WELCOME TO TECHNOFASCISM

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"But what is this bizarre totalitarian
machine that traverses time and space?
Some prop in a science-fiction story?"

– Félix Guattari, Everybody Wants to Be a Fascist (2008)

More than a decade ago, when we began discussing many of the questions gathered in this volume, the terrain still felt arcane. The three of us met for the first time in seminar rooms and reading groups dedicated to media theory, the histories of cybernetics, and critiques of digital capitalism. We read Nick Land and other Dark Enlightenment figures, traced the strange afterlives of the CCRU, and asked where, exactly, things had gone wrong. What had once presented itself as cybernetic experimentation, accelerationist provocation, or anarcho-libertarian anti-statism seemed to us already shot with darker impulses: hierarchy, eliminationism, fantasies of sovereign exit, contempt for democracy, and an attraction to domination dressed up as intelligence. At the time, however, such discussions still carried the air of specialist knowledge. To us, they seemed like excursions into an intellectual underworld: curious, perhaps revealing, certainly dangerous, but still too marginal to matter to the real centres of political power.

That distance has since collapsed. Over the last decade, the utopian tech imaginaries of the 1990s have vanished. The emancipatory rhetoric of openness, disruption, innovation, and democratisation now sits uneasily beside a much more visible political formation: authoritarian posturing, anti-egalitarian elitism, masculinist myths of merit, fantasies of civilisational collapse and planetary escape, and open contempt for institutions that still bear the marks of democratic process. What we once tried to piece together from obscure blogs, subcultural lineages, and other grey literature now circulates in podcasts, policy proposals, investor rhetoric, and broadsheet journalism. Tracing reactionary networks in and around the tech world no longer reads like the pastime of the paranoid. It has become part of the ordinary labour of contemporary criticism.

There is, for us as editors, a jarring double affect in this shift. On the one hand, there is the shock of recognition: we were discussing some version of this ten or fifteen years ago. On the other hand, there is the uneasy awareness that this is not simply a matter of wider publics finally catching up with insights first produced in specialist academic settings. It would be too flattering to describe the present moment as a delayed diffusion of critique into the wider public sphere. Something more troubling has happened. The object itself has changed. The reactionary right is emboldened. Influential figures in and around the tech world speak more explic-

itly than before. The problem is not that all the codes have vanished, but that much of what once required decoding is now proclaimed openly. We are learning, once again, that exposure alone is a weak political remedy. Sunlight is no disinfectant when the structures in question are thriving in broad daylight.

This altered situation leaves criticism in an uncertain position. If the seminar room once took some pride in perceiving what had not yet become publicly legible, that self-understanding can no longer suffice. The task is not simply to unmask hidden tendencies, nor to congratulate ourselves for having noticed them early. It is to ask what concepts are adequate to a present in which digital infrastructures, platform monopolies, venture capital, cyberlibertarian ideology, masculinist cultures, and authoritarian political projects increasingly reinforce one another. We need to recognize that the relation between critical thought and its object has become less comfortable than before. If these tendencies now occupy not only obscure corners of the internet but the front pages of newspapers, the agendas of states, and the infrastructures of everyday life, then the question is no longer only how to decipher them. It is also how to historicize them, how to distinguish them from adjacent formations, how to grasp their appeal, and how to think critically in a moment in which they appear, in significant ways, to be winning. It is in this context that we propose to investigate the term technofascism. By speaking of technofascism, we mean to name a constellation: one in which technical systems and technological imaginaries are mobilized in the service of hierarchy, exclusion, executive power, and anti-democratic forms of order. One in which domination presents itself as optimisation, and political violence borrows the language of efficiency, intelligence, and necessity.

