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Dies-Non: Refusal of Work in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

My comments aim to cast light on a specific political proposal that can arise from a discussion of the topic of the 'refusal of work' and its implications for a social radical change. Autonomist, anarchist and feminist activism, have been and are the main sources of a long-term conceptual and empirical work on the refusal of work. Refusal of work is a very complex concept that has traversed history and is reduced for uncritical dominant common sense to unemployment, laziness, idleness, indolence but it is in reality one of the basic foundational qualification to think any radical change. Among many important intuitions, the added value of Silvia Federici's work is to have offered a different perspective on the refusal of work discussion and how it can be expressed to develop different forms of communing. Her work provides the backbone for this brief excursion on the issue of the refusal of work. Emerging and consolidated social movements, for example in Southern Europe, have, consciously or not, taken position, often contradictorily, regarding what refusal of work means. In the context of current neoliberal capitalism, an increasing structural unemployment and precarious jobs are one of the trademarks of austerity policies to 'revive' economies. Drawing on Federici's insights on the women exclusion as a useful way of thinking about the spatial dimension of these issues in feminist theory, this article looks at examples of prefigurative politics that define their strategies of refusal of work building significant spatial patterns.

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Introduction

My article aims to reiterate the importance of the political proposals that originate from a discussion of the topic of the 'refusal of work'. Many proposals have arisen since the nineteen century to confront capitalism on the ground of refusing its work organization and ethic. I will develop my

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analysis on what I consider one of the most innovative and relevant point of Silvia Federici's analysis, that is her different perspective on the issue of the refusal of work. In few words, how Federici's perspective, and her gradual shift from 'refusal' to 'valorization' of housework, can suggest a different way to examine the refusal of work, particularly if compared to other different forms proposed in the recent past, for example luddism or some autonomist and post-autonomist proposals. The dominance of undisputed values attached to waged work, the devaluation of domestic work and its overvaluation as emotional labor are at the foundation of capitalism. It is crucial to stimulate thinking and debate on these topics and the development of Federici's investigations represent a good pivot point for orientation.

In my opinion, in Federici's analysis the refusal of work is one of the red threads that link her initial work on housework wages (Federici and Cox 1978; Federici and Fortunati 1984) to her more recent analysis of the Commons (Federici 2012). Her work is significant for a discussion on the way to figure out commoning patterns and refusal of dominant work strategies and mechanism of desocialization of individuals. Refusal of work is a complex concept that in common sense, that is the uncritical acceptance and understanding of the values of the dominant rulers, has been and is associated to laziness, idleness, indolence. In reality, through past struggles, current practices of commoning and through emerging prefigurative politics, it is one of the basis for any radical change. Organized, and also spontaneous, patterns of refusal of work can be another mechanism for political change to be explored. In fact, various patterns of refusal of work indicate symptoms of political subjectivity, primordial processes of 'subjectivization'. The geographical scope of the article is limited to Europe and North America and the focus of analysis derives from the Italian experience, nevertheless several reflections have wider implications in principle.

This brief essay is structured in four sections and a conclusion. In the first section I give a brief summary of what the concept of refusal of work is and in the second section I summarize different forms that characterize it. In the third section I briefly describe how this concept based on various literature and practices has developed in Italy, and elsewhere, since the end of 1970s. I will then develop an analysis influenced by Federici's work for a renewal of the use of this concept. In the conclusions I advocate the restitution of the concept of 'refusal of work' for any prefigurative movement that want to tackle neoliberalism in its various forms. These notes must be understood as a way to identify a number of questions and provide an agenda for further research and analysis, in particular on the intersection between feminists, autonomists and anarchists' concepts and practices.

Refusal of work: why not?

Before developing the analysis, a brief discussion on the definition of leisure time, free time, labor, and work is offered. While the distinction of leisure time and free time can be associated to two distinct processes, one in relation to the time that is not directly productive and another one to the time associated to a radical change in the economy and the society, more difficult, though possible (Arendt 1958), is the distinction between work and labor. This distinction is, among others, absent in Marx (Fuchs and Sevignani 2013). Although I have tried in the text to use 'work' as a general term related to the capacity of human beings to produce material and immaterial goods that we can find in any society, and labor as the act of working organized by capital, I had to give up on providing an overall consistent use of these terms because of two reasons. The majority of authors I make reference to use the terms interchangeably, and I have a non-Anglo-Saxon linguistic background that makes this distinction difficult to handle if not entering in a long philosophical dispute that it is important to tackle but not within this article (Fuchs and Sevignani 2013; Komlosy 2018; Weeks 2011). In this section I will start from some of Marx's great intuitions to move toward some conceptual proposals that open the doors to a revision of the concept of refusal of work, developed in the following sections.

