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Izzy Koksall *Sussex Utopia*

At the Sussex occupation, a copy of *The Problem with Work* by Kathi Weeks lies on the floor. Some of the occupiers remark that they have not done any of their class work for the past six weeks, since they started occupying Bramber House. They don't seem worried about it. Instead they have been running an inspiring campaign alongside the 235 campus workers whose jobs the university's management are attempting to outsource. Living, cooking, meeting, talking, learning, plotting and taking action together, the occupiers' activities are meaningful, inspiring, and necessary; carried out willingly, collectively, and horizontally. No wonder they seem unconcerned at the weeks of missed class work - the very antithesis of what is happening here.

Their banners and posters declare 'the university is a factory - shut it down!'. They have been very effective: occupying and closing down all the cafes on campus to hit the university financially (as well as allowing the workers the day off), smashing in the doors of the management's building, bringing together both students and staff in Library Square to take over the campus, and withdrawing themselves from the assembly line of 'knowledge' production. Yellow squares and ribbons decorated the entire campus, banner drops hung from buildings and swung from tree branches - the university is more a playground than a

factory. When the police try to end our fun, we push them back off campus in order to defend our space.

The occupation and the wider campaign raise two key issues around work, which may seem contradictory but that can be resolved, albeit rather messily. The occupation and the shutting down of the university-factory is an act against our alienated work and existence, 'even if we didn't have the campaign, I'd still want to be in this space because it's a great social space' said one student. As Kathi Weeks' book on the floor of the occupation shows, in its rejection of work and its forms of organising, the Sussex occupation is anti-work in its nature. They are, however, also defending work in its current form in the face of worsening conditions through outsourcing. Cleaning and catering jobs are under threat - jobs which involve subordination and servitude, poverty pay, monotony, and the enforcement of a reduce identity - 'this is what you do, you are this'. Whilst this side of the campaign against outsourcing does not explicitly question the nature of work, it is somewhat radical to defend your conditions of work under a system which devalues everyone. The demand for staff and students to have control over their working conditions, and the formation of the "pop-up union," does, in fact, allow us to challenge and even move beyond work.

WORKFARE DYSTOPIA

"Work makes me..." - the cascade of possible endings to that sentence provided by a Google search makes for grim reading. Yet things are getting even grimmer. Sussex University's attempt to outsource jobs is one of numerous examples of the worsening conditions which people are increasingly forced to endure. At the same time, as work becomes even more unappealing, the attack on the unwaged intensifies, whether it be through rhetoric - the vilification of those who are unwaged and the supposedly redemptive qualities of work, or actual forced work itself. One Daily Mail journalist and the equally bigoted Salvation Army have both recently drawn from the chilling Nazi slogan 'Arbeit macht frei' (Labour makes you free.) The violence and the inescapable dominance of work, for the waged and unwaged, is becoming ever more explicit.

The rise of workfare, a new(ish) phenomenon that continues a long tradition of forced and unwaged work, for example women's unpaid housework and care work, vividly illustrates the horrors of how work is perceived and organised under capitalism.

A two day A4e workshop - 'finding and getting a job' - involved being spoken at by a man called Vince, wearing a metallic looking suit, who attempted to convince us all that we could get the jobs we wanted if only we believed that we could. The wider economic crisis and whether work was actually necessary in our lives was absolutely irrelevant. We should sell ourselves like iPods, write our CVs like we apparently would behave on a first date, "you don't tell them everything on a first date." It was taken as a given that we must all strive towards work, spending every moment working on getting work, fuelled by an unwavering belief in ourselves as desirable workers.

The Department for Work and Pensions' recent introduction of Universal Jobmatch re-enforces this relentless job searching. Through this mandatory scheme, claimants will soon be made to job search online for 35 hours a week. Searching for work is itself set to become a full time job, thereby robbing claimants of the precious time they need to survive the welfare system and get by on impoverishing benefits. Imagining claimants stuck at computers for 35 hours a week searching for jobs that are not there, you could be forgiven for thinking that this was the stuff of some dystopian novel. Perhaps they would build special factories with rows and rows of computers, claimants sitting at them trawling through the web day after day in order to receive their meagre benefits (if they are lucky enough not to have been sanctioned.) Sadly, this is not some futuristic nightmare, but reality. When recently accompanying a friend to Work Programme provider CDG's office, we arrived to find a dimly lit room full of computers with claimants sitting at them, looking for jobs that do not exist.

MARINALEDA: UTOPIA - DYSTOPIA

The suffocating dominance of work in our lives, whether we are waged or not, is not something that we can escape on the left, even the more radical left. In fact, it is becoming ever clearer that this is one of the places where we are going wrong. We are failing to interrogate how we organise, and how we spend our days and our lives. The TUC's rallying call for a 'Future That Works' saw them fail to even organise a demonstration that worked. How can they claim to be plotting out a strategy for all of our futures when their vision is still so firmly entrenched in a romanticised notion of 20th century Britain?

Focusing back on the present, Dan Hancox's brilliant book "Utopia and the Valley of Tears" finds him in the small Spanish town of Marinaleda as part of his search of real living alternatives to capitalism. Here, with their practically de-commodified housing and infamous parties, it certainly sounds like "full communism." However, there is still work, in fact, quite a preoccupation with work, and a gendered division of labour too. Young people are leaving the town because a life of farming does not appeal to them. An outsider remarks, horrified, that they are forced to work on Sunday (although the mayor claims that this is volunteering). People are fleeing utopia.

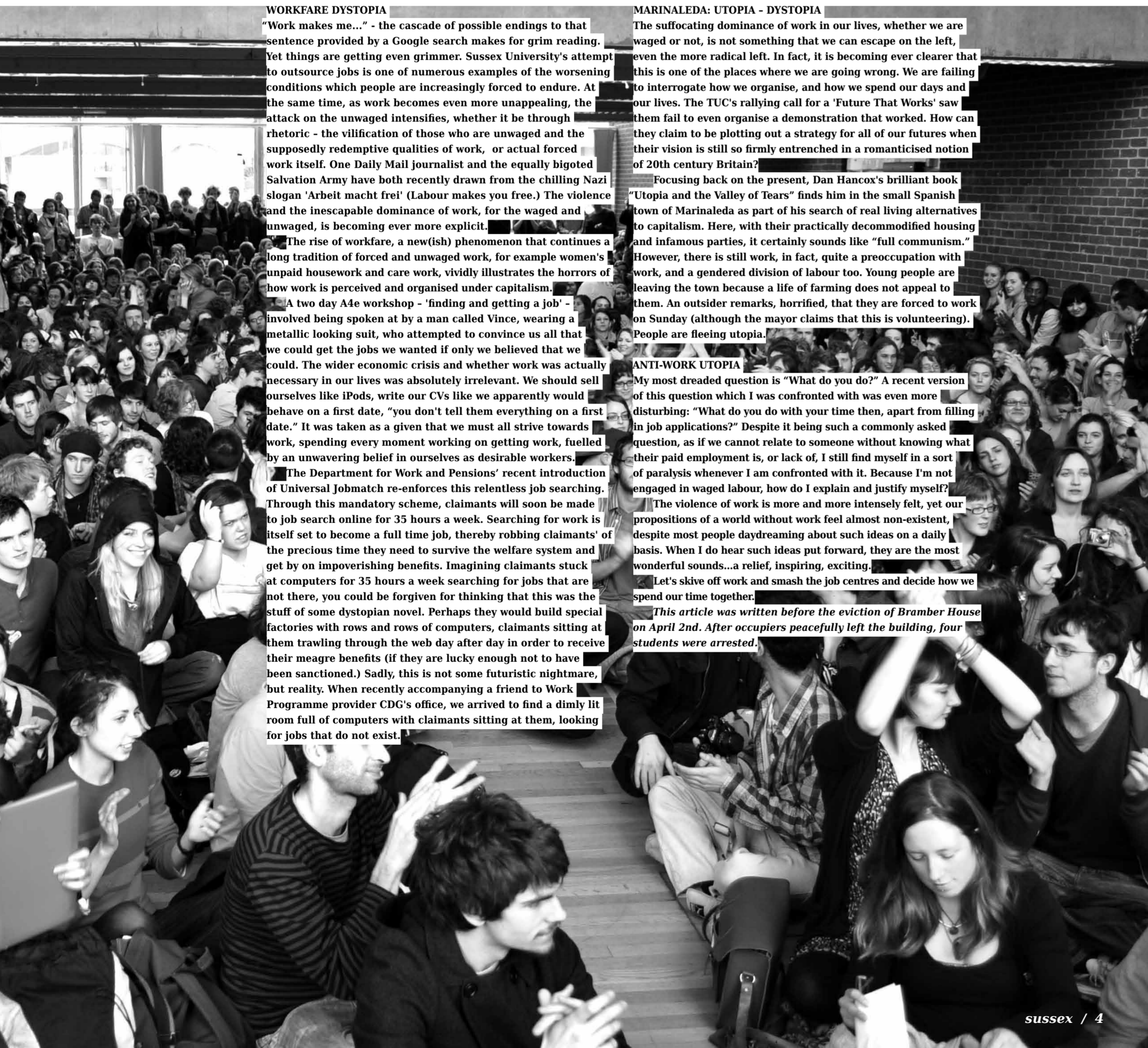
ANTI-WORK UTOPIA

My most dreaded question is "What do you do?" A recent version of this question which I was confronted with was even more disturbing: "What do you do with your time then, apart from filling in job applications?" Despite it being such a commonly asked question, as if we cannot relate to someone without knowing what their paid employment is, or lack of, I still find myself in a sort of paralysis whenever I am confronted with it. Because I'm not engaged in waged labour, how do I explain and justify myself?

The violence of work is more and more intensely felt, yet our propositions of a world without work feel almost non-existent, despite most people daydreaming about such ideas on a daily basis. When I do hear such ideas put forward, they are the most wonderful sounds...a relief, inspiring, exciting.

Let's skive off work and smash the job centres and decide how we spend our time together.

This article was written before the eviction of Bramber House on April 2nd. After occupiers peacefully left the building, four students were arrested.



EUROPE'S OTHER CRISIS

Daniel Trilling

At times, it seems as if the events of the last few years are following a well-worn script: a financial crash, followed by recession, which leads to the re-emergence of old hatreds. In certain crisis-hit countries (Greece, Hungary), the downturn appears to be leading directly to the return of fascism. Elsewhere (France, Holland, Britain, Sweden, Finland and beyond), other kinds of far-right parties command sizeable

votes at election time or have been able to push their agenda via the national media. Their rhetoric, emphasis, and underlying beliefs may differ, but certain key features are the same: they claim to be sticking up for a "native" population betrayed by the political elite; they want to drastically restrict the rights of immigrants; they want to reverse the supposed incursion of a "foreign" culture into the homeland.

Yet to see all this as a simple function of economic crisis obscures what has actually been happening in Europe since well before the 2008 crash. Below are four long-term trends that have enabled a more profound drift to the right. (For these categories, I am indebted to a speech by Kevin Ovenden at this year's Unite Against Fascism conference in London.)

