INVI SIBLE HAN D(S)

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Hidden Labor
AI-Driven Capitalism
and the COVID-19
Pandemic

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Whose Invisible Hand(s)?

Magdalena Taube and Krystian Woznicki

In the past 30 years, globalization has been underpinned by ideas and laws that have enabled governments to deprioritize the needs of their citizens. After the financial crisis of 2007-08, this tendency was driven by punishing austerity, including ever harsher cutbacks and accelerated privatization. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the devastating consequences of these tendencies. The neoliberal restructuring of health care – as one of the key frameworks for deprioritizing the needs of citizens – reveals itself as a (racialized) death machine that enables capital's requirements to be prioritized. If this tendency reshuffles the *dehumanizing of capitalism* from previous historical episodes such as colonialism and industrialization, it also consolidates the idea that "capitalism is an intelligent computer"— a computer that turns qualities into quantities, enshrines calculating as the dominant form of labor, and promotes the idea of self-learning, quasi-autonomous machines running production and the economy at large. The SILENT WORKS project explores this Western phantasm as *AI-driven capitalism*, thereby expanding on the already established notion of "computational capitalism" (Beller, 2017). Conceived thus, the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a crisis of this very system, coming about as, all of a sudden, the ostensible frictionlessness of self-running machines has been interrupted and distorted by an unexpected disruptive factor: de-humanized humans, whose vulnerability (also read: contagiousness) necessitates the *shutdown of the system* and thus the suspension of capital's allegedly seamless and incessant circulation.

The pandemic-related crisis as a crisis of AI-driven capitalism shows the limits of the tendency to dehumanization. Hence, we are at a crossroads. Will governments and corporations take the crisis as an opportunity to rethink and remake the "operating system" in accordance with human as well as environmental needs? Or will the shutdown be used for a radicalization of AI-driven capitalism? Meaning, will the shutdown be followed by upgraded AI fantasies/technologies as a way to diminish the risks that vulnerable humans (and environments) could pose to capitalism?

The latter would mean pushing "capitalism as a self-running machine" further towards independence from humans in general and human labor in particular. This is why it is high time to vigorously confront that this ostensible independence has – from the outset – been a myth. Meaning: "capitalism as a self-running machine" was never independent of human labor, but dependent on the devaluation, decomposition, and, ultimately, dehumanization of labor. Enforcing the belief in the high-tech version of Adam Smith's "invisible hand" enabled *the invisibilization of hands essential to upholding the system* such as laborers in basic supply (people in logistics, delivery, and tech work) and social reproduction work (people in childcare, elder care, and healthcare on the one hand, and in cleaning, maintenance, and repair on the other). In other words, while AI is being promoted and mystified, old and new forms of what we call "hidden labor" are thriving. In fact, unrecognized, underacknowledged, undervalued, unwaged, illegalized, and, ultimately, *unhumaned* labor is increasing and diversifying. And the underlying structures of subjugation are becoming ever more elusive hybrids of old and new forms of power.

In all probability, governments aligned with corporations will advance AI-driven capitalism in one way or another. The reasons for this are wide-ranging: from the fact that governments, despite ostensibly shifting their agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic to "saving humans," remain committed to capitalist priorities, to the fact that tech industries are emerging during the pandemic as the major driving forces (be it cloud infrastructure, fintech, or platform-driven services as varied as online learning and food supply). This said, a radicalization of AI-driven capitalism would entail a stronger dehumanization and invisibilization of labor. This presupposes that we as laborers consent to being invisibilized and dehumanized. But what if we don't? Could we then become capable of confounding, contesting and recoding the structures of power to emancipatory ends— and turning AI-driven capitalism against itself? One thing seems certain: The more we become aware of how dehumanizing and invisibilizing labor consolidates structures of power that continuously aggravate inequality and injustice, the more we gain a perspective on how labor could be mobilized from within underacknowledged, unrecognized, undervalued, unwaged, or illegalized workplaces against the very structures of power that are circumscribing them. This could activate the potential

of the growing "reserve army" of workers. After all, if our labor is indispensable – but presented as disposable and even nonexistent – then capitalism's dependency on labor has reached a critical limit. At this limit, labor gains a unique political quality.

The interviews published in this volume were conducted between March and June—a period in which, following China's example, drastic containment measures were also being introduced in the West, including shutting down air traffic, closing state borders, ordering the population to stay at home, and allowing – if not in fact compelling – "systemically relevant services" to be kept up. The related explosion of labor struggles would probably have gone unnoticed had the invisibilized work of people who actually provide "systemically relevant services" not become more visible in the COVID-19 pandemic. Exploring this critical moment, this series of interviews brings together our findings from within emergencies in Austria, Germany, Italy, and the US, among others. All of the interviews emerged under the almost paralyzing impression of the escalating pandemic, many of them within just a few days, in a fit of work fever at our privileged retreats (read also: "home offices"), with quick exchanges of emails. The selected texts intend to be representative neither of the results overall nor of the struggles in question. Putting them together, we were bound by a page limit and by our quest for a balance between discursive density and diversity. As a consequence, the selection mainly conveys views from the West and on emergent struggles in the West, albeit often in a self-critical manner. The German versions of the interviews have been published on Berliner Gazette and the English versions in our blog on Mediapart.fr.

Last but not least, the two images included here are intended to mark the field of tension: protective gloves as one of the most telling symbols of the crisis photographed from the TV screen at home in March and outraged laboring subjects at a Black Lives Matter protest in Berlin photographed at Alexanderplatz about two and half months later.

Berlin, June 2020

The Explosion of Authoritarianism and Labor Struggles in Italy's 'War on Corona'

Interview with Niccolò Cuppini

One could say that the current pandemic – structured and operating like a network – is a logistical phenomenon. For this reason, some argue that the pandemic can only be 'combated' if it is met on the very ground of logistics, reminding us that logistics is a minor art of war, e.g. the work of supply to and around the battlefield. This line of argument enables projecting the dream of frictionless capitalism – with logistics at its core – onto the emerging market to 'wage war against pandemics.' This dream of frictionlessness presupposes that 'things simply work' – as if operated by an artificial intelligence – rather than that 'someone actually works to make things work.' Before we go into these issues, let us start where one could say this story begins: in March 2020, several governments, including France, declared 'war on corona.' In Italy, the first and most pre-eminent European laboratory of the pandemic, war itself was not explicitly declared. One could say that Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was more managerial about the challenge, instead declaring rule by decree, a style of governance that is defined as allowing "quick, unchallenged promulgation of law by a single person or group, and is used primarily by dictators, absolute monarchs and military leaders." How can this difference be explained?

Italy has been the first epicenter of the pandemic in the West, and the country slipped slowly into the crisis rather than experiencing an instant shock. This circumstance gave rise to a gradual approach by public institutions, media, unions, and in the scientific debate on how to deal with the emerging pandemic. Hence, the growing social danger of the virus was initially perceived 'at the bottom of society' (where, for instance, Volunteer Emergency Brigades emerged) rather than in a top-down configuration. Then, in a second phase, the authoritarian, military imaginary about COVID-19 came into play. In the course of this, so-called "emergency procedures"

were adopted according to the "coronavirus decree" announced by Conte, first with regard to the North of Italy, and then to the entire country.

What happened when the management of the crisis became a top-down matter?

A turning point was the images of an impressive column of military vehicles crossing the heart of Bergamo on March 17th, transporting corpses that Bergamo's cemetery could no longer contain. After that moment, many politicians started to call for total curfew, tanks in the street, drones, all sorts of surveillance, abolition of privacy, and increasingly severe penalties for those who did not stay at home. In this context it is important to note that the deployment of a police-military dispositive is a practice but also a rhetoric, intending to transfer guilt to individual subjects, while freeing those in power from any responsibility.

The authorities can also be said to free themselves from responsibility and accountability by mobilizing the self-explanatory and self-evident appeal of a state of emergency. 'Everybody can experience the disaster as given, so nobody has to ask why the head of state is reverting to extralegal measures.' Authoritarianism appears just as self-explanatory and self-evident as the threat it claims to combat. How did Conte make use of such mechanisms?

After a sort of state of exception was officially declared in mid-March, a securitarian mobilization started with a great emphasis on police controls in the street, the use of the military corps to guard the cities, and so on. However, it is remarkable that, apart from these "visible" aspects, the more profound transformation in the power dynamics was resorting absolutely to complete management of the crisis by the executive power. The power of the legislative has basically been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for many days the national and regional governments were the only actors on the field. Rule by decree was the legal instrument adopted to define all institutional procedures.

This is not a novelty. In the last decade the balance of public powers has progressively moved toward the executive and law decrees have often been implemented. Yet, these tendencies exploded during this crisis. Another aspect to consider is how the Prime Minister uses the media. Giuseppe Conte quite often uses Facebook live streaming to communicate the government's decisions, even if these decisions are not yet contained in official documents. This direct link between a leader and the population echoes a period of war during which verticalization of the decision making process thrives.

'National security' is a major objective of authoritarianism and exceptional politics alike. However, 'national security' seems to be contradicted by the fact that Italy's primary health care and basic supply need to be upheld through extensive networks that are not limited to the quarantine zone borders of hot spots like the Lombardy region, that in fact often extend beyond the boundaries of national territory as such. How do these contradictions play out in the public debate, e.g. with regard to primary health care and basic supply need?

It is possible to sketch two poles in the public debate about these contradictions. On the one hand, there are people maintaining that the pandemic has definitely shown the unsurmountable limits of the form in which contemporary economies are shaped. In other words, they declare the end of so-called globalization, pointing to the need for a re-nationalization and stricter control over national boundaries. On the other hand, it has been said that global value chains are both the problem and the solution. That is to say: it is quite evident that the pandemic first developed in the North part of the country because it is the territory most interconnected and entangled in the global economy, but at the same time those thinking in this direction maintain that the solution can only be found at the global level.

From my perspective, the two poles include both truth and misleading elements at the same time. I think we should criticize and go beyond this opposition, one that somehow again proposes the dichotomy that has shaped the political arena in the last years—the opposition between a sovereign/populist side and a neoliberal globalization approach. At this juncture, I cannot go deeper into this debate, but what can be said, for example, is that both approaches tend to conceal that in the last ten years all governments (from the right to the left) have supported radical cuts to public health care and de-invested in research, two aspects that need both local *and* transnational responses.

How did workers respond to this paradoxical and conflictual scenario?

There were and still are a great number of struggles. The first step of these worker struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic was a reaction in the field of what could tentatively be designated 'social reproduction work,' which is usually invisibilized but was the first to pay for the crisis situation. Here, I am referring to people working in childcare, elder care, and healthcare on the one hand, and in cleaning, maintenance, and repair on the other. Then, a radical cycle of riots occurred within the Italian penitential system. More than 25 jails erupted, with prisoners occupying the jails and destroying some parts of them. This rebellion was violently repressed, and 16 people died. It was a sort of thermometer for the 'corona crisis,' with heat emerging from the lowest sector of society. The second step was the massive spontaneous wave of strikes in factories and different workplaces, mostly in Northern Italy. The third step, concentrated in the South, was a social fibrillation that took the form of some attempts to take goods from supermarkets without paying for them. Within this context, workers in the logistics sector mobilized since the beginning.

At the end of March it was announced that Italy is 'shutting down all sectors of production'— making it sound like all sectors of the economy would now be switched to 'sleep mode.' Tellingly, there is no mention of logistics, which is not reducible to the production sector, as it is primarily about circulation, last but not least in the realm of basic supply. How does the orchestrated shutdown – supposedly of Italy's entire economy – block out this particular economic dimension of the 'war on corona'?

Confindustria (the general confederation of Italian industry) and the government did not want to shut down workplaces. Workers who suffered from a sanitary situation that was becoming ever more difficult had a different opinion and went on strike. It was an extraordinary mobilization that finally led to "the blocking of production." The crucial point of these struggles is that this conflict led the government to act by declaring the shutdown of production, with the exception of what was labeled "essential services." The very definition of what should be considered "essential" became the front line of this conflict.

In the first moment its definition was really extensive, but it was reduced after the pressure of the unions. What is remarkable is that logistics, from the first moment, was considered "essential"—and still is. Therefore, the logistics sector is still at work, even if a "silent" struggle made by mass absence from workplaces and temporary interruptions of logistics chains is ongoing. So logistics has finally become visible to the general public as a crucial vector for capital reproduction. However, in Italy there are still millions of workers going to their workplaces, and the rapid proliferation of "smart working" conditions is another element to be analyzed.

