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TEN PROPOSITIONS ON BASIC INCOME[©] (Basic income in a flexible accumulation system)

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INTRODUCTION

In the last years, the people's number below the threshold of poverty is strongly increased in Europe. At the same time, the polarisation of incomes is continued all over the world without standstill, in more developed and in the emergent and poor countries of third and fourth world. There is nothing new: the great daily papers sometimes show a certain indignation (as for children's exploitation in Asia and in Africa) but of fact these points don't enter the agenda of the national and international economic

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♥ This paper has materially and formally been compiled from the author, but in the substance it is written by all those people that in the varied self-organised situations have discussed it. The actual version, that is enriched and widened in comparison to a first layout introduced in Ecn (European Counter Network) at the end of the month of September 1998, it is the fruit therefore of the intelligence and of the daily practice of struggle of all these people. To them it is dedicated A partially different italian version is in A.Fumagalli, M.Lazzarato, *Tute bianche. Disoccupazione di massa e reddito di cittadinanza*, DeriveApprodi, Rome, 1999. For the moral support, I thank Cristina Morini and Grateful Dead psychedelic music.

politics¹.

The transformation of the western economies in the last years, which in rapid and raw way we can point out in the passage from the *fordism* to the *post-fordism*, did not modify only the processes that subtend the mechanisms of accumulation, of creation of wealth and poverty, but also homogenised and conformed in unilateral way great part of the economic thought. Not has always been this way. For instance, the transformation of the western economies and the social movements of the seventies created the premises for potential change in the same economic theory. More, in the years of the postwar period, the development of the fordist model was accompanied by the spread of the keynesian economy and of its different variations in terms of economic planning, till to the centralised planning (creating in such way a distorted bridge between Keynes and Marx in order to furnish a theoretical base to a monopolistic capitalism in the West and to a State capitalism in the East): different theories, that however were faced to the neoclassical theory in a plurality of formulations, even on the methodological aspect. Beginning from the first Eighties, and subsequently after the fall of the wall in Berlin, it is assisted, instead, to the triumph without rivals of the neoliberal theory. Whatever theoretical opposition ceases, if not, in purely formal terms, inside the dominant neoclassic formulation. The political economy is transformed in neutral science, whose "scientific laws" are to appanage of "experts" and "skilled people", far from the theoretical diatribes typical of the social sciences. Independently on the type of government to the power (right or left), economics becomes a technique of support of the mechanisms of accumulation in order to be also more and more compatible with the entrepreneurial and financial needs in the short period. The homogeneisation of the economic thought, that permeates by now most meander of the academy and most of the centers of research, represents the greatest danger that we have today to face. And it is paradoxical that just in the moment in which the tallest level of fragmentation of the working activity is in force and in which it is not possible to highlight a unique model of dominant productive organisation, there is a unique economic thought (belief), a real manipulation of the consciences².

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In a similar context of repression of ideas and of ideological conformism, it is not enough to analyze the present situation to denounce its criminal and unfair effects. By now, especially in Italy and in

¹ For some data, see the article of J.Vincour on 15 International Herald Galleries and October 16th 1997. The source, unexpected, affirms that "by the way of uncomfortable reality, in May (of 1997) the Eurostat has made known that (to the 1993 ndr.) 57 million Europeans, 17% of the population of the European union, alive under conditions of poverty. In the United States the poor men are 13,7%. In France the poor families are 16% and in Germany 13%, 29% in Portugal and 24% in Greece (in Italy, the datum is of 18%, ndr.). At August 1997, according to the official respects, the unemployed of the Ue were 17,9 million. Perhaps because the data Eurostats are reported to 1993 (...), or because the governments are felt few responsible for figures of four years ago done, it is that the publication of the statistics of the Eurostat has produced little indignation and scarce political reactions. Today the pride with which the European countries are convinced to have beveled forever the spigolosità of the capitalism, and to really have succeeded in distributing national wealth, seem never an illusion" (drawn by the article: *Poverty grows Quietly Along With Wealth*).

² Against the unique thought, see the periodicals writings of I. Ramonet on "Le Monde Diplomatique."

France, a thick alternative literature exists on the process of transformation from fordism to postfordism, on the immaterial production, on the restructuring processes, on the new poverties, etc.³. But out of the report and of the usual polemics on the type of analysis and used methodology, among who is faithful to the more orthodox Marxist tradition of the social investigation and who tries to follow new analytical tools, the alternative political and social agenda risks to be shelved more and more. Thus, it becomes necessary to call on proposal and on action, on the base of the indications that origin from the real world of the conflicts, that afar from the being disappeared, are nowadays diffused in particular and local contexts. The French unemployed struggle of 1997, had, for instance, among its words of order, not only the application of a workplace, but above all of an income. The request of an income independently from work availability but as citizen belonging to a community is a word of order that more and more is howled in the conflictual controversies that animate the present European scene. It derives from a more or less consolidated conscience that in the new millennium to have a job is not able to guarantee the existence of a dignified life. Even in this case, as it happened in past, the theory is born from the struggles and from the appeals that laboriously and gradually come to the light.

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The basic income is a concept that exists since a long time, since capitalism exists⁴. And it cannot be otherwise. An economic system, which is able to produce a surplus of wealth, thank to the material transformation of the commodities and not on the simple base of the existing wealths in nature, it is not able to also face the theme of the distribution of such surplus. Capitalism has imposed his own law, according to which the social emancipation and the possibility to survive (to get an income, for instance) gets through work availability, in presence of different hierarchical relationships. Work is free and remunerated - this is the great social revolution of capitalism – but it undergoes to the rules of the private accumulation thanks to the blackmail of the need, or to the social stratification that derives from the human exploitation. The capital-labour relationship - in the different metamorphoses that occurred during the last two centuries - represents the theoretical and real aspect in which the social dynamics is moved and modified. The process of accumulation determines the conditions of production, the distribution of income affects demand conditions. Capitalistic growth tends to modify both of them. Affecting the side of the accumulation, through interventions on labour organization, on investment, on

³ Only the principals texts are here remembered: in France, among the many, see, besides the articles on *Futur Antérieur*, the last text of A.Gorz, *Miserable du present, richesse du possible*, Galilee, 1997 and of R. Castel, *Les Métamorphoses de la question social*, Fayard, Paris, 1996; in Italy, the writings on the General Intellect (among the others, M.Lazzarato, *Immaterial Work*, OmbreCorte, Verona, 1997 and M.Hardt-T.Negri, *The work of Dioniso*, Manifestolibri, Rome, 1996), on the s.c. autonomous workers of II° generation (S.Bologna-A.Fumagalli, *The autonomous workers of II° generation*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1997), on the social and financial changes (C.Marazzi, *Il posto dei calzini*, Casagrande, Bellinzona, 1994 and *E il denaro va*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1998). See also the magazines that deal with these matters in the area of the italian social antagonism, (Altreragioni, Derive&Approdi, Futuro Anteriore, Intermarx, Di Base, etc.)

