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# Economic Sovereignty as the Democratization of Work: The Role of Basic Income

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**Abstract:** Let us understand economic democracy as the fourfold capacity (i) to decide what social relations we wish to “enter” in order to work; (ii) to determine the (im)material nature of the space where we decide to stay and work, which requires the capacity of having a “voice” that is effectively listened to; (iii) to opt for “exiting” this space in case its nature and functioning go against what we wish for our lives; and (iv) in case we opt for leaving, to resort to an outside-the-previous-workplace offering tools for second and subsequent opportunities, that is, to effectively “restart” our (re)productive lives in other terms and conditions. Basic income can play a crucial role in fostering such capacity. Because of its unconditionality, and thanks to bargaining power deriving from it, basic income is a sort of income that is convertible in terms of (a) time to conceive of (and put into practice) projects of one’s own, be it individually and/or collectively; (b) a capacity to explore alternative options and take promising risks; and (c) the right to credit, in the twofold sense of the right to financial resources and the right to social trust. As noticed and appreciated by some post-crash social movements, there are some spheres where such democracy-enhancing bargaining power may unfold: wage-earning work, the decommodification of labour force and the possible subsequent constitution of cooperatives and other self-managed (re)productive spaces, the household, entrepreneurship, socio-political participation, etc. In sum, more flexible combinations of different kinds of work may emerge when individuals and groups enjoy an income stream that is guaranteed as a right, which echoes both classical and contemporary discourses on the need for humans to have the democratic right to autonomously choose and determine work(s) all along the life cycle.

**Keywords:** economic democracy, democratization of work, basic income, bargaining power, social movements

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# 1 Entering, staying, exiting, restarting: economic sovereignty as the democratization of work

Let us understand democracy as a collective project aiming at establishing some sets of rules allowing individuals and groups to effectively co-determine the nature of social relations. This applies to all domains of social life, including those where some form of (paid and/or unpaid) work is done. Democracy therefore enables us to mark out what we aim at doing – hence its active dimension – and to escape from what is heteronomously imposed on us – hence its protective dimension. The opposite of democracy is despotism and tyranny, here understood as an agent’s (or a set of agents’) capacity to arbitrarily interfere in our decision-making processes – no matter here whether these interferences are actual or just potential.

To be more concrete, economic democracy is the individual and collective capacity to decide “what to do” in terms of production, reproduction and participation in political life, no matter here the legal nature of the spaces where we act – privately owned spaces, self-managed cooperative projects, State-driven domains, etc. But what such “what to do” formula entails? Economic democracy can be equated to the capacity to determine in which workplace we want to act – which means defining, beyond the question on whether such work is paid by markets or not, what counts as work and workplace for us –; to the capacity to decide with whom we wish to work; at what pace we want to work, and with which frequency; to give rise to which (im)material goods and social scenarios, etc. As it can be seen, economic democracy is a capacity that operates both at an individual and at a collective level.

To be still more concrete and start pointing towards some institutional conditions, economic democracy is the fourfold capacity to (i) decide what social relations – that is, where/how/when/with whom/to achieve what – I/we wish to “enter” in order to work; (ii) determine the (im)material nature of the space where I/we decide to stay and work, which requires the capacity of having a “voice” that is effectively listened to;<sup>1</sup> (iii) opt for “exiting” this space in case its nature and functioning go against what I/we wish for my/our live(s);<sup>2</sup> and (iv) in case I/we opt for leaving, resort to an outside-the-previous-workplace social scenario that is

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<sup>1</sup> For a forceful analysis of “voice” within the workplace, see Lisa Herzog’s contribution to this issue. See also Herzog (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Both Alex Gourevitch’s, and Simon Birnbaum’s and Jurgen De Wispelaere’s contributions to this issue insightfully discuss when and why the exit option makes sense and the extent to which basic income constitutes a necessary and sufficient condition to exit.

far from being a quagmire where I/we cannot do anything “of my/our own”, as Harrington (1992: 269) would put it, but a space that offers tools for second and subsequent opportunities, that is, to effectively “restart” my/our (re)productive lives in other (“of my/our own”) terms and conditions.