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ITS COUSINS

It's not as if racism has ever disappeared, but under the guise of "criticism" of the religious and cultural practices of Muslims, it has found a new emphasis. This was already brewing before 9/11, but the War on Terror gave weight to the claim that "the West" was locked in a civilisational conflict with Islam. What marks islamophobia out as something new is the way in which its adherents use the norms of liberal democracy - free speech, LGBT rights, even at times a rhetorical commitment to "diversity" - as a stick with which to beat Muslims. Such ideas come from the mainstream (witness how the manifesto of the Norwegian far-right killer Anders Behring Breivik quoted liberally from the likes of the Daily Mail columnist Melanie Phillips), but various far-right groups have taken them to an extreme. Britain has seen the emergence and initial rapid rise of the English Defence League street movement, which others in Europe have attempted to imitate. Yet it would be a mistake to think "cultural" racism stops at Islam. Anti-Semitic incidents were up 30% in 2012, according to one recent study, while ethnic Roma are the target of profound discrimination in eastern and central Europe; and when they flee west they are accused of crime or benefit scrounging.



THE PERSISTENCE OF NATIONALISM

As the eurozone crisis makes clear, nationalism did not disappear with a wave of the EU magic wand. Whatever their underlying aims, far-right and right-wing populist parties have prospered by advocating some form of national preference. Some, like the UK Independence Party, make this an explicit attack on the EU itself; all see immigration and ethnic diversity as some kind of threat to national cohesion.

Paradoxically, it may well be the march of globalisation that has intensified such feelings: capital does not respect national borders; people are forced to move in order to find work; "native" populations are drawn to blame new arrivals for their own identity crises. It's not simply a question of competition over jobs or scarce resources: economic and cultural insecurities play off one another.

Against this background, political leaders have joined in an assault on "multiculturalism": The UK's David Cameron, Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Nicolas Sarkozy have all made major speeches in which they proclaimed the failure of this doctrine.

ANTI-IMMIGRANT POLICY

Together, the 27 states that make up the EU (soon to be 28, when Croatia joins in July) have the world's largest GDP. What's more, those EU countries that are NATO members fight wars which produce vast numbers of refugees. Europe, prosperous and peaceful in relation to large parts of the world, is and always has been a destination for migrants.

In the past two decades, amid various other anxieties about immigration, a powerful and poisonous stereotype has arisen: the "illegal" immigrant. As hostility to migrants has risen, openly encouraged by media outlets and far-right demagogues, panicking governments have reacted by introducing increasingly tougher controls, aiming for a co-ordinated borders policy nicknamed "Fortress Europe". Migrants find themselves trapped in a nightmare, whether in Greece, where the collapse of the asylum system has left thousands destitute and the target of neo-Nazi violence, or in Britain, where a restrictive and often brutal system of detention imprisons more migrants per year than any other country but Australia.

THE DEATH OF THE POLITICAL CENTRE

Governments of both centre-left and centre-right have bought into the neoliberal economic consensus - a move summed up by Margaret Thatcher as "there is no alternative". From the late 1970s onwards, we have seen disillusionment with conventional politics. The situation differs from country to country, but the hollowing-out of the mainstream leaves a void that far-right parties have been eager to exploit.

The austerity consensus that has seen governments from London to Lisbon enforce cuts with varying degrees of coercion, has further discredited political elites. In 2008, many predicted this would lead to a resurgence of the traditional left. So far, it hasn't. Instead, discontent has emerged in several other ways.

Most alarming, is that in certain cases it has enabled fascism to emerge from its hiding place and re-enter the political mainstream. Before now, fascists who wanted to win votes have had to clothe themselves in "respectable" language and imagery, hiding their innermost beliefs. With the success of Hungary's Jobbik and Greece's Golden Dawn, both openly neo-Nazi, that may no longer be the case.

Elsewhere, the "respectable" fascists (like France's Front Nationale) and other racist populists (like UKIP), have continued to prosper. They have been joined by newer formations like Beppe Grillo's "anti-politics" 5 Star Movement in Italy, which is not explicitly right-wing but remains ambiguous.

As for left-wing discontent, its expression has largely been in our streets and city squares. The methods of organisation, and the rejection of neoliberal dogma are an inspiration, but progress has been slow, fitful and fragmentary. It is crucial that these movements find a way to break through, but as much as we need economic alternatives, we also need to confront the racism and xenophobia prevalent across Europe, and to neutralise its political expression in the form of the far-right. If we don't, then the future risks being one of technocratic governments imposing yet more austerity, dismantling the freedoms of immigrants, minorities and political dissenters, with their rhetoric drifting further rightwards still as populists and fascists snap at their heels.



AFRICA'S HIDDEN CARE ECONOMY

Zo Randriamaro

WOMEN, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CARE IN AFRICA

The concept of social reproduction - that is, the process that makes it possible for individuals, families, and society itself to continue - provides the framework for this article, which is premised on the existence of a silent and hidden crisis that is affecting the invisible and undervalued realm of the care economy. A crucial dimension of the process of social reproduction, the care economy relies on the unpaid care work performed mainly by women in order to sustain families, households and societies on a daily and generational basis.

While care work is located in many different areas of the economy - ranging from the family to paid employment - and is performed on behalf of a wide range of care recipients, this article focuses on unpaid care work that is not classified as 'work' within the System of National Accounts (SNA.) This includes, but is not limited to, housework (collection of fuel and water, meal preparation, cleaning, etc.) and care of persons (children and/or the elderly, the sick and the disabled) carried out in homes and communities. Such work is a key component of social investment and is critical to well-being. It also fuels economic growth through the formation of human capital and reproduction of a labour force that is healthy, productive and possessing basic human capabilities. The monetary value of such work, according to UN researcher Debbie Budlender, would constitute between 10 and 39 per cent of a country's gross domestic product (GDP).

In this article, 'social reproduction' is defined as a multi-faceted concept that can pertain to a variety of subjects, including the labour force, the social fabric or capital. Of note is the social reproduction of primitive capitalist accumulation, which has taken the contemporary forms of land grabbing, and use of migrant labour by some transnational corporations to address the difficulties - resulting from the crisis of the social reproduction of the labor force - in the availability of a local labour force in the extractive sectors of mineral-rich countries like South Africa. In contrast to this type of social reproduction, very little thought and investment has been given by policy makers to addressing the crisis of the care economy, which mainly affects women.

This is the reason why the crisis of social reproduction on which I want to focus is the one that has affected African women for decades, and mirrors structural inequalities at both global and local levels. It is about the systemic crisis that started with the famines in the 1970s, and was later compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Kofi Annan described this crisis like so: 'A combination of famine and AIDS is threatening the backbone of Africa - the women who keep African societies going and whose work makes up the economic foundation of rural communities.'

It appears that one of the root causes of the neglect of this enduring crisis by the powers-that-be is that the primary subjects of the reproduction process are women, who are not paid for their work, although this work is directly productive of value. As Mariarosa Dalla Costa put it, 'since housework has largely been unwaged and the value of workers' activities is measured by their wage, then, women, of necessity, have been seen as marginal to the process of social production.'

A political economy approach is required for a sound analysis of the current crisis of social reproduction in all its dimensions, in order to identify its root causes and to provide adequate responses. There is a need to address the limitations of the current human rights paradigm in recognising and responding to the dual crises of social reproduction and care. In particular, a political economy approach allows us to understand the link between these crises and relations of power and domination at local and global levels. Such an analysis avoids both disconnecting the problem from its underlying causes and consequences, and obscuring the share of responsibilities and obligations between states and other actors.

In contrast to conventional economics, a political economy approach highlights the interlinkages between the economic, social and political realms. It specifically considers how power operates through the structured relations of production and reproduction that govern the distribution and use of resources and entitlements within households, communities and society. This approach allows us to debunk the myth of the unitary household model, and to make visible the hitherto hidden linkages at different levels with power relations that underpin the global economic order and macroeconomic policies, as well as intersections with issues of class, race and other variables. The political economy analysis points to three key elements that affect both the depth and prevalence of the crises of care and social reproduction.

First is the sexual division of labour within the public and private spheres, which is underpinned by gender norms and ideologies that hold women primarily responsible for unpaid care work, thus creating inequalities in bargaining power in the household between men and women. Caring professions in the public sphere and labour market that are similar to the 'feminine' unpaid care work are also undervalued, while the detachment of unpaid care work within the human rights movement from the broader struggle for social and economic equality has led to it being perceived as a "women's only" problem.

The second element is the current global macroeconomic environment. Neoliberal policies and the quest for cheap sources of labour and maximum profit have disrupted local economies and dramatically changed labour markets through deregulation, flexibilisation and casualisation of work. Women from developing societies have entered into waged employment on an unprecedented scale, whilst the neoliberal policy environment has led to their increased workload both in the market and at home, and to the feminisation of poverty - especially unskilled and marginalised poor women.

The third key element highlighted by the political economy approach to care is related to the gendered impacts of globalisation. This has often involved the privatisation of public services and infrastructure, thereby regressing women's rights and placing greater burden on their labour in the household, as well as the establishment of political and legal systems with limited participation by women.

Time use surveys conducted in Africa during the last decade provide a strong basis for quantifying unpaid care work, and for providing estimates of its overall magnitude and distribution between men and women. In spite of the recent progress in terms of data collection, the paucity of information about the care economy in Africa and other regions reflects the policy gap in relation to unpaid care work as well as the absence of a coherent theory of the relationship between the family, the market, and the state.

This is partly due to the fact that most economists and scholars have overlooked the two-way connection between the local and the global, which is based on the assumption that global economic processes shape the

structure and economic functions of households at a given time. They have specifically underlined the increased importance of households to processes of social reproduction in times of global economic crisis.

In line with the prevailing trend in developing countries, the results of surveys conducted in a range of African countries, from Guinea, South Africa, Benin, Madagascar, to Mauritius and Ghana, show that adult women and girls work longer hours overall than adult men and boys.

Women's central contribution to agricultural production, especially for subsistence consumption, accounts for a large part of this pattern in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia. Women spend substantially more minutes per day than men in agricultural production, yet it's women's domestic responsibilities that seem to hamper their ability to earn income.

Since 2003, researchers have called attention to a growing crisis of social reproduction, most severe among the poorest segments of populations in developing countries, due to the fiscal crisis of the state and cutbacks in public provisions of social services. The dual processes of privatisation of state functions and reprivatization of key institutions of social reproduction (education, health and social services) are part of these ongoing neoliberal reforms.

These reforms also involve a new framework for resource allocation of social and individual welfare shared between the state, the family, the market and the voluntary and informal sectors. In this new framework, social life is marketised via the commodification of spheres of society that were previously shielded, with citizens now becoming responsible for helping themselves.

This marketisation of citizenship has resulted in crises and transformations in social reproduction, and has led to heightened insecurity with worsening struggles for survival among the poorest. In addition to the neoliberal policies aimed at the free movement of capital, these circumstances have required a return to community-based survival strategies that rely primarily on women's initiatives and labour.

