misery, and injustices can be minimised, and human capacities and the satisfaction of true human needs can be maximised.

Co-operation

A society is false if it does not realise the potentials it has for creating benefits for all. Alienation means that humans are not in control of the conditions of their existence. In an alienated system, society and humans

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[18] Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. 2019. *Feminism for the 99 Percent: A Manifesto.* London: Verso. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek. 2000. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality.* London: Verso. Vivek Chibber. 2013. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital.* London: Verso. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange.* London: Verso.

[19] Hardy Hanappi and Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger. 2018. Social Identity and Class Consciousness. *Forum for Social Economics*, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07360932.2018.1447495.

are alienated from their essence. Realising humans' and society's essence requires the abolition of class, exploitation, and domination. Marx's works point out that ideologies should be demystified and that the potentials of humans and society need to be realised through political action in order establish a co-operative society.

Society's development is based on a dialectic of necessity and chance. Society's structures determine its space of possibility, the potential developments of society. This is an aspect of necessity. But it is not predetermined what potentials are realised by social practices, which is an aspect of conditioned chance. Society's structures condition actions. Marx advances a critical, emancipatory ethics: He argues that humans should struggle for the realisation of society's and humans' co-operative essence. Marx puts an emphasis on processes of societalisation (*Vergesellschaftung*). Societalisation as political process means the creation of the commons and co-operative structures. Marx sees human essence as societal and co-operative, which is why he, for example, writes about of 'the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his *human*, i.e., *social* existence',[20] the 'complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being',[21] 'the positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real *appropriation* of the *human* essence by and for man'.[22] Marx's categorical imperative stresses the need to overthrow domination and exploitation in order to create a true society.

Marx advances an ethics of co-operation. Co-operation is opposed to competition. By co-operation we understand a social process in which humans act and communicate together in order to make a joint use of resources, learn together, feel comfortable and at home in society, and create benefits for all. Co-operation is the *most important moral principle*. Competition means that individuals or groups benefit at the expense of others by making use of structures of inequality. Capitalist society is a society that institutionalises the competition between capitalists, the competition between workers and capitalists, competitive politics, and competitive culture and everyday life.

Co-operation is inclusive, whereas competition is exclusive. Co-operation includes humans into ownership, access to resources, decision-making, and the public sphere. Whereas co-operation aims at satisfying everyone's basic needs, competition only results in the satisfaction of particular needs of the dominant class. Whereas competition alienates, co-operation is society's essence. Hegel observes that essence means that 'things really are not what they immediately show themselves. There is something more to be done than merely rove from

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[20]   Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 297.
[21]   Ibid., p. 296.
[22]   Ibid., p. 296.

one quality to another, and merely to advance from qualitative to quantitative, and vice versa: there is a permanence in things, and that permanence is in the first instance their Essence'.[23]

A society can exist without competition. But a society without a certain level of co-operation cannot exist – it isn't a society. If human existence is purely built on competition, then we have an order of egoists who'll sooner or later kill each other. According to Hegel's reasoning, a true society is a co-operative society because co-operation is society's essence. A co-operative society is a participatory democracy. Co-operation as an ethical principle of society does not come from outside society, it is not imposed by doctrines or ideology, but stems from society's immanent logic.

Development psychology and evolutionary anthropology confirm the assumption that co-operative work is part of the human being's essence. Michael Tomasello argues that '[h]uman collaboration is the original home of human cooperative communication'.[24] His work shows that co-operative work not only distinguishes humans from animals, but that the logic of co-operation is also at the foundation of how small children learn to communicate and to talk. Tomasello found out that helping others and sharing are important human features that manifest themselves in shared intentionality, where humans together define goals and co-operate in order to achieve these goals which encompass offers to help, requests for help, offers to share, norms of co-operation, shared goals, communicative intentions, joint attention, common ground, co-operative reasoning, and communicative conventions.[25] Tomasello also shows that love, care, and communication are essential for child development. His work indicates that co-operation is essential to human life, whereas the logic of domination alienates humans from their essence.

Co-operative ethics criticises exclusion, domination, and exploitation. These are principles that do not correspond to society's essence. Such a critical ethical approach questions commonly accepted ideas and subjects them to critical reasoning. It questions the simplicity of one-dimensional thought and wants to advance complex, dialectical thinking. Competition and, along with it, exploitation and domination can only be overcome by a form of political transcendence, i.e. by social struggles that aim to realise the immanent potentials of humans and society.

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[23] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. 1830. *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences: The Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. § 112.

[24] Michael Tomasello. 2008. *Origins of Human Communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p. 343.

[25] Ibid., chapter 3.

Ubuntu Philosophy

Marx's critical ethics boils down to the '*categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being'[26] because humans are social and societal beings who can only lead a good life in a good society when everyone is enabled to lead a good life. Ubuntu philosophy is based on a comparable ethical imperative.

Mogobe B. Ramose argues that global capitalist competition justifies the killing of others in a literal sense (the death of humans, the death of jobs, and economies if corporations decide to relocate) and a metaphorical sense (the out-competing of opponents on the market).[27] Put another way, we can say that capitalism is a metaphysics of death. Ubuntu philosophy in contrast advances 'the principles of sharing and caring for one another'.[28] Because 'motion is the principle of be-ing, the forces of life are there to be exchanged among and between human beings'.[29]

Ubuntu is 'the basis of African philosophy'.[30] Ubuntu as '*African human-ness*' is based on the insight that a human being is human through other human beings.[31] Ubuntu is the insight that my 'humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. [...] We say, "A person is a person through other persons." It is not, "I think therefore I am." It says rather: "I am human because I belong. I participate, I share." A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are'.[32] To be a human 'being is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them'.[33] Ubuntu advances two principles that can be found in almost all indigenous African languages (expressed here in Northern Sotho language/Sepedi):

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[26] Karl Marx. 1844. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction. In *MECW Volume 3* (pp. 175–187). p. 182.

[27] Mogobe B. Ramose. 2003. Globalization and *Ubuntu*. In *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. Pieter H. Coetzee and Abraham P.J. Roux, pp. 626–649. London: Routledge. Second edition.

[28] Ibid., p. 643.

[29] Ibid., p. 643.

[30] Mogobe B. Ramose, 2003. The Philosophy of *Ubuntu* and *Ubuntu* as Philosophy. In *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. Pieter H. Coetzee and Abraham P.J. Roux, 230–238. London: Routledge. Second edition. p. 230.

[31] Ramose, Globalization and Ubuntu, p. 643.

[32] Desmond Tutu. 1999. *No Future Without Forgiveness*. London: Rider. p. 35.

[33] Ramose, The Philosophy of *Ubuntu* and *Ubuntu* as Philosophy, p. 231.

1. *'Motho ke motho ka batho'* – To 'be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane respectful relations with them'.[34]
2. '*Feta kgomo o tshware motho*' – 'if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life'.[35] '[M]utual care for one another as human beings precedes the accumulation and safeguarding of wealth'.[36] A 'life worthy of the dignity of the human person is paramount in ubuntu philosophy'.[37]

The 'invocation of the *ubuntu* human rights philosophy is a credible challenge to the deadly logic of the pursuit of profit at the expense of preserving human life'.[38] Ubuntu's principles are also based on the insights that 'the individual human being is an object of intrinsic value in its own right', which implies human dignity, i.e. that a human being 'is truly [human] only in the context of *actual* relations with other human beings'.[39] The implication of human dependence on each other and of the unity of being human is the principle of human equality.[40]

Based on the notion of critical ethics, we can next deal with the critical ethics of the communication commons.

12.3. The Critical Ethics of the Communication Commons

The Commons

The realms of communications and digital media are shaped by an antagonism between commodification and commonification. From a critical point of view, we need to ask in this context: *Why is it morally important, desirable, and good to advance the communication commons?*

By communication commons, we not only mean communication as a common process of sharing information (to make information common), but also

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[34] Ramose, Globalization and *Ubuntu*, pp. 643–644.
[35] Ibid., p. 644.
[36] Mogobe B. Ramose. 1995. Specific African Thought Structures and Their Possible Contribution to World Peace. In *Kreativer Friede durch Begegnung der Weltkulturen,* ed. Heinrich Beck and Erwin Schadel, 227–251. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. p. 249.
[37] Mogobe B. Ramose. 2015. On the Contested Meaning of 'Philosophy'. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 34 (4): 551–558. p. 557.
[38] Ramose, Globalization and Ubuntu, p. 644.
[39] Ramose, Specific African Thought Structures and Their Possible Contribution to World Peace, p. 246.
[40] Ibid., p. 247.

democratic communications, as pointed out by Williams, where humans have common control of the conditions and means of communication.

Yochai Benkler defines the commons as contradicting exchange on markets.[41] His definition differs in this respect from the one provided by Elinor Ostrom.[42] According to Benkler, the commons are 'radically decentralized, collaborative, and nonproprietary; based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who cooperate with each other without relying on either market signals or managerial commands. This is what I call "commons-based peer production".[43]

Michael Hardt and Toni Negri argue that the natural and the social commons are the two primary forms of the commons.[44] They subdivide the two main forms into five kinds of commons: the common of the earth and its ecosystems; the communicative and cultural common that involves cultural products such as ideas, images, and codes; commonly produced physical goods created by co-operative work; the common of rural and urban spaces, where communication, culture and co-operation takes place; and the common of social services that organise education, health care, housing, and welfare.[45] Hardt and Negri argue that in contemporary capitalism, there is a massive extraction of the commons, which includes the extraction of resources from data, data mining, social extraction from real estate markets and urban spaces, and financial extraction.[46]

In contemporary societies, we can find a variety of communication commons. Examples include public libraries and community centres that provide access to books, newspapers, magazines, computers, and the Internet without charging for it. Community networks (e.g. Freifunk in Germany) are computer networks that are controlled and owned in common and operate in local communities. Free software is software that can be executed, analysed, distributed, and changed by everyone under the condition that the same licence is used on resulting software products. GNU, Linux, and Mozilla are well-known examples of free software. Wikipedia is the most well known and most widely used WWW-based commons project. It is an online encyclopaedia whose articles are common knowledge. Wikipedia is co-operatively edited by volunteers and is a not-for-profit organisation. It uses a Creative Commons licence. Creative Commons is a licence that enables the re-use and re-mixing of content. One

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[41] Yochai Benkler. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[42] Elinor Ostrom. 1990. *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[43] Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, p. 60.

[44] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2017. *Assembly*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 166.

[45] Ibid., p. 166.

[46] Ibid., pp. 166–171.

version of it (NC = non-commercial) stipulates that re-use is only allowed for non-commercial purposes, which constitutes the foundation of an economic knowledge commons. Non-profit open access publishers release books and journals online without charging users for access and without a profit motive. In the case of books, they often also publish affordable paperback editions.

The Commodification of the Commons

Capital wants to subsume ever more aspects of society under its commodity logic. It wants to create new spheres of capital accumulation in order to prevent or postpone economic crises. Like all social phenomena, the commons are not automatically immune to the subsumption under capital. Peer producers can engage in the production of commons in a co-operative, solidary, altruistic, and social manner, but their work that creates commons can nonetheless be subsumed under capital accumulation processes in the form of free labour. For example, the Creative Commons CC-BY licence allows the re-use of knowledge commons for capital accumulation and thereby the subsumption of the commons under capital. In contrast to CC-BY-NC, CC-BY is a reactionary, pro-capitalist licence.

Digital capitalist corporations such as Facebook and Google have subsumed creativity, co-operation, openness, participation, and sharing under the logic of capital, which has resulted in the communism of capital. They base their operations on the free labour of users, who create content, data, metadata, social relations, and shared content. The platforms are free for anyone to use, which is gift logic. Nowadays, many companies crowdsource the marketing, development, and enhancement of their products via the Internet to consumers who conduct free labour. For-profit open access publishers release content as knowledge in common, but accumulate capital by so-called article/book processing charges paid by authors. These charges not only cover the production and publishing costs, but also increase the profits of open access capitalists.

Why Communication Commons are Morally Good and Politically Necessary

The Aristotelian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre writes about the 'narrative understanding of the unity of human life',[47] which implies that humans are social, communicative beings. We have argued throughout this work that human production and communication are dialectical poles extending into

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[47] Alasdair MacIntyre. 2007. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. Third edition. p. 265.

each other. Humans produce communication and communicate in production. They are also producing, communicative beings.

There are some key features of language:[48]

1. Language enables justifications and reflection.
2. Language enables humans to respond and have intentions.
3. Language allows the envisioning of alternative developments and how to shape the future.
4. Language makes possible the telling of stories.[49]
5. Through language, humans can ask moral questions.[50]
6. Humans can advance their individual good and the common good by making use of reflection, anticipation, learning, judgements, the practical modification of judgements, and co-operation.
7. Co-operation is the common dimension of language's capacities.

Both communication and work are dimensions of production: When communicating, humans create sociality and meanings. In work, humans create goods and services that help to satisfy human needs and desires. But work and communication are not separate: There is a work character to communication and a communicative character to work. This means that there is a dialectic of work and communication that humans practice in their everyday life as rational beings. Human production is a co-operative social process, which is why it is also a communication process. Communication is a process of production in which humans produce sociality and share their interpretations of parts of the world. Communication and work can be found in all societies. They are universal features of humanity. Humans cannot always immediately fulfil all of their desires. They suppress and postpone desires, which enables work processes through which they try to reach the satisfaction of certain desires and needs.

Humans desire a good life. In order to try to reach a good life, they behave purposefully. Purposeful action is possible because humans are communicative, ethical, producing, rational, social, and societal beings. The desire to flourish and lead a good life is part of human essence. But given the social nature of society, humans cannot achieve a good life all by themselves, but only in co-operation with others.

Communication, community, and the commons stand in a dialectical relationship. Communication has the potential to produce common meanings of a community. In capitalism, capital and bureaucracy have subsumed the

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[48] Alasdair MacIntyre. 2016. *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity. An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[49] Ibid., pp. 26–27.

[50] Ibid., p. 225.

common good in order to advance particularism. In capitalism, only some can lead a good life, so the good life is not a common feature of class society and capitalist society. Class society's economic, political, and ideological system alienates humans and damages their lives. Human essence has to do with the commons. Human essence is made up by the features common to all humans that they need in order to live. The good life is a universal desire and need of humans that they cannot reach alone, but only in social, collective, and political processes. In order for the individual to lead a good life, all individuals need to be able to lead a good life, which means that a good society is needed. And a good society is a society that corresponds to its essence. A good society is therefore a society of the commons, where humans are in control of the economic, political and cultural conditions of their lives and where everyone benefits and can lead a good life. In an alienated society, humans do not control the cultural, political and economic conditions that influence their ways of life.

Humans strive for a good life. Society's conditions either more enable or more hinder the realisation of the potentials of humans and society. The potentials of society and humans are not static, but develop over time and throughout history. If class and domination hinder the realisation of humans' potentials, then a good society can only be achieved through class struggles against alienation. A society of the commons is a society that realises the creation of the economic commons (wealth and self-fulfilment for all), the political commons (participatory democracy), and the cultural commons (voice and recognition of all). To realise a commons-based society, alienation needs to be overcome in the economy (exploitation), politics (domination) and culture (ideology). Praxis is the struggle for a good society, a society of the commons. The creation of a good society requires struggles that are informed by 'the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being'.[51] If humans cannot live a good life and if there is no society of the commons, then humans are denied their full humanity. They are denied the realisation of the common goods that society and all humans need in order to be able to flourish.

Praxis is the practical struggle for the establishment of a society of the commons. Critical ethics is a form of consciousness and praxis that aims at the creation of such a society. Its aim is to support humans in collectively reaching the point where the 'struggle for liberation changes dialectically into freedom'.[52] In struggles for a society of the commons, individuals practice solidarity and organise themselves collectively and politically so that they can overcome

[51] Karl Marx. 1844. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. In *MECW Volume 3*, 175–187. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 182.
[52] Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin. p. 42.

separation, isolation, and alienation. 'Praxis becomes the form of action appropriate to the isolated individual, it becomes his ethics'.[53]

Social struggles need their own culture, which includes the creation and communication of stories that focus on how exploitation and domination damage humans and society, and how resistance can be self-organised. The communication of injustices and resistance is an important aspect of the self-organisation of protest. Protest includes the public communication of analyses, goals, and demands, and organisational communication within protest movements.

The means of communication support the organisation of cognition, communication, and co-operation. Communication technologies are an important aspect of modern society. In all societies, humans have cognitive needs (love, recognition, friendship, etc.), communicative needs (understanding others), and co-operative needs (working together with others, sharing, solidarity, etc.). The means of communication are means for realising these needs. But the means of communication stand in the context of society. As a consequence, they do not necessarily and automatically foster the common good, but can in the context of class and power structures also be used as means of exploitation and domination.

The economy is the realm of ownership and production. Humans want to live in an economy that satisfies their needs and allows them work through which they can fulfil themselves and have a purpose in life. Organising communication resources as capital and commodities yielding profit has two consequences:

1. Human labour produces commodities in class relations, which involves exploitation of humans and means that the immediate producers do not collectively own the products they create.
2. Organising use-values as commodities means exclusive access so that those who cannot afford to buy these commodities do not have access. Commodity logic results in distributive injustices.

Exploiting communication labour and denying humans access to communication products is an economic form of alienation that damages humans. The communication commons are not produced in class relations and are inclusive.

