

Documenting Karl Marx: Rethinking Marx Ideas on the Commodity within a Documentary

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Abstract

Imagine a market where you have a high misallocation of commodities; this market could be the global food market. More than 150 years ago Karl Marx asked the question, why the classical economy of his time had such problems to properly explain the reasons for dysfunctional markets. The work of Marx and Engels turned the 20th century into a kind of stone quarry, where different ideological directions made use of the theory, and often misused it at the same time. This paper wants to introduce the reader to some of the core ideas of Marx's *'Capital'*, and also illustrate how lectures – in the case of Marx - can utilise the popularisation of public media for teaching purposes. This paper introduces Marx's idea of 'commodity' in the context of interviews from the popular Austrian documentary *'We Feed the World'*. By using the current global agriculture production as an example, the paper examines an urgent problem of global politics on the one hand. On the other hand, the paper aims to illustrate how the idea of joining Marx's theory with an actual documentary can be used in order to introduce one of the core thinkers of political economy to undergraduate students.

Keywords: Karl Marx, Capital, Documentary, We feed the World, Teaching

'We take away about 2 million kilos of bread a year, but there's nothing wrong with it. It's no more than two days old, fit for anybody to eat. And I still see, even though I have been in the business more than ten years now and I always drive the same route. I still see people stopping and staring, because they can't just believe what we are doing.' Austrian truck driver describes his work. (*We Feed the World* 3'58)

'Nevertheless, an increasing quantity of material wealth may correspond to a simultaneously fall in the magnitude of its value.' (Marx 1952: 18)

Introduction¹

Media and film have become increasingly popular as sources of social science analysis.² Especially in International Relations one can find a growing body of literature dealing with this type of academic analysis (Combs 1993; Engelkamp and Offermann 2012; Neumann and Nexon 2006; Shapiro 1999; 2009; Valeriano 2013; Weber 2006; 2009). Moreover, most of the existing work in the field focuses on the construction of reality within films.³ Nevertheless, the criticism of contemporary neo-liberalism in childrens' movies is an objective in this literature (Freeman 2005) as well as progressive ideas of Marxism (Mulder 2013). This article will therefore follow the path (based on the experience of using this paper for teaching purpose), and will explain key ideas of Karl Marx by

analyzing dialogues from a popular documentary. In line with this, this essay specifically targets lecturers, students as well as readers interested in Marxism in general.

There are very few political and economic ideas in history which were as influential as the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, at the beginning of the 21st century a great number of people living in political systems that label themselves as being communist states by referring to Marx and Engels. Yet, it is highly arguable whether the ideas of Mao or Stalin were really related to those of Karl Marx. Moreover, Marx never concluded his thoughts about the communist state before he died. This leaves us - as political scientists - with two important questions: Firstly, and after eliminating the stigma of, what was it that Marx wanted to tell us in his works. And secondly, which lessons can be learned from those works that have utility in our world today. Unfortunately, providing an answer to these questions would be beyond the scope of this article. Our aim is therefore to provide an introduction with regards to how to read the work of Karl Marx. Without a doubt, 'Capital' is Marx's central masterpiece. The first volume can be understood as a critical review of the existing literature on the political economy discourse of Marx's time. It is a masterpiece of classical macro-economy. In 'Capital' Marx tries to discover the underlying mechanism and the cause of wealth in societies which are producing their commodities in a capitalist mode of production. But Marx's work is not only challenging on a theoretical level. The empirical examples for the theory come from the time of early industrialization, of course. As the examples and calculations Marx is providing to illustrate his theory can be - to a certain extent - more confusing than helpful. The aim of this article is therefore to update some of the examples Marx gives in the first chapter of Capital's Volume I thereby providing an entry point to understanding to Marx's thinking.