It should be noticed here that having the right to exit does not force you to exit, as having the right to divorce does not force you to divorce. Actually, having the right to exit enables you to build and nourish stronger freedom-respecting ways of “staying”, as it increases your bargaining power when it comes to codetermine the nature of more satisfying durable social relations. Therefore, the right to exit should not be seen as the path towards an atomized world made of disassociated individuals, but as part of the institutional environment enabling you to stabilize freedom- and autonomy-respecting social relations, be it inside or outside the space – the workplace – you finally decide (not) to exit. Thus, a civilizing fruitful dialectics “exit-and-stabilization” must be underlined when it comes to assess the capacity individuals and groups must have (not) to break social relations all along their life cycle.

In modern times, the “entering, staying, exiting, restarting” tetragon we analyse here has recurrently been related to our relationship with markets – and especially with labour markets. In effect, the democratic nature of our connection to the mercantile sphere has very much to do with the fulfilment of a Polanyi-inspired endeavour of guaranteeing individuals and groups the capacity, first, to decide whether to enter markets or not in many – if not all – domains of social life; second, in case they opt for entering them, to politically dispute and co-determine the running of those markets; third, in case they opt for entering them and there is a decline in the running of those markets they cannot face and counter, the capacity to exit them; and fourth, in case they exit them, the capacity to resort to alternative ways for them to erect other forms of social relations over time. According to this perspective, the moral problem with markets does not lie on markets themselves – they are not intrinsically degrading social institutions –, but on the lack, in capitalist market societies, of such individual and collective capacity to decide whether to meaningfully (de)commodify resources and activities – starting with labour force.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> All these concerns are widely discussed in Polanyi (1944). Needless to say, the “exit-staying” dialectics we analyse in this paper finds conceptual inspiration in Hirschman (1970). For an analysis of the anti-democratic core of capitalist economies and the possible role of basic income in countering it, see Edgar Manjarín and Maciej Szlinder’s contribution to this issue.

## 2 Economic democracy as control over (re)production: basic income within “citizen rescue plans”

### 2.1 Basic income as a post-neoliberal democratizing project

Recently, “citizen rescue plans” harbouring packages of social rights have been presented by post-crash social movements in various regions of the world as a way to confer upon individuals and groups such democratizing capacity to “enter, undominatedly stay, exit and restart”. These “citizen rescue plans” have made appeal to the potentialities social and economic rights have in terms of empowering social actors with adequate tools to erect an interdependence that effectively respects their wishes and promotes their projects and life plans. Interestingly, basic income has played an important role within these “citizen rescue plans” in cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, Milano and New York, among others (Casassas et al., 2015; Fumagalli & Intelligence Precaria, 2010).

Let us put it in historical perspective, as it is only by analysing their context one can understand how and why transformative projects emerge and take a certain conceptual shape. As it is well known, the so-called “post-World War II social deal” or “Fordist deal” established what follows. On the one hand, working classes were offered relevant degrees of socioeconomic security through the guarantee of jobs with decent salaries to the male population and the implementation of public policies that had to come into play in cases of misfortune and to cover certain social needs. Of course, such achievement, which was deeply rooted in union fights and anti-fascist movements, meant a certain victory for working populations, as they managed to curb the harshness of capitalist labour markets and living conditions. On the other hand, these working populations had to explicitly renounce to the old central goal of contemporary labour movements, namely: the control over production. The fight both for property and for the organisation of work within the firm disappeared from the political agenda of workers’ social and political organisations. Needless to say, this constituted a huge defeat for the labour movement, as aiming at controlling the production had always meant aiming at controlling what to do, how to live, what to be. In other words, that social deal meant a huge loss of economic sovereignty (Casassas et al., 2015).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of how this social deal was erected both in the United States and Europe, see Davis (2000) and Zunz, Schoppa and Hiwatari (2004).

But today the deal is broken. In fact, it has been unilaterally broken by neoliberal elites since the mid seventies. Also, the dispossessing nature of this turn of capitalism has intensified with the elite-driven response to the economic crisis we have witnessed since 2008. In effect, neoliberal politics have entailed labour reforms undermining workers' capacity to foresee, plan and unfold stable life plans; the loss or the erosion of social rights, and the increase of precariousness. In this context, economic security is no longer guaranteed by labour markets, either because you cannot access them – unemployment rates have shot up – or because you do not get from them what you really need to earn a living and help support your household – this is the case of the *working-poor*. In addition, this scenario implies an increase of women's subservience, as less social rights means more exploitation within the household, where women tend to provide all in-kind services the State was expected to offer.<sup>5</sup>