To foster commons in the realm of communications, it is not enough to foster commons projects. Political struggles against capital also need to be organised in the realm of communications. Capital that disguises itself as common (the communism of capital) also needs to be questioned. Organising communication commons within the capitalist economy faces the problem that most humans are in capitalist society compelled to sell their labour-power in order to be able to sustain themselves. The communication commons question and

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[53] Ibid., p. 19.

challenge the capitalist organisation of communication. But they at the same time put into question the wage-labour that is subsumed under communication capital. The consequence can be that commons projects turn into voluntary, self-exploitative projects, into which commoners invest lots of time but from which they cannot live. This is not a problem as long as they have other jobs that sustain them and communing is a hobby; but it becomes a problem if the unpaid time invested is so large that the commoners can only lead precarious lives. In order to foster commons that challenge capital, mechanisms are needed that allow commoners to achieve an income from which they can live. The resource question is therefore crucial for commons projects. Examples of mechanisms to tackle this issue include a basic income guarantee, collective funds, common/public-partnerships, participatory budgeting, and the channelling of corporation taxes into commons projects.

In the political system, collective decisions are taken that are valid throughout society. The legal system defines the freedoms, rights, and responsibilities of those living in a political community. We can speak of political alienation when (a) political decision making is controlled by particular groups' or individuals' interests so that others have no or less influence on the decisions taken, or (b) when political rights that enable participation in politics and human voices to be heard are threatened, limited or abolished.

In authoritarian political systems, political regimes censor the political voices of citizens so that participation in the public sphere is damaged or not possible at all. The political surveillance of citizens' communication and the use of imprisonment or terror against political opponents are also authoritarian political measures. The outcome is that the political system is centralised and organised in an authoritarian manner. Citizens' rights are limited or abolished. They cannot participate in political life and political decision-making. Economic power is also frequently used for limiting political participation. Capitalist corporations and rich persons can use their money, influence, and reputation to create a voice and visibility for their political interests in the public sphere. For example, they can purchase advertisements or news platforms. The power of capital is a danger to capital and the realisation of the common good in the political system.

Advancing participatory democracy with the help of political communication needs particular communicative projects. The goal of participatory democracy is that humans are included in decision-making and the public sphere, and that the skills and resources needed for meaningful political debate and decisions are made available to all.

In the cultural system, humans make meaning of the world and define identities. In the realm of culture, the human being strives to be recognised by others. Twitter is an online platform where humans aim to be recognised by others. But on Twitter, recognition is very asymmetrically distributed. Celebrities and brands have a high reputation and have the money and influence needed to

purchase recognition. They have more power to define what is meaningful to the public than others. The asymmetric distribution of recognition, visibility and voice is a form of cultural alienation. It creates a hierarchical culture dominated by influencers who disable the voice and recognition of others.

Using communication goods to advance the common good in culture means using them in ways that help everyone to be adequately heard, seen and recognised. Humans all want recognition, but they have different subjectivities. A common culture is not unitary, but one in which the unity in diversity of identities, lifestyles, and worldviews is achieved. Culture is only common when it both avoids a plurality without any unity (= cultural relativism) and a unity without plurality (= cultural imperialism).

A critical ethics that is inspired by Aristotle, Hegel, and Marx sees the struggle for the advancement of the communication commons as part of broader struggles for a society of the commons. Commoners are virtuous when they criticise, question, and struggle against economic alienation (exploitation), political alienation (domination), and cultural alienation (ideology). Virtuous commoners aim at establishing a society of the commons, commons-based communications, and commons-based social structures.

There is an inherent link between communication, the commons, and community. A true and fully developed communication society is a commons-based society, a community of commoners that fosters the common good by fostering the individual good and fosters the individual good by fostering the common good. In a commons-based society, there is a constructive dialectic of the individual good and the common good. An ethics of the communication commons needs to build on the general ethics of the commons. Fostering the communication commons is part of the struggle for a society of the commons.

12.4. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main findings:

- A true communication society is a society in which the original meaning of communication as making something common is the organising principle. A society of the commons is an important foundation of democratic communications. Democratic communications are based on co-operative rationality.

- The human is a social and societal being. The societal essence of the human being includes co-operation. It is an essential characteristic of human beings that they have a quest for human flourishing and leading a good life.

- The commons are goods that all humans require in order to live a good life. The good life of the individual is only possible in a good society that enables the good life for all. Achieving a good society that benefits all

requires collective organisation of the common good. It also requires inclusive, co-operative communication.

Informational and Communicative Socialism

Socialist politics should engage with and not ignore communication politics. A good society needs to be a socialist and commons-based society, which includes the perspectives of informational socialism and communicative communism/commonism. Marx, in contrast to Anarchists (Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, etc.), was convinced that communism cannot be established immediately after the end of capitalism, but that a transitional phase, in which the state but not capital continues to exist, is needed. Socialism is a political-economic movement that has its economic foundations in socialised aspects of the economy already within capitalism and has its political foundations in class struggles against capitalism and for socialism. Socialist politics should think of both public services and civil society as realms from where alternatives can emerge. The politics of informational socialism and communicative socialism should be based on some general principles.

There are ten principles of informational and communicative socialism:[54]

1. **Techno-dialectics:**
   Socialist communication politics avoids techno-optimism/techno-euphoria as well as techno-pessimism. Instead, it asks: How can technology and society be shaped in ways that benefit all humans, workers, and citizens and develop the positive potentials of society and humanity?
2. **Radical reformist communication politics:**
   Socialist communication politics is neither reactionary reformism that bows to bourgeois interests nor utopian revolutionary romanticism. It advances a dialectic of reform and revolution (radical reformism). It struggles for measures that bring about immediate improvements and at the same time advance the possibilities and resourcing of alternative non-capitalist projects and struggles for informational and communicative socialism. Socialist communication politics operates at the level of both political parties and social movements. It brings about their co-operation in the form of a politically co-operating multitude.
3. **United class struggles of communication workers:**
   Communication corporations exploit different kinds of workers. Alternatives to communicative capitalism can only emerge out of class struggles.

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[54] These ten principles were first published in the following article: Christian Fuchs. 2020. Communicative Socialism/Digital Socialism. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 18 (1): 1-31, https://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/1149; reproduced with permission of the journal *tripleC*.

Socialist communication politics supports the digital and communication workers of the world in uniting. In order to make this struggle effective, we need national and international trade unions that unite all different communication workers across branches, occupations, countries, corporations, cultures, etc. in one union of communication workers. Class struggles of communication workers are often fragmented. In order to fight global capital in general and global communication capital in particular, communication workers of the world need to unite, avoid and fight the ideologies of fascism, nationalism, racism, and xenophobia wherever they appear (including in communication networks), and develop strategies of international solidarity and joint struggle. Capitalism exploits different kinds of workers, including unwaged workers who produce the commons and social relations. Unpaid workers' interests are not best served by the demand for an individualised wage, but by the demand for a social wage in the form of a corporation-tax-funded, redistributive basic income guarantee.

4. **Collective control of the means of communication as means of production:**
   In digital and communicative capitalism, communication technologies such as computers, apps, software, hardware, data, content, etc. are means of production. Capital controls and commodifies communication resources. Where these resources matter in the context of labour, it is an important political task that workers demand, struggle for, and obtain the collective control of the means of communication as means of economic production.

5. **Break-up of communication monopolies:**
   Corporate communication monopolies centralise economic power and are a threat to democracy. Socialist communication politics argues for and works towards breaking up corporate monopolies. It neither favours national over international capital (or vice-versa) nor small or medium size capital over large capital (or vice-versa), but no capital, public goods, and common goods instead of capital.

6. **Privacy friendliness, socialist privacy:**
   Public and commons-based communications should respect users' privacy and minimise their economic and political surveillance as well as other forms of surveillance. Personal data collection and storage should be minimised to the data that is absolutely necessary. The surveillance capacities of the state should be redirected away from the constant surveillance of citizens towards the policing of tax-avoiding corporations and white-collar crime. An important task and demand is to criticise and demand the abolition of the surveillance of workers and the mass surveillance of citizens. Socialist privacy means that data collection is minimised, information and communication systems are designed in a privacy-friendly

manner, and surveillance is directed against powerful corporations in order to increase transparency of their economic and financial operations.

7. **Public service media and communications co-operatives:**

The struggle for socialism needs to be fought on the territories of public services, the state, and civil society. The political Left should struggle for three forms of collective communication services: those that are publicly operated or enabled by the state, those that are collectively owned by worker co-operatives, and those that are organised as public/commons-partnerships (partnerships of public institutions and civil society). Services that involve lots of sensitive personal data (such as political opinions) should ideally not be operated by the state in order to reduce the risk of the state surveillance of political opinions. Services that involve the need for high storage capacity can best be operated by public institutions and public service media. Practically speaking this means for example that there should be a public service YouTube and a civil-society based Facebook platform co-operative. The state should legally and economically enable public service media to create digital public services and digital public service corporations. Newspapers should best be operated as non-profit, advertising-free, self-managed companies. Press subsidies funded out of taxation should only be given to non-profit, advertising-free, non-tabloid newspapers. Alternative funding mechanisms for public service and commons-based non-profit, non-commercial media should be sought. They include, for example, corporation taxes, taxing online advertising and advertising in general, the licence and media fee paid by users of public service media, donation models, a digital service tax for large transnational digital corporations, etc.

8. **Democratic, public sphere media:**

The logic of communicative capitalism and the commodity form favours superficiality, high-speed flows of information and news, the personalisation of politics, tabloidisation, one-dimensionality, and partiality in the interest of the bourgeoisie. Alternatives decelerate information flows (slow media), foster informed political debate, learning through collective creation and participation in spaces of public communication that are ad-free, non-commercial, and not-for-profit. Such spaces enable both professional media and citizen media as well as the dialectical fusion of both. Socialist communication politics supports the creation and sustenance of media that have the potential to help advance critical, anti-ideological thought by fostering engagement with content that stimulates dialectical debate and opposes classist, fascist, racist, xenophobic, and sexist discourse.

9. **Political and protest communication:**

Communication technologies are not the cause of protests, rebellions, and revolutions, but an important part of protest communication. Socialist communication politics seeks to use communication technologies

to spread socialist politics to a broad public. Wherever possible, it supports the development and use of non-commercial, non-profit media for organisation and public communication. It aims to avoid creating 'alternative ghettos' of resource-poor alternative media that are based on precarious labour. For this purpose, a politics is required that focuses on channelling resources towards alternative media. Political education in schools and other educational institutions is also an aspect of political communication. Political education shall enable humans to critically reflect on society as well as foster complex, dialectical, and independent thinking.

10. **Self-managed, democratic governance:**
    Socialist communication politics believes in the necessity of, supports and advances the democratic and participatory governance of media organisations, so that the workers producing in these companies, and representatives of everyday citizens that are affected by these media's operations, participate in the decision-making process.

The ethics of the commons is political because it requires praxis and the struggle for alternatives to capitalism in order to make humans and society flourish and realise their potentials. The society of the commons transcends capitalism because it goes beyond the latter. Love is the principle of the society of the commons. Love and death are particular forms of transcendence. The next chapter focuses on these phenomena.

Death and Love: The Metaphysics of Communication

Acknowledgement: Translated from German to English by Mareile Pfannebecker and Christian Fuchs

13.1. Introduction

Since 1990, references to Marxism have usually been references to the 'death of Marx' or the 'death of Marxism'. Those who speak in this manner imply: 'the analysis of class, class struggle and the critique of capitalism are outdated and wrong. We don't need them!' The rise of neoliberalism, Stalinism, and the corruption and collapse of actually existing socialism have worked together to render positive references to Marx difficult. My own political and academic socialisation took place in a climate of hatred towards Marx and Marxism. Again and again, we heard the same old claim:

> 'Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it, its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices.' It [this discourse] says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism![1]

This was not only the old, anti-Marxist tune of neoliberals. It was also repeated by representatives of identity politics and postmodernism who regard themselves as politically progressive. The effect is that they have furthered the discrimination against Marxism and its representatives. The recurrent claim, then

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[1] Jacques Derrida. 1994/2006. *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International.* New York: Routledge. p. 64.

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and now, has been that Marxism and Marx are reductionist, determinist, totalitarian, and anti-democratic.[2] Those who make such claims have usually not read and cannot uphold a debate about Marx. But they often occupy positions of power that allow them to discriminate against Marxism and its representatives. Their aim is to nip any revival of Marxism in the bud.

Since the antagonisms of capitalism caused a new global economic crisis in 2008, not even the most ignorant and foolhardy can deny that in the 21st century, class, the capitalist economy and capitalist society are of great significance. Socialist politics did not experience a general upsurge during the immediate crisis. And yet the interest in Marx and Marxist theory has increased. The overall effect was that it became easier to speak about Marx, Marxism, capitalism, class, exploitation, and socialism. Marx was never quite dead, since his work remains practically and theoretically relevant for at least as long as capitalism exists. Yet there were and remain many who would like to declare Marx's works dead for good. Recent history, in contrast, only shows their relevance.

Since the ideological project of silencing Marx has failed, perhaps it is now time to consider death in the context of Marx not as 'death of Marx' but rather to ask how Marxism ought to confront the phenomenon of death. This chapter is a contribution to this task.

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that deals with phenomena that cannot simply be quantified and that cannot easily be put into words. Death, mourning, religious belief, and love are among such existential human phenomena that fall into the realm of metaphysics. A critical theory of communication must deal with metaphysical questions such as the one that asks how we communicate about death, mourning, and love.

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that deals with questions of the trans-empirical, that is, with questions that go beyond the empirical everyday reality of human life. This includes death. Death is an important cause, impetus, and gateway for engagement with metaphysical questions. Since death is a scandal that affects everyone, everyone also asks metaphysical questions. Life is the dialectical counterpart of love. Since death is the eternal darkness, the nothing that confronts humans and is the cause of mourning, to simply pitch life against death is little consolation. The only hopeful counterpart to death is love as the principle of human sympathy and as the social principle of socialism.

'Religions have much to say about some vital questions – death, suffering, love, self-dispossession and the like – on which the left has for the most part maintained an embarrassed silence.'[3] Marx argues that '*religion* is a register of

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[2] For the rebuttal of this claim see: Terry Eagleton. 2018. *Why Marx Was Right*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[3] Terry Eagleton. 2009. *Reason, Faith, & Revolution. Reflections on the God Debate*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. p. xii.

the theoretical struggles of mankind'.[4] This translation from the German origi-
nal is a bit imprecise because Marx speaks of religion as '*Inhaltsverzeichnis*',
which literally means table of contents. Ideological and class struggles – like
struggles focused on pain, suffering, loss, loneliness, and death – are part of
the struggles of humankind. So, metaphysical questions belong in human-
ity's 'table of contents'. Just like other philosophies, Marxism has to deal with
such questions in order to understand and respond to the lived realities of
human life.

Section 13.2 considers the ontological question of death and love.
Section 13.3 deals with death and estrangement/alienation. Section 13.4 is
concerned with the work of mourning and the communication of death and
mourning. Section 13.5 discusses mortality and immortality, as well as post-
and transhumanism.

13.2. Death, Love, and Ontology

The death of the human being is the end, the absolute nothing. Every change
is a becoming as dialectic of being and nothing. A new idea that revises an old
idea renders the latter void. A new idea *sublates* an old idea in the sense of the
triple dialectical *Aufhebung*, as a simultaneous elimination, preservation, and
elevation onto a new level of organisation. The same principle applies to the
introduction of new methods of production and technologies that *sublate* old
methods. Death, on the other hand, is the annihilation of being, the end of the
body, spirit, consciousness, thinking, action, experience, social relations, social
roles, and communication of a given human being. For others, new things may
come out of the death of a person, like insights about the shape of their own
lives. But death produces nothing new for the concerned party; it destroys their
being. Death is the purest and most negative form of the dialectic. It negates the
dialectic of life itself. It is the end of life's dialectic.

Aristotle on Death

Aristotle relates death to fear. Humans are afraid of 'loss of reputation, pov-
erty, disease, loss of friends, and death'.[5] 'Fear is the expectation of something
bad'.[6] 'But the most frightening thing is death, for it is a limit, and it seems

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[4] Karl Marx. 1843. Marx to Arnold Ruge, September 1843. In *Marx Engels
Collected Works (MECW) Volume 3*, 141–145. London: Lawrence &
Wishart. p. 143.

[5] Aristotle. 2002. *Nicomachean Ethics.* Translated by Joe Sachs. Indianapolis,
IN: Hackett. § 1115a.

[6] Ibid., § 1115a.

there is nothing beyond it to be good or bad for the one who is dead'.[7] Aristotle argues that the most honourable and brave way to die, 'in honour' and without fear, is in battle. He thus idealises war. It is not convincing that death for a people, a nation, or a leader is to be considered honourable. Aristotle does not directly name the death of the nation as honourable, so does not directly idealise nationalism. In the case of fascism, the armed antifascist battle against the tyrannical regime is in fact honourable. Yet antifascism is the opposite pole to nationalism and imperialism, which have caused global wars. The mysticism of death must be avoided.

Death in itself is a scandal. That does not exclude the possibility that in some situations the fight against those who make killing systematic can be honourable. Dying, however, can never be honourable and instead takes place as tragedy. Fascism idealises killing and dying and presents the soldier as the perfect human being. Erich Fromm argues that those humans who act based on the principle of 'Long live death!' have a necrophilic character.[8] In his definition, necrophila is 'the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to destroy for the sake of destruction'.[9] According to Fromm, Hitler was not only authoritarian and sadomasochist, but also necrophilic.