If workers in Amazon warehouses and supply chains are nowadays forced into compulsory labor that is even more 'dull, dirty, and dangerous' than before the pandemic, then this dark moment also opens up new opportunities to expand on the strikes within and against logistics companies such as Amazon. Could you dwell on the strikes and struggles in Italy's logistics sector during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Worker struggles in Northern Italy have been taking place for many years before the 'war on corona' transformed the logistics sector into the open secret of the 'last-standing' economic domain in Italy. In these many years of struggles within the logistics sector, workers have accumulated power. This power made it possible that all the logistics companies – like TNT, DHL, UPS – were disrupted by strikes and mass absence from work.

A slightly different situation occurred in the companies of the "new metropolitan logistics," or "last-mile logistics," such as Amazon and the platforms for home delivery (Deliveroo, UberEats, Glovo, etc.). Here, worker struggles and worker organization are more recent and erratic. Some strikes happened in Amazon's fulfillment centers, though without a strong effect, while as far as I know this has not happened on digital logistical platforms. However, I think that the brutal work intensification and the health risk posed to workers in these contexts is somehow nurturing an awareness among workers at these companies about their own role. This awareness is in turn mirrored in a broader public awareness about the systemic relevance of these workers. That is to say: it is becoming clear that working here is not a "gig job," but an essential

job for capital reproduction. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that this logistics branch will also be shaken in the future by new mobilizations.

Is there something new in the current worker struggles in Italy's logistics sector? 'New' in the sense that this extreme situation either brings new aspects to light or accelerates the evolution within this force field of power?

I think it is possible to hypothesize some main tendencies emerging within this crisis. The confirmation of the cruciality of logistics to the system and of the (actual or potential) counter-power of logistics workers will lead to capital's restructuring within the sector, with different tools: investment in technology and automation; new forms of bargaining and a selective repression of some worker organization; an acceleration in the use of digital platforms as forces of intermediation that are becoming the concrete infrastructure of everyday life; an – at least partial – change in workers' social composition (the strategic role of logistics will probably attract new segments of the labor force); an increased form of concentration/monopoly of logistics companies.

However, I think that even within this scenario of radical transformation of the logistics sector on the capital side, logistics will remain a strategic terrain of organization and conflict from the class struggle perspective. In these weeks, some organized rank and file unions in the logistics sector are becoming more receptive to social issues and more willing to grant workers greater public recognition. The hypothesis of 'logistics becoming a hub' through connections with heterogeneous social and workers struggles remains an intriguing political option.

Speaking of the power structure underlying the logistics sector, we would like to address the role of so-called 'cooperatives.' How can economic practices endow the 'things simply work' fiction with the appeal of a seemingly uncontestable formula of capitalism? How are cooperatives circumscribing the struggles in the logistics sector in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The system of cooperatives is the main managerial tool through which big and small logistics companies have precarized labor. Quite a paradoxical toppling. Cooperatives used to be the socialist form of self-organization of workers and peasants. Now they

act as an intermediary between the workers and companies, and as such have become an instrument for management to divide and discipline the labor force. Since cooperatives are often undermined by organized crime syndicates, their mediation enables particularly 'ungovernable' and 'unaccountable' forms of management and discipline.

At the end of the day, cooperatives are first of all an institutional arrangement. That said, logistics struggles in the last decade clashed directly with this system, somehow "regulating" it within the framework of new power relations. And an ambivalence emerged: if in the first struggles workers used to see cooperatives as their primary "enemy," they then discovered that direct employment by logistics firms also has many disadvantages (less "freedom" of the workers). So, at the moment, we could say that logistics is passing through a transitional phase in terms of labor force organization.

However, the crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic has somehow "verticalized" the conflict: new actors (the national government, the management of multi-national companies that usually delegates to their local subsidiaries, public security agencies) are on the field, and it seems that organized crime actors and the small cooperatives are "silent" at the moment.

In her book "The Deadly Life of Logistics" (2014), the political geographer Deborah Cowen suggests that logistics has come to shape war and trade. Here, logistics are considered the main realm in which, on the one hand, corporate and military strategy and tactics, and, on the other, grassroots counter-strategies of disruption are organized. This said, exceptional politics are increasingly deployed in realms such as special economic zones and corridors to optimize the 'flows of capital.' In what sense are the exceptional politics deployed by the Italian government during the COVID-19 pandemic creating a framework in which the contemporary entanglement of war and trade can be recalibrated in the name of logistics once again?

Even if the link between logistics and war is unquestionable, I opt for a more heterogeneous set of genealogical trajectories of contemporary logistics. In other words, I think that focusing only

on the command and control side of the logistics evolution blocks out many histories of struggles, rebellions, and also of a desire for freedom contained in the logistical attempt to move that also need to be taken into consideration when we discuss contemporary logistics. In this sense, I think that the angle through which it is more productive to look at exceptional politics here is not to focus on the exception itself, but rather on 'the light of normality' that exceptional times 'switch on'.

In this sense, a series of logistical processes will probably become more visible and tricky: from the implementation of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative in Italy to the logistical management of migration in the Mediterranean; from energy supplies through transnational corridors managed by Russia to big European projects of infrastructural connectivity; from the territorialization of multi-national logistics companies like Amazon to the implementation of a logic of "special economic zones" in some ports of the North or in some agricultural areas in the South; and so on and so forth.

But I do not think that exceptional politics in itself will radically transform all these processes connecting war and trade in the name of logistics. It is the whole framework of capital reproduction that is going to change. Again, not because of exceptional politics, but due to a set of latent contradictions that have exploded during the 'corona crisis.' The current "state of exception" was not declared as an act of power, but as a reaction to a condition that no power was equipped to manage. As Carl Schmitt famously stated, the sovereign is he who is able to decide *on* the state of exception, not *within* the state of exception. We are living in exceptional times, but I think that the development is completely open. Things can move in many different directions.

Berlin/Bologna, April 2020

Capitalism's System Error as 'Disaster' and Opportunity for Labor Struggles

Interview with Dario Azzellini

As a scientist and activist you've been dealing with workers' struggles for about 15 years. Your work seems to be taking a dramatic turn in the current pandemic, with a seemingly unprecedented mobilization, as evidenced by your recent participation in an online conference with 170 trade unionists from all over the world. What was the subject of the conference? What concerns did the trade unionists raise?

The online conference was organized by the Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED), a global network of trade unionists for climate justice and sustainable transformation. The network is now being used for global exchange on the situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Trade unionists from many countries participated: there were reports from the US, South Korea, the Philippines, India, Australia (and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region), and South Africa. There were talks about workers' struggles and attacks on workers' rights and their health and safety. They all emphasized that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the many deaths, is by no means a "natural" consequence of the pandemic, but the consequence of decades of cutbacks and neoliberal policies that have privatized public health care systems and services and made them worse, abolished workers' rights, and made employment precarious.

Dramatic accounts were delivered from, for example, the president of the New York City Nurses' Association, who reported on the collapse of the health care system, and from India, where hundreds of millions of people have no means to survive long isolation. I participated as an interested party, not as a trade unionist (although I have been unionized since my master's degree). I am a scientist and activist. In this situation, I can offer my knowledge and contacts from 15 years of global involvement with factory occupations for takeover under workers' control.

Are there common concerns across borders, for example, in the face of the current rise of authoritarianism worldwide?

Yes. Despite all the dramatic reports, everyone stressed the opportunities to use the current situation to strengthen international solidarity and wage battles for radical change. There is a clear awareness that nothing will ever be the same again. After all, the COVID-19 pandemic is merely a trigger and an amplifier for the obvious crisis. The impact is immense. The Global North has never raised so much government funding to support the economy, and I dare to predict that once those resources are used up, there will be still more mass layoffs and countless company closures. The US has turned out to be a failed state, and not only in terms of its health care system. In the first four weeks since March 18th, 22 million people have lost their jobs—meaning that many have lost their health insurance. The dead and the unemployed are predominantly black and Latinxs—in NYC, 72% of the dead are black and Latinxs. And this is happening in one of the richest countries in the world.

What consequences are emerging for joint, transnationally networked action?

In the US and many other countries there will be spontaneous labor struggles and strikes. The response of capital to the pandemic – and to the 'human uncertainty factor' – is accelerated automation. The relationship between labor and capital is in a process of complete change and this will have far-reaching consequences. Including for capitalism and its ability to survive. Surplus value can only be created from living labor. Nothing will be the same as before. There are two possible developments. On the one hand, the absolutely authoritarian and ultimately militarily violent assertion of capital interests; on the other, strong structural changes, the emergence of new political and economic systems. It is probable that both will happen. The struggles now and in the coming years are about which direction to take. Workers play a fundamental role here. A little more than half a year ago, a major study was published which, after examining more than 150 years of social struggles worldwide, concluded that the participation of workers in social struggles is crucial for democratization. I don't find that particularly surprising.

But there are many who have lost sight of this in recent decades. It will not be easy. The crisis and the attack are hitting trade unions and movements in a difficult phase. Although there have been massive mobilizations in the last ten years, it has not been possible to develop a generally convincing alternative with great appeal. The left – in the broadest sense, i.e., including all movements and organizations that advocate overcoming inequality and exploitation and a sustainable perspective for the future – is in a process of reorganizing and reframing itself.

Turning workers into patients and thus depriving them of political participation—this is a central feature of the current quarantine policy. What kind of influence does this policy have in Latin America?

We have to be careful about general statements like that. The spread, the countermeasures and the general situation differ greatly in different countries. The dictatorship in Bolivia is using the pandemic to consolidate its position; the military and police repression against members of the former ruling party of Evo Morales, the MAS, and against leftist movements has increased strongly; Bolivians from abroad are being prevented by force from entering, and the presidential elections have been postponed. The regime in Chile is also using the pandemic to quell the uprising that has been going on for months; they have postponed their constitutional referendum.

In El Salvador, the recently elected right-wing Nayib Bukele ordered a complete curfew – before there was even one known COVID-19 case – and imposed a kind of military law in collusion with the criminal gangs of the maras. The right-wing government of Lenin Moreno in Ecuador, which a few months ago was forced to retract various neo-liberal measures as a result of a popular uprising that paralyzed the country, has also imposed a curfew throughout the country, including in regions that have hardly been affected by the pandemic—but which were leading the protests. In Colombia, there has been a frightening increase in paramilitary killings of activists and ex-guerrillas.

Authoritarianism is considered a typical feature of a crisis. But though any specific crisis is only aware of the present as its time horizon, the current forms of authoritarianism have been clearly evident for several years. You have dealt with the case of Venezuela in films and publications, including the documentary "5 Factories – Worker Control in Venezuela" (2006), which was filmed together with Oliver Ressler, and the book "Participation, Worker Control and the Commune. Movements and

Social Transformation in Venezuela" (2010). Even before the corona crisis, mainstream reporting on Venezuela considered it a "crisis state" and an "experimental laboratory of authoritarianism" . How do you assess this classification of Venezuela since Hugo Chávez died?

A lot has changed for Venezuela since 2013. Most of the center-left governments in Latin America were voted out of office, or removed by coup, or turned into the opposite, as in the case of Ecuador. This was all done with the active support of the U.S. and the EU. Starting in 2016, oil prices have collapsed completely, and international support for the extreme right-wing opposition has been boosted. Venezuela was subjected to blockades; the most important sources of income, eight refineries and a huge network of petrol stations, were confiscated by the US government and handed over to the opposition; tens of billions of Venezuelan dollars were frozen in banks in the U.S. and the EU; the country was subjected to economic and financial blockades; and a self-proclaimed "president" was recognized as the only legitimate president by the U.S., EU countries, and the radical right-wing governments in Latin America.

There has never been such an action against a country before. In Venezuela itself, this has led to a very difficult economic situation; the political impact was negative. The left has for the most part been pushed out of the government, decisions have been strongly centralized, there is distrust of critical opinions, the beginnings of workers' control in state-owned enterprises have disappeared. There's not much of socialism left. The high inflation and poor supply situation lead to massive speculation, and to a parallel economy where almost everything is charged at the dollar exchange rate. The only people who can live well are those who obtain foreign currency from relatives abroad. Those who have enough money can still buy everything. The government is trying to maintain a minimum level of supply by a tremendous distribution of subsidized food. The situation has been very difficult for a good five to six years now. The Maduro government is not very popular. However, it is also nonsense to claim that it is only through repression that it keeps itself in power.

Most Venezuelans consider all other options much worse. A left-wing alternative is developing only from below, from the structures of territorial self-

government, the Consejos Comunales (municipal councils), of which there are about 47,000 in the whole country, and the higher level of the Comunas, of which there are about 1,700. Where they function well, they have proven to be the best structures to counteract the effects of the crisis. Whereas under Chávez they were still central to the targeted transformation to socialism, today they have been strongly pushed out of the government discourse. They have always stood in a relationship of conflict and cooperation with the government. At the same time, however, they see the only possibility of continuing their work as under the current government.

