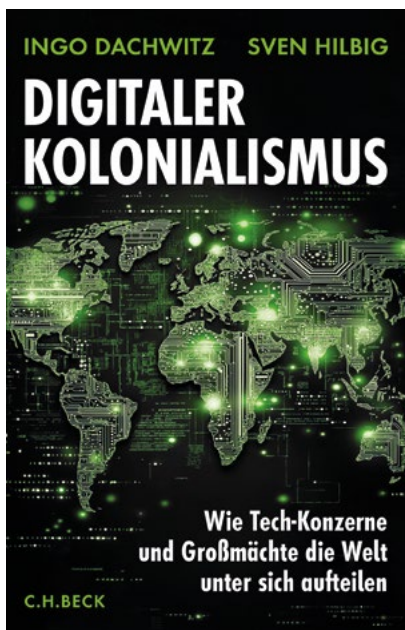




Deutscher
Sachbuch
Preis 2025

The nominees

Ingo Dachwitz & Sven Hilbig • Aladin El-Mafaalani, Sebastian Kurtenbach & Klaus Peter Strohmeier
Franz-Stefan Gady • Ines Geipel • Martina Heßler • Walburga Hülk • Bernhard Kegel • Ulli Lust



Ingo Dachwitz & Sven Hilbig **Digitaler Kolonialismus.** **Wie Tech-Konzerne und Großmächte** **die Welt unter sich aufteilen**

(Digital Colonialism. How Tech Firms And Superpowers Are Carving Up The World Between Them)

C.H.Beck

Jury comment:

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence are hailed as beacons of hope in our time: virtually no problem is believed to be beyond their ability to solve. What is discussed less often, however, is the extent to which digital progress today comes at the expense of people and nature, and how closely it is tied to surveillance and control. Dachwitz and Hilbig do an impressive job of exposing this other side of digitalisation. They carefully explain how the big tech companies are expanding their power and dividing up the world through digital colonialism, consolidating old dependencies – especially in the Global South – while creating new ones. In doing so, they dismantle the myth of immaterial, neutral technology, helping to correct the narrative surrounding digitalisation.

Biographies:

Ingo Dachwitz is a communication scientist and works as a political tech journalist for the award-winning investigative platform netzpolitik.org. In recent years, his expertise on the ethics of digitalisation has been sought by, among others, the Federal Chancellery and the Protestant Church in Germany. In 2024, he received the Alternative Media Award and the Grimme Online Award for his research on the global data industry.

Sven Hilbig is a legal scholar and expert on digitalisation and trade policy at the non-profit organisation Bread for the World. Together with partners from the Global South, he works to combat new forms of colonialism. For years, he has been one of the few in Germany involved in the World Trade Organisation's negotiations on a new e-commerce agreement. He regularly publishes in the political monthly *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*.

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**Aladin El-Mafaalani, Sebastian Kurtenbach
& Klaus Peter Strohmeier**

Kinder – Minderheit ohne Schutz. Aufwachsen in der alternden Gesellschaft

(Children – A Minority Without Protection:
Growing Up in an Ageing Society)

Kiepenheuer & Witsch

Jury comment:

Germany is facing a severe demographic imbalance: for years, far more people have been retiring than are enrolling in school. The consequences are primarily discussed in public from the perspective of the Baby Boomers, emphasizing issues such as pension poverty and the care crisis. Education sociologists Aladin El-Mafaalani, Sebastian Kurtenbach and Klaus Peter Strohmeier call for a fundamental shift in perspective: in our ageing society, the focus should be on those who will soon bear the responsibility. Only a child-centred society will be able to guarantee prosperity and quality of life for all. What do children need? The authors provide groundbreaking answers to this pivotal question and show how society can successfully navigate the necessary cultural change.

Biographies:

Aladin El-Mafaalani, born in the Ruhr region in 1978, is a professor of migration and educational sociology at the Technical University of Dortmund. After completing his studies, he worked as a teacher at Ahlen Vocational College, then as a professor of political science at Münster University of Applied Sciences. He later became a department head at the North Rhine-Westphalian Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration in Düsseldorf. El-Mafaalani studied political science, economics, education and labour science at Ruhr University Bochum, where he also earned his doctorate in sociology. He has received numerous awards, including the German Sociological Association's prize for outstanding achievements in the field of public impact in sociology in 2020.

Sebastian Kurtenbach, born in Cologne in 1987, is a professor of political science at Münster University of Applied Sciences.

