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## **Occupy Life! Precarity and Basic Income**

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Basic income means the ending of fear and humiliation, which is now a daily part of precarious life. Basic income means space for the individual autonomy. Basic income is a new deal of wealth: as such it gives new opportunities to refuse McJobs and McEmployers. For the precariat the basic income is a new common institution, common currency.

These are the claims that precariat movement and activists dealing with precarity have been advancing in recent years. In this short polemical article we want to critically continue the general analysis concerning the relationship between precarious condition of life in western, post-industrial societies and the possibility of the political struggle that we call as the basic income.

Our aim is to understand and describe the contemporary precarious conditions of workers in the intersection of changing labour markets, economical crisis and unsuccessful neoliberal policies and politics. As such this text addresses several political themes and emphasises the necessary political or even antagonistic stand deriving from the issues of precarity to debates concerning the possibility of basic income.

### **The Background of Precarity**

European unemployment has been on alarming level ever since the 1980s. In the end of the crisis year 2011 even 9,9% of European labor force, meaning approximately 23 million people, was unemployed. At the moment the number is even higher, rising up to total amount of 25.1 million unemployed in EU-27. When also hidden unemployment rates are taken into consideration the total sum is considerably higher. Every fifth of the people under 25 of age are without a job - in some areas nearly every second. There are also approximately from 5 to 10 million paperless immigrants in Europe forming a massive

precarious reserve of hidden labor force for labor markets.<sup>1</sup>

This mass of people living outside of the wage labor typical to industrial societies and Fordism is historically high.<sup>2</sup> Considerably high amount of work is done in the unofficial and 'untypical' contracts and arrangements. At the same time the financial gap between the rich and poor has grown enormously.<sup>3</sup> The society and welfare based on the traditional model of wage labor is in the crisis.

Neoliberal answer to the crisis has been to 'activate' the unemployed people and to cut public spending. The activation has meant pushing the people to accept more 'flexibly' any kinds of jobs despite of their education or to educate themselves for the new labor markets.<sup>4</sup> Any job with any conditions is better than no job at all, it is claimed.

People are also pushed to become private entrepreneurs, and there is a constant pressure to nullify the labor conditions and agreements. New contracting procedures are detached from the old tripartite form of the state, unions and employers. However, it is difficult to imagine how multiplying the supply of labor force would create real demand of work. Different tricks played with taxes (such as VAT, value added tax) create demand for a short period, but once there is no tax concession, there are bankrupts and even more unemployed people.

Thus, the problem is structural and the crisis tells about the end of the society based on the traditional model of industrial wage labor. It is about the coming of postindustrial society and the restructuring of labor markets for the new immaterial production. Politically the objective was aligned in 2000 in Lisbon strategy that declared Europe to become the world's leading 'knowledge intensive' economy. Hopes for the new growth were put on the development of knowledge and service sectors. However, this does not mean that wage labor, the current pillar of capitalism would vanish suddenly. Instead, it means that the political activity (namely social democracy and leftist party politics) organized around the wage labour is in crisis and thus unable to secure the growth in the sector of wage labour

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<sup>1</sup> See Eurostat statistics for unemployment rates in EU URL: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics). See also OECD statistics for the development of youth unemployment in Europe. URL: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/youth-unemployment-rate\\_20752342-table2](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/youth-unemployment-rate_20752342-table2). The amount if paperless or "illegal" immigrants is unclear, but the scale of the "problem" can be understood by reading the web sites of the main EU project that controls and acts against illegal immigration, Frontex. URL: <http://www.frontex.europa.eu/>

<sup>2</sup> It is good to note, however, that Fordism was in the longer historical perspective an exception in the social and political organization of capitalism, as Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter point out in their article "Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception" published in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 25 (7-8). pp. 51-71. Sage, London 2008.