In the beginning of the 21st century there are plenty of examples on the world market where Marx's analysis could offer a fresh angle. Especially instances where the idea of a self-regulating market has reached its limits could be of a special interest to illustrate some critical ideas of mainstream political economy. Inge Röpke (2011), for example, described the food market as a market with a high misallocation of commodities. Moreover, nowadays we see that on the agricultural commodity market (nearly) everything goes wrong, that could go wrong; e.g. we are producing enough food (and even more) to feed every person on this planet, but at the same time millions of people are undernourished (FAO 2009). This makes the case for agriculture commodities interesting for a closer look.

The Austrian documentary '*We feed the World*' aims to approach and shed light on this issue on both the local and global level. This documentary will be used in this article to discover some of the key ideas of Marx; the documentary will serve as a kind of empirical example as to update Marx's ideas and examples from his first chapter of '*Capital*'. This notion of using this documentary as a figurative door opener for Marx's thinking will play a predominant role in this article. To that end, the article is structured as follows: Firstly, it will examine some of Marx's key ideas of his first chapter in '*Capital*'. Subsequently, both the storyline as well as the form of narration in the documentary will be described. The third section is dedicated to offering teaching advice by discussing different approaches with regards to how to make use of this article within the scope of a course or a seminar. The fourth section will serve as the central part of this article. By means of interpreting two scenes from the documentary some of Marx's thoughts will be highlighted and illustrated. Lastly, a conclusion will be given.

To avoid misunderstandings, this article does not aim to simplify Marx's 'Capital' or even give a short summary of it. It is also not the goal of this article to explain the documentary '*We feed the World*' against the background of Marx's theory. This article aims to be a door opener to the theoretical ideas of Marx; while keeping in mind that the documentary '*We feed the World*' could very well be watched from different theoretical angles.

Quotations from the documentary '*We feed the World*⁴ will be given by the acronym WftW followed by an indication of the minutes and seconds at which a quoted statement occurred.

The commodity

Karl Marx conceived 'Capital' as a multi-volume edition. However, writing the very first volume took him 15 years. As such Marx did not manage to finish the second and third volumes before his death leading to a version of the book edited by Friedrich Engels being published after his death. Nevertheless, the first volume of 'Capital' remains Marx's opus magnum and is divided into seven sections containing 25 Chapters overall. The first section of 'Capital' is dedicated to taking a closer look at commodity –i.e. the circulation process and the meaning of money. In this first section Marx is already providing an encompassing overview of everything he is going to discuss over the course of the first volume. What is the essence of a commodity and what is its meaning for the functioning of capitalism? This is the central question of political economy for Karl Marx. Thus commodity is the central starting point to discovering what it is that lies at the heart of the wealth of those societies living in capitalist modes of production.

If one were to look at a used copy of capital it would not be uncommon to see (by looking on underscores and buckles of the pages) that most people stopped reading the book after the first section. There is a reason for that: Marx method of presentation is not always easy to follow.⁵ Let us take a look at the first sentence of the book:

'The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities', its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.' (Marx 1952: 13)

The key phrase in this passage is that the 'wealth of those societies [...] presents itself' to us; another proper translation for the word Marx is using is 'appear' (MEW 1867/1969: 49). The word goes back to the philosophical tradition of distinguishing between appearance and essence. This means that we see objects only as they appear to us, regardless of whether or not the appearance matches the underlying true essence of the object. Sometimes appearance and essence are the same, and yet sometimes they are different. This is what Marx wants to tell us. What we see when we look at society does not have to be true. As such Marx attempts to discover the essential structures behind the 'immense heap of commodities'. He is undertaking a so called dialectical analysis to discover the (dialectical) relation between appearance and essence. Thus what Marx is doing in those first two sentences is to inform the reader about the starting point and goal of his research (the research design), the theoretical background of the study as well as his dialectical method. This short example maybe illustrates how difficult it sometimes can be to read and understand Marx. Therefore this paragraph will be utilized in the following in order to introduce some ideas of Marx contained in the first chapter of 'Capital' as to make the interpretation of the documentary more feasible.

