







## >> OPENING PLENARY

### Plenary session topic/title: “Marx is Back: The Importance of Being Critical in Media and Communication Studies Today”

Plenary speakers: Vincent Mosco (Queen’s University, Canada), Graham Murdock (Loughborough University, UK)

Chair and discussant: Janet Wasko (University of Oregon, USA)

#### INFO:

**Vincent Mosco** is Professor Emeritus at Queen's University's Department of Sociology. He is a leading expert in the political economy of communication and was Canada Research Chair in Communication and Society and Professor of Sociology.

**Graham Murdock** is Professor of Culture and Economy at the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. He is a leading scholar in the Sociology and Political Economy of Culture.

**Janet Wasko** is the Knight Chair for Communication Research at the University of Oregon (USA). She is a leading expert in the Political Economy of Communications and the Political Economy of the Film Industry.

#### VINCENT MOSCO

Queen’s University, Canada

### **Marx is Back, but Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite? On the Critical Study of Labour, Media, and Communication Today**

**ABSTRACT:** This paper begins by addressing the revival of popular and academic interest in Karl Marx and explains why, for some of us, he never went away. Certainly, the global economic crisis has fuelled headlines announcing that it is “Springtime for Marx”. But so too has the failure of governments to deal with the crisis. Indeed Marx is back partly because of the profound political and moral crisis of capitalism as much as for its economic failings. All of these attest to Marx’s return in popular discourse whether in the mainstream press or on the signs carried by activists at Occupy sites around the world. For some of us, Marx never left because, from his early work on consciousness, ideology and culture, which has informed critical cultural studies, through to his later writing on the structure and dynamics of capitalism that provides bedrock for critical political economy, he offers invaluable guidance on how to understand the world and how to change it.

In addition to addressing these fundamental themes in Marx’s work, I have been recently interested in exploring the need for all of us, but especially for communication



scholars, to pay more attention to work that does not fit so neatly into either of these foci, namely Marx of the *Grundrisse* and Marx, the professional journalist. This is necessary because we have paid insufficient attention to labour in the communication, culture and knowledge industries. The Marx of these two streams of work directs our attention to what I have called the labouring of communication. It prompts one to ask a Marxian question with a contemporary accent: Will knowledge workers of the world unite?

The remainder of the paper takes up this question by reporting on an eight-year project that examines how knowledge workers have responded to globalization, corporate concentration, technological change and the ensuing economic crisis. It begins by taking up the meaning of knowledge work focusing on subterranean streams of thought that draw from Marx. Next, it addresses an all too persistent blind spot in communication research by assessing tendencies to labour and trade union convergence in the media, information and cultural industries primarily through merger, internationalism and the formation of new worker associations. The paper covers research sites in the United States, Canada, Europe, India, and China where interviews with workers and their leaders shed light on whether knowledge workers will indeed unite. The conclusion considers the implications of current labour strategies and the need for alternatives, including lessons from the Occupy movement.

**GRAHAM MURDOCK**

Loughborough University, UK

### **The Digital Lives of Commodities: Consumption, Ideology and Exploitation Today**

**ABSTRACT:** Marx famously placed the process of commodification at the centre of his analysis of capitalism. Stripped of other means of support workers traded their labour power for wages to buy the goods they needed to live. The structurally exploitative nature of this contract was in turn concealed by the relentless promotion of consumption as the primary sphere of personal choice and individual freedom. So far, so familiar. But the intersection of aggressive marketization and the rise of digital media is extending commodification - both structurally and ideologically - in new ways. We see the progressive commodification of online activity and engagement, overtly with the rise of 'prosumption', where users labour in their leisure time to boost corporate profits, and covertly through the mobilization of personal data for marketing. We also see the development of new forms of ubiquitous and immersive product promotion that integrate commodities ever more securely into the fabric of everyday digital life. Placing these developments firmly in the context of the critical analysis of commodification inspired by Marx, this paper takes stock of what we know about these emerging processes and their implications.



SPEAKER INFO: Graham Murdock is Professor of Culture and Economy at the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. He is a leading scholar in the Sociology and Political Economy of Culture.