<sup>3</sup> The economical and social differences between the most poor and most rich have been enlarging, for example, in Finland ever since the strong economical depression of 1990s. This is an outcome of changing social policy connected to right-wing political agenda that aims to reduce the taxation of the wealthiest. See Finnish statistics in Tilastokeskus. URL: [http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2011/art\\_2011-03-07\\_001.html](http://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2011/art_2011-03-07_001.html)

<sup>4</sup> For example in Finland the trade unions have agreed with the state to grade the earnings-related unemployment benefits in accord to that how willing a person is to participate in 'activation procedures'. Thus, not all are given by the same measure (on the basis of citizenship), but all are measured by the same imperative to be eager to show good will in front of the unemployment officials. Labor force is modified to become more flexible and receptive - hence also more submissive and cheap. The key word here is 'participation'. If you do not participate, you do not belong to the sphere of equal citizens.

and at the same time, to secure the well-being of labourers.<sup>5</sup>

Today the new working opportunities are really opening in knowledge sector and services at the same time as the industrial production is relocated globally to the areas of cheap labour. If still in the 1990s the vision of the end of industrial society felt like the hippies' utopia, today everybody is talking about immaterial production, high technologies and green growth. Meanwhile the old working class and its culture centered on the industrial labor has went to the crisis. As a matter of fact, emerging generations do not seem to attach to the wage labour or national economy in the similar way as the older generations used to do.

If for the older generations it is difficult to meet the new requirements of the new labor markets, the situation for the youth is not better while the youth unemployment is rising and the new labour model is temporary and flexible with relatively low salaries. In many cases this also means a demand for self-employment as a sort of 'entreprenuer', as the phenomenon is labelled (Pongratz & Voß 2003). What is expected from the labor power today is most of all high education, cultural and social skills, and adjustment to projects and temporary working conditions. Hence, the becoming model of work is *precarious*, meaning the uncertainty concerning the labour contracts combined to high-skilled capability to do several different kinds of works.

We call the new labor force *the precariat*<sup>6</sup>. Being precarious means low and insecure income without the full protection of unions and welfare institutions - many times also feeling their solutions as alien to one's needs and will. The precariat is about McJobs and unemployment, but it is also about the new demand of labour markets to be capable of organizing your labor power in a self-employed manner.

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<sup>5</sup> For the debates concerning the crisis of the leftists parties and social democracy in Finland, see for example Kuusela & Rönkkö (eds.): *Puolueiden kriisi*. [The Party Crisis]. Into, Helsinki 2008 and General Intellect: *Vasemmisto etsii työtä* [The Left in the Search for Labour]. Tutkijaliitto, Helsinki 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Coming from the struggles of social movements the concept of the precariat has lately drawn attention also in the academic circles (see e.g. Standing 2011) and it is used side by side with more traditional marxian concepts like 'working class' or 'proletariat' (see e.g. Harvey 2012). The concept of the precariat comes originally from the latin word *precarius* meaning the 'uncertain', 'threatened', 'dangerous' and 'being under the mercy of somebody'. In the contemporary context the precarity is used to refer to various kinds of untypical work from temp and hired workers to self-employed entrepreneurs and paperless immigrants. The concept also refers to the threatened situation of established working contracts and conditions causing precariousness in the traditional wage workers and working class as well. What is striking in the concept is that its contemporary popularity and political use is a direct influence of the new autonomous struggles and political theorists coming from alter-globalization movements and protests like EuroMayDay. In Finland the issue of precarity has been discussed widely in many political and academic publications since the beginning of 21st century. For the history of the sociological concept of precarity see for example Maryse Bresson: *Sociologie de la précarité*. Armand Colin, Paris, 2007 and Patric Cicolani: *La Précarité*. PUF. Paris, 2005. For the recent research concerning the precarity see for example: Michel Boutanquoi: *Interventions sociales auprès des familles en situation de précarité*. L'Harmattan, Paris, 2011, Sebastien Chauvin: *Les agences de précarité; Journaliens à Chicago*. Seuil, Paris 2010, Thornley, Jeffreys & Appay: *Globalization and Precarious Forms of Production and Employment: Challenges for Workers and Unions*. Edward Elgar Publishing. Massachusetts, 2010. For the Finnish research and debate see Jakonen, Peltokoski & Virtanen (eds.): *Uuden työn sanakirja* (A Dictionary of New Work). Tutkijaliitto, 2006. Korhonen, Peltokoski & Saukkonen: *Paskaduuneista barrikadeille*. (From Shit Job to Barricades). Into Kustannus, Helsinki 2009. Koivulaakso, Dan, Kontula, Anna, Peltokoski, Jukka, Saukkonen Miika ja Toivanen Tero: *Radikaaleinta on arki*. [The Most Radical is the Everyday Life] Into Kustannus, Helsinki 2010. Jokinen, Könönen, Venäläinen & Vähämäki (eds.): *Yrittäkää edes! Prekarisaatio Pohjois-Karjalassa* (Please Try at Least! Precarization in Northern-Carelia.) Tutkijaliitto, Helsinki 2011.

