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Precarity: A Savage Journey to the Heart of Embodied Capitalism

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A. Introduction

There is an underlying assumption to the current debates about class composition in post-Fordism: this is the assumption that immaterial work and its corresponding social subjects form the centre of gravity in the new turbulent cycles of struggles around living labour. This paper explores the theoretical and political implications of this assumption, its promises and closures. Is immaterial labour the condition out of which a radical socio-political transformation of contemporary post-Fordist capitalism can emerge? Who's afraid of immaterial workers today?

B. Immaterial labour and precarity

In their attempt to historicize the emergence of the concept of the general intellect, many theorists (e.g. Hardt & Negri, 2000; Virno, 2004) remind us that the general intellect cannot be conceived simply as a sociological category. We think that we should apply the same precaution when using the concept of immaterial labour. This is the case especially when the studies which acknowledge the

sociological evidence of immaterial work are increasing, such as research in the mainstream sociology of work which investigates atypical employment and the subjectivisation of labour (e.g. Lohr & Nickel, 2005; Moldaschl & Voss, 2003), or even conceptualisations of immaterial labour in the context of knowledge society (e.g. Gorz, 2004). A mere sociological understanding of the figure of immaterial labour is restricted to a simplistic description of the spreading of features such as affective labour, networking, collaboration, knowledge economy etc. into what mainstream sociology calls network society (Castells, 1996). What differentiates a mere sociological description from an operative political conceptualisation of immaterial labour – which is situated in co-research and political activism (Negri, 2006) – is the quest for understanding the power dynamics of living labour in post-Fordist societies.

The concept of immaterial labour is capable of delivering a diagnosis of the present contradictions of production, but who's afraid of sociological descriptions of the present, especially when they start becoming common topos in public discourse and in mainstream social science? In order to avoid just another apolitical sociological category, we need to focus on the ruptures, blockades, lines of flight which are immanent in the configuration of immaterial labour. Instead of assuming that today's emergent social subjectivities are simply mirroring the proliferation of immaterial labour, we need to conceive of subjectivity as interplay of value creation in immaterial labour and the outcome of the inconsistencies, the forms of oppression, the modes of dominance which are pertinent to it. It is misleading to assert that subjectivity is constituted by the sociological features of immaterial labour such as cooperation, creativity, linguistic exchanges, affectivity etc. Rather, the emergent subjectivities exceed the conditions of

production of immaterial labour when immaterial workers are confronted with the impasses in their life situation, the micro-oppressions and exploitation. In other words, subjectivity is produced when the contemporary regime of labour becomes embodied experience. When subjectivity puts on the shirt of mainstream sociology it corrodes its flesh and exposes its bones. The subjectivity of the immaterial labourers does not mirror the production process of immaterial labour; it is the diabolic blow up of its contingent intensities and fractures. Subjectivity is not a facticity, it is a departure.

Thus, the new subjectivities traversing the archipelago of post-Fordist production are not identical with the conditions of immaterial production; rather, subjectivity of immaterial labour means experiencing the new order of exploitation of immaterial labour. Today's composition of living labour is the response to the risks imposed by immaterial labour. What make the new political subjectivities happen are not the relations of production pertinent to immaterial labour – as for example Lazzarato (1996) asserts – but the embodied experience of the new arrangements of exploitation in post-Fordist societies. Precarity constitutes this new arrangement of exploitation of living labour in advanced post-Fordism.

Precarity is where immaterial production meets the crisis of the social systems which were based on the national social compromise of normal employment. Because work – in order to become productive – becomes incorporated into non-labour time, the exploitation of workforce happens beyond the boundaries of work, it is distributed across the whole time and space of life (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005). Precarity means exploiting the continuum of everyday life, not simply the workforce. In this sense, precarity is a form of exploitation which operates primarily on the level of time.