## >> PLENARY TALKS

**ANDREW FEENBERG**

Simon Fraser University, Canada

### **Great Refusal and Long March: How to Use Critical Theory to Think About the Internet**

**ABSTRACT:** Herbert Marcuse suggested two different strategies at different points in his career. The Great Refusal implied a strategy of non-cooptable demands. This notion stemmed from a dystopian sense of the total systematization of society and was in harmony with the uncompromising opposition of the early New Left. But in the later period of what Marcuse called the “preventive counter-revolution”, he adopted Rudy Dutschke’s slogan of “the long march through the institutions”. The choice at this time was between withdrawal, terrorism and participating critically. Marcuse advocated the latter.

I want to think about our critical stance toward the Internet in terms of these two strategies. Does Critical Theory require a blanket condemnation of the Internet? This seems to be the conclusion drawn by many observers. Hypothetically, this could lead one to a Great Refusal of the Internet and all its works, withdrawal to an Internet-free zone of some sort. I will argue that we need a long march strategy based on a much more nuanced critique. We need to measure the Internet against its real potentials and defend it against real dangers rather than condemning it unqualifiedly.

**SPEAKER INFO:** Andrew Feenberg holds the Canada Research Chair in Philosophy of Technology in the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, where he directs the Applied Communication and Technology Lab. His main areas of research are Critical Theory and philosophy of technology.

**CATHERINE McKERCHER**

Carleton University, Canada

### **A Feminist Political Economy of Labour and Communication: Precarious Times, Precarious Work**

**ABSTRACT:** As areas of research within communication studies, both feminism and labour have typically been relegated to the margins. This talk addresses the value of bringing together feminist and political economic ways of thinking about labour in the media industry. In an era increasingly characterized by non-standard work arrange-



ments and precarious labour, it recognizes the need to understand the relationship of gender to the workplace and the relationship of the workplace and the home. Specifically, I will examine the state of the freelance journalist in North America, an occupation that is increasingly seen as “women’s work.” A number of conditions have given rise to the precariously employed woman journalist, including declining employment in the news business, increasing reliance on free content provided by student interns, the feminization of the student body in journalism schools, and the imposition of freelance contracts that demand more and more rights over the freelancer’s work. Many young women journalists, especially those with children, see freelance journalism as a way to maintain a toehold in the creative class, offering flexibility and market-based pay and the chance to work from home. The reality, however, is that flexibility means precarity, and market-based pay lags significantly behind the pay for full-time work. In recent years, freelancers have begun exploring collective action in hopes of improving their social and material conditions. This talk will conclude by pointing to some promising developments in this area, including initiatives by conventional trade unions to organize freelance locals and efforts to create new forms of workers organizations for freelancers.

SPEAKER INFO: Catherine McKercher is Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University. Her research concentrates on labour in the communication industries, including labour in journalism.

## CHARLES ESS

Aarhus University, Denmark

### Digital Media Ethics and Philosophy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Information Society

ABSTRACT: Digital media occasion ever greater ethical challenges, including basic matters of privacy and copyright. At the same time, both Medium Theory and contemporary empirical evidence in the domains of our economic behaviour, democratization efforts, and religious behaviour point to significant shifts in our conceptions of selfhood and identity affiliated with digital media. Since our *ethical* and *political* conceptions are deeply shaped through our understandings of the self, these transformations raise compelling questions regarding both our ethical and political futures.

I begin by sketching moves in “the West” away from modernist notions of individual-exclusive *privacy* towards more group-based notions of privacy, if not the elimination of any sort of public/private boundary altogether. Similar shifts are apparent regarding *property* – most especially intellectual property, again away from modernist notions of individual-exclusive property towards more collective-*inclusive* understandings, as manifest, e.g., in Open Source, FLOSS, and the rise of Pirate Bay. I will try to show how these shifts correlate with a more foundational movement away from modernist notions of the individual *qua* rational autonomy towards more *relational* and *emotive* emphases



in our conception of selfhood. By contrast, “Eastern” attitudes are demonstrably shifting in the opposite direction – i.e., away from earlier emphases on privacy and property as *collective* and *inclusive*, towards ever greater emphases on individual privacy and property rights as positive goods. Most strikingly, recent developments in legal protections for *individual* privacy in North Asia – including mainland China – argue that North Asia will soon stand as second only to the European Union in terms of individual privacy protections. But this takes place vis-à-vis further *erosions* of individual privacy rights in the E.U. and the U.S., primarily in the name of fighting terrorism.

