



working meeting in Frankfurt

# towards a social and transnational strike?

March 19th 2015



A colorful poster for 'BLOCKUP Zeit' with a date and location. The text includes 'BLOCKUP', 'Zeit', '31.5.2013', '12:30 UHR', and 'PRIMARK' ZEIL 94.



# content

Intro	
agenda and invitation for 19.3. ....	3
Introductory Intervention including workshop descriptions.....	5
<b>Chronology of actions and discussions about labourstruggles, precarity and strikes in the frame of blockupy</b>	
Blockupy Zeil in May 2013.....	8
Workshop on strikes in the international conference in November 2013 and report.....	9
Lets tackle Apple in May 2014.....	11
Workshop during the blockupy Festival in November 2014 with reference to and texts about the social Strike in Italy N 14th 2014.....	16
Blockupy meets amazon strikers in Bad Hersfeld at 18.12.2014.....	18
Meeting in Rome in February 2015: invitation, final document and report of the workshop on migrant strike .....	21
Call to 18th and 19th of March 2015 from Italy: Follow the strikers.....	26
Call to M18 from the nationwide strike-solidarity-network Germany.....	27
<b>Examples of transnational cooperations</b>	
TIE and ExChains.....	29
Railway networks.....	30

## intro

Dear friends and comrades!

With this small brochure we want to offer a certain re- and overview about the discussions and activities on precarity, labour and strike in the frame of Blockupy-mobilisations in the past years. Its for sure not a complete rather a selective and fragmentary collection of texts, calls and announcements, which are available in english.

On one hand this reader should help to remember, that a certain continuity was and is already given inside Blockupy to work on the thread against precarity and the chains of exploitation. It is better known now as a common search „towards a social and transnational strike“, in reference to the experience of 14.11.14 in Italy, which was a crucial push-factor for our theoretical and practical efforts.

On the other hand this booklet might help to inform and to get involved more striking, angry workers and labour activists, who are involved in workers resistance since longer time but who have not yet been in closer touch with Blockupy. We are happy, that some new activists confirmed to join our working meeting on 19.3.15.

Thus we wish, that our brochure will contribute to the main aim of our gathering: to foster a better understanding and to deepen the communication between the various realities, who share a transnational approach on movements of strikes.

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# **Towards a social and transnational Strike? Invitation to a working meeting on 19.3. in Frankfurt**

## **Agenda of the day**

10.00 – 11.30 Opening Plenary:

Building strength, organizing struggles. Social and transnational strike: what is their potential? What kind of common platform?

12.00 – 14.00 Working groups:

Workshop I: Strawberries, textiles, electronics, logistics: acting and striking along and against the global exploitation chain?

Workshop II: From the workplace into society and vice-versa: How to relate social and economical struggle? Different forms of strikes and support from outside, campaigns and blockades and when they help?

Workshop III: Migrant labour, migrant rights, migrant strikes: labour and the government of mobility

Workshop IV: Common demands as organizational tools: discussing European minimum wage, welfare and income and EU minimum visa

14.00 – 15.00 Closing Plenary:

Outcomes of the working groups, next common steps and structures towards a transnational strike.

# Act III on strikes in the frame of Blockupy discussions about perspectives in social struggles

On 18.3.15 we expect a big transnational mobilisation in Frankfurt against the official opening of the new tower of the European Central Bank, against one symbol of the capitalist policy of austerity, precarity and exploitation. On 18.3 we will denounce the power of the Troika and the blackmailing against Greece: we will make the ECB and the European Union accountable for their actions! We know that no electoral result alone will be powerful enough to give us the force we need against the power of capital, for this reason we will be in the streets of Frankfurt and we want to use this opportunity of coming together to stay for another day and to try to deepen the discussion on practical and theoretical questions on social and transnational strike.

How to strike if you are hired in temporary contracts and every time in danger to be fired? What does it mean to strike for a precarious freelancer? Who can use a strong bargaining power and in which labour sections? And what to do without this power? How to transfer the conflict from the workplace into society and how to link social and economical struggles? What is the relationship between selforganisation inside the factories and support from outside, for example through blockades and campaigns? How to strike in transnational companies, which exploit borders playing one branch against each other? How to get organised along and against the global exploitation chains? Is the blockade of a highway, for example by the students, automatically a strike? Or only if it is done by truckers or together with them? What is the relationship with and the role of the unions? How to challenge the new government of mobility and regionalization of welfare which exploit the hierarchies built upon the borders? What does it mean to organize a labour force where migrants and locals are put one against the other by institutional racism? How can we make our differences our strength? Would it help to develop common transnational demands such as a European minimum wage and a European basic income and welfare?

We want to tackle (at least a first part of) these questions on the basis of real practical experiences of labour struggle and labour activism in the age of precarity. We know, that the national and regional conditions are manifold, that the exploitation regime is organized in a complex global way and that the precarious disconnections and the splitting hierarchies dominate the given realities. But we also know: if we want to challenge and overcome these realities, we need to get organized on a transnational level, we need direct exchange about practical experiences and we need to develop a common platform. Production is nowadays organized along transnational lines and plays on precarious, different, forms of labour. We need new tools for a transnational strike back!

We want to follow the discussion threads and questions which we opened up already in the international Blockupy conference in 2013 and which continued with new practical experiences in the Blockupy festival in November 2014, after the experiment of social strike in Italy. We will refer also to the debates at the Strike Meeting in Rome in mid February 2015, while we intend to invite for 19.3.15 also other workers and labour-activists from various countries.

# introductionary intervention

The recent developments in Europe, with the clash between the Eurogroup and the newly elected Greek government, made clear that austerity is in fact a political program aimed at pushing labour and its conditions out of the realm of political contestation. At the same time, the uncertainty that rose up after the anti-austerity pronouncement of the Greek people and the appearance of the social movements agenda inside the European institutional space has opened for us a political opportunity which makes the problem of transnational organization even more urgent. A new space is opening up in front of us, a space of discussion and political initiative which should be productive of a new discourse and understanding of the scale in which our political initiative must be placed, of the transformations of production and the centrality of labour in order to win again in this changing landscape. Let's take advantage of this opportunity.

We see that the EU institutions and governments are using monetary policies to enforce labour reforms, privatizations of commons and cuts in welfare benefits which are making labour and life more and more precarious. A new government of mobility is creating hierarchies among, between and inside European regions. While capital and finance exploit these hierarchies in order to make more profits, movements and workers are confronted with the lack of a common platform to connect the existing struggles and produce new ones at the transnational level.

During the International Blockupy Conference in Autumn 2013 we started to imagine how to deal with the issue of organizing labour and strike at a transnational level. In 2014 we deepened the discussion on the problem of the concrete organization of workers, migrant, precarious and industry workers. In November 2014 with the first experiment of social strike in Italy the question of organizing the "unorganizable" came to the fore. Then we had - in the frame of the Blockupy festival also in November 2014 - a workshop on transnational strike in Frankfurt, taking stock of the first experiment of social strike and dealing with its novelty and its limits. In Lisbon and then in Rome we discussed again how to start a process of organization inside Europe, recognized as our minimum space of political initiative.

We know that the European space is criss-crossed by global production chains and capital flows which stretch outside Europe, as the example of European Special Economic Zones in Turkey or immigration policies clearly show. It is following this understanding that we campaigned against Apple and Foxconn in several European cities during the "may of solidarity" actions in May 2014, denouncing and opposing one of the global chains of production and exploitation, and last December some Blockupy activist supported an important strike by Amazon workers in Germany. These experiences point at the potentialities of new forms of activism connected with labour struggles and strikes as a form to organize new coalitions and solidarity capable to hit the nodes of the global chains of exploitation.

Blockupy gave us the chance to act transnationally in this new European scenario, coming together on the 18th of March to contest the ECB and make the EU institutions accountable for what they have done to Europe and what they are doing to Greece. At the same time, the transnational space of communication and debate created around Blockupy gave us the chance to start sharing a common perspective on Europe and the struggles to come. Now that the Blockupy process is moving towards a turning point, it is time to choose where to put our energies. We know this is not the right place where to decide the future of Blockupy, but, after some debates and attempts, we recognize the existence of a burgeoning space of discussion in which we could go forward with the process of the transnational strike. What is the process of the transnational strike? It is the perspective of organizing and fighting back to foster our own agenda against the Europe of precarity and austerity. In order to be powerful enough to win, the struggles that deal with the problem of welfare, like the practices of mutualism, self-organization of solidarity and re-appropriation of the commons, cannot be conceived as separate from workers struggle and from the idea of transnational strike. Welfare policies, together with precarization, government of mobility and the new mantra of employability are but one important part of a more general restructuring of the wage regime: to

organize against it means to invent and use suitable tools to hurt the capital and the employers, identifying clearly our counterpart.