This is the Janus-faced condition of contemporary situation. It is different thing to be commanded than to be commanded to command yourself, as As Paolo Virno (2004) has written. There is a certain autonomy demanded from the new labor force from the uneducated service class to the higher educated information workers. This demand is a misery under the constraint of profit making, but a chance from the point of view of the new autonomous struggles. The precariat can also be called a new *dangerous class*, as Guy Standing (2011) has called it.

## **The Plurality of Precarious Work**

On the one hand the formation of the precariat is based on the massive unemployment, but on the other it is an expression of a new immaterial production in which the model of knowledge work and service work is displacing the old model of industrial wage work. The precariat moves in between the temp work and different forms of labor hiring, self-employment and private entrepreneurship. The precarity means fragmented careers and *lifelong education*, but it is also the basis for the new worker subjectivity not interested in the lifelong 'jail sentences' of the past.

While the precarious workers are becoming more and more flexible, the mission of the welfare state is also changing. Its aim is no longer to function as a guarantee against unemployment and to enhance the collective possibilities, but to conserve and 'activate' the unemployed people who are now understood as personally responsible for their situation. In short, the precarity of the work increases the demand of activating procedures and governance of the labour force - otherwise unemployment threat to become permanent in certain areas. For the *Curriculum Vitae* generation there is a constant pressure to form an unbroken working history with no black holes causing questions of motivation to work. Call centers, restaurants, cleaning companies, super market chains and job hiring agencies use as a rule young and unorganized labor force for whom, on their part, there is no social meaning for work, only a chance to get some money to consume and a note to CV. The old rhetoric of labour movement about the value and honor of wage labor is any longer nothing but pathetic muttering.

The same logic has spread to nearly all companies, as well as to governmental and municipal organizations including educational sector, especially universities. There is nothing unusual if over 40 years old doctor and professional knowledge worker is offered temp work for the month or two. New salary systems introduced by welfare states and designed by neoliberal doctrines make it possible to pay low wages and chain work in short projects in all public sectors.<sup>7</sup> Miserable wages and working conditions are approved in the name of 'vocation' and 'ethos' even if all the more the educated people too are concerned of their work only instrumentally and indifferently.

The precarity is often referred to as 'temp work', but it has to be emphasized that the concept also includes part time jobs, students living in poverty, unemployment and various kinds of entrepreneurial and self-employed working conditions. There are also differences between the temp workers. The others make succeeding careers in the fractals of the new economy; others such as the just-in-time-reserve of the job hiring companies, always

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<sup>7</sup> In Finland for example, a nurse working at the public sector had over 100 chained periods of temp work in the period of six years. This case was found to be illegal, since the official amount of chained working relations with same employer should not be more than two. See the report my TEHY (Nurses Unions): URL: [http://www.tehy.fi/viestinta/tiedotteet/tiedotteet\\_2005/?x1576359=1576414](http://www.tehy.fi/viestinta/tiedotteet/tiedotteet_2005/?x1576359=1576414)

ready to work, always ready to be kicked off, are pariah of all the labor force. There are also migrant workers, paperless immigrants and victims of human trafficking. The categories are partly overlapping, but it is clear that the precariat means the multitude of work and work force, not only temp workers. For example in Finland nearly one million of people can be counted as belonging to untypical work force. That is third of all Finnish labor power! (Koivulaakso et al. 2010).

