# ND21 – AC – Microwork

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## Part 1 – The Capitalist Infosphere

#### Capitalism has evolved. In the infosphere, workers are no longer hired, but bought as packets of time, disconnected from any collectivity and without labor relations. No longer people, they are machines to the capitalist system. Only through an existential continuity of the comrade is solvency possible, Berardi 11:

Franco Berardi, “After The Future,” 2011 [philosopher] // LHP AB

In February 2003, the American journalist Bob Herbert published in the New York Times the results of a cognitive survey of hundreds of unemployed youths in Chicago: none of the interviewees expected to find work in the next few years; none expected to be able to rebel, or set off large-scale collective change. The general sense of the interviews was a sentiment of profound impotence. The perception of decline did not seem focused on politics, but on a deeper cause, a scenario o fsocial and psychic involution that seemed to cancel every possibility of build­ ing alternatives. **During the zero zero decade, precariousness has spread throughout the organization of labor, becoming the prevailing feeling of the new generation**. The fragmentation of the present is reversed in the implosion of the future. In lhe Corrosion of Character: The Transformation of Wt.irk in Modern Capitalism, Richard Sennett reacts to this existential condition of precariousness and fragmentation with nostalgia for a past epoch in which life was structured in relatively stable social roles, and time had enough linear consistency to construe paths of identity: "Time's arrow is broken; it has no trajectory in a continually re-engineered, routine­ hating, short-term political economy. People feel the lack of sustained human relations and durable purposes" (Sennett 1 998, 98) . But this nostalgia has no hold on present reality, and attempts to reactivate the community remain artificial and sterile. **Precariousness is itself a precarious notion, because it defines its object in an approximate manner**, but also because from this notion derive paradoxical, self-contradictory, in other words precarious **strate­gies. If we concentrate our critical attention on the precarious character of job performance, what kind of program can we propose, to what target can we aspire? That ofa stable job guaranteed for life? This would be (and actually is) a cultural regression, the definite subordination of labor to the rule of exploitation.** Notwithstanding the idea of "flexicu­ rity," we are still far from any strategy of social recomposition of the labor movement that might extricate us from unlimited exploitation. We need to pick up again the thread of analysis of social composition and decompositon if we want to discern possible outlines of any re­ composition to come. In the 1970s, the energy crisis, the consequent economic reces­ sion, and finally the replacement ofworkers with numerical machines resulted in a large number ofpeople with no guarantees. The question of precariousness soon became central to social analysis, but also to the ambitions of the movement. We began by proposing to struggle for forms of guaranteed income, not linked to work, in order to face the fact that **a large part of the young population had no prospect of guaranteed employment.** The situation has changed since then, because what seemed a marginal and temporary condition has now become the prevalent form of labor relations. **Precariousness is no longer a marginal and provisional characteristic, but it is the general form of the labor relation in a productive, digitalized sphere, reticular and recombinant**. **The word "precariat" generally stands for work that no longer has fixed rules about labor relations, salary; or the length of the work day. However, if we analyze the past, we see that these rules functioned only for a limited period in the history of relations between labor and capital. Only for a short period at the heart of the twentieth century, under the political pressures of unions and workers**, in conditions of (almost) full employment, and thanks to a generally strong regulatory role played by the state in the economy, **some limits to the natural violence of capitalist dynamics could be legally established. The legal obligations that in certain periods have protected society from the vio­lence of capital were always founded on political and material relations of force (workers' violence against the violence of capital) . Thanks to political force, it became possible to affirm rights, establish laws, and protect them as personal rights. With the decline in the political force of the workers' movement, the natural precariousness and brutality of labor relations in capitalism have re-emerged**. The new phenomenon is not the precarious character of the job market, but the technical and cultural conditions in which infolabor is made precarious. **The technical conditions are based on digital recom­bination of infolabor in networks**. The cultural conditions include the education of the masses and the expectations of consumption inherited from late twentieth century society, which are continuously fed by the entire apparatus of marketing and media communication. If we analyze the first aspect, the technical transformations in­ introduced by the digitalization of the productive cycle, we see **that the essential point is not that the labor relation has become precarious (which, after all, it has always been), but the dissolution of the person as active productive agent, as labor power**. The cyberspace of **global production can be described as an immense expanse of depersonalized human time**. Infolabor, the provision of time for the elaboration and recom­ bination of segments of infocommodities, takes to the extreme the tendency, which Marx analyzed, for labor to become abstracted from concrete activity. **This process of abstraction has progressively stripped labor time of every concrete and individual particularity**. The atom oftime ofwhich Marx wrote is the minimal unit of productive labor. But **in industrial production, abstract labor time was impersonated by a physical and juridical bearer, embodied in a worker in flesh and bone**, with a certi­ fied and political identity. Naturally, capital did not purchase a per­sonal disposition, but the time for which the workers were its bearers. **But if capital wanted to dispose of the necessary time for its valoriza­tion, it was obliged to hire a human being**, to buy all of its time, and therefore it had to face up to the material needs and the social and political demands of which the human was a bearer. **When we move onto the sphere of infolabor, there is no longer a need to buy a person for eight hours a day indefinitely**. **Capital no longer recruits people, but buys packets of time, separated from their interchangeable and occasional bearers**. Depersonalized time has become the real agent of valorization, and depersonalized time has neither any right, nor any demand. **It can only be either available or unavailable, but this is purely theoretical be­ cause the physical body, despite not being a legally recognized person, still has to buy food and pay rent**. The informatic procedures of the recombination of semiotic ma­terial have the effect of liquefying the "objective" time necessary to produce the infocommodity**. In all of the time of life, the human ma­ chine is there, pulsating and available, like a brain-sprawl in waiting**. The extension of time is meticulously cellularized: cells of productive time can be mobilized in punctual, casual, and fragmentary forms. The recombination of these fragments is automatically realized in the net­ work. The mobile phone is the tool that makes possible the connection between the needs of semiocapital and the mobilization of the living labor of cyberspace. The ringtone of the mobile phone calls the workers to reconnect their abstract time to the reticular flux. It's a strange word-"liberalism"-with which we identify the ide­ ology prevalent in the posthuman transition to digital slavery. Liberty is its foundational myth, but the liberty of whom? The liberty of capi­ tal, certainly. Capital must be absolutely free to expand in every corner of the world to find the fragment of human time available to be ex­ ploited for the most miserable wage. But liberalism also predicates the liberty of the person. In neoliberal rhetoric, the juridical person is free to express itself, to choose representatives, and be entrepreneurial at the level ofpolitics and the economy. All this is very interesting, except that the person has disappeared; what is left is like an inert object, ir­ relevant and useless. The person is free, sure. But his time is enslaved. His liberty is a juridical fiction to which nothing in concrete daily life corresponds. If we consider the conditions in which the work of the majority of humanity, proletariat and cognitariat, is actually carried out in our time, ifwe examine the conditions ofthe average wage glob­ ally, if we consider the current cancellation of previous labor rights, we can say with no rhetorical exaggeration that we live in a regime of slavery. **Globally, the average wage is hardly sufficient to buy the mere survival of a person whose time is at the service of capital. And people have no right over the time of which they are formally the proprietors, but from which they are effectively expropriated. That time does not really belong to them, because it is separated from the social existence of the people** who make it available to the recombinant cyberproduc­ tive circuit. **The time of work is fractalized, that is, reduced to minimal fragments for reassembly, and the fractalization makes it possible for capital to constantly find the conditions for the minimum wage. Precariousness is the black heart of the capitalist production pro­ cess in the global network, where a continuous flow of fragmented and recomposable infowork circulates**. **Precariousness is the transformative element of the whole cycle of production. Nobody is outside its reach. At unspecified times, workers' wages are reduced or cut, and the life of all is threatened**. Digital infolabor can be fragmented in order to be recomposed someplace other than where that work is done. From the point ofview of the valorization of capital, flow is con­ tinuous, but from the point of view of the existence and time of cog­ nitive workers, productive activity has the character of recombinant fragmentation in cellular form. Pulsating cells of work are lit and ex­ tinguished in the large control room of global production. **Infolabor is innately precarious, not because of the contingent viciousness of em­ployers but for the simple reason that the allocation of work time can be disconnected from the individual and legal person of the worker, an ocean of valorizing cells convened in a cellular way and recombined by the subjectivity of capital. It is appropriate to reconceptualize the relationship between re­ combinant capital and immaterial labor, and it is advisable to obtain a new framework of reference**. Given the impossibility, from now on, of reaching a contractual elaboration of the cost of work by basing it on the legal person-because productive abstract labor is disconnected from the individual person of the worker-the traditional form of the wage is no longer operative, since it can't guarantee anything anymore. Therefore, the recombinant character of cognitive labor seems incom­patible with any possibility of social recomposition or subjectivation. The rules of negotiation, collaboration, and conflict have changed, not because of a political decision, but because of a technical and cultural change in the labor relationship. The rules are not immutable, and there is no rule which forces us to comply with the rules. The legalist Left has never understood this. Fixed on the idea that it is necessary to comply with the rules, it has never known how to carry out confronta­ tion on the new ground inaugurated by digital technologies and the globalized cycle of infolabor. The neoliberals have understood this very well and they have subverted the rules that were laid down in a century of trade union history. In the classical mode of industrial production, the rule was based on a rigid relationship between labor and capital, and on the possibil­ ity of determining the value of goods on the basis of socially necessary working time. But in the recombining stage of capital based on exploi­ tation of fluid infowork, there is no longer any deterministic relation between labor and value. We should not aim to restore the rules that neoliberal power has violated; **we should invent new rules adequate to the fluid form of the labor-capital relation**, where there is no longer any quantitative time­ value determinism and, thus, where there is no longer any necessary constant in economic relations**. How can we oppose the systemic depersonalization** of the work­ ing class and the slavery that is affirmed in the command of precarious and depersonalized work? This is the question that is posed **with insis­ tence by whomever still has a sense of human dignity**. Nevertheless, no answer comes, because the forms of resistance and struggle that were efficacious in the twentieth century appear to no longer have the ca­ pacity to spread and consolidate, nor, consequently, can they stop the absolutism of capital. We have learned from the experience of workers' struggle in re­ cent years that the struggle of precarious workers does not become a cycle, does not leave a social sediment of consciousness, organization, and solidarity. Fractalized work can also intermittently rebel, but this does not set any wave of struggle in motion. The reason is easy to un­ derstand. **In order for struggles to form a cycle there must be** a spatial proximity of laboring bodies and **an existential temporal continuit**y. Without this proximity and this continuity, we lack the conditions for cellularized bodies to become a community.

