



Capitalist unrealism: Countering the crisis of critique and imagination

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Introduction: Capitalism, unpacked

How does capitalism – in its various guises – capture the value that we produce in society? There are many ways to answer this question, because capitalism has many ways to extract value from us (Chertkovskaya et al., 2016; Hanlon, 2017). On the surface, everything above board. Businesses erect factories and offices for us to work in; workers sign contracts and receive wages for their daily efforts; and shareholders put in the capital and get a return on their investments. But below the surface, things are not quite so straightforward. Like a many-tentacled sea beast, contemporary capitalism also roams the depths and devours whatever it finds: public utilities (‘let’s privatize it!’), the counterculture (‘let’s brand it!’), conceptual art (‘let’s monetize it!’). Even when we highlight its injustice and inhumanity, capitalism just nods along and wonders how it can turn protest into profit. This is the new spirit of capitalism that Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe, a spirit that feeds off the energy of its adversaries like a parasite. Capitalism is not monolithic; it is, by definition, a hybrid form – and it’s this very hybridity that gives our economic order life and longevity, despite (or because of) all the dirt that’s slung in its direction.

Traditionally, capitalism has used violence to lay claim to everything that escapes from it. This is what Marx (1976/1990) called ‘primitive

accumulation', a process that involves forcibly appropriating land, property, and labour. Primitive accumulation has played out most brutally in the history of European colonialism: the conquest of foreign lands, the looting of natural resources, and the enslavement of indigenous populations. There is nothing subtle about primitive accumulation, and its violence is explicit.

This violence remains with us today (Birch and Springer, 2019; Harvey, 2003; Robinson, 1983/2000). But it is complemented by more insidious forms of coercion, one that is based as much on seduction and pleasure as it is on cruelty and oppression. We now work for capitalism as much in our free time as we do when we are being paid – not because we have to, but because we *want* to (Beverungen et al., 2013). We give our labour freely to our employers whenever we reply to emails or take part in Slack conversations outside of working hours. We give our labour freely to tech giants like Google, YouTube, and Meta whenever we search online, watch a video, or post a comment. And we give our labour freely to property developers whenever we make our neighbourhoods safer, cleaner, or hipper. Capitalism appropriates and hoovers up this value much like a 1980s stockbroker doing lines of coke at lunchtime: habitually, excessively, and without any concerns of an ethical nature.

How do we respond to a capitalism that is relentless in its pursuit of profit from untapped sources? Resisting capitalism today is like living out Don Michael Corleone's famous phrase from *The Godfather Part III*, a phrase that reflects the ageing mobster's inability to extricate himself from the world of hoods and gangsters: 'Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in'. Capitalism seems to be like a mafia boss to whom you owe a debt that can never be repaid. It wants everything from you: your ideas, your relationships and love, your loyalty, and every single penny you make (see also Hoedemaekers et al., 2012).

Yet modes of subversion do exist; forms of resistance are possible (Vandenberghe, 2008). Whether or not they are effective is a different matter. While some people and organizations try to subvert capitalism from the outside, others seek to unsettle it from the inside (Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004) – using its own logic to subdue it, like political-economic jiu-jitsu. The promise and limitations of both approaches seem evident if we look, for

example, to the world of artistic production, especially in its non-institutional, guerrilla forms.

The street art produced by the anonymous graffiti artist known as Banksy exemplifies the never-ending tug-of-war between capitalism and its discontents. Banksy's art addresses themes that are explicitly political in nature and often satirical in tone, taking aim at the cruelty and venality at the heart of contemporary capitalism. His most famous works include 'One Nation Under CCTV' (a commentary on the pervasiveness of state surveillance in the UK); 'Flying Balloon Girl' (a silhouette of a girl being lifted up by balloons that's painted on the side of the Israeli West Bank barrier, symbolizing a desire for freedom from occupation); and 'Slave Labour' (a stencilled image of a child labourer who is sewing together Union Jack bunting, criticizing the British use of overseas sweatshops) (Ross, 2016). Yet notice how easily Banksy's artworks are gobbled up by the economic order they set out to challenge. If they are not defaced or destroyed, or preserved for posterity beneath a sheet of Perspex, the murals are often removed from the public spaces in which they appear – a process that involves specialized crews removing entire sections of wall – and sold off in auctions for hundreds of thousands of pounds, dollars, or euros. In other words, the labour that Banksy freely gives is turned into pure profit by the very system that is subject to critique.