Thisbecause it changes the meaning of what non-productivity is. The regulation of labour in Fordism was secured in an anticipative way independently of its immediate productivity. The protectionist function of the welfare system is a time management: it works by anticipating and securing the periods when someone becomes non-productive (accident and illness, unemployment, age). In post-Fordism this form of time management disappears. Not so only because future is not guaranteed, but also because the future is already appropriated in the present. From the standpoint of the labourer, work takes place in the present, which is, though, incorporated into his or her whole lifespan as a worker. And precisely this lifelong scope is destroyed in precarity: from the standpoint of capital the whole lifespan continuum of a precarious labourer is dissected into successive exploitable units of the present. Precarity is this form of exploitation which, by operating only on the present, exploits simultaneously also the future.

How is this breakdown of the national compromise of normal employment and the reordering of time in precarious life conditions experienced by the singular labourer? If we understand the embodied experience of precarity we can interrupt the reductionism of mainstream sociological conceptualisations of immaterial labour. We already said earlier that new social subjectivities do not so much mirror the characteristics of immaterial production but the precarious modes of exploitation proliferating in them. Precarity is the embodied experience of the ambivalences of immaterial productivity in advanced post-Fordism. The embodied experience of precarity is characterised by: (a) vulnerability: the steadily experience of flexibility without any form of protection; (b) hyperactivity: the imperative to accommodate constant availability; (c) simultaneity: the ability to handle at the same the different tempi and velocities of multiple activities; (d)

recombination: the crossings between various networks, social spaces, and available resources; (e) post-sexuality: the other as dildo; (f) fluid intimacies: the bodily production of indeterminate gender relations; (g) restlessness: being exposed to and trying to cope with the overabundance of communication, cooperation and interactivity; (h) unsettledness: the continuous experience of mobility across different spaces and time lines; (i) affective exhaustion: emotional exploitation, or, emotion as an important element for the control of employability and multiple dependencies; (j) cunning: able to be deceitful, persistent, opportunistic, a trickster.

This phenomenology points to the potentialities for political articulation of the embodied experience of precarity. We started this text by asking who's afraid of the immaterial workers? Obviously, it is difficult to imagine that there is somebody today who is afraid of the immaterial workers. And this has certainly nothing to do with the difficulties to comprehend the neologism 'immaterial labour'. We already argued that the new social subjects of immaterial labour cannot be identical with the conditions in which they find themselves. This because they create an excess of sociability and subjectivity which is political and at the same time it does not participate in given political representation. Now, the logic which grasps subjectivity as identical with the position of a certain group of people in the production process (here the immaterial workers) ends up in constructing this subjectivity as pre-existent to its embodied materialisation. This logic conceives subjectivity as an already existing but effaced part of society (i.e. as otherness). This political logic attempts to incorporate this otherness into the totality of political representation. Subjectivity is reduced to a part which is not yet included (Rancière, 1998; Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006). The inclusion of subjectivity

into the political representation revitalises democratic politics, but simultaneously it neutralises the political excess of the subjectivity of immaterial workers and reduces it to a manageable part of existing political regulation. Being included simply on the basis of a regulatory or egalitarian principle actually indicates that some parts of the society really have no role to play in governing. The result is that society appears to be comprised of completely identifiable, self-evident subjects – that is, of people who occupy the space that has been allocated to them by their position in production and no other.

And precisely a subject which is included as otherness or as a previously excluded part in political governing is and never was a frightening subject for the given political order. More than that, it is not only that it is not frightening the given order, it is also an anxious and afraid subject. And with Spinoza, we know that when the mob is frightened, it inspires no fear (Balibar, 1994). This leads us to say, that only when a social subject is not willing to participate in the inclusion politics is fearsome. And it is fearsome because it participates in the totality through its singularity and imperceptibility, not as a recognisable and representable part. That means, it is fright-ening because it is everywhere, because it is everyone (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). A new social subject emerging out of the condition of immaterial labour can be only this one which does not pertain to its own position in the cycle of production, but it is one which challenges its identity by working on its immanent, situated and embodied experiences. We already said before: Subjectivity is not a facticity, it is an imperceptible departure. And the point of departure of the new social subject is not immaterial production as such but its materialisation in the subject's flesh (Negri, 2003b).

C. Fear-inspiring subjects

Before exploring the significance of the embodied experience of precarity for the articulation of a political project of exodus, we want to recall three alternative forms of fearsome action available in the social history of subjectivity. Could any of these three forms be a viable way to transform immaterial workers to a fearsome political actor?