These transformations suggest a *hybridization* in both “Western” and “Eastern” traditions – one that conjoins both modernist notions of individual selfhood with earlier notions (in both East and West) of relational selfhood. A particular question here, however, is: What *sort* of “individualism” is fostered through the use of digital media? Further evidence suggests that the individual fostered by “Web 2.0” communications technologies emphasizes not only the *relational*, but also the *emotional*. Such relational-emotional selves, whatever their other advantages and benefits, have historically correlated with hierarchical and authoritarian regimes. In contemporary, market-driven societies, this further correlates with an apparent willingness to allow processes of commodification to marginalize, if not extinguish, individual autonomy, privacy, and the freedom to dissent.

These correlations, finally, suggest that our choices regarding media usages and the media literacies we teach and emphasize will determine whether or not enough of the autonomous individual, as foundational to and the primary legitimation of modern liberal democracies, will survive in these new hybrid identities in the “West”, in order to sustain more democratic processes and egalitarian values. I will argue that such choices may be well guided by various forms of critical theory, as well as by an emerging philosophical anthropology that conjoins phenomenology, Kantian and virtue ethics, as reinforced by contemporary understandings, rooted in neuroscience, of the “embodied mind” and embodied cognition.

SPEAKER INFO: Charles Ess is Professor at the Information and Media Studies Department, Aarhus University. His research focuses on two domains at the intersections between CMC, communication and media studies, and philosophy, namely Internet Studies and Information Ethics.

**CHRISTIAN CHRISTENSEN**  
Uppsala University, Sweden

### **WikiLeaks: Mainstreaming Transparency?**

ABSTRACT: In the period shortly after the release of the “Collateral Murder” video, “Afghanistan War Logs” and “Iraq War Logs”, it appeared that WikiLeaks had done something that many had thought unlikely: the insertion of a radical critique of US military





and geo-political power into mainstream popular discourse (particularly in the US). While The Guardian, New York Times and Der Spiegel (the three newspapers chosen by WikiLeaks for the release of the first leaks) are not the newspapers of choice for many in the US, UK and Germany, the very presence of the material on their front pages opened up the possibility that the murky world of US power might now be forced to concede ground to transparency advocates. In this paper, I address the often contentious WikiLeaks-mainstream media collaboration, and the potential impact of this relationship upon the evolution of transparency as a political philosophy.

**SPEAKER INFO:** Christian Christensen is Professor of Media and Communications Studies in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University, Sweden. His primary area of research is in the use of social media during times of war and conflict, but he has also published on the representation of Islam, post 9/11 documentary film, and international journalism.

## **CHRISTIAN FUCHS**

Uppsala University, Sweden

### **Critique of the Political Economy of Social Media**

**ABSTRACT:** Do contemporary forms of mediated communication, especially social media communication, advance participation or new forms of exploitation and domination? What is the role of class, crisis, and participatory democracy in contemporary information society and its media landscape? Who benefits from the contemporary Internet and who loses? What is the role of critical theory and critical studies for finding answers to these questions? Given the global crisis of capitalism, there is a renewed importance and return of interest in the topics of class and capitalism and the works of Karl Marx. This presentation deals with the question of how “social media” are related to capitalism and class.

I will first discuss the relationship of the approach of political economy of the media and Frankfurt School critical theory and argue for a synthesis of both approaches that takes aspects of commodification and capital accumulation, ideology critique, and social struggles into account. I will also point out why commonly held prejudices against these two approaches are false.

Second, I will deal with the question if we live in an information society or in a capitalist society. I point out that in order to answer this question, one should draw on Hegel’s dialectical philosophy, Marx’s application of dialectical thinking to the capitalist production process, and the Marxian concept of the antagonism between the forces of production and class relations of production.

Third, I discuss two prominent approaches that have discussed the role of social media in contemporary society: Manuel Castells’ concept of communication power in the network society and Henry Jenkins’ notion of participatory culture. I argue that both



approaches are fundamentally flawed and that critical alternatives are needed to un-critical theories of social media.

Fourth, I discuss foundations of Critical Internet Studies. I argue that there is a difference between Critical Cyberculture Studies and Critical Theory/Critical Political Economy of the Internet and that this distinction parallels the controversy between Cultural Studies and Political Economy in Media and Communication Studies. I am not supporting the argument that the dividing line between these two approaches is obsolete, but rather that it has been renewed in Internet Studies and discussions about the role of class on the Internet.

