

Minutes of Workshop IV – Common demands as organizational tools. Discussing European Minimum Wage, Welfare and income and EU minimum visa

The workshop has been attended by self-organized groups of precarious workers, unemployed and unions focused on the possibility of regarding common demands as organizational tools, starting from three main claims: a European Minimum wage, a European welfare and unconditioned basic income, a European minimum visa for migrants. The main questions which lead the discussion concerned the possibility of considering these common demands as a way of overcoming the problems posed by the fragmentation – that is the difference determined by labor contracts, wage, levels of unionization in working places, the legal status of workers (citizens and non-citizens) – which increases as much as we pretend to work on a transnational scale, and the mobility of contemporary labor – that is the way in which workers move from one job to another, from one working place to another, from one country to another.

One of the main points emerged from the discussion concerns the necessity of thinking how to connect local and transnational struggles. There are different groups involved into this process, and these groups act within contexts that are characterized by different conditions of labor and welfare regimes. These differences require a clearer definition of the contents of our common demands: for instance, in some countries a «basic income» already exists, even though it is not unconditioned but rather depends on the individual disposition to accept any job that can be offered by job centers (workfare). Starting from these differences we also pointed out the necessity of understanding the relationship among our common demands: for instance, though it seems that the claim for a basic income implicitly includes also the demand for a minimum wage, in some cases a basic income can be used as a tool to reduce wages. The discussion, therefore, points at the necessity of developing together and share a common level of analysis which should be able to take into account the different conditions experienced by the groups and subjects that are involved in the organizational process.

The necessity of articulating a link between the local and the transnational scale requires also to take into account that each group, on a local level, is already working on different campaigns (for instance concerning housing, climate justice and its relationship with labor, the right to residence and so on). Though this aspect cannot be underestimated, we stressed the necessity of regarding a common platform not so much as a list or a collection of the different local demands, but rather as the establishment of some common priorities and claims shared on a transnational level. The European dimension of this common platform should be conceived as the real innovation that we must pursue.

A European Minimum wage, a European welfare and unconditioned basic income, a European minimum visa for migrants should be regarded therefore as strategic demands. They should be the base for creating a European political communication among precarious workers, unemployed and migrants, so as to enlarge the spectrum of people involved into the process of a transnational strike beyond the borders of the already existing activism. These demands should be articulated in a way which would allow an interconnection among the struggles that take place within and outside working places, and must address both the transnational chain of exploitation and the European institutions of capitalism. They could then be the base for common campaigns and shared actions on a European level, towards a transnational strike. In this perspective, the workshop agreed on the necessity of deepening all these questions in a further meeting.