Has the quarantine policy promoted a new kind of 'corona authoritarianism' in Venezuela?

Venezuela was the first country to comply with all WHO guidelines, namely to cease all work that was considered "not system-relevant," to close the borders, and for the most part to stop international air traffic. Precisely because its health care system was severely weakened by the crisis and blockade, Venezuela had little choice but to focus as much as possible on prevention. In fact, Venezuela has the lowest infection rate of all Latin America and also the fewest fatalities. On April 15 there were 204 cases, 111 of which had recovered, and nine deaths. Apart from a few isolated opposition voices, the population also does not perceive the measures as authoritarian. Quite the contrary.

My acquaintances tell me about how even die-hard opposition members, when they are standing in line to buy groceries, complain on the one hand about the government, but then are quite happy about how the government is dealing with the situation, and that they are in Venezuela and not somewhere else. Venezuela has done the most tests per capita in Latin America and still has more test equipment for laboratories than, e.g., Colombia. That's why they have offered to donate two test machines to Colombia. Colombia has only one lab test machine in the whole country! In addition, Venezuelan aeroplanes are flying Cuban doctors around the Caribbean, and Venezuela has donated and flown thousands of test kits to various Caribbean countries.

This does nothing to change the precarious situation in which the Venezuelan health care system finds itself. But you cannot assess the entire crisis on that alone. Perhaps the situation can be compared with

Greece. It is well-known that Greece – thanks to the austerity imposed by the troika – has a completely dilapidated health care system, but far fewer people are infected and have died than in almost any other European country. In Venezuela, the latter is due not only to the security measures taken, but also to the population's organization and to people's awareness. A Venezuelan friend who's a musician and radical left-wing hip hop and reggae culture activist wrote to me a few days ago: "We have been living in a state of emergency for six years. In that time, we have learned to cope better with such a situation."

In Venezuela, measures to prevent and combat the pandemic are based on the broad self-organization of the population, with which the government is cooperating. This includes, for example, the local structures of self-government, the municipal councils (Consejos Comunales). They are informing the households (a book with reports from the population of Wuhan on how to deal with the quarantine and the virus was distributed to all 47,000 municipal councils), supporting those in need, and coordinating with the health care structures. The provision of basic food packages (CLAP) by local committees that already existed is also an important element of the crisis management.

According to media reports, many people from Venezuela are currently forced to leave the neighboring country of Colombia because they are being driven from their homes and shelters. They no longer have any money to pay their rent because their low-wage jobs have disappeared, along with the informal economic sector. Reportedly, this is all due to the "preventive isolation" decreed by Colombia's President Ivan Duque.

Thousands are returning not only from Colombia, but also from other Latin American countries, especially Ecuador, but also Chile. The Venezuelan government is supporting those who want to return with special flights. Venezuelans have even had themselves flown back from the US by Venezuela with special flights because they feel safer there than in the US (because of the US blockade they often had to fly first to Mexico and from there to Venezuela).

Once the "system relevance" of basic supply and social reproduction work now openly comes to light, then the system error also becomes

obvious: in many countries this kind of labor was already underfinanced and structurally weak even before the 'corona crisis.' In New York, for instance, health workers are fighting within and against the health care system in the 'war against corona.' Are such struggles also taking place in Latin America?

First of all I would like to warn against using terms like the "war against corona". This abets authoritarianism. A war is waged against an external enemy, it justifies a state of emergency, is based on the 'friend or foe' scheme, and encourages thinking in terms of false blocs. But the only "war" we are in here is a class war, and it is primarily fought from above.

In Venezuela, there are protests in various sectors which are usually not directed against the government in order to overthrow it, but demanding better working conditions, higher wages, etc. In my opinion, however, the most successful struggles have been linked for years to the Comunas: the organized population occupies abandoned and inefficient state farms and estates, and in some cases private ones, taking them over on their own under the collective management of the Comunas.

Comparable protests and fights are also taking place in many other countries of Latin America. In most Latin American countries, a significant part, sometimes the majority, of the working population is employed in the informal sector. For them, their immediate livelihood has been lost. They do not know whether they should be more afraid of dying of COVID-19 or of hunger. In Colombia there are street protests and looting in various regions. The demonstrations are often just small, but are supported by thousands of people banging on pots from their balconies and windows; starving people are also trying to stop trucks containing food and loot them.

The Cacerolazos are also present in Brazil and Chile. There are also demonstrations in Bolivia. The health sector and other "systemically relevant" jobs are under great pressure. Radical demands are springing up. They existed before as well. After the pandemic has abated, they will certainly express themselves in enormous waves of protest. Rebellions and protests, as well as a 'return of the left,' already had a significant impact on Latin America in the 12 months before COVID-19. But now everyone feels an

enormous responsibility to maintain supply for the population. A direct relative of mine works 24-hour shifts in a hospital in Buenos Aires. And Argentina is still one of the countries that is managing the crisis better.

How do you assess the call to the workers to sacrifice themselves? Can workers in a 'rich North American country' such as the US react differently than in a 'poorer South American country,' where the population is even more existentially dependent on the already precarious basic supply?

The US is in many respects a 'Third World country.', That was even stated by a UN special rapporteur in a comprehensive report a few years ago. Access to health care is worse than in many newly industrialized countries. Even before the pandemic, 30-40% of the US population had no health insurance. After 22 million people lost their jobs in four weeks, that proportion has once again risen massively. And even many people with health insurance cannot afford the high deductibles for treatments and medication. The US also has the highest percentage of prisoners in the world. Almost two percent of the US population is incarcerated. In prisons, the number of people infected with COVID-19 is alarmingly high and there is no adequate medical treatment. Public services are loss-making, many housing situations are hygienically unacceptable, and the number of homeless people is very high. At the same time, workers' rights are worse than in all other 35 OECD countries, and even worse than in some countries of the Global South.

In recent years, however, there has been a sharp increase in trade union organization and industrial action. Even now, there are numerous industrial disputes in the US. Workers in various industrial enterprises have advocated for and gone on strike to convert their production to medical devices. There have been protests and work stoppages at Amazon and other mail order companies. Nurses in the US are comparatively well unionized and also quite left-wing. The call for more financial resources, general health insurance for all, more staff, better working conditions, and expansion of health care are already commonplace there. In the wake of the pandemic, more and more voices are being raised calling for the socialization of health care under the control of the working people.

There are still certainly major battles to be fought. The same applies to the US Postal Service, because the government has already announced that it will not rescue it with financial support. In the past years, teachers in many US states have also led significant labor struggles. Their working conditions and pay are atrocious. Many teachers can only finance their lives by having another part-time job. Shortly before the pandemic, I ordered a car from a transport service; the driver was a primary school teacher who also drove her private car several hours a day to make a living.

In such a crisis, what can workers' struggles look like that are not denounced as 'selfish' and are supported by larger parts of the population?

Basically, it is about developing labor struggles that resist capitalist 'business as usual,' ensuring the protection of working people – who are also part of the population and have families and friends – in this way also improving the supply to and safety of the whole population, particularly those most affected by the pandemic and its consequences. The possibilities are many and varied. In the U.S., workers and trade unions in automobile and aircraft manufacturing have called for a switch to producing medical equipment; in France, the employees of a McDonald's branch decided to occupy it and distribute food to the needy for free. During the rampant pandemic, the main concern is to guarantee the workers' safety and health and thus also render a service to the entire population.

It is a difficult situation. The challenge can be summarized like this: "How can I best serve those who need it, not my boss or my company?" For the time after, as this crisis clearly shows, the central question will be "capitalism or life?" It should be clear to everyone that this question constantly arises under capitalism. But we usually just don't perceive it with such clarity and force. This can be clearly seen with climate change: we're dealing with it like a lobster in a pot that is gradually reaching a boil; we know that for our mobile phones, petrol and cheap bananas, people in the Global South are dying, and yet it remains far away; the class differences in life expectancy are known, and so on.

You are a founding member and editor of the Internet archive workerscontrol.net, founded in 2011, which collects scientific and journalistic texts on the topics of collective self-

administration and workers' self-administration. How could the observations of current developments be placed in the larger picture of this discourse?

Solo el pueblo salva al pueblo, it is said in the movements in Venezuela. This is difficult to translate, because "pueblo" is not "the people," but rather it has a clear class dimension, roughly meaning "only those from below save those from below." The question of collective democratic control and self-management of the means of production (including services) is more topical than ever. Only the control of production by workers and the organized population will be able to guarantee an economy that serves society, rather than a society that serves the economy. It is about the discontinuation of the artificial separation between politics, economy and social affairs. This is not only the emancipation of humanity, but also its survival. The demands for direct control of the means of production by the workers are now coming back to the fore. I hope and expect that these struggles will increase. This goes much further than the mere 'nationalization' that is sometimes talked about now. In the past, the state has not proven to be a reliable representative of the interests of the majority of the population. This is about socialization.

I doubt that the health care systems worldwide would be in their current states of weakness had it been the workers and the population who had made the decisions. I doubt that most of the workers at Rheinmetall are longing to produce weapons for wars, and I bet that in cooperation with organized populations they would quickly discover many other needs. A transformation of production, a transfer of bankrupt companies to workers, and the introduction of democratic decision-making structures of workers and affected people in services of all kinds will not be introduced by governments. The workers at the RiMaflow factory in Milan, which has been occupied for many years, put it this way: "We have discussed how to improve the situation for the benefit of the working population and have come to the conclusion that the situation is not going to change: If we want the factories to be handed over to us, then we must occupy as many factories as possible. You can be sure the state will then want to come and regulate this with laws."

Berlin/New York, April 2020

How Invisibilized Work is Made Visible During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Interview with Katja Schwaller

In your book "Technopolis" (2019) you explore urban struggles in the San Francisco Bay Area, drawing connections to European metropolises such as Berlin. You investigate how, in the course of 24/7 network capitalism, life and work are merging in new ways, how workers of Big Tech companies serve as guinea pigs for their own innovations, and how, in doing so, users are instrumentalized in a new way, while at the same time new forms of expropriation are "normalized." Are users the workers of the future?

What we can certainly observe are new forms of monetizing social activities and everyday tasks when they take place on "social" media or digital platforms. The resulting data is the actual raw material of tech companies, which is then analyzed, mined, resold, and transformed into market shares and often exorbitant stock market valuations. In a sense, digital companies live from the unpaid labor of their users. Every click, every "like," and every "shared" posting thus ultimately contributes to the power of these companies. It is no coincidence that smart phones and social media are based on the principle of the slot machine. After all, the "like factor" can be just as addictive as a slot machine.

Gamification also plays an increasingly important role in the workplace, as demonstrated by the use of targets, ratings, 360° feedback and other "incentives." Work is increasingly made to simulate play, to feel like self-actualization within the "game." These mechanisms also play out on social media, where the recognition generated from posting and participating is said to be its own reward in the so-called attention economy, so the work that goes into it can remain uncompensated. In this vein, unpaid digital labor can even contribute to the glorification of precarious working conditions.

If users represent an important pool of the workers of the future, doesn't that also mean that networked life as work is only worth something when it is particularly vibrant,

without having to provide the workers with real-life foundations such as job security, old-age security, and so forth?

What's important for these platforms, for the time being, is not the content of a post or a tweet—the main thing is that it generates a buzz and thus contributes to increasing activity on their digital networks. Whether it's scandals, fake news, trolling or "Facebook revolutions," what's crucial is the data it generates.

Networked life is capitalized on in various ways: users are only one of the new categories that increasingly replace employees in the traditional sense. For example, I am thinking of the Airbnb "hosts," the "fast rabbits" who work for "Task Rabbit," the "independent contractors" who work for Uber, and so on. They call it "sharing," but what it does is exacerbate the precarization of workers who work without social benefits, without contracts, by using their own car, at their own risk, or even without pay.

Companies like Uber profit from the increasing precarization that they co-produce, to a certain degree, by disrupting unionized sectors and undermining public transport—or in the case of Airbnb, by driving up rents and exacerbating the housing crisis. Then they offer their own services as "solutions." Those who can no longer afford their rent can become a "host" and drive for Uber in their "free" time. These activities, in turn, produce data that is analyzed and strategically exploited by these companies, whether it's to monitor their workers or to beat out competitors in the run for market share.