In a historical materialist approach, labor defines both class relations and class identities that have faced a substantial evolution. The industrial proletariat, the working class, has represented the traditional figure of class politics that barely survive in the global North. Two instances are worth mentioning because related to the refusal of work and for supporting new analysis: the issue of the expansion, or better redesign, of class politics and the issue of the mechanisms of assignment of a system of societal values. The two issues are interrelated and the possibility of a renewed class politics passes for the re-analysis of the value to be assigned to work, and more importantly to the refuse of work, that has the potential to expand the terrain of class struggle to include actors well beyond that classic figure of traditional class politics (Weeks 2011). New forms of class politics expanding the range of actors, emotions, and relationships associated with class, and against the unquestioned exchange value paradigm and the structure of valuation associated with phallo/capitalocentric logic, have recently been suggested and explored (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003; Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2000; Vaughan 1997). Marx's work stands in terms of identification of the labor condition under capitalist relations and all the implications for a class politics of refusal of work. In fact, Marx posed the basis for an articulated critical investigation that identifies the originality of capitalism in the fact that labor can in itself be bought and sold and in all its historic forms as slave labor, serf-labor, and wage-labor; 'Labour always

appears as repulsive, always as external forced labour; and not-labour, by contrast, as "freedom and happiness"' (Marx 1973: 611). If labor is repulsive, the development of 'the category of the work society refers not just to the socially mediating and subjectively constitutive roles of work but to the dominance of its values' (Weeks 2011: 11). Among many great intuitions, Marx has put various concepts, such as the notion of value or the analysis of needs, in an original role, in particular when speculating about the society of associated producers. What has value in a society and how a system of values is assigned? This very difficult question is related to focusing on multiple interrelated social domains (Graeber 2001). Value is not only identifiable with exchange value but it is a general social category (Heller 1976). Value is a social and historically relative category, and it has to be considered not only for waged workers and commodities but to unwaged workers, nonhumans and nature. In fact, capitalism constantly assign values and reproductive work is devalued as well as the 'services' that nature provides (Collard and Dempsey 2017; Mies 1998). It is clear that value should not arise from the market and 'the basis and yardstick of any regrouping or classification is need as a category of value' (Heller 1976: 38). Need is primarily a category of value. 'While the concept of need is given a variety of interpretations by Marx, all contain an emphatic aspect on value-judgment' (Grumley, 1999: 55). Marx's analysis of the 'society of associated producers' is philosophically founded upon the concept of the system of needs. According to Marx only the society of associated producers can provide the new system of needs that measure wealth according to disposable time instead of labor time. And Marx is 'convinced that from a certain point onwards capitalism is incapable of shortening labour time any further: the need for free time then becomes in principle a radical need, which can only be satisfied with the transcendence of capitalism' (Heller 1976: 91). Heller's interpretation of Marx leads to the importance of defining radical needs, for free time and transformation of everyday life, which escape capitalism, departing from the centrality of the working class and the production sphere.

Actually, labor time has not decreased with the development of capitalism and the affirmation of neoliberalism, and the mainstream discourses have always been able to ridiculize or even criminalize unemployment, laziness, and idleness, though many famous thinkers have argued a revision of what non-working relations under capital mean (among others: Lafargue 1883; Russell 1935; Illich 1978) and even Keynes advocated a future reduction of labor time to 15 hours a week (Keynes 1936). Neoliberalism is becoming the utopia of unlimited exploitation, precariousness and insecurity, where employees are at the mercy of employers (Bourdieu 1998). We are experiencing a 'variegated' character of neoliberalization processes that denote a politically guided intensification of market rule and commodification (Brenner,

Peck, and Theodore 2010). Within this variegated development we can conceive social groups defined as classes by the relations of production (Gibson-Graham 1997). But, following Gramsci, we can also recognize that work under capitalism is not only 'inside a social relation defined by capital (and juxtaposed against capital) in the form of labor, but also a *creative* process that could exist outside that social relation' (Gill and Bakker 2003: 20). In the development and reproduction of capitalism, the position of women has a central role, but reproductive activities have been neglected as sites for political struggle (Ferguson 1999). Work remains a site of gendering and occupational segregation (Weeks 2011). The degradation of women and women's work operated by capitalism has been generated through centuries and the unpaid women work is one of the pillars of capitalism development (Federici 2004, 2012). In her exposition of the patriarchy of the wage, Federici argues that the money wage concealed women's unpaid work under the cover of natural inferiority, enabling capitalists to expand the unpaid part of the working day by using the male wage to accumulate women's labor and to deflect class antagonism into and antagonism between men and women (Federici 2004). Unpaid domestic work can be seen as a constant Dies Non that is 'No Work No Pay' applied to women. 'Dies non' is a part of the Latin expression 'Dies non juridicum' literally meaning 'Day without judiciary' that is a day when courts do not sit or carry on business. The expression is used to indicate 'No Work No Pay'. Absence from work (for example due to strike) is treated as Dies non, a day which cannot be treated as duty for any purpose.