I. The party form. Historically one of the first occurrences of a frightening political subject in the long history of the organisation of the worker's subjectivity has been the revolutionary party. The main feature of this organised subjectivity is its militant character. The party transforms the workers subjectivity to a war machine. The materialisation of revolution has as its primary target the extinction of antagonist relations. The crucial point here is that this extinction happens not only on the level of the relations of production but also on the level of their institutional manifestations. The extinction of the antagonistic character of social relations leads to the extermination of the two particular moments which regulate liberal nation states, namely rights and representation (for an extensive discussion of this issue s. Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2006). This was the first and by far more radical attempt to overcome the liberal political matrix of western nations. But the crux of this attempt was that the moment of overpowering the liberal matrix of rights and representation was initiated from above. This happened because the transcendence of the liberal matrix which was released by the organisation of worker's subjectivity was appropriated by the vertical organisation of the party form. The insurgent creativity of worker's subjectivity which departed from the liberal matrix, ended up in the facticity of

party's domination on society (Negri, 1999). A domination which in a purely vampiric form absorbs the impulse of worker's subjectivity to disseminate across society and then transforms it to the building materials of a vertical organisation imposed from above.

II. The trade union form. A further frightening form in the history of worker's subjectivity directly starts from the worker's immediate relation to production. Its difference from the party form is that the clash with capital was not mediated and facilitated by an attack on its institutional manifestation which was primarily the capitalist state as a whole, but directly in the space where class dominance was experienced, namely in the factory. The genealogy of trade union form shows a parallel movement to the party form, one which in many historical moments was in direct contradiction to the party. Unlike the party though, the trade union form organised workers' subjectivity as a group with common interests according to its position in the system of production. If the party form engages in militant politics, the trade union form engages in politics of protection, i.e. syndicalism. If the party form is characterised by a historically unprecedented radicalism, the trade union form is characterised by a historically unprecedented moment of camaraderie and solidarity. The trade union form is grounded on the principle of syndicalism, i.e. a belligerent sociability – belligerent towards the capital commando and sociable and protective for its members. But the protectionist character of the trade union sociability was invested in the attempt to moderate the asymmetrical relation between capital and work. This leads the traditional working class movement to restrict its interventions to the realm of the state and to become encapsulated in a purely productivist thinking. Reformism become the political logic of the

trade union form because gradually parts of the working class saw their interests aligned with parts of the state. The trade union form was the form that translated the surplus of the sociability of worker's subjectivity into institutionalised forms of state protection. Of course this institutionalisation of sociability was not equally distributed across the various workers groups. The statism of the trade union form changed radically the nature of capitalist nation state. The protection of labour becomes an inseparable moment of the modern state and gives birth to the triptych: social protectionism, institutionalised regulation, welfare state.

III. The micropolitical form. The last and most recent form of a fearsome social subjectivity is related to the radicalisation of the politics of everyday life. Here we encounter a departure from a political subjectivity which is primarily defined from its relation to the production process. The micropolitical form returns to the immediate level of social life where experience gets under the skin and materialises, affecting selves and others. There is nothing exceptional to this functioning of the everyday. As Lefebvre (1991) says, it is the realm where all extraordinary, specialized activity has been eliminated. Feminism, civil rights movements, identity politics, urban activism, antiracism, all start from the embodied experience of exclusion on the level of the everyday and, by doing that, they intend to rearticulate it and to insert difference as a constitutive moment of the everyday. It is the moment when everyday experience turns against the everyday itself, trying to attack it and change it, the moment when everyday experience becomes its own radical critique (Debord, 1981). The everyday is not identical with itself, it is the source and the target of change. Politics of difference. In other words, the micropolitical form attempted to incorporate new social subjectivities into the

established social compromise of the nation state – which was organised along whiteness, heteronormativity, waged labour, and property – by engaging in changing the dominant conditions of representation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The micropolitics of difference is the fight for representation. This political strategy finds its institutional equivalent in the concept of enlarged citizenship (Honig, 2001). The logic of the politics of difference is that it operates on a radical externality which has to be inserted in society's institutionalised system of representations. By starting from spaces located outside dominant citizenship, the politics of difference challenge factual forms of representation, and create the conditions for a transversal representation. Unlike the party form which targets the militant decomposition of the liberal state as a whole, and the trade union form which attempts to reduce existing asymmetries in the realm of the state, the micropolitical form positions itself on the neglected terrain of the everyday – a terrain which has been traditionally abandoned by the state – and from this very particular position attacks the established modes of belonging regulated by state institutions. But by doing this it arrives again at the state (Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006). In this sense, the subjectivity connected to the event of representation is neither a departure, nor a facticity, it is an arrival.