#### Only the collective can control the subjectivity and power necessary to have existential continuity and solve cap. This is contrary to capitalist logic, which suppresses the crowd in favor of individualism. Dean 16:

Jodl Dean, “Crowds and Party” 2016 //LHP AV

Conclusion **If the subject is interpellated as an individual, the strengths of many become the imaginary attributes of one**. **The individual appears as the locus of a capacity for innovation and interruption that is only ever an effect of collectivities**. If **bourgeois ideology is the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions** of 69 existence, as we learn from Althusser, **these conditions will be represented repeatedly as individual matters of individual preference and choice**, belief, and circumstance. **The contradictions constitutive of capitalist relations will exist side by side**, appearing as so many dreams or neuroses. **Collectivity**, in turn, **will be figured derivatively, in the shadow of the individual** such that the subjectivity it evinces fails to appear as an effect of a subject. **Rather than as the dynamic force of the crowd, desire appears as personal longing**. Rather than an inescapable circuit of activity, drive appears as addiction. **While the subject of psychoanalysis is not the reasonable, self-aware subject of liberalism, when the unconscious is rendered as that of an individual, psychoanalysis is drafted into its service as covert support for an individuated subjectivity conceived in terms of a rational and knowable will. Recognizing the collective as a subject becomes all the more challenging because the terms of what counts as the act of a subject are truncated and distorted.** Rather than heterogeneous, conflictual, temporary, unbounded, and in need of support from objects and figures that exceed it, the subject as individual is impossibly, fantastically independent and enduring. **The crowd becomes unconscious again in the continued operation of enclosure effected by the individual form.** Althusser asks why the **relation given to individuals of their collective material life is an imaginary relation**. My answer is that **it is imaginary because it is given to them as individuals**. Althusser, though, tries a different explanation, one that emphasizes practices of belief—kneeling, praying, shaking hands. He wants to get at the material dimension of ideology in practices, but he misses the ways these practices are collective, generic. In themselves, they are not individuating but rather the practices of a body of believers, a collectivity. Deploying Freud as backup, Althusser nevertheless asserts that individuals are always-already subjects, particularly to the extent that they are born into a family, a place: "it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable."1°2 His assertion points not to the inevitability of subjection but to the specificity of interpellation as an individual in the bourgeois family. In this regard, Althusser intermixes generic and naming practices, failing to distinguish between those that involve groups and those that single out an individual by name. Le Bon is an odious reactionary. The Crowd sounds the alarm, alerting elites to the threat of mass power and giving the rest of us a window into the will formed, expressed, and unleashed as that of a collective subject. **Collectivity brings with it a sense of invincibility, an immense courage and capacity to put self-interest aside**. **It is accompanied by an unshakeable equality, a demand for justice that Freud acknowledges** even as he derives it from an original envy. **The "exciting causes" of the crowd's directed intensity are unpredictable and temporary, which adds to the anxiety of elites endeavoring to hold onto the privilege they associate with their individuality before they are themselves swept up,** compelled into thoughts and actions they abhor. Destructive, creative, unpredictable, temporary, and intense: **the crowd expresses the paradoxical power of the people as subject.**

#### Capitalism is a death cult and the apocalypse is already happening. Without an unshakable commitment to the total and complete rejection of the fetishization capitalist value, we will all die like the dinosaurs, Allinson 21

Allinson, J. (2021). *The tragedy of the worker: towards the proletarocene*. Verso Books. pg 8-17