The working sphere transformation in neoliberalism has been substantial. Individuals are commodified and enter in the complex process of being wasted. Looking for the reasons why refusing the way capital organizes work relations is not a demanding task compared to the much more complicated understanding of the complex system of relations, oppressive binds, and violence that should reverse the question into: why working under these terrible conditions? The definition of an active political definition of the refusal of work can address the increasing analogy between human beings and waste that is at the cornerstone of current neoliberal capitalism (Yates 2011). In fact, it is necessary 'to break away from the logic of past struggles which, being based on the demand for work and for better pay for work, trap them within work and within exploitation […]' (Bourdieu 1998: 86).

Refusal of work: what does it mean?

Struggles related to demand for work or for better working conditions have been prominent and significantly analyzed. The millions of hours of strikes and all the demonstrations that the working class has produced remain the

main focus of concern when thinking opposition to capital. But, the concept of refusal of work has never ceased circulating since the affirmation of capitalism. Just to give a recent example, in Europe, the collective Krisis has been particularly active to challenge classical left vision of politics based on the acceptance of constant wage job growths as the social and economic goal of society (Kurz, Lohoff, and Trenkle 1999). A typology of the refusal of work as it is currently configured is not an easy task. In fact, within this broad category we can identify at least seven types that mirror various strategies and policies. I would exclude three types of apparent forms of refusal of work. Firstly, I would not consider forms based on parasitic rent that imply fostering class inequalities. Secondly, though relevant, I would not consider criminality and delinquency because of the difficulty to identify clear strategies of refusal of work in most cases and in reality we face exclusion from work. Thirdly, I would not include passive refusal of work, such as forced unemployment, precariousness and lack of hope to get a job related to the structure of the market or exacerbated in period of crisis and restructure of the job market, for example because of robotization. This exclusion deserves some more comments because of the spread of precarious work conditions and recent diffusion of 'end of labor' analysis. According to some economists and theorists (Hardt and Negri 2004; Rifkin 1995) formal waged work is at end because of the new technological revolution, but this conceptualization is full of contradictions and has not been empirically verified (Caffentzis 1999). The frequent change of work under neoliberalism is not the consequence of the worker's voluntary decision but is fully compatible with capital valorization, not antagonistic. According to 'end of labor' analysis, capital and labor do not stand out against each other because labor is an activity of capital (Kurz, Lohoff, and Trenkle 1999). Labor has become unrelated to needs, it has been made superfluous, and it represents an abstract principle that regulates social relationships (Kurz, Lohoff, and Trenkle 1999). But the end of labor perspective, for example in the Rifkin or Krisis' proposal, runs the risk to lack a serious anthropological analysis (Sobel 2004), a lack of empirical data to confirm it, on top of an eurocentrism that forgets about the condition of millions of people in the planet. In fact, labor is not losing its centrality in defining human condition and the extension of the condition of exploitation in the global south are massive (Caffentzis 1999). That capital could lead to the end of our work society is quite problematic and it does not look that there is a strategy in this sense. On the other hand our recent history has delineated several strategy to oppose labor and its dominance.

In the following paragraphs, I would concentrate some brief comments on active refusal of labor strategies. Work refusal has taken multiple forms, filled with possibilities, potentials, and contradictions also connected to forms of escape from modern civilization (Shukaitis 2014). We can consider two main

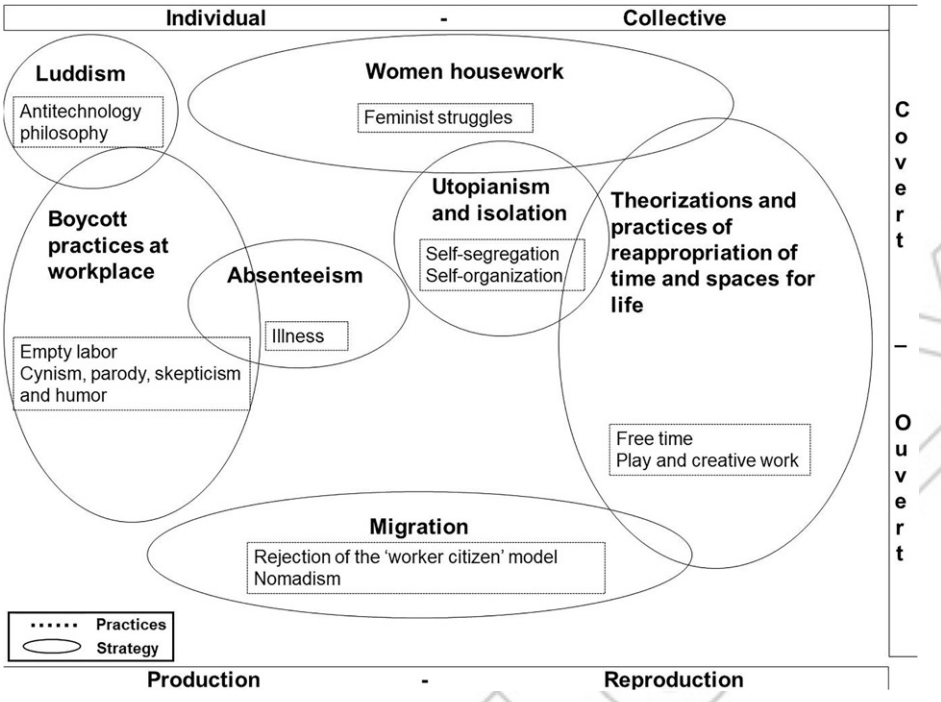

Figure 1. Refusal of work: typologies.