We propose four claims that could work towards the imagination of new tools of struggle and that could direct our action and be able to expand the capacity of the process of the transnational strike. The claims aim at disrupting the hierarchies that allow employers in Europe to play one group of workers against the other. European minimum wage and basic income aim at contrasting poverty, precarity and low wages. A European welfare should grant specific services everywhere in Europe, regardless of national citizenship. A European visa of minimum two years, independent from labour and income, could help stopping institutional racism breaking the blackmail of the link between residence permit and labour contract. To these point, we refer to the amazing increasing resistance against the internal and external borders all over Europe and we have to rethink to bridge further migrants' struggles for freedom of movement with those of precarious and industry workers.

We are aware that these claims raise problems and questions as much as they offer a possibility. Yet we think that these are the right problems and questions we need to raise in order to enlarge the opportunities for a struggle that aims to win a different future and not to defend the past. If 18M is the day where we can show that we – precarious, migrants, industry workers – can take the lead of Europe and take the ECB and the governments accountable for their actions, it is from the day after that we have to start the everyday work of organization of the transnational strike. Consequently, we invite all to take the question of strike seriously and assume the process of building its conditions as a common political priority.

**Let's start today: let's organize, let's share a platform, let's think together about the next steps, let's move forward toward a social transnational strike!**

## **Workshop I**

# **Strawberries, textiles, electronics, logistics: acting and striking along and against the global exploitation networks?**

The current formation of capitalism is one of a transnational organized production and distribution of products and services. Workers from all over the world are put into competition and are related to one another because of the transnational organization of labour. At the same time this relationship does not necessarily lead to worker-to-worker cross-border cooperation and collective actions even if the transnational organization of labour makes capital also vulnerable. Europe itself is by now a global space crisscrossed by differences and transnational production chains that hurt the capacity of labour movements to organize and win.

But there are experiences of acting and striking along and against the global exploitation networks. We want do discuss these examples in the global retail industry – where retail workers from Germany and workers from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka work together -and in the experiences of Amazon workers. We want want to discuss how we can gain strength out of transnational solidarity, how we can develop struggles solidly united which strengthen our position in local conflicts and how we can transform the connections between the different workers and workplaces into joint action.

## **Workshop II**

# **From the workplace into society and vice-versa**

## **How to relate social and economical struggle? Different forms of strikes and support from outside, campaigns and blockades and when they help?**

Strikes in an amazon warehouse, strikes of railway workers or strikes of social workers: the direct bargaining power and the conditions of the workers are quite different and thus the questions of effective syndicalisation and useful solidarity from society as well.

In logistics and factories a direct support of pickets might be important: to stop strikebreakers or to help to disturb a just in time production. But strong campaigns from outside should not cover and cannot replace a weakness inside and this relationship has to be rediscussed everytime.

Railway workers possess a strong power to disrupt the transportation and production chain, but strikes in public transport affect the ordinary people as well and a public support strategy might be a crucial aspect to win a conflict.

Social or health workers usually are with less direct bargaining power and the responsibilities for children or care-taking for other persons include a particular challenge – but also a potential for a social mobilisation together with parents and patients?

In this workshop we want to rediscuss challenges, contradictions and chances of organisation, strike and solidarity on the base of practical experiences in the above mentioned sections.

## **Workshop III**

# **Migrant labour, migrant strike, migrant right. labor and mobility.**

The European government of mobility is based on the blackmail of the visa for migrants, on the distinction between migrants and refugees and on the new restrictions of welfare benefits for internal migrants, that throughout Europe aim to bend the mobility of labour to the needs of capital. Labour itself is increasingly mobile, because it is more and more common for someone to change his or her working place, to move from one job to another, to engage in short-term contracts that make wages and life precarious. Europe is for migrants, precarious and industry workers a space of transit and a battlefield between forces that try to govern the mobility for the sake of profits and the exercise of the freedom of movement. The discussion on how to organize transnational struggles must face the opportunities and the problems posed by the mobility of labor. The experiences of migrant strikes and struggles are a central reference point here because they have been able to question together the employees and the institutions that enforce the government of mobility. How to expand and coordinate these experiences? How is it possible to effectively challenge the government of mobility? how to organize strikes in a situation where labour is always more mobile? what does it mean to organize a labour force where migrants and locals are put one against the other by institutional racism?



## **Workshop IV**

# **Framing demands?**

## **EU Minimum Wage; EU Basic Income and Welfare; EU minimum visa independent from labour contract and income.**

The workshop will discuss the demands proposed as a common frame to the process of the transnational strike: a European minimum wage and basic income, a European welfare and a European visa of minimum two years, independent from labour and income. This claims should be discussed on the basis of their aim and as tools for building political initiative and organization. The aim of the claims is that of trying to block and fight the exploitation of hierarchies between workers and regions that allow the employers to play one group of workers against the other. On the other hand, the function of the claims is that of helping to direct and coordinate our transnational action and to make it possible to expand the process of the transnational strike, talking to workers that are not yet involved in social movements. Finally they should help each of us to build connections between local fights and the European dimension. Can these claims be effective tools to build campaigns on a European level that not only connect existing struggles but produce new ones? How to use them for this purpose and to coordinate through them our political initiative? In this sense, the workshop will discuss also how to enhance these campaigns on a regional level in order to make them concrete organizational tools and to challenge the institutions on a local scale.

## **Chronology of actions and discussions about labourstruggles, precarity and strikes in the frame of blockupy:**

## **Blockupy Zeil | May 31st 2013 | 12:30 pm | Primark | Zeil 94 | At the fountain**

Block Business, Visibilize Exploitation, Demonstrate Solidarity!

The 31s of May 2013 together with many different people we will block the capitalist business-as-usual with disobedient actions and attac exploitative working relations locally and worldwide. Therefore we will carry our creative resistance in one of Europe's shopping streets with most sales, the Frankfurt Zeil. Our action is not directed against workers or costumers but against global relations of production.

The Blockupy Action Days 2013 protest against the authoritarian crisis policies which are currently imposed in the EU. Therefore they start with a blockade of the European Central Bank, a crucial institution of these policies. But the capitalist crisis exists not only at the level of banks and EU institutions, but affects us immediately in every day life. In precarious employment, in stress and competition, while we work and live. Global Exploitation in the Clothing Industry

This is particularly obvious in the textile industry. The company's profit is based on an aggressive exploita-



tion of workers along the global commodity chains. At the sites of productions workers manufacture for European companies for extremely low wages under working conditions often harmful to health. Catastrophes like the deaths of workers due to fires or collapses of factories sometimes reach our media. But resistance and organizing of workers in those factories in fact is going on every day, as the exploitation along the global commodity chains itself.

#### Prearious Employment in the Retail Sector

Also workers in Germany are affected, also here the rights of the 2.7 Million people working in the retail sector are under attack and their wages are lowered. Both in Bangladesh and in the Frankfurt Zeil it is specifically women who are affected by the lowest salaries. And everywhere is valid: the lower the wages, the higher the company's profit. Employers' attack on the collective agreement in the retail sector is just a current example of a general trend to flexibilize working hours and conditions. Always available- but just 5 hours a month of guaranteed work. Family, spare time, travelling? –All Subject to Approval.

#### Protest together

The expansion of low wages, precarious and „flexibilized“ working conditions is concerning all of us. Capitalism is a permanent crisis. Therefore together we will interrupt the crisis-laden capitalist business-as-usual. With creative and disobedient actions we will block the normal business of retail stores in the Frankfurt Zeil. We will visibilize actors of capitalist exploitation and demonstrate solidarity with workers' struggles. We will send out a loud and visible message against exploitation and competition, for cooperation and solidarity.

## **International Blockupy Conference in November 2013 Workshop on Strike: forms, perceptions, limits**

General strikes and wildcat strikes, metropolitan and social strikes, care and education strikes, migrant and refugee strikes... we just see various experiences and approaches to strikes as a mean of resistance and social change. What are the respective perceptions and expectations? What are the respective links and potential interconnections? What are the limits (concerning symbolism or fragmentation) and challenges (concerning the global chain of exploitation)? How to distinguish from a method of civil disobedience?

And how to estimate the role of the unions? While there has been hopes of a radicalization of the labor movement most trade unions in Europe have searched for new social pacts with the government and capital on a national level. Despite an upsurge in symbolic general strikes the decline of conflicts at the point of production proceeded during the crisis. This is not only due to a weakened potential of disruptive power by globalization but as well to a still cooperative behavior of trade unions vis-a-vis capital.

What does this mean for any perspective of a new labor internationalism?

We want to touch these questions and evaluate critically some experiences of recent years to discuss the transnational perspectives...

With Inputs from Christian Frings (strike activist from Cologne), from Paola Rudan (Coordinamento Migranti Bologna), from Interventionist Left (Berlin) and Global Project/Italy

# Report on workshop

## Strike - forms, understanding, limits (19th Nov 2013)

Strike has become a challenge because it has to deal with a complex process of transformation of labour and of its weight on the society. We see today the strike as a practice that involves the society as a whole, that is no more linked only with a static idea of the workplace or of the workers, but also with the potential employable people who are always in relation with labour, who get continually in and out of the workplace but are constantly constrained to conquer and to maintain this flexible connection with it, through a permanent training of their own skills.

