Summaries

Andreas Boes & Tobi Kämpf: Informatization and Emancipation: The Dialectics of the Economics of Information

The rise of the internet stands for a leap in the development of productive forces and a new stage of capitalism, comparable to the emergence of 'large-scale industry' in the 19th century. The information space has become a fundamental sphere of society and the basic infrastructure of economy and work. Critical analyses have so far mainly focused on the hazards of this transformation with its new forms of domination. Taking a dialectical perspective, Boes and Kämpf, by contrast, argue that the leap in the development of productive forces should also be seen as an opportunity as it may contribute to a revitalization of the project of emancipation. In order to understand the current upheavals in the mode of production, Boes and Kämpf develop the concept of informatization as it allows them to avoid the technicism inherent in popular idioms such as 'digitalization'. Through this new concept, Boes and Kämpf analyse the contradictions emerging within the new 'information economy' and discuss the emancipatory chances that arise in the tension zone between productive forces and relations of production.

René Bohnstingl: Creation of Value by means of Prosumption? Possibilities and Limitations of a Theory of Prosumption within the Marxian Critique of Political Economy

The article draws attention to the concept of *prosumption* within the framework of Marxian theory. Due to a monopoly-capital mode of production and the accompanied development of sales promotions, a new valorization process emerged. In this process, individuals produce value and surplus value for commercial capital while simultaneously consuming and reproducing themselves. These processes of *prosumption* can be considered to have gained additional relevance with the rise of digital social media through which users produce data commodities during their leisure time. Bohnstingl argues that although production, reproduction and consumption can coincide in spatial and temporal terms, they should be distinguished as societal functions within the capitalist mode of production. Not only is it necessary to differentiate among them for consistency within the Marxian value theory of labour, but their separation is posited by the relations of production within capitalism. *Prosumption* may therefore describe modes of production outside the capitalist one but if ascribed to a mode of production within capitalism can create confusion.

Florian Butollo and Patricia de Paiva Lareiro: A Digital Revolution? Contradictions in Productive Force Development in Post-Growth Capitalism
This contribution takes issue with the assumption that the adoption of new digital technologies would result in a rejuvenation of capitalism. The argument that digital technologies have the potential to develop productive forces is confronted with a pragmatic perspective. Butollo and de Paiva Lareiro emphasize that the sphere of circulation affects whether a potential leap in the development of productive forces is actually realized. In the context of structural overaccumulation, the authors discuss several contradictions with regard to the implementation of new digital technologies: Economic barriers to investment, tendencies towards ›overengineering‹ due to a lack of effective demand, as well as a growing gap between technological possibilities and their real-world implementation. Investment is instead diverted towards platform-based business models that seek to control the sphere of distribution. This reflects an intensifying struggle over market shares and a diversion from, rather than an unleashing of, productive force development.

Lisa Bor: The app doesn't clean it: The Political Economy of Online Platforms for Home Cleaning Services
Vacuum-cleaning robots are now available at a low cost while kitchen appliances coordinate their activities via wi-fi. A ›smart home‹ is supposed to recognize and fulfil the wishes of its occupants through automated systems and product orders. In addition, digitalized logistics such as intermediary platforms for household-related services are available and are becoming more common. At present, when many are overwhelmed by the challenge of reconciling job and family life, delegating housework to third parties is an individual solution. The author discusses the state of technological development and takes a closer view at how the business models of start-ups tend to separate IT-development from app use, thereby creating gender-specific tasks and discusses possible consequences for domestic labour.

Raewyn Connell: Imagining AI: Marge Piercy's novel *He, She and It*
Connell discusses Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It* with reference to classic science fiction. Studying the novel in a historical critical manner, she exposes the lines of tradition that Piercy picks up on, or fails to keep up with. As Connell argues, Piercy's novel should not only be read as a dystopian prophecy: it also points to the contradictions in the use of AI, and to the possibilities of mobilizing AI for collective struggles against the destructively ruling forces of the world.