The term 'technofascism' has been around for a while, most notably in the discourse around political ecology. Following Ivan Illich (1973) in the observation that politics in the name of ecology does not necessitate an egalitarian ethos, André Gorz warns that instead of favouring the "development and autonomy of communities and individuals", an ecological politics could also mean a world "centrally determined and planned by ecological engineers, and the programmed production of an 'optimal' environment will be entrusted to centralized institutions and hard technology." Gorz continues: "[T]his is the technofascist option [...]. The choice is simple: 'conviviality or technofascism'" (Gorz 1980, 17). Perhaps because it lacked both clear boundaries and a proper historisation, the concept, however, did not catch on, with terms like Lewis Mumford's (1967) "megamachine" being a more ready-to-hand concept for theorists of technology, and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) providing the clichéd metaphors for a totalitarian Big Brother in popular discourse. Still, the engineering fantasies of hard technology that, for Gorz, form the "path along which we are already halfway engaged" (Gorz 1980, 17), recur in the most notable recent treatment of the term as a historically precise phenomenon. In *Planning for Empire,* Janis Mimura (2011) outlines the technofascist core of the Japanese wartime state.

> Like other Japanese fascist visions and programs advanced by radical young officers and right-wing activists, techno-fascism embraced narrow, authoritarian rule; a form of state-directed economy; and an ethnic chauvinist, community-centered ideology that was used to justify war and imperialist expansion. In contrast to other fascist visions and programs, however, techno-fascism appealed to professionals on the left and right. It deflected sensitive distributional issues about winners versus losers, costs versus benefits, and ends versus means by promising increased productivity, efficiency, and co-prosperity through superior technology, organization, and national spirit. (Mimura 2011, 4)

This technofascism is a fascism of the technocrats, which "[c]onceptually [...] represented an authoritarian form of rationalization that sought to achieve freedom through control, innovation through organisation, autonomy via community, and status via hierarchy" (Mimura 2011, 196), a "techno-fascist vision [that] was oriented primarily toward progressive, middle class, urban professionals" (Mimura 2011, 107). Remaining unrealised, its ambitions transitioned into a "postwar managerialism" (Mimura 2011, 197). More recently, Dirk Matten (2026) has shown how deeply fascist ideas are shaping contemporary management philosophy. In both Gorz and Mimura, technofascism appears first of all as a fantasy of rule from above. Technofascism names a politics of command: the engineer, the planner, the state, the institution, the hierarchy, or the organized whole.

Félix Guattari's famously provocative "Everybody Wants to Be a Fascist" cuts across this vertical image and shifts the analysis from fascism as a state to fascism as a mode of subjectivation. Fascism exists in everyday desires, habits, institutions, and forms of subjectivity. His thesis is that people desire the very systems that dominate or repress them. Guattari calls this "microfascisms", which means authoritarian tendencies embedded in daily life. These appear in families, schools, workplaces, and political organizations. The key claim is that fascism operates not only politically 'from above,' but affectively and socially 'from below.' Against the idea that power simply represses people from the outside, Guattari argues that desire itself becomes attached to oppressive systems. Guattari's concept is strictly tied to desire: fascism is not just understandable as an ideology but as a libidinal investment in things like domination and authority. In that respect, "microfascism" refers to small-scale authoritarian desires and behaviors embedded in everyday life rather than only in state regimes. The danger of authoritarianism is not only 'the fascist State', but 'the fascism in us all'. This does not replace Mimura's historical account with a psychological one. If technofascism can persist as managerialism, then its continuity must be sought not only in institutions, but also in the everyday desires and practices through which subjects come to experience domination. In that regard microfascism names the diffusion of authoritarian desire into everyday subjectivity and social relations, where domination is reproduced in small practices just as much as it can appear as a full political regime. When this machine of desire is ultimately trained on meme culture and social media, a microfascist turn of the algorithmic in

contemporary media discourses and platforms cannot be dismissed. This turn emerges and operates on a technical-ontological and psychological level, while also making technofascist enunciations perceptible in everyday media use. Technofascism, in this sense, names the machinic production of subjects who experience optimization, ranking, automation, and command as forms of freedom.