⁴ On this theme, see A. Fumagalli, “Economic thought, flexible accumulation and basic income”, in Aa.Vv., *La democrazia del reddito universale*, Manifestolibri, Rome 1997.

the characteristics of exploitation, is a priority in order to modify destinies of the capitalism, but to influence and to hijack the distribution of income is as many essential. The experience of the sc.. "realized socialism" and, above all, its failure is there to show it.

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In this essay, we deal with the concept of basic (citizenship) income through the formulation of eleven propositions, with the intent to be as clearest as possible, but also to show the partiality of this proposal. Nevertheless, we guess that it constitutes in this historical phase an important pillar, able, together to others, to sustain a plant of alternative political economic, more solidale and less unfair and, for some verses, even more efficient. A last notice: the eleven proposition can independently be read one from the others (with some references to their inside for possible specific deepenings). This means that will be easy to incur in repetitions, that we hope doesn't excessively bore the reader.

Proposition 1: The basic income is a proposal of universal and unconditional economic intervention, not discriminating towards anyone, which competes to define, together to the juridical citizenship, the full economic and social citizenship and the full enjoyment of the civil liberties.

For basic income we intend the allocation of a regular and perpetual monetary sum in order to guarantee a dignified life, independently from the effective working performance. Such disbursement has to have two fundamental characteristic: it has to be universal and unconditional, that is, it should be a fundamental human right. In other terms, basic income must be given to all the human beings in non discriminatory form (of sex, race, religion, income⁵, work activity or inactivity). It is just enough to exist to have the right to it. It is not submitted to some form of tie or condition (or, it doesn't force to assume particular appointments e/o behaviors). These two attributes - universal and unconditional - clear away the table from many misunderstandings.

The nowadays existing income distribution policies⁶ have to do with the professional condition (the sc. "mean tests") or are bound to the obligation to assume some contractual appointments, even if unhooked by the working performance: thus, they are discriminating and not conform to the *status* of "individual inalienable right". This is not the case for basic income.

⁵ With the purpose to be more explicit, it is necessary to specify that also the great capitalistic families have the right to basic income.

⁶ As in the case of the French R.M.I (Revenu Minimum d'Insertion).

Treating of a homogeneous intervention, basic income should be distributed by a public entity constitutionally recognized with possible delegation to the local authorities for the material matters of redistribution. Treating of an income independent on wages (cfr. proposition 7), it replaces all the forms of securities which origin from the job loss (unemployment benefits, etc.) but not the other forms of income already existing (pensions, credits to the families, etc.). The purpose of basic income is that to provide a spendable monetary liquidity on the final market of the commodities so that to allow the full enjoyment of the rights of citizenship without necessarily being inserted in a hierarchized context of material and immaterial production: from this point of view basic income competes to guarantee the economic and social citizenship and competes to the formation of a “positive liberty”.

This last affirmation deserves a fast deepening. The nature of universality and unconditionality of basic income, in fact, competes to overcome a definition of the human liberty as simple removal of ties to freely act for the human kind, as it regards the primary rights (word, thought, movement, etc.). Human liberty is so defined in negative sense as absence of impediments. Such concept of liberty, that is at the base of our juridical systems, doesn't implicate that then the human beings are indeed able to enjoy of these primary rights. They are potential only on the plan of the juridical liberties but not real on the economic basis, since they can be bound by the income position. The reduction of the economic constraints, thank to basic income, can allow the human being to enjoy in real terms what it is often only a potentiality. Thus, basic income is tool of growth of the individual freedom.

Proposition 2: Basic income, afar from being an utopian proposal, is a measure of economic intervention compatible to the social reality of the flexible accumulation and therefore more realistic today than it was in the fordist period.

With the passage from the fordist model to what we roughly can define " post-fordism" or, better, the "flexible accumulation paradigm", the economic and social context changes in a radical way. What could seem unrealistic twenty years ago, it is no more today: that is the case of basic income. To explain this affirmation, it is worth to remember some economic and social break-ups, that have characterised the recent economic phase in the advanced capitalism countries, with particular reference to Europe:

1. invalidity of the connection production – stable and guaranteed employment, The technological progress and the spread of flexibility allow to increase production level without increasing stable employment, but rather, if it happens, precarious and uncertain labour activity. The labour flexibility implies that more and more shares of employment are characterised by what we can call “atypical” labour contracts. From a statistical point of view, it is possible an increase in the

number of generally considered employed people, but a greater part of new assumptions are “temporary”, “part-time” (often imposed), different types of autonomous and etherodirect jobs.

2. invalidity of the connection real wage - productivity. The salary of the dependent job is today, to the 2000 thresholds, more and more unhooked by the productivity, for the simple fact that productivity tends to mostly depends on type of machinery in an separate way from labour activity. If to increase production, it is enough to press a key or to send away a command *via* computer, it is evident that and the job and his wage are partially external elements to the mechanism of accumulation. Further, the flexibility in labour market leads to the prevalence of individual bargaining respect to collective bargain, with the effect to reduce the capacity to obtain wages increase.
3. ininfluence of the structure of the national consumption (end of the “nation state” era). The fact that wage and productivity are no more connected implies that the distribution of income to national level and, accordingly, the internal aggregate demand in terms of consumption do not have much importance in determining the process of accumulation. First, the financial flows internationalisation (with the total and complete capital flows liberalization) and, then, the widening of deindustrialisaion process of western economies have implied that single State economic conditions and the economic policy have today a decreasing influence on the global mechanisms of accumulation. From this point of view, in fact, the internationalisation process of the world economy is based upon a labour division that sees the western countries hold in a more and more assembled way the financial and technological power and the control of the commercial flows and the emergent countries of the third world object of the simple transformation of commodities. The irrelevance of the income distribution structure also implies the decrease of the role of the State both as economic agent that directly intervenes in the economic system to support accumulation (keynesian politics) and as actor which affects the same income redistribution. In a model of flexible accumulation, "Welfare State" doesn't have any specific function but it represents only a rigidity and, as such, it must be abolished.

These three aspects are extremely correlated and they underline a unique phenomenon: the separation between income distribution and accumulation process.

To social level, beyond the only economic sphere, such separation also implies a modification of the relationship social inclusion/social exclusion. In summary way we can rather say, that in the keynesian-fordist model the social exclusion and alienation depended on the degree of insubordination towards labour conditions and discipline. In such a situation, the presence of a strong labour ethics represented the principal way for integration and social inclusion, which allowed, even if in subordinate position, a share of the cooproduced wealth. The objective of full employment had therefore not only ethics but

also a strategic relevance, even if it was necessary to keep however a certain level of unemployment⁷. Today, in the postfordist flexible model, exclusion and social alienation are characterised as external element of "flexibilisation/pecariousness" and "indirect pressure" on the more and more narrow core of guaranteed workers (see. Proposition 6, for further deepening on this theme).