Philosophical Positions on Death

Depending on one's philosophical standpoint, death is regarded as a complete or partial ending of human existence, and thus either as temporary or final. Various religions assume a body/soul dualism where the soul does not perish in death, but instead lives on. This dualistic belief is shared by the world religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism see death as the end of worldly existence of the human mind and body but believe in the eternal existence of the soul in paradise and the possibility for the resurrection of the dead body In Buddhism and in Hinduism, on the other hand, a cycle of death and rebirth (*samsara*) is assumed (death as end of the human body and the transmigration of souls). In contrast, the dialectical and materialist worldview founded by Marx, like other materialist approaches, is monistic in outlook. Here, matter is understood as a differentiated unit and totality, within which moments overlap and correlate (see chapter 2 of this book). Accordingly, the human mind and body are conceived of as interdependent aspects of human matter. Death is understood as the complete and permanent end of a human being, and so of body and soul.

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[7]   Ibid., § 1115a.

[8]   Erich Fromm. 1973. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. p. 330.

[9]   Ibid., p. 332.

While religious people can find comfort in the belief in redemption in paradise or nirvana, among Marxists this belief is considered irrational and esoteric. The 'salvation' they concern themselves with is generally that of the oppressed within their society. Irrespective of their beliefs, of theism or atheism, most people will be confronted at some point of their lives with the mourning of deceased loved ones. Religion is an ideological coping process that can offer genuine consolation and make it possible to live on. After all, Marx insists that religion is not only 'opium for the people', but also 'the sigh of the oppressed creature', 'the heart of a heartless world', 'the spirit of spiritless conditions', and 'expression of real distress'.[10] In its promise of salvation in another world, religion displays an ideological character. But the reason why people look for refuge in religion is often based in suffering, pain, mourning, loss, misfortune, and death. Instead of just ignoring metaphysical questions related to death and mourning, Marxism ought to offer materialist answers to fundamental problems of human existence. Religion and Marxism share the hope for a good life for everyone. Marxism is the translation of such hope into 'the secular project of understanding societies and expressions of human possibility and history as a means of liberating the present from the burdens of the past, and so constructing the future. […] But the Marxist project remains the only one we have for reestablishing hope as a social virtue'.[11]

An important aspect that derives from Marxism is the necessity of solidarity amongst people in the fight for a good life and a good society. The ideal of the socialist society stresses community, collective control, co-operation, and solidarity. These principles also play a role in relation to death and mourning: If someone is alone in trouble, illness, death, and in mourning, then their suffering is multiplied. If others are there with their solidarity, love, and friendship, then suffering, dying, death, and mourning will not disappear, but be ameliorated by shared experience and endured more easily. In Marxism, love for your neighbour is not only an interpersonal principle as in many religions, but a societal principle and a matter of class struggle. Socialism is the society of love for your neighbour, of peace, and humanism. Death and mourning do not disappear in socialism, but lonely death, lonely illness, and lonely mourning become less likely. Only in socialism does it become possible to subject death 'to human autonomy, if not in terms of time, at least in terms of its quality, by eliminating decrepitude and suffering'.[12] Erich Fromm argues that the fear of

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[10] Karl Marx. 1844. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction. In *Marx Engels Collected Works (MECW) Volume 3*, 175–187. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 175.

[11] Alasdair MacIntyre. 1968/1984. *Marxism and Christianity.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. pp. 115–116.

[12] Herbert Marcuse. 1958/2011. The Ideology of Death. In *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse Volume Five: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and*

death can best be alleviated 'by our reassertion of our bond to life, by a response to the love of others that may kindle our own love'.[13] Love and death are fundamental aspects of human existence. Morally and politically, love is the most positive aspect of existence, on which socialism is founded as a social system. Death is the most negative, darkest, most absurd side of existence.

When human beings cannot live properly due to their alienation, domination, and exploitation, then the fear of death is largely the fear of 'seeing how much the living resemble it. And it might therefore be said that if life were lived rightly, the experience of death would also be changed radically, in its innermost composition.[14] Only in a society where humans were 'really identical to that which we are not but which we deeply know we could become, […] might we have the possibility of being reconciled with death'.[15]

There is a qualitative difference between the death of a human being at an old age, who has lived and enjoyed their life to its full extent and dies 'peacefully', and the death of a child or a young person or the unexpected death in a massacre, a genocide, war, or another catastrophe. 'In the death camps death has a novel horror. Since Auschwitz, fearing death means fearing worse than death'.[16] Since Auschwitz, there is a new categorical imperative, that is, to avoid the repetition of industrial mass murder: 'A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen'.[17]

The death of a child or young person often affects us especially, since in that case a person is not only robbed of their life, but also of the possibility to live many years, to have a family and children, and to experience self-fulfilment through life.

The Meaning of Human Existence: Three Philosophical Positions

There are essentially three positions regarding the question of the meaning of human existence. The first position assumes that both life and death are absurd and meaningless. The second position sees the meaning of life defined by death. Here, death gives meaning: the expectation of death is the meaning of life. The third position assumes that life is meaningful and death without meaning.

Emancipation, ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 122–131. London: Routledge. p. 129.

[13] Erich Fromm. 1979. *To Have or to Be.* London: Sphere Books. p. 127.

[14] Theodor W. Adorno. 2001. *Metaphysics: Concept and Problem.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 136.

[15] Ibid., p. 133.

[16] Theodor W. Adorno. 1973/2006. *Negative Dialectics.* London: Routledge. p. 371.

[17] Ibid., p. 365.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre is a proponent of the thesis that both life and death are absurd: 'It is absurd that we are born; it is absurd that we die'.[18] Sartre is certainly right to speak of 'the absurd character of death'.[19] But the absurd character of life does not follow from the absurd character of death. Human life and the life of a society afford the possibility of individual, social, collective, and societal happiness. The possibility of the happiness that solidarity produces and shares socially makes life worth living. Life in itself is therefore not absurd. Life only becomes absurd by virtue of the unhappiness produced by domination, class-relations and exploitation.

Martin Heidegger

Martin Heidegger's philosophy is representative of the second position. For him, the being of a human being is being-towards-death. This means that Heidegger ontologises death. He considers death the decisive aspect of human existence. For Heidegger, death is 'the "end" of being, that is, of being-in-the-world'.[20] Only through death does life become complete: Being-toward-the-end enables 'a wholeness'.[21]

When life and human existence are defined via death, nothingness is made absolute and idealised. Death is not an everyday experience of human beings but a tragedy, absurdity, and futility, which breaks into everyday life to shatter it. Herbert Marcuse argues that Heidegger advanced the 'ideological exhortation to death, at the very time when the political ground was prepared for the corresponding reality of death – the gas chambers and the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen'.[22] Adorno speaks of Heidegger's 'propaganda for death'.[23] Marcuse criticises death-nihilism as 'the exalted acceptance of death', which takes the shape of soldiers' willingness to sacrifice themselves or the acceptance of the possible nuclear mass annihilation of human life.[24] In these instances, death is instrumentalised by the rulers. Death becomes the ideology of death. Accordingly, death is then not a natural

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[18] Jean-Paul Sartre. 1943/2003. *Being and Nothingness. A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. New York: Simon & Schuster. p. 547.

[19] Ibid., p. 533.

[20] Martin Heidegger. 1926/2010. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Revised by Dennis J. Schmidt. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. p. 238.

[21] Ibid., p. 240.

[22] Marcuse, The Ideology of Death, p. 126.

[23] Adorno, *Metaphysics*, p. 131.

[24] Marcuse, The Ideology of Death, p. 130.

fact but a socially created one. 'Compliance with death is compliance with the master over death'.[25] By such compliance, death 'assumes the force of an institution which, because of its vital utility, should not be changed, even if it could perhaps be changed'.[26] Fascism is based on a sadomasochistic ideology and character structure that is built on the concept of 'self-sacrifice as the highest virtue'.[27] 'This masochistic sacrifice sees the fulfilment of life in its very negation, in the annihilation of the self. It is only the supreme expression of what Fascism aims at in all its ramifications – the annihilation of the individual self and its utter submission to a higher power'.[28]

Life only forms a totality when a human being can make use of all of their abilities in society. The wholeness of a human being is thus determined by society and in a worldly manner, not, as Heidegger claims, by death. Exploitation in class relations and domination mutilate the human being in such a way that they cannot form a whole. They cannot fully be what they could be. Heidegger neglects the negative and destructive aspects of class society. That 'death does not constitute the entirety of existence – as it does to Heidegger – is the very reason why a man who is not yet debilitated will experience death and its envoys, the ailments, as heterogeneous and alien to the ego'.[29] When Heidegger claims that 'death belongs primordially and essentially to the being of Dasein', then this applies to the *Dasein* of family, friends, and acquaintances of the deceased.[30] Depending on a person's relationship to the deceased during their lifetime, varying reactions like mourning, labour of mourning, indifference, etc. ensue. The reaction to the death of an acquaintance, friend, or family member makes it part of life. Yet Heidegger is mistaken in regard to the death of a particular person: death is not part of the life of a particular individual, but constitutes the end of their lifetime, an unending nothing. Death does not stand within, but outside of and after the time of life.

Heidegger regards the repression of death and false hope for survival as '*inauthentic*' (*uneigentliches*) being-toward-death.[31] He understands the '*anticipation [Vorlaufen]*' of the possibility of death as the authentic (*eigentliche*) being of death.[32] With this term, he indicates the anticipation of death, including one's own death. In this way, it would be possible to overcome the fear of death and to meet death in freedom.[33] Heidegger not only ontologises and de-scandalises

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[25] Ibid., p. 130.
[26] Ibid., p. 129.
[27] Erich Fromm. 1941/1969. *Escape From Freedom.* New York: Avon. p. 294.
[28] Ibid., p. 295.
[29] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 369.
[30] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 242.
[31] Ibid., p. 249.
[32] Ibid., p. 251.
[33] Ibid., p. 255.

death, he also takes a philosophical and idealist approach to death: he distinguishes between correct ('*eigentliches Sein-zum-Tode*') and false ('*uneigentliches Sein-zum-Tode*') forms of thought in the encounter with death. To face up to death in thought is brave to him, whereas to repress and deny it is cowardly and false. Death, however, is a material certainty regardless of whether a person faces up to it in thought or not. Death does not become less absurd, meaningless, or scandalous by thinking about it more or less. You cannot stop death by thinking about it or not thinking about it. After the death of a significant person, a human being has access to different forms of coping, all of which are directed towards their own survival.

Thomas Nagel

Thomas Nagel is a representative of the third position, which is also the position taken up in this chapter. He argues that 'death is an evil because it brings to an end all the goods that life contains'.[34] A counter argument proposes that many people have a bad life and that death offers them deliverance. But this argument overlooks that society can organise a good life for all. The development of productive capacity, for example, has greatly increased the real possibility for a life without toil. This possibility of a good life and happiness for all makes the individual life worth living, even though in class society, individual happiness must come out of the political struggle for the happiness of all. Bad life is produced socially, and largely by domination and class relations. Nagel does not engage with aspects of capitalism and domination. He says that 'perception, desire, activity, and thought' are constitutive for a good human life.[35] This definition, however, is too general and too individualist. It is based on purely individualist aspects of life. Yet life also includes social phenomena like work and communication, which organise social relationships. The good life presupposes spaces free of class and domination. Capitalism has not colonised society completely; there are always spaces left in which we experience love and happiness. There are thus particular forms of perception, desire, action, thought, communication, and labour, and of social conditions which make up the good life. Even in spaces free of domination a human being is confronted with disease, suffering, pain, loss, mourning, and death. Yet, in such free spaces and in a free society, they are more likely to have the strength to encounter it and to experience the solidarity of their fellows.

   Nagel makes one important point about death: death destroys the potential to live. 'But the time after his death is time of which his death deprives him'.[36] 'Therefore any death entails the loss of some life that its victim would have led

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[34] Thomas Nagel. 1979. Death. *Noûs* 4 (1): 73–80. p. 74.

[35] Ibid., p. 74.

[36] Ibid., p. 79.

had he not died at that or any earlier point'.[37] Death is the loss of potential good lifetime. It demarcates the end of the possibility of leading a good life, of fighting for a good life and, by acts of solidarity, of furthering a good life in a good society, which in itself creates meaning.

The next section asks: What does death have to do with estrangement?

13.3. Death and Estrangement: Death as Endstrangement

Thomas Nagel suggests that death is an estrangement. Through death, one is absolutely estranged from one's body and spirit. Marx understands estrangement, or alienation, as the loss of control and the ability to make decisions about the structures of one's own life (see Chapter 8, Section 1). One's own life concerns a person most immediately, which suggests that death presents a particular sort of alienation. Yet, alienation is a social phenomenon; it implies that lost control can be won back, that alienated structures, relationships, and structures can be appropriated. Alienation thus presupposes, as its own counterpart and counterforce, the possibility for the appropriation and attainment of control over one's own life via social struggle. Once dead, all potentials for action of a human being are extinguished, including the potentials for appropriation and the struggle against alienation. Death destroys the possibility of appropriation. This circumstance speaks against the idea that death is a form of alienation. The lack of control and the loss of control over body and mind during death is an aspect of alienation. But in contrast to alienation, death means the loss of the potential for appropriation and the participation in class struggle.

Death as Endstrangement

Death is *endstrangement*, estrangement without end. Death is the ultimate alienation of the self and society. It means the destruction of the essence of a being and the potential of their human existence. Death is 'the nihilation of all my possibilities, a nihilation which *itself is no longer a part of my possibilities*'.[38] While the alienation caused by domination can come to an end, the alienation caused by the death of the body, the mind, social relations, society, experience, consciousness, action, and communication is without end. While *endstrangement* also leads to the end of the experience of societal alienation, it does not lead to the end of alienation as a societal phenomenon. When a human being has lived in conditions of alienation, and so in misfortune, and dies in those circumstances, then he no longer has the opportunity to experience a better life in happiness and to fight for this together with other people. *Endstrangement* is

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[37] Ibid., p. 79.
[38] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 537.

a misfortune and no deliverance from alienation. What is left to the bereaved is the continuation of the struggle against alienation in the memory of loved ones who have passed away.

Sartre argues that death is a kind of alienation because one becomes the 'prey of others'.[39] The 'very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the Other'.[40] Sartre means that people can say what they like about the dead, who cannot defend themselves. Sartre refers to a communicational aspect of *endstrangement*: since the dead person is robbed of all the possibilities of human existence, he/she cannot communicate. He/She therefore cannot tell fellow human beings what he/she thinks about any statements made about him/her, about others, and about society.

Alienation as Death

Alienation takes on economic, political, and cultural forms: Exploitation, political oppression, and ideology are three forms of domination that lead to the economic, political, and cultural alienation of a human being. The result of alienation is that people are deprived of the control of the economic, political, and cultural systems in which they live. Capitalism, class society, and domination always mean a partial death of the life world of the human and of society: they kill the realisation of potentials that could have furthered the happiness of all humankind. Alienation as the surrender of the good life and of the realisation of positive potential for all is a partial death in life. Alienation involves forms of direct, structural, and ideological repression. Alienated structures thus always include the danger of the direct and indirect killing of humans by economics, politics, and ideology. Examples in the economy are overwork, work accidents, and health damaged by work; in politics, war, terror, imperialism, fascism, and genocide; and in culture, racism, nationalism, and other forms of ideologically motivated murder and mass murder of human beings in a given target group.

As 'double free' labour, work under capitalism means that the majority of people are forced to sell their labour power to earn money for their survival. The structural violence of capitalism includes the threat of death by starvation as a consequence of the refusal of waged labour. For Marx, human work is 'the living, form-giving fire'.[41] The products produced by work within class structures are dead labour, in as far as they are reifications of a human being's living labour and the surplus-value produced by it. Labour appropriated by capital acts as 'fructifying vitality' on the 'dead objectivity' of capital.[42] The transformation of living labour into dead objects, which are sold as products that belong

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[39] Ibid., p. 543.
[40] Ibid., p. 543.
[41] Karl Marx. 1857/58/1973. *Grundrisse.* London: Penguin. p. 361.
[42] Ibid., p. 298.

to the capitalist and not to the workers, is one of the foundations of capitalism. Capitalism means the rule of capital as dead labour over the living labour of human beings. Living labour is capitalism's 'mere means to realize objectified, dead labour, to penetrate it with an animating soul while losing its own soul to it'.[43] As a result, value is created that forms wealth that is alien to labour and is 'wealth of and for the capitalist'.[44] So, economic alienation under capitalism is the result of the transformation of living into dead labour.

What Karl Marx Says About Death

Marx describes working conditions in the 19th century that were so terrible that workers died through overwork, starvation, dangerous working conditions, etc. 'Hence even in the condition of society most favourable to the worker, the inevitable result for the worker is overwork and premature death, decline to a mere machine, a bond servant of capital, which piles up dangerously over and against him, more competition, and starvation or beggary for a section of the workers'.[45] 'So much does labour's realisation appear as loss of realisation that the worker loses realisation to the point of starving to death'.[46] In the method of absolute surplus-value production, the 'recognized form of overwork here is forced labour until death.'[47]

Compared to the 19th century, and as the result of class struggle, the general living conditions of workers in the 20th and 21st centuries have improved. Death at work and as a consequence of work will nonetheless continue to exist as long as capitalism itself, since to capitalism humans are mere resources and instruments. In the 21st century, precarious working conditions dominate, including part-time work, pseudo-self-employment, temporary employment, unemployment, unequal distribution of working hours, subcontracted labour, precarious self-employment etc. Overall, people in insecure working conditions (precarious work, unemployment, permanent unemployment) are more physically and psychologically impaired than those in permanent positions.[48]

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[43] Ibid., p. 461.

[44] Ibid., p. 461.