At the same time it has to be emphasized that temp work and permanent work do not form such an exclusive categories as it is some times presented. At least in Finland the protection against unilateral redundancy is relatively weak if compared to European giants like Germany and France. To employ is expensive, to kick out is cheap. Hence, what we are witnessing is the permanent state of emergency in the working places caused by so called 'joint action negotiations'. In every firm everybody, with the permanent position even, has to be prepared to the possibility of change in the situation and future options. In the end no one's contract is protected from the 'economical or productive reasons'.

Thus, if the traditional working class was constructed in the factories and on the basis of uniformity, the precariat comes from the turbulent chains of the networked economy in the era of globalized capital and the growing informational and service economy.<sup>8</sup> Even if capitalism has always been a global system particularly, especially nowadays the information technologies has made it possible to organize production lines and capital transfers on a directly global scale, as network organizations (Castells 1996). The capital has left the national confines, and all the more the work is done as outsourced. Contractors hire subcontractors, production houses freelancers. Small and middle size companies form a vital but turbulent network economy that works partly as an autonomous sphere of production and partly as a subcontractor dependent on the decisions of the parent companies.

In general, in the society of the precarity the political question is not about the form of the work or "permanent" contract, but the uncertainty of the income. The political tensions are formed in a society of the *working poor* in which unemployment is turned to a problem of self-employment.

### **The Society of 'Workability'**

Although the amount of temporary contracts has not increased significantly after the 1990s and although it is true that temporary work did also exist in the 'golden ages' of Fordism (1970s and 1980s) the contemporary situation is profoundly different if compared to past decades. There are mainly two reasons for this. First, as said, we are not talking about the temp work only. There has happened a multiplication of the forms of precarious work. Secondly, it was a totally different thing to be a temp worker in a society with nearly full employment, strong public services and high level social security benefits. The temp workers of those ages circulated from job to job. Nowadays they circulate like 'human yo-yos' from job to unemployment and back.

Hence, along with the precariat, we can speak of *the precarisation of society*. By this we simply mean that the life in the precarious societies is more and more risky in various economical ways reaching intimately the level of everyday life as well as the working

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<sup>8</sup> For the discussions concerning the multitude of global work and networked labour force, see e.g. Hardt & Negri 2000.

places. It is easy to understand the labour market side of the precarisation, but it is also important to emphasize the system of so-called *social wage* and its rupturing in the welfare societies. With the concept of social wage we mean the whole constellation of publicly founded, free or very cheap services, such as health-care, education and day care as well as the public infrastructure from sport facilities, roads and libraries to free public spaces, etc. In contemporary post-welfare societies the amount of social wage is diminishing, and there are even some ideas of capitalizing the public infrastructure, such as roads.<sup>9</sup>

As the capability to pay for the services and using the infrastructure becomes more and more privatized, life becomes also more and more dependent over the earnings, savings and finance. In short, everyday life is becoming deeply capitalized. The life is becoming risky and expensive and the demand to take loan for everyday expenses is ever increasing.

During the beginning of the 21st century the debt-equity ratio of the Finnish and European households has risen rapidly, like IMF has pointed out (IMF 2012). People's future is expropriated and people are forced to finance their everyday life in any possible way. Typical example is a mortgage, which takes several decades to pay back by average middle and working class households. At the same time rental housing is dismissed by the city planning favoring private investors and developers.

It is not a secret that the crisis of 2008 started from a housing bubble. Yet the problem was not only a careless finance given to the 'subprime' households with low and insecure income, but the complete lack of proper and reasonably priced rental houses, as well as the slow development of the lower wages themselves. For example, in Finland the income of the lowest decimal rose only about 13 % during the years 1995-2008, while the income of the highest decimal rose about 70%. During the same period the wage level rose 39%, while the property income rose 295% and dividends even 425%. On the other hand, the amount of the poor people has doubled at the same time being nowadays from 700 000 to 900 000 people depending on the statistics. The whole Finnish population is about 5,4 million people. (Koivulaakso, et. al. 2010.)