dynamics: (1) individual responses, (2) collective struggles. They are intertwined and they generate dissent subjectivities against dominant work values. It is true that accepting that the only 'struggles that take place through collective, large-scale, or institutional mechanisms' can effectively transform the oppressive and exploitative conditions of work, limits our 'capacity to recognize and value the significance of workplace resistance' (Gibson-Graham et al. 2000: 30). Overall, we face various sets and options that envisage individual tactics or political strategies, sometime they are pursued in isolation, sometime together (see Figure 1). Most of the sociological literature on the form of resistance to work discipline have been classified using dualisms such as individual/collective, organized/unorganized, overt/covert acts (Fleming and Spicer 2007). These dual classifications can be used to depict the various typologies within a continuous range of possibilities and intersections (see Figure 1).

Each of these typologies has developed and existed with various strengths and ways in different contexts. I present a brief critical comment on each of the typology before concentrating more on the last two typologies.

Luddism developed in England among skilled laborers, mostly textile workers, who in the second decade of the nineteen century, organized into secret bands under the supposed leadership of 'General Ned Ludd', smashed the kinds of machinery they saw as unfair to their craft and their trade (Jones 2006). Luddism implies a clear misunderstanding and waste of energy

against capital, as noted by Marx: 'It took both time and experience before the workpeople learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and to direct their attacks, not against the material instruments of production, but against the mode in which they are used' (Marx 1867: Vol. I, Chapter 15, Section 5). Luddism and its modern version of neo-Luddism, similarly to passive acceptance of a destiny of unemployment due to quick robotization of society, are based on technological determinism. Individual actions of boycott, often unrelated each other, have been and are difficult to record, but they are undoubtedly operating in many different work environments (Cohen 1980; Scott 1985). Similarly to the resistance of peasants described by Hobsbawm (1973) or Scott (1985): people who has not matured, at least in most cases, a full vision of the causes of their discomfort; but who, nevertheless, has identified some of their enemies and, secretly or even visibly, challenges them by means of 'inappropriate' behaviors. Inappropriate behavior that, in a complete different context and forms, we currently find in the youth population defined as NEETs (neither in employment nor in education or training), which is manipulated by the 'pathologizing' discourses of media and common sense. Additionally, there are new resistance behaviors that take the forms of 'empty labor' for millions of individuals that during paid work hours do not engage in productive occupation, but are involved with private matters such as taking a nap, surfing on the web, or chatting with colleagues (Paulsen 2014). Though sabotage is practiced far and wide, capitalism has taken all measures to depotentiate it (Sprouse 1992). Even cynism, parody and humor do not constitute a threat to dominant order in the workplace and they support the very order that such actions should transgress (Contu 2008).

Another typology of refusal of work is absenteeism, that represents the expression of usually unorganized conflict for particular occupational groups or a particular workplace. Depression, burnout and absence for health reasons from work became epidemic forms of passive resistance to capitalist values and its work discipline (Federici and Fortunati 1984). Organizing strikes and absenting from work, challenge the process of work rationalization, but the purpose and meanings attached to absenteeism change over time, as the relationship between strikes and absenteeism (Turnbull and Sapsford 1992). In all the first three typologies, of luddism, boycott and, in particular, absenteeism, coexist anti-capitalist forces that impair productivity (thousands of lost hours of work, huge health care costs) and that express the refusal of its discipline and anti-proletarian forces that pull individuals to mental and psychological suffering for the continuation of work discipline (Federici and Fortunati 1984). All the acts of sabotage and refusal of the work discipline are usually covert and rarely overt. On the other side, utopianism and isolation covers a very broad and heterogeneous set of social

experiments that have been carried out in various places along history. Restricting our focus on the northern hemisphere, it is worth remembering experiments and experiences that have crossed all European and North American history. Utopianism and separatism have been seriously criticized for their lack of challenge to capital and providing short-term relief from capitalism without seriously disrupt it. From one side Marx and Engels contrasted any utopian system, on the other side they supported the idea of communities not built around productive labor (Goodwin and Taylor 2009). Separatism and self-segregation are at odds with the most increasing strategy to avoid capital restructuring of the planet. This strategy is related to movement and migrations that are constituting themselves more and more as a social movement in all senses, a political nomadism (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008). 'In Europe, rights and resources that were formerly distributed on the basis of universalism are now distributed on the basis of work. It is the 'worker citizen' or the taxpayer who deserves these rights. The rise of the worker citizen has seen the development of two types of undeservingness: idleness (the unemployed citizen) and not belonging (the migrant)' (Anderson 2017: xix). But, migrants are also constituting themselves as autonomous subjects able to generate and participate to innovative social trajectories rejecting citizenship's exclusionary dimensions (Bojadžijev and Karakayalı 2010).

