Reviewed by: Antal Wozniak, *University of Liverpool, UK*

What is at stake when knowledge, human subjects, technological objects, and society become digital and algorithmic? This interdisciplinary edited volume – based on a symposium at Westminster University in 2017 – tackles this question through the lenses of digital/Big Data capitalism, digital labour, and digital politics. The book is organised in nine chapters – three per section – and nine accompanying reflections, plus an introduction by the editors.

In their introduction, David Chandler and Christian Fuchs discuss two competing definitions of Digital Capitalism. One sees it as a *stage* of contemporary capitalism, in which "the production of value depends increasingly on creative intellectual activity" (Negri, 2008) and where "digital abstraction adds a second layer to capitalist abstraction" (Berardi, 2015). The other sees it as a *form* that is subsumed under other modes of capitalist development where digital technologies play a mediating role in capitalist accumulation (Harvey, 1989, 2003, 2005). Fuchs himself defines Digital Capitalism as "an antagonistic societal formation that deepens alienation and exploitation while at the same time advancing potentials for liberation." It is between these contradictions – between digital optimism and digital pessimism – that the following chapters oscillate.

In Chapter 2, Chandler critically examines the nature of digital governance with its proliferation of "correlational machines." Less concerned with causality and adaptive change than with managing problems, digital governance is ultimately a depoliticised mode of governance that derives its tasks "empirically from the world, rather than from human actors as subjects." Fuchs, in his response, argues that modernity itself contains potentials for post-capitalism – via creating new technologies that transcend the logic of instrumental reason – and sees Hegelian and humanist Marxism as more feasible ways of thinking than post-modernism.

Fuchs outlines 14 reasons "why we need Marx today" for understanding, criticising, and changing society in Chapter 4. The analytical distinction between digital commodities and digital commons is one; precarious labour, Marx' thoughts on ideology and (commodity and political) fetishism, and the importance of social struggles and practical humanism are some of the others. Chandler questions the relevance of Marxist humanism for engaging with and critiquing Big Data Capitalism. Big Data discourses are not a "peak modernist abstraction" but constitute an entirely new epistemological approach that seeks to bypass the subject-object distinction entirely.

Paul Rekret (Chapter 6) criticises post-humanist theorizing for not accounting for the material conditions of the emergence of modernity's dualisms, despite these being inseparable from capitalist processes of dispossession and enclosure. Hybridity therefore reflects divisions and separations within capitalist societies; these are now merely reorganised by techno-science upon a global and neo-colonial scale. Robert Cowley qualifies Rekret's assertions by pointing out the variety of posthumanist thinking; its rejection of universalist aspirations; its "celebration" of contingency; and the danger of exaggerating its actual reach.

Moving to digital labour, Chapter 8 by Kylie Jarrett argues that Marxist Feminist theories of domestic work help to explain the economic and cultural logics of consumer labour in digital media. To understand labour in Big Data Capitalism we need to "recover and incorporate labour histories that do not belong to white men in industrial labour", e.g., sexed, gendered, racialized, and sexualised work. We also need to eschew the binary between productive and unproductive labour in order to draw a "holistic picture of how Big Data Capitalism organises us as economic units and individual subjectivities." Joanna Boehnert agrees with the general thrust of Jarrett's argument. She points to the concept of the 'social factory' and how capitalism is expanding its alienating, expropriating, and commodifying logics into the social domain. Twitter is her case in point, a commercial platform that users contribute to and rely on but that does not belong to them.

In Chapter 10, Phoebe W. Moore looks at the 'barbarism' of workplace surveillance in digitalised workplaces and investigates the affective dimension of platform capitalism. Moore describes how capitalism has expanded labour into people's lives beyond work, how it has "restructured these spaces along quantitative lines, to bring workers back into capitalism." Elisabetta Brighi concurs that the "injunction of productivity" has captured the affective, emotive sphere in its entirety. Brighi argues that precarity emerges as the purest form of alienation and that neoliberalism is translating into an epidemic of bipolar disorder or psychosis.