Capitalism, like certain bacteria, like the death-drive, is immortal. It has its limits and crises but, perversely, seems to *thrive* on these. Unlike the multi- species life-systems powering it, **the only *terminal* limit to capital’s perpetual augmentation is**, if driven towards from within, external: **either revolution or human extinction**; communism, or the common ruin of the contending classes. Long ago, both Max Weber and Walter Benjamin saw an occulted religious foundation in capitalist civilisation. As Michael Löwy points out, Benjamin, by defining capitalism as a cultic religion, went much farther than Weber in identifying a Puritan/Capitalist guilt-driven imperative to accumulate. ‘The duration of the cult’, for Benjamin, ‘is permanent’. There are ‘no days which are not holidays’, and ‘nothing has meaning that is not immediately related to the cult’. In what sense is capitalism a cult? What are its rituals, its fetishes? Those of investment, speculating, buying and selling. It has no dogma other than those ‘real abstractions’, as Alfred Sohn-Rethel put it, entailed by its rituals. In Sohn-Rethel’s words, the act of commodityexchange is the key exemplar of a social action governed by an abstraction of which the participants have no consciousness. The buyer may be concerned only with the sensuous particularities of the commodity, the needs it fills, but behaves, structurally, in the moment of exchange as though what matters is the quantity of exchange-value embedded in it. Ritual action determines dogma; social being, that is, determines consciousness. Capitalist theology, however, instates not dogma but unyielding imperatives governing action. ‘Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!’, Marx sarcastically withered in *Capital.* **Accumulation is, for capital, an imperative, not an option**. To exist as a unit of capital in conditions of universal competition is to accumulate or die. As long, therefore, as there is labour-power to exploit and, in Jason W Moore’s term, ‘cheap nature’ to appropriate, capital will augment itself. This very bifurcation of life into the exploitable and the appropriable, which Moore identifies as the foundation of a ‘Cartesian dualism’ unsustainably counterposing ‘Nature’ to ‘Society’, is not dogma but programme. It is related to a distinctive move of capitalist theology, currently given right- Evangelical sanction by Calvin Beisner and the Cornwall Declaration, to disavow in practice the existence of inherent physical limits. It posits, in its action, the earth as limitless cornucopia over which humans have dominion, and from which limitless accumulation must be extracted. This disavowal, this ‘real abstraction’, is the social basis of capitalist *implicatory denial:* the seemingly evidence-proof conviction of capitalist states that capitalogenic climate change can be remedied by means, and according to systems, that guarantee its perpetuation. The capitalocentric purview is commonly, but mistakenly, identified with the anthropocentrism of ancient and medieval monotheisms. Here, however, it is clearly *not* the Anthropos that stands at the centre, as though appointed by God to steward the garden of earth. At the centre is the ritual: that unconditional imperative to accumulate. And insofar as this imperative drives ‘adorers’, as Benjamin put it, to the horizon of human extinction, **capitalism** can – **must** – **be described as a death** **cult**. **Fossil capital** **is** but **one modality of** **the death cult**, albeit a paragon. **The ‘externalities’ of capital – climate chaos, biosphere destruction, resource depletion, topsoil erosion, ocean acidification, mass extinction, the accumulation of chemical, heavy metal, biological and nuclear wastes – extend far beyond the specific catastrophe of a carbonised atmosphere.** Capitalism is a comprehensive system of work-energetics. The food industry, which powers waged labour, and is key to the shifting value of labour-power itself, is as central to the deterioration of the biosphere as is fossil-fuelled transit. Nonetheless, the continuing decision for fossil fuels as a solution to the energy demands of capitalist production, for all the growing denial of climate-change denial among the antivulgarian ruling class, for all their concerned mouth music, is an exemplary case of the capitalist imperative of competitive accumulation at work. As Andreas Malm has fiercely and beautifully argued, **capitalism did not settle for fossil fuels as a solution to energy scarcity. The common assumption that fossil energy is an *intrinsically* valuable energy resource worth competing over**, and fighting wars for **is**, as geographer Matthew Huber argues, **an example of fetishism. At the onset of steam power, water was abundant, and, even with its fixed costs, cheaper to use than coal.** The hydraulic mammoths powered by water wheels required far less human labour to convert to energy, and were more energy-efficient. **Even today, only a third of the energy in coal is actually converted in the industrial processes dedicated thereto: the only thing that is efficiently produced is carbon dioxide. On such basis, the striving for competitive advantage by capitalists seeking maximum market control ‘should’ have favoured renewable energy.** Capital, however, preferred the spatio-temporal profile of stocks due to the internal politics of competitive accumulation. **Water use necessitated communal administration, with its perilously collectivist implications**. Coal, and later oil, could be transported to urban centres, where workers were acculturated to the work-time of capitalist industry, and hoarded by individual enterprises. This allowed individual units of capital to compete more effectively with one another, secured the political authority of capital and incorporated workers into atomised systems of reproduction, from transport to heating.  **Thus, locked in by the short-termist imperatives of competitive accumulation, fossil capital assumed a politically privileged position within an emerging world capitalist ecology**. It monopolised the supply of energy for dead labour, albeit in a highly inefficient way. This is the tragedy of the worker. That, as avatar of a class in itself, she was put to work for the accumulation of capital, from capitalism’s youth, amid means of production not of her choosing, and with a telos of ecological catastrophe. **That thus, even should the proletariat become a class for itself, and even if it does so at a point of history where the full horror of the methods of fossil capitalism is becoming clear, it would – will – inherit productive forces inextricable from mass, trans-species death. This does not preclude systemic, planet-wide transformatio**n. Particularly given the inevitably uneven global growth of class consciousness and resistance, however, and the concomitant embattledness of any reformist, let alone revolutionary, power on the global stage, **it does ensure that it faces extraordinary barriers**. As will become clear**. As of 2015, estimates suggested that humanity produced a total of 15.5 trillion watts of energy each year, of which a considerable 29 per cent was not used**. At an average of 2,000 watts per person (rising to 10,000 watts in the core capitalist economies), the majority was used for industry, commerce and transit, with only 22 per cent for household consumption. Some 90 per cent of this output was powered by fossil fuels: oil, coal, gas. This monopoly, enabling superprofits as monopolies do, ensured that fossil capital would always realise profit margins far higher than the industrial average. It has, in Malm’s term, become worth a ‘planet of value’. Each fossil fuel plant represents decades of investment awaiting realisation.  **To avert planetary disaster is to inflict an earth-sized blow on capitalist industry. It is to choose between burning a planet of value, and burning the planet itself.** But the death cult is so strong, so pervasive, that, against all resistance, the choice has already been made. **Apocalypse has begun. The button has been pushed**. Humanity is already committed to irreversible climate change. In May of 2020, levels of CO2 in the atmosphere hit 417 parts per million, the highest ever recorded – and the first breach of 400 ppm since the Pliocene. Climate activists are, in Richard Wilbur’s phrase, ‘mad-eyed from stating the obvious’. To understand the scale of what faces us, and the way it ramifies into every corner of our lives, is to marvel that we aren’t having emergency meetings in every city, town and village every week. **We are, increasingly, out of time. In** the capitalist *untimelich,* the time of the living and the time of the dead, human history and the history of inorganic sediments, collide. ‘Millions of years of concentrated solar energy’, as Huber calls it, have been released in an historical blink of an eye, only to rebound just as fast: the Deep Time equivalent of an asteroid strike. **The cyclical time of seasons turns freakish, leaving us uneasily sweating in the clammy mid-winter. Spring comes too early, hurricane-force winds and flash floods break the October calm, polar ice melts while temperate zones are plunged into polar winter. The Arctic burns, boreal forests turned to charred sticks. The Greenland ice sheet melts even in winter. Antarctic sea ice has suddenly and drastically contracted in recent** **years**. The polar vortex wanders, perturbed, and the mid-West freezes. In a parody of Revelations, Mediterranean storms rain fish on the island of Malta. **Stochastic weather events accumulate. Birds fall dead from the sky.** The progression of geological deep time, with its periods, eras and epochs speeds up so rapidly that it precipitates a crisis in the temporal order itself: spinning so fast, we may as well be standing still. The progressive time of human civilisation, reduced to the endless accumulation of stuff, collapses into nonsense. The cycle of ice ages, a necessary condition for human evolution, melts away for eternity. With awareness of which comes a wave of eco-anxiety, for which we grope for names – Glenn Albrecht’s ‘solastalgia’, Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis’s ‘ecological grief’, Renee Lertzmann’s ‘environmental melancholia’. Even at the end of 2018, 70 per cent of Americans describing themselves as ‘worried’ about climate change, and it has been a long two years for that fear to wax. **The sixth mass extinction, signalled by what one study calls ‘biological annihilation’, is underway**. **The oceans, which produce roughly half of the oxygen we breathe, are acidifying, and are swept by heatwaves, says a recent study, ‘like wildfire’. Coral reefs, home to a quarter of marine life, are bleaching. Insect biomass collapses, with 40 per cent of all species undergoing drastic decline**. **The bees, that once we believed were saved, are disappearing eight times faster than are mammals, birds or reptiles. Without their pollination work, 70 per cent of the crops that feed 90 per cent of the planet will fail**. **The question of human survival is inextricable from that of what sort of humans we should be. By 2070, MIT research says, the new norm for ‘many billions’ of people will be impossibly high temperatures that will kill less fit people and make outdoor work impossible. Half a billion will experience temperatures that would ‘kill even healthy people in the shade within six hours’**. **The Arctic, that ‘sluggish and congealed sea’ discovered by Pytheas, a breathing ‘mixture like sea-lung’, will be gone, on conservative estimates by 2040.** In 2019, the usually snow-bowed woodlands circling this uncanny sea-continent burned more fiercely than ever. Precise metrics of the scale of what will unfold are to be determined, not least by class struggle, but there is no longer, if there ever was, a choice between adaptation and mitigation. **So adapt. But to what?** Those species now going extinct were once well adapted. The widely accepted geo-logism, ‘Anthropocene’, is in one sense an obvious political evasion, diluting as it does the necessary focus on capital accumulation itself. Yet, of course, capitalism is something that the human species, and no other, does. And while there are unthinkably vast disparities in power and responsibility in the production of petro-modernity, the latter has had a proven – if, crucially, hardly irrevocable – popular base: the vatic rage of activists notwithstanding, no politician has been crucified for promising fuel tax cuts. This fact can easily be weaponised by the right. Of the recent protests of the gilets jaunes in France against declining wages and rising inequality and sparked by a rise in diesel tax later reversed by Macron faced by the scale of the protests, Trump tweeted that ‘[p]eople do not want to pay large sums of money ... in order to maybe protect the environment’. In fact, however, and allowing that the movement is hardly monolithic, the French uprising was characterised by a remarkable *refusal to refuse* to engage with questions of ecology, particularly compared, say, to the fuel- price protests in the UK in 2000 and 2005. Far from being characterised by ecological indifference, what characterised much of the French protest was disagreement between those for whom talk of ecology comes too soon, and those for whom such talk is inextricable from social – class – justice. One example of the former is visible in the claim of the prominent activist Jerôme Rodriguez that ‘[e]ventually, when we obtain the first things, ecology will have its place’; of the latter, the words of another, François Boulot, that ‘[t]he social and ecological emergencies are inseparable’, that ‘[w]e will not be able to operate the ecological transition without an equitable wealth redistribution’. Rodriguez’s rationale for his position, that ‘nowadays, people aren’t concentrated on this’, is not supported by the superlative gilets jaunes slogans, ‘End of the month, end of the world: same perpetrators, same fight’, and ‘More ice sheets, fewer bankers’. This refusal to compartmentalise is energising evidence of the new politicisation of the moment. Still, that not everyone opposed to the fuel tax rise has been so assiduous in drawing the connections is in part because the dispersed, privatised accommodation and individualised transportation of modern life offer individualised, immediate-term and distinctively capitalist answer to specifically human strivings. The concept of the Anthropocene is a tacit acknowledgment that the alienated labour of humanity has itself become a selective evolutionary pressure. It has already forced rapid adaptation in some species, where it has not resulted in extinction, as Bernard Kettlewell’s experiments with peppered moths show. The besooting of tree bark in industrial areas became a powerful selective force, favouring darker moths, harder for birds to see and pick off**. Now such pressures are coming for us, as powerful as the asteroid strike behind the Cretaceous-Paleogene mass extinction. We are compelled to adapt to ourselves.** From this point of view, there is no difference between adaptation and mitigation. **To close the fossil fuel plants, to destroy a planet of value, or even, dare we hope, the value-form itself:** are these not adaptations**?** Of course, this is not what is generally meant by adaptation. Implicit is a Green Zone-style survivalism of the rich; explicitly touted are permanent adaptations of capitalism to the consequences of capitalism. The ideology of ‘adaptation’ has become the ideology of capitalism’s triumph over all life.