The focus of next discussion is on women housework and autonomist practices. The time frame of the discussion develop from the 1970s when women challenged capitalistic policy on sexuality, procreation and maternity (Federici and Fortunati 1984). At the same various movements were reclaiming autonomy from capitalism. Women housework debate and autonomist refusal of work mean a different political praxis direction a different way to open the discussion on what is of value in our lives and 'a theory of value might itself be able to produce an alternative' (Graeber 2001).

Refusal of work to do what? Italy from the 1970s on

In Italy, the aftermath of the Second World War meant the need to reconstruct cities destroyed and a country that had experiences 20 years of fascist dictatorship. This context has meant a big emphasis on the need for workers to be obedient and docile in order not to obstacle the renaissance of the country. The first article of the 1947 Italian Constitution states that '*Italy* is a Democratic Republic, founded on work' (*L'Italia è una Repubblica democratica fondata sul lavoro*). In the 1960s, after 20 year of the emphasis and rhetoric on work, various struggles and theories were condensing around an active refuse of the ideology of work. At the end of the 1960s and all along the 1970s radical social movements put into questions the Italian way to

capitalism (Balestrini and Moroni 1997). Workerists in the 1960s and autonomists (*Autonomia*) in the 1970s analyzed and intervened in the definition of an articulated class struggle able to redefine Italian society. According to Tronti the rejection of the concept of 'labor value' is the starting point for any Marxian criticism to define socialism (Tronti 1966). In the mid-1970s, *Autonomia* and feminist groups carried out intense criticisms over the organization of work, leisure and life in general. In particular various autonomist groups affirmed independency from trade unions and promoted struggles based on direct action as a principle of political intervention. Nevertheless, *Autonomia* and feminism have followed distinct paths, with few exceptions. The activities of *Autonomia* were particularly strong in Italy, but also present in various European countries. The so-called 'Thesis on Europe' defining the principles of working autonomy were written in 1973, including analysis from Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Scandinavian countries and Mediterranean countries, are explicit on refusal of work: 'In Europe today there is a working class without homeland, without interest in its own work, with one end before their eyes: living without working, wiping away the principle of work and replacing it - as the only highest principle of social development – with that of non-work, because this is possible, because it is no longer utopian, because communism is near' (Collectif, Klassenkampf, Operaio, and Front, 1974: 14 [translation by author]). The same document also includes: 'The first manifestation of European working class activity, the one that defines all the revolutionary potential, is the refusal of work (Collectif, Klassenkampf, Operaio, and Front, 1974: 55 [translation by author]). The discourses and practices of *Autonomia* came out of the factories to spreading in cities and developing a refusal to work praxis to reappropriate life, affections, and confront the feminist and gay movements (Ovidi 2015).

Taylorism, the new robotization of factories and the conception of work organized as uncritical automatic repetition of gestures was rejected (Berardi 2004). *Autonomia* theorization on the refusal of work was explicit: 'Refusal of work, demand for more money and less work, struggle against harmful work (which after all, characterizes work in all its capitalist forms), has always meant forcing capital to develop to the maximum its productive forces. Only when the worker's labor is reduced to the minimum is it possible to go beyond, in the literal sense, the capitalist mode of production. Only when 'non-worker's labor' becomes a generalized reality and enjoying life a productive fact in itself, does freedom from exploitation become not only possible but materiality achievable' (Lotringer and Marazzi 1980: 16). Part of *Autonomia* had a strong limit of analysis by focusing intensely in the search for the revolutionary agent, identified with the 'socialized worker'. To a large extent this limit has been reproduced in post-autonomist analysis that focuses mostly on technical jobs, from the factory to those gig-jobs that

make use of new technologies. But there are plenty of other jobs that are different in nature, and that are systematically excluded from their reflection. A step further in the post-autonomist analysis has been to address more incisively the theme of basic income that will be mentioned in the following section. The autonomist feminist tradition has been ignored in the histories of *Autonomia* and *post-Autonomia* and it offers much to the reconsidering of work refusal (Shukaitis 2014).