During the 'corona crisis,' networked life has taken on a particular significance. "Social distancing" is considered crucial, and "social media" is being hyped up even more. Now even the heads of governments advise us to make use of them. Certainly, the Internet can also be seen as a tool that can be helpful in a crisis situation. But under the present conditions, it fuels capitalist exploitation like nothing else. Is it a bitter irony that states that have repeatedly appeared as opponents of Big Tech (for example in the area of data sovereignty) are now promoting Big Tech? Or does it instead reveal something that would otherwise remain underexposed: the complicity between states and Big Tech?

The Internet and the computer are products of the Cold War. The tech industry – or what is commonly known as 'Silicon Valley' – benefited more than almost any other industry from massive public subsidies and contracts with the Pentagon and other state institutions. Tech companies want to be seen as subversive, and they emphasize innovation, independence and self-initiative. In their techno-utopian manifestos, they stylize themselves as antidotes to authoritarian, bureaucratic governments and praise their digital platforms as a liberating force for the individual. However, this rhetoric should not blind us to the fact that companies such as Google, Twitter and Amazon benefit massively from state institutions and public amenities, even while they simultaneously undermine and even try to replace them.

Examples include tax deals negotiated with cities in return for setting up company headquarters or fulfillment centers, or how the negative effects of digital platforms and related working conditions are being externalized to society at large (think unemployment, depression and anxiety, environmental pollution). This creates a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, states like to schmooze with Big Tech, but at the same time companies are often a few steps ahead of democratically elected governments when it comes to exploiting legal loopholes or simply establishing new socio-political realities. Today, more than ever, we can see that those who have the data – and know how to make use of it – have the power.

In this sense, states are also dependent on tech companies when it comes to upgrading their own repressive police forces and border regimes. Companies such as Amazon, Microsoft, or Palantir, for example, collaborate with the US immigration authorities and promote their surveillance tools – such as Amazon's video Doorbell Ring – to other law enforcement agencies.

Eerily empty streets in metropolises like Rome, Berlin and New York. Occasionally you see parcel and food deliverers with neon vests. This image may seem characteristic of the COVID-19 pandemic—but doesn't it tell us more about the present than merely about this particular moment of crisis?

What becomes more visible in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic are relations of exploitation and dependencies that are otherwise deliberately obscured. If you press "order" in an app, nothing at all would happen were it not for the workers in the background who haul the parcels around in the fulfillment centers, deliver the food as couriers, and train the "smart" devices and algorithms that are then shipped to our homes in the form of Amazon's digital assistant Alexa, for example. It is ironic, and downright tragic, that it is precisely these jobs that meet basic needs – e.g. in health care, in the food supply chain or in transportation – that are often the least appreciated. Uber drivers, nurses, parcel delivery staff, bicycle couriers—they all work on the "COVID frontline" and are exposed to particular risks, but often have no paid sick leave, no job security and here in the US sometimes not even health insurance.

But the picture of eerily empty cities with the lonely parcel delivery person also shows that cutting ourselves off from the outside world is an illusion. Instead, the virus might simply enter your home with the next Amazon order. Because for many people in the supply chain, staying home when they are sick is not a viable option.

In view of the 'corona crisis,' government representatives such as Angela Merkel demand that public life should be virtually shut down, but the flow of goods must not come to a standstill. Logistics networks should continue to operate. The people who work in this field – and who are rendered invisible – are deployed without any precautions being taken. Doesn't this reflect exactly the same problem that activists were denouncing again and again before the COVID-19 pandemic, namely that people are being turned into robots?

One of the main arguments invoked in favor of automation is that robots would eliminate hard and dangerous manual labor. What we are seeing instead is that workers in Amazon fulfillment centers today are subjected to intelligent algorithms that monitor every step in the work process, down to the smallest detail, while constantly subjugating workers to new "targets" and even faster production rhythms. Sometimes it happens that workers have to pee in bottles in order to keep up with the rhythm enforced by the machine. Amazon still depends on human labor, but expects that labor to behave like machines: those who need to take an *unpaid* day off due to illness are punished. If you cannot function seamlessly, you risk being cast out.

The coronavirus has finally arrived in the clean and smooth world of a logistics empire like Amazon. As the headline of a US publication reads: "An Amazon warehouse worker in NYC has coronavirus. They probably won't be the last." Considering that supply chains are an integral part of the "critical infrastructure" in the current situation, and deploying Amazon employees seems to be imperative, isn't this the best time for protest and activism, as documented in your book "Technopolis"? What forms of resistance are necessary now and in the future?

The current crisis exacerbates exploitative conditions and renders society's dependence on precarious workers more visible. It hurts all of us if people have to go to work even if they are sick because they simply cannot afford to be ill; if precarious workers are under so much strain that they fall asleep at the wheel of an Amazon delivery van; and if health care workers are deprived of their breaks and home care has to be provided on a piecemeal basis. In this sense, quite literally, capitalism makes us sick—and not only during the COVID-19 pandemic. This hurts all of us.

Or at least almost all of us. One of the big profiteers of the current crisis is already known: Amazon. The online trading giant is currently recording massive gains in market share and plans to hire 100,000 new employees, while smaller businesses are going bankrupt in droves. Amazon's increasingly monopolistic position has also upended political power relations. Or as a journalist for the *Guardian* recently put it: Welcome to the "US of Amazon."

But even Amazon – one of the most powerful companies in the world – can be defeated, as a broad coalition of neighborhood groups, grassroots unions, critical tech workers and migration activists recently demonstrated in Queens, New York, where Amazon tried unsuccessfully to open its HQ2 after months of pitting cities against each other in a cut-throat race to the bottom. And now activists in Berlin have picked up the torch and are continuing the struggle—in a city that, mind you, has already sent Google packing.

And perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic may heighten awareness of certain social interdependencies, which in turn could lead to new priorities in the distribution of resources and perceptions of what a "good life" could be. Strikes in Italy against the obligation to work during the lockdown, certainly, have achieved some initial successes, and here in California, people are currently working towards an eviction moratorium and calling for collective rent strikes in times of widespread income loss.

Currently, the 175,000 gig workers of Instacart are threatening to stage a US-wide strike. These are precarious workers who can be hired via an app to do the shopping for other people—a business model that is currently experiencing a boom similar to Amazon's. However, if the company fails to comply with the demands for improved protective measures and working conditions, we might soon see another painful reminder of our social dependency on the labor of invisibilized workers.

Berlin/San Francisco, March 2020

Health Protection in Industry 4.0 and Human Labor as a Disruptive Factor

Interview with Kerstin Guhlemann

The politically decreed shutdown has only apparently caused all work to be halted. As can be seen not least in the widespread closure of hotels and restaurants: the businesses must be maintained, cleaned and managed. In this 'dead time' (without regular customer activity), it is theoretically possible to rethink one's current business model. This is a reminder that the shutdown option can be a targeted strategy when it comes to the planned renewal of a 'business' or 'system': you shut everything down to renovate during the closure time; during this time, only work that for the most part has been made invisible takes place. Against this backdrop, the question arises: What kind of work is taking place during the pandemic-related shutdown?

The radical change in the world of work that has resulted from the sudden shutdown has – unsurprisingly – in the first instance widened the existing gap between 'good' and 'strenuous/precarious' work, despite the ennoblement of the latter by granting it the attribute 'systemically relevant.'

Although the logic of the reorientation primarily followed the immediate protection of health, economic issues followed at a close second: how do I work as efficiently as possible in my home office, was the question self-organized screen workers asked themselves throughout Germany. How can I keep my business running while adhering to the required distancing and hygiene rules? That was a question asked by large and small companies that didn't have to close, while sectors that did have to close or radically reduce their operations, such as hospitality, personal services and retail, feverishly sought new sources of income.

It was too rare that questions were asked that in fact gained new relevance as a result of the changes—questions about how to reconcile family and work remained the employees' problem everywhere, while questions about health-conscious work design were without further ado reduced to the prevention of

infection. It is unfortunate yet understandable that in times of crisis the potential of humane work design is not a priority. But it would be even more regrettable to ignore this potential even after the shutdown. Obviously, we must remain vigilant. After all, the danger is great that – in an "economic best-of" digital and analogue working conditions – we will fall into a kind of regression in the areas of occupational health and safety and work design as the new normality.

Restaurants that were closed during the pandemic will be largely replaced by algorithmically optimized delivery services. The infection-free Gastro-Palace will come to us on two wheels – just as a fantasy. After contact-free delivery of food, we are forced to wait in the 'protective castle' that our home provides for a time when we might possibly go out to eat again and take advantage, for instance, of very real offers of a Gastronomy 4.0. What are the current indicators for this?

In the corona crisis, the hospitality industry has once again revealed the sector's flexibility. Accommodation providers, who could scarcely offer a digital solution, gave priority to expanding their offer to other customer groups. For example, they created day offices for employees banned from companies without suitable home office facilities. In addition, they have occasionally made their capacities available to compensate for shortages of hospital beds or emergency accommodation.

Apart from the basic discovery of hygiene concepts as a new sales argument, no major change in the structure of supply is expected here. It's different for the food- and beverage-oriented gastronomy sector: Large-scale to-go offers, including with "proper plates," sending out prepared restaurant meals to be warmed up by the customers themselves, "touchless" menus, digital wine tasting, and parties with virtual drinks – the industry's efforts to offer competitive shutdown-compliant services are extremely multi-faceted, though they cannot completely compensate for the losses. And it's not only the restaurant industry that is fighting for its existence: the elimination of service provision inherent to gastronomy 4.0 is hitting the already poorly paid, tip-dependent occupational category of service employees particularly hard.

As the success of Deliveroo and Amazon shows, the digital industry is booming in the current pandemic. Under the imperative of health protection, the 'vision' of Industry 4.0 is once again gaining momentum. As is well known, the CeBIT (at that time "the largest and internationally most representative computer trade fair" in Germany) was used as a platform to present and advocate this 'vision.' The 'vision' was soon adopted by other countries like the USA ("Industrial Internet"), France ("Usine du futur"), China ("China 2025") and Japan ("Industrial Value Chain Initiative"). It is significant that Industry 4.0 was launched in this context after the financial crisis in 2008—in line with the motto: 'If we reach our limits with finance now, we should open up new business areas in machinery.' Could you outline the role of labor in the 'vision' of Industry 4.0?

The vision of a networked, self-managing industry 4.0, in which work equipment, machines, rooms and products exchange information via the Internet and thus plan, control, execute and optimize the production process, initially gets by without people, despite the "human being at the center" which was subsequently demanded. In reality, people are still needed in these processes to deliver parts, monitor the process, troubleshoot, monitor discrepancies, and pass on the finished products.

At the moment, machines are used for more repetitive processes, including those that are highly onerous or involve hazardous substances, such as soldering, painting and overhead assembly. But here and there there are also fully automated processes and production lines. In principle, productivity can be increased by implementing this vision. An industrial robot does not need three years of vocational training, rarely gets "sick," takes no vacation, has no children to look after, and costs an average hourly wage of 5 euros over three years of operation.

If the austerity politics that became socially acceptable after the financial crisis of 2008 bore traits of dehumanization, as the neoliberal restructuring of the health care system shows, then one cannot help but notice these same traits in Industry 4.0. Against this backdrop, austerity measures and Industry 4.0 appear to be two sides of the same coin. How do you see

this connection, especially with regard to the devaluation of the human being in the world of labor?

On the operational side, the digital transformation usually follows a path-dependent logic. The technologies definitely offer promising potential for improving working conditions. For example, hazard warnings can be integrated into work equipment, workstations can be individually adapted ergonomically in real time, and work processes can be planned in a load-optimized manner.

But where a culture of profit maximization at the expense of employee health already prevailed before their use, these possibilities are certainly not being exploited. Moreover, there are unintended negative effects: If, for example, work processes and deployment routes are optimized by algorithms, employees omit not only time-consuming planning tasks, but also lose the scope that provides flexibility, and thus possibly needed short breaks, reaction possibilities to short-term customer requirements, or their own needs.

In the digital transformation of working worlds, the question often arises: are human beings placed at the center or are they in the way? The former rarely seems to be the case, the latter seems more realistic. After all, most of the tendencies of digital capitalism seem to want to digitalize away the 'human disruptive factor.' This means, for example, that it is a matter of replacing humans by machines or making humans machines' vicarious agents (keyword: human as robot).

In an interview with personnel managers of a German industrial company, we were once told in the presence of the works council that humans were purely a source of error and contamination and would be eliminated from processes as soon as technically possible. There the processes were already mechanically controlled, so that the employees were ordered to their workplace by the system at short notice. In another company, the production logic means that the systems assign half-hour time windows for delivery to suppliers of required parts.