[45] Karl Marx. 1844. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In *MECW Volume 3*, 229–346. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 238.

[46] Ibid., p. 272.

[47] Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 345.

[48] Lars Eric Kroll and Thomas Lampert. 2012. Arbeitslosigkeit, prekäre Beschäftigung und Gesundheit. *GBE kompakt – Zahlen und Trends aus der Gesundheitsberichterstattung des Bundes* 3 (1): 1–8.

Also, crises of capitalism are 'a question of life and death'.[49] In these crises, capital is destroyed, which bankrupts companies and makes jobs disappear. Suffering caused by capitalism often remains invisible, since those who suffer are ashamed and hide. Those who suffer invisibly in capitalism, such as the unemployed, the homeless, starving people in developing countries, etc. are like spectres.

Capitalism and class society lead to inequality, instrumentalist thinking, unhappiness, and loneliness. Capitalism makes people unhappy, and in some ways drives them mad. Violence in the form of crime, including murder are unavoidable within capitalism. Brutal murder cases (for example of children) are often instrumentalised in order to make the case for the death penalty. But the death penalty does not bring back the dead and does not remove the societal causes of high rates of murder and other violent crime. In 1853, Marx argued against the death penalty:

> [It] would be very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to establish any principle upon which the justice or expediency of capital punishment could be founded, in a society glorying in its civilization. […] Punishment in general has been defended as a means either of ameliorating or of intimidating. Now what right have you to punish me for the amelioration or intimidation of others? And besides, there is history – there is such a thing as statistics – which prove with the most complete evidence that since Cain the world has neither been intimidated nor ameliorated by punishment. Quite the contrary. […] Now, what a state of society is that, which knows of no better instrument for its own defense than the hangman, and which proclaims through the 'leading journal of the world' its own brutality as eternal law? […] is there not a necessity for deeply reflecting upon an alteration of the system that breeds these crimes, instead of glorifying the hangman who executes a lot of criminals to make room only for the supply of new ones?[50]

Mourning and grief have aspects of labour and communication that will be discussed in the next section.

13.4. The Labour of Mourning and the Communication of Grief and Death

The dead cease to live, and so, to communicate. Death means infinite silence and infinite non-communication. We can speak to the dead in thought, at their

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[49] Marx, *Capital Volume One*, p. 618.

[50] Karl Marx. 1853. Capital Punishment – Mr. Cobden's Pamphlet – Regulations of the Bank of England. In *Marx Engels Collected Works (MECW) Volume 11,* 495–501. London: Lawrence & Wishart. pp. 496, 497, 497–498.

graves, at memorials, at funerals, and days of remembrance, etc., but they do not hear us and they cannot answer. The impossibility to continue to communicate with dead loved ones, to continue to experience them, to see and feel them and share the world with them via the social relations that are kept up by communication, form the source of mourning.

The Labour of Mourning

Labour of mourning is labour for the memory of the dead. Because death is *endstrangement*, and so, the ultimate estrangement, the labour of mourning is always labour and not work. It necessarily confronts the ultimate alienation of human beings from themselves: the *endstrangement*. The labour of remembrance and mourning is production in the face of the destruction caused by death. It produces thoughts about the dead and the attempt to process mourning, to alleviate the pain caused by the loss of loved ones, and to live on.

Jacques Derrida understands the labour of mourning as the attempt 'to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead'.[51] 'Mourning always follows a trauma'.[52] Derrida sees the labour of mourning as 'confused and terrible expression'.[53] Why this expression is supposed to be terrible remains unclear. After a death, relatives often engage with the legacy and the remembrance of the deceased, contact shared relatives and friends, organise one or several memorial events, etc. They are thus confronted with *endstrangement* and process it by producing remembrance. Death is tragedy, and thus life without mourning would be a better life. This is why Derrida says 'there shall be no mourning'.[54] He does not mean that we should not mourn, but that it is a disaster that humans die, and that this is the cause of sadness and mourning.

The Labour of Mourning and Communication

Funerals and memorial events for the dead are rituals of the labour of remembrance and mourning. One question raised is how the dead are best remembered, through silence or language, individually or socially. The labour of remembrance and mourning is caught between the two poles of communication and silence (see table 13.1).

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[51] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 9.
[52] Ibid., p. 121.
[53] Derrida. 2001. *The Work of Mourning*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. p. 26.
[54] Ibid., p. 218.

Table 13.1: Forms of labour of remembrance and mourning.

	Communication	**Silence**
I	Individual speaking to the deceased	Individual remembrance of the dead
we	Communal/common talk among the bereaved about the deceased	Gathering of silent mourners (e.g. at a place of remembrance)

The problem of the labour of mourning, as it presents itself, for example, at a funeral or the obsequies right after the death of a beloved individual, is that speaking 'is impossible, but so too would be silence or absence or a refusal to share one's sadness'.[55] It 'is almost indecent to speak right now – and to continue to address our words to you. But silence too is unbearable'.[56]

The dead are silent. In many modern cultures individualised mourning predominates; here mourners must rely on themselves. The solidarity, the collective-individual dialectic as well as the communality and commonality proposed by Marxism imply that the remembrance of a dead loved one should not be individual and silent, but instead organised in a social and communicative fashion. By speaking to one another about the deceased and by trying collectively to let their ideas and their character live on, the labour of mourning becomes social labour, which helps people to find their way back into everyday life more easily. 'When, surviving, and so forevermore bereft of the possibility of speaking or addressing oneself *to the* friend, to the friend himself, one is condemned merely to speak *of* him, of what he was, thought, and wrote, it is nonetheless of *him* that one should speak. It is of him we mean to speak, of him alone, of or on his side alone. But how can the survivor speak in friendship of the friend without a "we" indecently setting in, without an "us" incessantly slipping in? […] For to silence or forbid the "we" would be to enact another, no less serious, violence'.[57]

It is anything but 'indecent' that, in speaking about a deceased loved one, one speaks of the community with the deceased and of a community of mourning, which produces solidarity in the labour of mourning. Derrida stresses the significance of collective communication about the deceased, but is yet too much caught up in the postmodern rejection of collective identity. Especially when faced with mourning and death, the 'we' is a weapon that may not be able to conquer death, but by which people can give each other strength.

There is a dialectic relationship between speech and silence. He/She who always speaks and is never silent destroys this dialectic. She/He who is silent at the wrong time and does not speak up against oppression also destroys the dialectic by standing by and watching domination at work. Without the silence

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[55] Ibid., p. 72.
[56] Ibid., p. 114.
[57] Ibid., p. 216.

of reflection and listening there is no true speech. And reflection, listening, and silence solicit speech. Speaking about the death of a loved one demands a particular dialectic of speech and silence. We can neither simply be silent about death nor speak about it with the form and content of everyday speech. Communication about death demands speaking that is quiet rather than loud, that encourages reflection and remembrance, that reflects and continues in thought the life of the deceased, returns the deceased back into life, and lets them live on in our life. In the Tanakh and the Old Testament, the *Book of Ecclesiastes* says that there is 'a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.'[58] These times, however, do not exclude, but dialectically integrate each other. The communication of mourning, especially, demands both, the dialectic of the time to keep silent and the time to speak.

It is part of the peculiarity of many modern cultures to render death taboo. Not only do we rarely see the dead, but death also remains un-communicated. 'Dying is pushed away [...] Thus we live from one day to the next and into the night, no thought must ever be given to the worst end which is yet to come.'[59]

> Our own era simply denies death and with it one fundamental aspect of life. Instead of allowing the awareness of death and suffering to become one of the strongest incentives for life, the basis for human solidarity, and an experience without which joy and enthusiasm lack intensity and depth, the individual is forced to repress it. [...] Thus the fear of death lives an illegitimate existence among us. It remains alive in spite of the attempt to deny it, but being repressed it remains sterile. It is one source of the flatness of other experiences, of the restlessness pervading life, and it explains, I would venture to say, the exorbitant amount of money this nation pays for its funerals.[60]

Part of the task of breaking the taboo of death is to ensure that death and dying is talked about, so that their horror can be moderated by the force of community and solidarity.

The Commodification of Death and the Communication of Death

Capitalism is imperialist in essence (see chapter 11). This means that its aim is to subsume as many social phenomena as possible under the logic of capital accumulation. Death itself is not immune to being subsumed under capital. Cosmetic surgery is an enormous engine of profit based on the striving

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[58] *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* Chapter 3, §7, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage= Ecclesiastes

[59] Ernst Bloch. 1986. *The Principle of Hope. Volume Three: Chapters 43–53.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. p. 1105.

[60] Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*, p. 271.

for eternal youth and beauty, and therefore on the implicit negation of death. The anti-ageing industry also commodifies the fear and repression of death. It sells creams, medications, hormones, treatments, literature, advice, anti-ageing retreats, etc. that are supposed to slow down ageing and prolong life. So, for example, the British corporation Healing Holidays offers different anti-ageing retreats that cost up to £9,000 and have the defined aim to 'slow down the clock when it comes to ageing'.[61] Death and mourning are also commodified directly. RipCemetery is an app for iPhone and Android-phones that describes itself as the 'world's first virtual cemetery' and an 'interactive cemetery'.[62] Users can create virtual memorial sites where they can leave messages, photos, videos, virtual flowers, and gifts. Users can also remember the deceased together and communicate about them. The operators of the app make a profit when virtual goods like messages, flowers, tombstone decorations, and other virtual objects are bought. The use of online social networks for the purpose of collective remembrance of the deceased, to keep them present and unforgotten, as well as to organise the labour of mourning and communication of mourning socially, interlinked over great distances, is in itself a good idea. But the commodification of death, of mourning, and of the communication of death, via the mediation of such forms of communication and community by the logic of money, of capital, of profit, and of exchange value is disrespectful. The logic of capital does not even stop before the dead, mourning, and the remembrance of the dead; this demonstrates that capitalism is a deeply immoral system. Services like RipCemetery should always operate in a not-for-profit, non-capitalist fashion in order to respect the memory of the dead instead of exploiting it.

Eternal life promises the alleviation of suffering and mourning caused by the loss of a loved one. Materialism shows that the idea of eternal life in an otherworldly paradise is ideological. But can there be eternal, or at least very long life in this world? The next section focuses on this question.

13.5. Mortality and Immortality

Human Life Expectancy

World-wide life expectancy has risen from forty-seven years in 1950 to seventy-three in 2020. According to forecasts, life expectancy in 2100 will be 82.6 years. Medical progress allows human beings to live longer. There is, however, a decisive split: While in the least developed countries, life expectancy in 1950 was thirty-six, in developed countries it was sixty-five. In 2020, life expectancy in the least developed countries was sixty-six years and in developed

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[61] https://www.healingholidays.co.uk/retreats/anti-ageing-retreats, accessed on 23 October 2018.

[62] http://www.ripcemetery.com/, accessed on 23 October 2018.

countries eighty years. For 2100, calculations suggest that life expectancy for the least developed countries will be 79.1 years and in developed countries, ninety years.[63] The capitalist world community is riddled with inequalities regarding death. The rich tend to live longer, and the poor tend to die sooner. All humans die. Death and dying in capitalism are shaped by class. A socialist politics of life must aim to make medical and social progress accessible to all, so that a long, fulfilled, happy life for all is possible.

Immortality is an old human dream. The dream exists because humans want to overcome the fear of death, suffering, and mourning. But humans have physical limitations. Jeanne Calment was the human being who reached the highest age so far. She was born in 1875 and died in 1997. She lived for 122 years and 164 days.[64] In terms of physics, the immortality of human beings is an illusion. If humans were to become immortal, but their minds and bodies continued to age, then ageing would be accompanied by constant suffering and pain, since older people are more susceptible to physical disease and dementia than younger people. A precondition for immortality as good rather than bad life is therefore that physical and psychological diseases must be vanquished. In order to achieve this, one would have to stop physical ageing or to reverse physical damage. Mental ageing, on the other hand, insofar as it does not come with dementia, is experienced by many as a growth of wisdom, knowledge, and serenity. While it is thoroughly desirable to stop mental decline, mental ageing itself can be enriching to human existence.

Post- and Transhumanism

Post- and transhumanism are philosophical approaches that assume that technical and medical progress will make human beings immortal. A first assumption of posthumanism is that medical nanorobots will operate within the human body to identify diseases and repair the human organism. A second assumption is that technical advancement will at some point allow the content of the human brain to be downloaded onto a computer, so that when the body dies, the mind lives on within the machine and so becomes immortal. Post/transhumanism assumes that the human species will cease to exist and that individuals will continue to exist as a new species of cyborgs that are human-machine hybrids and will thereby become immortal. This vision occurs not only in cyberpunk fiction[65] but also in philosophy. Postmodern feminism

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[63] Data source: UN Population Division: World Population Prospects 2017 data, https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/

[64] Data source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne_Calment, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_verified_oldest_people

[65] See for example: William Gibson's *Neuromancer*-trilogy: William Gibson. 1984. *Neuromancer*. London: Gollancz. William Gibson. 1986. *Count*

developed the idea that cyborgs will not only make individuals immortal, but that they will also sublate gender identity and patriarchy (cyborgs as androgynous, non-male and non-female beings).[66]

For Günther Anders, posthumanism is a reified, ideological dream of the human being 'to become equal to his deities, the machines'.[67] But to 'leave the human condition behind and stop being human', as posthumanism and transhumanism intend to do, implies 'the *climax of all possible dehumanization*'.[68] An initial problem of post- and transhumanism is that, like many religions, they are based on a mind-body dualism. This is philosophical idealism. If instead, as assumed by materialism, mind and body are interlinked and in a dialectical relationship, then the human mind cannot exist in a machine, independently from the body. The second problem is the techno-determinist assumption that technology can make humans immortal and free society of societal problems like patriarchal structures. The third problem is that post- and transhumanist approaches ignore the extent to which technical and medical progress is embedded in class relations and capitalist society.

Cyborgs and Capitalism as Cyborg-Fascism

Within capitalism, death works as a negative dialectic: While it has become scientifically possible to increase human life expectancy and improve human health, the potential for mass destruction and the application of destructive forces has also increased during the history of capitalism. While humans have the ability to transcend death to a certain degree, these possibilities are undermined by the forces of death inherent in capitalism.

If, in a capitalist society, nanorobots were to be developed that could penetrate the human body, then we can assume that these would be put to use to monitor human behaviour as well as to attempt to manipulate consciousness. Medical nanorobots that can heal diseases and renew cells and organs would, under capitalism, become a product that not everybody could afford. In this way, the class division of life, health, disease, and death would be further advanced.

Zero. London: Gollancz. William Gibson. 1988. *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, London: Gollancz.

[66] See: Donna Haraway. 1991. A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century. In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 149–181. Donna Haraway. 1997. *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouseTM. Feminism and Technoscience.* New York: Routledge.

[67] Günther Anders. 2016. On Promethean Shame. In *Prometheanism: Technology, Digital Culture and Human Obsolescence*, Christopher John Müller, 29–95. London: Rowman & Littlefield International. p. 40.

[68] Ibid., p. 44.

If it were possible to create cyborgs in a capitalist society, then immortality would also be subject to class division: the rich and privileged classes would become immortal cyborgs, the class of the poor and the workers would remain mortal and serve the cyborg class and be exploited by them. By the creation of cyborgs as 'superhumans' two species would be created. Under capitalism, it could easily happen that those mortals who are ill, old, or unable to work would appear as too expensive and a burden to society, and thus be killed. Capitalism always has fascist potentials. In a capitalist society that creates two classes, of mortals and immortals, a fascist demographic policy would be a serious threat. A further threat is posed by the possible future creation of genetically manipulated humans without a will of their own, with the aim of stopping resistance against exploitation and domination.

13.6. Summary and Conclusion

Death and mourning are phenomena that suddenly enter into the everyday lives of human beings. A person cannot experience their own death, but they can experience illness and dying. We experience the death of loved ones, friends, and family members as existential experiences. The absurdity and absoluteness of death, and the witnessing of it as an existential phenomenon that leads to mourning, show that death is a decisive human problem. This is why Marxism cannot ignore death, but must, like other philosophies, face up to it.

We can draw a number of significant conclusions:

- Marx views capitalism as the rule of the dead labour of capital over the living labour of human beings. He points out that capitalism carries deadly potentials, which take the shape of crises and the killing of humans by economic, political, and ideological repression. Accordingly, capitalism is a system of death, whereas socialism on the other hand is a system on the side of life.
- Economic, political, and cultural alienation in the form of exploitation, repression, and ideology mean a partial death of one's life world inside a society shaped by domination: they kill the realisation of the positive developmental potential of humans and society.
- Death is at the same time ultimate alienation, but as an estrangement is also strange to itself, since it escapes sublation and appropriation: the dead person cannot be brought back to life. Death is *endstrangement*, the estrangement of mind, body, experience, consciousness, action, communication, social relations, and community without end. Thomas Nagel does not use the terms estrangement and alienation but yet shows that death robs humans of the opportunities for the practice and realisation of and struggles for the good life.

- Auschwitz has shown that political and ideological mass murder is worse than death, which is already in itself a disaster, an absurdity, and a scandal that causes mourning. Antifascism is therefore a task of socialism. At stake is the categorical imperative to prevent a second Auschwitz.
- The practice and principles of the social, of love, cooperation and solidarity that are the basis of socialism can avoid lonely suffering, lonely illness, lonely dying, and lonely mourning. Socialism as a general community of solidarity, of love, and human sympathy produces happiness for all. This cannot expel death from the world, but it may render its appearance less terrible. Socialism also includes striving for a long, healthy, fulfilled, and happy life for all.
- The labour of mourning is labour in the face of death as *endstrangement*. It can take its course individually or socially, in communication, or in silence. Marxist philosophy suggests not to be silent about death, but to communicate about it with care in order to lift its taboo and to create human solidarity in the engagement with it.
- Commodification does not stop at death, mourning and the communication of mourning, but tries to subsume them under the logic of capital. Examples like virtual cemeteries operating for profit show the immorality and disrespect of the logic of capital, which will not even leave the dead in peace.