In order to imagine a new form of strike we are thus constrained to deal with this new type of connections between society and labour that are asserting inside and outside the borders of Europe. The political question at stake therefore concerns the disconnections between social conditions and a reconfiguration of political spaces that makes it impossible to imagine whatever natural process of recomposition.

The first problem we deal with is the role Unions are playing in this phase, suppressing any attempt to take on the struggles or in many cases organizing strikes that are in no way hurting capital.

From past experiences and experiments of strikes in the last years we derive the incapability of the unions to deal with the very fragmentation of labour in multiple different conditions and subjects. The strikes in the logistic sector and migrants strikes in 2010-11 demonstrated that the migrants were the real novelty of the labour struggles and here the union remain a partial and limited tool for the struggle, unable as it is to recognize the double attack, against the firm and against the State, that the migrants are fighting, insisting instead on a issue of unity that lost its power in the new configuration of the workforce. On the other side, unions proved to be still indispensable in organizing workers strike but more relevantly we have seen that movements cannot substitute unions.

How then is possible to deal with those different social and working conditions in a contest in which Europe is often imposing new forms of exploitation also outside its geographical borders, through , 'corridors' of precarization? Is it possible to , 'block and harm' on this really transnational dimension of the process that is connected on the side of the line of production but disconnected at the political level of the organization of the struggles?

The strike in France in 2010 and other experiences of strikes in these recent years, the attempt to organize a strike of precarious workers through a European network have already faced these problems and these limits. The effectiveness of the strike remain an open question, a question that cannot be thought without thinking the disconnections inside the society itself, between rights and labour, between citizenship and labour. All these political spheres are today strongly intertwined. Is it enough to call for a social strike if this social space is constantly complicated by the urgency to attack labour? Is it enough to fight the new poverty issue through a claim for income that is in an unavoidable strong relation with the political meaning of the wage?

The workshop confronted therefore a double tension: to redefine the political meaning of the strike and to understand what it means and how is it possible to dislocate the strike from its contest, that is to say, to redefine the new political spaces of the strike considering these (dis)connections between labour and society and the impossibility to reduce all the different conditions either to a European configuration of power or to a general recomposition that the square or the metropolis would automatically create.

All these questions need to be discussed in a broader framework and in a more transnational contest. For this reason a new space of discussion on the issue of strike and precarity will be opened in the next months.

Conessioni precarie/Coordinamento migranti Italy

# **May 2014: let's tackle Apple!**

## **coordinated actions at 16th and 17th of May**

### **against the global chains of exploitation**

In the frame of mayofsolidarity.org we will organise protests and civil disobedience simultaneously in various European cities in front of Apple stores. We will denounce Apple as profiteer of the global chains of exploitation, as symbol of „modern contract manufacturing“ benefitting from the global wage hierarchies. The current crisis policy involves austerity programmes in Europe with the result of redistribution of wealth from bottom to top, that forces more and more people into precarious labour contracts. But in the same time the aggressive crisis policies aim to extend and intensify immediate conditions of exploitation in the global production.

Apple is one example, this company no longer runs production sites itself but has its iPhones and iPads produced by contract manufacturers such as Foxconn that operate at low wages in world market factories in China and elsewhere. Apple provides design and technology, Foxconn organises the industrial production for Apple. With 1.3 million employees, Foxconn is both the world's most important industrial employer and producer of more than 50% of all electronic products worldwide.

Smartphones and tablets, notebooks, game consoles and workstations: All these devices are stained in the Global labour market with sweat and blood of mostly young, migrant workers who share – albeit in different forms – the blackmail of institutional racism that is functional to wages differentiation. They suffer exploitation in the production sites of the electronics industries in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, in industrial labour camps characterised by humiliation, stress, shift work, low wages, despotic management, accidents at work and diseases. Yet, there is no room for such horrors in the medial versions of our digital world and even less in the popular advertising spots of Apple or Samsung.

With his „Supplier Responsibility“ policy, Apple – with the complicity of scholars from Stanford University, other educational institutions and audit groups – is trying to shift any accountability for the working conditions in the production chain towards supplier like Foxconn. Apple discourse significantly aims to „conflict-free“ factories. Yet we know workers are struggling, and we know Apple is the leading actor in the electronics market and production chain: the continuous release of new models and the extreme quality Apple seeks are only possible thanks to extreme exploitation. The credibility of the supplier responsibility policy is very low, and the independence of the audit process not proved. Apple, Foxconn, and other suppliers are all equally responsible for the working conditions.

In our actions we want to address these structures of exploitation and at the same time draw the attention to the forms of resistance and refusal of the workers. In 2010, dozens of young Chinese workers fell to their deaths from Foxconn's factory buildings. The suicides fueled more struggles and a wave of actions and strikes that in some cases forced Foxconn and other employers to raise wages. Campaigners from solidarity groups in China, Hongkong and other countries blamed tough working conditions and military management as reasons for the suicides. They also denounced that Foxconn has actively tried to divide and isolate workers in the factory halls and in their accommodations in order to prevent resistance. Yet, Foxconn's world market factories have repeatedly witnessed strikes and riots that have received little attention so far.

„Solidarity beyond borders“ is one of our central slogans for the coming transnational actiondays in May. In Rome and Bologna, in Warsaw and Poznan, in Frankfurt and Dusseldorf, and perhaps in some more cities we will be active at 16th and 17th of May with simultaneous actions: with authorized manifestations or spontaneous go-ins, as announced sieges or as unexpected blockades in front of Apple stores and shops.

According to the respective conditions we will link these protests with local conflicts and struggles. We perceive our coordinated activities as an attempt to develop interconnected struggles on a transnational scale.

**No border, no nation – block exploitation!**

**Announced activities in the various cities:**

Frankfurt: 16.5.2014, 4 p.m. Manifestation and siege in front of the Apple store

Rome: 17.5. in front of the Apple store

Bologna: 17.5. in front of the Apple store

Warsaw: 17.5.2014 in front of the Apple-Shop

Poznan: 17.5.2014 in front of the Apple-Shop

Dusseldorf: 17.5.2014, 1 p.m. Manifestation in front of the Apple store

## **short reports**

### **... from Bologna:**

#### **Subverting the global chains of exploitation!**

Yesterday in front of the Apple Store in Bologna more than 200 persons participated to the initiative «Let's Tackle Apple!», organized for the transnational week of action and realized also in Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Poznan, Varsavia, Milan and Rome.

In Bologna Steve Jobs who, after his death, was condemned to work in the Foxconn Hell's Factory, spoke about the «dream» of Apple, an immaterial commodity made of innovation, transparency and self-entrepreneurship. Around him, the workers of Foxconn told the real stories of their exploitation – stories that have been collected in China, Czech Republic and Turkey – and described the frenzied rhythms of the production chain in the huge Chinese plants, the dormitory-factories, the work accidents but also the individual and collective refusal of exploitation, the sabotage of machineries, protests and strikes. With the voices of the artists of the group Laboratorio sociale Afrobeat and the music of the collective Sambalotta we represented the condition and the insubordination of the workers, while on the white wall of the apple store the dirty images of the greatest global chain of exploitation were projected.

The coordinated actions in front of the Apple Store point at the problem that we have to face: how to practice an organization which can really connect the men and women who works along the global chains of exploitation in order to subvert them. Our dream must be the matter of which their nightmare are made. This is our #solidarity!

### **... from Warsaw:**

„the picket today went fine! we were 30 people, with banners and slogans, very energetic. also one worker of electronic factory spoke on the megaphone. here is few pictures and report in polsih: <http://oz.zip.pl/teksty/informacje/ogolnopolskie/item/1742-apple-zyskuje-foxconn-wyzyskuje-%E2%80%93-protesty-przeciwko-koncernowi-w-polsce>”

### **... and Frankfurt:**

about 200 participants, with protest banners inside and outside, a funny quizshow and arrow-shooting on the apple symbol, speeches about precarious labour conditions and about the resistance of foxconn workers, and after the manifestation with blocking effects another spontaneous demonstration with a go-in in the Adidas store...

# Call for a European day of action on 14th November 2014

Call from the Strike Meeting held in Rome 2nd November 2014 to European Movements and Networks: on November 14th Let's Strike Back Against the Precarization of Labour and Life!

On November 14th, we, precarious workers, migrants, industry and public sector workers, students, autonomous workers, men and women, will strike against the condition of subordination which the labour regimes and the European policies want to impose on us. November 14th will be for us a social strike, a strike that should be general and generalized, precarious and metropolitan: a first experiment for the struggles to come[1].

It is clear to us that we are facing transnational dynamics and that Europe is the minimum space of confrontation in order for conflicts to be incisive. What is now called crisis is the radicalization and reorganization of production and neo-liberal policies, known as 'austerity', which have reshaped the European scenario. These are sustained by the attack on wages, the compression of trade union rights, the des-killing and the corporatization of education and research, the privatization of public utilities, the enclosure of the commons, the new government of mobility of capital and workers, and the exploitation of migrant labour. From Italy to Greece, from Spain to Poland, from Germany to France, Europe has become a field of precarization of labour and impoverishment that goes beyond its own borders.