But if technofascism is machinic in this Guattarian sense, then its history cannot be told only as a history of texts and theorists. As Robert Paxton has influentially argued, fascism was always "an affair of the gut more than of the brain, and a study of the roots of fascism that treats only the thinkers and the writers misses the most powerful impulses of all" (2004, 42). In this respect, the present issue decenters one of the most tempting origin stories of the present: the passage from the CCRU to Nick Land, from accelerationist theory to the Dark Enlightenment, from obscure blogs to the politics of Silicon Valley. The temptation of this story is obvious, not least for those of us who first encountered the tech right through precisely these subcultural and theoretical archives. Yet, the present cannot be explained as the conspiratorial triumph of an obscure philosophical sect. "Thinkers" like Land and Yarvin matter less as sovereign authors than as indices of a wider transformation: the moment when reactionary fantasies became materially attached to platforms, universities, states, and infrastructures.

Instead of asking, yet again, how the 1990s utopian impulse could have been so easily corrupted, or dignifying the works of middling writers with a minor cult following by elevating them to the status of geopolitical masterminds, the contributions collected in this issue have a different urgency. They focus on what social, infrastructural, economic, institutional, racial, colonial, epistemological, and libidinal conditions make their reactionary ideas operational today.

This new urgency is not unique to the essays collected here. It belongs to a broader reorientation in work on technology and the contemporary right. Recent scholarship has shifted from unearthing obscure lineages to tracing the concrete operations of power through which reactionary politics organize the present: misogyny and anti-feminism (Manne 2018), anti-trans and anti-gender mobilization (Amery and Mondon 2025; Kaul 2021; Kuhar and Paternotte 2018; McLean 2021), racial capitalism and colonial extraction (Gray 2023; Madianou 2024; Mejias and Couldry 2024), eugenic fantasies of intelligence (Chan 2025; Gebru and Torres 2024; Slobodian 2025), disability and body politics (Herzog 2025) and optimization (Sandifer 2017), attacks on democracy (Massanari 2024; Schaake 2024), technolibertarianism (Armistead 2016), and technofeudalism (Durand 2024).

The analysis of misogyny offers one clear example of this broader shift to operational mechanisms. In *Down Girl*, Kate Manne treats the logic of misogyny as a "law enforcement branch" of patriarchy. Whereas sexism provides the ideological justification for gender hierarchy, misogyny punishes women who violate patriarchal expectations. Manne shows that many contemporary authoritarian digital cultures do not necessarily depend on explicit doctrinal sexism. Instead, they function through networked harassment and coordinated punishment directed at women,

queer people, or minorities who are perceived as threats to established hierarchies. In technofascist environments, misogyny becomes decentralized and automated through recommendation systems and swarm harassment. Manne's account of patriarchal entitlement helps explain why misogynistic grievance is frequently central to far-right digital movements: From incel forums and reactionary influencer ecosystems to platform-based harassment campaigns, technofascist cultures thrive when they mobilize resentment, humiliation, and entitlement. Technofascism today relies on participatory enforcement where users reproduce authoritarian norms through memes, dogpiling, and gaming the attention economies rather than solely through state coercion. The ideological affinities between contemporary technofascist imaginaries and earlier formations of digital nerd culture can provide cultural and affective blueprints for understanding segments of Silicon Valley's emerging political elite. Tech culture repeatedly celebrates figures who present themselves as misunderstood outsiders while simultaneously accumulating immense economic and political power. Adrian Daub (2020, 2026) has argued in his analysis of Silicon Valley's political rationalities that the peculiar worldview of Silicon Valley billionaires and reactionary tech elites produces actors whose social awkwardness is retrospectively reframed as evidence of visionary genius and therefore exempted from ordinary norms of accountability, which can ultimately be traced back to a reactionary and misogynistic worldview (Daub 2026, 138). The social tendency to excuse or rationalise male entitlement when it is associated with status, brilliance, or perceived exceptionality becomes particularly visible when considering the figure of the 'creep' (Daub 2026). Daub argues that the "creep" functions as a cultural archetype through which Silicon Valley constructs 'gifted' men as misunderstood outsiders and legitimises their social marginality by reframing social discomfort as a marker of visionary potential. The creep thus functions as the anthropological counterpart to Silicon Valley's vision of governance, in which authority emerges not despite uncertainty but through it. The creep is not simply a sexist subject but a subject whose insecurity itself becomes politically productive. Following Manne's analysis of misogyny as a system of enforcing patriarchal norms (Daub 2026, 140), Daub shows how a similar logic operates in tech culture, where antisocial or domineering behaviour is re-coded as evidence of visionary leadership.