A question rises then: if wage is not determined inside the production, from who or from what is regulated?

There are two possible answers: the first describes what is happening, the second postulates a future option.

If it is true that wages are not determined inside the mechanisms of accumulation and production as it was in the fordist model, then a possible answer consists of postulating a prefordist or, rather, a nineteenth-century situation in which the wage dynamics depends on the demographic levels, that is, on labour supply. It is neither a provocation, neither a paradox, on the contrary, a painful reality. Today wages vary according to the level of unemployment: thus, we can talk of starvation wage in a context of structural unemployment or, that is the same, of uncertain and precarious employment. These simple considerations explain the presence of an anomalous situation for the first time in the postwar period: production grows, productivity grows, real wages decrease to advantage of profits and financial rents.

If this is the up-to-date trend - and it is a dangerous one because of its anti-historical and regressive nature - , it needs nevertheless to hold account that accumulation characteristics together with the high flexibility of today's productive systems are hardly modifiable elements in short and middle term, unless it will not reached a contractual power able to structurally modify such productive formalities, hypothesis, today, a great deal unrealistic.

Technological flexibility and wages flexibility are managed by enterprise system; they are therefore exogenous factors to a short term alternative economic policy, out of the control of the antagonists social realities. From this point of view, the space for a reformist politics, intending for this last a compatible politics with the accumulation needs in short period, is totally void⁸.

It is then necessary to open a different alternative, a more realistic and practicable option. This second option deals with the *mot d'ordre* of basic income as result of a process of social redistribution of the income. The security of an income independent on the working activity is a hypothesis that escapes from the logic of the productive accumulation to operate on the vast social plan. To avoid that wages are reduced to pure and simple element of subsistence and not of liberation and tool of individual freedom, it is necessary that the retributive dynamics (dependent and independent work) becomes a

⁷ On this theme, a Kalecki's article (written almost 60 years ago) is still illuminating: M.Kalecki, *The political aspects of the full occupation*, 1943.

⁸ In effects, in Italy as in German and Great Britain, the actual economic politics pursued by the government of center-left with the support of the labor union, falsely denomineted " riformist", doesn't hand anything else other than to the total subordination to the economic compatibilities dictated by the same capital.

social matter and that is regulated on the plan of the social distribution of the income⁹. And today it becomes a more and more a realistic and irremissible option.

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Always as far as the utopian character of basic income and the possible negative effects are concerned, it is often highlighted that, if an income were indeed available independent from the necessity to work, this it would induce a diminution of labour supply, above all, for hard and unskilled jobs. The effect should be a decrease of production levels and therefore of the possibility in the future to enjoy a same amount of good and services. In other words, who would make the hardest jobs but as many necessary to maintain the level of existing comfort today?¹⁰ To such objection, which doesn't appear at first sight lacking of good sense and which often implies a strong labour ethic, can be answered with three orders of considerations:

1. one of the principal stimulus to economic and technological dynamics derives from the existence of constraints and obstacles to the process of accumulation in progress. Every time that a conflict is developed among the different social components and particularly between capital and labour (but, in small measure, also among the different forms of capital), the resolution of such conflict passes through an innovative push of the technological and social progress. That was the case, to the beginnings of the XX century, of the introduction of the 8 hours a day for six days a week. If we go to reread the documents of that period, we shall find very similar arguments to those that today, almost one century later, are alleged on the topic. Too often, however, it is forgotten that social conquests have been the better antidote to economic crises, forcing the entrepreneurs to escape from routinized behaviours and to introduce technological innovations able to oppose and to overcome the possible compression of profits or the risk of economic failure. In other words, whatever fit measure to improve income distribution in non compatible way with the expected profitability, imposes necessity to stimulate productivity to the same productive system and to accelerate the technological progress with the purpose to resolve and to eliminate the constraints to the accumulation process. From this point of view, well-come to basic income, so that it forces productive system (firms, banks, etc.) to set remedies to the obstacles that such measure inevitably is suited to introduce. Anything else than productive paralysis!
2. It is necessary to remember that the history of technological progress shows a secular tendency to

⁹ This thematic is also present in the historical experience of the struggle for the reduction of labour time, that has always implied - fact today too often forgotten - to conjugate the matter of time with that of income. For a deeper treatment, see the good essay of A.Foti, *Cronocrazia*, Etas Libri, Milan, 1998.

¹⁰ It is this for instance the critics by G.Mazzetti, *Quel pane da spartire*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1996. See, also the paradox of Okum, as reported by Ackermann and Alstott: "excessive redistribution reduces incentives for production and growth. The big trade off, then, is between more equality and more wealth to share". See B.Ackermann and A.Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society*, Yale U.P., New Haven and London, 1999, pag. 3.

the reduction of the physical work and of the sc. "heavy jobs " (obviously we make reference to the areas where the technological progress is mostly spread). Technical change made giant footsteps in the field of mechanisation. A greater difficulty to retrieve labour-force for uncomfortable and heavy jobs, induced by availability however of a basic income - afar to stop the production - it would induce an innovative stimulus to mechanise these same heavy jobs, favouring in such sense an increase of productivity. Besides, non secondary aspect, this could favour a more consistent technological dynamics to the real demands of liberation of mankind, element that it is not always correlated with the development of the scientific and technological progress (for instance, see about the development of the weapons industry).

3. It needs, finally, to remember that the nature of the man is directed more to *activity* than to *laziness*, "vice" that is assumed to the honors of dominant *common sense* in concomitance with the development of the protestant ethics of work. If the man is freed by the heaviest and alienating job, this doesn't mean that he will be dedicated to the "*sweet doing nothing*". The meaning of the word *labour* - as it normally derives in western world - is often synonymous of *effort*. Without excessively dwelling on these thematic ones¹¹, in almost all the western languages the word *labour* is semantically synonymous of " pain " or " effort" (in neo-Latin languages, it derives from the substantive *trouble* or *labour* that point out or the pain of the birth or a tool of torture) but working activity can also be pointed out by a second word, "*work*", that defines the performance freely developed by the human mind (man or woman) using the talent and the wish: locution that today, in the current language, is used for pointing out artistic activity (not by chance an activity untied by the necessity to produce exchange value and therefore not immediately productive, in the capitalistic sense of the term¹²). What basic income can favor, it is the reduction of the concept of work as labour, not in general of the man working ability, increasing in such way the degree of autonomy and the liberty of individual choice. Rather, with the diminution of heavy and alienating jobs, human beings would have more resources and more time to devote to the construction of "works" and even to organise in more libertarian way the production of what is him useful. The "right to *otium*"¹³ doesn't mean in fact absence of activity, but rather the disappearance of the constraint to *labour* and the advantage sweat of liberation of human creativeness. From this point of view, the *mot d'ordre* of basic income represents a kind of *counterpower* to the labour discipline and to the derived social hierarchy and for this it is retained a great deal dangerous. In fact, if it moves along a process of liberation not of work but from work (in capitalistic sense), one of the disciplinary tools of nowadays social control will be vanished.