The European economic crisis is not so much about the public spending, as presented by the populist politicians, but the structural problems of the *Eurozone* and the private indebtedness and insecurity caused by the politics purposefully growing the distribution of income in the favour of capitalist class. And more is coming as the crisis seems to have become permanent. Even in the right-wing parties only a minority of politicians deny that the liberal capitalism has failed. We are most probably entering the paradigm shift, but not to the direction that would be socially more desirable. Quite the contrary, the outcome seems to be more *authoritarian capitalism* (see Žižek 2011) forcing people to produce more and in a more harsh ways at the same time as their democratic rights are repressed in the name of active social policy, public order, and national competitiveness. The paradox of the liberal economy has shown to be that the liberal system needs strong discipline and control to make out in a global markets.

Thus, the story of the 21st century will be the story of the transition from *welfare* to *workfare*, from the welfare society to the society of intensive work, i.e., to the society

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<sup>9</sup> See for example British discussion about the privatization of roads. URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/mar/19/david-cameron-privatisation-roads>

of 'work capability' or 'workability' in which the right to enjoy social rights is tied intimately to the measurement of one's capability and willingness to work productively and to 'participate'. It is perhaps needless to say that in workfare society the European principle of universality becomes disintegrated. In these conditions it seems that the whole life of an individual becomes tied to a process of production and capitalist accumulation.<sup>10</sup>

### **Precarians of the World...**

The challenge of the precariat is directed not only towards the right-wing hegemony or the prevailing order of wage work. Instead, it proposes new questions concerning the dilemmas and paradoxes of the new working life. It also means opening for the new possibilities the precarisation of the work and everyday life offers. The precariat invests in the new modes of life in the contemporary societies and the increase in the autonomy of a working subject. Thus, the precariat does not blindly follow any given political ideology, but instead criticizes all the political and economical 'solutions' that only reproduce the old political forms.

The concept of the precarity is created not only to describe or explain the social reality, but to mobilize people to change the situation. The concept is political, it is the concept of the social movements and the concept in the movement. It aims to recognize the structural violence and oppression embedded in unsatisfying social conditions, but it also aims to search for the possibilities of resistance and radical action within the conditions, to get out of them.<sup>11</sup>

The position here equals to Marx's investigations on the working class. Marx identified the possibility and potentiality of the revolution particularly in the industrial workers although the amount of those was at the time relatively small if compared to the amount of people working in rural production and in general outside of the wage labor. This potential political subject of 19th century, industrial working class, was for Marx a group of people who situated to the focal point of the developing capitalism and formed a tendency of the hegemonic class of workers.

What Marx recognized was *the potentiality* for the collective organization in this rather marginal group and stated that it was possible to further this organization by pushing forward the demands that workers were already struggling for in their own battles concerning their everyday life and work, such as eight hour working day, reasonable wages, social security and free education. The political research was anticipating the political organization of 'the proletariat' by enabling the workers to understand conceptually and politically their social struggle.

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<sup>10</sup> On the biopolitical dimensions of precarity, see Morini & Fumagalli: *Life Put to Work: Towards a Life Theory of Value* in *Ephemera* URL: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/10---3/10---3morinifumagalli.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Concerning this, see the various texts and websites dealing with political struggle over the precarity. See for example Yann Moulier Boutang and Anne Querrien: *La Lutte contre précarité: un mouvement de fond* in *Multitudes* URL: [http://multitudes.samizdat.net/spip.php?page=imprimer&id\\_article=2514](http://multitudes.samizdat.net/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=2514), Precarias a la Deriva such as *A Very Careful Strike – Four Hypotheses* in URL: <http://zinelibrary.info/files/A%20Very%20Careful%20Strike.pdf>, *Euromayday* process. URL: <http://www.euromayday.org/about.php>, Portuguese manifest against precarity In their *Manifeste de la Génération Précaire Portugaise* URL: <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Manifeste---de---la---Generation>

During the times the industrial work really grasped the key role in the economical and social production in such far extent that even the agricultural work became industrialized. Industrial proletariat with its trade unions and parties reached an economical, social and political position, even a hegemony, which gave a possibility to challenge radically the bourgeoisie. Social institutions, such as health care, public schools and social wage, were established to answer to the needs of the working class and industrial production. The whole society was organised on the basis of the factory model, as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (2000) have emphasised.