On November 14th we will start to organize our strike back against this condition, to claim a European minimum wage, a new European welfare and basic income for all European citizens and migrants, the right to housing and free access to education and knowledge. On November 14th, these claims will echo across Europe! In fact, building connections and communication across the European space means not only to articulate present struggles and programmatic demands, but also to imagine processes and claims that recognize Europe as our common battlefield.

During the open assembly called by Blockupy International Coordination in Brussels[2], the 14th of November has been discussed as one step, between others, to go on with commons days of action and mobilization. Various initiatives are already planned in several European countries[3]. As „Italian Strike Meeting“, we call all groups and movements to join this effort and to be part of the Social Strike on November 14th: let's make this day the first step to combine the different forms of struggle and strike that have been experimented and to invent new ones, which are potentially capable of expanding on a European and transnational scale!

Rome, 2nd November 2014, Strike Meeting

## The strike that didn't happen yet.

14th of November has been a novelty. First of all, that day has had the capacity of bringing labour back at the centre of the political discourse of the movements. It was not just the denounce of the objective conditions of precarity and impoverishment, but it was also and above all the starting point of a process of organization that looks at the strike as a practice and a project to accumulate strength.

Secondly, 14N opens up a political space whose potentialities are not just in the mediation between different subjects towards a single moment of protest, but in the pretension of defining an autonomous political process, credible and expansive, facing a common problem, a discourse and the corresponding practices.

Between these two plans there is a necessary bond. This opening has been possible because we recognized as a necessity the production of a political disruption on the field of labour.

The social rootedness of 14N was not due to the ability of giving immediate responses or a representation of a set of "needs" otherwise unexpressed, or of uniting the fragmented and disconnected struggles and disputes. The rootedness of 14N was due to the establishment of a plan of common initiative for all those who, every day and in different ways, experience precarity and want to get rid of it.

The success of 14N is not exclusively a matter of numbers, even though there were thousands people in the squares, and this allowed to get visibility without the rhetoric of "siege" and without the protagonism of the militants.

The success of 14N should be measured by its capacity of keeping open the political space that produced it and by the consistency in organizing the strike as a political practice which is able of disrupting the domination of capital significantly.

At the core there is not the pretensions of freeing spaces where to organize one's own sociability and one's life out of the social bonds of capital. At stake there is the production of organizational levels able to interrupt continuously an otherwise uncontested domination.

The strike establishes a practice of power. We succeeded in constructing a preview of what we would like it to be, singling out approximately the conditions thanks to which the social strike could happen for real. The preview was so convincing that it pushed the biggest confederate union to declare a general strike on the 12th of december 2014.

To oppose the regime of wage and the government of mobility means to address the problem of a political break in the labour field, that is to get it over with the policies which establish the subjection of millions of people through labour.

To say that it is the time of social strike means to recognize that the social strike needs its time.

## **Social strike. 14th Nov.**

### **What happened?**

60 cities in Italy, thousands of people in the streets and taking actions against particular places of exploitation (cooperatives, stage and internship offices, job agencies). Demonstrations and strike at the same time, with rank and file unions working together with social movements to give visibility to those who cannot strike because of the blackmail of precarity. It is just a start of a process triggered by the Strike meeting in Rome and by the creation of metropolitan strike laboratories. The method applied was one of open participation of different subjects and collectives, trade unions, migrant and industry workers, precarious workers, students. Actions in other cities in Europe (France and Berlin), plus the support of Precarios Inflexiveis in Portugal.

### **Claims**

Minimum european wage, european welfare and income: wage, income and welfare are all linked together and framed in a European perspective which is our minimum battlefield and space of politica reflection.

These claims aimed at connecting the struggle against the exploitation of the workforce in Europe with the struggle against the political conditions of its reproduction.

We claimed a minimum wage equal in every part of Europe, including special economic zones that the EU establishes outside its borders, as in Turkey. This minimum wage should force the contractual conditions which make up the precarity labyrinth, and should trigger processes of transnational organization.

On the one hand, we claim a European income not related to labour and financed by EU funds; on the other, a European welfare is the answer to the attempts to renationalize the citizenship, against the current

government of migration and the exclusion of the non-natives from the enjoyment of unemployment and housing subsidies, pensions etc. Welfare benefits should be guaranteed to those who come to, and go through, Europe; this welfare should establish the dynamic basis of EU citizenship. The claim of a minimum wage is not to be satisfied with the existing misery. At the same time, welfare should not be the instrument to push migrants out of Europe, but it should be transformed in the possibility to enjoy freedom of movement.

### Idea

Need to bring labour and organization to the core, inside and outside of the workplaces starting from the question: what does labour say to social struggles? Can we think about social struggles without questioning the power relationships inside labour?

Which differences – migrant labour, care and reproductive labour, factory labour, precarious labour – are exploited both by the employers and by us, as a richness, when we try to organize the unorganizable? i.e. those who, thanks to their constitutive difference, are not the privileged subjects of trade unions' struggles?

We need for them a space of public recognition, to put our strength together and communicate. The social strike offered an occasion to show a precarious pride, although in a still insufficient and embryonic form, and also after the failure of other attempts, as *Euromayday*. The discourse has been part of the organization and helps to deliver some keywords which make sense of the squares: as a fruitful indication for the *Blockupy* process, we need to keep together discourse and organization, practices and theory.

### Problems and limits

1) Only the rank and file trade unions participated at the strike, while the metal workers union held an ambivalent attitude (there was also the metalworker strike in Milan on 14N). The metalworker union tried somehow to impose the hegemony of true labour upon the precarious labour, the social movements and the so-called social unionism.

2) Another problem concerned the fact that the participating rank and file trade unions hardly recognized precarity as a generalized condition of exploitation. How could we take advantage of the trade unions support and participation while putting into question the pretended hegemony of the syndical organization of the workers. Even though the role and the power of the trade unions in different parts of Europe are very diverse, and even though sometimes the Italian trade unionists seem to be stuck to old analyses, the problem of the relationship with the trade unions has to be discussed at a European level as well

3) The labour which showed itself in the streets was set into pieces: permanent workers stood together with a multiplicity of workers (employables, unemployed, fake self-employed, stageurs, all kind of precarious workers). What does it mean not to have a well defined labour time? What does it mean for the organization processes to face a new time and space framework?

4) We missed a full recognition of the centrality of migrant labour, which instead allows to connect the everyday struggle against exploitation with a radical opposition to its political conditions. We did not emphasize all the differences which are crucial because they show the new frame: how can we strike when mobility is the rule of labour?

5) Another big problem is the absence of a well defined enemy and also the impossibility of organizing a collective opposition to this enemy. In fact, inside the same workplace there are different contractual conditions, different employers, different superiors (es. Cooperatives and various contractors). The inhomogeneity of the working conditions inside the same workplace is often related



# Blockupy Festival 2014

## workshop: Precariousness, government of mobility and transnational strike: beyond the mobilizations of 14th

Sat | 22nd November | 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Studierendehaus | University campus Bockenheimer | Mertonstr. 26-28 | Room K 3

Following the debates of the Blockupy alliance in Brussels, the social strike of November 14th in Italy and the day of action against precarious jobs on a transnational level, the workshop aims to discuss the political challenges related to precarious jobs, exploitation and the mobility of labour. We will discuss common claims linked to struggles of unemployed, precarious workers, students and migrants. We want to focus on

the organization of struggles against workfare and junk jobs, questioning claims such as European welfare, European minimum wage and basic income, focusing on new perspectives of mobilizations that assume Europe as our common battlefield, exploring the idea of a European transnational strike.

## input for workshop on transnational strike, 22th Nov.

Pr

eliminary consideration: Discourse is part of the organization and helps to deliver the words which make sense of the street protests: we always need to hold together discourse and organization, practices and theory.

The transnational strike is an attempt to bridge the struggles already existing while at the same time trying to enlarge the spectre of those who are not involved in political movements yet. Those whom we want reach are precarious and industry workers, migrants (also internal EU migrants), men and women who are always fighting for a better job and wage, together with trade unionists, activists and party members. The starting point is the consideration that we have to focus on one condition which can be paradigmatic and can unveil the contradictions of the new government of labour in Europe and globally. Europe is our battlefield, as a single market located in the global market: what happens on one side produces consequences on the other one.

### A first outlook on the concept of transnational strike

Transnational strike is not just an event: it is a process. It is the accumulation of strength in the long term. After the Day X of the ECB (non) opening, a different space for a European movement will open up, allowing to think about our own agenda. How will we fill this empty space? How to continue mobilizing keeping together the dimension of the street protest and that of the organizations inside and outside the workplaces, bridging the diverse conditions of labour and life?