Love as a Socialist Weapon

Love cannot conquer death. Nevertheless, it is the most powerful socialist weapon that humans can wield against the destructive forces of death, which include not only physical death, but also class society and fascism.

> If man is to be able to love, he must be put in his supreme place. The economic machine must serve him, rather than he serve it. He must be enabled to share experience, to share work, rather than, at best, share in profits. Society must be organized in such a way that man's social, loving nature is not separated from his social existence, but becomes one with it. […] Indeed, to speak of love is not 'preaching', for the simple reason that it means to speak of the ultimate and real need in every human being. That this need has been obscured does not mean that it does not exist. To analyze the nature of love is to discover its general absence today and to criticize the social conditions which are responsible for this absence. To have faith in the possibility of love as a social and not exceptional-individual phenomenon, is a rational faith based on the insight into the very nature of man.[69]

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[69] Erich Fromm. 1956. *The Art of Loving*. New York: Harper & Row. p. 133.

Religions have legitimated and advanced authoritarianism, domination, exploitation, patriarchy, sexual abuse, war, terror, nationalism, and fascism. They thereby have again and again undermined essential elements of their own doctrines, namely the facilitation of love. One has to preserve those elements from religions that advance the struggle for a peaceful society based on love and solidarity. And we have to criticise practices and structures that turn religion into ideology and domination. We need religions of liberation that together with Marxism struggle for 'overcoming doom, lovelessness and indifference' and aim at establishing a realm of freedom, in which we 'can live for each other so as to reap the true riches of being human'.[70] 'The call to […] love […] is the most serious call for praxis'.[71] Religion can thereby also act 'as a means for carrying out class struggle'.[72] In the same way as we do not need just any religion, but liberating religions and theologies of liberation, so we do not need just any socialism, but democratic, humanist socialism. United, liberation theology and humanist socialism can act as 'passionate protest against the break-up of humanity by existing society that makes the human being fall victim to 'self-alienation''[73] and can stand up for 'the wretched of the Earth'.[74]

Marxism and Liberation Theology

The dialogue of Marxism and religion allows the 'function of theology as critical reflection on praxis', as is the case in liberation theology.[75] Theology thereby becomes a critical theory that aims at advancing the liberation of humankind from oppression and exploitation.[76] The theologian of liberation is an organic intellectual.[77] 'Salvation embraces all persons and the whole person; […] the struggle for a just society is in its own right very much a part of salvation history'.[78] Liberation theology and Marxism converge in stressing the importance of class struggles to establish love as society's principle.

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[70] Translation from German: Emil Fuchs. 1955. *Marxismus und Christentum*. Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang. 3. Auflage. p. 165.

[71] Translation from German: Ibid., p. 69.

[72] Translation from German: Ibid., p. 135.

[73] Translation from German: Emil Fuchs. 1958. *Christliche und marxistische Ethik. Erster Teil: Lebenshaltung und Lebensverantwortung des Christen im Zeitalter des werdenden Sozialismus.* Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang. 2. Auflage. p. 127–128.

[74] Translation from German: Ibid., p. 127.

[75] Gustavo Gutiérrez. 1988. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis. p. 5.

[76] Ibid., p. 9.

[77] Ibid., p. 10.

[78] Ibid., p. 97.

> The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors. […] But in the last instance we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society.[79]

In the penultimate chapter of this book we will consider social struggles. The chapter will discuss questions of political communication with regard to struggles for alternatives.

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[79] Ibid., p. 174.

CHAPTER 14

Communication and Struggles
for Alternatives

This chapter deals with the question of how communication matters in struggles for a commons-based society. First, the notion of praxis communication is introduced (section 14.1). Second, the chapter discusses the role of alternative media as critical media in social struggles (14.2). Questions of class struggles, communication in class struggles, and struggles for alternative communications deliberately form the conclusion to this book. Given that the many problems outlined in this book result from our capitalist world and capitalist communications, the point is to change the system, which can only be achieved through social struggles. Praxis, class struggles, and social struggles are critical political economy's practical implications.

14.1. Praxis Communication

Praxis

How humans react to forms of domination (including exploitation) is not programmed. Some endure violence and oppression because they fear consciously or unconsciously that they may lose something. But resistance can emerge over time or rapidly. Humans neither automatically endure nor automatically always resist domination. Humans' existential fears and needs can be instrumentalised so that they accept domination. Social struggles of dominated groups always imply risk-taking and uncertainty. When a large enough number of the oppressed take such risks and engage in collective organisation, then resistance to domination comes about. The formation of a collective dimension of consciousness is part of such organisation processes.

In organising politically, humans communicate in order to define goals, identities, and strategies that help them in transformative processes. Political

consciousness has the potential to be progressive, but is not automatically progressive. A better society is a possible, but not a certain result of social struggles. Only when objective contradictions trigger the collective political organisation of protests and movements that aim at progressive changes is there a chance for the establishment of a better society.

Critical theory's differentiation between practice and praxis was introduced by Karl Marx. Marx writes in his 'Theses on Feuerbach': '#3 […] The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary praxis. […] #8 All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human praxis and in the comprehension of this praxis'.[1]

For Marx, human beings are practical because they transform society through practices. By praxis, Marx refers to a certain form of practice. Praxis refers to political practices whose goal is a human-centred society. Praxis-oriented humans see such a society as a political need of human beings and try to demystify ideologies that aim at hindering the establishment of such a society. Praxis includes class struggles that aim at abolishing exploitation and domination. Antonio Gramsci argues that the philosophy of praxis critically questions common sense.[2] Praxis wants to establish an 'absolute humanism'.[3] For Gramsci and Marx, praxis is the critical political form of human practice. Praxis is related to socialism and wants to establish a '*free community of free personalities*'.[4]

Marxist humanism combines socialism and humanism. It is based on the insight that critique and praxis 'grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself', '*man is the highest being for man*'.[5] Praxis is based on the insight that a good society means a good life for all. Based on this insight Marx articulated the '*categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being'.[6]

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[1] Karl Marx. 1845. Theses on Feuerbach. In *MECW Volume 5* (pp. 3–5), pp. 3 & 5. In the English translation of the 3rd and 8th Feuerbach-theses, the term 'practice' instead of the term 'praxis' was used. In the quotation I have rendered the term as 'praxis' following Marx's own usage in the German original.

[2] Antonio Gramsci. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers. p. 330.

[3] Ibid., p. 417.

[4] Gajo Petrović. 1967. *Marx in the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Garden City, NY: Anchor. p. 133.

[5] Karl Marx. 1844. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction. In *MECW Volume 3* (pp. 175–187). p. 182.

[6] Ibid., p. 182.

Praxis Communication

For Jean-Paul Sartre, praxis is purposeful human action. He therefore argues that 'language as the practical relation of one man to another is praxis, and praxis is always language'.[7] This means that, for Sartre, language and communication are always praxis and there is no significant difference between practice and praxis. For Sartre, communication is always already praxis and does not become praxis through socialist politics. In comparison to Marx, Sartre depoliticises the concept of praxis. If all communication were praxis, then the term praxis communication would be tautological. In contrast to Sartre, the approach taken in the book at hand differentiates between practice and praxis and between communication as practice and praxis communication.

Praxis communication is a particular form of human practice that has an ethico-political character. *Praxis communication* is always *communicative practice*. But only a subset of *communicative practices* is *praxis communication*. Communication is not automatically good. It is not automatically a means to question domination. Communication is a practice through which humans create and reproduce social relations. They do so by using symbols and interacting symbolically. In communication, humans make meaning of each other's behaviour and utterances. But this mutual referencing does not imply that the participants in a conversation necessarily agree or understand each other. Social struggles and political action can transform communicative practice into praxis communication. Praxis communication takes place within democratic-socialist organisations, groups or structures, or aims at the establishment of such humanist structures. *Praxis communication* is not about society as it is, but about how we can achieve an actual, true society that corresponds to human needs and develops all human potentials so that all benefit.

Activists use communication technologies such as the Internet to challenge exploitation and domination. Alternative online news media such as Democracy Now! or Alternet and digital commons projects such as Wikipedia or Creative Commons question the capitalist character of digital media. Besides such alternative civil society Internet projects there are also potentials for the development of public service Internet platforms. Civil society and public service Internet platforms challenge the corporate Internet giants. They want to create a commons-based, non-commercial, non-profit Internet.

Neither technology nor individual people can radically transform communications so that capitalist communication are transcended and replaced by communication commons. Such a change requires critical individuals who organise politically and engage in class struggles about the character of communications

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[7] Jean-Paul Sartre. 1960/2004. *Critique of Dialectical Reason. Volume One: Theory of Practical Ensembles.* London: Verso. p. 99.

and society. A commons-based society and commons-based technologies can only be achieved by human praxis.

Class struggles in capitalism are a conflict between capital and labour that is expressed in particular practices. It is labour's objective interest to sublate the conflict between the opposing interests of capital and labour so that a classless society emerges, whereas it is the objective interest of capital to uphold the class conflict. There are mechanisms such as lay-offs, rationalisation, strikes, outsourcing, wage negotiations, etc. that do not sublate, but mediate the class conflict. The mediation of the class antagonism only temporarily settles the conflict either more in the interest of labour or of capital. But given that the interests of capital and labour are polar opposites, the class conflict cannot be overcome by mediation. In contrast, the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of the class conflict creates a new whole that eliminates class structures, lifts the individuals to a new existence in a class society, and thereby constitutes a qualitative difference.

Figure 14.1 presents a model that situates the role that communication and communication technologies play in protests and struggles in a broad context.

Protests are based on the structure of society, especially society's economic, political, and cultural contradictions. These contradictions result from particular forms of domination that bring about societal problems. As a consequence, there are phases when societies enter crises. A crisis is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the emergence of protests. There are economic, political, and cultural/ideological crises. If such crises interact and converge, then a
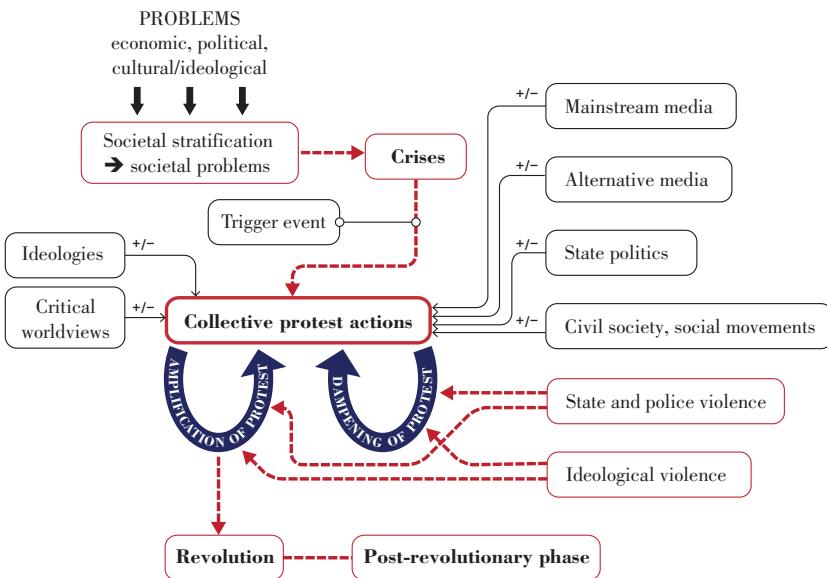
Figure 14.1: A model of praxis communication in social struggles.

crisis of society as a whole emerges. For protests to emerge, there must be public recognition of the existence of society's problems, and a significant number of people need to be convinced that these problems can no longer to tolerated and that society needs to be changed. Protests and social movements often emerge from trigger events. Examples are the emergence of the US civil rights movement after the arrest of Rosa Parks, the emergence of the 2011 Tunisian protests after Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation following harassment by public officials, the triggering of the 2011 Egyptian revolution by the police's killing of Khaled Mohamed Saeed, or the emergence of the 2013 Gezi protests after police violence against the occupiers of Taksim Square in Istanbul.

It is precisely in such situations that emotions such as anger, class hatred, socialist love, and hope play a role in the potential transition from crises to protests. Subjective perceptions and emotions are, however, not the only factor, because protests are conditioned and influenced by politics, the media and culture/ideology. The way state politics, mainstream media and ideology, on the one hand, and oppositional politics, social movements, alternative media and alternative worldviews, on the other, connect to human subjects, directly influences the conditions of protests. These factors can have rather amplifying, rather neutral, or rather dampening effects on protests. So, for example, racist media coverage can advance racist stereotypes and/or the insight that the right-wing media and class society are racist in themselves. In an antagonistic society such as capitalism, the means of communication have an antagonistic character. They have antagonistic impacts and effects, which means they can have multiple effects at once and in general either intensify or diminish protest or not have much effect at all on the level of protest.

There can also be antagonisms and power struggles between various media, such as between capitalist media and non-commercial media. But the media is certainly not the only domain of society that shapes protests. There are also other aspects of the economy, politics, and ideology/culture that shape and influence the conditions under which protests emerge and develop, or do not emerge. Multiple dimensions of society influence protests. Given this complexity, it cannot be calculated whether and when protests will develop. When protests emerge, the various factors and dimensions of society continue to have (often contradictory) influences on protests. And protests can also influence other domains of society. To what degree there are positive, negative, or neutral influences is not pre-determined. In antagonistic society, the state, too, often reacts to protests with police action. State violence and ideological violence (e.g. the scapegoating of protesters in tabloid media) directed against protesters influence protests in ways that are not determined. These influences can bring about the intensification or the dampening of protests, or can have no significant consequences at all.

Under certain conditions, protest can intensify in a spiral so that the movements, occupations, and demonstrations become larger and larger. The result

can, but does not have to be, a revolution. Revolution means a fundamental change of society so that the economy, politics, and culture are reconstituted and renewed. Revolutions always have post-revolutionary phases in which society needs to be reconstructed. The legacy of old conflicts and the old society can in this context pose challenges.

Communication technology in an antagonistic society, in which the class conflict and other conflicts between dominant and dominated groups matter, is likely to have a contradictory character: It does not necessarily and automatically support/amplify or dampen/limit rebellions, but rather poses contradictory potentials that stand in contradiction with influences of the state, ideology and capitalism.

The next section focuses on alternative media as critical media.

14.2. Alternative Media as Critical Media

A Model of Communication

Figure 14.2 visualises a model of the communication process.

There is a dialectic of structures and practices of communication. They produce each other mutually. The media system is a dynamic system, in which human subjects' communicative practices and communication structures stand in a productive, dialectical, mutually constitutive relationship.

In the media system, we find journalists and other media producers as subjects who make use of particular structures and technologies in order to create content
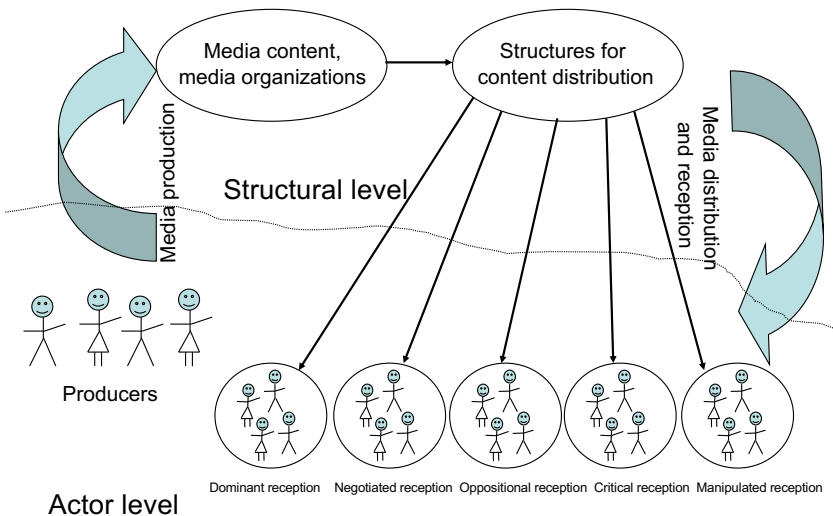
Figure 14.2: The communication process.

directed at a broad public. They want to shape the consciousness of the members of the public by informing them. Particular media contents have a more or less artistic and aesthetic, news or entertainment character. Created content needs to be organised, stored, and distributed, for which special structures and technologies are needed. Users and audiences receive and interpret distributed content.

The production, distribution, and reception of content are dialectically connected. Without reception, there is no need for further production. Produced content is not effective if it is not received and interpreted. Produced content needs distribution and reception. Reception is not just the consumption of information, but also produces meanings. Reception is consumption and production. Recipients interpret content in the context of their everyday life. What meanings they give to objects depends on their historically conditioned social contexts and experiences. Meanings are social and historical. Under different circumstances, it is likely that an object will be interpreted in different ways. Producers encode certain meanings into content. But there is no guarantee that the recipients will decode the text in the manner intended by the producers. But at the same time, decoding is not arbitrary, because there are power dynamics that influence meaning-making. Different interpretations of content can co-exist and contradict each other. There is neither a necessary convergence nor a necessary divergence of encoded and decoded meanings. Power dynamics can result in recipients reproducing hegemonic meanings. There are different forms of reception: hegemony, opposition, mixed meanings, critical reception, and manipulated reception (see chapter 5, section 5.5). There can be overlaps between first three and the latter two types of reception.