The importance of the class concept when discussing social media has been shown by the digital labour debate. I will fifth discuss the role and importance of Dallas Smythe's work and the Blindspot debate for conceptualizing and analyzing digital labour. I will comment on the use of Smythe's works in existing digital labour approaches and introduce based on Smythe the notion of Internet prosumer commodification. I will argue that Marx's notion of class and Smythe's foundational work about audience commodification as process of exploitation shall be revisited in the light of works such as Rosa Luxemburg's theory of imperialism, socialist feminist works, Autonomous Marxism (especially the work of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt), and Erik Olin Wright's class theory. Sixth, the role of class, exploitation, class struggle, and ideology in relation to the media in contemporary capitalism will be analyzed with the help of the examples of platforms like Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia, and WikiLeaks, as well as societal contexts like the Arab Spring, the UK riots, the Occupy movement, and Anonymous' hacktivism. I maintain that when speaking about participatory Internet and a digital public sphere it is important to remember the origins of the concept of participatory democracy (Crawford Macpherson, Carole Pateman) and of Jürgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere and their grounding in Marx's analysis of capitalism. I finally will suggest that we need to strengthen the commons and to create a commons-based Internet in order to democratize prosumption, communication, and society.

SPEAKER INFO: Christian Fuchs is Chair Professor in Media and Communication Studies at Uppsala University's Department of Informatics and Media. His fields of research are critical theory of digital media and society and critical media and communication studies.

**GUNILLA BRADLEY**

KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden

### **Social Informatics and Ethics: Towards the Good Information and Communication Society**

ABSTRACT: Some issues that will be addressed from my research on the interplay between ICT, Society and Human Beings are relating to the following questions:



- How are human beings *involved in the labour market*? Present changes and new social structures?
- How does the *workforce* in the so-called flexible companies function?
- What is *Quality of Life* in the ICT society and how can it be achieved?
- What main *changes* are taking place in the *professional role, private role and citizen's role*? How can we balance various *roles* in our lives - at the increasing convergence of them?
- What are *new ways to influence* our work life conditions as well as to contribute to societal change?
- What impact on *values, motivation, human behaviour, and life styles* do networks and network organizations have? Is there a dialectics of values? Can early warning psychosocial signals be identified?
- Some trends in *psychosocial communication* and ICT;
  - o Collaboration in distributed organizational structures and changes in global communication patterns;
  - o The home as a communication sphere in the network era - new opportunities and risks;
  - o Young IT people in cities and rural areas and their virtual and real communities.

I will initially give a short impressionistic picture of “The Swedish way” – a trial for many decades to balance two main economic systems. I will also summarize my “Convergence model on ICT and Society” that was formed from my research during the main eras in the “history of computerization”. The convergence reflects the main processes in technology, societal structure, organizational design, and human roles in society. Where are the “energy centres” in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ICT society that can activate and create changes towards the “Good Information Society”? Can agreements on the Goals and Visions for that society be achieved? What are the hot Ethical concerns? I will conclude with some reflections on sustainability in the ICT society from a grandmother’s perspective and will address the risk of cyberwar and opportunities for peace.

The presentation is mainly based on *Social and Community Informatics - Humans on the Net* (Bradley G 2006, Routledge) and a newly published Festschrift entitled *Information and Communication Technologies, Society and Human Beings – Theory and Framework* (Haftor D. & Miriamdotter A (Editors) 2011, IGI Global).

See also a recently published paper: Bradley, Gunilla. 2010. The Convergence Theory on ICT, Society and Human Beings – Towards the Good ICT Society. *tripleC (cognition, communication, co-operation): Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 8 (2): 183-192.

<http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/170/186>

SPEAKER INFO: Gunilla Bradley is Professor Emerita in Informatics, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden. Her research focuses on the interplay between Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Human Beings, and Society.



## MARGARETA MELIN

Malmö University, Sweden

### Flight as Fight: Re-Negotiating the Work of Journalism

**ABSTRACT:** In this talk I will address issues how women (and other groups) use the tactic of flight to re-negotiate their professional conditions in the field of journalism. I do so from the theoretical crossroad of political-economy, feminism and cultural sociology. As such my starting-point is that a gender logic permeates the culture and every corner of the fields of journalism. I will in the talk discuss the play and dynamics around the way this gender logic is defended and challenged, specifically using new technology to do so.