The question for us then is: could any of these political forms become the vehicle for the transformation of the subjectivity of the precarious workers to a fearsome new social subject?

D. Excessive sociabilities

The answer is no. This is because, as we will argue, the subjectivity of precarious workers creates an excess of sociability, which cannot be accommodated by the three existing political forms without

being neutralised and normalised. And the reason is twofold: Firstly, because the embodied experience of precarity of the immaterial labourers, as we described it earlier, is radically different from the experiences which historically built the ground on which these three forms of political organisation thrived. Secondly, because the regime of control which has to be challenged by the fearsome subjectivity of the immaterial workers is radically different from the regimes which each of the three mentioned forms came to challenge in each particular historical time. So, why cannot the precarious subjectivity become a frightening subjectivity in the party, the trade union, or the micropolitical form?

I. 'I don't have the time…' Perhaps it is the first time in the history of worker's subjectivity that the expression 'I don't have the time' becomes an explicit political statement. It is an explicit political statement which designates a form of collective subjectivity which is radically different from the overregulated subjectivity in the party form. And the reason for this is that this expression doesn't refer to an individualised way for the personal time management but it concentrates in an emblematic way the collective experience that time is already totally appropriated. The embodied experience of a restless movement between multiple time axes refers to the existential condition of precarious living labour which is organised on the continuous time of life (remember the – in the meantime so widespread – issue of intermingling production and reproduction, work and non-work, work time and leisure time, the public and the private). The expression 'I don't have the time' is the paradigmatic figure for the subjective internalisation of non disposal over one's own labour power.

If precarious experience is structured by the dominance of a productive timeline which makes the expression 'I don't have the

time' so obvious, then the liberation from the dominance of time over the worker's subjectivity in post-Fordist production is the capacity to tarry with time (Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006; Theunissen, 1991). That is not just simply to go with time, but to insert various speeds in the embodied experience of time. Tarrying with time constitutes the moment of the reappropriation of the productive means of immaterial labour (this because the productive means of immaterial production is the whole living labour of each individual). In other words, it is the moment where the immaterial worker's subjectivity is not constituted as a device for productivity, but it breaks the immediate flow of time, it becomes frightening because it escapes the dominance of the immaterial linear chronocracy. What is important for us here is that tarrying with time is purposeless in itself, it has no object, it is non organisable, it defies regulation. Tarrying with time is pure potentia, pure departure. In this sense it is the most powerful way to question the logic of precarity: it implodes the imperative 'be creative'. If the liberation from production, that is if recovering from the pressure of simultaneity and restlessness, is constituted as a break with organisation, then it becomes obvious why the party form which is primary fixated on an over-determination and overregulation of time becomes obsolete in contemporary conditions. The liberation from time of the precarious worker and the programme for liberation in the party form are unfolding along two incompatible timelines.

II. The trade union form is simply not applicable on the terrain of the embodied experience of precarity – and here we mean that it cannot fabricate a frightening social subject – simply because the constitutive needs of the precarious worker are per definitionem excluded from the structure of the national compromise on which

the trade union form operates. This is because the crisis of the social welfare systems is nothing other than the end of a peculiar liaison between normal waged labour and state interventionism which was nurtured by the trade unions. As we already know, immaterial work and the embodied experience of precarity is an exodus from the system of waged labour. At the same time the new neoliberal state seized this exodus in order to create a forced activation of the individual labour beyond state regulation. This means that the two foundational moments of the classical trade union reformism, i.e. statism of labour and interventionism of the state, are absent in the terrain of precarity.