### About a new context for our struggle. Which are the new conditions we are facing?

Post-austerity (or normalization of austerity): Every head of State in EU is now saying that austerity is over because the austerity has already produced the wanted effects of precarization, lowering labour and

living standards (see the European Stability Mechanism (Bail-out) that imposed cuts on wages, labour conditions and welfare, privatizations..., which will be probably extended to the whole Europe through the Competitiveness Pact)

### **What is the new government of mobility in Europe?**

«Government of mobility» is the set of institutional, economical and geopolitical practices that, while managing and enhancing the mobility of capital, aim at exploiting the movements of the labor force. It exploits the different levels and types of organization of labour, working conditions, wage, regulations, incentives, i.e. labour hierarchies inside the EU which make for an employer or investor more profitable to invest in one site or another.

Mobility also means corridors of production which run throughout Europe and special economic zones where different fiscal criteria apply. Mobility is also a potentiality, as the high turnover in Eastern Europe factories where the young choose to follow the flows of capital and wage – and they don't regret privileges that they never had.

EU has an interest in facilitating capitalistic accumulation creating the conditions of a mobile production. The social effects on the workers of the constant dislocation of production, according to the wage levels, working conditions, logistical opportunities etc, are for the EU just a small negligible side effect. Full employability substituted full employment.

EU is also an instrument of neoliberal policies where institutions play a significant role but it is also an actor which intervenes in contexts of rapid change, like Greece (bailout) or Eastern Europe (trigger of industrialization).

### **The European regime of wage**

There is no more centre versus periphery in Europe. On the one hand, the centre of the "virtuous" countries had to import precarity home in order to pump economic development, obtaining instead economic stagnation, extension of mini and midi jobs, legalization of black labour (if you are compelled to accept whatever job the job center offers you in return for whatever wage, it means that the employer pays you less, profits more and the state – the tax payers and in particular the taxes collected from the workers – will indirectly finance the employer completing the missing part of the wage). On the other, all the other countries had to extend to the whole society the mechanisms of precarity that were the prerogative of only a part of it. If before the young were the stereotype of the precarious workers, now precarity is encompassing all the sectors of the labour.

### **About a new strategy: Learning from the migrants**

How can we hurt the centres of production and at the same time bring people together?

It is urgent to match up with migrants' struggles within and outside Europe. Not only because the management of migrant labor was and still is the pattern of the government of labor as such on a European level. Not only because migrants were able to fight against the exploitation and oppression regimes imposed by that pattern. Match up with migrants' struggle means thinking at organization starting from the mobility of the working individuals. It means recognizing that a territorial, local or national dimension of organization is necessarily insufficient when precarious, industrial workers and migrants move all the time from one working place to the other, from a territory to the other, while the global chains of exploitation systematically move across the borders.

Migrants have been able to connect the everyday struggle against exploitation and a radical protest against its political conditions. The necessity of this connection is what the strikes of migrant workers teach us.

Example: In 2010, on March the 1st, thousands migrant and non-migrant workers turned the transnational watchword «a day without us» into a political practice to oppose discrimination, institutional racism and the exploitation of migrant labor. Three years later, in Italy, migrant workers triggered an impressive cycle of struggles and strikes in the logistic sector, thus tackling both the production of profits and the laws on residence permits which support it. They brought the struggle against precarity inside and outside the working

places. The great novelty of these strikes was their subject. Migrants reconfigured the objectives of the strike: those objectives had to be not only economical but also political, given the legal bonds to which the right to stay in Italy and Europe is subdued.

The project of a transnational strike for a European minimum wage, income and a European welfare could be the starting point for a coordinated attack against the government of mobility.

The claim of a minimum European wage and of a European welfare could be the lever for producing organization across the global chains of exploitation, turning the strike into a political struggle which questions European institutions and crosses the borders of territories and of particular working places. In order to connect the struggle against exploitation in Europe and the one against the political conditions of its reproduction it is necessary to keep together minimum wage and welfare on a European scale. This means neither to distribute the crumbs of social security cushions, nor to call for national minimum wages according to the hierarchies imposed by the processes of valorization and by the command on social cooperation. Rather, it means to pretend a minimum wage equal in every place of Europe – included the special economic zones established by Europe outside its political borders, such as in Turkey – in order to overcome the precarity-maze of different labor contracts and to trigger transnational processes of organization. It means creating the conditions according to which the general tax-system at a European level can support an income released from labor. In such a way, the strike could concretely attack Europe, its wages, its welfare and their function within the government of mobility. A European welfare can be also the practical alternative to the ongoing government of migrations, since the politics of citizenship cannot be based again on nationality. The welfare granted to those who arrive and crisscross Europe should be the dynamic base of citizenship in Europe. The minimum wage should not be the simple acceptance of the existing misery, as much as welfare cannot be a mean for excluding migrants from Europe. Rather, it must be the material legitimation of the freedom of movement. Once we take the move from the necessity of overturning the power relationships which affect us, we can also understand the global meaning of incomes and wages, precarity and mobility and arm the strike with an effective offensive capacity.

A pan-european and transnational dimension of struggles is not simply the sum of local occurrences of conflict connected by a single date or week of mobilization, but rather a radically innovative political initiative which could hit simultaneously strategic places of that global exploitation chains.

### **Open questions for the future: Bring the labour back in**

How to involve pieces of movements who are already inside the Blockupy process but who do not see the crucial aspect of a struggle around labour? Gathering them around a specific discourse about labour to underline shortcomings, flows, potentialities, possibilities of recomposition and creating specific keywords, language, frame, discourse.

14.11.14 in Italy

## **Blockupy meets Amazon Strikers A moment of mutual infection in front of the gates.**

At 18th of Dember 2014 a small Blockupy delegation met with the Amazon strikers in Bad Hersfeld, in this time one of the six Amazon branches in Germany with about 2300 striking workers in total. The Blockupy activists supported the protests at the gates of so-called FRA 1, one of the two huge ware houses in the

city. Attached you find an article of the press agency Reuters to summarize the background of this repeating union coordinated strike. But first a field report from the gates and about some nice moments of solidarity and mutual infection...

A first informal meeting had already been held in Bad Hersfeld in the evening before with a group of the strikers who had just returned in high spirits from the city of Koblenz. At this Amazon branch, workers had for the first time joined the strike coordinated by the service union (verdi) and busses from the other striking branches had been gathering in Koblenz in support: two busses of workers joined from Bad Hersfeld, in total more than 1,000 strikers from six of the German Amazon branches came together in Koblenz for an impressive common manifestation and exchange.

Inspired by this a vivid talk took place to pre-discuss the next afternoon strike manifestation in front of the gates in Bad Hersfeld. How many strikers would join? How many would stay for longer time and participate in the activities at the gates? Apart from these considerations, a first discussion was also held in the evening about the issue of participation by the Hersfeld Amazon workers in the protests of 18.3.2015 in Frankfurt on the occasion of the opening of the European Central Bank. After a short introduction of the Blockupy delegation, an initial discussion took place about the lines of communication between the struggle against the crisis regime and the struggle of precarity workers. In this talk some colleagues framed their strike in the context of a wider struggle against the strategies of exploitation and the proposal was made at the end to come from Bad Hersfeld to Frankfurt at 18th of March, at least with a bigger delegation and ideally with a full bus...

Next day at 5.30 a.m. two supporters joined the strike picket in front of the gate of FFA 3, the second big Amazon warehouse in Bad Hersfeld. The morning picket with about 10 strikers is a kind of information point: with some union flags, a music box and distributing leaflets for the strike to the shift-starting workers. Between 2 and 3000 workers are employed in both warehouses in Bad Hersfeld, many of them with temporary contracts and thus in a social situation almost impossible to join a strike. Some of them show solidarity by sick notes, and we learned, that in general the number of employee's illness is very high due to the working conditions: sometimes even 25 percent of workers are ill. And it's not a surprise, if you know that Amazon pickers have to run 20 km and more per shift.

The participation increased from strike to strike - now about 600 workers are on strike in Bad Hersfeld - but a majority is still working during this new strike. Thus hundreds of workers, although partly open minded, crossed the picket line this morning to start their shift, it seemed to remain very difficult to put pressure to this global player and its machinery.

But another picture in the afternoon: as of 2 p.m. up to about 400 workers gathered, at the change of shifts, in front of the gates of warehouse FFA 1 and formed protest rows at the entrance ways (see first photos below). At about 5 p.m. there still were around 100 strikers in front of the gates and the so-called „informative talks“ with the drivers of the „Cut Offs“ (departure of trucks) started. This because it had meanwhile been achieved, that the departing truck drivers could be stopped at the entrance gates for 15 minutes in order to be informed about the strike. The police was present with only a few officers and anyway overburdened and now tried to ensure that the 15 minutes were not exceeded and the informative talks did not turn into longer blockades, as the trucks are an essential part of the Amazon Just-in-Time chain and each delay can immediately entail further delays of deliveries. In this respect the Amazon management was on permanent feverish stand-by on the site and tried - at first at 5 p.m., it was already dark - to make the trucks leave the premises unnoticed by a rear exit and an asphalt country road. But it was noticed by the strikers, and a small group of them and Blockupy supporters could stop it immediately as they refused to leave the street. One truck now stood almost one hour before and at the gate without being able to move and the country road was moreover blocked by a private car "that had been parked there by coincidence". The Amazon management had to give up with the idea to use a rear exit.