¹¹ On this matter, see the introductory pages of the last essay of A.Gorz, *Misères du présent, richesse du possible*, quoted. and A.Foti, *Cronocrazie*, qt.

¹² On the matter of the definition of the artistic activity and his relationship with the exchange/use value, see P.Virno: "Virtuosity and revolution", edited without notes on the magazine *Luogo comune*, n. 4, May 1993 and reprinted in P.Virno, *Mondanità*, Manifesto Books, Rome, 1994.

¹³ See, obviously, P.Lafargue, *The right to idleness*, 1887.

Proposition 3: Basic income is a measure of a radical reformistic economic policy and not of structural modification of capitalistic organisation, by intervening on the side of the distribution of income and not on the side of the conflict capital-labour.

The evolution of the capitalistic economic organisation is founded on the continuous metamorphosis of the relationship of exploitation between capital and labour. It is the clashing nature of such relationship that continually pushes toward a modification of itself. To the dawn of capitalism, still first and then in contemporary to the industrial revolution of end '700, the creation of an urban labour-force, untied by the existing conditions of agricultural subsistence, represented the premise to formation of a proletarian class, necessary for the development of a capitalistic process of accumulation. The regulation of the capital-labour relationship, then in phase of constitution, was also founded on forms of distribution of the income as pure benefit against the hunger and poverty¹⁴. In the following century, the spread of capitalistic accumulation process brought to the abolition of any benefit against the poverty and to prevail of a wage regulation entirely founded upon the merciless law of market hierarchies. Wages were consolidated as dependent variable, without any inferior limit if not that to guarantee the simple reproduction of the labour-force. Unemployment levels, demographic dynamics and accumulation requirements determined the value of subsistence wage. Savings was exclusively a bourgeois activity and the finance activity was possible thank to the reinvestment of matured profits¹⁵. With the diffusion of the tayloristic and fordist organization of production of the XX century, it becomes necessary for the same growth of capitalistic accumulation to increase the levels of consumption and of aggregate demand. Wages cannot be more considered a simple variable of cost to national macroeconomic level but one of the most relevant components of demand and therefore of the monetary surplus valorisation; wages become so dependent on the same process of accumulation¹⁶. Today, the overcome of the spatial constraints which limited the development of the process of accumulation inside national borders thanks to the introduction of computer and transport innovations leads to propose a more and more individual wage bargaining (as effect of the fragmentation of labour market) and dependent non more

¹⁴ An example, in such sense, is represented by the s.c.. english "poor laws " of the second half of '700. For a deepening, see A. Fumagalli, *Economic thought, flexible accumulation.....*, qt.

¹⁵ The destination of the profits to activity of investment rather than to the acquisition of good of luxury or consumption had a very important role in last century to finance the process of accumulation, actually to the point to make to retain to theoretical level that the saving is to produce the investment. Such belief, still today to the centre of the academic teaching in almost all the western universities, had been in definitive way destroyed by Keynes in the General Theory.

¹⁶ The reference is to the *golden rule* of the fordist distribution that ties the dynamics of the real wage to that of the productivity.

on accumulation process (as in the fordistic phase) but rather on the same labour market conditions (with analogies with the pre-fordistic phase). Basic income inserts in this tendency: as income (and not wage) becomes tool of demand **recomposition**, by modifying the distribution of it among the economic macro-agents. Therefore, it is a favourable instrument to the dynamics of the capitalistic process of accumulation. And it could not be otherwise, if we think that all the corrective interventions in capitalistic economies (often originated by violent conflicts, too) introduced new pushes to the growth of the same capitalistic economy. For these reason, basic income is a reforming measure and not revolutionary (in the sense that doesn't go to modify the same structure on which capitalistic organisation is been founded). But it is a measure of radical reformism, that is a reformism which is incompatible with the requirements of accumulation in the short period.

Proposition 4: Basic income is a proposal of partial economic policy, not exhaustive and not in contradiction with other proposals of radical reformism (for instance, reduction of labour time, development of the social self-organisation aspects, activation of alternative works, etc.).

Just for its nature of measure of political economy on the side of income distribution, basic income is tool of partial intervention. It nevertheless cannot be in contradiction with other alternative measures which may concern or labour organisation in a flexible accumulation system (reduction labour time) or the development of no-profit alternative production forms (third sector and self-organisation)¹⁷. Rather, a relationship of narrow complementarity exists among these different alternative measures. To title of example, we will analyse the relationship that could profitably intervene among two proposals that have too often been seen opposite: reduction of labour time and basic income. Both the proposals make reference to the two faces of a unique medal: the break-up of the connection production and employment from one side, and among productivity and real wages from the other (see Proposition. 2 for deepening).

On this aspect, a brief reflection is necessary. Because the reduction of labour time has a positive effect on employment, it is necessary that at least three conditions are verified:

1. The reduction of labour time must be sudden and drastic: already 35 hours are today an insufficient application, because with a growth of the productivity around 4% (in the machinery sectors, also of 5-6%), in two year-old turn, the labour reduction to 35 hours a week doesn't produce new employment. Therefore, it becomes necessary to go down at least to 30-32 weekly hours.

¹⁷ On this alternative option, see M.Revell, *La sinistra sociale*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1997. See also G.Lunghini, *L'economia dello spreco*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1996, in which the concept of alternative "concrete jobs" is introduced.

2. If the reduction of labour time has to be drastic and sudden, it follows that achieves some costs. These costs cannot be borne by the workers (in the sense, lower time, lower wages), otherwise, instead of increasing employment, there is an increase of labour precariousness to advantage of profits and productivity/flexibility. Second, an excessive loss of the purchase power of wages could twist itself against the same mechanism of accumulation. Because, if it is true that the internal demand is not so binding anymore as in the fordist era, nevertheless it is possible to hypothesize a minimum level under which consumption is better non to fall. Thus, real wages cannot infinitely decrease.
3. It is as much clear, for reasons of political and economic realism, that the whole cost due to a drastic reduction of labour time cannot initially be imputed to the productive system; initially, because the earnings of productivity and the increases that necessarily spring from a more rational labour organisation induced by labour time reduction can only subsequently reasonably finance the same cost of time reduction.

It follows that the reduction of labour time it has to behave an initial cost. Such cost should be burdened by general taxation. Basic income could compensate and to assure workers of the possible losses that the actual negotiation – with pessimistic expectations (for the workers) - could behave, by allowing the same workers to be less blackmailed on income side, and more combative for the pursuing of time reduction objective, on the other side. In this context, a fiscal reform can not be put off (see proposition 9 for deepening). From this point of view, basic income is the complement, able to make practicable time labour reduction

The necessity of the introduction of basic income is not limited only to the reduction of labour time, but it goes besides this problem. If the reduction of labour time is related only to employed people, basic income deals with a more general social aspect, referred to the whole population.