Misogyny and male entitlement, then, are exemplary mechanisms through which technofascist politics becomes operative today through technologically mediated participatory mechanisms of affective and cultural enforcement. A different strand of research looks at how hierarchies become institutionalised through the implementation of machine learning technologies throughout the sociotechnical infrastructure. Although written before the widespread diffusion of LLMs, Dan McQuillan's *Resisting AI: An Anti-fascist Approach to Artificial Intelligence* is an exemplary case of the new urgency to identify the mechanisms through which technofascism manifests. McQuillan shows that, far from being simply a question of bias or the perpetuation of historically produced inequalities, AI gives a technical form to a politics of making populations legible as more or less deserving. Tracing how

AI's logic turns classification into judgement, which is then presented as neutral administration, he highlights how the current deployments of AI are continuous with a long history of bureaucratized fascism, and even, we might add, Mimura's more precise account of technofascism. Similar arguments uncovering the discriminatory logics of contemporary data practices are a cornerstone of the critical literature of the last decade in general (Benjamin 2019; Chun 2021; Eubanks 2018; Noble 2018; O'Neil 2016; Zajko 2021). Yet, McQuillan's most intriguing point, perhaps, is his gesturing towards the fact that the "social contradictions that are amplified by AI [...] are the social contradictions that fascism will claim to solve" (McQuillan 2022, 99; Stürmer and Carrigan 2023). The idea that technofascism can also be understood as a (technologically mediated) response to the contradictions of our contemporary technological condition recurs throughout the literature and the texts in this issue (e.g., Munn; van der Klaauw and Kopaitich). The relation between 'techno-' and 'fascism' is historically mediated and not just an identifiable characteristic of the technology itself.

The wager of this issue is therefore not that technofascism names a clear object to be identified, but that it names a contested field. The term is useful precisely because it can hold together critical analyses of infrastructures, epistemologies, affects, political economy, race and gender hierarchy, colonial extraction, and attacks on democratic institutions without flattening their differences. The contributions gathered here do not apply a shared definition of technofascism, but rather test the concept's usefulness, limits, and political stakes in a time in which authoritarian desires, social contradictions, and technical systems are mutually reinforcing.

We begin this issue at one of the sites where these questions are currently both analysed and lived: the university itself. In a climate where universities are attacked as 'woke' institutions, the collective working group **University Against Fascism** advances a case for an explicitly anti-fascist media studies. Media studies is understood as a field dedicated to analysing and fostering anti-fascist practices, especially given the increasingly central role of digital media in facilitating and shaping processes of fascistization. The university is a crucial site in ongoing struggles over the preservation of democratic institutions and values. Investigating the role of the university in contemporary processes of fascistization, the working group examines discourses of cyberlibertarianism and situates them in relation to the influence of technological elites and their contribution to the erosion of democratic structures. Ultimately, they emphasize the importance of digital sovereignty and argue for the collective ownership and organization of the means of media production as key components of a democratic media landscape.

The question of education and the university returns, in a different register, in **Felix Maschewski, Anna-Verena Nosthoff and Anna Puzio**'s "Make Merit Great Again." Their article follows the concept of 'merit' as one of the most powerful signifiers in the Tech Right's language of legitimization. The authors analyze how prominent tech figures and thinkers – Alex Karp, Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, Marc Andreessen, Curtis Yarvin and Nick Land – mobilize meritocracy and use it as an

argument for anti-egalitarian policies. The "anti-democratic meritocracy" describes not only a preferred social order and rule by the elite, but legitimises itself as efficient and rational. Here, the right's fetish with intelligence and its metrification through IQ tests and other quantifiable efficiency markers are at play in the recent re-activation of anti-democratic principles of exclusion.