Media and communication systems are not just social systems, they are social systems that reach a wider public and are therefore part of communication processes in the public sphere. Therefore, the notion of the public sphere is important for a social theory of the media in general (see chapter 8) and therefore also for a social theory of alternative media. For their operation, media systems and organisations need producers, recipients, organisation structures, distribution structures, and contents. The communication process of the media is based on the dialectic of structures and actors.

For Stuart Hall, there are hegemonic, oppositional, and negotiated (mixed) interpretations of texts.[8] In order to avoid a relativistic approach, one must assume that there is a degree of objectivity in the communication process. An example: If anti-fascism is the dominant ideology and a message is encoded based on the dominant worldview, then fascism must be characterised as oppositional. Hall's distinction between dominant, oppositional, and negotiated

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[8] Stuart Hall. 1973. *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse. Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Papers #5.* Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

meanings is too restrictive and relativistic. Hence the notion of critical reception/consciousness is added in figure 14.2.

A critical interpretation or meaning is an insight that enables the individual to put domination and exploitation into question and to develop models of society that focus on advancing benefits for all. A co-operative society is the true and essential form of society and human existence. Manipulation tries to advance interpretations that are a form of false consciousness, i.e. that do not put into question exploitation and domination, but rather foster and legitimate class structures and structures of domination in general. Critical and manipulated decoding/interpretation/consciousness are particular forms of consciousness.

The model shown in figure 14.2 has a structural level and an actor level. These two levels interact. Information workers are located on the actor level. They produce content that is publicly communicated. Actors involved in the communication process include journalists, other media workers, and audiences. Media structures include, for example, institutions, products, and technologies used for the production, distribution, and reception of content. Production is the basis for distribution and reception. Distribution and reception in turn are the foundation of further production. In the media system there is a dialectical, dynamic process, where actors and structures interact with each other.

Alternative Media, Critical Media

Alternative media are media that challenge the dominant capitalist forms of media production, media structures, content, distribution, and reception. Table 14.1 is based on figure 14.1. It gives a comparative overview of potential characteristics of alternative media. Not all of these characteristics are necessarily qualities of or conditions for the existence of alternative media. The model shows an ideal-type with a maximum number of characteristics. The central aspects are media producers, recipients, and practices of producers and recipients on the actor level; products, organisations, and distribution structures on the structural level.

In antagonistic societies, we find antagonistic media that at the same time have potentials to advance emancipation and domination. In capitalism, the media always to a certain degree have a repressive character: They sell commodities and distribute ideologies. But the media also have potentials for alternative organisational forms and the distribution of critical content. Such potentials often remain marginal. They do not automatically come into existence, because alternative media face structural inequalities in the capitalist media system. Only social struggles can improve the structural conditions that can help realise such potentials of alternative media. Media and communication are embedded in society's totality and therefore also within social struggles.

Table 14.1: Potential dimensions of traditional and critical media.

Dimension	Capitalist Media	Alternative Media
Media production	**Elite media producers:** journalists and other media producers as a professional wage-labour class that is confronted with corporate and political pressures, media production is conditioned by power	**Citizens' media producers:** independence of media production from corporate and political influences and pressures, true journalistic freedom, ordinary citizens as journalists and media producers, citizen-controlled journalism, individuals or groups that are affected by certain problems become journalists/producers or at least the positive subject of reports, journalistic practice as part of protest movement praxis, consumers as producers (prosumers), active audiences
Media product structures	**Ideological Form and Content:** content is strictly defined by what is considered as popular and sellable. The drive for profit can result in a lack of quality, complexity, and sophistication (as e.g. the case in Yellow Journalism that simplifies reality and is focused on singular examples, emotionalism, and sensationalism). Content takes on an ideological form either by the manipulative reporting of reality or by reporting stories as important that aren't really important for society at large. In any case, such content aims to distract the recipients from confrontation with actual societal problems and their causes.	**Critical Form and Content:** oppositional content that provides alternatives to dominant perspectives that reflect the rule of capital, patriarchy, racism, sexism, nationalism, etc. Such content expresses oppositional standpoints that question all forms of heteronomy and domination. Forms of counter-information and counter-hegemony include the voices of the excluded, oppressed, dominated, enslaved, estranged, exploited One goal is to give voices to the voiceless and media power to the powerless, as well as to overcome filtering and censorship of information by corporate information monopolies, state monopolies, or cultural monopolies in public information and communication. There are forms of presentation that are not one-dimensional, but that make demands of the recipients and challenge them in order to advance their imagination and complex, critical thinking (e.g. Brecht's concept of dialectical form in epic theatre, radical discontinuities that shock people).

(Contd.)

Table 14.1: *(Continued).*

Dimension	Capitalist Media	Alternative Media
Organisational Media structures	**Hierarchical media organisations:** organisational media structures: Capitalist media corporations that aim primarily at making profit, financed by selling content to audiences and/or by advertisements. There is private ownership of media corporations and there are hierarchical structures with a clear power differential that creates influential decision-making actors and less influential roles as well as a division of labour within media organisations.	**Grassroots media organisations:** there is collective ownership and inclusive decision-making by those who work in the organisation, symmetric power distribution and economic self-management. There is a focus on non-commercial, non-profit media that are not financed by advertisements or commodity sale, but by donations, public funding, private resources, or no cost strategies. The division of labour is sublated: the roles of authors, designers, publishers, printers and distributors overlap.
Distribution structures	**Marketing and public relations:** high-tech distribution, marketing and public relations departments, specialists and strategies, sales departments, advertisements, distribution contracting.	**Alternative distribution:** technologies that allow easy and cheap reproduction, strategies like anti-copyright, free access (open access), or open content allow content to be freely shared, copied, distributed or changed. Furthermore, there are alternative distributors or alternative institutions (e.g. alternative book stores or libraries) that focus on the distribution of alternative titles.
Reception practices	**Manipulated reception:** content is interpreted in ways that contribute to false consciousness	**Critical reception:** content is interpreted in ways that allow the recipients to question domination

Table 14.2: Potential dimensions of traditional and critical media.

Dimension	Capitalist Media	Alternative Media
Media Production	Elite media producers	Citizens' media producers
Media product structures	Ideological form and content	Critical form and content
Organisational media Structures	Hierarchical media organisations, commodity form	Grassroots media organisations with collective ownership
Distribution structures	Marketing and public relations	Alternative distribution
Reception practices	Manipulated reception	Critical reception

Table 14.3: Characteristics of alternative and capitalist media.

		Capitalist media	Ideal alternative media	
Media Structure	**Economic form of media products**	Media product as commodity	Non-commercial media product, non-profit	
	Content of media products	Ideological content	Critical content	
Media Actors	**Consumers**	Many consumers	Critical consumers	Critical prosumers
	Producers	Few producers	Critical producers	

We need to decentre the media, which means that technological determinism and a neglect of the influence of society on the media should be avoided.

Alternative media question the capitalist organisation of media production, organisation, content, distribution, reception and structures. Table 14.2 provides a summary of the model outlined in table 14.1. Table 14.3 provides another version, where the dimensions are ordered a bit differently.

In elite media production, there are journalists and other media producers who are wage-workers. They face pressures from corporations and political organisations. Power shapes and influences media production. Professional media workers also have their own professional ethics and often compete for the accumulation of status. In citizen media, the producers are independent from the power of corporations and political organisations. Everyday citizens can become media producers. Citizens and workers control the media organisations. Those affected by society's problems are present in media reports and content. And they themselves can act as media producers. Alternative media are also often part of social movements. In alternative media, consumers are producers of the media.

Traditional media often produce and disseminate ideology. The published content is mostly shaped by sales perspectives. Commercial media's profit orientation can result in oversimplified, low quality and one-dimensional content. So, for example, tabloid media often simplify reality and use sensationalism. Media content is ideological if it distorts reality or focuses on issues that are presented as important, but distract attention from the focus on problems that are truly relevant for society.

Critical media's content and form are critical. Its content challenges domination, exploitation, capitalism, patriarchy, ideology, racism, sexism, nationalism, etc. Such critical counter-hegemonic information expresses the voices of those who are alienated, exploited, oppressed, enslaved, or excluded. Critical media give voice to the voiceless. They provide communication power for the powerless. They aim at overcoming the censorship and filtering of communication brought about by information monopolies controlled by corporations, the state or cultural organisations. Critical media question one-dimensional forms of

presentation. They use forms that enhance complex thought and imagination. An example is Brecht's dialectical, epic theatre.

Capitalist media yield profit by selling access, advertising, content, or technologies as commodities and exploiting communication labour. Such media corporations are privately owned and have a division of responsibilities and labour so that some take all the important decisions and others merely execute labour based on these decisions.

Grassroots media are organisational alternatives to capitalist and hierarchical media. Such organisations are collectively owned; they operate by participatory decision-making, which means that those working in the organisation take collective decisions. Such organisations are forms of economic self-management, where power is more symmetrically distributed. Grassroots media are not-for-profit and often do not sell advertisements or other commodities, but rely on donations, public funding, private resources, low-cost-strategies or no-cost-strategies. There is no rigid division of labour in grassroots organisations; the roles workers have overlap.

Traditional media use marketing, public relations, advertising, branding and high-tech in the process of distribution. Alternative media are open to different strategies, including low-tech and DIY technologies, open access and open content, anti-copyright, free access, etc. There are also alternative distributors that focus on the distribution of critical media. Examples are radical publishers and alternative book stores.

In the reception of information, critical and manipulated reception are two of the ways in which audiences interpret content. Manipulated reception means forms of interpretation that help to create or reproduce false consciousness. In contrast, critical reception means that content is interpreted in ways that make audiences question exploitation and domination. An interpretation of form or content is critical if the audiences are empowered to develop ideas about how to foster a co-operative society.

The models shown in tables 14.1, 14.2, and 14.3 describe ideal-type alternative media. Under ideal conditions, all of the dimensions of alternative media can be realised, including self-managed organisations, and widely available and widely consumed critical content that is critically interpreted and brings about change in society, including animating citizens to become alternative media producers. Ideal-type alternative media work best under conditions that provide citizens with the resources, time, and skills needed for them to participate in the public sphere. If critical media flourish under such conditions, then the division between media production and media consumption disappears. Grassroots media then become the standard form of media. Such conditions cannot be created within a capitalist society, but rather require the creation of a society of co-operation and the commons that is governed in the form of a participatory democracy.

Prefigurative politics assumes that alternatives to capitalism can already be established within capitalism. Prefigurative politics also believes that within

a capitalist framework, alternatives can operate relatively autonomously from capitalist structures. Alternative media, however, often face the problem of resource precarity and voluntary, self-exploitative, precarious labour. This type of media should therefore not be idealised. Self-managed organisations are not always politically progressive. It is perfectly possible for self-managed media to advance fascist or other repressive contents. A communication system must at least have critical content or critical form in order to be an alternative medium. In cases where audiences critically interpret repressive content published in traditional media, one cannot speak of alternative media, only of alternative reception. Certain parts of mainstream media can at times have critical content. The minimum condition for defining a medium as critical is that it is a critical product. But of course, it is desirable that as many dimensions of alternative media as possible can be realised. In capitalism, it is, however, difficult to reach all of these desirable aspects of alternative media. If one rigidly focuses on all dimensions, then one assumes that an alternative society can already be created within capitalism without abolishing structures of exploitation and inequalities. Citizen journalism, self-managed organisation, alternative distribution channels, and critical reception practices are desirable, but not necessary, features of alternative media. Critical content and critical form (= critical media products) constitute alternative media's necessary features. Alternative media are critical media.

Types of Critical Media

By using the method of advancing from the abstract to the concrete, we can identify subtypes of critical media. We will now introduce a typology that presents different forms of critical media (see table 14.4). The typology is based on the following questions: (1) what parts of the body are predominantly used in media production and reception; (2) is communication synchronous or asynchronous; (3) does communication take place spatially over a distance, or in the presence of the other communicators.

Given that critical form and critical content are decisive for the alternative character of the media, one cannot argue that all community-produced, non-commercial, 'free', independent, self-managed, self-organised, etc. media are alternative, although many of them are because they feature critical content. They are more likely to be critical than conventional media, but they are not automatically critical.

The key feature on which the typology is built is the notion of critical products that have critical content and critical form. Alternative media, like critical media, are critical products, which means that they have critical form and/or critical content. There can be critical form without critical content and vice versa. Critical form and critical content can also occur together. In artworks such as films, music, concerts, literature, theatre, visual arts or digital arts, form

Table 14.4: A typology of alternative media.

Communication	Production	Reception	Formats	Time	Space	Alternative media	Examples
Print/visual communication	Brain, hands	Brain, eyes	Newspaper, journal, books, pamphlets, leaflet, comics, satirical prints, flyers, visual art, graffiti, dress, textiles, pins, buttons, stickers, murals, etc.	Asynchronous	Distance	Alternative press, critical art	*Jacobin, Mother Jones, Oz, Bay Guardian, The Nation, Le Monde Diplomatique, New Statesman, Fifth Estate, Class War*; Duane Hanson, Joseph Beuys
Audio communication	Brain, mouth	Brain, ears	Radio, telephone	Synchronous	Distance	Free radio, independent radio, community radio, pirate radio	Pacifica Radio Network, KPFA Berkeley, KPFK Los Angeles, KPFT Houston, WBAI New York, WPFW Washington DC, National Federation of Community Broadcasters, Grassroots Radio Coalition
Audio communication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, ears	Face-to-face communication, Conversation, talks, lectures, singing songs	Synchronous	Presence	Radical singing, protest singing	'Oh, freedom' (abolitionism), 'We Shall Overcome',
Audio communication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, ears, body	Concerts, choir, dancing	Synchronous	Presence	Alternative music concerts, protest song concerts	Alternative music, recorded protest songs

Communication type	Production organs	Reception organs	Medium/technology	Time	Space	Alternative form	Examples
Audio communication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, ears, body	Sound recordings (records, music cassettes, CD, MP3, etc)	Asynchronous	Distance	Alternative music, recorded protest songs	Mogwai, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Billy Bragg, Robert Wyatt, 'The Preacher and the Slave' (Joe Hill, socialist), 'Bombtrack' (Rage against the Machine, social justice), 'Sound of Da Police' (KRS-One, anti-racism), 'Kill the Poor' (Dead Kennedys)
Audio-visual communication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Theatre, performance, happening	Synchronous	Presence	Critical theatre	Youth International Theatre (guerrilla-theatre), Brecht's epic theatre
Audio-visual communication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Film, video	Asynchronous	Distance	Critical television, independent cinema, underground film, avant-garde film, amateur videos	Democracy Now!, Crash (Paul Haggis, 2004); films by Jean-Luc Godard, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Andy Warhol
Audio-visual communication	Brain, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Live television	Synchronous	Distance	Public access television	Manhattan Neighborhood Network
Multimedia, computer, Internet communication	Brain, hands, mouth, body	Brain, eyes, ears	Digital text, digital audio, digital video, real time text/audio/video chat, online radio, online TV, wikis, blogs, Internet art, etc	Synchronous or asynchronous	Distance	Alternative online media	Novara Media, Young Turks, The Canary, Another Angry Voice, Indymedia, Alternet

is of particular relevance. Art exists through is aesthetic appearance. It is critical if it is non-identical with society and strengthens imagination. Its content is therefore not directly critical. Art's critique lives through its form and art's non-identity with society. But there is of course also critical political art that not only works at the level of form, but also at the level of content that is directly critical of domination and exploitation.

14.3. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main conclusions:

- There is no pre-defined role of communication technologies in social struggles. Because capitalism is an antagonistic society, communication technologies often have an antagonistic role in this society.
- There are potentials for alternative media as critical media to challenge the capitalist organisation of the communication system. Providing access to critical forms and critical content is one of the foundations for critical debate, critical engagement, and critical consciousness.
- Critical media and the use of communications as tools of emancipatory struggles are forms of praxis communication.
- Alternative media face certain structural limits in capitalist society. The history of alternative media is a history of resource precarity and voluntary, self-exploitative labour. Alternative media therefore need to be complemented by public service media as alternatives to capitalist media. Alternative media require public sources of funding in order to be able to constitute a strong counter-public sphere.
- In capitalism, the class struggle is not only between capital and labour, but in the realm of communication also between capitalist media on the one side and commons-based, alternative, critical, and public media on the other side.
- Strengthening critical media must be part of any progressive political agenda.

CHAPTER 15

Conclusion: Advancing a Dialectical, Humanist, Critical Theory of Communication and Society

This chapter draws overall conclusions from the preceding fourteen chapters of this book. For this purpose, the approach taken in this work is compared to Habermas' theory of communicative action (15.1). Various metaphors of communication are discussed (15.2 & 15.3), and some key results are summarised (15.4).

15.1. Habermas' Dualisms

Habermas' theory of communicative action is a necessary reference and starting point, but not the end point of any critical theory of communication. In the middle of the 1970s, Habermas formulated foundations of the theory of communicative action as a reconstruction of historical materialism. 'But we now have to separate the level of communication from the level of instrumental and strategic action that are combined in societal co-operation'.[1] Habermas argues that for Marx the material synthesis of human activities in society takes place through labour. In contrast, he relates 'the materialist concept of synthesis likewise to the accomplishments of instrumental action and the nexuses of communicative action'.[2] 'On the human level, the reproduction of life is determined culturally by work and interaction'.[3]

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[1] Translation from German: Jürgen Habermas. 1976. *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. p. 160.