The big societal question that arises here can be synthesized as follows: what to do when a deal is broken? More precisely: what can the wronged betrayed side do when a deal is *unilaterally* broken? As said before, a deal tends to include a victory and a renunciation – this was clearly the case of post-World War II social deal. Since the recovery of the conditions that shaped the post-World War II social deal seems to be politically unfeasible – the economic elites do not seem to be willing to return to the sort of taxation regimes and public policies schemes that characterized the deal in question –, the wronged betrayed side may be feeling legitimized to try to dust off what it had to renounce as a result of the signature and implementation of the old deal, namely: the control over production, over the many ways in which we humans operate in order to collectively satisfy our needs.

But how to raise the question of the possible ways to conceive of and carry out the control over production under the circumstances of the present? Of course, I am not suggesting here that basic income constitutes a unique, univocal and comprehensive response to this challenge; what I wish to uphold is that basic income can help return the control over (re)production – over our whole lives – back to the societal agenda, because it helps recover something working populations lost as a result of the old Fordist deal: bargaining power. In effect, by unconditionally guaranteeing people's social existence, basic income confers upon social actors the capacity to “say no” (Widerquist, 2013) to lives they don't wish to live and to set up work and social

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5 David Harvey (2003, 2007) and Guy Standing (2009, 2011) have very cogently explained how this process has historically unfolded and which effect is having on ordinary people's daily life.

arrangements in a way that is really “of their own”. At least, this is how the basic income debate has taken shape within social movements in the above-mentioned cities: Barcelona, Madrid, Milano and New York (Casassas et al., 2015; Casassas and Manjarín, 2014).

## 2.2 Democracy-enhancing bargaining power

In other words, basic income can help contradict the dispossessing nature of capitalism, which Marxist theorist David Harvey (2003) has seen as a process of “accumulation by dispossession” and which Karl Marx himself so thoroughly described in chapter 24 of the first volume of *Das Kapital*. One might object that what Marx maintained is that capitalist dispossession leaves us without means of production, not only without income. However, basic income is not “only” income: because of its unconditionality – and thanks to the bargaining power deriving from it –, basic income is a sort of income that is convertible or translatable in terms of:

- time to conceive of (and put into practice) a “life of one’s own”, be it individually or collectively – and if collectively, time to resort to the mediation of the State, unions and other organizations, and/or to create and nourish various forms of self-management;
- a capacity to explore alternative options and to take promising risks – the positive correlation between risk propensity and freedom-enhancing bargaining power should not go unnoticed (Casassas and Loewe, 2001; Elster, 1989); and
- the “right to credit”, in the twofold sense of the “right to financial resources” and the “right to social trust”: a constant stream of income should also be understood as the politically guaranteed right to second, third and subsequent opportunities to trigger and sustain (re)productive projects of one’s own, which is extremely important so as to build a truly inclusive and democratic socioeconomic environment.<sup>6</sup>

This is why it can be said that basic income is not “only” income, but a relevant set of resources that can be used when it comes to organize production and reproduction according to our own wishes, desires and life plans. In effect, bargaining power deriving from that unconditional income stream allows individuals and groups to try other forms of work, other ways of setting up

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<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Michael R. Krätke for a very inspiring conversation on these issues.

productive and reproductive arrangements, other social relations within a world to be effectively made in common.

Let us explore a few spheres where such a democracy-enhancing bargaining power might unfold:

- Within the field of wage-earning work, individuals and groups need to be empowered both to exit those spaces when employers arbitrarily interfere in their daily life and, in case they opt for staying, to credibly threaten the employers and negotiate better working and living conditions. In effect, “workplace democracy” cannot be reduced to a gift kind-hearted employers capriciously decide to offer to their employees, as it would put the latter in the situation of those slaves that are treated with respect but nevertheless remain slaves, that is, *alieni iuris*. If the goal is effective workplace democracy, employees need unconditional resources to face bargaining processes with real opportunities to co-determine the running of the productive unit.
- But productive life can go beyond the walls of the capitalist firm. Workers need also to be enabled to decide with some fellows to stop performing wage-earning work for others and constitute a cooperative self-managed productive space where they might count on higher degrees of control over what to do and how to do it. The decommodification of labour force and the creation of productive spaces of this sort would constitute another expression of the kind of workplace democracy basic income would help consolidate.<sup>7</sup>
- Economic democracy should also reach the domestic sphere. In effect, the democratic organization of all the work that needs to be done in all domains of our societies very crucially includes women’s capacity to obtain fairer division of tasks within the realm of reproduction and care. The unconditional nature of basic income could constitute a domestic counterweight for women to question and dispute current sexual division of work and to propose and, if needed, impose other care-related arrangements. Also, the individual nature of basic income – basic income is not paid to households, but to each person – would avoid patriarchal forms of intra-family domination.<sup>8</sup> In sum, economic democracy is not possible