## Part 2 – Microwork

#### Microwork preys on the marginalized – individuals label data and do scattered freelance tasks key to the existence of the wealthy tech companies responsible for their displacement under a brutal capitalist system – Jones 21,

Jones, Phil. (Phil Jones is a researcher for the think tank Autonomy. He regularly writes for publications such as the London Review of Books, the Guardian, the New Statesman and Novara Media). Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism. Verso Books, 2021. // LHP AB

**A woman living in Kenya**’s Dadaab, **among the world’s largest refugee camps, wanders** across the vast, dusty site **to a central hut lined with computers**. Like many others who have been **brutally displaced** and then warehoused at the margins of our global system, her **days are spent toiling away for a** new **capitalist vanguard thousands of miles away in Silicon Valley**. 1 A day’s work might include labelling videos, transcribing audio or showing algorithms how to identify various photos of cats. **Amid a drought of real employment, clickwork represents one of few ‘formal’ options for Dadaab’s residents, though the work is volatile, arduous and, when waged, paid by the piece.** Cramped and airless workspaces, festooned with a jumble of cables and loose wires, are the built antithesis to the near celestial campuses where the new masters of the universe reside. **In the hour it takes Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to make $13 million, a refugee earns mere cents teaching his algorithms to spot a car – each task a stretching of the gulf between the vast and growing ghettos of disposable life and a capitalist vanguard of intelligent bots and billionaire tycoons.2** The barbaric and sublime bound in a single click. The same economy of clicks determines the fates of refugees across the Middle East. Forced to adapt their sleeping patterns to meet the needs of firms on the other side of the planet and in different time zones, **the largely Syrian population of Lebanon’s Shatila** camp forgo their dreams to serve those of distant capitalists.3 **Their nights are spent labelling footage of urban areas – ‘house’, ‘shop’, ‘car’ – labels that, in a grim twist of fate, map the streets where the labellers once lived, perhaps for automated drone systems that will later drop their payloads on those very same streets**.4 So opaque are the sites on which they labour that it is impossible to establish with any certainty the precise purpose or beneficiaries of their work. Just next door, jobless Palestinians are made the targets of M2Work, a collaborative project between Nokia and the World Bank, which aims to give ‘the most underprivileged people in the world’ access to new forms of microemployment.5 Dedicated to ‘job creation’ in the Global South, the World Bank undoubtedly sees Palestine’s 30 per cent unemployment rate as an unmissable opportunity – an untapped source of cheap labour, readily brought into the sphere of global capital by the great telecom networks on which our brave ‘new economy’ rests. M2Work is only one of many ‘impact sourcing’ ventures that uses microwork to reach once inaccessible segments of the global workforce. **The NGO Lifelong, run by the company Deepen AI, trains Syrian refugees to annotate data for** the likes of **Google and Amazon.6 Similarly, the notfor-profit platform Samasource trains refugees in Uganda, Kenya and India to complete short data tasks, and actively recruits refugees to work on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk.7 The platform’s motto, ‘give work, not aid’, perfectly encapsulates the ethos of such projects. Samasource coined the term ‘microwork’ to reflect the microloan projects to which it owes its ethos.** Like microfinance, banking schemes that offer loans to the jobless and poor, an aggressive faith in markets as panacea justifies projects that serve only to trap nations in cycles of debt, war and poverty. **Microwork comes with no rights, security or routine and pays a pittance – just enough to keep a person alive yet socially paralyzed. Stuck in camps, slums or under colonial occupation, workers are compelled to work simply to subsist under conditions of bare life.8 This unequivocally racialized aspect to the programmes follows the logic of the prison-industrial complex, whereby surplus – primarily black – populations are incarcerated and legally compelled as part of their sentence to labour for little to no payment.9 Similarly exploiting those confined to the economic shadows, microwork programmes represent the creep of something like a refugee-industrial complex.** It comes as little surprise that Samasource’s former CEO Leilah Janah opts for the more euphemistic ‘virtual assembly line’ in an effort to dress up immiseration as industrious dignity. 10 Though safer than the worst informal work – and in some cases more lucrative – microwork is often still the preserve of those with nowhere else to go. The truth is that microwork programmes often target populations devastated by war, civil unrest and economic collapse, not despite their desperate circumstances – as many advocates like Janah insist – but because of them. Such organisations know that workers in Nairobi’s Kibera slum or the shanty towns of Kolkatta are hardly in the position to protest low pay or meagre rights.**11This is the hidden abode of automation: a globally dispersed complex of refugees, slum dwellers and casualties of occupations, compelled through immiseration, or else law, to power the machine learning of companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon.** Take autonomous vehicles, a growing industry for many of the biggest platforms, estimated to be worth $54 billion in 2019 and well over $550 billion by 2026.12 So much of the labour that companies like Tesla require centres around the need for clean, annotated data to help its driverless vehicles navigate traffic. **Images taken from onboard cameras contain large amounts of raw visual data, which, to become useful, must first be categorised and labelled**. The labelled data then shows the car how to differentiate the urban environment and recognise everything from pedestrians and animals to road signs, traffic lights and other vehicles. Data training rarely takes place in-house. Instead, companies like Tesla outsource the work to the Global South. In 2018, more than 75 per cent of this data was labelled by Venezuelans facing the most desperate circumstances.13 In the aftermath of the country’s economic collapse, when inflation was pushing 1 million per cent, a significant number of the newly unemployed – including many former middle-class professionals – turned to microwork platforms like Hive, Scale and Mighty AI (acquired by Uber in 2019) to annotate images of urban environments, often for less than a dollar an hour. Though the anonymity granted requesters on these sites makes identifying the large companies they host close to impossible, one can speculate with some certainty that – in typical disaster capitalist style – Google, Uber and Tesla did very well out of Venezuela’s crisis. Estimates suggest that most data for autonomous vehicles continues to come from the country. 14 **From victims of economic collapse to refugees and slum dwellers, platform capitalism preys on the nominally superfluous – its profits the result of a multitude of minute tasks carried out by those chronically excluded from anything that even resembles proper employment. Held by the likes of Google and Facebook at the fringes of the labour market as a permanent shadowy reserve, they are neither quite employed nor unemployed. Hired for all of a minute to show an algorithm how to identify a pedestrian, then flung back onto the reserve pile to search for another task, workers constantly oscillate between the two states.**

#### Micro and platform workers striking would crush big tech’s power over the masses – however, companies, aided by current national structures, stifle any opportunity for this, Jones 2

Jones, Phil. (Phil Jones is a researcher for the think tank Autonomy. He regularly writes for publications such as the London Review of Books, the Guardian, the New Statesman and Novara Media). Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism. Verso Books, 2021. // LHP AB