It doesn't take much imagination to envision the impact of such specifications on the everyday work of truck drivers. Even in trade and maintenance there are reports of automatically generated routes

or schedules. The request for the closest nurse as identified by GPS signal is certainly rationally logical, but it could also lead to a complete imbalance in the distribution of work. The fundamental problem is always the loss of autonomy of agency, which can be a major source of psychological stress.

It seems necessary to think beyond the question 'is the human being placed in the center or in the way'? After all, digital capitalism addresses the problem of the 'human disruptive factor' not least by instrumentalizing this factor and making it a source of accumulation of data and capital. The worlds of work should be tailored to the needs of the individual. In addition to such 'personalization,' 'participation' is also of great importance: it is intended that the individual be involved in all processes, not least in order to create data profiles that are as in-depth as possible. In this way, the subjectivity of workers is tapped—as a capitalizable value in itself, but also as an instrument for optimizing machines and enabling the work of machines in the first place, for example, to create new products on the basis of accumulated data. In view of these contradictions, what does it mean for you to think and demand the humanization of labor 4.0?

I think we need to distinguish conceptually here between the economic sector of collecting, processing, and trading in human data, in which the human being is actually the product in the illusion of being the consumer of a free service, and the data that is generated in the work process. In most cases, this data is easier to protect than the traces that people leave behind in their leisure time with average media consumption.

A humanization of work therefore also naturally includes an increased awareness on the part of employers and managers, as well as employees, of how to handle personal and personal-related data generated by work processes. This includes, for example, efforts to find software and hardware providers that fall under European data protection guidelines, as well as well thought-out concepts for the collection, storage, retention and deletion of data.

In simple terms, the fact that the intelligent hand drill automatically collects data does not mean that it should be used to compare employees' working tempos, nor does it mean that the drill should be

allowed to simultaneously send the vital data of employees from the sensors in its handle to the manufacturer.

In the fully digitalized working world of Industry 4.0, even health protection seems to be a question of algorithmic optimizability. By the way, the danger of viral infection seems to be reduced to a minimum. After all, almost everything is mediatized by machines, while interpersonal contacts have mostly been reduced. Is this a fiction, or is health protection in Industry 4.0 actually guaranteed quasi-automatically?

Remaining conceptually in the area of production, the deployment of 4.0 technologies actually reduces the risks for employees, whether because physically demanding or hazardous work is automated and the activities are transformed from physical tasks to monitoring / planning ones, or because the same processes simply require less personnel.

However, these changes have led not so much to a reduction in the overall number of workers, but rather to a shift in the hazards from physical to psychosocial ones—for which occupational health and safety unfortunately still provide too few functioning procedures and routines. Stress is caused here, for example, by the fact that occupational expertise is no longer applicable if the work being carried out is automated. Isolation is also a problem in increasingly empty production plants, as is the "pilot dilemma" – the necessity for constant attention while being for the most part inactive – in monitoring activities and, of course, the loss of autonomy of agency described above. It should also not be forgotten that the job insecurity or loss of jobs associated with these developments can be an immense source of stress.

In your work you repeatedly point out that a later change in technical systems – and thus also adaptation to the workers' needs – is basically impossible because the costs are too high. Among other things, the costs arise from downtimes during which such readjustment would be possible. Now the shutdown decreed by the government has generated such downtime. How could it be used to improve working conditions in Industry 4.0?

Of course, downtime in production plants could be used to make work processes more humane with the help of the technology deployed. Virtual health circles would even be conceivable here, on the basis of which systems and processes could then be adapted. However, such processes can only function on the basis of security and stability, not with the uncertain future prospects generated by this crisis.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that such efforts are not currently noticeable, especially since the pandemic has brought with it, in addition to economic threats to existence, new and urgent health protection problems for which the priority was to find solutions. Initiatives are therefore currently mainly concerned with averting new dangers by improving hygiene, not with general improvements in conditions.

What problems that were already apparent in the context of health protection before the pandemic should be given greater consideration from now on?

It would be necessary to take a look at the problems that have further intensified or become more obvious due to the pandemic measures. Firstly, problematic working conditions in systemically important professions, where the imbalance between performance, workload, working time on the one hand and remuneration – in many cases also reputation – on the other can in no way be compensated by one-off bonus payments.

Secondly, unevenly distributed working conditions in the context of the compulsion to work in flexible locations, which in the past required employees to have a degree of self-organization skills and opportunities that could not be achieved by everyone through indirect control mechanisms.

Thirdly, precarious employment contracts which leave employees without security in times of crisis. Fourthly, particularly questionable working conditions at particularly powerful global companies which have gained even more market power as a result of the crisis. All in all, despite the current physical-viral threat, attention must be focused more strongly on the increasing psychosocial burdens that continue to accompany the digital transformation.

Health protection was imagined and tried out with the help of apps even before the pandemic. In this scenario, workers constantly provide personal data—'voluntarily,' as often emphasized, without reflecting the inherent constraints, including the fact that workers are also concerned with optimizing their performance, which is to employers' liking. Healthy workers work better than sick ones. The fact that health – and thus also functionality – can also be digitally optimized is shown in the military version of Industry 4.0. Here, for example, cyber helmets enable soldiers to stay awake and functional for several days. During the shutdown, the German detective series "Tatort" presented such future workers to a mass audience in a cautionary way.

The possibilities of influencing the performance of employees, for example by adjusting light, climate or the activation level of tasks, can certainly be useful in certain areas, for example to prevent accidents while driving or to support other focused activities. In the same way, data from employee wearables such as wristbands could be used to identify unfavorable peak loads, distribute work evenly, or optimize breaks.

However, these tools also offer the possibility of overwork, digital performance monitoring, or interference with employees' private lives. A constant activation leads to performance improvements in the short term, but to negative consequences of stress and illness in the medium and long term. Suppressing signals of exhaustion with permanent technical support is basically as much of an encroachment as enriching water dispensers with caffeine, which certainly nobody would approve of.

Not only but also during a pandemic, these signals of exhaustion could also be signals of illness, which could endanger others but go unrecognized. A corresponding sensitization of company and inter-company actors is therefore urgently required, even – or especially – in times of other priorities.

Berlin/Dortmund, May 2020

Why the 'System Relevance' of Care Workers Can No Longer Be Denied

Interview with Christine Braunersreuther

In the 'corona crisis,' all those care workers who otherwise get little to no attention and thus usually have to work under miserable conditions, are unexpectedly being appreciated. In her big speech on TV on March 18th, German chancellor Angela Merkel thanked all those who are "keeping the shop running," which has now become a popular expression for 'keeping things going.' In her turn of phrase, the "shop" is nothing less than the nation, the economy and the system.

Yes, the big THANK YOU … I don't know whether in Germany people were also clapping on their balconies every day at 6 pm to thank those maintaining the system. Here in Austria that ceased after a while because there was a lot of criticism about this immaterial form of recognition from those affected and from support groups. This is very typical for care work. Care work is not only work done out of love, but very often it is work against love – and nothing or not much else. When care work does not take place on a completely unpaid basis in "private households," then it is precariously paid – whatever the profession. This applies just as much in medical care as in child care and 24-hour home care.

This type of recognition is specious under the conditions of 'quarantine nationalism' currently prevalent, based on the strict exclusion of all those who do not belong to the nationally constructed 'we.' But where do all the workers come from who work in the care sector in countries like Austria and Germany, those who are keeping the shop running?

The 24-hour caregivers about whom and for whom I can speak, in both Germany and Austria, come for the most part from eastern or southeastern Europe. Their exact places of origin vary from region to region. On the one hand, it depends on what countries are close to the border. In Berlin, for example, most of the caregivers come from Poland, in Vienna from Slovakia (by the way, there are also many medical nurses from there in clinics); in Styria

there are caregivers from Slovenia. Women from Bulgaria and Romania, in contrast, are represented everywhere, but they come from different places. How agencies or persons are recommended mostly has to do with word of mouth among neighbors. Only a few caregivers come from countries that are not part of the Schengen area. The others are allowed to work here as EU citizens, but cannot obtain a right of permanent residence because they are working transnationally, i.e. they retain their official place of residence outside the country.

The Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) writes that "throughout Europe the pandemic is endangering the home care of old people because care workers can no longer visit them—or have left the country in a hurry to return home." Two things surprise us: firstly, that blame for the political and economic responsibility for current problematic situations is being shifted to the pandemic. Secondly, that previous history is being ignored here. In short, the current care crisis is not primarily due to the fact that the Schengen area has been constructed as a 'borderless' circulation sphere that favors the movement of goods while imposing conditions on the movement of people: the work of mobile laborers is made precarious while budgets are cut in the care sector. In other words, isn't the current debate distracting from the real problem, namely the neoliberal restructuring that the Schengen system itself enables?

There is actually a third surprising thing about that quote. The SZ could have written: "Hooray, finally the elderly in Eastern Europe can be cared for by their relatives again." But they don't say that—and probably don't even realize that they are reproducing a classical Balkan stereotype. Maria Todorova coined the term Balkanism to describe this special form of racist devaluation of eastern European regions and people. As you can see, it has hardly entered public awareness. How else could it happen that a renowned daily newspaper does not notice that it has simply forgotten about the elderly people in half of Europe, regarding those countries as merely the carers' – i.e. the service providers' – countries of origin?

No wonder that this form of transnational outsourcing of care work is called neo-colonialism in academic thinking. Colloquially, it is also often called "new slavery." I find the latter term inappropriate,

however, as it euphemistically ignores the racist atrocities of slavery. But what both systems do have in common is that they forget the people behind the service. When people talk about vulnerability in the context of care work, they are usually referring only to the vulnerability of those being cared for. All you want from the care givers is that they have a big heart and a lot of patience—but you don't worry about *their* vulnerability. This is due not only to Balkanism, but rather to a great extent to the nature of care work: referred to as invisible work, it is carried out by 'good spirits.'

This actually answers both points that you were so surprised by: blame for the problem can be shifted to the pandemic so easily because in the past it was kept completely under the lid of the precarious system that was nonetheless still running. And of course, there is a story behind this. Many stories, in fact. The story of the former Austrian chancellor whose mother-in-law was looked after by an irregular worker from Slovakia is a beautiful one. This was uncovered by an investigation in 2006. The Home Care Act, which regulates the regular work of 24-hour caregivers, was passed in 2007.

The Schengen system, which is intended to ensure the uninterrupted flow of goods, raw materials, data and people, contributes significantly to the illusion of 'frictionless capitalism.' An illusion which, last but not least, enables the devaluing of care work. After all, when everything runs more or less by itself, no human work is required, or at least it can be considered "not systemically relevant." If, at the moment of the 'corona crisis,' it becomes clear that this is an illusion, then this is also due to the fact that countries like Hungary are refusing transit for reasons of "national security"—and care workers no longer come to Austria by bus from, for example, Bulgaria as they usually do. To circumvent the problem, special planes are now being chartered, so you simply 'fly over' the barrier to an uninterrupted flow. In this manner, much more is suddenly being invested and it seems like a lot is being done to ensure that the working conditions are 'right.' But the question arises: have the working conditions really been optimized as desired?

No, the conditions have not improved at all. We are a long way from optimizing here, even if it is 'nobly' announced that flights and accommodation

are paid for. The caregivers are expected to spend two weeks in quarantine before starting their service. Unpaid, in rooms with three to four beds, sometimes with strangers. After that, another two weeks of quarantine in their places of origin. That is four weeks of unpaid work. For this they get a bonus of €500, which is even less than they normally earn per month. The average income of a caregiver is €1,000, but almost €300 of that goes to social security. And: No one gives a damn about what would happen if the virus started spreading in one of the so-called "quarantine hotels."

These accommodations are paid for by the Chamber of Commerce. This is not as generous as they keep claiming. In Austria a large share of the regular caregivers work on a self-employed basis, and they make up the largest group among the EPUs (one-person companies). This means they are responsible for the greatest share of the contributions to the Chamber of Commerce, from which they otherwise hardly receive any benefits (some provinces such as Styria are an exception here). The caregivers have thus long since paid for their accommodation themselves.

The fact that the caregivers are mostly self-employed can be attributed to the above-mentioned Home Care Act. Self-employment has the disadvantage that no labor law standards apply. The profession would not otherwise be possible: over the course of weeks the daily working hours can be up to 22-24 hours without days off. In Germany this regulation does not apply; there, care workers must be employed by families. The result is absurd working hours: 7:00 – 7:30 prepare breakfast. 7:30 – 8:00 break, 8:00 – 8:30 clear breakfast and brush teeth. 8:30 – 9:00 break, etc., so that the 40-hour week is not exceeded. To put it sarcastically: there really isn't much friction left in neoliberal capitalism. The many people working irregularly are not even mentioned here. In Germany, it is estimated that the share of irregular working conditions in the care sector is much higher, as many families are not willing or economically able to employ carers.