If we want to spell out the divergences between the trade union form and the embodied experience of precarity then we need to start from the basic conditions of immaterial labour. It has a trans-spatial order. If the trade union form starts from the immediate space of production and mobilises the workers according to their common spatialised interests, a classical syndicalism against precarity will find as a major obstacle the trans-spatial movements of the precarious worker. We described earlier two of the major characteristics of the embodied experience of precarity, i.e. hyperactivity and unsettledness. The embodiment of incessant movement and accountability in multiple locales destroys the possibility of the classic trade union organisation form based on a single locality.

At the same the exodus of the subjectivity of the waged labourer into the subjectivity of the neoliberal entrepreneurial and self-managerial individual establishes a new relation between the state and living labour. The classical trade unionism is based on the articulation of a balance between parts of the working class and parts of the state. For example, consider the state interventionism in protecting the rights of male workforce and establishing a

hierarchical order of labour. On the lowest level of this hierarchy was female and migrant 'dirty work' (domestic labour, undocumented labour, unskilled employment, cf. Anderson, 2000). Historically the attempts of the trade unions to reduce the power asymmetry between labour and capital was organised as a hierarchical order between various kinds of labour subjectivities. By doing this, the overrepresented subjectivities of the working class trade unionism operated along a particularism which de facto fractured the everyday sociability of living labour into variably important social groups. The neoliberal policies of the 70s worked on this fragmentation of the social, broke down the traditional concepts of protectionism, and systematically undermined the role of trade unions in the national compromise between labour and capital. The neoliberal project amplified this fracture; in fact it elevated the fragmentation of living labour into a new regime of primary accumulation. The condition, which we encounter today, is that the trade union form cannot effectively protect labour and the neoliberal project no longer wants to protect it. The trade union form cannot create fearsome subjects in the wake of the neoliberal attack against living labour.

We find ourselves in a vacuum of protection. The embodied experience of precarity very much reflects this vacuum: the almost existential condition of vulnerability felt as constant state of being in every moment of everyday life. The embodied experience of precarity calls for a new mode of protection, one which cannot be covered by classic form of trade union syndicalism. The income of the salaried worker was measured in relation to the quantification of the individual work force. This measurement was guaranteed and protected by the collective trade union negotiations. But this no longer holds. Simply because you cannot protect through collective bargaining something which is immeasurable. There is

no unified equivalent for the labour productivity of each individual immaterial labourer. The singular productivity of the immaterial labourer is no longer quantifiable(Negri, 2003a). This leads us to say that immaterial labourers living in precarious conditions need a different form of protection, one which allows them to perform their everyday re-/productive activities and at the same time guarantees an existential security when they are affected by neoliberal exploitation. New social movements against precarity (e.g. the EuroMayDay network, www.euromayday.org) stress this necessity and demand basic income as the unconditional protection from the precarity of living labour (Fumagalli & Lucarelli, 2006). The precondition for this demand is the radicalisation of classic trade unions since these cannot accommodate demands beyond the logic of waged labour. The logic of waged labour is incompatible with the demand for basic income because the latter calls for an uncoupling of wage from labour (i.e. the earning from the executed work). In this sense, there is a new form of syndicalism needed which, starting form the embodied experience of living labour, can overcome the limitations of the trade union form: biosyndicalism.

Biosyndicalism as a possible approach for the organisation of precarious subjectivities could bring various contemporary experiments of collective organisation (e.g. Precarias a la Deriva, www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.htm; cf. also the precarity map, www.precarity-map.net) together with a new form of unionism.This new form of unionism operates on a transnational level (it follows the transnational flows of labour mobility), it is trans-spatial and trans-sectorial (i.e. it does not represent a particular sector or a particular locale in the cycle of production), it is non-identitarian (i.e. it questions the predominant workforce identity as male and native), and finally, and most importantly, it attends to the life experience of precarity (i.e. it questions the

centrality of work time in the unfolding of the worker's life). A syndicalism of this kind will preserve the most valuable and irreplaceable merits of the historical trade union form – i.e. caring, solidarity, and cooperation – and elevate them into new more complex forms of organisation (cf. Chesters & Welsh, 2006). In this sense it will be a truly life-oriented syndicalism (biosyndicalism), as it will operate on the immediate level of common life experiences. Nevertheless, the question remains whether this new form of experimental syndicalism can contribute to the creation of a fear inspiring social subject against precarity. This can be answered by recalling a historical analogy: today the basic income for precarious workers is what the eight hour day was for the working class before the turn of the previous century. It was just the annunciation of fear.