Today the outlook of the economy is rather different. Markets are filled with new immaterial products such as services, knowledge work and cultural products. Industrial production itself is becoming dependent on the information technologies and innovation policies. The refinement level of the industrial products is increased and they are connected with the new service models (for example in the case of mobile phone industry and software production).

New immaterial production is very different compared to traditional industrial production. Immaterial products are not produced to be stored to wait for the consumption. Instead they are sold best just in time, which requires great flexibility from the working process and also a capability to react to the individual demands and needs. Immaterial production requires the organization of labour, which emphasizes the flexible use of the workforce, networking, communication and subjectivity. The place of the traditional mass worker is taken by autonomous worker, whose working experience does not come from the assembly line and working in the factory from nine to five, but instead from the various projects and a 24/7 compulsion to keep up running for the new working opportunities and personal productivity. In *cognitive capitalism*, as Yann Moulier Boutang has called it, the production and control of knowledge becomes the main strategical issue for the accumulation and privatization of wealth (Boutang 2011).

However, manual work or other work typical for Fordist production does not vanish. Instead they become hierarchized in a new way. The top know-how elite, managers educated in the elite schools, are the winners of new work. 'Chain-workers' produced by mass schools instead feel the precarious life and work as a threat for the use and development of their own know-how and personal opportunities. Shit jobs and McJobs, on their part, are left for the new service class, which is strikingly populated by the dropouts, migrants and socially excluded whatever their educational background is. These different groups feel the precarisation in different ways, but they all feel same kind of contradictions that relate to the demands and controls of the new labor markets and working places. It also has to be emphasized that the dividing line does not locate between the cognitive and manual work, but also in knowledge and service sectors there are many work processes simplified and mechanized to be enabled the use of unskilled and cheap workforce. (Korhonen, Peltokoski & Saukkonen 2009; Newfield 2010.)

It is worthwhile to note that if precarious work is seen only as an impoverished version of the old wage labor, many crucial aspects and forms of the new work become unrecognized. This leads also to the problem concerning the difficulty to understand the new possibilities of the political organization in a proper way. It is important to understand that the forms of the precarious work are structuring and developing as an answer to the new working capacities and to the new *subjectivity* of the labor force. If we do not



recognize the new producing labor force, we leave it on the mercy of exploitation of private and public companies, without a possibility to build up new struggles, which would collaborate and echo the new needs and desires of the labor force. For this reason we should emphasize the process of becoming free from the chains of wage labor, even though this freedom gets awkward and even biased forms.

The hegemony of the new labour force has to be based on the models based on the material creativity of the precariat, on its cooperative and social powers producing in the displaced social networks and dispersed working places. It is important to underline the possibility of the precariat to produce *the common*<sup>12</sup> to overcome the separation and privatisation of the new labor force. However, the solidarity between fragmented precarious groups would need a uniting political struggle for some generally accepted objective. One of the most promising suggestion for this is the demand for *the basic income*. Common currency for the common subjectivity!

### **Occupy Life!**

The precariat, as a potentiality of autonomous organization of work and labor, is also a potentiality for the new forms of resistance. From the multitude of precarious work and the social condition of 'workability' there is awakening of the most competent political monster, which is dancing on the grave of wage work and singing farewell to the division between work and non-work.

New work capabilities are not categorized professional skills, but subjective knowledge and abilities that develop in the whole life time and are embedded in the new information technology environment. At least from the point of view of potentiality, the precariat does not become passive if there are no factories to work in town, since it can build up work and production from the basis of it's own life and capabilities. The real picture if of course not this optimistic, but the change in the course of the resistance is dramatic. However, without organized resistance the ability to produce 'everything from the nothing' – that is, from the constitution of common and commoning – threatens to become nakedly exploited by the corporate giants and big organizations.

The new cycle of movements that rose up within the struggles of Arab Spring, Spanish M15 and Occupy Wall Street has been criticized about the incapability to formulate clear alternatives and answers to global problems. However, what should be done instead is to blame mainstream politicians and political organizations about the incapability even to present the right questions. Especially the defending of welfare state is threatened to remain only as a bitter struggle against its end without any new ideas of how to create welfare and collective solidarity on the basis of contemporary situation. Welfare state, build on previous working class struggles, has become an empty slogan that is parroted while the welfare in these world's richest countries is collapsing.