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<sup>7</sup> The link between basic income and cooperative forms of organizing the production has interestingly been analysed by Erik Olin Wright (2006).

<sup>8</sup> Carole Pateman (2006) has very convincingly shown the potentialities of these two principles of basic income – unconditionality and individuality – in terms of democratizing social relations within the domestic sphere. Corina Rodríguez Enríquez’s contribution to this issue dwells on the time use dimension of this set of concerns.

- without solid forms of “household democracy”, and many reasons assist us to think that basic income could play an important role in promoting it.
- More generally, our lives include many activities that are not paid by labour markets – or only intermittently. Many forms of care work are a good example of it, but we can expand the analysis to other fields such as education all along the life cycle and artistic work. Also, the mere act of trying to pave the way for one’s professional life – and to stay in there, nourish it and reconnect with it in case of misfortune – means loads of time of unpaid work: investment in experience and professional recognition, networking, etc.<sup>9</sup> A very clear example of this can be found in the activity of those who set up a business or a self-managed cooperative and need to work with no or little revenues until they reach the breakeven point. In all those cases, the link to the sources of payment of work are cut, which means that social actors lose an important asset – income – for them to negotiate the terms and conditions of the ways in which they perform all those activities – care work, lifelong education, artistic work, entrepreneurial tasks, etc. If economic democracy has to do with the capacity to co-determine what you do and how you do it, you need to be materially protected when you legitimately decide to (temporarily or permanently) stop your relationship with labour markets. Basic income can offer such an activating protection.
  - The political sphere constitutes another space where we perform many forms of (paid or unpaid) work that is highly valuable both for individuals and for the society as a whole. Either under direct participatory democracy schemes or within indirect representative institutions, one needs resources like time and some initial endowments in order to be able to make genuine choices with real effects. As 5th Century BC Athenian revolutionary democrats introduced a remuneration – the *misthon* – for those who had been elected to public office in order to secure their personal and therefore political independence (Raventós, 2007), basic income can constitute part of the material conditions of a free autonomous life within the many possible *agoras* of our time.
  - Finally, basic income can help shape these conglomerations of different types of work in a flexible way. The value of flexibility has often been embraced by managerial sectors aiming at reducing costs by eroding workers’ legal and institutional protections, which has often turned the discourse of flexibility into a suspicious strategy. However, we humans do need flexible lives where we autonomously perform different tasks according to our needs, which change all along our life cycle. When and how to do productive work and when and how

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<sup>9</sup> Guy Standing (2011, 2014) clearly shows that these are some of the most essential activities contemporary precarious workers are tasked with.



to do care work? When and how to open up the doors to artistic or entrepreneurial work? And how much of these kinds of work do we want at each period of our lives? These questions need to be answered by individuals and groups, which means that the old Fordist imaginary of one single work for all your life needs to be questioned – and is actually questioned by contemporary social movements who see the (not too likely) return to monolithic lives around one activity as a clear sign of an important lack of economic sovereignty (Casassas et al., 2015; Standing, 2014). Again, an unconditional income stream would help enable people to command flexibility in an effectively secure way that would enhance their effective freedom to choose what work(s) to do, when, how, and in which proportion.<sup>10</sup> Marx and Engels (1845) had very famously and forcefully endorsed this aspiration in their *German Ideology*:

[...] As soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.

It is for all these reasons that basic income can be presented as a tool favouring the normative goal that has been upheld in the first section of this paper: individuals and groups need democratic ways to enter, undominatedly stay, exit and restart all kinds of social relations, starting with work relations. The unconditionality of basic income confers upon ourselves relevant doses of bargaining power to oppose social relations we do not wish and to nourish and develop other social relations we wish to have but today escape us because we are forced to accept what is “on offer” out there. By guaranteeing our existence, basic income plays a crucial role when it comes to autonomously decide how to lead our lives.