Klaus Peter Strohmeier, born in 1948 in the Ruhr region, used to be a professor of sociology specialising in cities, regions and families at Ruhr University Bochum.

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Franz-Stefan Gady

Die Rückkehr des Krieges. Warum wir wieder lernen müssen, mit Krieg umzugehen

(The Return of War. Why We Must Learn to Deal With War Again)

Quadriga

Jury comment:

For a long time, the subject of this book – war – seemed like a thing of the past for Germany and Europe. With painful precision, military analyst Franz-Stefan Gady dissects the political misjudgements that have led to the return of war to Europe and answers crucial questions: how are wars waged today, what role do artificial intelligence and nuclear weapons play, and what factors determine their course? Gady examines specific scenarios that could become relevant for Europe, focusing in particular on Germany's potential role as a leading military power in Europe. Finally, he advocates for a strategic culture of deterrence to prevent future wars. The book provides urgently needed insight and confronts Germany with the unwelcome reality of a new global order.

Biography:

Franz-Stefan Gady is an independent analyst and military consultant. He is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Studies in London and an Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Center for New American Security in Washington, DC. He advises governments and armed forces in Europe and the United States on issues related to structural reform and the future of warfare. Field research and consulting work have repeatedly taken him to Ukraine, Afghanistan and Iraq, where he has worked alongside the Ukrainian armed forces, the Afghan army, NATO troops and Kurdish militias on various missions. Gady is also a reserve officer.

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Ines Geipel

Fabelland. Der Osten, der Westen, der Zorn und das Glück

(Fableland. The East, the West, Anger and Happiness)

S. Fischer

Jury comment:

The dreams and promises of 1989 shattered against the cliffs of a collective memory that favoured transfiguration and repression over honesty and insight. In "Fabelland", Ines Geipel develops this thesis in a work that is a cross between case studies, personal memories and political essay, captivating readers with its precise analysis and linguistic subtlety. Yet, this unillusioned examination of the ailing East German system and its posthumous whitewashing is not another reckoning. Instead, it is marked by empathy and sadness. At the same time, Geipel's poetic language reveals a sense of possibility, one that does not relinquish the hope of reconciliation. An astonishing book that has the power to reinvigorate the often muddled discussions about East and West.

Biography:

Ines Geipel, born in 1960, is a writer and professor of verse at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. In 1989, after studying German literature, she fled from Jena to Darmstadt, where she studied philosophy and sociology. The central theme of her work as an author and editor is the German history of violence under both National Socialism and the GDR dictatorship. Ines Geipel received the Federal Cross of Merit on Ribbon in 2011, the Lessing Prize for Criticism in 2020, the Marieluise Fleißer Prize in 2021 and the Erich Loest Prize in 2023, and was nominated for the Leipzig Book Fair Prize for Non-Fiction in 2024.

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Martina Heßler

Sisyphos im Maschinenraum. Eine Geschichte der Fehlbarkeit von Mensch und Technologie

(Sisyphus in the Engine Room.
A History Of The Fallibility Of Humans And Technology)

C.H.Beck

Jury comment:

What we compare ourselves to largely determines the image we form of ourselves. Martina Heßler shows how a new obsession has been spreading since the beginning of the 19th century: the comparison of man and machine, in which, to this day, the seemingly enduring, flawless and objective nature of technology regularly prevails. Hessler delves deeper, debunking the myth of perfect technology and contrasting the dream of a world where machines relieve us of all the tedious and dangerous tasks with the reality in which humans must expend increasing amounts of energy to maintain control over their ever more complex technology. The book is a crucial call not to lose sight of the question of the purpose behind ever-smarter machines in the global race for technological supremacy.

Biography:

Martina Heßler is a historian and since 2019 has been Professor of the History of Technology at the University of Darmstadt. She works on the cultural history of technology, on the history of objects and of design, on growth and shrinkage perspectives in industrial and car manufacturing cities, and on the relationship between humans and machines in the past and present.

