Ha-Joon, C, Dorling, D. and 11 others (2019) Economic benefits of Labour plan to provide free broadband for all, Letter, The Guardian, 21 November, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/nov/21/economic-benefits-of-labour-plan-to-provide-free-broadband-for-all

Economic benefits of Labour plan to provide free broadband for all

The objection that the proposal is an election 'giveaway' should not be taken seriously, say 13 signatories including **Ha-Joon Chang** and **Danny Dorling**

Letters

Thu 21 Nov 2019 18.13 GMT Last modified on Thu 21 Nov 2019 18.16 GMT

We write to support the proposal from the Labour party for a public programme to provide rapid internet service to the entire population (Broadband 'communism'? They said that about the NHS, Journal, 19 November). This project would have a high social and economic rate of return, especially at current borrowing rates.

Since it would be socially profitable, the objection that the proposal is an election "giveaway" should not be taken seriously – that is not an objection raised for other infrastructure projects such as airports and motorways.

Arguments from self-interested corporations that a public sector programme would discourage private sector investment should be seen as unfounded special pleading. This pleading also ignores the fact that this network would create many more opportunities for web content providers to profit in a space where something approaching a real market operates, and is, therefore, decidedly selective in its view. Finally, to claim that this is an activity more appropriate for the private sector is a political assertion that fails to take account of the manifest failure of private companies to provide a broadband network accessible to all.

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'This project would have a high social and economic rate of return, especially at current borrowing rates.' Photograph: Alamy