Another striking feature of the current media narrative is that they say that care workers "cannot come to work" (i.e. are passively affected). Shouldn't the question be asked whether they want to come to work at all under the current conditions?

The fact that this isn't happening is also due to the dehumanized view of them as invisibilized service providers, which makes it almost logical. The people behind 'the service provided' are only seen when you have personal contact with them—for example, when the Romanian caregiver had better be nice to the granny suffering from dementia. To some extent the carers' needs are also perceived in this personal contact. Institutionally, the existence of such needs is suppressed on the capitalist care market. Otherwise, this precarious system could not and would not work.

And it is in the same spirit that nobody asks whether the care workers can actually come to work. The main concern is that the international care chain works. But what about the personal care chains of the care workers themselves? What do they do when their children have no school and they are not allowed to go to their grandmother's in the afternoon because she is in a high-risk group? Will the care workers board a plane to spend six weeks abroad doing care work rather than being home? And if not, how will they pay their next month's rent?

Care work is based on a direct, often personal connection to a specific person who would be in dire straits if there was a strike or refusal to work. Unlike in Italy's logistics sector, for example, striking and refusing to work therefore appear less viable options…

Of course a strike would be feasible! It is more difficult to wage strikes in care work, however, because it requires greater solidarity. For 24-hour caregivers in Austria this applies in two respects. On the one hand, it is difficult to show solidarity with each other. The fact that they are self-employed makes it almost impossible to organize in trade unions. With Vidaflex, the ÖGB (Austrian Trade Union Federation) has kicked off an attempt to establish an insurance with simultaneous trade union support, including for strikes, for self-employed carers. The approach is a good thing in itself. A membership fee of €25 for this may not sound high at first. But with their monthly earnings of €700, it is still too much for most of the carers. Nevertheless, the care workers are quite well connected, although they hardly see each other due to their working hours. The Facebook group of Romanian care workers has close to 35,000 members, and there is a lively exchange of information. One of the consequences of this is that exploitative agencies or overpriced travel services no longer find clients. A

lot of information about the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic was provided in more detail and in better quality, especially about the situation of the people who have been flown in. And there has been solidarity with the unpaid carers and nursing family members. That is good—and should not be underestimated.

However, solidarity on the part of the people cared for or their families would also be important. If this solidarity were strong, a strike would certainly be possible. The strikes of kindergarten teachers, which were supported by parents, have shown this. After all, it would be in everyone's interest if the caregivers were highly motivated and economically well served. But of course private persons cannot finance this; the state social system must play a role and either co-finance it or, as would be absolutely necessary in the long run, provide alternative forms of coping with old age which are also effective against the huge problem of isolation. Intergenerational housing and shared flats are models whose implementation have already tested well in Scandinavia. Here, however, we have deliberately missed the boat on implementing them, because the system works anyway as it is, on the carers' shoulders.

Another point is that people think care workers just can't go on strike. This is due not least to a poor assessment of their work. A (monetary) value is attributed exclusively to production work, while care and reproduction work have never really been considered from an economic point of view. Slowly but surely, something is changing about this way of thinking. There is hope that this kind of critical thinking will be able to leave the bubble of feminist economists and attract political attention. Because the caregivers themselves are very well aware of the value of their work.

The labor struggles in the 1970s, which were associated with numerous strikes, showed how, for example, female cleaners in Great Britain worked basically around the clock like machines – cleaning offices at night and doing household and care work during the day – and had to get by practically without sleep. Today, the 'low pay economy' poses a similar problem, as can be seen in the words of Angela McRobbie. This is because in the low-pay economy, parts of the population are "incarcerated" with long working hours, which means there are little or no opportunities for further job training, for day

release or for upping qualifications. Does this not apply to the care sector in particular, and to what extent does this open up or block paths to politicization?

In my conversations with caregivers I have learned that there are hardly any expectations of further training measures, but that their motivation for further training is nevertheless very high. Due to the work situation, mostly informal channels are used for this purpose. German courses, for example, are hardly taken up at all; instead, if the persons supported are willing, they learn and practice whatever is possible. Online offers are also very popular. Some family doctors have also already started to train caregivers in medical activities. For the doctors it is a great relief if they don't have to come to the house for every injection, and for the caregivers it is an important asset in their portfolio, guaranteeing them better payment because they can then also take on cases requiring a higher care level.

Self-employment and transnationalism are preventing the process of politicization. Many caregivers behave with great reserve in the workplace because they are constantly aware that they are in a foreign country. They know neither the legal system nor the political structures and do not want to get actively involved, as they do not even have a residence permit. Similar to the so-called "Gastarbeiter" (guest workers) of the 1960s and '70s, they are treated as guests and so of course they feel that way. And guests are not usually politically active. Especially not guests from Eastern Europe. For it is not only Western Europeans who have internalized Balkanism. It of course has had and still has effects on Eastern Europeans, who now often have the feeling that they have to adapt to neoliberal Western European capitalism, which was their ideal, as they were led to believe for so long and intensely.

The new bargaining power of the care sector is indicated by nurses in Hong Kong who threatened to go on strike during the 'corona crisis.' What does it mean to cry out for "a new world after the virus" – across those boundaries that separate workers from those who speak for them?

First of all, it means taking a critical look at oneself and at the well-oiled, smoothly running system. This is because the international care chain often begins with precisely those academics and journalists who

can only exercise their professions because they externalize care work and ignore social inequalities. In the short term, it is easier and often cheaper to organize au pairs and care givers for the elderly from Eastern Europe—at wages far below those in Western Europe. Had people always thought like that, there probably wouldn't even be childcare facilities today. Therefore, it is important that academics and journalists in particular see themselves as advocates and make political demands and get loud. I demand and want to see an academic activism!

To make this more feasible: When the previous government coalition undertook an indexation of the child benefit for employees whose children were registered abroad, there were quite a few media reports on this. For one thing, because this measure is still controversial under EU law. But the injustice done to those affected was mentioned much more frequently, however. Since then, Bulgarian women, for example, only receive half of this lump sum, which, however, represents for them a significant and often necessary increase in their earnings. Already at that time there was a wave of fear that a crisis of care could occur. Unjustifiably, as I could have predicted, since a majority of the caregivers don't have children of eligible age. Nevertheless, I found the feedback as reflected in newspaper forums, among other places, positive. Politically it still didn't change anything. Neither the transitional government nor the current coalition of ÖVP and the Greens have so far reversed this controversial reduction. I hope that the care crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic has at least raised awareness of the fact that these care workers exist, that there are indeed a great many of them, and that they work under degrading conditions, so that positive political measures will finally be taken to improve the care situation.

Berlin/Vienna, April 2020

Unboxing the Hidden Labor of Saving Lives and Saving Capitalism

Interview with Angela Mitropoulos

In your books "Contract & Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia" (2012) and "Pandemonium: Proliferating Borders of Capital and the Pandemic Swerve" (2020), you advocate a "social understanding of health and disease." Could you briefly explain what you mean by "social"?

There are two points I think are important in this. Firstly, a social understanding of health and disease is a rejection of the premise of neoliberal health policies, according to which individuals' health and ill-health is understood as a matter of 'personal responsibility' and, implicitly, of 'personal' decisions. That tenet of 'personal responsibility' mystifies the material conditions though which people become ill or enjoy good health. Since the late twentieth century, and far longer in countries such as the United States, neoliberal policies have emphasized the commercialization of healthcare, the transformation of public health into private insurance, referring to patients as clients, and, not least, shifting the burden of risk to individuals and private households.

As I point out in "Pandemonium," the privatization of healthcare in China since the 1980s has been largely erased from discussions of the pandemic. In the United States, this system of private insurance has produced the most expensive and technologically intensive healthcare system in the world, and the largest commercial retail market for pharmaceutical drugs. It is also a system that undermines preventative healthcare, produces high rates of chronic illnesses, and is therefore terrible at handling a pandemic (particularly where the impact of COVID-19 is worsened by so-called underlying illnesses). Moreover, while the privatization of healthcare is certainly a function of capitalism, it is important to be clear that the idea of 'personal responsibility' is moral-economic, in that it is derived from conservative theologies of sin and redemption, according to which the causes of health and disease are mystified, treated as an effect of individuals' moral conduct. Selective healthcare establishes the

uneven material conditions of health—while its results are explained away as if they are the effect of moral failings or providence.

Secondly, in the history of the social sciences (and other disciplines such as law and philosophy), 'social' has often been seen as synonymous with 'national.' This is not the sense in which I have used it, but it is important to understand its circumstances and how this has changed. The eighteenth-century conflation of 'social' and 'national' came about because the social sciences, and particularly those fields associated with public health such as epidemiology, are involved in the statistical mapping of populations within the borders of a defined state. In politics, or healthcare policy, this assumption has been carried over as a defined split within the availability of healthcare—and this split has become more pronounced in recent decades. This selectivity should be made explicit and rejected—in "Pandemonium" I describe this as a distinction between the political representation of the *demos* and the economic concept of populations. Everyone should be able to access healthcare where they live and work, but the split between the *demos* and populations renders (working) populations disposable because it has evaluated their worth in terms of productivity. The restriction of healthcare to citizens is, among other things, a disaster for public health, and this is particularly clear in the circumstances of a pandemic.

In the present pandemic, social approaches to health care seem to be ruled out by 'quarantine nationalism.' Or do you see signs of social approaches nonetheless?

I think there are two, perhaps three tendencies which have overlapped to create something outside of this nationalist framing. The most obvious is the emergence of a global system of health governance, namely the World Health Organization. The WHO should not be treated uncritically. Like other agencies, it has often been influenced by neoliberal approaches to health and disease and, in any event, is comprised of national governments, and dependent on wealthier governments for funding. In the past, it has sometimes sought to persuade governments to fund its activities by fostering fears of diseases crossing borders or moving from poor countries to the global North. Nevertheless, there were key divergences between the WHO and national governments during the pandemic that illustrate the different stakes involved. The WHO, as with other public health

agencies, has not given credence to quarantine nationalism and, in some notable instances, has pointed out that this course would not be effective in stemming the transmission of disease.

At the same time, social media and the Internet have changed the spatial terms of publics—less national in scope. While this has enabled conspiracy theories about the origins of the disease to circulate and dangerous 'miracle cures' to be promoted, it has also involved the sharing of information, research and discussion of measures which would be effective in interrupting the transmission of SARS-CoV-2. For instance, the early open sourcing of genome sequences meant that it was possible to develop tests far more quickly. I do not want to understate the continuing influence of nationalist affect, since for many people the disease was not serious until it affected those who look like them. But I do think that a conversation emerged, particularly among health workers, that, by placing the emphasis on what is effective or will work to save lives, powerfully pushed back against both conspiracy theories and ineffective government policies.

Before getting deeper into the potentialities of social approaches to health care in the present pandemic, let us expand the critique of 'quarantine nationalism.' It thrives on authoritarianism, coupled with the privatization of health care. What for you are the most problematic contradictions inherent to this trend? And how are they becoming visible during the present pandemic?

The powers of surveillance, detention and deportation have always existed at the thresholds of citizenship and legal personhood, as do selective approaches to healthcare. It has never been the case that neoliberal governments have facilitated the movements of people—which is to say, not outside a system that converts those movements into the circulation of commodities, or labor as a commodity. So, at one level it appears as if there is a contradiction, but not when these seemingly contradictory tendencies are understood as geared toward facilitating the circuit of capital. My argument in "Pandemonium," as earlier in "Contract and Contagion," is that neoliberalism involved endogenous turning points to authoritarian government (including fascism), and that many of these were present in colonial circumstances. Those turning points, in short, are where the threshold of

surplus value is situated—and this is the importance of racism and misogyny, in that these naturalize higher rates of exploitation (as evidenced by gendered and racial wage gaps).

The most visible aspect of this during the pandemic has been the reliance of locked-down, private households on the offline work which has been deemed necessary—but which, as it happens, tends to be low-paid, and where Black and Brown people, many of whom are women and migrants, predominate. Much of that work has become increasingly dangerous, particularly in the absence of adequate personal protective equipment. But what we can say is that this aspect of pandemic policy has only functioned inasmuch as the threat of starvation, homelessness and deportation hung over the heads of those who ensured the work of those who were capable of locking down and shifting to online work.

What potential do labor struggles have for making visible, addressing, and potentially overcoming the contradictions in question?

How we understand and reckon with that interdependence in the coming months (and years) will shape a great deal. There are suggestions of a new 'social contract' or political-economic contract in a projected post-pandemic world, one that focuses on the repayment of government debts accrued through stimulus packages and any expansion of healthcare and welfare during the pandemic. I discuss this at greater length in "Pandemonium," but suffice to say here that it demands a view of debt that does not sacrifice those who have already sacrificed the most.