The irony is not lost on Banksy. Perhaps in response to the commercialization of street art, Banksy tried to turn the tables on market forces and give capitalism a taste of its own bitter medicine. In 2018, a framed copy of his iconic mural 'Girl with Balloon' was sold at the renowned auction house Sotheby's for just over one million pounds. Immediately after the auctioneer struck his gavel, the artwork began to self-destruct. Initiated by remote control, the canvas was shredded by a mechanism that had been built into the frame (although the mechanism jammed and the destruction was incomplete). The destruction of the artwork has echoes of Michael Landy's 2001 performance piece, *Break Down*, which involved putting all of the artist's belongings – over 7,000 items, including his previous artworks – into a mechanical crusher and grinding them into obliteration (Sooke, 2016). The point, of course, was to question the basic tenets of consumer capitalism by initiating a process of de-accumulation (see also Caffentzis, 2010). Although

Banksy takes aim at the rarefied art market, rather than the consumer products market, the same principle underpins his Sotheby's stunt.

Whether it was a genuine attempt to disrupt the commodification of art or an elaborate hoax played on a gullible public is irrelevant. What matters is that, far from interrupting the capitalist feeding frenzy, the stunt only increased the value of Banksy's original artwork. In 2021, the half-shredded painting was sold for over 18 million pounds under its new title, 'Love is in the Bin' (Palumbo, 2021). Carnivorous capitalism, smelling fresh meat, takes another bite.

The lesson seems to be this: you cannot escape from the tendrils of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, no matter how hard you try to wrest yourself free. This was, at least, Mark Fisher's message in *Capitalist Realism*: there is no alternative to capitalism because the 'alternative' becomes a part of the power it seeks to countermand – or sold to the highest bidder. As Fisher (2009: 6) puts it, 'capitalism is very much like the Thing in John Carpenter's film of the same name: a monstrous, infinitely plastic entity, capable of metabolizing and absorbing anything with which it comes into contact'. Just as in the film, it is difficult to know how to respond to something that takes on the shape and dimensions of everything around you. Do you try to provoke it or outwit it?

Much has changed, though, since Fisher's text was written: Britain's exit from the European Union, Donald Trump's election to high political office, a global pandemic, the hollowing out of civil rights and environmental protections by the US Supreme Court, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the destabilization of the world economic order being only the most prominent examples. So, as society undergoes a protracted period of crisis and transformation, we might ask whether there are, in fact, alternatives that cannot be (fully) usurped by capitalist motives (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014). Can we inject capitalism, in other words, with a dose of healthy 'unrealism'?

In this open issue, we suggest potential answers to this question. The open issue consists of three articles and one note (as well as two book reviews), each reflecting on how we might challenge the dynamics of contemporary capitalism. The contributions suggest that, by reclaiming the commons and

by reconfiguring our creativity and imagination, it might be possible to short-circuit the inner-wiring of capitalism...at least locally and temporarily. Before we outline the contributions, in the remainder of the editorial, we flesh out – in more nuanced, theoretical terms – what this introduction has only hinted at: the push-and-pull of being and becoming, solidity and liquefaction, and power, counter-power and critique in work relations, organizational forms, and society in general.

Struggles with and over appropriative capitalist logics

There have been numerous attempts over the years to commodify and capitalize on what lies at the heart of ‘communicative capitalism’ (Mumby, 2016), not least our relationships, our subjectivities, and our creative capacities. There are, however, obstacles and limits to such appropriation attempts. In other words, there seems to be always ‘something that flees the system, something that is not controllable’ (Vandenberghe, 2008: 878) or manageable (Cameron, this issue; Karppi et al., 2016).

One reason for this, following Karakilic and Painter (this issue), is the ontological ‘primacy of process’, a privileging of movement over substance and stasis (Chia, 1999). For scholars inspired by process philosophy, being is constituted by its *becoming* (Whitehead, 1929). Such a perspective implies that organizations are not, or no longer, considered fixed entities but temporarily stabilized patterns of relations, forged out of an ‘underlying sea of ceaseless change’ (Chia, 2014: 10). In particular, a process-based ontology points to the limitations of management’s attempt to appropriate and control organization, an insight that Chia (1999: 224) reflects on:

Organization acts to arrest and convert the otherwise wild and infrangible forces of nature into a more predictable and, hence, liveable world. Acts of organizing, much like the ceaseless building of sand-dykes to keep the sea at bay, reflect the ongoing struggle to tame the intrinsically nomadic forces of reality.