If autonomists developed a series of struggles animated by the refusal of work, feminists struggles defined new perspectives against male and capital oppression. The Italian feminist movement has been very articulated, with groups associated with the Italian Communist party, collectives organic to the New Left groups and several local autonomous collectives. A difficult relationship developed between the feminist movement and radical organizations such as *Potere Operaio*, *Lotta Continua* and *Autonomia* later (Cuninghame 2008), though wage for housework (*salario alle casalinghe*) was mentioned by *Potere Operaio* in 1973 (*Potere Operaio del lunedì May 1973* quoted by Ovidi 2015). But women involved in *Potere Operaio* had already decided to abandon the group not waiting for its disbandment in 1973, to found *Lotta Femminista*. Enduring gender-based conflict within the New Left organizations led by the mid-1970s to what has been defined a diaspora of women (Bracke 2014). Male centered politics and analysis carried out by the new left movements was not accepted (Stelliferi 2015). Most of the analysis shared by people in the *Autonomia* movement has been oriented to a class politics that considered feminist instances as reformist proposals, divisive for the proletariat, and incapable of any radical change. New Left perspectives were at odds with the idea that building the refusal to be labor force, especially from women perspective, constitutes the driving force of any liberation process from capitalism (Federici and Fortunati 1984). The roots of the social and economic exploitation of women have been differently interpreted in the feminist thought. Federici has pointed out how Radical Feminists have had a 'tendency to account for sexual discrimination and patriarchal rule on the basis of transhistorical cultural structures, presumably operating independently of relations of production and class' and 'Socialist Feminists, […] failed to acknowledge the sphere of reproduction as a source of value-creation and exploitation, and thus traced the roots of the power differential between women and men to women's exclusion from capitalist development' (Federici 2004: 7). Exclusion of women from capitalist production present precise characteristics. There is a 'double bind' in which women find themselves as a result of a set of rules, institutions and relations. One bind comes with capital and the other with patriarchy (Dalla Costa and James 1973; Federici 2012). The bind that comes from capital is related to the unpaid surplus labor women provide, and this makes women powerless

against male authority. The bind that comes with patriarchy is the persistent reproduction of masculine domination to subjugate women. The double bind, of mixed balance of capital expansion and patriarchy control over the workforce and female bodies, makes women vulnerable, quiet and with difficult access granted space for expression in urban policy. Lifetime as a natural container of work and rest time has to be rejected (Federici and Fortunati 1984). Although converging to similar analysis developed within *Autonomia*, feminist praxis had different perspectives. 'Tronti referred here to the increasing reorganization of the "territory" as a social space structured in view of the needs of factory production and capital accumulation. But to us, it was immediately clear that the circuit of capitalist production, and the "social factory" it produced, began and was centered above all in the kitchen, the bedroom, the home—insofar as these were the centers for the production of labor-power—and from there it moved on to the factory, passing through the school, the office, the lab' (Federici 2012: 8). The Italian long period of social struggles has also meant a profound critique to the moderate and the radical left, such as Lenin, Gramsci, Benston and Mitchell, all in agreement on the marginality of domestic labor within the process of capital reproduction (Federici and Cox 1978). Daily reproduction was usually omitted in mainstream Marxist analysis, avoiding also female efforts to re-establish the reproductive sphere on a collective basis to self-protect women from poverty, and violence from men and state (Federici 2012). The season of intense struggles finished at the end of 1970s.

At the end of 1970s every refusal of work behavior has been blamed, criminalized and removed from the political discussion (Berardi 2004). The affirmation of neoliberalism along the 1980s and 1990s has meant reshaping individuals' social behavior and the political landscape (Swyngedouw 2014). As pointed out by Federici, previous discourses on the refusal of work had to be revised in favor of a refusal of the conception of lifetime as a 'natural' repository of working time and leisure time to recharge to go back to work (Federici and Fortunati 1984). Summarizing Federici's analysis, the refusal of work is a rebellion against a time that is closed and fixed within determined spaces full of regular, mechanical, repeatable, and impersonal activities (Federici and Fortunati 1984). Among other features, neoliberalization operates with the goal of desocialization and isolation of individuals, building fragmented social subjectivities that are collectively weak to contrast oppression but relatively strong in fuelling the development of capitalism (Federici and Fortunati 1984; Federici 2012). Radical struggles can change and liberate women subjectivities, that find their origins in the witch hunts, from the subjectivities imposed by the organization of work (Federici 2004). Exactly on the desocialization of individuals there has been a political work that is worth addressing more in detail.