Marx starts his research by looking at commodity. A commodity for him is a product of mental work and material conditions. For example, building a house does not only require a constructor but also an architect. Both of them have work experience and have learned their jobs; so the connection between mental and physical work has a historical component as well. This is a central idea of historical materialism, the theoretical tradition in which Marx is working. For him every commodity is split in two parts: A use-value and an exchange-value. Both forms of value are related (dialectically) to one another. Let us reuse the example of the house to make this clearer. Every house has a use-value for the person living in the house. And yet you can also put a house on the market and sell it for a certain amount of money (exchange value). The money you can get by selling the house depends

on how much it is worth to another person (use-value); someone who maybe wants to live in the house (Marx 1952: 13).

Marx's argument is not only that use-values and exchange values of commodities are related. He also describes the process of transformation that happens to a commodity while it is sold on the market. The commodity, while on the market, is reduced to a quantitative indicator – i.e. a certain amount of money (Marx 1952: 14) - while the qualitative dimension is 'extracted' from the commodity through the transformation process. Moreover, on the market the commodity has to compete against other similar products. Thus it is not the inner quality of a commodity that is of importance on the market, but rather the quantity and the price are the important indicators of its value. This is something we can see every day at a discount market. Most economic theories only look at this quantitative dimension which is visible on the market, but we have to keep the qualitative dimension of a commodity in mind as well. However, the 'transformation process of a commodity' is also important for the person producing the commodity. Human labor, in any form, is for Marx the essence of all commodities. Here we have to be aware of different meanings of different terms. In German the terms work and labor only have one translation 'Arbeit'.⁶ As such Marx refers to the English terms and explains that 'work' represents the qualitative form of production, maybe vegetables I am growing in my garden for my own consumption. Labor on the other hand implies for Marx the sale of work or human life time in exchange for money. So again, we have to be aware of the terms we are using in the research process. Looking carefully at the terms we are using is an important part of Marx's method. For example, the term 'British Pound' tells us that money once was defined through weight measures; i.e. quantitative dimensions.

The fact that we have two forms of 'Arbeit' – work and labor – also has some implication for the labor process and the production of commodities. For instance I can produce a commodity for my own purposes and make use of its use-value or - through labor - I could produce a commodity and sell it on the market. However, on the market I will not be compensated for the labor time it took to produce the commodity. On the market the (quantity of the) commodity, again, has to compete against similar commodities. For example, if I can produce 5 tons of potatoes per year and sell them on the market, while my neighbor produces 15 tons at the same time, I will not make more money with my product just because I spent more labor time (or work that has to be done) - in relative terms - on my potatoes. The market will 'level' the potatoes and come up with a price for the 'socially average necessary labor time'. This logical deduction of Marx from observing capitalist markets has important implications. First, for the worker, who has to sell his labor time. The price for his 'life time' depends on his productivity or the productivity of the branch he is working in. The process of industrialization and mechanization of production lowers the value of the time spent working. As such everyone has to achieve the average level of output, at least. The best thing, according to the inner logic, is to be at least as productive as average while simultaneously trying to produce more than average. This is a logic every student is familiar with. At university, students compete against one another with the driving force being the hope to sell one's own time - in the form of labor - for a good price on the market. Second, this process can also include a race to the bottom; not only for the worker, but also for the commodity. At the beginning of this article there is a quote from an Austrian truck driver talking about how bread is thrown away and abolished on a big scale. This is because bread exists in such quantities that it is not worth anything and can therefore be thrown away. The destruction of food in industrialized countries is still shocking, because so many people suffer from hunger in the world. This is one of the qualities of food, to stop hunger. Yet dimensions of quality do not count in a capitalist market; it is the quantity that counts. This is exactly what we nowadays see on the agrifood markets and this is what the article aims to shed more light on by looking at two chapters of the documentary '*We feed the World*'.