From this point of view, the perspective of basic income surely results the fittest to face the structural modifications of capitalistic accumulation.

Further, it is too often forgotten that since about ten years it is well present inside the post-fordist job market the tendency to the extension of the working day, not only inside the segment of the employed (thank to the thick use of the extraordinary), but above all inside that new category of independent and “heteromanaged” workers. Such workers, being inside the complexes subcontracting relationships of the actual productive cycles, are also subjects of subordination and hierarchies of varied intensity according to the degree of their own professional activity and/or specialisation¹⁸. Nevertheless, by definition, although they can be autonomous and self-entrepreneurs, they are not able to check their own labour time. Consequently, only reduction of labour time risks to formally become element of dualism among workers with different juridical *status*, but substantially the same situation inside the labour organisation. The work flexibilisation and precariousness lead to the segmentation and the

¹⁸ On this matter, see S.Bologna, “Orari di lavoro e postfordismo” in Aa.Vv. *IL giusto lavoro per un mondo giusto. Dalle 35 ore alla qualità del tempo di vita*, Edizioni IL Punto Rosso, Milano 1995. For a case-study, see C.Morini, “Lavoro editoriale e settore editoriale”, *Altreregioni* n. 4, 1995.

decomposition of labour.

From this point of view, the thematic of basic income develops an important strategic function of unifying element and recomposition factor of the different forms of job, as it is not inside to the logic of accumulation (see proposition n. 11). More particularly, basic income can be the political and economic goal that not only allows the reduction of labour time but becomes the tool of homogeneity of the three followings categories of workers: the unemployed, because with basic income, besides guaranteeing them a purchasing power without necessarily resorting to illegal profitability, they know that a reduction of labour time can be feasible; the independent, “heteromanaged” and precarious workers, partly expelled by the fordist production process, through basic income, can effect a reduction of their working activity without necessarily accept a reduction of their own income, and increase their individual bargaining power; employed salaried people, that thanks to basic income, can get a reduction of labour time that involve an improvement of the quality of their own life.

Similar considerations about reduction of labour time can be also developed as it regards the activation of no-profit alternative jobs or the development of self-organised productions. In this case, in fact, the greater individual freedom deriving from the availability of income would allow to more people to be able to tightly develop no-merchant activities, without being submitted to the selective tie imposed by market hierarchies.

Thus, the thematic of basic income represents a remarkable picklock to unhinge some commonplaces, which are often present also inside left parties, with the consequence to break a supine acceptance of the dominant unique thought. It is not little.

Proposition n. 5: Basic income is a measure of counterpower to the power of money to discriminate between ownership of the means of production and simple endowment of labour force.

The material transformation of commodities or manufacturing production as unique moment of the origin of surplus (unlike the feudal society - based on the agricultural expropriation - and merchant society - based on the hierarchy of exchanges), presupposes the separation among capital (means of production) and labour (endowment of labour) and therefore it needs a monetary exchange among these two differently defined parts; in other words, capitalistic production is production of money by means of commodities (D-M-D') and it requires a monetary anticipation to start the activity of material transformation of commodities (D-M), in order to get subsequently a monetary profit in the phase of circulation and valorisation (M-D'). Beside to the role of unity of account, of exchange and of measure

of the wealth (general equivalent), money assumes, for the first time in the human history, also the function of credit-money (finance).

The availability of credit-money, or *finance*, is not a propaedeutic condition to produce in a routinised way, but to widen and to extend the level of production and surplus. In other words credit-money is money of new creation that enters the economic process in a dynamic way, proceeding to his continuous metamorphosis (together with technological progress: from this point of view, “money” and “technology” are the engines of capitalistic growth and of the continuous redefinition of the capital labour relationship). The availability of credit-money is therefore reserved to who, holding the means of production, is able in autonomous and unilateral way (in prices, output and technologies) to organise production. Thus, the accessibility to credit-money defines the economic discriminating factor (with all the social implications) among who holds the means of production (the entrepreneurs) and who only its own labour endowment (the wage earners).

From another point of view - complementary – it can be observed that credit-money is *sign-money* or *virtual money* since the relationship of debt and credit that it commands is no-solvent exchange (immaterial), intermediated not by a commodity and therefore not comparable to a merchant exchange (hence, the misunderstanding and the mystification of the neoclassic political economy); the debt-credit ratio has as object the time (the bridge between present and future, in the words of Keynes) and a promise of restitution (from which the rate of interest has origin, differing according to the length and riskness of the loan operation). Thus, it derives the discriminating role of the credit-money, whose accessibility is selected on the base, capitalistically determined, of the economic role, reducible, directly or indirectly, to the ownership of the means of production (as security).

It follows that the capitalistic power of money is one of the most relevant criteria of the hierarchy between capital and labour, as source of class division¹⁹. Such function touches its apogee in the fordist compromise: the availability of credit-money of new creation defines the ownership of the means of production, the availability to the job guarantees the citizen and the enjoyment of the civil rights of the wage earners. For the wage earners (dependent) and for the independent and autonomous workers, the availability of money is however residual, result of the working activity, that is income (the last passage of transformation of money). From this point of view, it becomes necessary to untie money, (income) from work availability. The separation between income and work implies to defuse the carrying elements of the power of money, as previously defined. Obviously, this doesn't structurally modify the capital-labour relationship, since the entrepreneurial power still is able to manage in unilateral way the productive activity and the technology, but it favours that process of liberation of the individuals from the slavery of work and from the blackmail of need.

Basic income is, therefore, tool of monetary counterpower.

¹⁹ On this thematic, see K.Marx, *Lineamenti di critica all'Economia Politica (Grundrisse)*, particularly notebook 2.

Proposition 6: Basic income is a measure of conterpower to the today's forms of social exclusion, aimed to increase the subjective autonomy founded upon the liberation by the coercion to the precarious, compulsory and predetermined work.

In the Fifties and Sixties, work represented the principal passport to enjoy civil rights; in other words, working activity was the best way to social inclusion. In the fordistic society, social status was strictly dependent on the type of job. If the rules of the disciplinary power to economic, social and political level were accepted, then a share of economic welfare was guaranteed, on whose base derived the social positioning. Only those people who were not submitted to the disciplinary regime of family, of school, of barracks and of factory, risked the social alienation. Thus, the fordist compromise between capital and labour, through and thank to the role and the growth of “welfare State”, guaranteed the satisfaction of the material needs in collective way. If the social inclusion were a collective phenomenon, the exclusion was instead an individual choice. The crisis of the fordist organisation led to the fall of its social compromise and to the crisis and unsustainability of “welfare State” till the disappearance of the social mechanisms (therefore collective and general) of amortisation of the economic disparities. The dominance of liberalism in the Eighties implies the sovereignty of the individual as only agent able to handle his own inclusion and social recognition, independently on the initial given conditions. If in fordism, social inclusion was the compromised result of an economic collective conflict on distributive side, in the era of flexible accumulation it is the fruit of a merciless individual competition. Substantial difference is that today also who pants to the social inclusion, even predisposing himself to bear every level of hierarchical subordination, not always is able to reach such objective. Today, to be employed doesn't guarantee the social inclusion anymore: the phenomenon of the “workings poor”²⁰, is a phenomenon that would have been inconceivable and incompatible with the forms of the fordist social regulation. In this context, basic income represents a definite inversion of rout in comparison to the present dominant tendencies. It will be discussed later about the degree of complementarity and/or substituibility with the social services of “welfare State” (see. proposition n. 8).