Jack Linchuan Qiu describes two modes of "iSlavery" in Chapter 12. One regards the production-mode of modern slavery as manifested in the mining of coltan in the DR Congo or the assembly line work at Foxconn. The other mode regards the consumption of digital gadgets such as Facebook or mobile games, which Qiu likens to the addictive consumption of sugar and rum during the transatlantic slave-trade in the 17th century. Peter Goodwin, while supportive of the relevance and moral clarity of Qiu's work, questions the conceptual rigour of the 'slave' terminology to describe conditions of labour and consumption in digital capitalism. The workers described by Qiu are exploited wage workers, not slaves; and to treat the general use of digital gadgets as an addiction – and this addiction as enslavement – Goodwin deems as even more implausible.

Shifting the focus to digital politics, Jodie Dean interrogates the notion of the "political subject" in digital activism and critique (Chapter 14). She takes issue with Hardt &

Negri's assertion of the democratic capacities of horizontal and autonomous (digital) networks. Against this "techno-utopianism" Dean highlights how communicative capitalism stimulates the production of networks that generate power law distributions, but also how these emergent hierarchies can become important means of contestation and political struggle. Paulina Tambakaki acknowledges that democratic institutions in communicative capitalism tend to nurture existing inequalities and hierarchies. But she points out the dangers that a hierarchical common of communism could bring about. She also looks at the Occupy movement as an example of a crowd without a vanguard that has developed a durable critique of the institutional establishment in lieu of immediate transformative change.

In Chapter, 16 Paolo Gerbaudo argues that the mode of organisation of political parties tends to be analogous to respective contemporary modes of production: the mass party during the height of the Fordist factories; the platform party in the post-industrial service economy; and the digital party in our current network society. Gerbaudo explains how the digital party employs a participatory architecture (via digital communication) as a substitute for a physical and bureaucratic infrastructure. This disintermediation, however, strengthens organisational extremes, which leads to a major contradiction between the direct participation of digital party members and a reliance on charismatic and centralised leadership. Anastasia Kavada sees the parallels between models of political and economic participation as being better explained by changing media and political environments. She focuses on the contradictory objectives of movement parties – their goal of winning elections in the existing system versus their organising around a yet non-existing model of democracy – that lead to the observed structure of hyperleader/superbase. But the potential remains open for superbases to win elections and govern themselves and then be able to cast aside their hyperleadership as remnants of the past.

In the final exchange, Antonio Negri describes how living labour in digital capitalism is re-appropriating fixed capital. This takes place in the form of algorithms – fixed capital born of the 'general intellect' – that become integrated into the bodies and brains of workers. In order to fully actualise "the power of machinic subjectivities and their cooperative networks", Negri argues, this fixed capital has to be socially (not individually) re-appropriated and "therefore transferred from private property to the commons." The appropriation of fixed capital is thus a political struggle. Fuchs then suggests that "Big Data commonism" should take the form of "Small Data", i.e., the minimally necessary storage of data. Fuchs identifies two ways to re-appropriate algorithms: participatory budgeting and capital taxation, and platform co-ops and peer-to-peer production.

"Digital Objects, Digital Subjects" brings together an impressive group of critical scholars. It offers theoretically rich and thought-provoking treatises on the malaises of contemporary digital capitalism, but also points to a number of avenues for sustainable critique and viable activist opposition. Both a strength and a weakness,

this interdisciplinary essay collection addresses a plethora of issues, speaks to a variety of academic and activist discourses, and offers a great number of jumping-on points for academic and practical engagement with modes and forms of digital and Big Data capitalism. Some of the chapters – like those by Rekret, Moore, or Negri – are firmly situated within their respective disciplinary discourses, making their arguments and use of terminology a (worthwhile) challenge to uninitiated readers. A great help for understanding and contextualising the essays – and an exemplary way of structuring such an edited book – are the responses to each chapter. Whether they provide counter-arguments, qualifications, and re-contextualisation, or instead offer supporting evidence and theoretical corroborations, these reflections help to create a more discursive presentation and exchange of ideas and perspectives. This greatly benefits the reader, who with this book can find (a) an overview of contemporary issues and critical debates on digital capitalism; (b) entry points into the work of renowned scholars from various disciplines (Communication and Media, Political Theory, International Relations, Geography); and (c) a selection of concise readings for use in graduate and post-graduate teaching on digital capitalism and related subjects.

References

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