As the Internet continues to develop we see...
...perennial proclamations of novelty
...ever new, Web-inspired, socio-theoretical diagnoses of the times
(Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2009; Castells, 2000; Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

The dominant discourse has it that...
...the Internet is changing not only society but also its economic underpinnings.
...digitized value creation embraces more and more areas
...the Internet is shaking the very foundations of our economy (Sharma, Krishan & Grewal, 2001).
...E-commerce is a boom similar to the Industrial Revolution (Drucker, 1999).

Example: Converse Create Website

Converse „create” website lets customers design their sneakers customized down to the individual seam.
Should a “digital native” customer in Brooklyn design a totally customized pair of sneakers, this one-of-a-kind item will cost little more than a normal Converse sneaker and will be in the customer’s hands within four weeks.
How many highly paid knowledge workers?
How many work for what wages and under what conditions in the retail outlets?

Who conceives the online marketing strategies, who programs and designs the websites for them?

Who programs the interface that permits a smooth transfer of the customer-generated data from Converse’s “create” website into the Beijing-based contract manufacturer’s order system?

What difference does it make for a underpaid sweatshop worker that the shoe is customer designed?

Are these employees in Nike’s e-commerce department, well paid Palo Alto “digital natives” or off-shore IT service providers in Bangalore?

How can we make to be seen there is not only a value chain, but a labour and skills chain, too?
And how this human labour generates the value that superficially seems to stem from the Web somehow.

Substantial changes of work along the value chain

“anyone in the chain who produces and distributes knowledge products” and in between is found a steadily growing army of employees who “handle, distribute and convey information and knowledge” (McKercher & Mosco, 2010).

All those tasks are increasingly interconnected along the global value chain, and modularization and standardization are applied progressively so that these connections can be “managed as seamlessly as possible” (Huws, 2012:2).

This sort of standardization no longer just reaches into the production area, but meanwhile also impinges on the creative processes of innovation work (Pfeiffer, Sauer & Wühr, 2012; Pfeiffer, Schütt & Wühr, 2010).

→ analyzing work along virtual value chains
→ analyzing the qualitative value of labour and skills

The locale can split apart for the value generation and realisation processes (in real economy as well).

Different digital locales can be relevant for every step in the value generation and value realisation processes.
Value generation and value realisation both happen offline:
- a book is produced in the print shop and offered in the bookstore or library.

Value generation and value realisation both happen online:
- several co-authors collaborate on an online platform in writing a novel that later becomes available online.

The value generation takes place online, the value realisation occurs offline:
- several co-authors collaborate on an online platform in writing a novel that is then made available as a printed book.

The value generation happens offline, the value realisation occurs online:
- a book is produced by a printer and made accessible through an online portal.
Commons becomes detachable from its previously mostly locally bound context, letting far more people render voluntary labour. Which, on the other hand, becomes an object of economic exploitation.

Value generation occurs as commodity production, value realisation is commoditized: content is sold that was produced or purchased as a commodity.

Value generation utilizes the commons and value realisation takes places as commons. Access remains open to content that was jointly produced or existed as commons.

Value generation utilizes commons; the result is treated as commodity in value realisation: content is made available for sale that was jointly created or existed as commons.
Value generation occurs as commodity production, the result is transferred to commons: access is open to content produced or bought as commodity.

work happens increasingly along virtual value chains!

analytical framework for virtual value chains

understanding the qualitative role of human labour

How to analyze skills and labour?
Quantitative
Exchange value of human labour
Commodity

labour power ➔ Production

dialectical

labour capacity

Qualitative
Use value of human labour
No commodity

= Arbeitsvermögen
(Pfeiffer 2004)

means and
objects of work

appropriation

labour power ➔ Production

appropriation

subjectifying work action

labour capacity

Differ extremely along the virtual value chain

work happens increasingly along virtual value chains!

How to analyze skills and labour?

analytical framework

for virtual value chains

understanding the qualitative role of human labour for value creation