Here, it presses us to remember that basic income is tool of social inclusion (and therefore of civil progress) for two principal reasons: first, it guarantees in short term the material resources to allow a

²⁰ The phenomenon of the workings poor is born in the Usa of Reagan during the years 80. Today is also being spread in Europe. In Italy, the last statistics tell us that the families below the threshold of poverty (600.000 liras for each, less than half the middle income) amount to 2.245.000. The increase of the poverty is particularly elevated among the dependent workers that from a 8,4 quota% of 1996 has passed to 9,7% of 1997. In the same direction the increase of the poverty goes among the young familyheads up to 35 years: from 10,1% of 1996 to 11% of 1997. On this topoiocs, see G.Procacci, Social citizenship in front of the crisis of the welfare, in *Altreraioni* n. 8 and Commissione Povertà, *Relationship 1997*.

dignified life to everybody and therefore to resolve the aspect of the primary survival - not more object of an external intervention -, second, by resolving, at least partially, the survival problems, it increases the degrees of autonomy from the blackmail of the need and therefore from the necessity to undergo to working conditions, more and more to the limit of the slavery or illegal. From this point of view, basic income represents a potential weapon (not real) for the growth of social clashing and economic claims (see. propositions 11).

Proposition 7: Basic income has nothing to do with wages and with the accumulation process (on which wages are depending).

This proposition partially deals with some similar consideration to proposition 3. We discuss the origin of income distribution in a capitalistic society.

A brief premise. Capitalistic economic process can be easily described as a sequence of economic phases which define a *monetary production economy*: the separation between capital and labour on job market implies a propedeutical exchange between credit system and enterprises in order to get the monetary liquidity which is needed to buy labour-force and to start production activity, according to entrepreneurial choices. The labour-force price, wage, is determined in monetary term still before production activity will going on and still before the valorisation of final outputs. Monetary profit is the final result (surplus) of the circulation and valorisation phase, to which a surplus share is subtracted to pay interest to credit system on initial “finance”. It follows that nominal wage is fixed in the starting phase of economic process, whilst profit and rent depend on the result of the economic process. The sequential and dynamic logic of capitalistic production does not allow a simultaneous remuneration of input (as it is postulated in neoclassical theories).

Secondly, this sequential structure origins asymmetries and hierarchies among the same production factors. Who decides how to produce (how much, how and the price) – entrepreneurs – also affects the real value of distribution: in other words, the effective purchasing power of production inputs. That is the result of conflictual relationships that origins in the credit and labour markets, when it is determined the price of credit money and of labour. The fordist compromise between industrial capital and labour was essentially founded on a wage level able to include productivity gains (counter balanced by factory discipline) and compatible with a reasonable profit growth and on the security of constant demand rates (thank to Welfare State, too). With the fordist crisis, such a compromise falls. Productivity gains are non more distributed, Welfare State support to internal demand decreases. That mostly depends on technological change and on increasing weight of immaterial production. Today we are facing a sort of

“social productivity”²¹, due to the decreasing separation among manufacturing and design phases, to the diffusion of “general intellect” as production input, which makes more difficult to measure productivity at individual level. Bargaining is becoming more and more individual, whilst production depends on collective support. In this context, the separation between productivity and wage is irreversible. The nowadays problem is how to redistribute the social productivity gains, which till now are exclusive prerogative of profits and rents. Hence, to speak of basic income as form of social income distribution means to redistribute the social surplus in a social way during the phase of valorisation, independently on monetary wages. Basic income has nothing to do with wage.

Just looking at the relationship between wage and income and at the confusion that this misunderstanding generates, there are today three different proposals of social income distribution.

First, in the present debate, basic income can be considered as functional to the new flexible accumulation paradigm. It originates from the recognised necessity to guarantee – in a limited and temporary way – a minimum living standard to the people who are alienated, because of unemployment status. That is an old question, whose analysis provides two different answers, according to the social model which is considered: fordist or post-fordist.

The first one deals with the proposal of a “*negative income tax*”: it means a fiscal support to all whose income is lower than a certain level. It is a functional measure to limit an excessive widening of Welfare State. But at the same time it provides a support to the aggregate demand (mass consumption).

The second one deals with the concept of *social wage* as a measure derived from unemployment subsidy. With the acceptance that new production organisation is no more able to guarantee a stable work to everyone, unemployed or precariously employed workers can have the right to minimum income. That is the new-keynesian version with respect to the fordist one. The relationship between income and wages is not very clear, since it is recognised the existence of working activities which do not grant the possibility to access to a dignified life (“working poor”). In such “post-fordist” context, social wage is synonymous of *minimum guaranteed income*. It deals with a temporary support to income, which is not universal, since it is always the work the key to get (in future) the means of survival.

The concept of *social dividend*²² derives from the proposal of *minimum guaranteed income*. In this case, the basic idea is that everyone, even if formally unemployed, in direct or indirect way, take part to the process of social production. In this case, the professional status doesn’t matter, but it is important in any case that the social dividend is the return to the civil and social participation to the accumulation process²³. Who has not this availability, has no right to the *social dividend*.

The concept of *universal basic income*, instead, is something different. The attributes of universality and unconditionality are the relevant characteristics of the proposal (see Proposition n. 1).

²¹ On this matter, see C. Marazzi, *E il denaro va*, cit., pagg. 98-103

²² It is this for instance the denomination used by J.Meade, see. J.Meade, *Agathopia*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1994.

²³ An example is constituted by the hybrid figure of the “Contrat of insertion social” required by the 1988 law on the Rmi in France. See, I.Astier, *Revenu minimum et souci of insertion*, Paris, Desclée de Brower, 1997.

Proposition 8: Basic income is not substitutive to the welfare state, but it is complementary to it.

A very common objection to basic income (also inside the radical left) consists of retaining that perfect substitutability exists among the same basic income and allocation of social services, favouring in such way an individualist approach to loss of appeals of collective solidarity and, implicitly, a dismantling of the “welfare State” through the *monetisation* of primary social services.

The answer can be articulated on two levels: theoretical and practical.