One might reasonably speculate that such promises account for why **these sites have seen no mass walkouts, no acts of data sabotage or algorithmic disruption, only a crowd so quiescent that accounts of the surplus as atavistic seem entirely misplaced**. For this reason, one might wonder whether microwork offers a route to trouble capital at all. It is evident that – **taken by sufficient numbers – strike action would ripple across the system as a whole. AI projects would sink as venture capital stagnates**; **algorithms would make unwanted decisions and dangerous mistakes.** Even on a smaller scale, a strike by content moderators would instantly swamp user feeds with violent and pornographic images. But **disruption on this scale is smothered before it can catch light**. A **message of solidarity from content moderators to Facebook employees, who chose to walk out after the firm failed to stop President Trump from using the site to incite racist violence, encapsulates** the **risks** such workers face: **We would walk out with you – if Facebook would allow it**. As outsourced contractors, **non-disclosure agreements deter us from speaking openly about what we do and witness for most of our waking hours**… In contrast to the official Facebook employees, NDAs also **prevent us from voicing concerns** and contributing to the public discussion about inevitable ethical challenges connected to the job. We would walk out with you – if we could afford it. At the moment, content moderators have no possibility, no network or platform or financial security – especially when we are atomized in pandemic and **remotely micromanaged** – to stage an effective walkout **without risking** fines, our income and even our **right to stay in the countries where we live** and work.3 Paralysed by **legal and software architectures that replace bodies with avatars, crush conflict with account closures, or else gag users with NDAs, workers stand at a growing pressure point unable to make a move**. The more general that AI becomes to producing and circulating bodies and things, the more fragile capital is to disruptions affecting the flow of data. But **the more machine learning suffuses the labour process, smoothing tensions through surveillance and gamification, the less likely disruptions become**. As algorithmic control **suffocates worker action before it can take a breath**, too readily is the shout of the crowd sublimated into the gentle hum of software code. Such inertia is not unique to microworkers but displays the wider torpor of today’s worker movement, **unable to move against a system no longer reliant on labour to anything like the degree of the postwar period**. In the twilight of industrial growth, bargaining power has diminished, union membership has declined and, as the aborted democratic efforts of Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn suggest, conditions necessary for something like a mass labour party – dependent as it is on a now largely defanged worker movement – have all but vanished. **Platforms have moved into the space evacuated by worker power and have reasserted capital’s dominance over labour in ways reminiscent of the early industrial period**. It is hard not to conclude that this ‘**late-capitalist triage of humanity’ has foreclosed all avenues for labour**. 4 Unities without Unions **Defined by superfluity, exclusion and informality rather than a wage, microworkers pose a particular challenge to labour organisers**, whether looser worker associations or the more typical institutions of organised labour. **Everything from the international geography of microwork to the pools of surplus labour on which platforms draw makes their organisation an uphill struggle**. Monthly or annual models of union membership run up **against microwork’s temporal dynamics**, with workers joining sites daily and some staying for only brief periods. With ‘contracts’ between microworkers and requesters lasting mere minutes, sometimes only seconds, wages are so volatile that membership fees are likely unaffordable. Even if unionization were financially viable, **unions** so often **relate to** their **members through identities** of a professional or occupational nature, to which **microwork offers only an unequivocal negation**. One finds no clearly demarcated occupations, **no sectors or vocations**, only the loose array of odd jobs so typical of our low-growth economy. New unions like the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), which organises workers by precarious contract rather than occupational status, offer rays of light against this bleak backdrop. But even if such unions were the rule rather than the exception, microwork often takes place in slums, camps, prisons and occupied territories, places where unions fail to reach and organising ranges from dangerous to criminal activity. Even outside of these more extreme spaces, **workers** tucked away in bedrooms and internet cafes **remain invisible to one another and** to the **institutions that might otherwise organise them**. Workers are geographically dispersed, rarely if ever brought together in physical space. On labour platforms where action has been effective, meeting in town and city centres has been a central tenet of organisation. As Callum Cant, a key organiser on Deliveroo, explains: Deliveroo began to further increase the labour supply… More riders started working every evening, but the number of orders stayed the same. That meant that we worked less, earned less and spent more time at the zone centre. As we stopped going drop to drop, everyone started to get to know each other. I got used to starting work by joining a crowd of between five and thirty workers waiting at the cyclists zone centre.5 Attempts to discipline workers by flooding supply only served to bring together an otherwise fragmented workforce and provide the grounds from which to organise. Such face-to-face meetings seeded a swell of wildcat strikes in Brighton, London, Southampton, Newcastle, Oxford, and other British cities.6 Yet, this chain of events is hard to imagine being set in motion by those who encounter each other only as online avatars. **Organisation thrives on a public dimension that microwork sites prevent, not only by geographical distance but software frontiers that limit worker contact**. Such barriers restrict organisation to the less than ideal terrain of online forums. Users of TurkerNation and MTurkGrind, as well as Turker-themed Reddit threads, engage in small-scale, nonantagonistic action such as raising funds for fellow workers.7 Such action has been most effective when aimed at the architectures of specific sites. **Pushing back against one-sided review systems, Turkers have developed Turkopticon, a website and browser plug-in that overlays the worker’s screen and allows them to write reviews about requesters and publish them in real time**.8 The simple fact of the tool’s existence – letting requesters know they might be rated – itself acts as a **deterrent against wage theft** and other misdemeanours. But while the plug-in helps to discipline requester behaviour, it is not built to transform the platforms themselves. Alone it carries little potential as a tool for mass mobilisation, even if it does show that workers can collectively organise. Built to modulate requester behaviour rather than to unleash worker power, its role remains more reform than revolution. The impact of efforts to make platforms behave better has been as limited as other attempts to tame capital’s nastier elements. **In a 2011 letterwriting campaign, workers on Mechanical Turk wrote to Jeff Bezos asking him to raise the price of their labour and improve the site’s functions. The letters sought to show Bezos – and the rest of the world – ‘that Turkers are not only actual human beings, but people who deserve respect, fair treatment and open communication.**’9 In one letter, the CEO was told in no uncertain terms: ‘I am a human being, not an algorithm.’10 Hosted **on We Are Dynamo, a forum set up for and by workers to organise on the site, the campaign remains the only action Turkers have successfully organised**. During the forum’s limited period of operations **members could post campaign ideas and vote on those of others**, giving workers a means to mobilise around popular suggestions. It aimed, in the words of its architects, to create ‘publics that are just large enough to take action – **unities without unions’**, standing in for more traditional labour institutions that had so far ignored the site or were otherwise unable to represent its users.11 But We Are Dynamo did not last long. **The site relied on Mechanical Turk to host tasks verifying the status of new members** as real ‘Turkers’. **Once Amazon realised what was happening, it immediately closed Dynamo’s account, cutting off** the forum’s **source of new members**.12 That We Are Dynamo was so quickly defeated indicates the Sisyphean task such workers face as they attempt to organise collectively. The letter campaign still represents the sole action taken by Turkers. And though effective at drawing media attention to those working on the platform – arguably a first step toward more robust forms of action – the **campaign’s result was to humanise rather than organise workers**. The limits of such action mirror the limits of an atomized workforce, forced to meet through informal online means, and unable for lack of power or money to turn action into something more durable. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that no such campaigns have appeared around sites such as Playment and Appen. To condemn such tools on these grounds, though, would be naive, for **at the very least they raise to consciousness a common collective struggle**. Where the tactics of traditional unions have signally failed to meet the challenges of a digital world, forums and plug-ins have been leveraged into new forms of worker association, even under the menacing shadow of disabled accounts, bad reviews and NDAs. Whether these associations can translate a nascent digital militancy into a proper movement still remains to be seen.

#### Platform and micro-work functions to evade legal protections by situating workers in a third zone of sub-employment as neither workers nor non-workers. All future labor rights including striking depend on the firm classification of micro-work as work.

#### Thus, the plan: A just government ought to recognize the unconditional right of platform and micro-workers to strike. This is the only way to firmly assert their status as workers rather than fragmented surplus populations, raising their class consciousness along with providing tools for resistance Leterme and Anne

Dufresne, Anne, and Cédric Leterme. “App Workers United.” The Left in the European Parliament, European Parliamentary Group, Jan. 2021, [https://mirador-multinationales.be/IMG/pdf/study\_empl\_version\_finale\_en.pdf. //](https://mirador-multinationales.be/IMG/pdf/study_empl_version_finale_en.pdf.%20//) LHP AB