III. We said earlier that the micropolitical form is primarily concerned with the conditions of representation; it is the fight against dominant forms of representation and the fight for the extension of representation. The question then is if this primary focus of the micropolitical form can address the embodied experience of precarity. To what extend can the issue of representation contribute to the generation of a fear inspiring social subject of the immaterial worker? Here we will assert that this is almost impossible because the embodied experience of precarity exceeds representationalism, and in this sense it cannot be covered by the micropolitical form, despite – and this is particularly important here – the almost 'natural' proximity between the politics of the precarious workers and the micropolitical form. This proximity results from the common concern with the trouble of visibility. The embodied experience of precarity is crucially undermined and suffers a lot by its invisibility. There are three

reasons for this immediate closeness between micropolitics and precarious politics and their common strategy against invisibility: Firstly, because immaterial labour and the precarious experience have been effaced from the official agenda of the working class movement and its institutions. It was doomed to invisibility or better subsumed under the category of the service sector or it was disparaged as a synonym for new economy, human capital, and in the best case as knowledge work. Secondly, because an integral component of the embodied experience of precarity, dirty work (as we described it earlier), was linked in the public discourse to the shadow economy and it was denigrated as counterproductive or at least irrelevant for national economies. It is due to the social struggles of the migrant and feminist movements that made the issue of dirty work visible. The common struggles between the precarious movements and the social movements of the 70s and 80s still remain a crucial and irreplaceable strategic coalition for any form of activism related to precarity today. Thirdly, the proximity between the micropolitical form and the embodied experience of precarity arises out of the common situatedness in the everyday. Both of them, the micropolitical form and the movements against precarity, start and work on the immanent terrain of everyday life (and here we should also not forget the Foucauldian idea of biopolotics which was equally important for both currents).

Despite all these commonalities and strategic alliances, there is an insurmountable difference between the two, one which does not allow a micropolitical social movement against precarity to become a fear inspiring social actor. This difference refers to the failure of representational politics (Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006). The issue of representation today is the matter out of which post-Fordism enacts its own exodus from the blockade of the existing national compromise of distributive rights – we call this

transformation postliberal sovereignty (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2006). In order to reconstruct this blockade we need to rethink the relation between productivity (as value creating work) and property (as the accumulation of value) in post-Fordism.

The productivity of immaterial labour challenges the systems of the distribution of wealth. In order to be productive immaterial labour needs an unrestricted access to the immaterial resources of production (that is the netware, e.g. networks, databases, visual data, health, culture, freedom of circulation). In this sense immaterial labour becomes productive by blocking the capitalist principle of property. Of course the productivity of immaterial labour is essential for the neoliberal project. Therefore another solution was necessary, one which, on the one hand, does not suppress the productivity, sociability, and creativity of immaterial labourers, and, one the other hand, reinstalls a new regime of distribution of wealth – one which is based on the production and commodification of netware (Moulier-Boutang, 2001). But the property regime of netware has a peculiar feature: it is not founded on the property of the means of production but only of its products (patents of intellectual goods, life, and biodiversity; copyright; restrictions in up/download; privatisation of health; mobility control etc.). This is because the means of network-based production and of embodied productivity are the singular creativity, affectivity, and sociability of the immaterial worker. A new system of property emerges, one which controls the products of the subjectivities of the immaterial labourers rather than the tools or production, which is the subjectivity of the immaterial worker as such (the rise of consumerist capitalism is to a large extent the outcome of this).