To theoretical level, in the fordist paradigm, the social services were and are allocated on the base of a contribution corresponding to the working performance along the whole arc of the working life. The social services are therefore a component of the salary of the workers, is *postponed salary*, object of bargain between labour and State. In other terms, social services are not income, i.e. purchasing power and/or saving potentiality, on the contrary, they are integral part of the job remuneration. Contrarily, basic income is purchasing power of feasible goods and services. As already remembered (see Proposition 3 and Proposition 7), a wide difference exists between basic income and wages in its different forms (guaranteed, temporary, etc.). The first one is independent from any working performance and social securities; the second depends instead in subordinated way on the existence of a working performance.

On the base of these observations, the allocation of social services and the basic income cannot be substitute, on the contrary, they may be complementary.

It needs nevertheless to be realistic: almost surely in the same moment in which basic income is proposed, it will be asked as compensation the *monetisation* of the social services and therefore their solvency inside the private market. Nevertheless, the process of privatisation of social services is already in progress, independently on any application of basic income. The possibility to oppose to such dynamics depends on the potential of resistance and conflictuality that the antagonist forces are able to put in field and not from the request of a social redistribution of the income (intending with this basic income). Unfortunately, the problem is much besides the basic income.

Actually, the ability to organise social conflict encounters the predominant tendency towards individual bargaining. It deals with a process of individualisation of the social and economic (*americanisation* of the society) that it can happen thanks to:

- * increasing flexibilisation of the relationships of production;
- * scomposition and fragmentation of the labour world and of jobs typologies;
- * loss of importance of the salaried job and, similarly, intensification of the subordination of the job to

the capital also in the more properly intellectual offices in the fordism (taylorisation of the s.c. “*general intellect*”).

Different moments of conflictuality can be developed, but nobody of these is able to clog the accumulation process. It is always more necessary a process of recomposition of the different working subjectivity, today decomposed and fragmented and too often in struggle among them. Such recomposition is no possible – at this moment - only looking at the single work conditions, since these latter are too much different and not referable to an unique model of productive organization with a dominant working figure (subjectivity).

Secondly, the blackmail of need and the direct subalternity of work is not mediated by forms of intermediary representativeness (crisis of the labor union) especially in a situation of prevailing individual bargaining: such condition doesn't allow that generic and demagogic calls to the *class solidarity* (which class, or, better, which segment of class?) can be pursued. A process of social recomposition in this complex phase can occur along extra-production coordinates but anyway, indirectly, depending on it: *income* and *time*. To allow a great availability of income in a context of individual bargaining leads to a great contractual power because less dependent from the blackmail of need and therefore more possibilities to better its own work conditions (first of all, labour time).

The matter is therefore inverted. It is not basic income to favour the process of individualisation of the social relationships and production, on the contrary, it is the opposite one. The possibility to have an income out of working activity and therefore unhooked by the "blackmail of earnings" could, at least potentially, favour the development of forms of resistance and of antagonist struggle: hence, basic income as possible element of social recomposition of the different subjectivity, today scattered and unable to translate in struggle and social conflict their own frustrations and working alienations.

Finally, basic income can assume different forms. In fact, it can exclusively be disbursed in monetary way, if this doesn't implicate the elimination of social primary services (house, health, education, transport, energy, etc.), or, partly, under form of additional real services (excluding those primary), that allow to increase life standard. The possibility of choice would be desirable so that basic income could be more consistent to individual needs.

To practical level, the fundamental objection concerns the forms of financing of a process of social redistribution of the income that is complementary to the maintenance of the principle of the "welfare State" This aspect will be analysed in Proposition 9.

Proposition 9: Basic income creates the premises for its same financing

The present postfordist social organisation, or flexible accumulation, is based from one side on a tecno-working paradigm that privileges the individualisation of the working relationships, the diffusion of immaterial production as more and more essential component of surplus thanks to strong earnings of social productivity, from the other an increasing levels of uncertainty with very short and mutable temporal horizons as well as of tools of exploitation. In other words, we assist to increasing life precarity and, at the same time, to processes of concentration and homogeneity inside macro-areas multinational strategic, thanks to the new financial tools and the development of the international market of capitals.

In a similar context, the possibility to activate national economic policies is very reduced, above all of the fiscal type (since that monetary policies are expropriated out of the single central banks and more and more subordinated to international agreements - as that of Maastricht - or to international organisms that engrave on the financial markets). This doesn't remove the fact that the request to harmonise different fiscal policies inside the European Monetary Union can be particularly useful for the discussion of redistributive policies.

It can be easily accounted that, more or less, the monetary sum which is needed to guarantee a universal basic income is about one fifth of national GNP. Besides, this sum is greater, lower are the existing income subsidies, unemployment benefits and so on. For instance, in Italy, a universal basic income will cost yearly about 26,3% of the total GNP, because of the larger population density and of the non existence of income subsidies and unemployment benefits. In France, where already exist a policy supporting low incomes (R.M.I.), the cost is lower than 15% of GNP.

In any case, managing a similar sum in terms of public budget (beyond the administrative level that will have to directly manage her/it) implies an afterthought of the whole European fiscal policy and contemporarily the necessity to develop new tools for the control of financial flows that freely pass every day on our heads.

To treat a similar matter would require a special analysis. Here we confine to announce the principal fiscal lines, distinguishing among those that are relevant at national level and those that require instead a coordination to european level.

As far as country-wide context is concerned, the principal points can be the followings:

1. taxation of all incomes independently on the asset (work, enterprise, capital) through a strongly progressive imposition but with lower rates than those actual;
2. rates reduction on asset coming from productive activity (work and enterprise) and introduction of a property tax: reform of the social contributions, proceeding to the elimination of the exemption of the social burdens in exchange for a reduction of the payments of social contribution

(superfluous thank to the introduction of basic income) and comparison between salaried work and etero-managed work (with obligation of share by the employees):

3. to favour the prevalence of the direct imposition on that indirect;
4. simplification of the fiscal system and cross controls as it regards the consumption services so that to minimize tax evasion.

As far as the international and European context is concerned, there is instead an increasing mobility of financial capital flows and of the entrepreneurial activity with respect to a real estate ownership by definition characterised from "scarce mobility" and to a work which for political reasons of repression and public order is still a little mobile. It is not a case that fiscal policy all over the Europe is based on the taxation of these two assets, especially during the years Eighties. As far as international movement of the capitals (above all assembled today in the Anglo-Saxon and European markets) is concerned, it becomes more and more imperative to introduce a kind of " Tobin-tax " on the speculative-type financial transactions, both national and international²⁴. With reference, instead, to the process of productive delocalisation through outsourcing and downsizing strategies, a fiscal intervention has been recently proposed on "*abroad direct investments*" (*Ide*).²⁵ Such tool consists in the introduction of a tax rate on the flows of capital effectively invested in the foreign branches. In such way it could be submitted to control and monitored not only the purely speculative flows but those investments that exploit existing processes of social dumping in many countries. Such interventions need to involve as minimum the greatest part of the European countries, with the goal to control the possible competition founded on the run towards more and more low costs of production and to allow an improvement of the social conditions in the emergent countries.