**The vast majority of micro-tasking platforms classify their workers as self-employed**. **As with other workers in on-demand platforms, this deprives them of the protections afforded by labour** and social security **law**. Concerning “crowdwork”, several initiatives (mostly German and American) have emerged to encourage platforms and “requesters” to improve the working conditions of micro-workers, who are particularly precarious. The idea is to encourage clickworkers to join forces, reducing the asymmetry of information they experience vis-à-vis platforms and clients (Irani & Silberman, 2013). FairCrowdWork: a trade union counter platform In Germany, the IG Metall union, the most powerful in Europe, both strategically and financially, has launched a crowdsourcing code of conduct, the result of a voluntary commitment with the country's largest platforms. The Frankfurt Declaration argues that “platform operators, workers, worker organisations, clients, researchers, and regulators must work together to bring democracy to these new digital workplaces” (FairCrowdWork, 2016). From the declaration, this has involved rating crowdwork platforms, including both assessments based on the terms of service offered to workers, but also workers own reviews of the platforms (FairCrowdWork, 2017). As Heeks (2017, 23) has argued, this is the only “existing code or standard of specific relevance to the digital gig economy.” (cited in Graham, Woodcock, 2018). For example, the signatory platforms, in cooperation with the union IG Metall, have set up a mediation office through which employees can report disputes with platform operators. The website FairCrowdWork.org for platform workers, set up in 2016, is a trade union initiative of IG Metall, but also includes the Austrian Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Confederation of Trade Unions (OGB) and the Swedish white-collar union Unionen94 . FairCrowdWork collects and disseminates information on working conditions for a dozen crowdwork platforms, including the giant Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT). Finally, IG Metall has also worked with the inventors of TurkOpticon, an alternative platform bringing together the workers of AMT)95. It allows workers to evaluate applicants who post tasks to be performed. This is a “place for workers to help one another with information and their experiences about employers” (Turkopticon, 2017). This was achieved by developing a browser plugin to allow workers to review the work tasks, attempting to reverse the Panopticon-like surveillance of the platform (hence the name). In addition to this, there is a forum for workers to communicate. The project itself began from surveys of workers on the platform, and sought to build upon this, involving workers and their views in the strategy. This intervention provides one way to overcome the barriers between workers created by the platform organisation (Graham, Woodcock, 2018: 247). The Fairwork Foundation and the ILO: Towards “Decent” Platform Work It is in this context that the Fairwork Foundation was born, launched in autumn 2017 in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It bringstogether the expertise ofseveral universities on platforms’ working practices and conditions. Fairwork's objectives are to imagine and help to achieve a “fairer” platform economy offering better conditions to its workers. To this end, Fairwork highlights the best and worst practices of this new economy. The Foundation brings together platforms, workers, trade unions, regulators and academics. It has set up a rating system based on certifications, certificates, guidelines, and “schemes that are able to carefully distinguish between platforms that offer workers a fair deal and those that do not. The initial set of criteria for fair digital work build directly on the fifteen criteria established for crowdwork by IG Metall (see detailed list in Annex G)”, and which concerns in particular remuneration, working conditions, the employment contract, algorithmic management and employee representation. These criteria are used to evaluate the platforms. They are intended as a starting point and will be refined and improved in a regular multiparty dialogue with workers, unions, platforms, and scholars. In October 2019, Fairwork published its first annualreport, including analyses and ratingsfrom 22 platforms active in Germany, India and South Africa96. The Fairwork Foundation is part of the “decent work” framework proposed by the ILO (2013), which it considers to be a good platform for analysing working conditions. This concept is based on the conviction “that core transparent production networks can lead to better working conditionsfor digital workers around the world. For digital workers, it addresses the twofold structural weakness that they face: first, the lack of ability to collectively bargain due to the fragmentation of the work process; and second, the asymmetry of information between workers and platforms. The certification process provides an important means to address these two challenges, along with building and developing connections between workers and institutions like trade unions and regulatory bodies.” (Graham, Woodcock, 2018: 251). These certification processes maintain the illusion that it ought to be enough to “encourage” the platforms to improve the working conditions of micro-workers. But beyond this, **wouldn't the issue at stake be rather to question the very concept of micro-work?** Despite the disastrous working conditions revealed by the surveys (2018b), neither the foundation linked to the ILO nor the trade union network are questioning this concept, believing that it is possible to reconfigure the modalities of this type of work in order to improve workers' conditions. What they are in fact doing is proposing to adapt labour law and social protection systems to meet the platforms’ demands (Annex G), and not the other way around. **From a “social dialogue” perspective and in line with the logic of “Fair trade”, they greatly underestimate the need for workers, firstly to achieve a balance of power and then force the platforms to regulate the work done on the platforms scattered across the globe.** Indeed, while the certification stage can be interesting for a better understanding of the working conditions at stake and therefore what the demands ought to be, **if micro-work has to exist at all, the building of a power relationship with the trade union movement remains necessary not to “encourage” but rather to “force” the platforms to improve the conditions of micro-work**. 2.4 BATTLE FOR THE VERY CONTOURS OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY **Legal battles are currently raging over the status and rights of platform workers, as unions seek to renew their representation and collective bargaining practices.** At the same time, there is another

#### CONTINUES

Dufresne, Anne, and Cédric Leterme. “App Workers United.” The Left in the European Parliament, European Parliamentary Group, Jan. 2021, [https://mirador-multinationales.be/IMG/pdf/study\_empl\_version\_finale\_en.pdf. //](https://mirador-multinationales.be/IMG/pdf/study_empl_version_finale_en.pdf.%20//) LHP AB

In response to the question raised by this study of how to fight effectively against the degraded status imposed upon workers by the platforms and the business model they are propagating, we have provided an answer based on the strategies used by the workers themselves and their representatives. **Platforms** such as Uber (2009) or Deliveroo (2013) **are now found in all major cities across Europe and all around the world. With all of the arrogance of multinationals operating outside of the law, they have flouted national social rights, plundered social security funds, and stolen data from those they refer to as their “collaborators”, who are essentially performing ‘naked’ labour, deprived of any rights whatsoever.** We define platform work as “naked labour”: it means poorly paid, with working hours that are too long and unstable, weak or non-existent social protection, largely fictitious “autonomy” and individualisation/fragmentation of labour relations that undermines the possibilities for organisation, representation and collective mobilisation. **These characteristics are not unique to platform work, but their cumulative and extreme nature is specific to it.** As is the large-scale collection and exploitation of data by the platforms, which are the only ones to be able to decide on and benefit from their use. **This social upheaval and large-scale data abuse occurs with the application posing as the sole commercial intermediary, shirking** the role and **responsibility of employer-platforms and which have become socially and societally irresponsible. Yet governments are allowing these predatory platforms to set themselves up. Illegality is becoming enshrined in law, informal work is becoming commonplace.** Amid this climate of legalising outlawed platformpractices and the urgency ofthe battle over platform workers’ future status, this study considered it important to study two strategies being used in the struggle: collective action and legal action which turn out to be complementary. In conclusion, for each of these two strategies, we extract the essential lessons and challenges, before opening up another, broader challenge:the need to redefine the very contours of the digital economy. Towards transnational collective action and new digital employment rights A first key lesson relates to the genuine achievements of the first strategy in the study directly targeting platforms: the progressive construction of a new collective “glocal” player. **Whilst the immediate results of the numerous mobilisations described may seem fragile and limited, the fact that they even exist and are multiplying has above all enabled new collective actors to invent and reinvent new ways of acting and mobilising at different levels. We have seen how, at local level, platform workers are resorting to direct action and switch-off strikes with demands for concrete improvements in terms of pay or work organisation.** The trigger for the strikes is mostly the drop in “rates”. The collectives and unions also have some new weapons in their arsenal, such as media coverage, to try to push the platforms to negotiate. **They have also been developing new alliances with a wider front of precarious workers,** where collective organisation can think in terms ofsupply chains(with IT technicians, orthe permanentstaff working in customerservice, for instance), potentially **paving the way for a new “cybertariat**”. At European level, the European Couriers’ GA highlighted two main cross-cutting demands: data transparency and a minimum hourly wage. Aside from the two flagship themes mentioned above, four other categories of demands emerged: those relating to employment status, collective representation, working conditions in the stricter sense of the term, as well as more “political” issues such as broadening the reach to include other sectors and categories of workers. On his side, the international coordination Allianza UnidXs Charter includes the following demands: recognition of the work of digital workers, accident and life insurance, a “decent” wage, the elimination of the classification system, an end to arbitrary deactivation, and universal social insurance. The overlaps between the two charters, European and international, suggest that the common theme is precisely that of abolishing performance appraisals, which in fact reveals the intensification of work that is very specific to platform work. This demand is included as part of a more general demand: that of the transparency of applications and the reappropriation of the algorithm, essential claims today. There is still the big challenge of coordinating demands between countries in order to identify a real common substratum of demands, supported by proposals for coordinated action. In addition to the coordination of demands, **it is also the specifically digital nature of platform work which must now be taken into account in the demand for new “digital labour rights”, with, firstly, the consequences of “algorithmic management” on working conditions and, secondly, the place and role of data in the business model of platforms.**