The internationalisation of reproductive work has been part of the transnational response to the crisis of care, whereby women from developing countries migrate to provide care services for families in wealthier countries. As a growing number of women and girls - predominantly from the rural areas - are pushed into domestic and care work by the pressing need to supplement family income in the context of the multiple global crises, the availability of their relatively cheap labour enables middle and upper class families, including those in rich countries of the North and Middle-East, to provide market solutions to their care problems.

These care and domestic service workers, who cannot afford to pay for care services in the market, rely on unpaid family members to care for their dependents left behind, leading to the formation of transnational families who have to solve their own care needs. In many instances, it is girls who are removed from school to care for younger children and do domestic chores, at the expense of long-term education and employment opportunities.

The dominant development policies have failed to acknowledge that gender roles are continually challenged by social and economic changes as well as by political and legal reforms, and that women's reproductive labour

capacity is not infinitely elastic. In particular, policy makers have failed to acknowledge the crisis of care in Africa due to the heightened demand for and burden of women's reproductive work resulting from the cumulative effects of hunger, HIV/AIDS, cutbacks in government expenditures, economic downturn/crises, and fiscal austerity measures, just to name a few.

Current trends in family structures and gender division of labour, whereby women continue to provide most of the unpaid care work, are exacerbating inequalities in well-being between women and men, as well as the impact of wealth and income inequalities between and among the different categories of women.

As caregiving is essential for human survival, the burden of care work has been shifted back onto families, with women and girls often acting as the ultimate safety net. There are, however, serious limits to how far burdens can be offloaded onto the unpaid care economy without damaging the social fabric. The housewives living in the urban areas of several African countries who participated in the 2008 food riots have called attention to such limits: indeed, they went in the streets not only to protest against higher food prices, but also to warn about the fact that they were tired and unable to withstand the drain on their capacity to act as stabilisers in the face of the impacts of the economic crisis on their households.

And yet, this is a crisis that continues to be ignored, and one which the world continues to dismiss, even as its magnitude requires a global response. The new conditions of reproductive work, along with the changes in family structures and in the global macroeconomic environment require urgent social mobilisation and policy actions to overcome the crisis of reproduction. The prerequisites for achieving this goal include: the recognition of the value of unpaid care work, its reduction, and more equitable redistribution between men and women as well as between states, communities and families; a rethinking of the sites of social reproduction, away from the privatised sphere of the family and towards a socialised care system; the conscious decision to refuse to have women and vulnerable social groups - including children, the elderly, immigrant workers - pay the price for social reproduction; and, the engagement with the development of an alternative economic paradigm that fully integrates unpaid care work and that can ensure adequate social reproduction.

Zo Randriamaro is a human rights and feminist activist from Madagascar, currently acting Executive Director of Fahamu Africa. This article was presented for the first United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) Monthly Seminar on 5 March 2013.

The full version of this essay was first published on the Pambazuka News blog.

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Federico Campagna

Sales Projections

I am a salesman, I sell things for a living. What I sell has no importance. Selling is always the same process, with only minor adjustments according to whether you sell cars or paintings, films or hams. What remains the same is the distinctive manner in which the consciousness of a salesperson tends to disembodiment itself out of the living flesh which hosts it, and to re-embody as part of an ethereal, immaterial entity. A new body, a new narrative made of numbers.

We all know too well how unfaithful our consciousness is towards the blood and guts that provide it with its physical nourishment. Any excuse is good enough for our consciousness to separate itself from our physical selves and find refuge in other, external bodies, may they be the celluloid characters of a movie, the invisible imaginations of an evocative piece of music, or even the neighbouring land of another human being with whom we feel a degree of empathy.

Consciousness is the self-reflecting activity of our thoughts, and in such self-reflection, in their looking back towards themselves, it often happens that our thoughts see themselves as belonging to different entities than our physical bodies. They re-embody elsewhere. Sometimes they see themselves as part of a pantheistic whole, sometimes as part of imaginary animistic creatures, sometimes as part of an abstract narrative.

As a salesperson, it often happens that your consciousness drifts away from its original place, towards a re-embodiment within the narrative of sales figures. Your thoughts look back at themselves, and see themselves as the tip of an iceberg made of numbers, targets, sales, losses, percentages. Your thoughts look back at their time, and they see their time expanding and contracting in the trench-war cycle of sales, torn between the anxious boredom of waiting and the frantic adrenaline of actual sales. They look back at their environment, at their peers, and they see a strange and silent land of abstract figures.

It would be enough to describe the dis/re-embodiment that typically occurs to salespeople as a brief psychedelic nightmare, were it not that such a process has more long-lasting consequences than a short-lived bad trip.

The dynamics of the embodiment of our consciousness are always highly flexible processes. It is only through a constant feedback between physical body and self-reflective thought that consciousness decides to locate its primary belonging within one's own human flesh. If such feedback is too often interrupted, or diverted, towards a different one (possibly, always the same one), then the identification of our consciousness as part of our biological organism becomes at first uncertain, and then dissolves into other identifications. This is typically what happens with certain mental disorders, but it is also what increasingly takes place in the lives and in the minds of an overworked population.

What is at stake here is not simply a conservative diffidence towards new embodiments of human consciousness. What is at stake is the possibility of maintaining empathy and responsible economics as defining characters of our lives.

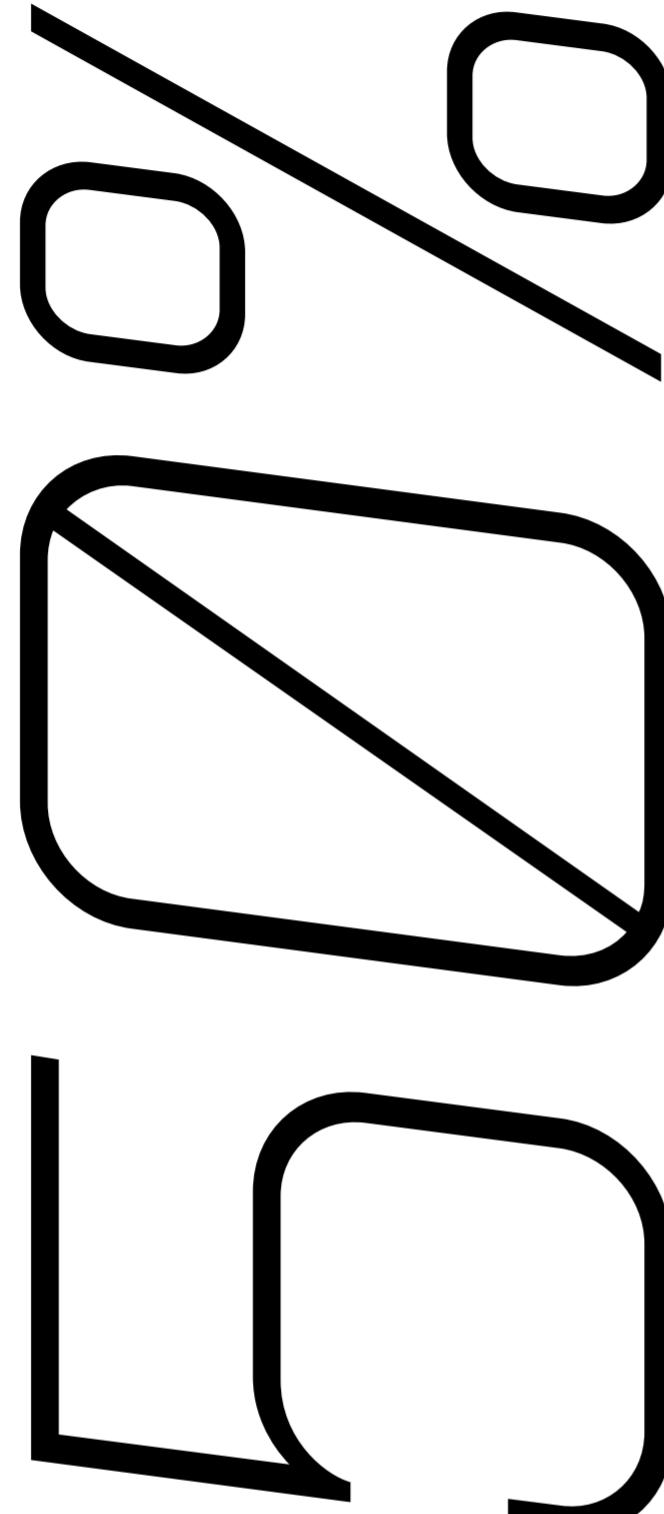
When consciousness identifies with a specific body, it simultaneously decides on the possible network of empathic connections, and on the available range of resources over which it has control. On the one hand, since empathy is only possible between bodies which are part of the same plane of existence, a disembodiment from the biological form (even from its representational, celluloid simulacra) towards a re-embodiment in the abstract immateriality of numbers removes any possibility of intra-biological empathy. Such dis/re-embodied consciousness

simply does not recognise the other biological creature, not even as an 'other' within the same plane of existence. On the other hand, different embodiments give consciousness different perceptions about the resources which it can master and of which it can dispose: any attempt at affective generosity vanishes as soon as our consciousness leaves the affecting body towards the translucent body of abstract numbers.

As our lives sink ever more deeply within fully immersive, numerical work environments, our consciousness (and consequently, our empathic and economic potential) faces a decisive challenge in terms of its bodily identification. And this is not just a matter of interest for stock-brokers, salespeople or programmers, and not even just for those workers defined as the 'cognitariat'. It's a challenge for everybody bound to the demands of the contemporary work regime, that is, for everybody in employment, as well as in the obsidian mirror of unemployment.

In our relationship with work, it is not just our freedom or boredom that are the stakes: it is us, who we are, what we can feel, what we can do, that we negotiate every day within ourselves. We often enter such negotiations without even realising, since it is exactly the anchor of our rationality and sanity, our own consciousness, which is affected by this game of changes and tides. Each one of us, in his or her working environment, can detect what currents are pulling their consciousness away from their physical body, form their human empathy and practical economy. It is for each one of us a different challenge, and a daily exercise of dancing through illusions, to decide what body we want to give to ourselves. And to live with the consequences.

NOW!



MARK FISHER

SUFFERING WITH A SMILE

"there are no longer even any masters, but only slaves"

"I usually get up at 5 or 5:15am. Historically, I would start sending emails when I got up. But not everyone is on my time schedule, so I have tried to wait until 7am. Before I email, I work out, read, and use our products. ... I am not a big sleeper and never have been. Life is too exciting to sleep." "I quickly scan my emails while my son is taking over my bed and having his milk. Urgent ones I reply to there and then. I flag others to follow up on my commute into work. . . . I receive an average of 500 emails a day, so I email throughout the day." These two accounts - both taken from a Guardian article entitled "What Time Do CEOs Wake Up?" - might have been designed to illustrate the theses of post-autonomist theorists such as Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi. Labour is essentially communicative. The boundaries between work and life are permeable. The incessant demands of semio-capitalism stretch the limits of physical organisms. Email means that there is no such thing as a workplace or a working day. You start working the minute you wake up.