* * * *

On the side of expenditures, it is necessary to proceed to a simplification of the public budget: maintenance and widening of the social expenditures, reduction of the military expenses and defense and of public order (the only voice in strong growth in the last years), elimination of the supports and economic facility to the enterprises. It is necessary to keep in mind that a serious politics of reduction of the unemployment (through reduction of labour table) and a politics of demand (basic income), although instruments of radical reformism, have a double effect on the public budget: reduction of the

²⁴ The Tobin-tax would consist in the introduction of a very low tax-rate, 2 - 3%, on the financial flows destined to the speculation, that transit in the hands of financial society, holdingd, banks, etc.. In other words, it deals with a light taxation on the financial exchanges, therefore a kind of indirect imposition type. It is evident that this measure must be taken also to community level and with reference to the Anglo-Saxon markets. And it is just to this direction that for instance self-organised associations and groups are being moved in Europe, above all in France (for instance, AC! (Action contre the chomages!)) beginning from the last march European on Bruxelles and Koln. For a deeper analysis on the matters of the Tobin Tax, see: M.ul Haq, I.Kaul, I.Grunberg (edited by): *The Tobin Tax. Coping with financial volatility*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996. Beginning from 1997, it is active in France an association ATTAC, that has as goal the taxation of the speculative financial incomes through the introduction of the Tobin Tax. For information, see Internet: [www/attac.org](http://www.attac.org).

²⁵ As far as IDE taxation is concerned, see: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1997.

unemployment costs, and therefore reduction of the public sector costs (the only costs that employers are been careful not to quote) from one side and increase of the fiscal receipts as effect of demand growth, from the other (an increase of a point percentage of demands, means a 1,3% increase of the GNP – *coeteris paribus*).

From an other point of view, it is important to discuss the problem of the redistribution of productivity gains, induced by technological transformations which are today exclusive prerogative of profit and rent and not of work. It is necessary to consider that the rates of growth of the productivity are today greater than the statistics doesn't say. In fact, the official statistics necessarily measure the earnings of productivity in material terms (number of pieces, worked hours, etc.) without holding account that to such productivity it is necessary to add another productivity - immaterial - induced by the intellectual activity applied to the production. It is such "other" productivity which constitutes a remarkable share of the added value. And it is such added value that has to constitute the taxable basis from which to take away the financing of basic income.

Besides, it is remarkable to remember that in a context of increased uncertainty and economic and financial instability the existence of a basic income guarantees more stability from the demand side, by favouring a continuity in the activity of private consumption, by allowing in such a way a planning to longer term of entrepreneurial investment activity and, in last analyses, an increase of the fiscal entries.

Proposition 10: Basic income is tool of cultural counterpower.

The battle for basic income is at the same time a political battle for riappropriation of their own needs and a cultural battle for the riappropriation of the use of knowledge.

The process of knowledge formation on the cultural plan and of the self-consciousness is something different from the processes of formation of the technical competence and the professional formation. Both are dependent from the existing economic hierarchies (as Marx wrote, "dominant culture is the culture of the dominant classes"), but different their relative weight according to the existing economic paradigm.

In the fordist model, the separation between design phase and manufacturing phase was poured in the hierarchical separation among intellectual activity (endowed with specific knowledge and competence) and manual activity. Knowledge and formation were synonymous, not only because elements that determined the same cultural level but above all because to exclusive prerogative of few *elite* inside the

crucial phases of control of the productive and formative command (factory, school and university). In the Sixties the social conflict was also manifested as *right to knowledge* (tool of knowledge and conscience) and right to access the education system.

In the postfordist paradigm of flexible accumulation, the relationship is structurally modified between phase of the planning and phase of the execution, involving, consequently, a redefinition of the manual and of intellectual activity.

As far as manual job is concerned, one of the effects of the flexible "automation" (*lean production*) was to break the manual repetition of the working action, typical of the traditional assembly line. The possibility to communicate (with the language of the computer science) among different operative machines allows to be able to develop almost simultaneity differing operations, which once were sequential: particularly, to the assembly activity, today often prerogative of the robot (with notable reduction of the physical work), other operations are added, like control-quality, computerised adjustment of the robot to the piece on line, that may constantly varies, and so on, in a process of continuous redesign of the output.

The mix of manual activity, of control and of design necessarily involves the detention of specific skills, or rather of knowledge related to the used technology. It becomes a process of specialised, permanent and continuous training. more essential faster is the technological change. The enslavement to the machine not only passes today through the arms but also through the brain. In this context, the development of professional training does not need an autonomous cultural preparation. The individual knowledge is separated more and more from the necessity to endow specific skills.

As far as intellectual work is concerned, the impact of the computer technologies has been even stronger. The principal distinction among manual activity, subject to a physical effort or to a repetition in work, and intellectual activity, based on brain and on – by definition – individual evaluations, was based on the impossibility to measure and to valorize in terms of unity of product e/o of time (work productivity) the latter, since the result of the working activity depended on the degree of education, on the cultural level and on individual experience. Today, the introduction of linguistic technologies allows to be able to check in numerical terms the intellectual performance. If once an intellectual activity was appraised after the end of the performance, the codification of languages and of their formulation from one side, and the standardisation of the processes of immaterial production in pre-arranged and routinised procedures, from the other, allow the measurement of the intellectual activity step by step, at every moment. Today the activity of writing and design, for instance, is paid more and more on the base of the number of the produced characters and not of the qualitative level or following standard procedures of presentation of the results to regular intervals that allow the measurement of it in term of unity of time. The standardisation of the communicative procedures through the use of computer systems has so behaved in the most recent years a kind of taylorisation of the intellectual performance. Obviously, this cannot be extended to all the intellectual activities: it is mostly present whereas the degree of competence and knowledge is more spread and codifiable, or where the degree of

relative specialisation of knowledge is small. Generally, nevertheless, it is assisted to a substantial emptying of the intellectual activity for its mechanisation. Also for intellectual work, therefore, "culture" counts less and less to advantage of the necessity of specific formation.

Independently from the working performance (if manual, material, intellectual or immaterial), the necessity of the professional formation, better if it continues and permanent, becomes more and more essential as condition to enter the job market or to have new job opportunities. But more and more it is treated of a professional formation enslaved to the necessities of the production, which implies a more and more elevated cultural subordination²⁶. And this doesn't have to marvel. If also the " brain " is put to work, and it is instrumental to the mechanisms of production and it is often the mean of production for skilled, is necessary that it is most influenced possible: in other words, endowed with specific competence but not of self-consciousness and cultural autonomy.

From this point of view, basic income, favouring the liberation from the job and decreasing the degree of blackmailness from the need, it is also tool of cultural counterpower.

²⁶ For an analysis and a deepening on the relationship between culture and formation, see the essay of R. Alquati, *Culture, formation and search. Industrialization of immaterial production*, Alternative Velleity, Turin, 1994.