In your essay "Workers of the World Unite" (2019), you deconstruct claims that migrants bring down the wages of non-migrant workers. In doing so, you are intervening in a discourse that foregrounds the resurgence of the nation-state as an answer to the challenges of globalization. In the current pandemic the discourse in question is reemerging with great force. As 'quarantine nationalism' proliferates and the separatist undertones of the lockdown get stronger, migrant workers are played out against non-migrant workers. Yet isn't the phantasmagorical ground of this tactic revealed as such, making it clear that 'quarantine nationalism' is a dangerous illusion? After all, aren't migrant workers now openly in demand

where they are also usually most needed—in the domain of basic supply and social reproduction work?**

I agree that it has been revealed as a dangerous illusion. But that will not halt the trajectory, no more than it has in the past. The emerging tendency in mainstream trade unions and those parties with which they are associated, particularly their conservative wings whose membership is drawn from the repressive apparatus of the state (police, border security and immigration detention), is toward corporatism. That is, excluding migrant and unemployed workers, and largely indifferent to precarious workers, and enforcing a reckoning of national debts in ways that will expand that repressive apparatus. That does not mean corporatism will triumph. The Black Lives Matter movements, in circumstances where Black people are more likely to die from encounters with the police and in prisons no less than from their encounters with a virus, is a powerful movement against this trajectory. How we treat the connections between the pandemic, exploitation and repression is key. Those connections are not forged within national spaces but instead occur along the fragile lines of supply chains and the extent (or not) of solidarity.

For us, globalization also has something to do with "world revolution," also in the sense of "das Weltweite" (approximately, the worldwide) as Karl Marx thought and anticipated it. This became tangible in the 1960s, in the form of worker (and student) revolts in the Global North and resistance movements in (former) colonies. Such a "world revolution" goes beyond the borders of the nation state. And that is the crux of the matter. This became clear for the first time when the idea of the nation state fully shifted to the center of politics from the 18th century onwards. The viral spread of the idea of the nation state and the nationalism associated with it managed to contain the nascent "we" of the "globally" oppressed and disadvantaged and to redirect the energies of this emerging "we" to the national: instead of global class struggle, a struggle among nations flared up. It seems that this mechanism is still at work today. Do you nonetheless see potential in the current pandemic such a transnational "we" emerging? And how can (and how do) workers in the domains of basic supply and social reproduction contribute to this?

It is important to keep recalling that the nation-state is a modern invention and not a phenomenon that occurs naturally. I also agree that it contained (and split) workers' movements at pivotal historical moments. As to your question, and besides my remarks above, two of the most powerful moments I saw during the Black Lives Matter protests in the US recently were of medical staff lined up outside of a New York City hospital, in full protective equipment, applauding protesters as they walked by, most of whom were also wearing masks. The other moment was of ambulance drivers using their ambulance megaphone as they were driving past a protest march in support of those protests. These moments are poignant illustrations of solidarity during the pandemic that has particularly taken its toll on Black lives, and in one of the most diverse and largest protests occurring in circumstances of a massive rise in unemployment. The mask is a method of protection against both the virus and surveillance during protests and, at the same time, has come to represent those who have a social understanding of care—and those who do not, like Trump, who has refused to wear one. Black Lives Matter emerged in the US, but it is nevertheless to some extent global. As with other antiracist movements in recent years which focus on immigration detention, it has prioritized divestment and boycotts of prisons. The importance, here, is that there are already solidarities which have emerged that, firstly, value health and lives (over the circuit and value of capital) and, secondly, illustrate the strategic importance of intervening in the materialities of that circuit, from financial investments to supply chains which can be interrupted at each point, from the extraction of raw materials to the point of sale.

In the aforementioned essay you write that "The 'movement' in 'workers' movement' is not a metaphor." How do care, maintenance, logistics and cleaning workers assert their right to freedom of movement in the present pandemic? And how is this becoming the basis for the (re-) emergence of worker movements?

As with all other markets, the labor market is defined by contracts. In some instances, those contracts are shaped by immigration and related policies that set the terms of, for instance, 'guest worker' status and give rise to systems of surveillance. The most powerful response in any market, including labor markets, is the refusal or breaking of contracts—classically, this is the strike, but it is also boycott and divestment. Moreover, some of those systems of surveillance have expanded with the introduction of tracking technology that is noticeably less effective at stemming disease transmission than tracking workers' dissent or surveillance. One vivid example is, for example, suggestions by police in the US to use such systems to trace the contacts of those arrested during protests. Intervening in these processes requires not only understanding supply chains, but also a clear assertion at each juncture of the difference between protecting lives and protecting capitalism. The precise answer given to this in each instance is complex, but it is a reckoning that I think is already occurring. Whether corporatism or the increasing levels of unemployment will manage to undermine this is still an open question—but, either way, it will be answered by whether and how austerity will be imposed on the unemployed and the scope of (or exclusions from) any 'social contract' assembled to reinstate a social peace and order. Will there be social and industrial peace without justice?

How can (re-)emerging worker movements contribute to the spreading of a "social understanding of health and disease" and to a "social approach" to health care?

As above, and put more bluntly, there is a sharp distinction between saving lives and saving capitalism. The distinction only becomes obscured because, on the one hand, many have become habituated to placing a lower value on the lives of Black and Brown people, women, migrants and those who are not of the same nationality and, on the other, capitalism has fostered a metaphysical view of life, as a Way of Life that, in reality, is often lethal and dangerous. Since capitalism has yet to be abolished, in the meantime the question becomes how risks are defined and distributed. It is possible to reckon these differently, to insist on other values and another accounting of liabilities.

We wonder whether and how the expanded notion of both worker movement and labor could also be mobilized by those at what is presumably the other side of the spectrum: tech workers and tech users who are increasingly becoming aware of themselves as laboring subjects in a shifting political economy that the big data-police state is fostering in complicity with Big Tech companies?

The first thing, as perhaps your question implies by including tech users, is to understand that labor exists even where they may not be a wage contract or a standard contract. The use of software and technology in surveillance, in systems of incarceration, policing, detention and deportation, is the most obvious. Tech workers, not the owners of technology companies, build and maintain those systems. They also know how they work, and know (though not always) who has purchased or uses them. We have not seen tech workers wield the enormous power that they have as yet, in part because of the workplace culture of tech, the ways in which migration policies subdue conflict, and the contracts under which most tech workers work. Those things have to be addressed, but even in the absence of doing so, tech workers still know how technology works in ways that most outside of tech do not. Indeed, all workers know how their systems work—or don't.

Can there be a common ground for struggles?

I think I would say that 'common ground' cannot be a point of departure or assumption so much as something that can only be constructed—by which I mean, we have to honestly admit that the conditions of living are not all the same, nor are the risks, and understand the dynamics that both split and merge movements in particular directions. But there is nevertheless a clear choice between the corporatist path (in which workers' interests are said to be aligned with those of a company and economic nationalism) and those approaches which emphasize a defense of the most vulnerable—as I put it in "Pandemonium": on the understanding that all liquid incomes (or wages and social incomes) will gravitate to the lowest point. This is not a moral position. It is strategic, focused on where the threshold of surplus value is situated at each juncture.

Berlin/Sydney, April-June 2020

Learning as Labor: Re-Inventing 'the School' Along the Lines of 'the Factory'

Interview with Tom Holert

In the beginning of April, Wuhan factories that had been closed during the COVID-19 pandemic-related shutdown were reopened. Reportedly, high-level security measures have been introduced. Workers who enter a factory are being disinfected with highly concentrated alcohol, and they get their temperature measured. Workers' temperatures are checked twice again during their shift. Inside the factory all workers must wear a mask and a special protection suit at all times. The places which workers used to use for social gatherings or potential encounters are closed—break rooms, conference rooms, smoking corners, etc. They are forced to 'take food in' at the work place itself, where each worker has her or his own table placed in security distance to other tables. An AFP image taken in a break room of a re-opened Honda factory in Wuhan powerfully captures the 'social distancing' logic of that labor environment. Weirdly enough, the situation depicted vaguely resembles a classroom setting. How do you read this image?

That's an interesting observation, but I don't necessarily share its underlying assumption. Spatially separating workers in the name of hygienic measures and in the interest of fighting the pandemic may resemble other forms of separation and prohibition (of assembly, of association, of labor politics, of "unruly" behavior at the workplace, etc.). However, I'd acknowledge that these measures bear a minimum of reasonability in light of the current situation. The pandemic at least complicates any criticism, justified as it may be, that falls back on venerable traditions of the analysis of power and discipline.

Sure, comparing the choreography of work depicted in the image of the Honda plant in Wuhan with images of separation and isolation of students in class is to some extent valid. Separate seating in classrooms has been a continuous feature in the history of education. Although distancing measures have been the subject of repeated contestation since the early days of reformist and progressivist pedagogy in the early twentieth century, they tend

to be redeployed time and again. Against all the trends towards group work, team teaching and the unraveling of the disciplinary, geometric spatial orders of the classroom (which have always served as reminders of the structural kinship among factory work, prison time, and formal education), the "egg crate" model of schooling has proven quite persistent.

Before you go deeper into the spatial politics of education, could you first expand your thoughts on the changing environment of labor?

In a sense, COVID-19 has forced industrial labor, as well as the labor in "post-industrial" spaces, to unlearn the lessons of the flexible workspace, of the "action office," the "Bürolandschaft," or the fake lounge liberalism of Facebook and Google headquarters. These models of creativity-/innovation-inducing environments all originated in the 1950s and 1960s when corporate culture, cybernetics, behavioral psychology, and ergonomics were combined to redefine the workspace, only to be supported in this effort soon thereafter by the ostensibly anti-authoritarian pop and countercultures of the period (much of this development has been chronicled in the television series *Mad Men*).

Authoritarianism never ceased, however, it just changed its terms. It cloaked itself in new forms and shapes, protocols and "philosophies" that were intended to signal freedom and laissez-faire. Capitalism has always been quite effective in dissimulating its violent and throbbing disciplinary force. What is happening now, under the manifold influences of virologists, epidemiologists, politicians, and industry, is *a peeling away of such surfaces of openness and liberty, and a rediscovery of the barren structures upon which they have been grafted*. However, the imposition of rules of distancing, of isolation and securitization due to COVID-19 comes face to face with different cultures of labor and education. Depending on the respective national and geographic context, the features of lockdown and prevention can appear more or less alien to those affected by it, and may thus be experienced as more or less exceptional.

Could you give an example?

The draconic regime of testing in China epitomized in the hellish, nationwide *gaokao* exam that determines college placement for high school seniors, has generated images (and – orientalizing – fantasies)

of panic-ridden, drilled students being seated in large numbers in huge school halls or sometimes stadiums, an ornament of the (joyless) masses if there ever was one. The "super high schools" that prep students for this ordeal are aptly called "educational factories," since they resemble the old assembly-line type of factory (a metaphor/analogy popular in the 1960s when Workerism, André Gorz, and others put it to productive conceptual and political use). It might be argued that the kind of discipline performed in the *gaokao* exam belongs to a larger scheme of authoritarian rule that is part of a culture of preparedness with regard to health crises of the scale of SARS epidemics, such as the first one in 2003 and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic of 2019-20.

Unsurprisingly, scenes of 'social distancing' are becoming common in the world of education. In fact, in the COVID-19 pandemic the image of 'a group of isolated individuals in one room' was first shaped in classrooms in Taiwan, where responses to the spread of the coronavirus were organized as early as late December 2019. Images of classrooms show pupils at individual desks that are enclosed by yellow plastic walls. Tellingly, Taiwan is not allowed to be a WHO member but yet is hailed as the only country that was able to respond to the virus with an array of de facto preventive measures rather than just organizing ad hoc adaptations. Consequently, little criticism is voiced as regards the measures deployed themselves. First, where do you see parallels between the isolated pupils and the isolated workers?

The factory/school analogy is an ideal candidate to become the object of an in-depth study of its history, semantics, and use value. As intimated before, I am not entirely convinced whether this analogy actually helps better understand and conceptualize the specifics of the current situation. Health and hygienic issues have informed and driven the whole process of modernization, and they continue to inform every aspect of spatial politics—in urban planning, in the spatial regulations of factory and office labor (where health administrations, building departments and unions work hand in hand), and with regard to educational facilities.