Luke Munn approaches fascism as a set of logics, affects, desires, and political techniques that can mutate across historical conditions. The central claim of the essay is that contemporary technology serves fascist formations in three overlapping ways: augmentation, alienation, and manipulation. In its augmenting function, technology operationalizes domination, as can be seen in the case of Palantir and its work with ICE. In its alienating function, technology produces an overwhelming informational environment that creates a vacuum of meaning for fascist mythologies to fill, offering coherence, identifiable enemies, and moral clarity. In its manipulative function, technology further shapes desire over time through feeds and recommendation systems, presenting racialised, gendered, and civilisational hierarchies as neutral outputs. From the alt-right pipeline to the "Tate effect" and stereotyped AI imagery, Munn argues that technofascism is not reducible to extremist content or authoritarian policy, but names an alignment of infrastructure, ideology, and affect through which technical systems help make fascist impulses more compelling, more scalable, and more ordinary.

Jillian (Lee) Crandall also moves away from conceptualizing "tech fascism" as a historical analogy. Crandall brings together Frankfurt School critical theory, with its argument that fascism has always been technologically mediated, and thinkers in the Black radical tradition to connect contemporary fascism to the long durée of racial capitalism and colonialism. In recent years, accelerationism as the dominant techno-deterministic promise has given way to abundance and its promises of human flourishing and wealth. Crandall does not want to abandon the word to techno-optimists or liberals. That their promises are hollow and only serve the billionaires should not surprise: Technofascist projects fetishise frontiers, claim scarcity as a choice and mostly end in technological totalitarianism. "Tech Fascism and Antifascist Abundance" draws on building projects associated with and financed by tech bros and other right-wing figures. Tech enclaves in different forms – Crypto, Startup and Charter Cities or the Network State – are envisioned and financed by venture capitalists and techno-optimists.

Jamie van der Klaauw and Ryan Kopaitich's "The Fascism Farce" dissents from the general framing of technofascism. Instead, they argue that there is "no such thing as technofascism" in the strong analytic sense. Their claim is not that fascism, authoritarianism, or technological domination are absent, but that the label "technofascism" misidentifies the deeper political-economic constellation. For them, the contemporary fascist spectacle is subordinate to, and often distracts from, a neofeudal order marked by rent extraction, concentrated ownership, platform dependency, and the re-fusion of economic and political power. Crucially, they distinguish two forms of antifascism: a liberal antifascism that seeks to defend or fortify

democratic procedures, and a socialist or materialist antifascism that asks what social and political conditions make fascist movements possible. The fact that they side with the second leads them away from diagnosing the contemporary condition itself as "technofascism" and towards Adorno's concern with the continuing social conditions of fascism, especially the concentration of capital. It is in the defence against a fascism to come that we have to accurately address the socio-economic conditions of the present. The most accurate label, they argue, is to speak of technofeudal capitalism. More than just naming a particular socioeconomic condition, van der Klaauw and Kopaitich effectively push the analogy with the feudal court to offer us a typology of today's right, with (wannabe) kings like Donald Trump, their courtiers from Pete Hegseth to Brett Kavanaugh, (false) prophets like Jordan Peterson, and jesters like Joe Rogan.

Gustavo Robles takes this political-economic question across the global division between centre and periphery. His essay "Technofascism North and South: Cyberlibertarianism and Its Latin American Translations," analyses the peripheral expressions of technofascist rationality. Beginning with the techno-optimism of the post-Cold War moment, Robles shows how the language of openness, participation, and digital emancipation functioned as one of the privileged utopian idioms of triumphant capitalism. This imaginary was not unique to Silicon Valley or cyberlibertarian circles. Its untenable emancipatory promise also shaped parts of the left, especially in post-operaist accounts of immaterial labour and networked cooperation. Against both residual techno-optimism and the more recent language of "technofeudalism," Robles argues that contemporary digital capitalism is not simply rent extraction or enclosure, but a futural, libidinal, and explicitly right-wing project. The originality of Robles's essay lies in its insistence that technofascism does not travel unchanged across the world system. Turning to Latin America, Robles examines Nayib Bukele's Bitcoin experiment in El Salvador, Javier Milei's entanglements with cryptocurrency in Argentina, and the Argentine government's fantasy of transforming the country into a global artificial intelligence hub. For Robles, peripheral technofascism therefore names a mutilated techno-utopia: one in which territories, labour, energy, minerals, democratic sovereignty, and collective futures are made available as infrastructure for global techno-capitalism.