These descriptions of a CEO's day also prove Deleuze and Guattari's claim in *Anti-Oedipus* that, in capitalism, "there are no longer even any masters, but only slaves commanding other slaves . . . The bourgeois sets the example . . . : more utterly enslaved than the lowest of slaves, he is the first servant of the ravenous machine, the beast of the reproduction of capital . . . 'I too am a slave' - these are the new words spoken by the master."

At the top of the tower, there is no liberation from work. There is just more work - the only difference is that you might now enjoy it (life is too exciting for sleep). For these CEOs, work is closer to an addiction than something they are forced to do. In a provisional formulation, we might want to posit a new way of construing class antagonism. There are now two classes: those addicted to work, and those forced to work. But this isn't quite accurate. Whether we are working for our employers (who pay us) or for Mark Zuckerberg (who doesn't), most of us find ourselves compulsively gripped by the imperatives of communicative capitalism (to check email, to update our statuses). This mode of work makes Sisyphus's interminable labours seem quaint; at least, Sisyphus was condemned to perform the same task over and over again. Semio-capitalism is more like confronting the mythical hydra: cut off one head and three more grow in its place, the more emails we answer, the more we receive in return.

The good old days of exploitation, where the boss was interested in the worker only to the extent that they produced a commodity which could be sold at a profit, are long gone. Work then meant the annihilation of subjectivity, your reduction to an impersonal machine-part; it was the price that you paid for time away from

"there are no longer even any masters, but only slaves commanding other slaves"

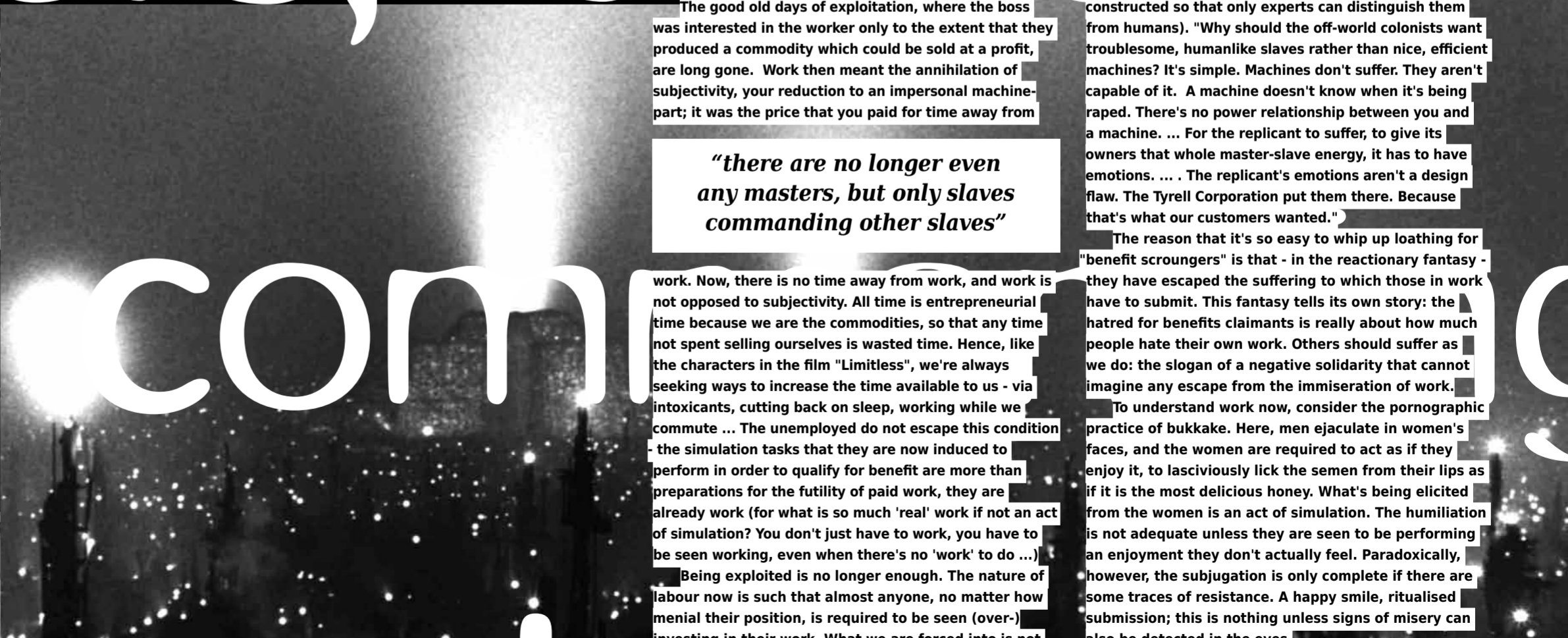
work. Now, there is no time away from work, and work is not opposed to subjectivity. All time is entrepreneurial time because we are the commodities, so that any time not spent selling ourselves is wasted time. Hence, like the characters in the film "Limitless", we're always seeking ways to increase the time available to us - via intoxicants, cutting back on sleep, working while we commute ... The unemployed do not escape this condition - the simulation tasks that they are now induced to perform in order to qualify for benefit are more than preparations for the futility of paid work, they are already work (for what is so much 'real' work if not an act of simulation? You don't just have to work, you have to be seen working, even when there's no 'work' to do ...) Being exploited is no longer enough. The nature of labour now is such that almost anyone, no matter how menial their position, is required to be seen (over-) investing in their work. What we are forced into is not



merely work, in the old sense of undertaking an activity we don't want to perform; no, now we are forced to act as if we want to work. Even if we want to work in a burger franchise, we have to prove that, like reality TV contestants, we really want it. The notorious shift towards affective labour in the Global North means that it is no longer possible to just turn up at work and be miserable. Your misery has to be concealed - who wants to listen to a depressed call centre worker, to be served by a sad waiter, or be taught by an unhappy lecturer?

Yet that's not quite right. The subjugatory libidinal forces that draw enjoyment from the current cult of work don't want us to entirely conceal our misery. For what enjoyment is there to be had from exploiting a worker who actually delights in their work? In his sequel to *Blade Runner*, *The Edge of Human*, K W Jeter provides an insight into the libidinal economics of work and suffering. One of the novel's characters answers the question of why, in *Blade Runner's* future world, the Tyrell Corporation bothered developing replicants (androids constructed so that only experts can distinguish them from humans). "Why should the off-world colonists want troublesome, humanlike slaves rather than nice, efficient machines? It's simple. Machines don't suffer. They aren't capable of it. A machine doesn't know when it's being raped. There's no power relationship between you and a machine. ... For the replicant to suffer, to give its owners that whole master-slave energy, it has to have emotions. ... The replicant's emotions aren't a design flaw. The Tyrell Corporation put them there. Because that's what our customers wanted."

The reason that it's so easy to whip up loathing for "benefit scroungers" is that - in the reactionary fantasy - they have escaped the suffering to which those in work have to submit. This fantasy tells its own story: the hatred for benefits claimants is really about how much people hate their own work. Others should suffer as we do: the slogan of a negative solidarity that cannot imagine any escape from the immiseration of work. To understand work now, consider the pornographic practice of bukkake. Here, men ejaculate in women's faces, and the women are required to act as if they enjoy it, to lasciviously lick the semen from their lips as if it is the most delicious honey. What's being elicited from the women is an act of simulation. The humiliation is not adequate unless they are seen to be performing an enjoyment they don't actually feel. Paradoxically, however, the subjugation is only complete if there are some traces of resistance. A happy smile, ritualised submission; this is nothing unless signs of misery can also be detected in the eyes.



slaves

com

other

slaves

PREOCCUPYING: MICHAEL HARDT

Michael Hardt has combined his role as Professor of Literature and Italian at Duke University with political writings and activism. Together with the Italian Marxist Antonio Negri, he has produced an influential critique of our present time. Their trilogy of books - titled "Empire", "Multitude", and "Commonwealth" - have been described by Slavoj Žižek as a "Communist manifesto for the 21st Century".

The Occupied Times: In your recent work, *Declaration*, you and Professor Negri identified four political archetypes or 'paradigmatic subjectivities', as you call them, that you believe will be crucial to any political change. These are: the indebted, the represented, the mediated and the securitised. In looking at the indebted, how can we transform what starts as consciousness-raising about the importance of 'the debtor' as a subject under post-Fordist capitalism, into a more viable means to challenge those who make us the indebted?

Michael Hardt: We intend for these names to identify subjective figures produced and reproduced today by capital and the crisis. This is what capital makes us into. Our assumption or claim is that capital functions centrally through the production of subjectivity. And these are also the figures, it seems to us, that many contemporary movements seek to attack.

Two core elements of being indebted are the individualising power and the moralising effects of the condition: you are responsible - even guilty - for your own debts. And yet, in the US, at least, you practically have to be in debt in order to live - to go to university, to get health care, to get an apartment, etc. I like Christian Marazzi's formulation that we have passed from welfare to debtfare, meaning all those things that used to be covered by welfare - education, health, housing - are now subject to personal debt.

So, movements that reveal the broad social nature of debt make one step to de-individualising it. And a second step is to organise debtors in a movement to make collective demands. I think Strike Debt, which has emerged in the US out of Occupy Wall Street, is an excellent example of the kinds of organising that can address the situation of indebtedness.

OT: What do you think about a fifth subjectivity: the stigmatised? Mentally ill, disabled and trans* people can be seen as "fair game" for discrimination by both the state and wider society. The stigmatised experience the kind of isolation you say is key to the formation of your other groupings, and are often forced to be more politically conscious and active as they are more likely to be on the frontline of the neoliberal state's attacks.

MH: Yes, that's great, and you might link that discussion to the tradition of analyses of the normal and the abnormal.

We by no means consider our short list to be exhaustive. We hope it might stimulate others to think of other subjective figures produced by capital

that we need to struggle against. The point is simply to identify the forms of the capitalist production of subjectivity and discover means to challenge or even invert them.

OT: So, do you agree with much of the recent theorising around debt by the likes of Graeber and Lazzarato? Are they correct in arguing that labour is, to a large extent, about social control, and it is through our debts that the bulk of capital accumulation now comes?

MH: I very much agree that debt is a central structural and subjective mechanism of control today. And I find David's and Maurizio's books wonderfully helpful and illuminating in that regard.

It would be a mistake, though, to assume that debt has somehow today replaced exploitation as a primary figure of domination, as if labour were no longer a central element of domination - and I do not read David or Maurizio as saying this. Increasing debt has added to and exacerbated forms of exploitation.

Along the lines of your previous suggestion, then, we should add the figure of the precarious to emphasise that any political focus on debt should also focus on labour. That would allow us to clarify some of the intersections of the indebted and the precarious and highlight the lines of control and domination.

OT: We've recently seen warfare emerge as a form of discipline here in the UK. Would you agree that a form of unionisation around new forms of capitalist exploitation could provide a successful post-Fordist alternative to the traditional union? What would be the potential outcome/result/change if the unemployed, the precarious, the indebted collectively organised themselves outside of existing trade unions, which tend to identify around specific forms of work?

MH: In my view, we have to work from both sides. As you say, we must create new forms of unionisation that can effectively organise the precarious, the indebted, the migrant, and the unemployed, experimenting with organisational methods adequate to confront the great challenges posed by their conditions. And, at the same time, traditional labour unions must break open their corporatist structures and transform themselves so as to engage and include greater labouring populations. These two processes can complement one another.