Health, since it affects everyone, if to different degrees, is a universalizing and generalizing planning parameter, and right now it is being prioritized more than is usually the case. Thus, the question

whether practices of isolation (and images thereof) in workplaces and schools bespeak a continuum of discipline and control across these spaces of work is to be weighed carefully to avoid collapsing a standard critique of power, alienation, and abstraction (of labor, cognitive and physical) into a critique of anti-viral preventive measures. I am not saying, however, that the latter could not be used to foster the former.

In what sense are the school and the factory complementary institutions as far as 'treating' the threat of 'unpredictable' associations among group members?

During the past days I watched (again) the fourth season of the excellent television series *The Wire*. As fans of *The Wire* well know, that's the season that focuses on the school system of Baltimore, Maryland, a city with a majority Black population, in the mid-2000s. Narrating different stories of students, teachers, principals, and educationalists in an urban middle school in a near-documentary fashion, the failure of the system to serve the needs of the pupils and the community as a whole is rendered palpable. The urgency of the issue of space and separation/segregation in education is persuasively articulated. The classroom is portrayed as a force field of contestation and confrontation.

However, depending on the teacher in charge and the students in the room, curricular and spatial measures can be taken to turn the classroom space into one of actual learning and collaboration. For this to happen though, a spatial separation of those pupils who don't see any use in the curriculum offered by the system but have a vital interest in learning and honing the skills and the trade of the "corners," of dealing drugs and surviving amid gang wars, proves to be helpful. "Useful knowledge" can be generated and acquired when the socio-spatial predicaments of learning are considered.

That said, to prevent "'unpredictable' associations" you sometimes have to come up with solutions that go beyond default (punitive) isolation. What this can possibly mean with regard to COVID-19-induced separations, I can't tell. However, I'd be curious what David Simon (creator of *The Wire*, as well as *The Corner*, *Treme*, and *The Deuce*) would make of the current crisis in his writing on and of educational life-worlds.

One of the phenomena (and outright problems) of the current pandemic is that 'we' are 'forced' to avoid any potential exposure to contagion by pursuing isolated lives in online-only mode. The web is promoted as a contagion-free space. In the course of this, online learning is booming, without any deeper inquiry into its tools, methods, and consequences, and the isolation of the individual is more or less taken for granted. To what extent is this about consolidating tendencies that aim to reduce the 'human risk factor' (including student strikes), and to what extent is this about preparing people for a braver new world of an even more frictionless capitalism?

Again, I'd be cautious with extrapolating too much and too quickly from the phenomenology of a situation that is still and arguably primarily to be considered one of health and care (with all the social, psychological, economic, ecological, etc. implications and repercussions coming with it). The whole system of video conferencing, remote teaching/learning, live streams, etc. wasn't waiting for the COVID-19 pandemic to happen, but rather has been in the making for a long time. Earlier attempts at distance learning, tele-universities, etc. on a large scale date back to the 1960s and 1970s. It has always been the tech sector's dream to do away with material spatialities and infrastructures, with physical and lived sociality. The teleology of cybernetics is the virtualization of the material world, its translation into data. That's a fact. And no doubt, the digital industries are benefitting enormously from the pandemic and the social distancing imperative, at least in the short run. For what has also become quite apparent in the course of only a few weeks – the promises of Zoom, Skype, Netflix, and the like can also turn stale and stultifying. They produce their own fatigues and boredoms, a dangerous dissatisfaction that Silicon Valley is no doubt busy developing a therapy for (in parallel to Big Pharma's race for a corona vaccine).

In the 1960s the writings of Norbert Wiener and J. C. R. Licklider contributed to spread the word about Artificial Intelligence (AI) like wildfire at US universities, giving rise to the popular image of the 'machinic superbrain'—even becoming a movie star in Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968). This AI hype catalyzed a transition during which capitalism as a self-reproducing, self-running, and ultimately 'smart'

system was reinvented. In this period capital made a leap into a new, immaterial era—trained on the all-encompassing instrumentalization of labor, while designed to become entirely unaccountable to labor as well as labor struggles, e.g. in the form of worker (and student) revolts, but also resistance movements in (former) colonies. It was in this period that Buckminster Fuller, who is regarded as having conceived of AI and the Internet before they became mainstream, wrote in his book "Education Automation" (1962) about highly personalized forms and spaces of learning, mapping early versions of distance learning and remote teaching. What are the prehistories that you consider relevant in this context?

You are right in pointing out the reciprocities between cybernetics (and the [pre-]history of AI) and pedagogies that focus on the individual and thus aim at personalizing learning (as in the "child-centered" approach that is inherent in any "differentiated" curriculum and school type). Buckminster Fuller was not alone in calling for a radical overhaul of the education system in the 1960s. An entire generation of young architects, educationalists, countercultural types, etc., propagated a new spatial and design politics that was geared towards the learning self (see, e.g., my essay "Spaces of the Learning Self"). Such imaginaries of extramural learning environments for the singularized learner who inhabits "capsules" and "study carrels" moved away from a new economy of scale in the rapidly expanding education systems of the post-war decades, that is: of what I propose to call the Education Shock.

It could be argued that the drive towards autonomous systems of (knowledge) production implicit in the development of AI has considerably informed the debates around schooling beyond the confines of the school building. As much as it is a networked technology, AI in its early days was imagined to be based on a central supercomputer rather than on a web of distributed data centers. The individualized learners were to be brain-fed by a single HAL-like machine.

Catering to the needs of the individual is an important objective of any advanced pedagogy; it needs to be counterbalanced, however, with the recognition of its social and environmental conditions. In the progressivist and countercultural discourses around 1970, the individual learner was

thus also always placed within a "community" or "tribe." The computer was seen as a means to yield a "radical software," and learning was conceived as an essentially liberating and emancipatory activity, to be held against the learning factories of capitalist education (and education for capitalism).

However, it must be emphasized that the individualist/tribalist visions of (Western) countercultures were typically oblivious of their own privileges and elitism. Inadvertently (or not), they disconnected from the world of labor and its struggles. Criticism of the "machines" of the education industry – materializing in the huge education centers built for thousands of pupils or the university campus mega-structures mushrooming everywhere – was often also dismissive of the new educational "masses" generated (in the West) by welfare state educational policies and (in the East) by socialist measures of expanding access to learning and knowledge.

The real and substantial links between an expanding educational system geared towards producing workers for the new knowledge industries and class struggle became increasingly invisibilized. Technology, and cybernetics more specifically, certainly had its share in this development (though the particular historical role of cybernetics in the Communist countries needs to be considered here as well).

Designs of learning environments like those depicted on a photograph taken by Leon Kunstenaar in 1971 look conspicuously like computer-assisted workplaces. Here, the trope of 'isolated individuals in a group context' oscillates between the factory and the school, evoking hybrids such as 'factories of education' and 'schools of work.' It seems the isolated individual – his or her body and brain – successfully becomes the key site for the production and accumulation of 'constant capital' when the disciplinary discourses of working and learning are not just intermingled but also placed in a circular relation.

The photograph of the hexagonal "learning laboratory" by Kunstenaar was made in an "experimental" school in the Boston area. The Wm. Monroe Trotter Elementary School in Roxbury, Mass. was opened around 1970 to be frequented mostly by Black children. One basic idea of the

school's design was to combine "open-plan" group work with individualized learning stations such as the one depicted here. The circularity of this particular setting results from the hexagonal designs of large parts of the school. It was the exception rather than the rule in a time of predominantly container-shaped big schools. I'd thus be careful, once again, about drawing too neat an analogy between factory and school. Although, here I agree, the labor that is learning is the predicament around which even the most "progressive" architectural designs of the Education Shock age revolved.

Against this backdrop, the question arises how we can reconsider the politics of isolated learning as it is being reactivated and reinvented during the current pandemic.

An image similar to the one from Taiwan you mentioned shows, as the caption states, "high school senior students study[ing] with plastic partitions in a classroom." Taken at a Wuhan school in April 2020, the image resembles encounters in public that everyone has had in the past weeks – plastic partitions between cashier and customer. It's an image of a world that has already been in a constant process of securitization for a very long time. Thousands of shops and offices around the world are familiar with the plastic shielding (often bullet-proof) that separates the customer (potential burglar) from the employee (system-relevant).

Job security and protection at the workplace are only two sides of an ever more rapidly swirling coin. The protected (care) worker allegedly becomes the precondition of the system's survivability. But what is a protected way of learning? A fenced schoolyard with a security guard on patrol? Certainly not. However, I tend to think of the classroom with plastic partitions as a potentially "safer" space than the domesticity of home schooling. Although around 1970 "free schools" were hailed as a Utopian alternative to the learning factories of the public school system, the home and the privacy of the family have always been potential harbingers of violence and abuse. Formal, public education may be flawed to the extreme, but it is also the only template on which an accountable and protected education is likely to happen. Home schooling and remote learning are *not* an alternative.

Berlin, May 2020

Biographies

Dario Azzellini is a political scientist, sociologist, and documentary film director. Specializes in international labor studies and global social change with a particular focus on Europe and Latin America. Extensive research and has published in the fields of critical labor studies, politics of resistance, Latin American Studies, and war sociology. In critical labor studies, his research has focused on workers' self-organization and collective responses to precarious work conditions and workplace closure. Out of his engagement in international debates on the commons, Dario Azzellini developed the concept of "Labour as a Commons" (Critical Sociology 2016).

Christine Braunersreuther is a researcher, curator, and activist based in Vienna. She works as a curator, journalist, and lecturer for exhibition theory and is also active in local politics. She is currently working on her doctorate on 'Possibilities of (re)presenting transnational care work' at the laboratory for critical migration and border regime research at the Institute for Cultural Anthropology at the University of Göttingen, curating an exhibition on the labor of 24-hour care workers for the Pavelhaus in Laafeld and coordinating "Grazer Soundscapes," a project of Radio Helsinki for Graz Culture Year 2020.

Niccolò Cuppini is a researcher at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland. Oriented towards a trans-disciplinary approach within the fields of urban studies and the history of political doctrines, he researches logistics and social movements; sociology of labor and the platform economy. He is involved in research projects in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the US. He is part of the Into the Black Box research group and editor of Scienza & Politica.

Kerstin Guhlemann lives and works as a social scientist in Dortmund. Since 2019 coordinator of the Research Unit Labor Policy and Health at the Social Research Center of the Technical University Dortmund. Her publications include "Humanization of Work 4.0: Prevention and Democracy in the Digitalized Working Society" (2020).

Tom Holert works as an art historian, writer, curator, and artist in Berlin. He co-founded the Harun Farocki Institut in Berlin (HaFI) and is the editor of "Mutual Aid," an ongoing special issue of HaFI's online journal Rosa Mercedes. He curated

"Learning Laboratories: Architecture, Instructional Technology, and the Social Production of Pedagogical Space Around 1970" at BAK in 2016-17. Currently he is working on the research, publication and exhibition project "Education Shock. Learning, Politics and Architecture in the 1960s and 1970s" for HKW. Publications include "Knowledge Beside Itself. Contemporary Art's Epistemic Politics" (2020).

Angela Mitropoulos is a theorist and academic based in Sydney, Australia. Among other writings which track shifting boundaries and movements in the history of philosophy, science, aesthetics, politics and economics, she is the author of "Contract and Contagion. From Biopolitics to Oikonomia" (2012) and "Pandemonium. Proliferating Borders of Capital and the Pandemic Swerve" (2020). Her writing has appeared in numerous journals, including Social Text, Mute, Cultural Studies Review, Borderlands, and ephemera; it has been widely translated, disseminated and taught in both academic and activist contexts.

Katja Schwaller is a writer, translator, and doctoral researcher at Stanford University, working on the intersections of digital capitalism, labor, and the built environment. She is the editor, translator, and co-author of "Technopolis. Urbane Kämpfe in der San Francisco Bay Area," an edited volume on Big Tech and urban struggles, published in Berlin/Zurich in 2019.

Magdalena Taube is professor of Digital Media and Journalism at the Macromedia University of Applied Sciences in Berlin and editor-in-chief of berlinergazette.de. She is the author of "Disruption des Journalismus" (2018) published by Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, and co-editor of numerous anthologies, including "A Field Guide to the Snowden Files" (2017). Her curatorial projects include "Signals. The Snowden Files in Media, Archives and Arts" (2017) and "BQV. Büro für Qualifikation und Vermögen" (2012).

Krystian Woznicki is a critic, organizer, photographer, and the co-founder of Berliner Gazette. Blending writing and photography, he has created books such as "After the Planes" (2017), co-authored with Brian Massumi, "Fugitive Belonging" (2018), and his most recent work "Undeclared Movements," which was published by b_books 2020. His curatorial projects include "As Darkness Falls" (2014), "Temporary Embassies" (2008), and "Young Japanese Cinema" (1999).

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