Press contact and interview requests:

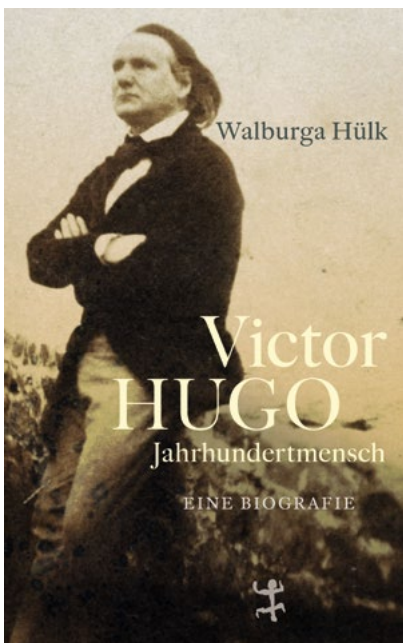
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Walburga Hülk

Victor Hugo. Jahrhundertmensch

(Victor Hugo. Man of the Century)

Matthes & Seitz Berlin

Jury comment:

The burning of the Paris cathedral has brought renewed attention to Hugo's "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame". Enlightened on the one hand and romantic on the other, Hugo embodies the contradictions of his era. After a royalist phase, he positioned himself at the forefront of progressive bourgeois protest, a stance that eventually led to his exile following Napoleon III's coup d'état. There, a lover of pomp and kitsch, he wrote "Les Misérables" and campaigned against the death penalty, slavery and authoritarian regimes. Through his own testimonials and those of others, the novelist Walburga Hülk successfully brings to life both Hugo as a politician, writer and unhappy family man, as well as 19th-century France. She portrays him as a public intellectual of enduring relevance, who used the mass media of his time to advocate for a united Europe and to speak out against the oppression of Poland by the Russian army.

Biography:

Walburga Hülk, born in 1953, was Professor of Romance Literature at the University of Siegen until 2019. She previously taught in Freiburg and Gießen and was a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris and the Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France in Valenciennes. In numerous books and articles, she has repeatedly dealt with the 19th century in France and with literature and art in the modern age.

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Bernhard Kegel

Mit Pflanzen die Welt retten.

Grüne Lösungen gegen den Klimawandel

(Plants Can Save the World. Green Solutions to Climate Change)

DuMont

Jury comment:

The title is as striking as the book is nuanced. Bernhard Kegel examines the roles of plants in various ecosystems – forests, moors and oceans – and the mechanisms by which they benefit humans. He focuses on climate change and the carbon balance, explaining how carbon is stored in plant matter and absorbed from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. Kegel highlights how labour-intensive and fraught with conflicting goals many initiatives are that aim to promote these processes. Yet, the existence of such efforts around the globe – in Europe, China, the USA and Africa – whether in the form of peatland restoration in Schleswig-Holstein, kelp forests in the oceans or reforestation in the Sahel, is encouraging. The author does not promise a magic bullet; instead, he presents and reflects on various approaches.

Biography:

Bernhard Kegel, born in Berlin in 1953, studied Chemistry and Biology at the Free University of Berlin, followed by research work, work as an ecological expert and lecturer. Since 1993 he has published numerous novels and non-fiction books. Bernhard Kegel's books have been awarded several journalism prizes.

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Ulli Lust

Die Frau als Mensch. Am Anfang der Geschichte

(Woman as Man. At the Beginning of History)

Reprodukt

Jury comment:

What a title! Even as Ulli Lust tackles the question of the role of women tongue-in-cheek, she takes a sweeping historical journey. The author knowledgeably combines contemporary perspectives from archaeology, anthropology and gender studies. Her perspective is extremely refreshing, and the broad, scholarly scope leads to surprising conclusions. A history rich with female representation over millennia must be read through a female lens. The visual representation of the text as a graphic novel goes far beyond mere descriptive illustration. By engaging with the text in a discursive manner, it adds another layer. "Woman as Man" is virtually a documentary film in graphic novel form, making it a non-fiction book in the truest sense of the word.

Biography:

Ulli Lust, born in 1967, emigrated from Vienna to Berlin in 1995. Since then, she has been creating comic reportages with sharp observations about modern everyday life. In 2009, she published "Heute ist der letzte Tag vom Rest Deines Lebens" ["Today Is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life"] (avant-verlag), an extensive comic about her youth that blends travel and picaresque novel elements with existential teenage drama. The book has been translated into numerous languages and has won several awards, including the Prix de Revelation at the Angoulême International Comics Festival, the Ignatz Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Award in the USA. Her autobiographical graphic novel about an unusual three-way relationship, "Wie ich versuchte ein guter Mensch zu sein" ["How I Tried to Be a Good Person"] (Suhrkamp, 2017), was shortlisted for the "Fauve d'or" in Angoulême in 2018 and won an Ink Pot Award at the San Diego Comic-Con. Since 2013, Ulli Lust has been a professor of illustrative design and comics at Hanover University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

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