OT: To turn to an anecdote of yours: you once recounted that when in Latin America some years ago, activists there told you that you would be of more help



"Any political focus on debt should also focus on labour"



Jessica Lehrman

to the struggle if you returned home. Do you think there's an argument for us to overwhelmingly focus efforts on the local or are the exploits of the roving activist valid today, like they were in the Spanish Civil War?

MH: The point of that anecdote, in part, was that in the mid-1980s I had great difficulty imagining how to develop a revolutionary or transformative movement in the United States - and I don't think I was the only one. Since then, though, the situation has changed. Beginning with ACT-UP and Queer Nation, at least in my experience, and through the alterglobalisation movements, Zapatista collectives, occupy, and others, there has been a great deal of important experimentation.

I think that for movements to be rooted in the local territory is powerful



Andrea Bekacs

and important. The various encampments and occupations that emerged throughout 2011, particularly those in North Africa and Spain, demonstrated this in clear terms.

But it is certainly also important not to be closed in the local or national framework. Not just solidarity but also communicating and being inspired by struggles elsewhere is key - as well as developing an analysis that grasps the global nature of the forces and powers we are confronting. The alterglobalisation movements were very important in this regard.

And furthermore there is no reason for any of us to be limited to doing politics only where we are from. Think of how Argentinians and other South Americans played important roles with the Indignados in Spain, and how people from all over were central in the Zuccotti Park occupation. I imagine that your experiences with non-Britons participating centrally in the St Paul's occupation were very similar.

OT: If the manifestation of today's Empire is global, whilst most legal apparatus deal with sovereignty at a national level, are there currently any forms of institution that have a hope of holding this supranational Empire to account in any tangible or practicable way? If not, can they, or should they, be built?

MH: I am all for working through existing supranational institutions to challenge violations of international law, aid the poor, help refugees, etc. Much good can come, for instance, from working through United Nations structures to aid Palestinian refugees in the West Bank or to challenge violations of human rights.

At the same time, though, one should not expect too much from such supranational institutions. They operate under rigid political and ideological limitations. Necessary too are various forms of autonomous and direct political action. My point is simply that it's not a question of either/or.

MH: One important idea derived from the Italian Autonomist school is the notion of immaterial labour, or affective labour. David Graeber argues that immaterial labour relies on a "crude, old-fashioned Marxism" yet ignores a basic Marxist concept: that the world does not consist of a collection of discrete objects, but of actions and processes. This form of labour has traditionally been the work of women, as Silvia Federici points out, but has nevertheless always been a central tenet of traditional Marxism. What do you make of Graeber's argument? Where do you think the theories of immaterial labour stand apart from traditional Marxist theories?

MH: The most important idea that should be maintained as point of departure, it seems to me, is that in each era and each situation one should first conduct an analysis of class composition. All kinds of errors result when one just assumes that the composition of labour is just the same as it was in the past or as it is elsewhere. We have to ask, in other words, what do people do at work? How is cooperation among them achieved? How are they divided hierarchically by race, gender, and other lines? And how might they be organised politically?

In our effort to look at labour today in this way, Toni and I (along with many others) arrive at concepts like immaterial production, biopolitical production, affective labour, precarious work, and so forth. We are trying with these concepts to grasp what people do at work today and to respond to the questions I posed above.

So, if by traditional Marxist theory you mean continually going back to conduct an analysis of class composition as a basis for political strategy, then, yes, that is our method. But that method, of course, leads us today away from some traditional and orthodox Marxist claims about the centrality of the industrial working class, the subordinate role of non-waged female domestic labour or of peasant labour, and so forth. The point is to recognise, in other words, that class composition is continually changing.

OT: Federici claims in her essay "Precarious Labour: A Feminist Viewpoint" that the theory of affective labour strips the feminist analysis of housework and reproductive labour of all its demystifying power. Would you agree? Do theories surrounding precarious labour ignore feminist theory as Federici has claimed?

MH: In my experience, much of the discussion about immaterial and biopolitical production over the past decade, especially in France, has focused on "cognitive labour" and the new cognariat. I think much of this work has been extremely important, but it has tended to focus (sometimes despite the intention of the authors) on the intellectual work of the high level sectors of the workforce.

I have found that, in this context, focusing on the concept of affective labour has the potential to extend this discussion through various levels of the service sector and to highlight the gendered nature of these forms of work. For me and Toni, the notion of affective labour brought together two different traditions: one that derives from Spinoza's analysis of the affects and the other grounded in the Anglo-American socialist feminist analyses of care work, kin work, maternal labour, emotional work, reproductive labour, and the like.

Therefore, I very much agree that analyses of affective labour should highlight the gender hierarchies at work, and, when possible, point toward feminist political action.



Eric Walton

"in each era and each situation one should first conduct an analysis of class composition"



Michael Richmond & Jack Dean

Media, Activism & Society of the Spectacle

Our ability to move into a collectively imagined future has been trapped in an ever-present now, composed of continually transmitted images. The spectacle accompanies us throughout our lives. News, propaganda, advertising, entertainment and social media present a continuous stream of imagery, projecting a constant justification for how our culture is formulated. When Guy Debord first published *The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967, the digital revolution was still decades away and the technological capacity to project images into every corner of our lives was far less developed than it is today. The spectacle is no longer simply *all of the time*; it is also *everywhere*. More than ever before, Debord's words apply: "Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation."

As with many things in recent times, the boundaries of systems have become harder to discern. In the media/entertainment industry the process of mediation, where a consensus on the 'nature of things' is imposed, used to occur within newsrooms, edit suites and copy editing offices. Today, much of the ingredients of the spectacle - press releases, YouTube videos and comment/blog pieces - are received and published almost verbatim. More adverts are increasingly populated by the consumers themselves. We donate, as consumers, our own commodified identities to the spectacle, to be sold back to us.

The developing power of the spectacle can be seen in politics: both in the halls of power and in the street. PR-perfect Prime Ministers like Tony Blair and David Cameron (who worked in PR before becoming an MP), more adept at constant self-representation, have an instant head start on the likes of Gordon Brown, whose persona and body language were more suited to the era of the telegram. It may surprise some people to hear that many comparisons can be drawn

between the extraordinary influence on public life held by PR figures like Alastair Campbell or Andy Coulson, and the suffocating imperatives of the spectacle seen within activism.

A press group in any "social movement" acts as its point of interaction for mainstream media and thus sets about shaping the movement's outward identity which, in the case of something like Occupy, is then projected on a massive scale. The press teams of protest movements, like the spin doctors in Westminster, have power precisely because of the power of the spectacle. A press team sees nothing incongruent between the culture of PR and "messaging" and a movement's stated rejection of "business as usual," often to the dismay of those who view this abuse of language and corruption precisely because of the power of the spectacle. A press team sees nothing incongruent between the culture of PR and "messaging" and a movement's stated rejection of "business as usual," often to the dismay of those who view this abuse of language and corruption precisely because of the power of the spectacle. A press team sees nothing incongruent between the culture of PR and "messaging" and a movement's stated rejection of "business as usual," often to the dismay of those who view this abuse of language and corruption precisely because of the power of the spectacle.

A seriously flawed strategy that seems pervasive among activist groups is the idea that by simply "exposing" something to public scrutiny or "showing the media" evidence of systemic injustice, a dent can be made in the daily reproduction of such injustice. Mass "public debate," hosted and framed by the mass media is a pre-decided, packaged commodity, ripe for consumption and replete with the media's essential ingredient "controversy". Chasing the news agenda and trying to keep its attention long enough for that to make a difference to your cause is like trying to get the Tasmanian Devil to sit still long enough to do a sudoku puzzle.

In the absence of the ability to control the spectacle, people often fall back on the trope of "We changed the conversation". But this is what you say when you have no actual effect. A change in the discourse is an acceptable achievement only if it forms the beginning of a process - not the end result or its highest claim.

Talk is cheap. Capital is a liquid process, a means of reproducing and consistently cementing class and power relations on a minute-to-minute basis - any change in the debate that surrounds this process dissolves into nothingness once the space is gone, the novelty wears off and the news cycle moves on. A social movement that fails to intervene in the production process or have a tangible impact upon political/economic power or, worse still, doesn't realise the importance of these two things is just a 'social', not a 'movement'.

The spectacle, instead of being a mediator of the actions that are taken, now becomes an active player in how actions manifest. We find it impossible to entirely escape the spectacle and its power to formulate subjectivity. Many direct actions are consciously staged and choreographed with the question "how will this play in the media?" in mind. The timing of an action is highly influenced by when it might fit into the news cycle. Locations are carefully planned, with thought given to the power of their symbolism. This makes a worrying amount of dissent little more than



a performance, whereby protesters pit themselves against the entirety of existing power structures not by trying to directly impact them but by taking the confrontation onto a different terrain - capricious old "public opinion". As Mark Fisher writes: "Protests have formed a kind of carnivalesque background noise to capitalist realism".

Spokespeople are chosen for their marketability to media audiences, largely consisting of the learned ability to utter banal, empty statements to fit with the discursive style of mainstream politics. All of this and more is present within perhaps the most perfect case study of the interaction between the spectacle and activism: Laura Taylor.

Laura was one of the self-appointed spokespersons of Occupy London. Except this spokesperson wasn't self-appointed; she had no self. Laura was a fictional being, concocted by the Press Team, who set up the initial Facebook page calling on people to occupy the London Stock Exchange on October 15, 2011. She makes one of her first appearances before the occupation even began with a long quote on the politics blog, Libcon.

This stalwart of Occupy London would go on to appear in national and international publications including Reuters, the Guardian, Morning Star, CNBC and the Daily Mail. She would invariably relay rapid pronouncements such as the following quote, in which she explains why Occupy London activists were handing out flowers to members of the public last May Day: "The flowers we gave to people this morning will be taken into offices all over the city. We hope they will brighten up people's day, but also provide some food for thought. May Day is a day for everyone who works, whether that be in the public or private sector, in an office or at home, unionised or not. Together, we can make this May the start of something really special. Everyone is invited."

Laura's sordid tale of fabrication and nothingness holds within it many lessons for us about the influence of the spectacle, media pressures on activism and the dangers of prizing mainstream media attention as the sole arbiter of achievement or success. Occupy

London wasn't like the other big horizontal movements of 2011 in Spain, North Africa and the US. It began with a Facebook page and a Press Team, with an idea, based on a single tactic yanked wholesale from Zuccotti Park: it was conceived out of PR and that's how it continued. Central to the planning of events was corporate messaging, press releases and marketable aesthetics. Actions were deemed as failures simply because they didn't garner enough column inches in the corporate press, let alone the even more vaunted television coverage.

In any analysis of activism and the spectacle, it's incumbent upon those of us who seek to call a halt to the dominion of capital over our lives and our ability to live them, to ask ourselves a fundamental question: Are we having any direct effect on capital's ability to continually reproduce itself? Whilst a great many people are engaged in a lot of good work, it would be criminal of those of us with a desire to see another possible world to not

"Together, we can make this May the start of something really special."

take advantage of the recent crises facing capitalism.