The world of news-production can be hard, particularly for women and groups that are perceived as others. In order to survive and get a career, i.e. be a successful player on the field of journalism (in Bourdieuan terms) these groups of others need to use varying tactics to fight strategies used by the dominating groups in the field. These strategies can be symbolic violence in daily routines, harassment in the news-room, the infamous glass-ceiling, etc. Well-known and much written-about tactics for women journalists are fighting hard for a top career by aggregating masculine capital and being “one of the boys”, or fighting for female subjects and being “one of the girls”. A third tactic “flight” has been used as a mean of fleeing the newsroom in order to avoid the suppressing strategies and patriarchal symbolic violence. It has been used because the dichotomised positioning of journalist – woman/mother/person of colour/disabled etc have been near impossible to overcome. And as such the tactic of flight could be seen as a tragic victimisation. I have in previous research shown that the only option open to those women who wanted both to have a family and work as a journalist was to work as a freelancer, web-journalist, part-time producer – all poorly paid.

My argument is, however, that we now live in an age where news is no longer just newspapers and (public service) TV and radio. Today TV-producers write news, newspapers broadcast news, and news is twittered and blogged by journalists, their “sources” and audience alike. And the number of women in journalism is above the so-called “magic number” of 33%. New technology has meant new possibilities, new ways to overcome old dichotomies.

I argue that finding new means to do journalism can be strong and creative tactics of finding new usages of ones aggregated (journalism) capital. Working as a freelancer, or working with web-news in various ways, can be means of creating your own space and your own newsroom. It means fighting through flight.

**SPEAKER INFO:** Margareta Melin is an Associate Professor at the School of Arts and Communication (K3) at Malmö University. Her research lies in the crossroad between cultural sociology, feminism, journalism, and the arts.



**MARK ANDREJEVIC**

University of Queensland, Australia

## **Social Media: Surveillance and Exploitation 2.0**

**ABSTRACT:** This presentation explores the ways in which social networking technologies are being taken up by the commercial sector as ways for integrating social and work life. Thanks to the popularity and ubiquity of social network technologies in some sectors of the population, companies are finding ways to exploit the social connections of their employees, customers, and clients, leading to start-up companies that seek to monetize social network data by linking it with consumer relations databases and other technologies for target marketing. When important aspects of people's social lives migrate onto commercial platforms these become subject to marketing imperatives, self-branding becomes a new (or updated) form of employee asset. The goal of the presentation is to develop a theoretical approach to the commercialization and monetization of online social life. To what extent might the critique of exploitation be updated and brought to bear upon the productivity of social networks? What aspects of this critique help illuminate the wholesale commodification of social relationships, and what are the implications of relying upon a privately owned commercial infrastructure for their development? The critique of exploitation directs us back to these questions. It urges us to consider the ways in which the commercialization of the platform turns our own activity back upon ourselves in the service of priorities that are not our own, and it reminds us of the double duty done by the privately controlled interactive infrastructure. This infrastructure might serve as a platform for new forms of creativity, deliberation, communication, interaction, and consumption. At the same time, though, it works to assemble the most comprehensive system for mass monitoring in human history. The accusation associated with the critique of exploitation reminds us of the ways in which new forms of marketing driven surveillance help turn our own productive activity back upon ourselves in the service of ends that are not our own.

**SPEAKER INFO:** Mark Andrejevic is a media scholar at The University of Queensland, Australia. He writes about surveillance, new media, and popular culture. In broad terms, he is interested in the ways in which forms of surveillance and monitoring enabled by the development of new media technologies impact the realms of economics, politics, and culture.