Simultaneously the mood at the two major entrance and exit ways was getting better and better. In the further course of time a truck tailback was building up on the premises, also because the 15-minute informative talks with each truck driver were often creatively prolonged. Strikers and supporters refused to leave the street in the ordered time or moved very slowly, the police officer was confronted with ignorance

or disobedience. Banners were used during this kind of blocking actions – among one by Blockupy – and a short fire show by “Tanz, kleines Leben/dance, little living” in front of the central truck departure way raised the spirits (see more photos below) and made the manager of this Amazon branch get more and more nervous and feverish. Until around 8.30 p.m. the cat-and-mouse game in front of the gates continued successfully, and in conclusion the participants agreed that thus the course of Amazon deliveries had been brought out of rhythm more effectively than ever before...

For this day the gathering of strikers and supporters (not only the Blockupy delegation, but also further activists from Frankfurt, Kassel and even singular persons from Hamburg and Bremen) was very positively assessed and in the joined action and discussions mutual trust was built up. This can and should get a follow-up and the connections between Amazon workers and Blockupy should be extended at further strikes, as well as on 18.3.15 in Frankfurt! This is what was promised to each other again at the warm parting in the late evening on the basis of a new and concrete experience in this afternoon in front of the gates: a first moment of mutual infection, which has to be continued...

## **Amazon workers strike in Germany as Christmas orders peak**

Reuters, 15.12.2014:

More than 2,000 Amazon staff at German warehouses went on strike on Monday to press demands for better pay and conditions as the online retailer races to ensure Christmas orders are delivered on time. Labor union Verdi said almost 2,300 workers joined the action at five of Amazon's nine distribution centers in Germany, and that the action would be extended to a sixth on Tuesday - the most warehouses hit by a strike in the long-running dispute.

The walkouts at the six centers are set to run until the end of Wednesday's late shift and Verdi said delays to deliveries could not be ruled out as a result of the strikes. Amazon itself said customers could order up until midnight on Dec. 21 to get gifts in time for Christmas, or even on Dec. 23 or 24 if they pay for express delivery. „We deliver reliably,” a spokeswoman said, adding that only a small minority of workers had joined the strikes, with around 19,000 employees working normally. Last year, Amazon orders in Germany peaked on Dec. 15, when customers bought 4.6 million items - or 53 per second.

Verdi has organized frequent strikes at Amazon since May 2013 as it seeks to force the retailer to raise pay for workers at its distribution centers in accordance with collective bargaining agreements across Germany's mail order and retail industry. Amazon has repeatedly rejected the union's demands, saying it regards warehouse staff as logistics workers and that they receive above-average pay by the standards of that industry.

The U.S. company has previously said the long-running dispute has not affected deliveries as the vast majority of workers in Germany have not joined the strikes and it can draw on a European network of 28 warehouses in seven countries. It employs almost 10,000 staff at its warehouses in Germany, its second-biggest market behind the United States, as well as more than 10,000 seasonal workers.

Source: [www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-amazon-com-germany-strike-idUSKBN0JT0YS20141215](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-amazon-com-germany-strike-idUSKBN0JT0YS20141215)

# Rome strike meeting, act II - feb 2015

## Invitation and final document

Among the Renzi Government's Christmas „gifts“, the first two decrees of the Jobs Act stand out – the one concerning the “increasing guarantees” contracts and abolition of Article 18, the one that concerns Naspi (“New social insurance for employment”) - and the reform of the system of minimum taxation for self-employed workers and freelancers. The fury of reform has confirmed what had already been denounced in September, during the Strike Meeting: behind the rhetoric of the „exchange“ between old and new rights, stands the intention to hit everyone with no exception, stable and precarious employment, self-employed workers, students and the unemployed.

In the past year, at least in Italy, the neoliberal offensive against work and its regulations has reached an unprecedented intensity and violence. And already 2015 opens with an attack to the civil service. Flexibility in output and „employability“: this is the „couple“ consecrated by the executive decrees approved on December 24 (!), which is accompanied by liberalization of precariousness without necessary cause, by de-skilling of the apprenticeship contracts, by fierce tax increases against freelance workers who perform intellectual work/communication, and by the few leftovers, as usual, meant for the universal extension of unemployment benefits (to the detriment, among other things, of the funding of solidarity contracts). With full flexibility in output of the civil service, the circle is closed and Italy enters a new era.

It would be short-sighted and wrong to not grasp at the least the European nature of the reform process that hit Italy in recent months. It is evident that the „internal devaluation“ ( that is to say wage devaluation) mainly hit the PIIGS, it is equally true that the European labor market tends to become homogeneous, at least for one generation. Mini-jobs (under-employment laws), active policies and dual learning, from this point of view, are emblematic examples of a new rule. If productive investments, driven by a still uncertain quantitative easing of the ECB, should shift up, they would do so within a radically changed scenario – for what concerns the relationship between capital and labor, rights, wage conditions, etc. -: that is to say, the crisis has done its job properly.

No wonder that in Italy even the most optimistic forecasters speak of a jobless recovery for 2015: the recession should stop – we repeat, should - without any decrease in unemployment, all the contrary.

In the midst of Renzi's offensive, during and after the approval of the Poletti Decree-law the process of the Strike Meeting started to take place. During these months we have already stressed the innovative character of the process, it would be redundant to go back doing so again. It is worthwhile, however, to insist on the success of the Social Strike of November 14th. Not only the numbers, which have been also powerful, but the spatial extension (more than 45 cities involved) and time (24 hours); above all, the involvement of a broad social coalition, made of temporary workers, students, unemployed, grass-roots unions, committees in defense of commons and many more. A coalition that, overcoming the traditional form of the strike, was able to innovate practices, exhibiting the extension of exploitation outside the work place, from education to reproduction, from life forms to social relations. Nothing more than the beginning, no doubt, but a beginning that has left its mark.

The crowded National Assembly of the Laboratories for Social Strike, which was held in Naples on November 30th has already stated it: the success of the #14N imposes a political, organizational, and linguistic research, under many aspects unprecedented. It started well during fall, but it is yet to be furthered. It is evident, in fact, that the expansive and independent path against the policies of insecurity - that are articulated not only with the Jobs Act and the regulation neoliberal employment market, but also through putting the whole of life to value - and that process of widespread unionization to which reference has been made in recent months, also and above all from the point of view of practical experimentation, must be pursued

and developed. It is equally true that the European extension of the strike, only evoked with the actions of Paris and Berlin, has yet to be fully conquered. The matter, among others, was widely and productively discussed in Frankfurt, during the Blockupy Festival (21/22/23 November), and in mid-December in Lisbon, in the Forum on insecurity and unemployment organized by Precarios Inflexíveis.

We therefore raise and articulate, in line with the Neapolitan discussion, the second act of the Strike Meeting, that we propose to be held in Rome on the 13/14/15 of February. It will be a great opportunity of common research around three main axes:

- First axis - The process of social Strike: forms of action and widespread unionization;
- Second axis - Campaigns and common disputes;
- Third axis - European extension of the Social Strike.

We would like to dedicate the initial plenary to the first axis, so that such a delicate and decisive theme can be addressed and discussed by all and with enough time at hand.

The second axis, the second day, will be divided into workshops. Among the themes we indicate the following: the European minimum wage as an alternative to under-employment and freejobs (toward the May Day in Milan: against the mechanisms of exploitation experienced by Expo2015, a crucial match is played by the articulation of practices of conflict that look to the forms of social strike and new unionization); basic income and welfare against the business of youth unemployment (to resume the campaign „Lets guarantee our future“); the world of education, from fighting against the “Good School” reform, to the organization of the precarious researchers; commons and contrast to the “Sblocca Italia” reform; what resistance for freelancers, harassed by the separate management of INPS (national pension fund) and by the reform of the system of minimum taxation; „A day without us“, how to build the of migrant labour strike and, at the same time, radically oppose the business of hospitality; production and putting to work of genders, how to resume and give substance to the issues raised by Gender Strike. This axis, can obviously be enriched by the proposals of anyone who wants to organize workshops around further disputes/joint campaigns.

The third axis will be dedicated to Europe, to the direct debate between networks, groups, unions, who want to try to build the process of a continental Social Strike. Also in this case, as well as in the first day, it will be a plenary, and will be strictly held in English.

With November 14 a new social coalition began to take the scene, putting forth practices of struggle and forms of relationship that have made and can make a difference. An important still partial, act of resistance, against the diktats of the Troika, the financial powers and global corporations. Now we have to give this coalition strength, to transform it into a daily organizational practice, against insecurity, unemployment, destruction of schools and public universities, environmental devastation and privatization. Now we have to overcome national borders and fight against the neoliberal policies of Brussels and Frankfurt.