We feed the World

The geographer David Harvey started some of his courses back in the 1970s by asking the students the question of where their breakfast came from. The question is a difficult one because the answer has to acknowledge the commodity change behind the products we find in our refrigerator. To make this context visible to consumers; i.e. to uncover what is behind the products we see in the supermarkets is the aim of Erwin Wagenhofer's documentary *'We Feed the World'*. The connection between industrial food production and the quality of our food as well as the environmental costs of transportation and the production process itself have been part of the political debate for many years. How we influence the outcome of this process with our consumer habits is one of the things that makes Wagenhofer's documentary more accessible for the viewer. Similar to some other productions such as Michael Moore's well known *'Bowling for Columbine'* or the documentary *'Darwin's Nightmare'* which were produced for the cinemas and lead to a renaissance of documentaries, *'We Feed the World'* is very similar in nature.

Erwin Wagenhofer makes a journey around the globe in his documentary. Bread or chicken from Austria, French fish, Spanish tomatoes, eggplant from Rumania, and soy from Brazil – alongside the commodity chain, production processes and conditions of employment are described. Moreover, by utilizing different interview partners the story of the documentary is told (see table below). Even the content of the interviews is very different; Wagenhofer does not change the camera technique or explanations through off-camera voices. From a technical standpoint, the documentary is very unemotional and more complex relations are explained by visual aids or voices from off-set. The camera is more similar in nature to an explanatory narrator, connecting different visual and auditory impressions.

Table 1: Structure of the documentary and persons introduced

Person	Chapter	Content
Dominique Cleuziou	2	Breton fisherman; his every day work/life is shown
Philippe Cleuziou	2	Fishmonger; talking about business and the quality of the product
Lieven Bruneel	3	Agronomist; explains the industrialized production of fruits and vegetables
Karl Otrok	4	Production director of the seed firm 'Pioneer'
Hannes Schulz	5	Poultry producer; rejects critic on his work vehement
Johannes Titz	6	Poulterer; explains how chickens get butchered
Peter Brabeck	7	Nestlé CEO

In addition, the interviews with Jean Ziegler are a recurrent theme throughout the documentary. Even though the documentary is rather devoid of emotions and neutral from a technical perspective, the interviews with Jean Ziegler connect two important messages. On the one hand Ziegler, as a special correspondent for the UN Human Rights commission, presents his arguments in a very rational and factual manner. On the other hand, with his body language and his way of describing empirical examples, Ziegler gets emotionally involved in the topic. This tension between the unemotional description of facts and the emotional impact from the pictures and descriptions characterizes the documentary (Lemke 2006: 10). It cannot be ignored that the positions of Jean Ziegler are overlapping with Wagenhofer's message for his audience.

Nevertheless, the very last interview with the Nestlé CEO Peter Brabeck is a very unusual part of the documentary. In his role as a representative of the world's biggest company in trading comestible goods, Brabeck's explanations appear almost like cynical comments of what was shown throughout the documentary (Lemke 2006: 11). Brabeck's argument is that water is a commodity

and could be best allocated through the market. That this concept does not work in practice for the food market is the central message of the documentary. However, *'We feed the World'* is not a romantic retrospection of small family owned farms which may have been ruined through the process of industrialization of the agrifood market. Also the seed producers and grocery chains are not painted as the 'bad guy'. The documentary aims to explain the global interconnections of the food economy and to make them visible for consumers.

Teaching advises

It might be possible to show the whole documentary within the scope of a seminar, but in this article the interpretation will be limited to only a couple of selected chapters to make it possible for seminars or lecturers to select single aspects. This article is also a suggestion for a single teaching unit, or can be used either to give an introduction to Marx's 'Capital' or for a bigger teaching block. To use the article in a seminar one can either Marx's writings or the documentary as the starting point. This depends on the teaching aims one has defined for the course. This section will give some suggestions of how to use the article, but it is important to keep in mind that every didactical approach has to fit the teaching aims of the course.