Try as it might, organization can, from this point of view, never quite domesticate the nomadic forces that shape it, constitute it, and give it structural form. We must hence recognize that there are always ‘fleeting forces’ (Cameron, this issue) that subvert the attempt to fully absorb and

neutralize the disorder(s) within corporate organizations (Plotnikof et al., 2022). Indeed, as Foucault and critical scholars, more overall, remind us, any type of governmentality (neoliberal or otherwise) will inevitably trigger modes of opposition, insubordination, and resistance, i.e., ‘resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power’ (Foucault, 1982: 221; Donzelot and Gordon, 2008).

While economic market logics dominate the contemporary ‘spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), such logics are, as above-mentioned, neither absolute nor invulnerable. This is also shown by the contributions to this issue. The contributions by Kioupkiois (this issue) and Zechner (this issue), in particular, suggest that the commons, both digital and IRL, have the potential to undermine capitalization and economic valorization. Meanwhile, the contributions by Cameron (this issue) and Karakilic and Painter (this issue) illustrate that ‘production factors’ that are core to communicative-immaterial capitalism, including creativity and affect, also threaten to undermine management and regulation (see also Karppi et al., 2016). Qualities such as difference, surprise, multiplicity, heterogeneous becoming, and indeterminacy, which are immanent in constructs like creativity, mean that ‘something unorganisable’ (Karakilic and Painter, this issue) is always a part of creative processes. This does not mean, of course, that attempts to enclose and ‘contain what is not containable’ (Karakilic and Painter, this issue) are dissolved. But it does illustrate that, within contemporary capitalism, power and control do not operate in a unidirectional manner; they are polyvocal and accompanied by variegated tensions and struggles (Foucault, 1982). After all, dynamics and adaptability are not only a characteristic of the current capitalist configuration (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; De Angelis, 2007), but also a part of modes of insubordination and subversion at work (Hoedemaekers et al., 2012; Vandenberghe, 2008).

Struggles over capitalist, managerial logics manifest in multiple forms, as the contributions to this issue make clear. They can manifest in more or less explicit *critique* and problematization of extant socio-economic structures and conditions. As constellations of struggle, the commons, e.g., provide sites of, specifically, feminist critique and counter-conduct that challenge appropriative, exploitative practices of (re)production central to

contemporary capitalism (Federici and Caffentzis, 2014; Caffentzis, 2010). In this issue, for example, Kioupiolis and Zechner illustrate how political strategies and tactics can subvert uneven, constraining social hierarchies, orders, and divisions in the virtual spaces reclaimed for peer-to-peer production (in the former case) and urban spaces reclaimed for self-organized child-care (in the latter case). These contributions demonstrate how it is possible to build powerful ‘counter-empires’ that allow ‘not being governed or...not being governed *like that* and at that cost’ (Foucault, 1997: 29).

Subversion and resistance can, however, also be expressed in more *creative-explorative* forms that foreground imagination and experimentation, forms that are guided by an interest in creating new ideas, possibilities, and ‘ways of seeing, being, and relating’ (Perini, 2010: 183) – and, hence, inventing alternatives to the status quo (see also Karakilic and Painter, this issue). A core concern of creative practices of contestation is, in light hereof, an engagement with the question: what could be(*come*) (Dey and Mason, 2018)? Such engagement is often found in cultural-artistic initiatives, types of creative production that involve imagining other possible worlds – just think of the surreal landscapes of Salvador Dali or the polka dot installations of Yayoi Kusama. There are, further, examples of artistic projects that intervene on both a creative-aesthetic and a critical-political level. The *Yes Men* collective is an exemplar in this regard, a ‘culture jamming’ effort that produces artefacts in order to counteract the practices of corporate and political elites. In this way, the *Yes Men* seek to re-envision the popular social imaginary as well as contest dominant political-economic orders (*ibid.*; Perini, 2010). The latter is, specifically, grounded in the idea of ‘power to’ and differs, as such, from traditional positional power (Hales, 2001).