**NICK DYER-WITHEFORD**

University of Western Ontario, Canada

## **Cybermarxism Today: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Capitalism**

**ABSTRACT:** “Cybermarxism” is a contribution to the study of working class composition, a composition which changes historically, both technologically – in terms of the division of labour and use of machinery in the labour process – and politically, in terms of the degree of working class subordination or challenge to capital. Such changes in class composition occur in cycles of struggle. Capital periodically restructures its command by spatial expansion and technological innovation, which undo established forms of working class power, but can also catalyze the emergence of new struggles. The last half century has seen the decline of “the mass worker” – the factory-based labour force, concentrated in capital’s core territories of the planetary north-west, politically organized through trades unions and mass democratic parties. From the 1970s on, a neoliberal offensive decomposed the mass workers assembly-line bases by robotization, container transportation and electronic communication, relocating industrial production to the periphery and, in the core, a shift to service and technical work. The result has been a new class composition, the global worker – a collective labour organized not along the assembly line of the factory, but along planet spanning supply chains; internationalized by the world-scale expansion of capital; diversified by an increasingly complex division and integration of labour; universalized by the subsumption of women; rendered precarious by a massive world-scale reserve army of the unemployed; planet-changing in the scale of its activity (think global warming) and finally, and interconnected by digital communications, which now plays as strategic role in the composition and decomposition of the global worker as the mass media of broadcast radio and television did to the mass worker. In this new composition, digitalization touches nearly every aspect of the labour process, albeit in sharply differentiated ways. Within this overall process there are, however, also sub-cycles of struggle, which directly affect the main organ of digital labour – the Internet. The main phases of Net history, from its military beginnings to its hacker liberation, through the meteoric rise of the dot.coms to the bursting of the Internet bubble and up to the consolidation of a for-profit Web 2.0 can be understood as a cut and thrust, parry and riposte, between capitalist command and new quanta of technical labour. Capital has sometimes held the advantage, but has as often either had to play catch up, trying to capture innovations initiated outside its orbit, or to deal with the unforeseen, catastrophic consequences of its own apparent success in deploying digital technologies to evade unrest. This paper will focus on the most recent phase in this contestatory process, looking at the central role of the Net both in precipitating the financial crisis of 2008 and in disseminating a new global cycle of struggles running from the hardware factories of China to the squares city squares of North Africa and Europe and to the North American Occupy movement.



SPEAKER INFO: Nick Dyer-Witheford is Associate Professor and Associate Dean at the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at The University of Western Ontario, Canada. His research interests include emergent forms of counter-power against high technology, globalized capital, the political economy of computer and video game industry as well as political economic perspective on the transformation of libraries in digital capitalism.

### **PETER DAHLGREN**

Lund University, Sweden

## **Social Media and the Civic Sphere: Crisis, Critique and the Future of Democracy**

ABSTRACT: While the advent of social media has already had a significant impact on people's daily lives, it has also come to alter the character of the civic sphere, i.e., the broad social terrain of citizens' activities.

Thus, social media in their various forms quickly became incorporated into discourses about democracy and the political. Clearly, social media can play a useful role in the advancement of democracy, but it is by now quite clear that they offer no simple solution to the ills that beset contemporary democracy. On the one hand they can just as readily be used for purposes that are anti-democratic, on the other hand – and in a more complex perspective – the contingencies of late modern capitalism generate a variety of conditions that intercede, in problematic ways, between even progressive “produser-citizens” and the advancement of democracy via social media. These contingencies have to do with a number of factors, including power relations at different societal levels (including the growing separation between power and formal politics), the imperatives of consumer society, late modern cultural currents of individualism, and the architecture and political economy of the net itself and its Web 2.0 affordances. As the global crisis deepens, these contingencies become more pronounced.

This presentation will highlight and exemplify these aspects, arguing that research needs to become more alert to such obstacles in regard to social media's role and potential in cultivating the civic sphere. Even the notion of democracy – too often deployed as incantation – needs critical interrogation to elucidate its multiple and at times contested ideals.

In this regard, the latter part of the discussion will probe the notion of critique, suggesting that there is a methodological dimension that can be retrieved and applied to social conditions, practices, and discourses for progressive political purposes. The concept of critique of course remains multivalent; I focus on the lineage from Hegel's idea of the critical reflection on unnecessary constraints on human freedom. Its concern is with “emancipation”.

Historically, various intellectual and political movements on the Left have used the notion of critique. Today, however, the concept seems to have lost its punch, due to the



decline of the Left, the rise of neoliberalism, the growing social uncertainties, the ironic sensibilities of liquid modernity, and not least the current global crisis, in which no clear political alternative has emerged to galvanise the many heterogeneous strands of opposition.