Refusal of work: yet again in a new articulation of struggles

From the 1970s, one of the most important novelties left on the 'landscape' of possible struggles has been the possibility to attack the core mechanisms that supply labor force as a source of value creation (Federici and Fortunati 1984). End of public space, appropriation of commons and shared time together has been a strong feature of neoliberal policies to maintain privileges and keep order in society. The resistance to these policies means to delineate segments of time belonging to the experimentation of life practices outside of the capital domain (Federici and Fortunati 1984). The institutional opposition and resistance to neoliberalism has articulated various proposals. These proposals can be grouped in three groups: reduction of working time for the same pay, increase of socially useful works, and basic income guarantee (Bihr 1991; Srnicek and Williams 2015). These proposals can only work if appropriated by the state and articulated together, if we want to imagine to delink a large part of the population from capitalism. Weeks from a Marxist feminist tradition renewed the feminist critique of wage labor outlining a post work political agenda, within which a program of state-supplied basic income would be fundamental (Weeks 2011). But, given current circumstances, this appears very difficult, consider for example how basic income guarantee has been adopted in its rightist version (Gorz 1989), and it is better to look at practices that are already prefiguring new paths. Federici's work comes to our rescue because of her emphasis on capitalism ability to devaluate people life and control people space, in particular people capacity to move in space (women by and large) and the control of female bodies and land grabbing (Federici 2012). It is in the attack to capital capacity to control space and time that we have to turn our attention. A radical change can turn up as a prolonged process of living here and now along with non-negotiable interdiction of sexism, racism, hierarchies and environmental destruction.

In the last 30 years various practices have attempted to prefigure different use of time and spaces and some cases have demonstrated the ability to enact self-managed territorializations (Mayer, Thörn, Thörn 2016; SqEK 2013). These practices are direct interventions on space by various groups and collectives in relation to housing, social activities, urban gardens and the commons (SqEK, Cattaneo, and Martínez 2014). The struggles for the re-appropriation of spaces for a social life detached from capitalism has been one of the most important feature of radical movements. Southern Europe can provide some examples (Leontidou 2010). In particular, in Italy the intersection of autonomist and anarchist has produced self-managed Social Centers that have provided original spaces of resistance to neoliberalism (Mudu 2012).

The development of Social Centers in the main urban areas and the persistence of a movement of squatting for housing has been a way to establish a control on time and space not regulated by profit rules. In many cases women have organized the spaces of the squatted places according to their shared vision of safety and security for children. In general, organizing spaces together, not driven by business targets, has allowed in some cases to commoning spaces otherwise abandoned and privatized. Radical urban gardening has also been practiced in many cities and the reappropriation of space by collectives and networks of people challenge neoliberal land use patterns. Overall these movements have demonstrated long-term capacity of resistance generally based on volunteers work, keeping people outside labor market but not in poverty. Difficulties are not absent. Women migrants have suffered also in 'liberated' spaces (Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2017). Feminist collectives have often pointed out the problems of males presence in squatted Social Centers. Patriarchy is difficult to be defeated also in liberated spaces (Kadir 2016). In the recent years, a new wave of squatting by women collectives has been very important, see for example the cases of *Lucha y Siesta* (squatted in 2008) or *Cagne Sciolte* (squatted in 2013) in Rome. Squatting for Social Centers and housing has gone beyond the survival needs and neoliberal cultural deprivation posing relevant questions on autonomy and social reproduction. Sharing habitually spaces outside capital has meant to redefine the notions of 'labor' and 'occupation.' Also anarchist viewpoints reiterated that refusal of work 'does mean creating a new way of life based on play; in other words, a *ludic* revolution. By "play" I mean also festivity, creativity, conviviality, commensality, and maybe even art' (Black 1986). The Italian or Greek or Spanish examples are not alone and other examples in the northern hemisphere can be offered, not forgetting that in central and South America, Africa and Asia many experiences of women against commercialization of nature, supporting a non-capitalist use of land and a subsistence-oriented agriculture (Federici 2012). Squatters in New York gave an example of practices that have individuals not being superfluous to production because they produce their own life outside capitalist relations (Starecheski 2016). Squatters' power, as women power, does not come from some recognition of their place in the production cycle, but from their ability to fight against it (Federici and Cox 1978). These experiences have provided the support to resistance to global exploitation and the development of a new politics of the commons, though not everywhere and with the same results. The new politics of the commons has to be measured, among other factors, by a feminist position, that is produced by the struggles against sexual discrimination and over reproductive work, which is the building block upon which society is formed and by which every model of social organization

must be tested (Federici 2012). This means to consider the fact that women, the primary subjects of reproductive work, have depended on access to communal natural resources more than men and have been most penalized by their privatization and most dedicated to their defense (Federici 2004; 2012). Marx also posed that: 'Free time - which is both idle time and time for higher activity - has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject' (Heller 1976). 'No common is possible unless we refuse in commons base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed, if commoning has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject' (Federici 2012: 145).