Christian Fuchs: »Socialism is not an app that can be downloaded from the Internet« – An Interview
Christian Fuchs is Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Westminster, London, editor of the open-access journal *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, and author of several books on social theory. In this interview, he discusses pressing issues in the critical political economy of digital

capitalism, such as the Corona pandemic driven boost in digitalisation and its contra-dictions, Marx's prognostic views on technological development, the possibilities of a computer socialism, the organisation of digital labour and the fascist threats that emerge with the current structural transformation of the public sphere.

Frigga Haug: Facebook Behaviour
The article deals with Facebook as a form of addiction and at the same time, as a means of communication that makes the socialisation of humanity real and tangible. Through autobiographical references and by scrutinizing Facebook's business data, Haug reveals the power and powerlessness of life online. The Facebook phenomenon illustrates the emergence of a 'World Society' that is not a so much a genuine community as a gathering of people driven together by struggles of capital, the market, politics, and by individual desires of petty revenge.

Frigga Haug: Robots as Teachers
Robots seem to offer a remedy for a range of different problems in the field of education, from teacher shortages to failures in politics and pedagogy. One might even dream about reaching a level of self-determination that generations of anti-au-thoritarian student protests have called for. The question of the use of robots at school, which may at first seem to be a minor issue, is in fact a fundamental question concerning the image of humanity under high-tech capitalism.

Frigga Haug: An Attempt to Learn from Christoph Türcke without Blindly Following Him
Christoph Türcke's *Digitale Gefolgschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine neue Stammes-gesellschaft* tells the story of humanity, from the origins of human socialization to high technology. It is an account of a great tragedy, or indeed of a road to hell whose only way out — with the help of Marxism, critical theory and psychoanalysis — is a return to reruralization. Türcke's book is well worth reading for its historical-critical elaborations on the different steps in the development of human society.

Wolfgang Fritz Haug: Online Capitalism. An Inquiry into Philipp Staab's Description of 'Digital Capitalism'
›Digitalization‹ is the word of the historical moment. Philipp Staab has offered rich analyses of how capitalism changes epochally through the processes vaguely described by the term. His work thus provides an adequate starting point for a confrontation with the theory of high-tech capitalism. By way of historical-critical perspective, Haug takes a close look at the new phenomena unearthed by Staab. Critique proceeds as inquiry as he puts his theory to the test and develops it further.

The path leads through a whole array of problems that arise whenever political economy borrows its categories »from everyday life without further criticism« (Marx, *Capital*, transl. Fowkes, I, 678; MEW 23/559): How to understand – in terms of value theory – the mind-boggling sums appropriated by the oligopolistic plat-

forms and the corresponding stock market values? Are they based, as Staab assumes, on ›rent form‹-like, non-productive deductions from the profit of productive capital? What is novel, distinctively ›digitalist‹ about their concrete mode of appropriation? Is it true that the ›digital‹ economy is one of ›non-scarcity‹, turning the very principle of all economics on its head? The common blindness towards form causes Staab to mistake price for value, purchase for consumption, competition for rationalization, exploitation for efficiency. Eager to identify concrete phenomena as new, he over-looks the fact that what is novel about them is the ›online mode‹, but not necessarily that which is now exercised via the web. And not least, Staab's fixation on the circu-latory sphere leads him to reduce the commercial platforms of the internet – along with their ›disruptive‹ effects – almost universally to trade, instead of grasping them in their multifaceted determination as tech corporations and infrastructure providers. In contrast, Haug's article shows that the law of value is indeed asserting itself in novel ways in online capitalism. Under this perspective, the various phenomena that Staab designates as ›digital capitalism‹ emerge as transitional phenomena. In essence, all capitalist production, service, distribution, and financial enterprises face the challenge of expanding their business practices to incorporate the online mode and reinvent themselves accordingly.