And this is something that was not possible even under welfare-state capitalism, where the centrality of wage-earning work as the main mechanism for the structuring of our societies blocked a myriad of possible productive and reproductive

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<sup>10</sup> “Effective flexicurity” may be an appropriate term to name the normative and institutional goal that is being discussed here.

arrangements that only emerge when work and income are decoupled and unconditional resources trigger many sorts of (paid and unpaid) life projects. As mentioned before, some social movements seem to have appreciated such potentiality of basic income in times of distress, where the old Fordist social deal has been unilaterally broken by the elites and an indignation that is deeply rooted on a feeling of betrayal nourishes unprecedented social and political ambitions (Casassas et al., 2015; Casassas and Manjarín, 2014). Marco Revelli (2010) made it crystal clear when he quoted the graffiti he found on a wall at the *Politecnico di Torino*: “*Ci avete tolto troppo, adesso rivogliamo tutto*” (“You’ve taken too much from us, now we want everything”). May basic income serve as a tool to help conquer such an “everything”?

### 3 Conditions for basic income to democratize work

But basic income is far from being a panacea that statically deploys its potentialities like a historically unavoidable algorithm. Basic income needs conditions to constitute an institutional device with real democratizing effects on work relations. Let us distinguish here between immaterial and material conditions for basic income to democratize work.

As for the immaterial conditions, it should be immediately said that political culture matters. It will depend on historical trajectories of collective action and socio-political mobilization that a tool like basic income be perceived by working populations as a mechanism to foster the collective fight for better working and living conditions.<sup>11</sup> To go no further, the history and nature of unionism may have an important impact on workers’ perception of basic income in a certain political context. In effect, unions might favour an understanding of basic income as a useful device to develop a collective sense of belonging that could strengthen the fight for common goals; nevertheless, unions, especially when they are big, tend to see basic income as an individualizing measure that would undermine class consciousness and the space and vigour of collective bargaining.<sup>12</sup> Of course, one could respond that the fact of being paid an unconditional income that is funded by the taxation system – which means that its existence results from a huge process of transfer of income and wealth from the better-off to the rest of the society – would create a sense of belonging to the group of the “repossessed” that would help create new forms of class

<sup>11</sup> Alex Gourevitch’s contribution to this issue offers a very subtle discussion of these concerns.

<sup>12</sup> For a study of unions’ (lack of) support to basic income, see Vanderborcht (2006).

consciousness and, in turn, new forms of collective action.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the case it would be, it is evident that the political-cultural interpretation a society can make of basic income will have determining effects on the use the society in question will make of it.

Let us move on now to the material conditions for basic income to democratize work. Basic income does not serve the democratizing goals that have been upheld if it constitutes the only policy in place. In effect, a full package of measures considering at least the three following dimensions is crucially needed:

- First, basic income is just a “ground”, but in order to deploy its democracy-enhancing potentialities it should be a “substantial ground” – at least, high enough to cover individuals' basic needs. Each society must identify such a threshold where basic needs are covered, and the amount of basic income must be set at the level of that threshold. Below the threshold, cash transfers increase the recipient's welfare, but not her freedom and the democratic nature of the social relations she is involved in, which necessarily involves that capacity to “enter, undominatedly stay, exit and restart”. Freedom requires enjoying significant degrees of bargaining power, and bargaining power only increases relevantly when material existence is effectively guaranteed (Casassas and De Wispelaere, 2012, 2016). Of course, this does not mean that one cannot plead for partial forms of basic income for many strategic reasons; but one must be aware that those partial basic incomes do not foster freedom and democracy as a basic income at the level of the threshold does.
- The second dimension has to do with the institutional context of basic income. Basic income should constitute a part of the ground “only”. In other words, basic income is a measure to be complemented with other equally unconditional “repossessing” measures. In effect, welfare devices – that is, in-kind policies such as public health, education, housing, and care policies, among others – play an equally important role in terms of building positions of social invulnerability for all (Casassas and De Wispelaere, 2012; Haagh, 2007; Standing, 2014).<sup>14</sup> Having to buy those services in the market can turn basic

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<sup>13</sup> I am thankful to Iratxe Fernández de las Heras for very useful remarks on this point.

