
On the impossibility of a society after money and the possibility of a society after money capital

Ernest Aigner*¹, Manuel Scholz-Wäckerle¹, and Hardy Hanappi²

¹Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien [Austria] – Autriche

²Technische Universität Wien – Autriche

Résumé

This article explores the impossibility of a society after money together with the possibility of a society after money capital (the latter understood as universal equivalent). A society where money ceased to be the dominating mechanism to mediate, regulate, conceptualize, commensurate and transmit a plurality of values into one general social value system. Thereby the article contributes to a recently growing literature about future conceptions of a society after capitalism.

The dominance of money capital on social systems became evident at least during the financial crisis 2008. Historically, money, despite having existed in ‘specific forms’ before, only became a generalizing form of social value with the emergence of capitalist societies. Money forms changed along with the societal evolution of capitalist classes, as an appropriated social technique to gain and stabilize agency over social ecological metabolisms. Capitalism’s emerging structures enabled the bourgeoisie to introduce a norm of general equivalence allowing to extend social control beyond the local energy system. The monistic value norms created, reach global levels today and are reproduced through numerous exclusionary mechanisms that create a vast dependency on money, e.g. the coupling of US currency with fossil fuels.

Recently we have observed the emergence of so-called platform capitalism that is coordinating the globalized flows of information, value, matter and energy. The deep interlinkage of global ICT infrastructure and financial markets has brought forward a crisis of addressability, where large-scale defaults have not been traced back to its original causes. Contemporary capitalism tends to solve such problems with technological innovations, representing algorithms, matching protocols and artificial intelligence in this case. These technological fixes truly go ahead as accelerationist researchers have rightly acknowledged. Capitalism will likely be partly controlled by algorithms within this century. An issue that some counter-hegemonic futurists consider also as a chance for a steady transition towards a society after money, where money is replaced by algorithmic matching protocols, i.e. a sort of computer socialism.

In this article we argue that such a conception may be worthwhile to follow, although crucial political economic amendments are necessary or it remains just a dangerous gamble. First, a society after money represents a theoretical oxymoron if the various kinds of money are meant altogether. We seek to characterize money through its dialectical nature and abstain therefore from sketching a rather naïve harmonistic future society. Second, in contrast, we consider society as antagonistic and highlight the problem of software development and

*Intervenant

thereby social control in such techno-optimist conceptions. The latter may even turn societies in a techno-fascist future and/or a global climate catastrophe. Eventually we develop a future perspective of a social-ecological political economy after money capital and highlight some preliminary roles of a pluralist money.

Mots-Clés: money, capitalism, classes, ICT, metabolism