Anthony Burton's contribution, "First Principles and Algorithmic Reason in Technofascism," shifts the question of technofascism from ideology or infrastructure to epistemology. For Burton, technofascism is not simply a politics that uses technology instrumentally, nor an authoritarianism amplified by digital tools. It is a political epistemology in which power derives its legitimacy from computational reason itself. Burton takes aim at Silicon Valley's recurring attachment to "first principles thinking," associated with figures such as Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, and Jeff Bezos. What appears, in their language, as a rigorous method for innovation – a "physics-based" way of looking at the world – becomes, in Burton's account, a fantasy of axiomatic mastery. Complex social and political problems are translated into computable puzzles. First principles thinking divides the world into the com-

putable and the incomputable, the rational and irrational, signal and noise, and then treats whatever falls outside its axioms as waste to be managed, colonised, or eliminated. This is why, for Burton, technofascism is structurally anti-democratic. Democracy depends on the negotiation of incommensurable perspectives; algorithmic reason demands derivation from a singular truth. Thiel's declared incompatibility between freedom and democracy, Yarvin's monarchic anti-democracy, the valorisation of monopoly, and the logic of DOGE are variations on this same computational authoritarianism. Technofascism's novelty, as Burton shows, lies in the migration of fascistic potentials from mass spectacle and charismatic affect into the operations of logical systems themselves. Its domination need not announce itself as fascist, but can present itself as efficiency, objectivity, optimisation, or intelligence.

Laura Niebling's contribution provides a historical counterpoint to the present. Focusing on West Germany during the "long 1970s," it reconstructs early debates surrounding the computerisation of public administration and the fears these developments generated with regard to democratic freedoms. Through a case study of medical data politics, the analysis demonstrates how collective memories of bureaucratically organized mass violence shaped the development of data protection legislation, independent regulatory institutions, and the influential figure of the "glass citizen." These measures emerged as attempts to limit state power and safeguard democratic accountability in an increasingly computerized society. The article traces the changing meaning of the glass metaphor, showing how it gradually shifted from a critique of surveillance and administrative transparency to a positive vision associated with technological innovation and efficiency. This transformation is interpreted as indicative of a broader realignment between public authority and private digital infrastructures, a development that has contributed to contemporary forms of technofascist governance.

Few researchers have been as close to the belly of the beast as sociologist **Fred Turner**, and his seminal work "From Counterculture to Cyberculture" (2006) marks its twentieth birthday. But those are only two reasons why **Martina Leeker and Laura Hille** sat down with Turner to discuss the continuities and discontinuities of his work. Turner shares our concern that the countercultural dreams were already myth-driven and that their problematic power relations were ignored. Read in the context of this issue, the interview shows how anti-bureaucratic and anti-institutional imaginaries could become compatible with charismatic authority, extractive infrastructures, Christian nationalism, and what Turner calls "The Texan Ideology" (2026). Although not an easy undertaking, Turner ends the interview on a positive note: the call to care for each other.

In the Extra section of this issue, **Thorben Mämecke** documents a workshop convened in February 2026 at the FernUniversität in Hagen, which brought together scholars from media studies and sociology. Titled "Basic Concepts of the Broligarchy," the workshop aimed to collaboratively develop and refine analytical concepts capable of addressing the entanglements between Big Tech, gender, and

the resurgence of fascist tendencies in Western democracies. The report offers a broad overview of the key conceptual dimensions involved in describing and theorising the phenomenon provisionally referred to as the "Broligarchy."

Taken together, the contributions do not give us a stable, final definition of technofascism but return us to the conditions under which such a question has become unavoidable. As fascism takes up new tools, fascism itself changes. The pressing questions concern what fascistic politics becomes and becomes capable of when it is attached to contemporary platform infrastructures and their technological imaginaries. The contributions that follow insist that asking these questions has become part of the political and intellectual work of the present.

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