

The chapter The washing machine has changed the world more than the internet has from the book “23 things they didn't tell you about capitalism” written by Ha-Joon Chang is very interesting in its view of the washing machine and the conclusions that he brings from why and how it is more impactful than the internet as well as the reasons he gives.

One of the first things that he states when comparing technology to the past and what is revolutionary he states “ We should not ‘put the telescope backward’ when we look into the past and underestimate the old and overestimate the new.” He backs up this conclusion with the reason “this leads us to make all sorts of wrong decisions about national economic policy, corporate policies, and our own careers.” (pg.32) This quote tells the reader that he has an assumption that most people tend to look on the present favorably and with bias than when looking into the past about how they lived in a society and what they used to use as well as being the first conclusion that he states. And follows up with another reason that we tend to regard the most recent inventions as the most revolutionary.

The second conclusion that he gives is that domestic service is a luxury good in rich countries while in developing countries it is cheap enough for the low-middle class. The reason for this is that as a country develops people become more expensive because they are paid more in general causing the higher price of labor while tools or “things” are less expensive. And that what we see today in developing countries is what rich countries had in the past, in the case of the US in 1890 8 percent of our “gainfully employed” were domestic servants. We can assume

when talking about “rich” countries that he means first world countries and talking about “developing” that he means third world countries or countries that have similar wealth to that.

The third conclusion is that washing machines changed the way women live and through women men. This is because of the emergent rise of household appliances, as well as electricity, piped water, and piped gas has totally transformed the way we live. This saves 4 hours to 41 minutes on a 38 lb load of laundry and 4.5 to 1.75 hours of ironing clothes and gave the ability to women to enter the job market raising their status at home due to making their own money and being able to leave and support themselves, and increasing their labor market participation as a whole. With this increase in market participation the costs of having a kid were increased by a great margin. We can assume that he is not only talking about the washing machine as he brings up contraceptives and even social reasons as to why women have more social value at home.

All in all, I thought this essay written by Ha-Joon Chang was very informative with facts and statistics as well as examples from countries that have domestic servants to back up the conclusions he stated and the writing felt less like he was trying to convince me then show me. His reasons are good and speaks to his audience that presumably believes the internet has had a greater impact as he thinks most people do.