This means using our minds, our bodies and our laptops to reach beyond the currently limited terrain, consisting largely of occupying/picketing branches of multinationals, tussling with the police and going on big marches or one-day strikes with little effect. The "beyond" we're trying to reach, that we rarely lay a glove on, is the terrain where power resides. Where existing power and class relations are continually reproduced.

Of course, the problem we face is that the terrain of real power is as surreal as the spectacle. There are the towering, phallic skyscrapers built to intimidate; and the impenetrable lexicon of financialisation whose facade bewilders but whose substance fails to add up. One statistic is particularly revealing: JP Morgan Chase has a derivative exposure of around \$70 trillion, roughly the size of the entire world's economy. Activists, with little budget and who are up against recent history and the status quo, can be forgiven for feeling overwhelmed, even hopeless. The complexity of the global financial system means that true power often resides not only out of reach, but outside of reality.

Back to Debord, who wrote: "Complacent acceptance of the status quo may also coexist with purely spectacular rebelliousness - dissatisfaction itself becomes a commodity as soon as the economy of abundance develops the capacity to process that particular raw material."

This describes perfectly some of the "activism" that you see nowadays. The activism of the ego, of the machismo. The kind that

could have been plucked from the Jay Z and Kanye West 'No Church in the Wild' video or that Levi's advert. There is the mimicry of imagined, nostalgic or historically lionised forms of protest, linked to romantic notions of "fighting the good fight". A group of the men at OccupyLSX even took to dressing in military camouflage and set out on marches as if an outmoded form of warfare was imminent. This was a group of people who had been birthed into the world of non-institutional politics largely for the first time. They took their cues from the spectacle. They reproduced the imagery of dissent that had been broadcast into their lives, through countless adverts, films and images of war on rolling news. But they were unable to make it relevant for a completely different terrain. Towards the end of the encampments of the Occupy movement in London, the sites became a faithfully simulated boot camp, as if on the edge of a trench system of a continuing armed conflict - one or two even developed trench foot. People sat on the frontlines, waiting for a revolution that could only take place in the immaterial realm.

We're not going to stop reproducing these effects until we step back from them. We can't affect change within the glare of the spectacle and its very nature wards against it being a tool that we can control. Its function is predicated on its ability to subsume attempts to co-opt it or "change it from within." The bridge from the past to the future instead needs to be mediated by not only a more accurate and tangible present, but a present where genuine discussion can take place. We must provide a better, broader context to the present. It's only in constantly building a present contextualised to the past, that we can continue to transform the present into a shared future. This is the environment in which movements are built. It's not enough to develop tools of expression across new media and communication networks. It's also imperative that these organs are not fed by the same nervous system as the spectacle. Or, if we are to engage with it, to understand its limitations and engage in a suitable fashion.

We're in a period between spikes of action where we've seen infighting, burnout and selling-out. The UK movements of 2011 have run out of steam, the next concerted pushback is yet to materialise, but it's important that we have some way of recording things to mitigate the problem of the lack of institutional memory in contemporary organising. The juncture we have reached is too critical, the forces we face too powerful to keep on making the same, naive mistakes. Social movements need to break with convention, break the law and break us out of this desolate paradigm. The main lesson must be that if you only want to lobby capitalist power, appealing with insipid entreaties to the impervious spectacle: join an NGO.

Alex Charnley & Jack Dean

Dear VFX Worker

Politicians like nothing better than to do much about nothing. Thus, forceful opinions from Tory and Labour seem to intersect as indecipherable inflections of a consensual agreement. These two flailing political monarchs slip around on melting ice while grappling clumsily for some secure footing, agreeing on nothing, except an allegiance to the malleable platform they both share. There is only one respite in this feeble display. Periodically, they will imperceptibly move from a fray to a pirouette, slip into each other's arms and call on the immaterial angels of Tech city and Soho to save them from their purgatorial crisis. The culture industry, or 'creative industry' as we're now obliged to refer to it, is pure light in dark times for the mean men of the ledger sheet; the specular that sings us out of the cold.

Thinkers such as Theodor Adorno once discussed the way soothsayers of capital captured beautiful moments and things. He understood what happened when a vision became another thing sold; how form and prose became the tools to invent wants and distractions. Cultural markets operate not only as fields of consumption but also help us believe that what we see all around us is all that there is and all that we are capable of. Whilst Adorno took aim at the reproduced and rebooted cultural commodities of the post-war western world in the fields of film, text, stage, opera and animation, he could not have envisaged a form that would straddle all such interdisciplinary boundaries: Computer Generated Imagery (CGI). That is, the algorithmic form that germinates in, around and between the moving frames and interactions of the screen. It is the game, movie, and the new imagery of post-fordism. For this reason, we must reconfigure the pirouettes of the political class and claim the production of CGI as a commons. The field of Visual Effects (VFX) is one such important sub-terrain.

It is in the darkened theatres of the spectacle that the dreamy immaterial worlds of the hyperreal image help us forget about our degenerating material reality, whilst concealing the labour power consumed in their production. The VFX film Avatar is a fitting example of this paradoxical compact. A film that presents an anti-capitalist struggle, whilst simultaneously participating in capitalist accumulation. As a spectator, immersed in the highs and lows of this second order reality, it is impossible to comprehend the work of the computer animators, technical directors, riggers, compositors et al. who spend months irrigating the feudal acres of the virtual simulacrum for the barons of Hollywood.

Yet, in the bright green squares of social media platforms we are witnessing the first signs of global VFX solidarity. The green screen is the blank canvas of the VFX spectacle and has now come to represent the Facebook and Twitter profile pictures of all those artisans of CGI who are ready to show a collective face. This metaphor of the unrendered image has developed into a poetic resistance to the exploitation that exists behind the thin veil of the hyperreal, invoked by the protestations of the workers who brought *Life of Pi* from the green screen to the Oscars only to be unceremoniously expelled from their positions, without pay, after two of the largest production houses in the world went bankrupt. Now, without question, it has been made abundantly clear that the immaterial worlds of *Avatar*, *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings* and *WALL-E* do come from somewhere very real indeed. As a result, the artisans of this latest promontory of the culture industry have acknowledged the need to collectively organise and fight for better conditions.

This is, we all hope, a paradigmatic shift for a young artistic form so cruelly delivered out of the military-entertainment complex of capitalist production. But in order for this to be realised, we must consider it the beginning of a movement for all those who play in the sandbox of the virtual simulacrum.

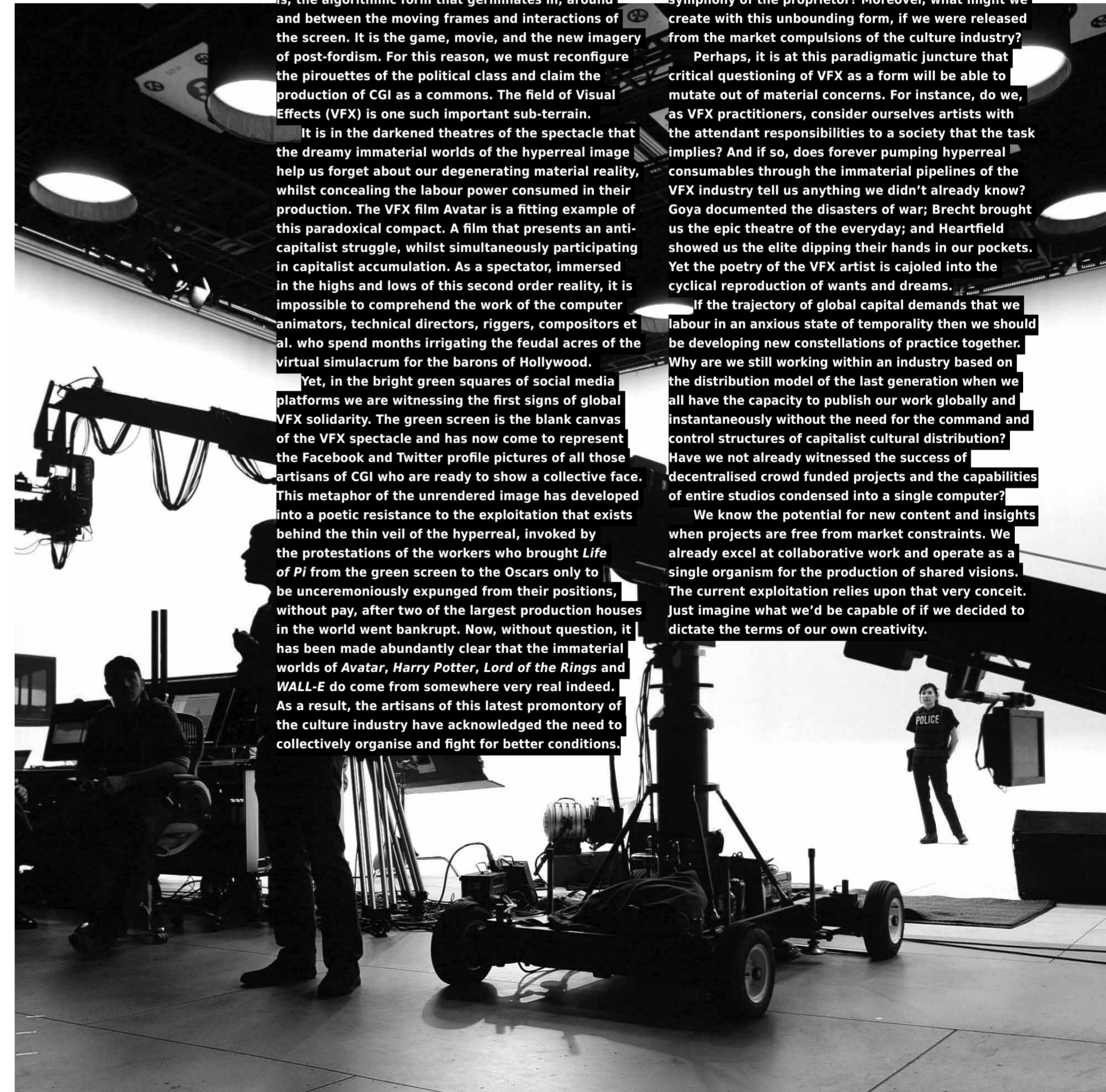
It is the excluded for whom the mystique of the creative industry hangs like an ephemeral perfume. Great throngs of graduates hang on their heels in the hope that they will render out their dreams as unpaid interns, years before they have a chance to join those who now protest at the degenerative conditions of employment. If this is the neoliberal trajectory of global labour then what is left for the collective artisanship of VFX; the heaving edifice of the culture industry that forever mediates our dreams? The VFX proprietors reach out for tax deductions from the sympathetic hand of the slippery politician while simultaneously outsourcing work to the developing capitalist economies of India and China. Are we now witnessing the flagship Soho and New York production houses becoming little more than the reception areas for the sweatshop labour of VFX workers in the global south?

