

Dallas Smythe Today - The Audience Commodity, the Digital Labour Debate, Marxist Political Economy and Critical Theory.

Prolegomena to a Digital Labour Theory of Value.

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Abstract

Due to the global capitalist crisis, neoliberalism and the logic of commodification of everything have suffered cracks, fissures and holes. There is a return of the interest in Marx, which requires us to think about the role of Marxism in Media and Communication Studies. This paper contributes to this task by discussing some foundations of contemporary Marxist media and communication studies, including a focus on the renewed interest in Dallas Smythe's audience commodity category as part of the digital labour debate. Dallas Smythe reminds us of the importance of engagement with Marx's works for studying the media in capitalism critically. Both Critical Theory and Critical Political Economy of the Media and Communication have been criticized for being one-sided. Such interpretations are mainly based on selective readings. They ignore that in both approaches there has been with different weightings a focus on aspects of media commodification, audiences, ideology and alternatives. Critical Theory and Critical Political Economy are complementary and should be combined in Critical Media and Communication Studies today. Dallas Smythe's notion of the audience commodity has gained new relevance in the debate about corporate Internet services' exploitation of digital labour. The exploitation of digital labour involves processes of coercion, alienation and appropriation.

Author Biography

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Christian Fuchs is professor and chair in media and communication studies at Uppsala University's Department of Informatics and Media. He is board member of the Unified Theory of Information Research Group and editor of tripleC (cognition, communication, co-operation): Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society. He holds a *venia docendi* in the field of ICTs and society.

His research interests are: critical theory, social theory, media and society, ICTs and society, information society theory/research, political economy. He is author of many publications in these fields, including the books 'Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age' (Routledge 2008), which presents a social theory of contemporary society with a special consideration of media, information, and technology, and the book 'Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies' (Routledge 2011), which is an introduction to the theoretical and methodological foundations of critical media studies and critical information science.

He is co-ordinator of the research project 'Social Networking Sites in the Surveillance Society' (funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF), co-ordinator of Uppsala University's involvement in the 2 EU FP7 projects PACT and RESPECT, and management committee member of the EU COST Action 'Living in Surveillance Societies'.

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