Laboratories for Social Strike



# Report of the workshop at the Strike Meeting II (Rome)

## on Migrant strike and unconditioned European minimum visa of two years

Despite the fact that the crisis increased the blackmail of the connection between residence permit and labor contract, migrants have been in the last years the protagonists of the most relevant experiences of strike, especially in the logistics sector and in agriculture. The limits encountered by these experiences were connected to the difficulty of becoming general struggles and of going beyond the specificity of a labor category or a local situation. From this point of view, the challenge that the strike meeting has to face is that of constructing processes of organization able to confront with the specificity of the migrant condition, without making it an exception in respect to the common condition of precarity, as it has frequently been done by the anti-racist movements.

Migrant labor is a central part of the labor market and of the entire contemporary production. In the past, it anticipated general processes of precarization, nowadays it is at the center of the main laboratories of precarization [...] The challenge of organization has to face the problems and opportunities connected to a labor force that is always more mobile outside, across and inside the borders of Europe and of labor. To sharpen the experiment of the social strike means also to come to terms with this portion of the labor force, that is more and more isolated, but also all the more involved in the general processes of precarization. Some examples of that: it is not possible to think at the organization of struggles involving social workers of reception centers not able to connect with the demands of the migrants themselves; or to think at the problem of strike in time of precarity without considering that it is more and more frequent that the centers of reception for migrants become reservoir of labor force just in time, useful to employers hit by a strike and thus in need of workers on demand [...].

If the political discourse of the social strike has to be constantly re-elaborated through the steady contact with the problems posed by migrant labor, migrant labor needs in turn a constant rethinking of discourses and practices. The exploitation of labor and the residence permit lie at the basis of the double blackmail to which migrant labour is subdued. Beside that, a new government of mobility has taken shape on a European scale that, by means of national legislations, administrative procedures, restrictions in the access to welfare and the production of humanitarian emergencies, has contributed to fragment and individualize even more the condition of migrants that is all the more extended and common, making exploitation easier and the processes of struggle and auto-organization more complicated. [...]

We recognize the need to make a leap forward in the process of the social strike, in the forms of struggles as well as in its imagination, in order to include this central piece of society in the challenge of organization and extension of the opposition against precarity. The first step in this direction is a campaign for a visa for two years independent from labour and income. By this, we don't mean to reduce the complexity of migrant labor to the residence permit, but to express a determined position in relation to one of the main tools of the government of mobility, to hit the differences and the hierarchies that it produces and to gain new instruments for organization. A campaign on a European minimum visa of two years opens the possibility for a better coordination and involvement of the local experiences of migrant struggle, both in relation to labor disputes and in relation to the struggles of migrants against institutional racism. It is not so much a matter of building a communication between the struggle that already exist, as to gain the tools necessary to produce new initiative on the migrant question and to involve other subjects that are not yet involved, connecting the local struggles with the European dimension.

# let's get organised! Towards the European Social Strike

## Final document of the Strike Meeting Act II Rome, February 13-14-15, 2015

The two main objectives of the Second Act of the Strike Meeting were the consolidation and articulation of the social coalition and the European extension of the social strike process. When the three intense days of debate ended, the general feeling was that the right path had definitely been taken. The meeting saw an even greater and more heterogeneous participation with respect to the first Strike Meeting [held in September 2014 in preparation of the Social Strike of 14 November 2014]. During the two plenary meetings and the several workshops, the positive tension towards a common platform of demands – which had been crucial for the September 2014 meeting – was further intensified and expanded.

The second day of the meeting, dedicated to workshops on common struggles and campaigns, saw many new connections being established and important proposals emerge:

- A precious dialogue was established between freelancers, generic self-employed professionals and self-employed professionals belonging to specific professional associations (i.e. lawyers, architects, etc.), to define a common analysis and mobilisation on the issues of taxation and social security. Fair taxation and social security are the key demands at the centre of the February 20 tweet-storm, the February 27 protest in front of the Lawyers Pension Fund and the March mobilisation against the increase in the compulsory pension contributions that self-employed workers have to pay entirely out of their own pockets.
- Unpaid work and youth unemployment emerged in many workshops as essential issues to be tackled at various social and geographical levels, through: 1) the mobilisations against the Youth Guarantee, with a common day of protest to be organised on March 28 in front of job centres and against the business of youth unemployment, in an effort to organize at regional level the over 400,000 subscribers to the Youth Guarantee program by creating 'Youth Corners' where young precarious / NEETs can be informed and get organised; 2) the mobilisations against EXPO 2015 [the Universal Exposition to be held in Milan between May 1 and October 31 2015] and the model it proposes, through a broad and radical campaign against the use of unpaid work during this mega-event; 3) the mobilisations against the dismantling of public research and the use of internships and curricular training, to be organised by students and university researchers so as to overturn the principles of university governance, centred on evaluation mechanisms, and fight against cuts to public funding and privatisation.
- A fruitful exchange on the government of mobility at European level, the exploitation of migrant labour and the 'humanitarian' business was initiated. A 'European residence permit of at least two years', regardless of income levels, 'grade of integration' and employment status was proposed as a central demand for a campaign to be built against the permanent blackmail that marks the lives of migrant workers – a blackmail which in recent years has been used to ignite wider processes of labour fragmentation and precarisation.
- The details of Renzi's school reform will soon be made public, and students and teachers protests are likely to be re-launched following such announcement. In the meanwhile, precarious teachers developed a common campaign based on the recent European Court of Justice Ruling against Italy for the use of precarious labour in Italian schools. Such ruling can provide a common ground of mobilization against the ultimate institutionalisation of precarity within our public sector.

- An important convergence was established between the mobilisations against 'Sblocca Italia' [the government mega-development plan], environmental devastation and privatisations on the one hand, and the protests against Expo 2015 on April 30, May 1 and May 2 in Milan on the other. The Milan mobilisation will be an essential step to contrast the social and cultural impact of neoliberalism. Moreover, health and health care was another essential issue that emerged both in the framework of discussions on privatisations and in the proposal made by the Gender Strike Workshop to connect new experiences of mutualism, in particular those can help deconstructing the Italian family-centred welfare model.

- The workshop dedicated to cultural work, creative and performing arts emphasised the need to focus on how the combined impact of the Jobs Act [the Italian Labour Reform] and the government decree on the cultural sector is further worsening the diversified conditions of cultural workers, who were already suffering from a lack of labour protections. The campaign on cultural work will therefore be focused on cooperative and mutualistic organisation in the sphere of cultural production.

To reinforce the different campaigns that we will be building as a coalition and in cooperation with many others beyond us, and in order to give new momentum to the mobilisations against the Jobs Act and its implementation decrees [in the course of being issued by the government], we propose to organise a national day of convergence in April, to be defined more in detail in the weeks to come. A day of struggle centred on the demands which are transversal to our various campaigns: European minimum wage (15 euros per hour), European basic income and welfare, minimum residence permit for all.

The Meeting also decided to start testing a new organisational form: a permanent space of coordination and consultation for our coalition, where to connect and assess our campaigns, set common political priorities and define a shared agenda against exploitation and precarity. This space will take the form of itinerant meetings aimed at supporting the organising process in the time between our general Strike Meetings. This also as a way to strengthen, as much as possible, our experiments of social unionism and mutualism at local level and the common political organising and communication devices we are building as subjects who experience precarity on a daily basis in the most diversified ways.

The meeting ended, on its third day, with an assembly that saw the participation of collectives and activists from Greece, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Sweden, Ireland, Spain and France. It was not the first time that the idea of a transnational social strike was explored: both at the Blockupy Festival in Frankfurt and at the Precarity Forum in Lisbon the discussion started on the possibility to organise a continental strike capable of uniting the different social conditions which exist in Europe, on the basis of common demands and perspectives. However, for us it was the first time this discussion happened in the framework of the Strike Meeting: an important step to fully acknowledge the fact that, also at the organising level, Europe is the minimum horizon of our political action. The transnational assembly was also extremely important in terms of the issues discussed, the proposals made and the decisions taken. The current political phase is characterised by the productive uncertainty generated by the results of the Greek elections. An uncertainty that opens up the possibility – and marks the urgency – of further advancing a political initiative based on a common platform of demands. The assembly agreed of taking up together the challenge of building the perspective for a transnational strike, on the basis of such common demands. There are many different issues to be tackled and many different ways to do so. However, we wish to continue exploring this idea and deepening the debate around the four main demands/campaigns proposed by the Strike Meeting. Moreover, the assembly also highlighted the need to find further moments to coordinate and mobilise together so that this organising process can grow at the European level, in view of a Transnational Strike Meeting to be held by next summer. It was also proposed to organise a day of action on unemployment (next June).

In this spirit, we will participate to the mobilisation called by Blockupy in Frankfurt on March 18, coordinating ourselves through a common communication framework. Moreover, we will also participate to the assembly on the transnational social strike proposed by the activists of Blockupy meets Amazon, that will see the participation of networks and workers from various European countries. In order to continue our exchanges

on these points and strengthen the process, the international mailing list 'Transnational Strike', created following the Frankfurt workshop, will be further implemented.

We know that the challenge set by this second Strike Meeting is very ambitious. One thing is to organise, at our best, a one-off autumn mobilisation, another is to give continuity to the innovative experiment of the social strike. It is a matter of generously putting the best of ourselves into the game, in a context – the Italian one – which is all but simple. But we are not used to bow down – and we definitely won't do that now.