We commonly assume that orthodox organizations are characterized by formal hierarchies and institutional structures, exerting authority over those who work within them. Such positional power is often referred to as ‘power over’ (many others), or power from above (Hales, 2001). The idea of ‘power to’, however, entails a different approach (Clegg et al., 2006). ‘Power to’ foregrounds the dynamic and relational components of power. It asks how power can be reduced to a minimum of domination and, moreover, be used to mobilize ideas, action, change, creativity, and people – not least their energies, desires, attitudes, and inclinations (*ibid.*; Hardt, 2001).

In ‘building movements which are aimed at changing conditions and structures’ (Perini, 2010: 193), critical-political *and* creative-experiential interventionists like members of the Yes Men seem indeed guided by such questions. This, further, holds true for movements such as the commoning movement (Zechner, this issue), aiming to undermine the instrumental-appropriative logics of capitalist market economies and work towards social transformation. In doing so, they acknowledge that there is no outside to power. Individuals and groups are rather always implicated in power, in one way or another, whereby power can be enacted in multiple ways in social relations and organizational forms (Foucault, 1982). That said, rather than considering power an object or an end in itself, movements inspired by the idea of ‘power to’ view power as a productive capacity – a way to foster new modes of organizing and of relating to oneself and others (Weiskopf, 2021). The following section elaborates in more detail on what such alternate forms of organizing and relating could look like.

Organizing and relating differently: Assembling an affirmative-transformative critique

In accordance with the contributions to this *ephemera* issue, we now want to raise the question: what types of organizing might allow us to go beyond capitalist appropriation and, hence, foster ‘new kinds of social relationships, new kinds of relationships to the commodity’ (Perini, 2010: 195), and new kinds of, affirmative-transformative, critique?

The work of post-Marxist scholars (e.g. Hardt, 2001; Hardt and Negri, 2004, 2009; Virno, 2004) as well as critical process thinkers and philosophers (e.g. Chia, 1999, 2014; Deleuze, 1988; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) is helpful in addressing this question. Such work allows us to see, think, and speak ‘differently’ about organization and its politics. In particular, concepts such as the ‘multitude’, introduced by Hardt (2001), provide an organizational image that moves us beyond traditional ways of thinking about organizations, such as fixed boundaries, formal hierarchies, divisions of labour, and techniques of classification that divvy up tasks, responsibilities, and privileges within the organization. In contrast to this traditional organizational image, the idea of the multitude highlights the ‘internal

multiplicity of organization' (Linstead and Thanem, 2007: 1487), and reminds us thereby that our working lives are inherently fractured and many-faceted and, hence, that the structures of command-and-control are full of polyphonic cracks and clefts that can never be plastered over. More specifically, the idea of the multitude emphasizes difference, singularity, creativity, and openness, and views them as immanent to and constitutive of organization itself. As Hardt argues, organization is 'the composition of creative forces' and, as such, 'always an art' (Hardt, 2002: xv) – that is, an ongoing process of giving form to heterogeneous elements and relations, one that is counter-posed to self-containment and enclosure (Weiskopf, 2012).

The idea of the multitude not only points to the creative qualities of organization, though. It also illustrates that organization is infused with and surrounded by politics. In other words, the multitude is 'multiplicity made powerful' (Hardt, 2001: 392). The 'politics of multiplicity' (Deleuze, 1988), specifically, plays out in activities that seek to challenge and modify established conditions, to enact 'the multiple' and spur it into action (see also Cameron, this issue). The contributions of Kiouпкиolis (this issue) and Zechner (this issue) elaborate on this enactment by portraying the politics of multiplicity as an irreducible part of commoning practices. Such practices foster an ethos of organization that is grounded in ideals like participation, solidarity, equality, care, and open-ended democracy. By this means, the practices described by Kiouпкиolis and Zechner create interventions into the socio-economic fabric in critical and creative ways. These interventions present a central part of the politics of multiplicity that, following Linstead and Thanem (2007: 1487), essentially advocates 'a creative pluralism of organization (based on enfoldedness, relational connections and becoming) against a controlling pluralism of order (based on positions, interests and governmentality)'.