The article consists of nine sections:
1. On the theoretical background of the investigation
2. Subject matter: the 'disruptive' rise of the commercial internet
3. On the theoretical basis of Staab's notion of 'digital capitalism' as an epoch
4. The dominant capitalist agents on the internet
5. The 'economy of non-scarcity' as the core of platform business (Staab)
    5.1 An anti-economy?
    5.2 On the intertwined problems in Staab's non-scarcity thesis
6. On the question of the all-new in contrast to the old being upscaled to online level
7. Blindness towards form: exploitation as efficiency, price as value, purchase as consumption
8. Capitalism of the circulation sphere?
9. Online capitalism as the actual stage of high-tech capitalism.

Thomas Lühr: Struggling for Conformity – Work Experiences in Transformation
This article analyses how, as society undergoes a digital transformation, people are adapting themselves to the requirements of a new mode of production. Lühr highlights the importance of 'conformity' between how people behave and what is expected from them at work. Such conformity allows for a stable lifestyle, which in turn is necessary for safeguarding agency. Conformity also enables social integra-tion, a precondition both for maintaining existing relations of power and domination as well as for overcoming them. The empirical part of Lühr's contribution deals with the production of conformity in the context of the radical changes the world of work is currently undergoing. Lühr offers an assessment of how people are perceiving

these changes, and of how they are coping with them in their everyday life. The article concludes by mapping out the contradictions that challenge people in their striving for conformity, as well as their implications for an emancipatory perspective on the social project of digital transformation.

Christian Meyer: Digitalization and Fascization
Digital Technologies are omnipresent. They are not only forces of production but also shape everyday life. While several prophets of the digital era predicted more democracy and freedom, we are facing an authoritarian neoliberalism and a new rise of fascist movements. The article follows the contradictory relations between the omnipresence of digital technologies and the rise of authoritarian politics and right-wing ideologies. To show the correlations between both megatrends, recent developments in labour/production, inner security and the public sphere/communication media are examined. While each field follows its own logic, a global connection between digitalization and fascization is undeniable, while at the same time contradictory. To analyze the correlation between the two, the article draws on the sociology and philosophy of technology, the sociology of work and digital-capitalism as well as media studies. Technologies originate in society and are shaped by interests. But they are enmeshed in society and its relations of power.

Georg Seeßlen: I in the Future, or, Why Science Fiction is (In)Capable of Solving the Problems of Progress and the Subject
Science fiction is the genre of crisis. At its best, it is dystopian, sceptical, melancholic, sarcastic, ironic, critical. But at its worst, it merely serves as an accompaniment to the sort of technical-scientific progress that is linked to the white, male, western capitalist subject. It is in fact this subject that science fiction repeatedly constructs, in the figures of the heroic, physical man of action, the intellectual sceptic with his scientific view of the world, or the moralist and humanist full of doubt. These three basic characters run through both the production and the reception history of the genre. They are modified only occasionally when one of the three takes on some 'other' (female, queer, non-white etc.) features. Against this backdrop, it can be said that authors such as Margarete Atwood, Angela Carter, Ursula K. LeGuin or Nnedi Okorafor do not just write other science fiction. Rather, they write something very different from science fiction, something that seems to be forbidden in this genre that oscillates between progressivism and apocalypse: a utopian exploration of the future. Instead of settling for the cheap hope of having just gotten away from it, their science fiction seeks out what, drawing on Ernst Bloch, one might call models of active hope.

Sebastian Sevignani: Class Formation within the Digital Transformation of the Public Sphere
In public, capitalist conflicts can be articulated, shared, interpreted, and potentially organised in an emancipatory manner. Class struggle always entails a struggle over the relevant means of communication and the organisation of communicative work.