Acting on the law: Towards new statuses for platform workers? **The second strategy** highlighted in the study **is “Acting on the Law”. It shows just how topical and important the battle over status is: a long-term process which largely conditions everything else.** After a disappointing start, the case law on reclassification has increasingly moved towards recognizing platform workers asfully-fledged employees, with a lot of favourable decisions(specially in Spain) over the last five years in the eight countries concerned in Europe106. The judgements are based on the fact that, even if formally the platform claims to have only an intermediation role from one individual to another, the judge notes that it actually exercises control over the courier, with numerous indications of subordination: the situation of platform workers, geolocalised, unable to set the price of their services, forced to respect working time restrictions, carry pre-determined equipment, likely to be “disconnected” by the platforms… This situation looks very different from that of real self-employed workers. The legal action undertaken by the couriers with a view to obtaining jurisprudence that is favourable to workers has been supported by the trade unions in each one of their countries. They are legally well armed and often have previous experience from other sectors, as the problem of bogus selfemployment arose long before the platform economy. This favourable case law, together with the media’s lens being shone on collective actions by couriers or drivers, has given a boost to the ongoing debates and legislative initiatives at State- and EU level around legislations specifically framing the legal status of platform workers. **In this context, a majority of governments support the “uberisation” of society and are participating in the unravelling of labour law.** So how can we fight on the legal front in a context of progressive legalisation by money or by the law of hitherto outlawed companies? **In the United States, Uber's Proposition 22**, which carries the status of the digital self-employed, **was imposed by referendum** and thanks to the funds injected into the campaign by the transport multinationals, contradicting the government of the state of California, which had succeeded in imposing wage-labour (salariat**). In Europe, third statuses** **with** both **disadvantages**: the subordination of wage-earners and the nonprotection of the self-employed **are the norm** in many Member States. Only the Spanish model seems to be holding fast against this strong trend and defending unconditional employment against any form of precarious status. **This is** also **what** Leila **Chabi**, a member of parliament from the political party La France Insoumise, **is advocating by bringing forward a draft directive that defends the idea that platform workers are salaried workers as such**. Collective AND legal action **In order to transform these accumulating social forces** (on the basis of favourable reclassification decisions and social mobilisation) into bargaining power or political victories, collectives, **trade unions and their allies will have to continue** the battle. This study reveals the eminently complementary nature of the two strategies being analysed: **collective AND legal action**. **The existing mobilisations being taken at different levels (local, national, European and international) support indeed the legal and political struggles favourable to platform workers. Today, it is indeed the struggle’s gathering pace and the building of a powerful collective actor that will open up the opportunity for a workers' victory in the ongoing battle over status. And conversely, it is by building on the victories of favourable case law, by extending this fundamental conquest to other possible future political victories that collective action can be strengthened.** **In this difficult context, the future of the Spanish law that defends unconditional wage-earning is therefore important not only for Spanish workers, but also because it can serve as a model in the political battle overthe future directive set to take place in the European institutionsin 2021.** The legal battle may run for a long time. **However, the legal victories so far and the debate that is just getting underway at European level testify to the accuracy and perseverance of the historical struggles in winning (back) the right to have rights.** Vigilance towards the contours of the digital economy Last but not least, a final challenge relates to a major oversight in the strategies currently being deployed to defend platform workers: the taking into account of broader developments affecting the functioning of the digital economy as a whole. As we have seen, platform work is part of broader changes taking place with the platformisation of economies and societies. Starting around the beginning of the 2000s, platformisation has progressively led to the forming of vast digital monopolies with their powerlargely being derived from a relative legal and regulatory vacuum on a whole series of key issues, beginning with the question of data. Against this backdrop, the main digital lobbies and their State-level backing are seeking to lock down their advantages and their business modelthrough international trade negotiations on “e-commerce” (Leterme, 2019). The most recent example of this offensive was at the WTO, with its eighty or so members launching controversial negotiations on this subject in 2019. The outcome of these negotiations may have a lasting effect on the possibilities to resist the growing power of digital platforms, through clauses such as the free flow of data across borders, a ban on data localisation measures or even the protection of source code and algorithms. If they came to pass, these clauses would render futile the platform workers’ efforts to achieve better control of their data or to improve the transparency of algorithms, for example (ITUC, 2019). At the same time, the European Union has also begun its own efforts on reforming the digital economy with its Digital Services Act. The overall prospectsforthe text, which is essentially aimed at the competitive functioning of the digital economy, does not bode well for the EU’s capacity to tackle the crucial challenges for platform workers, and workers in general, such as the socioeconomic rights linked to data or the legal status of platforms (Just Net Coalition, 2019). As we can see, whilstthese international and European developments do not directly concern platform workers’ working conditions, they are still laden with potential consequences for their current and future strategies. Thisrequiresfar more vigilance on these issues, but also (and most of all) the forming of alliances with other actors and/or sectors (which are multiplying all the time) that are mobilising to change the current course of the “digital transition” (JNC, 2019)

## Part 3 – The Comrade

#### The relationship of the comrade – one oriented toward a better future – provides the means necessary for organization to solve capitalism and create any coherent resistance movements, Dean 19:

JODI DEAN, January 18, 2019, “Capitalism is the End of the World” <https://mediationsjournal.org/articles/end-of-world> //LHP AV

Conclusion From the loss of comradeship Lessing describes, **we can salvage the comrade as form of political relation among those who desire collectivity**, **who see themselves as on the same side of a struggle for communism.** As a generic, abstract figure of political belonging, **comrade promises alienation and fulfillment: liberation from the constraints of racist patriarchal capitalism and a new relation born of collective political work toward an emancipatory egalitarian future**. **Exceeding a sense of politics as individual conviction and choice, comrade points to expectations of solidarity as indispensable to political action**. When we do things out of comradeship, **we show up to meetings we would miss, do political work we would avoid, and try to live up to our responsibilities to each other**. We experience the joy of committed struggle, of learning through practice. We overcome fears that might overwhelm us had we no choice but to confront them alone. **My comrades make me better, stronger, than I could ever be on my own. Some on the Left are skeptical of such political belonging**. Seeing comradely discipline only as constraint rather than as a decision to build collective capacity, **they substitute the fantasy that politics can be individual for the actuality of political struggle and movement**. **This substitution evades the fact that comradeship is a choice**. It also ignores the liberating quality of discipline: **when we have comrades, we are freed from the obligation to be and know and do everything – there is a larger collective** with a line, program, and set of tasks and goals; we are freed from the cynicism that parades as maturity because of the practical optimism that faithful work engenders. Discipline provides the support that frees us to make mistakes, learn, and grow. When we err – and each of us will – our comrades will be there to catch us, dust us off, and set us right. We aren’t abandoned to go it alone. Disorganized Leftists too often remain entranced by the illusion of everyday people spontaneously creating new forms of life that will usher in a glorious future. This **illusion fails to acknowledge the deprivations and decapacitations that forty years of neoliberalism have inflicted.** If it were true that austerity, debt, the collapse of institutional infrastructures, and capital flight enabled the spontaneous emergence of egalitarian forms of life, we would not see the enormous economic inequalities, intensification of racialized violence, declines in life expectancy, slow death, undrinkable water, contaminated soil, militarized policing and surveillance, and desolate urban and suburban neighborhoods that are now commonplace. Exhaustion of resources includes the exhaustion of human resources. **People often want to do something, but they don’t know what to do or how to do it.** **They may be isolated in non-unionized workplaces, over-burdened by multiple flex-time positions, stretched thin caring for friends and family. Disciplined organization, the discipline of comrades committed to common struggle for an emancipatory egalitarian future, can help here**. **Sometimes we want and need someone to tell us what to do because we are too tired and over-extended to figure it out for ourselves. Sometimes when we are given a task, we feel like our small efforts have larger meaning and purpose**, maybe even world-historical significance in the age-old fight of the people against oppression. **Sometimes just knowing that we have comrades who share our commitments, our joys, and our efforts to learn from defeats makes political work possible where it was not before.** Some Leftists agree with everything I’ve said thus far…and add “but.” But won’t we end up disappointed and betrayed**? Won’t it all ultimately fail (as it has so many times)?** What about the harms comrades have inflicted on each other in the name of comradeship? What about the persistence of sexism and racism, bigotry and bias? **What happens when we are no longer on the same side, when we cannot say “we” or acknowledge a side?** **The critical tendency to reject an idea because of a slew of possible future failures is widespread in left milieus. An intellectual façade masks a failure of political will that would be unconvincing in any other context** – don’t meet that person for coffee in case you fall in love and later have an expensive and hateful divorce. **Worries about the end foreclose possibilities of beginning. Relationships end. Failures happen. But failure is nothing to fear – it’s something to learn from, a next step. We lose our comrades. The fact of an end should not forestall beginning.**

#### Thus, the role of the ballot is promoting the politics of the comrade – a new relation towards an emancipatory future. This is a pre-fiat methodological resistance strategy that applies to debate.

#### Independently:

#### [1] Forms of fragmented politics completely cedes the political to capitalism. Engagement in under common communication is too individualized and resists collective and concrete change. This constitutes enjoyment of melancholic pleasures of being distanced and accommodated to the real world, and as a result remains stuck in parasitic oppression without change. Dean 13:

“Communist Desire”, Jodi Dean, , 2013, LHP AM

An emphasis on the drive dimension of melancholia, on Freud's attention to the way sadism in melancholia is 'turned round upon the subject's own self', leads to an interpretation of the general contours shaping the left that differs from Brown's**. Instead of a left attached to an unaclmowledged orthodoxy,** **we have one that has given way on the desire for communism, betrayed its historical commitment to the proletariat, and sublimated revolutionary energies into restorationist practices that strengthen the hold of capitalism**. **This left has replaced commitments to the emancipatory, egalitarian struggles of working people against capitalism - commitments that were never fully orthodox, but always ruptured, conflicted and contested - with incessant activity** (not unlike the manic Freud also associates with melancholia), and so **now satisfies itself with criticism and interpretation, small projects and local actions, particular issues and legislative victories, art, technology, procedures, and process**. It sublimates revolutionary desire to democratic drive, to the repetitious practices offered up as democracy (whether representative, deliberative or radical). **Having already conceded to the inevitably of capitalism, it noticeably abandons 'any striking power against the big bourgeoisie',** to return to Benjamin's language. For such a left, **enjoyment comes from its withdrawal from responsibility, its sublimation of goals and responsibilities into the branching, fragmented practices of micro-politics, self-care, and issue awareness**. Perpetually slighted, harmed and undone**, this left remains stuck in repetition, unable to break out of the circuits of drive in which it is caught** - unable because it enjoys. **Might this not explain why such a left confuses discipline with domination, why it forfeits collectivity in the name of an illusory, individualist freedom that continuously seeks to fragment and disrupt any assertion of a collective or a common?** The watchwords of critique within this structure of left desire are moralism, dogmatism, authoritarianism and utopianism - watchwords enacting a perpetual self-surveillance: has an argument, position or view inadvertently rukeo one of these errors? Even some of its militants reject party and state, division and decision, securing in advance an inefficacy sure to guarantee it the nuggets of satisfaction drive provides. **If this left is rightly described as melancholic, and I agree with Brown that it is, then its melancholia derives from the real existing compromises and betrayals inextricable from its history - its accommodations with reality, whether of nationalist war, capitalist encirclement, or so-called market demands.** Lacan teaches that, like Kant's categorical imperative, the super-ego refuses to accept reality as an explanation for failure. Impossible is no excuse - desire is always impossible to satisfy. A wide spectrum of the contemporary left has either accommodated itself, in one or another, to an inevitable capitalism or taken the practical failures of Marxism-Leninism to require the abandonment of antagonism, class, and revolutionary commitment to overturning capitalist arrangements of property and production. **Melancholic fantasy (the communist Master, authoritarian and obscene) as well as sublimated, melancholic practices (there was no alternative) shield this left, shield Ltd, from confrontation with guilt over such betrayal as they capture us in activities that feel productive, important, radical.**

#### 2] The only way to make radical change is through a process of finding a target and building a movement – targeted demands are key, Malm 21:

Malm, Andreas. “We Must Nationalise Total.” Versobooks.com, 2021, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/5168-we-must-nationalise-total.

Clearly, the situation is not the same. Our political world is completely different. That said, the First World War can be seen as the catastrophe that really began the twentieth century. Governments throughout the world, particularly in Europe, were prepared to send millions of soldiers to die on the battlefield without a valid reason. Individuals such as Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, known as Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg, then asserted that if we wanted to stop this catastrophe, we had to depose its artisans and transform the war into a political crisis. That is how the situation today is analogous. **We are faced with a chronic emergency which will continue for the long term and worsen on many fronts because we have ruling classes that maintain the driving forces of this ecological crisis. Our political task is** precisely that which Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg had to confront: **how to transform these moments of crisis, such as the pandemic, into political crises that shatter the driving forces behind these problems.** *You quote Lenin when he said that ‘to temporise in insurrection is death…It is impossible to save anything now by half-measures.’ There is no place here for reformism. Where do you situate yourself between the three classic branches of political transformation, i.e. reformism, revolutionary reformism and revolution?* If I understand you correctly, I would say **that I situate myself rather on the side of revolutionary reformism, because I do not think that the left or the climate movement should demand today the complete abolition of capitalism, should seek to make a clean slate. To start with, no revolution of that kind ever succeeded. Lenin himself did not demand such a thing, the Bolshevik slogan was peace, bread and land**. Those were the key demands that fuelled their revolutionary project. **The left has spent around two centuries trying to abolish capitalism, so far without success, and it finds itself today, throughout the world, in a state of unprecedented weakness. To imagine that we could pass from our dreadful present weakness to the total abolition of capitalism tomorrow is for me completely unrealistic. Besides, we have to act extremely rapidly given the timescale of the climate crisis, and we cannot give ourselves tasks that are impossible to accomplish in this short space of time. But it is precisely because the timescale is so short and the change needed so colossal that we have to attack the very powerful interests at the heart of the capitalist economy**. **Take Total for example – the largest French private company – which continues to grow in the Arctic or in East Africa by constructing what will soon be the longest oil pipeline in the world.****[[1]](https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/5168-we-must-nationalise-total" \l "_edn1" \o ") That must stop. We cannot have companies of this type, which profit from the expansion of fossil fuel production. These companies must be closed and transformed into something completely different. Those are the kinds of ‘reform’ I would like to see: nationalise Total, immediately end completely its production of oil and gas, and transform it into a company devoted to the capture and sequestration of atmospheric CO2, for example**. **To achieve this, we need a different kind of French state, acting in response to massive popular pressures. And if this reform were brought about, would it also open up a process of reorganisation of French society? I don’t know. But these are fundamental demands, concrete ones, that we have to formulate. At the stage of the conflict where we are at present, therefore, it is not a matter of saying that we have to get rid of the capitalist system from one day to the next, but certainly to formulate extremely basic and necessary demands** – in this case to take control of oil and gas companies, and then see where we go from there. *Perhaps the most difficult change concerns our way of life, the goods we produce, the way in which we consume… Fossil energies are one thing, but there is also the extraction of metal to make cars or buses, natural resources to build homes, etc. The idea of sobriety and sharing goes against the desire produced by society to live like the upper classes. How do we convince the population?* Two things. **On a strategic level, it is logical to be a bit down to earth in the sense that, to start a process of radical transformation of society, you have to begin somewhere and identify an enemy – or a force – that is actually at the centre of the disorder and must be defeated. And once you have achieved this, you move on to the following steps. So, to concentrate on the oil and gas companies doesn’t mean that everything is perfect with solar or wind energy, electric cars, etc., but that this is what is imperative strategically**. Now, I also think that we can envisage a transition towards a society without fossil fuels, which will improve people’s quality of life and is not just a question of sacrifice. Certain sacrifices will have to be accepted, of course, such as aviation as we know it, and by the richest people first of all. But ordinary workers will also have to accept certain sacrifices – the overconsumption of meat, for example. It is possible to explain to people in a sufficiently convincing way that they have much to gain from such a transition: working less, not seeing their job suddenly offshored to China, etc. *Many currents in the ecological movement are inspired by anarchism, and have a pretty hostile attitude towards the state, seeing it as centralising, concerned to develop its power and its economy, fundamentally anti-democratic… What is your position towards the state?* **In my ideal world, power would be decentralised. But we are at the opposite extreme from an ideal situation, and we are heading closer towards nightmare and dystopia. To wait for another form of state would therefore be both crazy and criminal. The only way to escape from the impasse, I believe, is a centralised power capable of braking the forces of destruction.** Take the recent legal case where The Hague tribunal decided that Shell has to reduce its CO2 emissions by 45 per cent by 2030. Of course, we don’t know if this will be carried out. **But, in principle, what this suggests is that you can have a state apparatus ordering an oil and gas company to change its practices, and perhaps, in the end, to cease its activities completely. I can see no other institution than the state, in our societies, able to take and apply such a decision. That is not something that can be carried out by neighbourhood committees or a federation of councils – unless this establishes itself as a new state.** Concerning this case at The Hague, it is interesting to the extent that it reveals that therex is a branch of our state apparatus, the judicial branch, which is sensitive to the pressure of the climate movement. **We must not stop exerting pressure on the various branches of the state apparatus, even if we do not like the state. We are in a crisis, and we must use all the forces available to us.** *You are one of the few intellectuals to think on both a strategic and a tactical level, with the ideas you develop in* How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. How do you combine the two things?* Certain methods would do us a lot of harm at this stage – for example, if some climate activists started to adopt armed struggle. But that apart, **we need the greatest possible diversity of tactics, including legal cases, various kinds of lobbying, parliamentary efforts, electoral campaigns, street occupations, and mass blockades of lignite mines, as Ende Gelände have been doing in Germany.****[[2]](https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/5168-we-must-nationalise-total" \l "_edn2" \o ") Mass civil disobedience, of course, but also the destruction of property and sabotage.** The projects to expand the extraction of fossil fuel that are currently under way throughout the world really deserve to be destroyed. If people in Uganda or Tanganyika destroyed the pipelines there tomorrow, I don’t see how you could condemn this. Throughout human history, what destruction of property would be more legitimate than that? The great paradox is that this has not yet happened on a large scale. *That’s what you call the ‘Lanchester enigma’, after the essayist John Lanchester who in 2007 expressed his surprise that climate activists had not yet committed acts of terrorism, given the scale of the catastrophe, and the ease with which one could sabotage a gas station or vandalise an SUV…* It’s just crazy that ‘business as usual’ continues with everything we know today, given that 30 million people have had to flee their homes just in the last year because of natural catastrophes bound up with extreme meteorological phenomena – consequences of global heating. That reminds me of the recent novel by Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*. He imagines a very convincing transition in the form of a kind of best-case scenario for the coming decades, involving a plethora of movements and tactics. **Sabotage and destruction of property play a key role. But there are also existing state institutions operating under the aegis of the United Nations, and a multitude of local initiatives… I believe that this is the best way of thinking the transition: a turbulent and disorderly process, acting on different levels, with recourse to various tactics. If French people launched a campaign against Total, that could very easily include forms of destruction of property, and that could increase the pressure.**