If we intend to extract great rhythms of change from this moment, then we must also consider the future of VFX as an aesthetic and practical concern. If for instance, we consider that all those who practice also have access to a network of production points, then must we continue playing musical chairs to the symphony of the proprietor? Moreover, what might we create with this unbounding form, if we were released from the market compulsions of the culture industry?

Perhaps, it is at this paradigmatic juncture that critical questioning of VFX as a form will be able to mutate out of material concerns. For instance, do we, as VFX practitioners, consider ourselves artists with the attendant responsibility to a society that the task implies? And if so, does forever pumping hyperreal consumables through the immaterial pipelines of the VFX industry tell us anything we didn't already know? Goya documented the disasters of war; Brecht brought us the epic theatre of the everyday; and Heartfield showed us the elite dipping their hands in our pockets. Yet the poetry of the VFX artist is cajoled into the cyclical reproduction of wants and dreams.

If the trajectory of global capital demands that we labour in an anxious state of temporality then we should be developing new constellations of practice together. Why are we still working within an industry based on the distribution model of the last generation when we all have the capacity to publish our work globally and instantaneously without the need for the command and control structures of capitalist cultural distribution? Have we not already witnessed the success of decentralised crowd funded projects and the capabilities of entire studios condensed into a single computer?

We know the potential for new content and insights when projects are free from market constraints. We already excel at collaborative work and operate as a single organism for the production of shared visions. The current exploitation relies upon that very conceit. Just imagine what we'd be capable of if we decided to dictate the terms of our own creativity.





BE THE CHANGE Boycott Workfare

It has been over a year since The Occupied Times first invited Boycott Workfare to spread the word with an article in print. At the time, few people knew what workfare was, or why it mattered. Since then the campaign against workfare has come a very long way. It continues to grow and, importantly, to enjoy real concrete successes. People now know what workfare is and what it means. What started as a small group of unemployed people, union members, voluntary sector workers and activists at an open meeting in London has grown into a truly UK-wide campaign, which has now also taken on an international dimension. Boycott Workfare has worked with groups across the world, and will soon be taking part in an international unemployed people's conference in Austria. Not bad for a grassroots campaign run on a shoestring.

The relentless efforts of growing numbers of people campaigning has seen nine more organisations pull out of workfare schemes since the turn of the year: Sense, PDSA, Shoe Zone, Wilkinson's, Superdrug, Capability Scotland, Sue Ryder and the Red Cross. The Children's Society has pledged: "All volunteering at The Children's Society should be done by choice and under no obligation from any other agency." If there are no places to send people to carry out workfare, then workfare cannot exist.

There was the High Court victory in February 2013, in the case bravely brought by Cait Reilly who was forced to work in Poundland. It was a reminder that people faced with workfare also face sanctions - benefit stoppages which can now last up to three years. The High Court ruled that 300,000 people were unlawfully sanctioned on workfare schemes, and that £130 million had to be repaid to them. But to avoid doing so, the government pushed a retroactive law with the help of the Labour party. It is a bill that denies justice to those unlawfully sanctioned by the state. The DWP have said that even if it is repealed, the £130 million in compensation would come from brand new cuts to the social security budget. Collective punishment of the poor is the order of the day, with Jobcentre staff rewarded with Easter eggs for sanctioning people. Sanctions are a way of making cuts by stealth: 827,660 people were sanctioned between April 2011 and October 2012. It's a fact that on workfare schemes, you have a better chance of being sanctioned than of finding a job.

The greatest success of the campaign is that it demonstrates the goodness and kindness of people and their generosity of spirit. Faced with huge odds, people power can overcome government policy, vested corporate interests and big brands. This is because it is a campaign that puts people first. That means listening to people, not lecturing them. We try to help and empower people. If you take people as they are, they will give what they can. Christianity Uncut now also supports the campaign against workfare, which given the large number of Christian charities taking part in schemes, such as the Salvation Army and YMCA, could make a big difference.

With the introduction of Universal Credit, even those who are in part-time work or self-employed will be referred to workfare schemes - for the crime of not working enough hours or being

paid enough. Disabled people passed fit to work by ATOS are also being sent to do workfare. The idea has even been floated by one Lord that pensioners should do workfare for their pensions. Workfare replaces paid workers which means it affects everyone, unemployed and employed alike. Because this is such a wide-ranging issue Boycott Workfare works closely with other groups. Without this spirit of working together, the success we've had up until now would not have been possible.

Workfare has become a totemic issue, in which people see different aspects of neoliberalism in action. People focus on whatever ideological critique of workfare suits their political beliefs, but our message is simple: Workfare is wrong and you either oppose it, or you don't. Boycott Workfare works with anyone opposed to workfare and will not compromise on its anti-workfare stance. This has meant that at times it has had to contend with criticism from those that many would assume to be supportive - union leaders, Labour Party apologists and mainstream commentators among them. To us, unity comes from working together with integrity, not being told: "Shut up, don't criticise, and do as we say".

Ironically, the successful campaign against workfare represents as much a threat to the institutionalised way of 'opposing the government' as it does to the government policy itself. After all, if such a diverse array of individuals and groups can have such success then what does this mean for those with leaders to sell, party faithfuls to please, and career ladders to climb? Change is scary. When people don't need to ask what action to take and they can just take it, counting on others in the network for support, where does that leave annual A to B marches concluding with speeches from the usual suspects? If you had spent millions on 'opposing austerity' but had absolutely nothing to show for it, how would you feel?

It's about horizontal organising, not vertical. This is something Boycott Workfare took from London Coalition Against Poverty (LCAP), which is where the campaign evolved. LCAP's model of community organising has an emphasis on empowering people. People must always come first. We work together to learn legal rights and share practical advice, information and strategies. When this approach is combined with the tried and tested: demonstrations, leafleting, occupations, workshops; and the new: social media, crowd-sourcing, Tweet-walls, and online action, you get a successful campaign. Our keywords are: People, Empowerment, Outreach, Creativity, Collaboration, Dialogue, Flexibility and Fun.

Perhaps, and in a similar vein to Occupy and UK Uncut, the campaign against workfare represents the birth of a new campaigning paradigm, a new way of doing things.. The infographic later in this issue is an example: The Occupied Times and Boycott Workfare, working together to produce something practical to help people in their lives. It didn't take vertical central committees, party leaders or millions of pounds to produce. It took people working together collaboratively, not for personal or political gain, but for the greater good of others. A new paradigm. Be the change. Boycott Workfare.

Warren Richards

DO ASK, DO TELL?

(RE)TIRING SEXUALITY IN A 'BRAVE NEW WORLD'

I recently gave a talk as part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) conference, 'Brave New World', in central London. Presenters and attendees were encouraged to think of the ways that 'we've arrived' as out, proud and endorsed queer citizens - now welcome in official 'seats of power'. Arguably, queer subjects have burst out of a 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' context as unspeaking subjects, to a telling, asking, speaking, arriving state. The feeling of 'arriving' on stage and on the broader social map of State recognition, societal value and cultural distinction is appealing, but also rather disturbing. What is 'staged' in these moments of 'arrival', where the pull into the room may discord with everyday realities of living and 'being brave'? What is rendered unspeakable in the telling of 'sexual citizenship'? It depends, perhaps, on who is inside and outside the conference space, where different doors contain and announce our arrival.

ARRIVING: A young female lecturer starting out in her career sits behind her closed office door (observe her dangling on the bottom rung of academia, while ambivalently hopeful, if not expectant or certain of upward climbs). While students bunch and buzz outside, emails are monotonously checked, ever received and she pauses to reflect upon the space she now inhabits with its various freedoms and constraints. Snippets of student chatter are overheard; behind her door they are pausing over whether to choose her course this semester - who knows what she's really like (one of them, one of us)? How young is she (who does she think she is)? Where does she come from (funny accent)? And what about that hair cut, those clothes (a lesbian?!?). Suspicion, excitement and a dose of caution gather in the corridor; pens linger over her sign-up sheet - what has she and these students signed up for? An official 'diversity and equality' email arrives in her inbox, all mainstreamed and official. The university welcomes, actions, promises; an inclusive certainty, a new agenda, a line on 'sexual minorities'... While she reads and searches, a voice from outside authoritatively declares 'She IS a lesbian'. Her course, herself - a matter of fact? A threat? An absence? What should she do? She opens the door, heads to the printer, picks up the email, and a few looks along the way...

Prof. Yvette Taylor

Researchers in sexualities studies have long contested the neat, 'travelling into place', of 'arriving' LGBT subjects, showing instead how victories won in a landscape of Equalities Legislation, Gender Recognition, Civil Partnership and Same-sex marriage, can be easily lost. Doors can remain firmly closed and the corridors of power can still follow fairly straight lines. And still heterosexuality is never placed or positioned as having to be announced or arrived at, instead it is circulated as the automatic, default destination. So who is propelled forward as the brave citizen-conqueror and what's at stake in claiming and feeling the often still strange spaces we inhabit as sexual subjects? And as variously placed LGBTQ and heterosexual subjects?

Inhabiting, indicating and identifying sexualized positions can still be difficult. Articulating these difficulties in a workplace context - still packaged as 'public', rational and 'objective' and disconnected from 'private', emotional and subjective lives - can result in the 'brave' subject being seen as out of place, excessive and inappropriate. My talk on 'Gay By Degree? Indexing Diversity' sought to question points of arriving on campus - as the queer campus was Stonewall-endorsed and promoted. The measuring of 'diversity' through the arrival of 'others' on campus, in 'scenes', is somewhat problematic: suggestive of a happy state of smiles, celebration and capitalisation. How to tell of other, perhaps unhappier, states?

APPEARING: 'What do you imagine of this 'young academic'? What does she look like, short hair besides? (It does matter, not least to her.) Dressing for work is mostly a casual affair, the wardrobe proud in its choice provisions: jeans, vests, jeans, vests. If this is dressing for success, should she hang up the vest, get another costume (are long sleeves safer)? She strolls along the corridor, outfit on, suited people pause in awe of her: a) hardiness ('a vest in winter, do you not get cold?!') b) stupidity ('you're a student no more') c) good taste (unlikely). In the comments, criticisms and doubtful praise, the feminism she knows is disappeared. She glances down, she IS clothed. This wasn't meant to be subversive...



The queer subject is increasingly identified in diversity policies. In a workplace context, the messages about capitalising on a 'diverse' workforce, where the LGBT subject stands for diversity, is endorsed as making 'good business sense'. LGBT employees become 'diversity dividends'. But when subjects are required to 'stand-in' for university commitment to diversity, narratives of living a lesbian identity at work may chafe against university rhetoric that 'welcomes all through its door' in the name of inclusivity. Indeed, universities can be viewed as significant sites where neoliberal organisational discourses predicated on a politics of heteronormativity may be required and resisted.

We witness a 'domestication of difference', which makes diversity respectable and manageable, synonymous with normative, white, middle-class and professional forms of organising, existing, teaching and researching. For universities, the pay off for making queer 'respectable' is that sexuality is maintained as a private issue, but one which has profit potential. This also makes some queers complicit in rendering queerness invisible, as she shuts her door...

