From Value Generation to Value Realization – Current Digitalization as a Phenomenon of Distributive Capitalism

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https://digitalisierung-der-arbeitswelten.de

Could/should we assign the adjective „digital“ to today’s capitalism?

Increasing use of the term.
Historical shift from production to digital.
From producing material things towards managing/coding immaterial knowledge.

Dan Schiller
Philipp Staab
Michael Betancourt
Scott Lash
Paul Mason
Shoshana Zuboff
...

Immateriality is key?

This is a Western centric view.

In terms of quantity.

Humanity has never produced, moved and consumed such vast quantities of material goods as it does today.

In terms of strategy.

China.
Paradigm Shift/Industry 4.0

Or does the term „digital capitalism“ stand for an analytical position that capitalism itself has changed substantially - in its essence, not its phenomena?
So, is digital capitalism defined by production gone immaterial?

Materiality is alive and kicking. And value creation still needs human labour.

Or, is digital capitalism defined by the relevance of the newest capitalists and business models?

Is digital capitalism defined by surplus production gone digital? With digital means of production and new capitalists on board?

The seeming immateriality of the web economy relies on material infrastructure.

Cobots, 3D-Print, IoT, drones: pretty much material.

Algorithms and apps are material in an abstract way.

Two things are still key:
Ownership of means of production.
Who produces the surplus value and who collects it.

Wet dream of capitalism?

GAFAM – heirs of the steel magnates of earlier times?

Largest profits and/or the highest stock market listings.

Winners of the intangible production.
employees globally 900,000

Data-driven "newbies": less profitable than old school Microsoft

data is not the main driver of Amazon’s profits

Karl Polanyi: focus on human labour becomes a commodity.

Karl Marx: focus on exploitation within production.

Birth of capitalism.

Expansion of markets & consumption. Increase of crises.

More and more of advertising & marketing, logistics & storage, governance & prognosis

Since then: Exponential optimization of productive forces

Distributive Forces
In the developed capitalism of our days, the central problem is the realisation of created values in markets. Strategies of market expansion and consumption are becoming a more relevant field for competition. In addition to the productive forces directed towards the generation of value, those directed towards the realisation of value are gaining dominance.

Digital Business models & digital technologies match best (but not fulfilling) immanent needs of developed capitalism. So it is more a capitalism of distributive forces than a digital capitalism.

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