The practices briefly mentioned indicate that the path for an organized refusal of work necessitate should follow at least three directions. Firstly, we have not to accept any sexual discrimination in particular based on reproductive work, and sexual discrimination is the parameter to which every model of social organization must be tested. Secondly, we have to reduce remarkably the amount of work being done. Thirdly, 'we have to take what useful work remains and transform it into a pleasing variety of game-like and craft-like pastimes, indistinguishable from other pleasurable pastimes except that they happen to yield useful end-products' (Black 1986). This directions to the refusal of work mean consistently acquiring other attributes which accentuate its potential innovative radicalism. When Marx described the two alternatives for increasing disposable time he stated that '[…] One alternative would be to produce greater wealth in half the current average labour time. The other would be to reduce the labour time by half in such a way as to direct the remaining half towards the satisfaction of "necessary needs" as they are at present. Marx considers it a theoretical mistake, a lack of clarity, to confuse these two alternatives. He explicitly declares himself to be in favour of the first of them' (Heller 1976: 101). The relations of production, social relations and systems of needs are, as we know, different aspects of a single formation, in which each is the precondition of the other. 'Our rejection of leftist ideology is one and the same as our rejection of capitalist development as a road to liberation or, more specifically, our rejection of capitalism in whatever form it takes. Inherent in this rejection is a redefinition of what capitalism is and who the working class is—that is, a new evaluation of class forces and class needs' (Federici 2012: 30). 'The true wealth of society is realised through the free self-activity of social individuals and through their qualitatively many-sided system of needs. The true wealth of man and society consists not in labour time but in *free time*. For this very reason the wealth of the society of associated producers cannot be measured by labour time but only by free time' (Heller 1976: 104).

Conclusions: 'Work Less and Everyone Works'? Or refuse to work?

Contrary to the end of labor perspective we have entered a new age of precarious jobs and forced labor exploitation on a global scale. The belief that technology is employing and using people is stronger than in the past. Technological solutions to run activities tend to make people forgetting that technological production can be oriented in different directions and technology is never neutral. 'Smart' technologies are always class driven. Digitalization and robotization of production have meant no reduction in labor time. Current refusal of work has to deal with new perspectives. The reproductive perspective of women is different from the perspective of workers, as reproductive work is always depicted as non-work. Reappropriation of time and space, stop working, is at the core of any criticism of neoliberalism and its colonization of lifetime of individuals. Stop working, does not mean stop doing things but to engage in a different perspective about the use of our lifespan (Federici 2012). The refusal of waged work can be envisaged as the way out of mandated domestic work and unemployment, but this can only happen if there is a reorganization of the reproductive work, in a way that makes it creative work, not aimed at providing workers for the labor market (Vischmidt 2013). Capitalism is producing a surplus of individuals, humans as waste, millions of people that have the time of their lives occupied by jobs that are unpaid, with increasing unemployment or diffuse offer of low paid precarious jobs. Exactly because of this condition there is the need to reopen a public discourse against wage labor and refusal of work (Berardi 2004), but glorification of work and technology is still identifiable in post-autonomist scripts and has to be refused (Federici 2012). This can open a different autonomist perspective from the one by Hardt and Negri (Hardt and Negri, 2004) or other post-workerists or post capitalism authors (Srnicek and Williams 2015). At the same time, also different perspectives from other feminist proposals on alternative economies should be tackled to understand the points of intersection and distinction. For example, how much patriarchal reality is challenged by a gift giving economy that satisfy needs rather than profit (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003)? The work-centred nature of society has to be put into discussion (Frayne 2015). In particular when the societal organization of work has moved toward an extensive biopower, merging work and 'life itself', that does not allow the social possibility of switching off the phone or laptop (Fleming 2014; 2015). Also in the feminist debate new directions can be taken for a post-work ethic (Trullinger 2016).

By making the connections between refusal of work practices, commoning experiences, differently articulated by the various movements, we can confront radical left practices to create a reality outside of capitalism. In particular, we need to support the practices that outline intersections between commoning, self-management and feminist political struggles, given the fact

that capitalism has been built on the huge devaluation and appropriation of women life for their unpaid reproductive and relational work (Federici 2004; 2012). The struggle against unpaid reproductive labor and violence has to match a redefinition of needs as a counterweight to neoliberal individualism and lack of justice (Doyal and Gough 1991). This means recognizing radical needs as long as they do not involve the degradation of other humans and the reproduction of exploitation patterns. Why accepting exploitative working conditions, unsustainable consumerism and a caged lifestyle (summarized in the catchphrase 'consume, be silent, die' or more colorful in Italian 'produci, consuma, crepa' as sung by the Italian punk band of CCCP)?

We are left with serious questions that need a collective effort to look for a satisfactory outcome. For example, how can we reformulate the debate on the value of labor in order to shift the discussion on the value of stop working, not ignoring women's specific needs? How can we integrate in the analysis the different situation of new technical jobs, mostly related to the new digital evolution, and the case of other service-jobs in general, for example care workers? How to articulate a political proposal based on refusal of work when no-work has been put at work? How 'free time' can surmount labor to meet the needs of life? How to articulate struggles, dealing with female condition, political mobilizations of migrants and self-management of space?

Among others, these questions are unsolvable without a huge mobilization able to stop the violence of wage labor, precariousness, segregation of minorities and exclusion of women.

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