How might 'queerer' places to work and learn be created? Queering the workplace involves bringing to the fore those who identify as 'queer', and others who might be willing to labour at the process of queering within their everyday work lives. It is a labour. But one which potentially paves a way forward for addressing another focal point of concern: how we might understand and experience the workplace beyond that which seems obvious, rational, taken for granted, as markers even of promotion.

ANNOUNCING: 'At the end of her course she distributes module feedback forms, welcoming "constructive criticism" (Teaching Certificate now completed). How will they rate her? The service provided, polished enough? Or excessively threatening, a step out of place? Sociological analysis embodied as 'personal', academic authority condemned as 'niche'. Pressure and promotion, as a personal problem. She's read the guidelines 'Dignity at Work', but these words on the page are more insidious. Although she's situated feminism(s) in their political, social, historical context, teasing out complexity and tension, she sees that 'it' (like her) has been reduced as a conspiracy, as a conspirator, as anti-men (her all-female class protest and fear). She conspires, she challenges. And she gets tired.'

I prepared this piece as and for 'work'; when things are working, academics sometimes get the chance to pause, write and think, to 'ask and tell'. But sometimes working contexts themselves act as blockages to 'arrivals'; 'don't ask, don't tell' is still woven into the workplace. Let's not retire the queer worker/citizen to a happier state. Let's require and demand a broader social bravery for all our 'new worlds'.

ART & POLITICS

Isidora Ilić & Eleni F.

“The problem is not to make political films, but to make films politically” - Jean-Luc Godard
 Art is not political because of its messages, or because of the way it represents something. According to Ranciere, art is political because it participates in the division of the sensible - (re) distribution of times and spaces, places and identities, the way of (re)framing the visible and the invisible, of telling speech from noise etc. Art is politics.

What about art politics then? Whether we speak about art as art - art as/in institution, or art as life - art as a creative process/skill employed or placed in public space and outside institutional socio-economic frames, potentiality for (social) emancipation lies in the procedures of making art, not simply in its content or form.

CASE STUDY A: ART POLITICALLY INSIDE THE INSTITUTION

Politics, derived from the Greek politikos (meaning “of, for, or relating to citizens”), is not simply the exercise of, or struggle for, power. Politics is, first of all, the configuration of a space as political. Aristotle said that contrary to animals, which only have voice to express pleasure or pain, human beings are political because they own the power of speech and through it reveal what is good and bad, just and unjust. But politics is not the public discussion about justice and injustice among speaking people. How do you recognise that the person who is mouthing a voice in front of you is discussing matters of justice rather than expressing private pain? Politics is in fact about that question: who has the power to decide this?

After 2000, Serbia entered a painful and, what has now been proven, illegal process of privatisation. Many factories which had been socially governed were forced into bankruptcy and sold to private entrepreneurship. New owners ceased production or changed the factories’ primary industrial function. Workers lost their jobs and went on strike - the only political tool for resistance they possessed. The workers’ struggle was not recognised by the state or the media.

CASE STUDY B: ART POLITICALLY OUTSIDE THE INSTITUTION

Like all crises in history, the Greek situation has inspired a lot of local artists. Political artworks of critical, informational or emotional value are popping up in galleries, museums and art forums within and outside of Greece. Even in spaces which trade in art as commodity, the crisis has spread its shadow. Many artists have been happy to use the free ride of the art scene of Northern Europe that this crisis has offered them, seeking safety and recognition. Meanwhile, in the local art scene, the crisis has birthed a flush of networks with libertarian and self-organised characteristics.

I am Greek and I am an artist. So, when returning home after having spent some years abroad, I had elaborated on my practices as an artist and as a political subject. It was quite clear to me that in such crisis situations, political artworks are not enough to accelerate the pace of radicalisation. As long as they are contextualised in the art world, they simply reproduce its elitist relation to the public sphere and its dominant character¹. If artistic language is to be used for the conveyance of a political message related with social emancipation, it has to be reflected within the way it will be contextualised and not only expressed: it is not only a matter of what, but also a matter of how.

In the Greek context, art can be used for the enrichment of conscious and directed social struggles that do not seek an eventuality, but really investigate and exert



Ignorant Schoolmaster is a project developed by a group of artists and activists. It is hosted by the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade. In a self-educational format, the project organises discussions in which intellectuals, experts and workers take part by articulating their experience and thought. Politics begins when those who have ‘no time’ to do anything else apart from work, make time, in order to become visible and capable of voicing their experience as a common experience in the universal language of public argumentation. It is an emancipatory potential that art as art can enable, but only by following emancipatory procedures.

Although placed within the cultural institution, the project does not help raise the visibility of workers’ issues. Rather, it endorses workers’ empowerment by offering context and infrastructure. Periphery is chosen as a political position, the only one that can bring political subjectivation. This takes time.

Earlier, similar projects are not unknown to the global art scene, though, what is important to notice here is not the form or the content but the procedures this project employs. What matters is the way it is being performed.

Ignorant Schoolmaster is not activism in the system of art, nor is it engaged art. The project itself does not represent workers’ subjectification. Workers are not objects of artist’s research that will be conveyed in an art product and will address the system of art. Other artists, or elites, cannot consume it in museums or galleries.

Thus, the possibility of cultural capital for the organisers has been diminished. The frame of self-education rules out hierarchical division between workers and artists/intellectuals. Both artists/activists and the workers undertake a process of self-education. This art does not represent - it performs politics, enabling the participants to engage in a process of defining their political subjectivity.

The questions remain: could emancipatory procedures performed within the art institution bring social emancipation or does the context of an institution nullify the potential? Does an issue placed in the sphere of art and culture diminish the possibility of a real impact on political structures? And, does this mean that social emancipation is only immanent to the performance outside the institution so, in the case of art as life, procedures are not even needed?

the alternatives for a possible insurrection. The artistic perspective and creative process can be of an important value in the attempt to convey a political message and broaden the potential of political practices.

But let’s discard the division between artists and “the others”. We need to abandon the feeling of safety we once had; there is no such thing anymore. To move the struggles forward we need to practice applied resistance through structural changes in our lives, such as self-organised projects, enrichment of educational processes, applied solidarity, mutual empowerment and collective fermentations. The end goal is not a short-term social relief, but social emancipation.

I cannot and will not be specific to definitive individual practices which will guarantee our future. I have only pointed to a handful of possibilities here, as I don’t consider myself as “the enlightened” that can give solid suggestions of how this is going to be done in each case (and I tend to think that “how” is sometimes even more important than “what”). We all have different needs and surroundings, possibilities and potentialities that we should all elaborate on. How are we going to transform utopia into reality?

1. As Andrea Fraser bravely admits, “We are the institution of art: the object of our critiques, our attacks, is always also inside ourselves.” What is Institutional Critique, from Institutional Critique and After, JRP|Ringier, Zurich, 2006



HOW TO AVOID WORKFARE

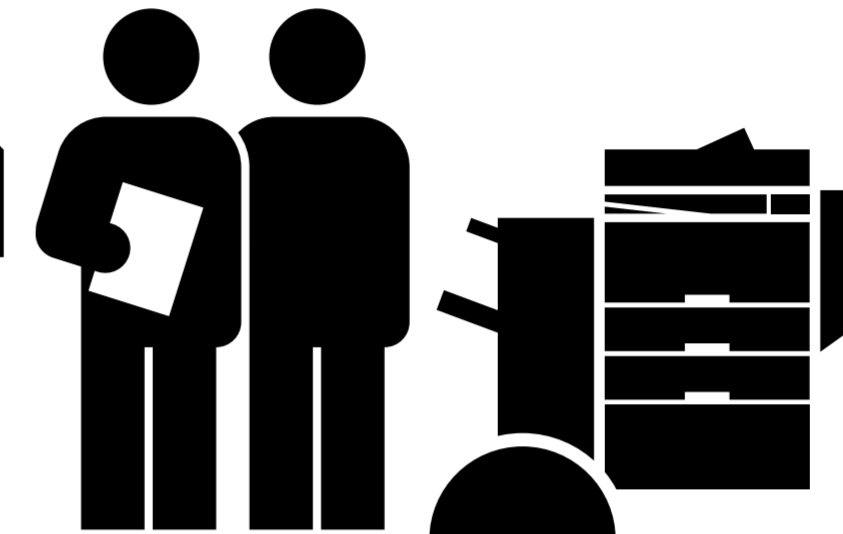
1 BEWARE UNIVERSAL JOBMATCH



STOP THE JOBCENTRE SANCTIONING AND SNOOPING ON YOU

- In your Universal Jobmatch Account Profile:
1. Do not tick the box that gives DWP access.
 2. Do not tick the box that lets them send you email messages.

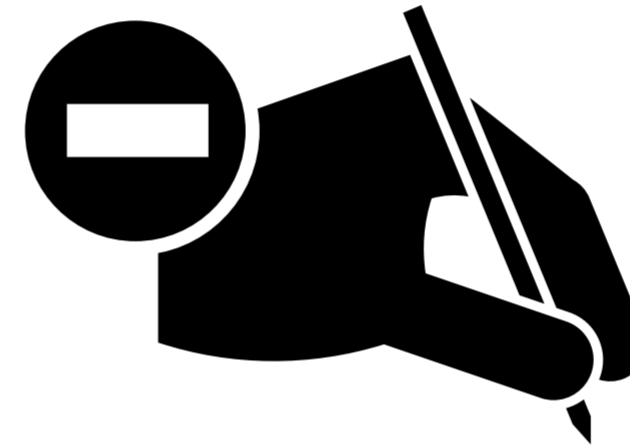
2 KEEP YOUR CV SAFE



YOUR CV IS YOUR PERSONAL DATA

1. Never give a copy to the Jobcentre, DWP, any training provider organised by the JCP/ DWP or a Work Programme Provider.

2. Only show it when asked, by holding it in front of them. Do not let them copy it. If they demand a copy ask them to put the request in writing, stating what benefit sanctions may apply if you refuse.



3 DO NOT SIGN

REFERRED ONTO THE WORK PROGRAMME WITH A4E OR REED?

Take someone with you. Do not sign any documents the provider gives you.

1. You are not legally required to sign any document they put in front of you.
2. By not signing any document, you are preventing the provider from being paid to harass you and you prevent your personal information being shared.



4 FORCED INTO MWA / WORK EXPERIENCE?

RESEARCH! Check out the guidelines to see how to avoid being sent on these schemes. Conscientiously object! Find an ethical problem with those you are referred to.

Sent to a Charity? Find out if they have pulled out of the scheme. If they have, and you are sent to do workfare for them let Boycott Workfare know, they will get them to cancel it.

Speak up. Tweet, Facebook, Blog, write to newspapers, email. Seek legal advice or a judicial review.



5 WORK WITH US TO END WORKFARE!

TELL PEOPLE ABOUT WORKFARE

Sleuth: When shopping keep your eyes and ears open for workfare

Boycott shops that use workfare: Argos, Poundland

Do not donate to, or shop in charities using workfare: YMCA, Salvation Army, RSPCA

www.boycottworkfare.org
 @boycottworkfare

**THE
ECONOMY
IS SUFFERING
LET IT
DIE**