Against this background, we would like to conclude our discussion with some reflections on an *affirmative* kind of *critique* that seeks to destabilize and re-create contemporary socio-economic and organizational worlds – from within. In comparison to conventional notions of critique, such a form of critique does not come from a superior position and is, thus, not interested in assessment and judgement from outside (Locker, 2021; Weiskopf, 2012). It rather proposes to closely engage with the specific field and conditions that it

challenges (Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004) and assumes – in consonance with the idea of ‘power to’ – that *local* engagement is the most productive kind of engagement (Kavanagh, forthcoming). Consequently, an affirmative critique is ‘more akin to appreciation than fault-finding’ (*ibid.*) and not that ‘shy about making...proposals for change’ (*ibid.*).

An affirmative critique thus extends beyond a focus on problematization; it also engages with the question of how alternatives (to capitalist economies, to traditional management, to established organizational forms, etc.) might be developed and furthered. Dey and Mason (2018) remind us in this context about the ‘transformative capacity’ (*ibid.*: 88) of creative *imagination*. By envisioning other forms of the social, new modes of thinking and acting – and along with them, ‘new realities’ (*ibid.*) – may, indeed, become possible. Such a task is not solely an individual endeavor, of course. It is a task for collective mobilization – and the cultivation of shared hope (*ibid.*). As Perini (2010: 196) puts it, imagination is a phenomenon that allows us ‘to link our private experiences to broader collective struggles, social institutions, and our society’s position’. If there is any obstacle to socio-economic change and transformation, then it mainly lies, from this vantage point, in the ‘crisis of imagination caused by the orthodox social imaginary’ (Dey and Mason, 2018: 97), and less with our actual ability to build alternative, more participatory and sustainable forms of organization and social life beyond capital/ism (see also Birch and Springer, 2019; Federici and Caffentzis, 2014).

In light hereof, the purpose of critique becomes the creation and dissemination of ‘new possible worlds’ (Dey and Mason, 2018: 88), something that Foucault recognized many years ago:

I can’t help but dream about a kind of criticism that would not try to judge, but bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea-foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes – all the better...Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep. I’d like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be a sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms. (Foucault, 1980/1997: 323)

The contributions to this *ephemera* issue seek to engage in exactly the kind of affirmative-transformative critique that Foucault had in mind. They involve leaps of the imagination that question the capitalist complex in which we live. In doing so, they acknowledge that ‘imagination is not an untroubled space...but acquainted with uncertainty’ (Perini, 2010: 196) and, yet, they purposefully envision and propose alternatives for living with, organizing, working alongside, relating to, and caring for one another beyond the logics of extraction and appropriation (Caffentzis, 2010). There are no sentences handed down in what follows; only the lightning flashes of creative imagination, creating cracks and building subtle openings into the process.

The contributions

In her article ‘Childcare commons’ (this issue), Manuela Zechner asks what a community-based form of childcare might look like – and how it might change the city in which it takes place. Based on a four-year research project in Barcelona, Zechner explores how informal parental networks emerge and develop in an inner-city neighbourhood. Such networks provide support for parents that the state does not (or cannot) offer, based on the principle of mutual solidarity. Self-organized nurseries, workshops, healthcare centres, and cooperatives are just some of the elements of this complex, grassroots ‘ecology of care’. But these parental networks – composed primarily of mothers and to a lesser extent fathers – do more than provide help and assistance to those with children. They also challenge the dominant logic of municipal childcare and the top-down diktats of local government. Child-care is typically sequestered from public view; in the capitalist division of labour, the work that goes into social reproduction is atomized, invisible, and undervalued. The parental networks in Zechner’s study make visible this work of social reproduction and, in so doing, transform the act of care into a form of radical feminist politics – one that goes decisively ‘against and beyond capitalist economies of capital’ (Zechner, this issue). In this way, informal parental networks challenge what it means to *care for* but also *care about* children in an urban context.