<sup>14</sup> A minimum wage is also important to avoid possible decreases of salaries. Although the presence of a basic income itself would help individuals and groups refuse low-wages jobs and negotiate better wage conditions, employers could still have incentives to diminish wages if these wages ceased to be the only source of income for workers to survive. Clearly, relying on a basic income, on in-kind policies *and*, in case of still performing wage-earning work, on a decent salary as well, helps consolidate the kind of positions of social invulnerability that have been presented as a necessary condition for more democratic social relations. This is especially important when the kind of wage-earning work you perform is not a self-rewarding activity, but something you do for purely instrumental reasons.

income – even a high basic income – into an irrelevant measure from the point of view of the democratization of social relations. To go no further, the price of private health insurances dramatically grows with risk – for instance, because you are aging or you suffer from a chronic illness. In these cases, the private insurance in question might partially consume or even exhaust your basic income, and therefore ruin your bargaining power. This is why there is need to avoid neoliberal State-replacing forms of basic income such as the one proposed by Charles Murray (2006).

- Third and finally, the ground – even if it is an “extended ground” like the one that has just been discussed – may fall short in securing democratic social relations if it is not complemented with a proper “ceiling”, that is, with a set of institutional devices avoiding great accumulations of private economic power. This can be done either by directly cutting the range of economic inequalities through taxes and other egalitarian measures, or by introducing regulatory frames to prevent the most powerful economic actors from carrying out freedom- and democracy-limiting economic practices.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, even if individuals and groups have been unconditionally empowered with a relevant set of resources for them to create and unfold life plans “of their own”, the prospects of democracy are very limited when those individuals and groups aim at developing these projects within socio-economic contexts – markets, for instance – that have been destroyed and disabled by the voraciousness of powerful economic actors with the capacity to introduce entry barriers and turn the economic space into an exclusive, excluding, private property. Thus, the making of “the ceiling” cannot be disregarded. If the argument is democracy, the story cannot finish with basic income and other dimensions of the ground.<sup>16</sup>

## 4 Conclusion: economic democracy as the fiduciarization of social relations

A parallel can be drawn between the realm of work and that of politics. In both spheres, certain degrees of “trust-based division of tasks” – or “trust-based

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<sup>15</sup> This is why both F.D. Roosevelt and J.M. Keynes were convinced that “economic monarchs” had to be fought to put an end to rentierism and to any form of speculative use of assets and the economic space. In effect, the opportunity sets of the most powerful economic actors had to be, if not destroyed, at least severely restricted. For an analysis of this period, see Sunstein (2004).

<sup>16</sup> A more extensive approach to the link between “grounds” and “ceilings” can be found in Casassas and De Wispelaere (2012, 2016).

representation” – ought to take place. Within properly-running democratic political institutions, some citizens entrust other fellow citizens who act as their representatives with the responsibility of gathering information and making relevant decisions vis-à-vis the running of (certain domains of) the polity – sometimes the roles change and, as Aristotle put it, citizens “govern and are governed in turns”.<sup>17</sup> Within democratic workplaces, individuals understand that certain levels of division of work are needed,<sup>18</sup> and mutually entrust with the responsibility of carrying out mutually necessary (re)productive activities. If democracy is to be preserved, these forms of “representation” or “division of tasks” that take place both within political institutions and within the workplace should not be understood as acts of delegation of agency and power to decide, but just as acts of accountable delegation of concrete duties – institutional decisions, management activities, the production of certain (parts of) material and/or immaterial goods, the care of other people during a certain period of time, etc.

This leads to a principal-agent problem to be solved in a democracy-respecting way, that is, by guaranteeing the principals – citizens and workers – the capacity to control and remove the agents – other citizens and workers who act as trustees – from “office” and/or the power to make them comply with what the principal – the demos – had previously determined. In order to achieve this goal, all members of the community must permanently count on the power to (de)institute all those fiduciary relationships. Institutional devices such as basic income, unconditionally guaranteeing individuals' existence – and thus an effective option to enter, undominatedly stay, exit and restart social relations – can help strengthen the principals' power to control the agents in all possible workplaces.

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<sup>17</sup> *Pol.* 6,1317b.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, what is needed are forms of division of tasks according to wishes, preferences, and genuine individual and collective life plans, not the kind of *social* division of work that characterizes capitalist corporations, where the class of the dispossessed bears the less rewarding tasks precisely because dispossession has deprived them of the most elementary bargaining power.

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