The contribution elaborates on the interplay of publics within the social communication process in liberal-democratic capitalism. It draws on hegemony and ideology theory to describe the rearrangement of the ideological public sphere that became necessary to mitigate antagonistic social relations. The ›ideological public sphere‹ includes antagonistic media, compromise-enabling mass media, values of the ›bourgeois public sphere‹. It sets a framework for popular, hegemonic or populist class-formation strategies. Circumventing the mass media from below and a re-inter-mediation by digital media platforms within the current structural transformation of the (ideological) public sphere puts pressure on hegemony and counter-hegemonial class strategies alike but facilitates popular and populist opportunities. It is argued that class formation ultimately relies on popular learning processes that tend to be limited. Alternative media structures and a withdrawal from the ideological public sphere would be necessary in order to develop communicative capabilities for autonomous forms of socialization.

Sabine Skubsch: Educational Justice through Digitalization? Deconstructing the Bertelsmann Foundation's Narrative
The digitalization of education is primarily driven by technology and economics. Public discourse on digital education is heavily influenced by the economy and the influence of providers of educational media on the public discourse regarding digital education cannot be overestimated. Using the ›digital education revolution‹ propagated by the Bertelsmann Foundation as an example, Skubsch examines the narrative of the IT lobby. Instead of the ›educational justice through digitalization‹ promised by Bertelsmann, she shows that the path chosen under pressure from IT companies threatens to intensify social selection.

Irene Scherer & Wolf Schröter: Why worker's councils must develop self-determined design approaches for digital transformation. From ›retarded digitalization‹ to ›preventive work design‹
The Forum Soziale Technikgestaltung (FST) is a network of 5,000 men and women from trade unions, works councils and workforces in Baden-Württemberg. The main aim of the FST, which was founded in October 1991, is to share knowledge and to strengthen the degree of workers' co-determination in the ›digital transformation‹ of the economy. Together with education institutions and social initiatives in the network ›Sozialer Zusammenhalt in digitaler Lebenswelt‹ (›Social Cohesion in the Digital World‹), the FST advises on the consequences of the declining importance of the workplace for urban development planning. Focusing on the case of the FST, Scherer und Schröter's article is concerned with the requirements for the design of autonomous, self-changing software systems, as well as with the possibilities of intervention available to employee representatives.

Ben Tarnoff: The Making of the Tech-Worker Movement

On November 1, 2018, more than twenty thousand employees and contractors of Google walked out in fifty cities around the world and pulled off one of the largest international labour actions in modern history. They were protesting what organizers called a ›toxic work culture‹, characterized by harassment, discrimination, racism, and the abuse of power. This walkout, however, did not come out of nowhere: The tech industry was already in the midst of a wave of rank-and-file mobilization. This article explores the origins and the dynamics of the new tech-worker movement, and discusses its implications for class analysis and class struggle.

Jutta Weber: Human-Machine Learning and Digital Commons

We are currently witnessing the algorithmization and datafication of all social and personal spheres, processes that generally make decisions less transparent. At the same time, these methods promise to increase efficiency and solve complex problems. Acting in complex human-machine assemblages or human-machine structures is becoming the norm. In view of these developments, we need new forms of human-machine learning to make possible a more communicable and fairer technopraxis. And we need complex human-machine assemblages that acknowledge a multiplicity of actors.

Alexander Ziegler: The New Machine Systems of High-Tech Capitalism. On the Foundation of Tech Companies

Tech companies have been key drivers in the development of high-tech capitalism. Analyzing their strategies, therefore, is of central importance for understanding the dynamics of high-tech capitalism and has recently gathered momentum in the critical social sciences. So far, the debate has focused mainly on deciphering the strategic patterns that have become ever more visible as ›big tech‹ tightens its grip on the consumer internet. Mostly overlooked, however, is the fact that the emergence of new patterns such as digital platforms did not come out of nowhere. Key aspects of their constitution were developed and implemented by the workforce of start-ups. Following Marx, this article aims to reconstruct the development of these dynamic productive forces inside the tech companies, as well as the power of their disruptive strategies.