I intend to explore the notion of critique as it still can be found in the writings of a number of contemporary theorists – Laclau and Mouffe, Boltanski, Bauman, and Žižek – and extract some common threads. These will be applied to social media and the civic sphere, against the background of the current crisis, with an eye towards reinvigorating critique as an intellectual endeavour. Also, I will briefly address the notion of ‘emancipation’ to see what useful meaning can be elucidated in regard to our contemporary horizons.

**SPEAKER INFO:** Peter Dahlgren is Professor Emeritus at Lund University, Department of Media and Communications Studies. His research focuses on democracy, the evolution of the media, and contemporary socio-cultural processes, including identity formation.

## **TOBIAS OLSSON**

Jönköping University, Sweden

### **The ‘Architecture of Participation’: For Citizens or Consumers?**

**ABSTRACT:** According to Tim O’Reilly – the Internet analyst who coined the term Web 2.0 in 2005 – the improved web is an “architecture of participation”, which makes it easy to co-construct knowledge and include users in various ways. O’Reilly’s inflated claims about the transformative potential of the new, more interactive web have also inspired debates within various academic fields. In the wake of his propositions, we have become increasingly familiar with concepts such as participatory culture (Jean Burgess & Joshua Green), convergence culture (Henry Jenkins), and prod-users (Axel Bruns).

The extensive use of various notion of participation – with reference to web 2.0 – also makes the issue complex: What kinds of participation are we, as researchers, actually referring to when we talk about participation? Sometimes the notion of web 2.0 is invoked within research in order to discuss new modes of civic participation. At other times, it is called upon in order to point towards new possibilities for participation within the cultural sphere. At still other times it is brought into debates concerning communication for development.

To make notions of participation even more complicated, they have also made it into market discourses. Within the business manifesto literature the web 2.0 has inspired a “cult of the amateur” (Andrew Keen), holding that “democratized tools of production and distribution” (Chris Anderson) make “market and social capital [converge]” (Tara





Hunt). Among other things, this adds up “to a more participative approach” to branding (George Christodoulides).

This paper will review and critically discuss these various takes on participation. It will above all analyse the tension that emerge as notions of participation are variously framed within freer, civic (“bottom up”) and market (“top down”) discourses.

**SPEAKER INFO:** Tobias Olsson is Professor and head of research in Media and Communication Studies at THE School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University. His main research areas deal with the interrelationship between new media and citizenship

## **TREBOR SCHOLZ**

The New School, USA

### **The Internet as Playground and Factory**

**ABSTRACT:** In the midst of the worst financial crisis in living memory, the Internet has become a simple-to-join, anyone-can-play system where the sites and practices of work and play, as well as production and reproduction, are increasingly unnoticeable. The World Wide Web is a work place devoid of labour laws and worker protections. Digital media have affected shifting labor markets and concepts like exploitation, expropriation, volunteering, intellectual property, and privacy have shifted in meaning. "The Internet as Playground and Factory," a talk grounded in a New School conference that Scholz chaired in 2009, argues that the distinctions between work, leisure, play, and communication have faded and that labor, without being recognized as such, generates data and profits for a small number of governmental and commercial stakeholders.

Guests in the virtual world Second Life co-create the products and experiences, which they then consume. What is the nature of this "digital labour" and the new forms of digital sociality on platforms like Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk, Crowdfunder, LiveOps, and Innocentive that it brings into being?

Newly gained freedoms and visions of empowerment through digital media have complex social costs that are often invisible.

Internet users are becoming more vulnerable to novel enticements, conveniences, and marketing approaches. Online and off, they are increasingly wielded as a resource for economic amelioration. The channels of communication are becoming increasingly inscrutable.

This talk will explore the violence of participation and ask how economic value is generated in the actual rather than speculative economy of the Internet. How does the intertwining of labour and play complicate our understanding of exploitation? What are the flows or discontinuities between traditional and new forms of labour: between homework and care giving or tagging, and interactivity on social networking services?

Beyond an analysis of the situation of digital labour, between the affordances of social entrepreneurship and the dark realities of exploitation, this talk also suggests tangible



proposals for action that lead to a public debate about contemporary forms of exploitation. Attention must be focused on social action and, while always in need of scrutiny, state regulation and policy.