One suggestion for teaching is to proceed in three steps: first, watching the whole documentary while giving group work assignments to the students in which they have to discuss what the documentary is about and what it could have to do with political science theory. After this, an introduction to Marx's thinking or some readings from 'Capital' can be given to the students. Afterwards the final step is to bring theory and film together. For this last step the article can be used. It is important to keep in mind however that every interpretation of the documentary and the parallels to Marx's ideas are just suggestions; there cannot be one correct interpretation of the documentary or a correct or incorrect way of reading Marx today. Another suggestion would be to read 'Capital' as a whole and show the documentary at the end of the seminar. In that case the documentary can be seen as an empirical case and the article as a type of research proposal. The documentary and the article can then be used to reflect on the learning process of reading the book. A third suggestion is to merely use some select parts of the film and then pick out the corresponding interpretations the article provides. Therefore I would suggest taking the very first part of 'Capital'; the first few pages, and combine them with chapters four and seven of the documentary. This is how the interpretation in the next paragraph will work - this interpretation could serve as a blue print for his or her teaching. This last version could be a way to start with some reading from the book.

Interpretation of chapters from the documentary

'We feed the World' is the advertising slogan of the seed producing firm 'Pioneer'. The fourth chapter of the documentary is about Romania, and the product director of Pioneer - Karl Otrók - explains his work there. Pioneer is introducing the so called hybrid seeds in Romania. Karl Otrók distinguishes between his duties as a product director of Pioneer and his personal point of view. During the interview, parts of his personal view have a prominent position. Otrók's point of view is marked by a romantic vision of the declining traditional Romanian agriculture. The very last chapter of the documentary, the interview with the Nestlé CEO Peter Brabeck, could not be more different from this. Brabeck defends the ideas of his firm. At first, these two interviews seem to be totally different. Yet when taking a closer look, they seem to deal with nearly identical topics.

Karl Otrók

In the documentary Karl Otrók talks to another Pioneer worker from Romania. The farmer cultivates 400 hectares with half of the cultivation being vegetables. Otrók is using the example of

onions to describe that the Romanian agricultural products have to compete with high subsidized EU products on the world market. Examples like this could be expanded towards a lot of samples. Behind these examples are mostly two lines of argument. Firstly, subsidies could be understood as a bias of the market to question any kind of political intervention in the market. Secondly, according to Marx, we could assume an analytical point of view as regards the commodity and ask how the exchange process transforms the commodity itself. To use Marx's words, the commodity is reduced to its quantitative exchange value through the exchange process. For the case of the Romanian onions, this means that they have to compete against Dutch onions on a purely quantitative level.

'Such properties claim our attention only in so far as they affect the utility of those commodities, make them use-value. But the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterized by a total abstraction from use-value. Then one use-value is just as good as another, provided only it be present in sufficient quantity.' (Marx 1952: 14)

While talking to the Romanian Pioneer worker, Karl Otok tries to draw parallels between agricultural products from Romania, where fruits are left in their natural state while they are growing, and the growing success of organic products in Austria. The other Pioneer employee objects that it is hard to compare the two countries (WftW 49'46):

'Yes, you cannot compare that natural vegetable that we are growing here. But one country or one grower at a certain moment has to make a choice. If they want to stay with the best taste, low production, low market let's say, or they want to produce.'

According to Marx, the Pioneer worker from Romania would also be correct in how he justifies his reply to Otok's point of view. The growing demand for organic products in Austria does not influence the production in Romania. Through labeling a new product has been created; the organic agricultural product. Romanian farmers still have to compete against industrial farming of developed countries which dominates the world market. This competition is mainly through price and mass (quantitative measures) not by quality.