Among the new netware circulating in post-Fordism are the risks of the living labour as such. The monetarisation and

commodification of the life risk of immaterial workers is an essential part of the embodied experience of precarity (we described earlier, the aspects of vulnerability, affective exhaustion, and recombination which refer exactly to the pressures ensuing from the subjectivisation of risk in precarious living conditions). The productive subjectivity of the immaterial labourer is reloaded as precarious subjectivity. The precarisation of life reveals the limits of the national compromise of distributive rights. Precarity means imposing restrictions on the rights for participation in the established national compromise. Simultaneously, this partial exclusion creates the constitutive condition for performing the politics of representation. The micropolitical enterprise (e.g. governmentality studies) attempts to understand how the neoliberal project activates multiple social actors and attempts to initiate their inclusion in a new system of rights. This is the micropolitical New Deal of neoliberal societies. It is obvious, that despite the centrality of micropolitics in the contemporary movements against precarity, there is not very much here which could point out to a fear inspiring social subjectivity. This because the subjectivity of micropolitics is itself anxious and afraid.

The codification of the micropolitical New Deal in the neoliberal state takes the form of citizenship. In particular, the idea of flexible citizenship captures the moment where politics are confronted with the crisis of national sovereignty and the national compromise between labour and property as described in the previous paragraphs. Flexible citizenship shifts the gaze from a hermetically and exclusively structured form of national belonging to a form of a residual belonging beyond the destabilised dominance of national identity (e.g. Sassen, 2004) and opts for a new extended foundation of democracy (e.g. Honig, 2001). It accounts for new social actors working on transnational, post-welfare representations of

participative rights (e.g. Mezzadra, 2001). But the problem with this understanding of political representation and flexible citizenship – despite its enormous importance for the political constitution of the present – is that it is inherently defensive. It is defensive because it cannot act beyond the already given ambiguous dynamics of the globalised neoliberal project. Of course the new politics of transnational representation and flexible citizenship are crucial for today's social movements because they de facto establishe the right to escape dominant nationalist representations and the national compromise between labour and capital. But by being defensive these movements are merely fixated on arrival, they attempt to establish a new compromise between immaterial labour and postnational capitalism in the form of flexisecurity. Representational politics and the demand for flexisecurity are necessary responses to the concerns of the embodied experience of precarity, but they reterritorialise the subjectivity of the precarious workers in the matrix of a new postliberal statism.

E. Imperceptible politics

Our starting question was why immaterial workers cannot constitute a subjectivity which frightens the existing political order today. In a second move we tried to reconstruct immaterial labour from the standpoint of the worker's subjectivity that is how the intensities and ruptures of immaterial production are experienced on the terrain of the everyday life. This allowed developing a different take on the concept of immaterial labour: not only as a constitutive moment of a new cycle of class composition in post-Fordism, but as a conceptual moment to understand the history of our late capitalist present. We argued that we cannot extract an understanding of the contemporary class composition from the characteristics of immaterial labour. We understand immaterial

labour as a condition which corroborates the transition form Fordism to post-Fordism, in a way that it prevents us of understanding the present (post-Fordism) by simply applying categories of the past (Fordism) to it. But at the same time, it does not offer enough conceptual means to think possible developments of the future, or, in other words, to think the conditions of a departure from the present. One the one hand, immaterial labour reveals the impossibility to return to a Fordist regulation of labour; it is the institutionalised manifestation of an irreversible movement to a system of production which becomes crucial to the realisation of a transnational system of domination (i.e. postliberal sovereignty, cf. Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2006). On the other hand, immaterial labour cannot be conceived as a possibility for delineating a line of flight out of this system of domination. The question then is how to think of deterritorialisation and exodus beyond the concept of immaterial labour.

Deterritorialisation in post-Fordism cannot be conceived in relation to immaterial labour itself but in relation to the imperceptible experiences of the possibilities and oppressions pertinent to living labour. We called this the embodied experience of precarity. We suggest that this must be the starting point in order to understand (a) possibilities for exodus as well as (b) the constitution of the present. We will proceed with a description of the latter and at the end of this text we will move to the discussion of the politics of exodus. The paradigm of cognitive capitalism conceptualises the constitution of the present transformation of production by highlighting the centrality of knowledge as the main resource for the creation of value. We think that despite the importance of the concept of cognitive capitalism, there is much more which we need to consider in order to understand the contemporary formation of capitalism in its post-Fordist phase.