Also see: <http://digitallabor.org/>

**SPEAKER INFO:** Trebor Scholz is a scholar, artist, organizer and chair of the conference series “The Politics of Digital Culture” at The New School in NYC. He also founded the Institute for Distributed Creativity that is widely known for its online discussions of critical network culture.

### **URSULA HUWS**

University of Hertfordshire, UK

#### **Virtual Work and the Cybertariat in Contemporary Capitalism**

**ABSTRACT:** This presentation will look at the emergence of ‘virtual work’, examining the positions it occupies in global value chains, including its place in mediating and shifting the boundaries between paid and unpaid labour at either end of the chain: in production and in consumption as well as in intermediate links. It will also examine the interrelationship between the transformation of labour processes, the contractual and spatial restructuring of value chains and the changing global division of labour. Outlining how a global reserve army of information workers has developed in the last quarter-century, it will conclude by asking whether this can be regarded as a common class, or “cybertariat”.

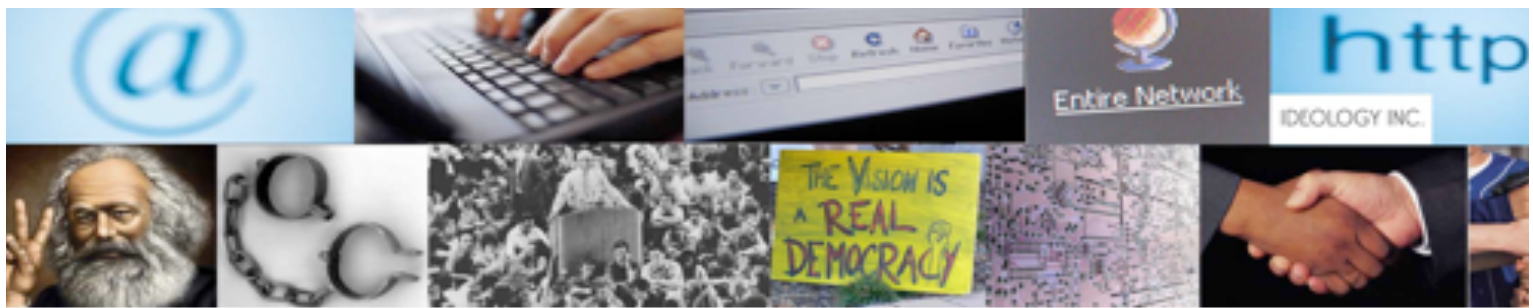
**SPEAKER INFO:** Ursula Huws is Professor of Labour and Globalisation at the University of Hertfordshire Business School. University of Hertfordshire Business School and University of Hertfordshire Business School and Director of Analytica Social and Economic Research. Her main research interests are the social impacts of technological change, the telemediated relocation of employment and the changing international division of labour.

### **WOLFGANG HOFKIRCHNER**

Vienna University of Technology, Austria

#### **Potentials and Risks for Creating a Global Sustainable Information Society**

**ABSTRACT:** Currently, in the IT sector vast numbers of engineers concentrate on designing things we do not need, whereas things we would need are not designed. The inertia of the economic system builds an obstacle to building meaningful technologies.



What a meaningful technology is, derives from the need for societal change. A GSIS (Global Sustainable Information Society) is the overall framework of conditions promising a future without the danger of anthropogenic breakdown. A GSIS is a society in which information is used to safeguard sustainable development on a global scale.

Informatisation – the spread of ICTs, computers and the Internet – has to be reshaped as a means for informationalisation. This involves raising the problem-solving capacity of world society to a degree of shared intentionality, to a level of collective intelligence and to an intensity of collective action that successfully tackles the problems that arise from society's own development. Informationalisation helps establish computer-supported communities of action in contradistinction to mere communities of practice or communities of interest. Communities of action share common goals for the development of world civilisation and act collectively to alleviate global challenges. Spontaneously, ever newer communities of action germinate like the “Occupy” movements around the world. How can these communities be supported by means of ICTs to have a lasting impact on society?

**SPEAKER INFO:** Wolfgang Hofkirchner is Associate Professor of Technology Assessment at the Institute for Design and Technology Assessment of the Vienna University of Technology and co-founder of the UTI Research Group. His current research and teaching focus is: Science of Information, Systems Theory, ICTs and Society.