In his article ‘Digital commons, the political, and social change’, Alexandros Kioupiolis reflects on the political significance of the digital commons. The

digital commons is a virtual space in which goods and services are produced and exchanged freely in a de-centralized, non-capitalist manner, facilitated by peer-to-peer (P2P) technology such as free and open source software. P2P ensures that anyone can contribute to and benefit from a shared resource. This means that, for its advocates, the digital commons promises to challenge the hierarchies and enclosures of private property in capitalist society and advance a radical democratic alternative. However, as Kioupkiolis reminds us, the digital commons risks being hijacked and co-opted by the very forces it seeks to counter. What is needed, therefore, is 'broader ranging politics of counter-hegemonic contest' (Kioupkiolis, this issue), one that seeks to disentangle P2P technology from capitalist markets and so makes it impossible to profit financially from the digital commons. Drawing on Gramsci, Kioupkiolis (this issue) urges us to push back against the dominant hegemony of capitalist production by adopting an attitude of 'conscious struggle', an attitude that's embodied in digital cooperatives like Enspiral, Sensorica, and the Guerilla Media Collective.

Emrah Karakilic and Mollie Painter open their article, 'The (un)surprising nature of creativity: A Deleuzian perspective on the temporality of the creative process', with the question whether or not creativity is manageable. Inspired by the work of Deleuze, Karakilic and Painter specifically engage with the paradoxical and contested nature of creativity and, concomitantly, suggest that creativity is 'capable of yielding temporal surprise' (Karakilic and Painter, this issue). To this extent, creativity allows for novel perspectives and unpredictable experiences to emerge. By this means, the authors cast into doubt utilitarian-instrumental approaches to creativity that we typically find in capitalist organizations. Karakilic and Painter also foster a processual perspective on creativity 'at work', which emphasizes the temporal dimensions of the creative process. Karakilic and Painter's analysis, particularly, shows how temporal dynamics in the creative process subvert managerial programming, design, and orchestration within and through time. On this basis, the authors conclude that temporal *becoming* is central to the creative process, allowing us to understand organizational creativity and practice 'differently' – that is, taking into account the surprise, serendipity, difference, and multiplicity that is immanent to creativity at work.

In her note, ‘Point of difference: The lost premise of creativity in “creative work”’, Alexia Cameron challenges the ubiquitous demand for creative ideas, products, and labour that constitutes specific experiences and ‘atmospheres’ within so-called affective capitalism. In particular, Cameron problematizes the typical instrumental-managerial approach to ‘being moved’ and affected. Using the example of a report from *Slack Technologies*, the note points to tensions, intricacies, and limitations that accompany current attempts to unify, measure, and align creativity, emotion, and affect at work. With reference to Spinoza, Cameron argues that the very premises of creativity – such as difference, exploration, and heterogeneous becoming – are denied by many organizations. This poses a challenge to the emergence of genuinely creative work that affects workers in a non-determined, open manner. Cameron’s note concludes with a plea for an opportunity for ‘being moved’ and ‘becoming moving’, which might undermine managerial attempts to appropriate and define creativity and instead foster alternative forms of creative labour that allow for ‘emancipatory potentials’ to emerge and unfold (Cameron, this issue).

The open issue is completed by two book reviews. In the first, ‘A posthumanist approach to practice and knowledge’, Laura Lucia Parolin reviews the second edition of Sylvia Gherardi’s *How to conduct a practice-based study: Problems and methods*. Focusing on the similarities and differences between the first and second editions, Parolin reiterates the main pillars of Gherardi’s practice-based approach, including the notion of situatedness, knowing in practice, embodied and aesthetic knowing, and technological, discursive and social infrastructures. In particular, Parolin considers the distinction between humanist practice approaches and posthumanist approaches, focusing ‘on the very process of connecting’ (Parolin, this issue) variegated elements and practices, a main contribution of the book. The second edition of *How to conduct a practice-based study* thus serves to enrich the current debate on (post)humanist approaches to practice and knowledge within MOS and the social sciences more generally.

In the second, ‘From biased robots to race as technology’, Inga Luchs’ reviews *Race after technology: Abolitionist tools for the New Jim Code* by Ruha Benjamin. With reference to Benjamin, Luchs reflects on the role of media technologies in governing and regulating individual and social life, paying particular

attention to how new technologies ‘reproduce and increase social inequalities under the guise of apparent objectivity and efficiency’ (Benjamin, 2019: 5f.). Luchs, moreover, asks what we can do to more effectively counteract the discrimination that underpins contemporary media technologies and ‘their entanglement with structural racism inherent in society’ (Luchs, this issue). Indeed, what an emancipatory, alternative approach to technology might look like seems to present one of the most pressing questions that scholars from the social sciences and beyond will in future need to address.

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