The mistrust against the mainstream politics experienced among the youth reflects directly the incapability of the politicians to answer to the new social and environmental questions as well as to the new needs and wills of the precariat. New generations are more educated and able than any generation in the history, but the mainstream politics is locked to the

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<sup>12</sup> For the production of the common and commons see e.g. Hardt & Negri 2009; De Angelis 2007 and the special issue 'The Common and the Forms of the Commune' in Rethinking Marxism, Volume 22, Issue3 2010.

questions that were created in the post World War II situation.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising that the governments have to use such a huge amounts of money to 'activate' the citizens to vote since the daily political debates are really not corresponding to their lives - or are even threatening the their life as well as the whole life on earth like the contemporary financial, industrial and social policy does.

There is an urgent need to break out from the established political questions and behavioral models and to find means to build new struggles and autonomous production. It is about the time to start to reinforce independently those concrete alternative 'worlds' in which we already live and want to live. This new *organization of the precariat* has to express the ability of new labor power to create new welfare and wealth without the bosses and the structure of wage labor. Due to the environmental crisis, the collapse of social welfare and the precarisation of everyday life we simply do not have time to drag the old establishment with us. They are nothing but a burden!

Thus, the struggle for basic income is not about pragmatic social policy. It is instead an expression of the antagonism between *life* and *capital* in the society of workability. Hence the precariat's demand for the income high enough to decent life without the compulsion to wage work. The demand of basic income is an expression of organized precariat and its will to reclaim the life.

Today, less and less of the richness produced in everyday production, and thus by 'living labor' of the workers, is left circulating as a common wealth to our society. Instead, the accumulation of property and power in the hands of richest just keeps escalating (see e.g. Harvey 2005). Thus, in its most simplest sense the basic income could be seen as a 'new deal', where some lose and others get. However, basic income does not mean charity for the poor, but rather *the investment* to the new working abilities and technological possibilities to open space for the new modes of production based on the common. We need an 'injection of capital' that is taken from the money holders to the common use. Basic income would mean a real investment to the activity of the people, a reconstitution of social relations.

Common wealth, as understood here, is not a merit of an individual worker or even a collaboration of individuals as a collective, but a social process which in its most organic forms is seen in autonomous networks of immaterial production. There the production is based in different commons, in open sharing, communal caring and developing of knowledge, language, Internet, urban space and so on. Capitalism, on the contrary, tries to privatize and appropriate the conditions and results of this autonomy based on open interaction between people. Here the precariat stands on the side of a kind of 'hyper production' because every attempt to privatize and control the open production of the common only slows down and weakens the social productivity.

The basic income would give a possibility for a decent life in precarious societies. It would mean money for the autonomous activities and now so often paid social services. Paradoxically it can be seen as a 'real activation' of the unemployed, since the real way

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<sup>13</sup> For the burden that youth is carrying due to Euro crisis and possibility of the conflict between the younger and older generations see URL: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/commentary-why-the-euro-crisis-is-also-a-generational-conflict-a-849165.html>

to find work in present capitalism requires money: money to move and travel, money to read and educate, money to love, eat and live socially, money to have Internet and mobile phone. Poverty deactivates.

Basic income is a new form of labor struggle. It gives people a *subjective strike weapon* that makes possible to refuse the shit jobs on the precarious labor markets and strengthens the possibilities to control what kind of work one wants to do and when to quit if the work satisfies no more. Basic income is a common resource that opens space to develop an alternative future to the society that is under permanent crisis and ecological collapse. By realizing the basic income the employers would be forced to admit that the work done with shitty salaries and in miserable conditions does not interest anybody and is even harmful for the environmental and social 'ecologies', as Félix Guattari (2008) calls them.

Basic income is a new constitutive and common institution for Post-Fordist society. Unlike the welfare state, which produced people to serve capital, basic income liberates people to occupy back their own lives. The precariat demands basic income for selfish reasons for everyone. The precariat takes the basic income simply because *it can*.

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