Therefore the statement of the Romanian Pioneer employee is positively true – i.e. in the end it comes down to the question of whether someone wants (or better has to) produce on a larger scale or wants to produce a niche product that can hardly sustain him or her. This connection is also implicitly described by Karl Otok when he talks about the high level of human labor in the production process in Romania (WftW 45'13):

'It's the way they work, too, that fascinates me, the people, all those people who still work the fields and harvest and sow by hand. The standard of food will suffer, so will the flavor. It'll no longer be as it used to be and should be. The children will have no memory of what a proper tomato tastes like, or an apple or anything. Everything will taste different.'

At this stage Karl Otok brings together the qualitative use-value with the production process. In Marx's terms the connection is described as follows:

'As use-value, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use-value.' (Marx 1952: 14)

This is exactly the problem the Romanian Pioneer employee describes. It is not the decision of how to produce, but the decision of whether or not the 'average labour power of society' time can be realized within the production process. While integrating the Romanian agricultural production into the world market, production in Romania has to be competitive on an international level. Technical developments, like hybrid seeds, allow for a reduction of the average labor power of society in the production process; the average labor power required in the production process and overall conditions of production are both undergoing a transformation. Marx provides us with an example from his days:

'The total labour power of society, which is embodied in the sum total of the values of all commodities produced by the society, counts here as one homogeneous mass of human labour power, composed through it be of innumerable individual units. Each of these units is the same as any other, so far as it has the character of the average labour power of society, and takes effect as such; that is, so far as it requires for producing a commodity no more times than it is needed on an average, no more than is socially necessary. The labour time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power looms into England probably reduced by one-half the labour required to weave a given quantity of a yarn into cloth.' (Marx 1952: 15)

These developments Marx is describing are exactly what the process of transformation in Romania is all about at the moment. Karl Otrok's notion that small scale framers in Romania will not have the possibility to buy hybrid seeds is a double edged sword; because monetary barriers would lead to an exclusion and therefore to a growing pauperization of some rural areas in Romania. Yet he is also right by thinking the idea through that the quality of a commodity can only sustain by circumventing the exchange process. However, Karl Otrok in the end is not fooling himself by thinking that this development could be a real alternative; it is more of a hope (WftW 44 '40):

'I hope that this won't change too fast in the near future. I think it will change, though, because of the many large foreign corporations establishing themselves and introducing hybrids. They're in fact destroying what's been built up here, everything that's natural. For example the aubergines, sweet peppers or tomatoes which are still natural and have nothing to do with these hybrids.'

Peter Brabeck

The very last interview, i.e. Peter Brabeck's - stands in stark contrast with the whole documentary. As Jean Ziegler is talking about the ignorance of TNCs, the interview with Peter Brabeck seems to present a good example of it.

According to the theoretical background explained in this article, two statements will be looked at in more detail: firstly, the argument that water is a commodity like any other and secondly the growing importance of robotics in the labor process (WftW 89 '03):

'Water is of course the most important material we have today in the world. It's a question of whether we should privatize the normal water supply for the population. And there are two different opinions on the matter. The one opinion, which I think is extreme, is represented by some NGOs who bang on about declaring water a public right. That means that as a human being you should have a right to water. That's an extreme solution, yes.

And the other view says that water is a foodstuff like any other, and like any other foodstuff it should have a market value. Personally I believe it's better to give a foodstuff a value so that we're all aware that it has its price, and then that one should take specific measures for the part of the population that has no access to this water, and there are many different possibilities there, so.'

There are two levels of argument here: a rhetorical one, and another one according to one's definition of value. At this point the article takes a closer look at the way Peter Brabeck defines the term value. Brabeck uses two different terms: first, market value and then value; both terms are synonymous for Brabeck, but the value term could be translated into Marx's idea of exchange value. According to this, Brabeck makes a categorical mistake by mixing up the term of exchange value with the process of products becoming a commodity. This categorical mistake underlines the description of the NGO positions as an extreme one. The critique of the NGO focuses on the question of whether essential foodstuff such as water should be transformed into a commodity. While Brabeck goes on to talk about the question of price, someone could oppose this position by saying water already has

(use-)value in itself, and it does not have to be transferred into an exchange-value in order to give it a 'value' in the first place. Value and price are not identical terms. So the critique of NGOs is not one of value allocation through the market, and how to organise it; it is about taking the last atom of quality out of the product, to use Marx's (1952: 14) words. The question therefore is, should we undertake such a transformation with an essential product like water with only quantity and not quality being relevant in the end?