[2] Jürgen Habermas. 1971. *Knowledge and Human Interests.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press. p. 62.

[3] Ibid., p. 196.

The problem with Habermas' reconstruction of Marx is that is destroys the dialectic by substituting Marx's dialectical ontology and epistemology for the dualisms of system/lifeworld, work/interaction, economy/culture, and instrumental/communicative action. Marx's historical materialism is dialectical. Habermas' theory of communicative action is a non-dialectical, dualistic critical theory. In his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas characterises his approach explicitly as 'dualism of the media' that 'distinguishes two sorts of media', namely 'on the one hand, steering media, via which systems are differentiated out of the lifeworld; on the other hand, generalized forms of communication, which do not replace reaching agreement in language but merely condense it, and thus remain tied to lifeworld contexts'.[4] Habermas' dualism also becomes evident in his distinction between strategic action and communicative action. He sets up a strict either/or-dualism between the two types of action: 'Rather, social actions can be distinguished according to whether the participants adopt either a success-oriented attitude [strategic action] or one oriented to reaching understanding [communicative action]'.[5]

Christian Marazzi argues that in post-Fordist capitalism, communication has entered the sphere of economic production, which has brought about the 'communicative mode of production'.[6] Habermas' separation of communication and work goes back to Hegel's philosophy. Marazzi writes that Hegel's dualism was influenced by a world of work where in the division of labour 'all activities are silent'.[7] The consequence of this dualism was the separation of instrumental and communicative action in the theories of Hegel and Habermas. 'In the light of what is happening in the 1990s, the insufficiency of Habermas' theory can hardly be denied. […] Now that communication has entered into production, the dichotomy between the instrumental and the communicative sphere has been upended'.[8] Marazzi argues that in communicative capitalism, the rise of neoliberalism has resulted in a crisis of political forms of representation that communicated political interests and demands, which includes a crisis of trade unions and democracy. At the same time, there is the 'proliferation of political self-representational forms' as well as widespread individualism.[9] 'At the peak

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[4] Jürgen Habermas. 1985. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press. p. 390.

[5] Jürgen Habermas. 1985. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press. p. 286.

[6] Christian Marazzi. *Capital and Affects: The Politics of the Language Economy.* Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e). p. 31.

[7] Ibid., p. 33.

[8] Ibid., pp. 38 & 41.

[9] Ibid., p. 42.

of the "communication society", we are paradoxically witnessing a *crisis of* communication itself'.[10]

Marazzi argues that Habermas' separation of work and communication does not reflect the reality of communicative capitalism where communication plays an important role in the economy. This circumstance is certainly true, but one should add that communication has since the start of capitalism been important in the instrumental sphere of the capitalist economy: Prices and exchange-value are the 'language of commodities';[11] capitalists and mangers communicate capitalist ideology to their employees, politicians, and the public in order to justify exploitation; advertising is the communication of product propaganda; managers communicate instructions to workers; the 20th century saw the rise of the culture industry, communication and culture take on the commodity form; etc. In capitalism, communication has a fundamentally instrumental character. Communicative reason is in capitalism to a large degree subsumed under instrumental reason.

In post-Fordist capitalism, this subsumption has, together with the diffusion of informatisation, been extended to a degree where communication labour and communication technologies have become central factors in the antagonism between the productive forces and the relations of production.

Forms of Social Action

Habermas also visualises this approach (see figure 15.1). For Habermas, strategic action is 'purposive action' that is 'primarily oriented to attaining an end' and is a form of social action.[12] In contrast, communicative action is social action 'oriented to reaching understanding' and 'a process of reaching agreement among speaking and acting subjects'.[13] The dualism that Habermas defines here implies that communication is not purposive, although reaching joint understanding of parts of the world or a joint definition of a situation is a goal in itself. In my approach, communication is a form of teleological positing that aims at (re)producing social relations.

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[10] Ibid., p. 43.
[11] Karl Marx. 1867. *Capital Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 143.
[12] Ibid., p. 285.
[13] Ibid., pp. 286–287.

Social Actions

Communicative Action   Strategic Action

Action Oriented Toward   Consensual   Concealed Strategic Action   Open Strategic Action
Reaching Understanding   Action

Unconscious Deception   Conscious Deception
(Systematically   (Manipulation)
Distorted Communication)
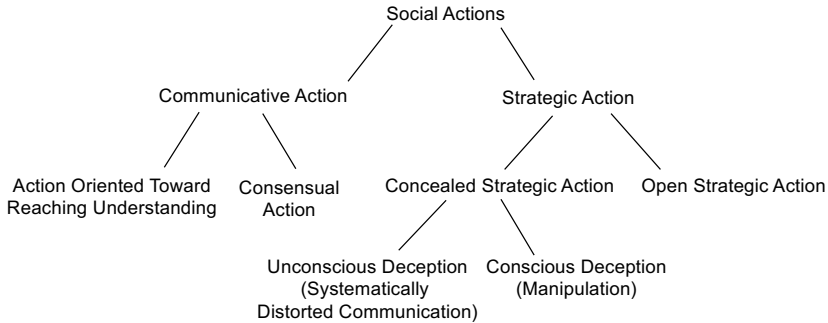
Figure 15.1: The dualistic logic of Habermas' theory of communicative action.[14]

Three Forms of Rationality

For Habermas, communicative action is neither purposive nor teleological. In an essay written in the middle of the 1990s Habermas identifies three forms of rationality: Epistemic rationality is oriented on knowledge, teleological rationality is oriented on achieving purposes, communicative rationality is oriented on understanding.[15] Strategic action would use language, but wouldn't be communicative, but rather oriented toward consequences.[16] According to Habermas, the three types of rationality interact in discourse, but 'do not for their part appear to have common roots'.[17] This means that Habermas also argues here in a relativistic and dualistic manner because no common ground of the three forms of rationality is identified. He advances a multi-factor analysis of rationality where there are three independent roots of rationality that do not have a common rationality. Knowledge, purposes, and understanding are products of thought, action, and communication. Communication is a form of action. Communication and action are based on thought but have emergent qualities that make them go beyond thought. Thought and communication pursue purposes, namely the production of knowledge and understanding. Thought and communication do not stand outside of what Lukács terms teleological positing, but are specific forms of it. Habermas' separation of teleological rationality

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[14] Based on: Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, p. 333. Jürgen Habermas. 1998. *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. p. 93, footnote 2.

[15] Jürgen Habermas. 1996/1998. Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality. In Jürgen Habermas: *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, 307–342. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

[16] Ibid., p. 326.

[17] Ibid., p. 309.

from epistemic and communicative rationality falls short and does not identify a common ground of human subjectivity. In contrast, the model of teleological rationality in Lukács' ontology sees social production as the common ground of humans and society that aims at achieving particular goals.

Linguistic Communism

For Habermas, communicative action is inherently morally and politically good. Certain parallels to Habermas can be found in the works of representatives of 'linguistic communism'. Robert Merton argues that communism is an 'integral element of the scientific ethos. The substantive findings of science are a product of social collaboration and are assigned to the community. They constitute a common heritage in which the equity of the individual producer is severely limited'.[18] In Fritz Mauthner's works, we find a generalisation of Merton's argument of the communist character of science. Mauthner argues that language and communication have a communist character because they are created and used collectively: 'In language, the ultimate utopia of communism has become reality. Language is like light and the air common property. Like light and air, it is available to almost all humans (only almost all) without charge'.[19] 'Communism has become a reality in the field of language because language is not something to which one can claim ownership'.[20]

It is certainly true that it is difficult or impossible to turn language as an intellectual means of production directly into a commodity. But linguistic and symbolic products and spaces of communication can be treated and sold as commodities. Examples are books, movies, music, newspapers, computers, mobile phones, etc. So, although language and communication are in essence commons, their reality in class societies is that they are embedded into class and power relations. Like Habermas' theory of communicative action, the view that language is in essence communist is in danger of underestimating the capitalist reality of language and communication.

Pierre Bourdieu warns in this context of 'the illusion of linguistic communism' and stresses that 'one must not forget that the relations of communication [...] are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers

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[18] Robert K. Merton. 1973. *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. p. 273.

[19] Translation from German: Fritz Mauthner. 1906. *Die Sprache.* Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt Rütten & Loening. p. 87.

[20] Translation from German: Fritz Mauthner. 1921. *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache. Erster Band: Zur Sprache und zur Psychologie.* Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger. Dritte Auflage. p. 25.

or their respective groups are actualized'.[21] In capitalist societies, language is shaped by capital and power and does not stand outside of the processes of commodification, exploitation, and domination. In capitalism, essence and existence of communication diverge: The essence of language and communication is that they are common goods. Their reality in capitalism is that besides communication commons there are cultural and communicational commodities and the communication of ideology. The essence of language and communication as common goods of humanity can only become a full reality in a commons-based society.

In a commonist society, power inequalities can be better addressed, overcome, challenged, and communicated, but do not all automatically vanish. An equal distribution of power is an important goal that can only be achieved politically. In commonism, it is easier to achieve equality and freedom than in capitalism, class societies, and dominative societies.

Communicative action in a socialist society is certainly an important means for realising participatory democracy. But in a capitalist society, language and communication are to a certain degree shaped by structures of domination and instrumental reason and so cannot escape their own instrumentalisation as means of ideology and means of production in labour processes organised in class relations. Habermas has a socialist vision of language, but underestimates the ideological and class constraints that communication faces, so that we today find the dominance of class language and class communication. Given that labour in class societies is exploited by capital, a theory that disembeds communication from work and production faces the danger that the resulting dualism implies the idealist assumption that emancipation can to a certain degree be achieved through communication and in language without having to abolish the class structure.

Communication Free From Domination

In the late 1960s, Habermas argued that to make communication and discussion 'free from domination' (*herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation/Diskussion*) would mean '*removing restrictions on communication*' so that '[p]ublic, unrestricted discussion'[22] is possible, which requires 'a decreasing degree of repressiveness', 'a decreasing degree of rigidity' and 'behavioral control' that allows role distance and the application of norms that are 'accessible to reflection.'[23] In the 1971 debate between Habermas and Luhmann, and in his 1972 essay on theories

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[21] Pierre Bourdieu. 1991. *Language & Symbolic* Power. Cambridge: Polity. pp. 43 and 37.

[22] Jürgen Habermas. 1968/1989. Technology and Science as Ideology. In *Toward A Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, 81–122. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. p. 118.

[23] Ibid., p. 119.

of truth, Habermas further specifies the conditions of communication free from domination as the ideal speech situation that he sees given when the four validity claims of truth (correspondence of communication to facts), rightness (respect of norms of communication), truthfulness (open and transparent motivations and interests), and understandability (B can understand what A means and vice versa) are met.[24] For Habermas, truth and rightness can be achieved in discourse (these are discursive validity claims that are reached through arguments in a discussion), whereas truthfulness is an action-based, non-discursive validity claim, and understandability a condition of communication.[25]

   In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas no longer uses the notion of communication free from domination, but continues to use the term 'ideal speech situation' as a substitute. An ideal speech situation is given when 'the structure of their [participants'] communication […] excludes all force – […] except the force of the better argument'.[26] Habermas also continues to speak of 'conditions for speech free of external and internal constraints'.[27] Habermas tends to drop understandability from the validity claims, and speaks of 'three validity claims'[28] that are enabled by the 'cultural tradition' that permits 'differentiated validity claims'.[29] In volume two of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas characterises the external constraints on communicative action as monetisation and bureaucratisation that colonise the lifeworld.[30]

The Dialectical Alternative: Communication as Teleological Positing

A perspective, such as the one grounded in the book at hand, that sees communication as a form of teleological positing and therefore as a form of production and work that has emergent characteristics, has the advantage over a dualist theory of communicative action that sees the communication of conflict as an aspect of class struggle and class struggle as an aspect of communication in class society. Leaving out aspects of class and labour from the analysis of communication risks advancing an ethics in class society that tries to use 'a procedure

[24] Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann. 1971. *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie – Was leistet die Systemforschung?* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. Jürgen Habermas. 1972/1984. Wahrheitstheorien. In Jürgen Habermas: *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns,* 127–183. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

[25] Habermas, Wahrheitstheorien, pp. 139, 141.

[26] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, p. 25.

[27] Ibid., p. 42.

[28] Ibid., pp. 99, 310.

[29] Ibid., 71.

[30] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason.*

of moral argumentation' to establish consensus between humans and groups who control fundamentally different amounts of property and power.[31] Discourse ethics holds that only 'those norms may claim to be valid that could meet with the consent of all affected in their role as participants in a practical discourse'.[32] The limit of this procedure is reached when dominated classes and oppressed groups agree to and justify exploitation and domination in consensus with ruling groups and the ruling class. The problem of discourse ethics is that it only focuses on ethical consensus and can thereby not conceive of ethics in class society as a form of intellectual ethico-political struggle that unveils ideologies, defines socialist perspectives and challenges instrumental reason. Discourse ethics in a class society has to take on the form of the public critique of domination and exploitation. Critical theory is based on a dialectic of theory and praxis.

The emancipatory dimension and the advantage of Habermas' theory is that he stresses the necessity for and the possibility of overcoming instrumental reason. He sees culture and discourse as determining truth and rightness. Ideology means communication, in which claims are made that do not correspond to reality in order to justify domination. The lack of truth and truthfulness is a matter of ideology. Whether communication is true and truthful is not simply an individual decision, because ideology depends on societal structures, i.e. on class and power structures and practices that shape, but do not absolutely determine individuals', classes' and groups' consciousness. The rightness of communication depends on the broader cultural norms of society, groups, organisations, and institutions. These norms are simultaneously dependent on and relatively independent from society's class structure.

Validity Claims of Communication

With his notion of the colonisation of the lifeworld, Habermas takes adequately into account how commodification (of labour-power, goods and services, including the commodity forms of the commercial media, advertising and capitalist consumer culture) and bureaucracy limit democratic, participatory communication. So, the external constraints of communication are well defined in Habermas' approach. The problem is, however, that he conceives of truth, truthfulness, and rightness as internal validity claims of communication and does not give much attention to understandability. Ideology is the major blind-spot of his approach. Inequalities of education, class status, income, wealth, influence, reputation, and ownership (including media ownership), as well as dominant ideologies, influence humans' capacities for communication and debate, the probability that they will be heard and taken seriously by

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[31] Jürgen Habermas. 1990. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. p. 197.
[32] Ibid., p. 197.

others, and the truth, truthfulness, rightness, and understandability of communication. Although a certain internal degree of individual choice exists in respect to communication's validity claims, there is a strong shaping and conditioning of communication by class structures, governance, state power, bureaucracy, and ideology. Habermas' communicative action is a socialist utopia that requires the creation of economic, political, and cultural commons as its precondition.

Habermas' theory is an important contribution to the critical understanding of communication, but is not sufficient for grounding an emancipatory perspective that is directed against capitalist society. It is not surprising that Habermas evaluates the 1968 student movement as a 'misleading total perspective'.[33] Certain positions that Habermas voiced in respect to Rudi Dutschke and the student movement, such as the claim that agitation replaced the position of discussion in the student movement,[34] resulted in the German Left's heavy criticisms of Habermas.[35] For example, Wolfgang Abendroth, who supervised Habermas' habilitation thesis that was successfully defended in 1961 at the University of Marburg, wrote: 'There is the danger that Habermas' belief that institutional reforms cannot be achieved through struggle but only by convincing those in power, becomes a fetish'.[36] Critical theory's emancipatory analyses have the potential to inform social struggles and protest movements' praxis. And conversely, critical theory draws on and learns from the experiences of such struggles.

Dialectical, Materialist, Humanist Critical Theory of Communication

The book at hand transcends Habermas by having elaborated foundations of a dialectical, materialist, humanist critical theory of communication, where the economic/the non-economic, production/communication, economy/culture, object/subject, labour/ideology, class/domination are dialectical, i.e. identical and non-identical at the same time. Communication does not exist outside of the economy and purposive action, but is a particular form of teleological positing

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[33] Übersetzung aus dem Deutschen: Jürgen Habermas. 1969/1989. The Movement in Germany: A Critical Perspective. In *Toward A Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, 31–49. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. p. 32.

[34] Ibid., p. 198.

[35] Oskar Negt, ed. 1968. *Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas*. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.

[36] Übersetzung aus dem Deutschen: Wolfgang Abendroth. 1968. Demokratisch-liberale oder revolutionär-sozialistische Kritik? Zum Konflikt zwischen den studentischen Oppositionen und Jürgen Habermas. In *Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas*, edited by Oskar Negt, 131–142. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt. p. 141.

through which humans (re)produce sociality and society (see chapter 4). In Habermas' theory, communication exists outside of the economy, whereas in the approach taken in this book communication is both the production of communication and communication in production (see chapter 4). Hence, it is economic and non-economic at the same time.

Other than in Habermas' approach, purposive action is not separated from communicative action, but rather instrumental and co-operative, commons-based action are conceived as two forms of action with a purpose (teleological positing/action). The two types of action stand in an antagonistic dialectical relationship that constitutes the difference between class/dominative society and a commonist society. This antagonism translates into antagonisms in the realms of the economy, politics and culture (society's three realms of production). Politics and culture are grounded in the economy because humans produce politics and culture. For example, there are cultural workers who create cultural goods, which means that culture operates in the economy and the economy in culture. At the same time, there are distinct features of both culture and the economy.