The figure of cognitive capitalism delivers a persuasive conceptualisation of the 'post' in post-Fordism. But we want to assert that there are more efforts needed to understand the complexity of post-Fordism and the conditions which post-Fordism itself creates for its own overcoming. We assert that we need to turn here to the problem of the body and materiality in order to grasp this complexity – a turn which is mainly inform by research in feminism (e.g. Boudry, Kuster, & Lorenz, 2000; Braidotti, 2006; e.g. Grosz, 1994), Science and Technology Studies (e.g. Barad, 2003; Haraway, 1997), and migration & border studies (e.g. De Genova, 2005; Papastergiadis, 2000).

The constitutive moment of the contemporary system of production is not primarily its cognitive quality, but its embodied realisation. In an attempt to overcome the somatophobia of the cognitive capitalist approaches we want to discuss the composition of living labour as an excess of sociability of human bodies. The third capitalism (pre-industrialism, industrialism, post-Fordism) is not cognitive, it is embodied: the regime of embodied capitalism. This is primarily characterised by: (a) Sociability: productivity is not the result of pure exchange of information and knowledge based interaction, but of the creation of an indeterminate excess in informal, affective, world making connections. Embodied capitalism feeds on what is not yet commodified. (b) Affectivity: the making of bodies capable of work. Bodies are made through their ability to literally transform their state of existence through affecting others and being affected by others, not through mere linguistic or verbal communication. Embodied capitalism operates with bodies, not minds. (c) Volatility: the power of the body to act in space and to transform the localities in which it dwells, not just the mobility between spaces. The regime of embodied capitalism capitalises on the migrants' bodies as naked labour power, not as

mobile subjects of rights. (d) Materiality: Embodied capitalism is concerned with the production of matter, not knowledge. Knowledge is nothing more than one attribute of material assemblages among others, it is enfleshed technoscience. Materiality is neither pre-existent to our knowledge of it nor an objective facticity. Productivity in embodied capitalism is not the outcome of the 'cooperation between brains' but of the cooperation between human bodies, machines, and things. (e) Recombination: The primary productive force of embodied capitalism is not information, but the capacity to recombine nature in unfixed and limitless ways. The process of value creating productive labour today is based on the making of matter and the denaturalisation of nature, not the making of knowledge. Embodied capitalism is a mega 'apparatus of bodily production', a compound of biotechnologies and information technologies.

The embodied experience of precarity is how the regime of embodied capitalism becomes inscribed on the flesh of living labour, that is the individual worker's body. Thus, if precarity is the core mode of exploitation of living labour in the regime of embodied capitalism, then the embodied experience of precarity is the point of departure and the condition for thinking the quest for exodus. And precisely because the embodied experience of precarity is the terrain on which exploitation as well as value creation takes place, it allows us to understand the dynamics of the third capitalism beyond the productivist model prevalent in contemporary theories of class composition and immaterial labour. According to this productivist model the subjectivity of exodus is identical with the cycles of production, be it immaterial labour or cognitive capitalism. This model is passé, it is the model which wants the exploited class to transform to a class for itself as a total expressivity. But dialectics has proved fatal for any project of

exodus. Dialectics resembles a black box, you can insert anything and await resurrection. A new model of subjectivity is needed which is neither effect of production nor is it identical with the conditions of its exploitation, a concept which drifts constantly away from its social determinants. We believe that the embodied experience of precarity does precisely this.

In the embodied experience of precarity we see a tension between value creation and exploitation, i.e. between capital and living labour, a tension which is less a dialectical process between opposites, than a steadily move of deterritorialisation away from its own conditions of existence. This move changes both the composition of capital as well as the composition of labour subjectivities. In this game there in no fixed rule. There is only drift, departure, sliding which becomes constantly re-inscribed on the participating bodies, creating always new singular social actors. This is the power of change; this is the power to change. This is social transformation after representation. This kind of transformation does not construct precarious workers as a scared subject which needs to be included and protected by becoming part of the post-Fordist social compromise. In this moment experience ceases to create social subjects, ceases to be subjectivity, and becomes materiality. It de facto changes social reality. And this is an imperceptible change, a non-dialectical change. This is the cunning of precarity.

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