Furthermore, the transformation process does not only happen to the commodity. It also happens to the workers. In the very last scene of the documentary Peter Brabeck walks through an exhibition hall of Nestlé products and commercials (WftW 92´36):

'The Japanese. You can see how modern those factories are; highly robotized, almost no people.'

This is what Marx meant by 'average labour power of society' and its reduction through the process of industrialization. Factories with '...almost no people...' are the result because the average necessary labor time has to decline. This sheds light on what has been discussed before. The farmers in Romania have to reach the level of 'average necessary labour time' in the Netherlands to produce an onion, if they do not want to become obsolete.

'But the value of a commodity represents human labour in the abstract, the expenditure of human labour in general.' (Marx 1952: 17)

So in the end, the inner logic of the capitalist market influences the quality of a commodity as well as the workers who have to sell their labor power on a market. In order to shed some light on the ideas of Marx, this article took a look at current developments on the food market. Hopefully this can help to understand the world around us a little bit better while highlighting some of Marx's ideas in order to see how we can use his approaches until today to understand the world a little better.

Conclusion

Popular Hollywood films and media in general have become enticing topics for social science research, especially in IR (Yalvac 2009). They are also used for and in different teaching approaches. Therefore this paper discoursed on the central ideas of Marxism, value(s) of the commodity, by illustrating some key features with the help of a documentary. Undisputedly, Karl Marx with the first volume of 'Capital' wrote one of the most influential and controversial books on political economy. The aim of this article was to introduce some of Marx's ideas, the commodity and working conditions in particular. However, the first three chapters are the thickest part of the book and most of the ideas presented in later parts of the analysis are already mentioned in it. Therefore the goal was to introduce the reader, students as lecturers, to some of the central ideas of Marx on commodity and to update the examples provided by Marx for his theory on capitalism. This has been achieved by selecting two chapters of the documentary '*We feed the World*' and to interpret them against the background of Marx's theory on commodity. At the same time, the more than 150 years old illustrations have been refreshed to make Marx more accessible for students. As such this article viewed as a blueprint for how the documentary '*We feed the World*' could be used to introduce Marx in a teaching context.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank my colleagues Ivo Hernandez and Tarek Rahman for their helpful comments on this article.

² Another examples other than films is music, e.g. Jacquelynne Modeste (2012), 'Train Whistle Diplomacy: Blues-based Jazz and National Identity' or Ulrich Franke and Kaspar Schiltz (2013), 'They Don't Really Care About Us!' On Political Worldviews in Popular Music'.

³ For a good literature overview and the debate on the pedagogy value of films see Safia Swimelar (2013).

⁴ For a long time it was possible to watch the whole documentary with English subtitles on the web for free. However, there might be still some alternatives we would not suggest because of problems with the intellectual property rights; but there a lot of information's provided in English about the movie and how to watch it in English or in other languages on the official web site, accessed on 9 May 2014, <http://www.we-feed-the-world.at/en/film.htm>.

⁵ Not at least Marx´s is so difficult to read because of the categories he uses. It is impossible to define his categories, just by looking at the appearance of the phenomenon. It is always important to look at the bigger pictures, on the greater analytical context to get the meaning of what Marx wants to tell us (Ollman 2003: 4).

⁶ Marx explains this 'inaccuracy' of his mother tongue in the German version in footnote 16 of *Capital* (Marx 1952: 18-19; German version, MEW 1867/1969: 61-62).

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