Communication does not form, as in Habermas' theory, the emancipatory, critical side of social antagonisms, but is in class societies rather itself antagonistic and shaped by the antagonism between instrumental reason and co-operative, commons-based reason. Society's antagonisms were especially discussed in chapters 4 and 8. Figure 15.2 provides a summary that shows the ethico-onto-epistemological features of the approach taken in this book. There is a clear difference to Habermas' approach that is visualised in figure 15.1.
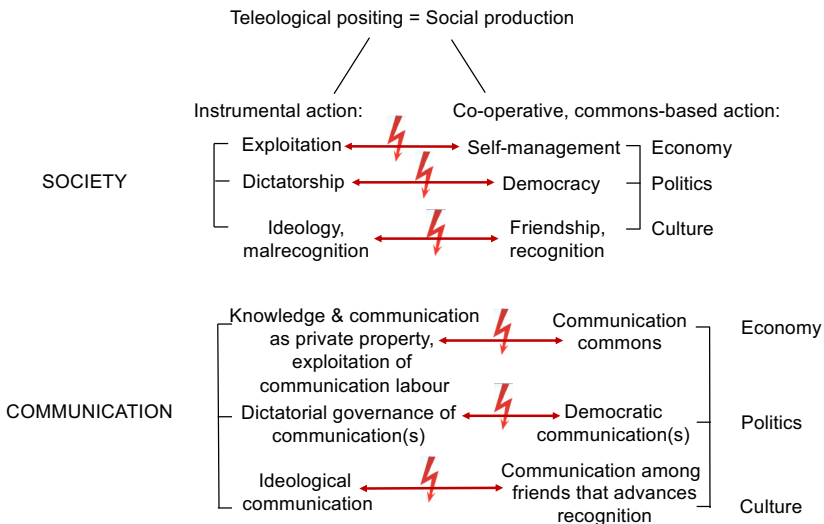
Figure 15.2: The dialectical logic of the critical theory of communication outlined in this book.

To ground a synthesis of society through knowledge and communication, Habermas departs from the framework of Marx's theory and Hegel's dialectical philosophy and integrates aspects of Kant's philosophy, pragmatism, constructivism, and speech act theory, especially the works of George Herbert Mead, Jean Piaget, and John Searle. The approach taken in this book is based on the insight that there is a rich tradition in Marxist theory on which we can build and from which we can dialectically reconstruct certain moments in order to ground foundations of a dialectical, critical theory of communication. My works on communication theory aim to show that the tradition of socialist humanism is especially well suited for such a dialectical reconstruction.

Habermas argues that in the theory of Lukács and, based on him, also in the theories of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse there is 'the lack of a clearly demarcated object domain like the communicative practice of the everyday lifeworld in which rationality structures are embodied and processes of reification can be traced'.[37] Habermas understands his theory as the take up and reformulation of 'the problematic of reification […] in terms of communicative action, on the one hand, and […] the formation of subsystems via steering media, on the other'.[38]

Habermas overlooks that foundations of a Marxist theory of communication can be reconstructed from elements of works by Lukács and other humanist Marxists, so that it is not necessary to resort primarily to bourgeois theories.[39] The lack of engagement with the rich tradition of Marxist theory has contributed to its marginalisation. Important elements for a reconstruction of a critical theory of communication can often be found in the less well-known works

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[37] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, p. 382.

[38] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, p. 399.

[39] See: Georg Lukács. 1984. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 1. Halbband. Georg Lukács Werke Band 13*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. Georg Lukács. 1986. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband. Georg Lukács Werke Band 13*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. Georg Lukács. 1963. *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen. 2. Halbband. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 12*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. pp. 11–192. Zur Diskussion der Relevanz von Lukács für eine kritische Theorie der Kommunikation siehe u.a.: Christian Fuchs. 2016. *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet*. London: University of Westminster Press. Chapter 1: Georg Lukács as a Communications Scholar: Cultural and Digital Labour in the Context of Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being* (pp. 47–73). Christian Fuchs. 2018. Towards A Critical Theory of Communication with Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann. *Javnost – The Public* 25 (3): 265–281.

of Marxist humanists, such as Lukács' *Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*, to which Habermas and other theorists have not given attention.

15.2. Metaphors of Communication

In his book *Communication: A Post-Discipline*, Silvio Waisbord identifies six metaphors of communication that he sees as characteristic of different understandings of communication and different traditions in communication studies:[40]

- communication as technology-enabled connection,
- communication as dialogue,
- communication as expression,
- communication as information,
- communication as persuasion,
- communication as symbolic interaction.

Waisbord argues that scholars in communication studies share a commitment to the study of communication, but disagree on how to understand communication, which is why communication studies is a fragmented and hyper-specialised field. 'Ontological differences explain why communication was born a fragmented field. […] There is no unified field because there is no coherent and shared vision of communication'.[41] According to Waisbord, the various specialised areas within communication studies draw severally on each of the six understandings of communication.[42]

Silvio Waisbord argues that 'grand theorizing' of communication is 'completely utopian today'[43] because scholars have adapted to exist in their academic niches and do not have an interest in integration; there is no institutional support for such an integration or grand theories: '[t]heoretical bridge-building, a nice sounding endeavour, does not have too many engineers, sponsors, or users', and such endeavours require complex skills.[44]

In neoliberal capitalism, communication studies and academia in general are certainly highly specialised. This does not mean, however, that one should give in to the logic of the instrumentalisation, specialisation, and commodification of research, but rather against all odds build critical alternatives. Philosophy,

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[40] Silvio Waisbord. 2019. *Communication: A Post-Discipline*. Cambridge: Polity. pp. 25–47.

[41] Ibid., pp. 39 & 41.

[42] Ibid., pp. 48–51.

[43] Ibid., p. 73.

[44] Ibid., p. 72.

meta-theories, grand theories, universal theories, and critical theories of communication might not be able to convince everyone and do not have to embrace all perspectives to the same degree. Building critical theories of communication is important, however, because it challenges the predominant instrumental character of communication studies, analyses the larger roles of communication in society, shows how communication stands in the context of domination and power, and enables a connection to activism and social movements that try to struggle for a better society. Struggles for a better society need critical theories, including critical communication theories that can inspire critical perspectives and visions of communication and society that go beyond instrumental reason.

Silvio Waisbord writes that because communication studies emerged at the interstices of multiple disciplines, it 'has been historically less concerned with disciplinary boundaries than the traditional disciplines'.[45] He says that communication studies is a post-discipline that is in principle rather open for trans-disciplinary co-operation. He argues that focusing communication research on 'big, cross-cutting questions', namely global problems such as social inequality, misinformation, climate change, digital dystopias, racism, sexism, etc., has the potential to build bridges within and beyond communication studies and between different branches of communication studies.[46] He in this context stresses that critical studies are a tradition that has focused on such problems.[47] Paraphrasing C. Wright Mills, he calls for a 'communication imagination'[48] that brings together communication scholars 'around big theoretical knots and real-world problems'.[49]

What Waisbord does not say is that the urgent task of scholars focusing on studying global capitalist society's big, global problems cannot and should not simply embrace all types of knowledge and all approaches to the same extent, because some of them are instrumental in the creation, legitimation, and reproduction of these problems. Creating knowledge that contributes to the solution of the world's global problems needs to be organised in projects of critical theories and critical research that create critical knowledge, foster a unity in diversity of critical approaches, and are opposed to instrumental reason and instrumental research, i.e. approaches that are part of the causes of the global problems that threaten the survival of humankind.

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[45] Ibid., p. 130.
[46] Ibid., p. 139.
[47] Ibid., p. 149.
[48] Ibid., p. 150.
[49] Ibid., p. 152.

Klaus Krippendorff discusses six metaphors that are frequently used in communication theories for characterising information and communication:[50]

- communication as container (e.g. input/output- and black box theories of information and communication),
- communication as channel/conduit (e.g. the hypodermic needle model of communication, the two-step flow of communication model),
- communication as transmission (e.g. Shannon and Weaver's mathematical theory of communication),
- communication as control (e.g. behaviourism, strategic communication theories),
- communication as war (e.g. theories of information war, psychological warfare, net wars, cyberwars), and
- communication as dance.

We can add further metaphors:

- communication as gate (e.g. gatekeeper theories of communication) or mirror (e.g. theories of information and communication as reflection),
- communication as machine (e.g. cybernetic theories of communication),
- communication as computer (e.g. the computer metaphor of the brain in cognitive science),
- communication as game (e.g. game theory)
- communication as organism (e.g. radical constructivism)
- communication as individual (e.g. methodological individualism),
- communication as network/plant/rhizome (e.g. Deleuze or theories of the network society),
- communication as theatre/stage (e.g. Goffman's theory of the self and social interaction),
- communication as ritual (e.g. James Carey's model of communication as culture and ritual),
- communication as environment/nature (e.g. media ecology),
- communication as motorways/streets (e.g. 'information superhighway'),
- communication as village/city (e.g. McLuhan's 'global village'),
- communication as wave (e.g. Alvin Toffler's theory of the information society as the third wave of society's development),
- communication as market/exchange (e.g. Hayek's concept of information), etc.

None of these metaphors, however, adequately grasps the dialectical character of communication, the way communication is embedded into the dialectics

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[50] Klaus Krippendorff. 1993/2009. Major Communication Metaphors. In *On Communicating: Otherness, Meaning, and Information*, 48–71. New York: Routledge.

of individual/society, actor/structure, chance/necessity, subject/object, continuity/change, economy/society, etc.

15.3. Towards Communication and Society as Dialectical Dancing

In chapter 3, the metaphors of the flow and the river were introduced to stress the processual and productive character of society and communication. A spontaneous and unchoreographed dance has the character of the flow of a river. 'Ideal conversations are dance-like'.[51] Bertell Ollman uses the dance as a metaphor for the dialectic.[52] He argues that the dialectic process has four steps:

1. Analyse ('one step to the left, followed by two steps to the right, then one to the left')
2. Historicise ('one step backward')
3. Visionise ('two steps forward')
4. Organise! ('one step backward, finish with a jump ["we're now on a higher level"] and repeat steps to "deepen" analysis').[53]

In society, the dialectical dance is not just a metaphor for critical analysis and emancipatory class struggles, but also a metaphor for the essence and ideal of communication. In symmetric, democratic, participatory communication, humans dynamically approach and retreat from each other as in a dance. In the dialectical dance of communication, humans take one step back by critically reflecting on what was communicated and then together jump to a higher level by together envisioning and creating the future, which fosters co-operation, community, the commons, and the public sphere.

The communicative dialectical dance is a recursive symbolic interaction taking place between at least two humans. In the communication process, humans mutually call attention to each other by producing symbols, interpret each other and mutually relate their symbolic actions to each other so that they produce or reproduce social relations, groups, organisations, institutions, society, and sociality. Communication can take place at various spatial levels: with oneself (intrapersonal communication), between two humans (interpersonal communication) or in human groups (group communication) or in organisations (organisational communication) or in local communities (local communication) or at the regional level (regional communication), in a whole society (society-wide communication, mass communication), on the international

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[51] Ibid., p. 61.
[52] Bertell Ollman. 2003. *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press. p. 169.
[53] Ibid., p. 169.

level (international communication), or on the global level (global commu-
nication). Besides these intra-level forms of communication there are also
inter-level forms of communication[54] (for example an individual communi-
cates a message to society at a whole) as well as communication systems such
as e-mail or Internet platforms that support various forms of communication
(which is why some scholars speak of mass-self-communication).[55] In com-
munication, humans use one or more of their senses (visual communication,
auditory/acoustic communication, tactile/haptic communication, olfactory
communication, taste-oriented communication).[56] Based on whether or not
media technologies are used for mediating the production, distribution, and
consumption of information, one can distinguish between various forms
of communication technologies (primary, secondary, tertiary, quaternary, and
quinary communication technologies, see chapter 6).

Ideal-type communication as dialectical dance can, as this book has shown,
only exist in the context of social relations that are free from exploitation and
domination. In true friendships, we practise communication and life as dialec-
tical dances. But the dialectical dance is not a good metaphor for social rela-
tions shaped by class and domination, where certain groups or individuals try
to instrumentalise others by exploiting them, ruling and controlling them, or by
spreading ideology that aims at reifying consciousness. The dialectical dance is
not a good metaphor for communication in general, because communication
is not independent from power structures. The dialectical dance is rather only
a good metaphor for communication that takes place in social relations or a
society that is classless and without domination. In class and dominative socie-
ties, society's and communication processes' dialectics more resemble a dance
of robots that are remotely controlled. Remote controls can always fail and run
out of battery power, which means that domination is never without alterna-
tives and can always be challenged by political praxis (see chapters 12 & 14).
But the point is that in relations of domination, dominative groups or classes
try to instrumentalise humans, communication, and society in order to enforce
their partial interests.

Whereas a commons-based society is a dialectical dance, capitalism and class
societies are more like machines and computers, i.e. a form of instrumental
dialectic, in which one side of a dialectical relation tries to impose the logic
of instrumental reason on the other side. In class societies, there is, as in all
societies, a constant dialectical flow of life, communication, and society, but
it takes on the forms of alienated life, alienated communication, and alienated

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54 Karl Erik Rosengren. 2000. *Communication: An Introduction.* London: Sage.
    pp. 51–52. See also: Denis McQuail. 2010. *McQuail's Mass Communication
    Theory.* London: Sage. Sixth edition. p. 18 (figure 1.2).
55 Manuel Castells. 2013. *Communication Power.* Oxford: Oxford University
    Press. Second edition.
56 See: Ruth Finnegan. 2014. *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human
    Communication.* London: Routledge. Second edition.

society, where the few benefit at the expense of the many. In the realm of communication, this means the production of alienated communication and the communication of alienation in the production and reproduction of society. Emancipatory struggles aim at a commons-based society, where all benefit. In a commons-based society, social relations and communication are shaped by what Erich Fromm characterises as humanist social character (see chapter 4). Such social and societal relations are not dominated by exploiters, dictators, and ideologues, but by the dialectical dances and flows of commoners, democrats and friends (see chapter 4). In a socialist society, social and societal relations take on an ubuntu-character (see chapter 12) so that humans are structurally enabled to treat others and communicate with others not in a machine-like manner, but humanely, i.e. based on the humanist insight that a human is only human through other human beings.

Metaphors of communication are not independent from society. They are metaphors of communication and society. Universal metaphors that claim to be valid for all contexts and all societies, but either conceive of communication in merely positive terms (e.g. dialogue, dance) or merely negatively (e.g. domination, control, surveillance, war), are analytical forms of fetishism: they fetishise domination by either conceiving of class and dominative societies in positive terms or by naturalising domination as essential, endless, and without history. The alternative is that we use certain metaphors for communication in class society and under conditions of domination (machines, computers, instruments), and other metaphors for socialist communication (dialectical dancing). Sociality is a fundamental feature of the human being. It is part of human essence. As a consequence, communication as dialectical dancing on the one hand refers to socialism, but on the other hand it points to the essence from which humans and their communicative relations are alienated in capitalist, class society and under the conditions of domination.

That in capitalism it is in the interest of dominant groups to organise society, humans, and communication like machines and computers does not mean that face-to-face communication is a sacred form of communication that is superior to mediated and digital communication. In a commonist society, there is a wide range of forms of communication. The point is that in such a society, there is more time and a greater possibility for humans to integrate various forms of communication and to overcome communication's dominative character.

15.4. Transcending Capitalism, Transcending Capitalist Communication

This book has outlined some foundations of a critical theory of communication. Such a theory is critical because it is a critique of capitalism, class, and domination. It is materialist because it analyses communication and society as complexes of social production. It is dialectical because it analyses the antagonisms we find in society and communication. It is focused on praxis

communication because it wants to help create critical knowledge that contributes to the creation of a commons-based society, a democratic public sphere and communication commons.

The critical theory of communication needs to engage with issues such as the relationship of the economic and the non-economic, the relationship of production and communication, the dialectic of subject and object, communication in the context of capitalism, class, commodification, and alienation, domination, communication technology fetishism, the communication society, political communication in the public sphere, ideology, nationalism, authoritarianism, and global communication.

The critical theory of communication is a negative dialectic in that it is an analytical critique of communication in the context of capitalism and domination. But society's dialectic is a determinate negation, where social struggles have the potential to produce change. The critical theory of communication therefore also needs to engage with communication in the context of social struggles and political protests and the quest and vision for alternative communications that are commons-based or public service.

There is a world beyond capitalism and beyond capitalist communication(s). Humans are social and societal beings capable of praxis. In the last instance, humans either accept their own enslavement and a media system that upholds this enslavement or struggle for democratic communications in a commons-based society.

Index

'An authoritative analysis of the role of communication in contemporary capitalism and an important contribution to debates about the forms of domination and potentials for liberation in today's capitalist society.'

Professor Michael Hardt, Duke University, co-author of the tetralogy *Empire*, *Commonwealth*, *Multitude*, and *Assembly*

'A comprehensive approach to understanding and transcending the deepening crisis of communicative capitalism. It is a major work of synthesis and essential reading for anyone wanting to know what critical analysis is and why we need it now more than ever.'

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Communication and Capitalism outlines foundations of a critical theory of communication. Going beyond Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, Christian Fuchs outlines a communicative materialism that is a critical, dialectical, humanist approach to theorising communication in society and in capitalism. The book renews Marxist Humanism as a critical theory perspective on communication and society.

The author theorises communication and society by engaging with the dialectic, materialism, society, work, labour, technology, the means of communication as means of production, capitalism, class, the public sphere, alienation, ideology, nationalism, racism, authoritarianism, fascism, patriarchy, globalisation, the new imperialism, the commons, love, death, metaphysics, religion, critique, social and class struggles, praxis, and socialism.

Fuchs renews the engagement with the questions of what it means to be a human and a humanist today and what dangers humanity faces today.

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