Let's unite for the European Social Strike! Rome, 13-14-15 February 2015

from [scioperosociale.it](http://scioperosociale.it)

# **FOLLOW THE STRIKERS AGAINST AUSTERITY, LET'S STRIKE THE ECB Call to 18 and 19 March in Frankfurt**

By now the time of the technical government of the crisis, the time of austerity as a «mandatory choice», ended. Now more than ever it's clear that the policies imposed by the Troika under the label of unavoidable necessities depend on the deliberate political choice to transform Europe in a space in which millions of men and women are doomed to precarity in working and living conditions, unemployment and permanent employability as a new normality. Now more than ever Europe is the minimum framework for our political action. Pushed by the claims made by the movements in the last years, the results of the Greek elections are challenging the apparent impregnability of the Troika and are bringing a new wind of uncertainty and a positive tension, in which we want our voice to be heard.

Threatening to cut the funds for Greece, once again the ECB has shown its active role in the political blackmail that uses debt to block the achievement of a program different from the monetary strictness and the policies of precarization. Yet, this is the program that we want to bring in Europe: a European minimum wage of 15 euros per hour, a basic income and a European welfare for all, a European unconditioned and two years long residence permit for all migrants. With these claims the strikers who brought about the social strike of 14 November will go to Frankfurt, taking part to the demonstrations organized by the European coordination of Blockupy to protest against the ECB policies, one of the institutions that govern the regime of austerity by managing the money. On March 18th we will be in front of the new headquarters of the ECB to ask: what have you done to Greece? What are you doing to Europe? And we won't accept whatever technical answer.

Against the competition between EU countries and against the nationalistic and xenophobic trends, the strikers, men and women, will bring to Frankfurt a common platform which could promote and enhance the communication among the struggles, the resistances and the experiences of self-organization happening in the different European regions.

We know that Europe does coincide with the borders of the European Union nor with the EU institutions, but it is criss-crossed by the financial capital and by the global chains of production, which use the differences – borders, laws, purchasing power – between the European regions to make profits. In order to hit these profits, we will bring to Frankfurt the challenge of building a transnational and social strike, which is able to strengthen the existing struggles and to originate new ones.

After the blockades and the demonstration of March 18th against the ECB policies, on the 19th of March

we stay in Frankfurt one day more to take part to the meeting called by the activists of Blockupy meets Amazon and where there will be networks and workers coming from various European countries. The aim of this meeting is to promote and enlarge the idea of transnational strike as a concrete perspective, putting together the experiences of struggle and organization, activism and trade-unionism coming from different contexts. It is something new and important, and an opportunity for carrying on the process that will bring the strikers, men and women, to Frankfurt on March 18th together with many others from all over Europe.

In order to foster the greatest participation possible, the laboratories and the networks of social strike are arranging buses and telephone info-lines in different Italian cities. Starting from today, we will organize initiatives of information and mobilization that will continue until March 18th.

**Follow the strikers: against austerity policies, let's strike the ECB!**

**organisation at the job/unemployment struggles/worker's struggles/strikes/solidarity action for strikers/social strikes/social struggles/transnational struggles.**

**Call for participation in the Blockupy demonstrations and associated action in Frankfurt/Main. 18th March 2015**

by Germanwide strike-solidarity-network

**Against precarisation and authoritarian crisis policies**

We, people from various - transnational - networks, initiatives, organisations and groups, who are engaged in the struggle against poor working conditions and precarious employment situations, the precarious situation of the unemployed and against the slashing of rights of workers and the unemployed, will participate in the Blockupy demonstrations on the 18th of March 2015.

Through this, we want to make visible the confrontations, struggles and strikes for the improvement of our working and living conditions. These struggles take place in many different places, for example the strike at Amazon in Bad Hersfeld, the social strikes in Italy and in many different places worldwide. They are taking place both in direct actions in factories and job centers as well as in strikes and demonstrations.

Flexibilisation, liberalisation and privatisation - more and more domains of societal life are affected by those politics. Poverty and precarisation are the consequence, more and more people are becoming unemployed or are working under unworthy conditions in underpaid jobs. The authoritarian crisis politics of the federal government and the Troika (EU, ECB, IMF) have taken away the most basic means of subsistence for millions of people thanks to cuts in public spending, deregulation and privatisation measures. All of this is accompanied by expropriation and the ever continuing slashing of democratic rights. Precarious employ-

ment situations have been on the rise for the last decades. It is the result of economic restructuring processes, the deregulation of the job market according to neo-liberal economic concepts and the privatisation of government services. Social security systems have already largely been slashed and are continuing to be dismantled.

What this means is that more and more people are forced to sell their labour power at increasingly precarious conditions: More specifically this means that our employment and with it our living conditions are increasingly characterised by minimum wage labour, part time or self-employment, short term, temporary or permanent unemployment. This insecurity is accompanied by an increasing social schism.

And parallel to all of this, fortress Europe continues to be expanded.

What was valid for most countries worldwide is now increasingly valid for Europe: Social peace is not bought anymore, but established through direct state power! The coercion into ever more precarious forms of wage labour is enforced by way of disciplinary methods.

Against all of this we position our mutual solidarity and support in our respective struggles and labour disputes. We have begun to organise and network, across companies and sectors, transnationally. We have already gathered first experiences in strike solidarity and will use the current labour disputes at Amazon, in the social and education branches of the labour market and everywhere to expand our organisation and networks.

We would like to invite everyone to participate in their respective local struggles and are calling for participation in the actions against the ECB opening on the 18th March 2015 in Frankfurt.

**nationwide strike-solidarity-network**

# Examples of transnational cooperations

## TIE Global

TIE global is a global grassroots network of workers active in workplaces and communities. It includes both union and non-union activists in the formal and informal sectors. tie aims to encourage, organize, and facilitate international consciousness and cooperation among workers and their organizations in various parts of the world.

tie global was founded in 1978 through the initiative of union activists from various countries. Today, tie includes activists in every continent and has active groups in Bangladesh, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey and the USA. From the beginning tie has supported workers initiatives that see themselves as part of a broader movement for social change committed to fight for a life without exploitation and exclusion – a life grounded in the dignity of human beings and their freedom for self determination.

tie global supports an international exchange of information and experiences among worker activists, women's and human rights groups. Therefore tie organizes local, regional, and international conferences, exchange visits, and education seminars on a regular basis. tie is a politically independent organization that is rooted both in the global South and North.

Global Solidarity: Neo-liberal policies, changes in mass production, globalization of work, as well as the variety of social, political, and economic mechanisms used to divide, exploit, and exclude workers demand continuous evaluation and development of strategies linking local, regional, and international unions, and workers in non-union facilities of the same sector. It is critical that workers, both employed and unemployed, regardless of migratory status, develop these strategies in the context of defending their own interests and responding more effectively to new challenges.

Self-organization: We see solidarity and self-organization as important instruments for fighting back, we understand they also enable workers to experience the empowerment of their own world in the here-and-now and thus the world we want to build. For us solidarity and self-organization mean mutual help between equal partners, brothers and sisters explicitly aiming to overcome existing divisions. tie has a proven track record of facilitating both the exchange and implementation of fight-back strategies learned through international exchange projects and programs by movement activists.

Fight against racism, and sexism, and all forms of oppression: tie global is firmly committed to dealing with issues of racism and sexism, and all other forms and mechanisms of exclusion.

Building global workers networks: tie global actively supports and participates in building transnational networks among workers in specific sectors, and among workers employed by the same transnational corporations or their suppliers in different countries. Another kind of networking is the ExChains project, a network to link and organize workers along the global textile, garment retail subcontracting chain. Here tie supports global campaigns on workers rights and organizing efforts.

Building democratic workers' organizations: For workers worldwide "globalization" has meant not only decreased wages, deteriorating working and living conditions, but also a decrease in democratic rights. As the power of transnational corporations has increased, companies, especially in the global south, have regularly disregarded social, labor, or collective agreements and regulations. tie supports both the building of democratic workers organizations that genuinely represent the interests of workers, as well as new forms of organizing. For example, in Sri Lanka tie together with other organizations has participated in the formation of the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Union in free trade zones of that country. In Bangladesh tie together with the National Garment Workers Federation supports the organizing of garment workers.



# ExChains

Garments sold in shops like H&M, Zara, Esprit, or Primark make a long journey before they end up on display. Workers may have produced cotton fibres in Kenya; other workers may have spun, woven and sewn the garments in factories in Sri Lanka, India, China or Bangladesh; until they come to be sold by retail workers in Europe.

This 'Global Garment Factory' thrives on the exploitation of garment workers in the global south. The workers, mostly young women, are not receiving a living wage, make long hours often working six days a week, are not seldom physically abused, do not have the right to organize... But also garment and retail workers in the north have their problems. For instance, in Germany workers and workers representatives of the cheap-chic clothing companies H&M and Zara often face aggressive union bashing, and the low wages and exploitative working conditions of retailer Wal-Mart are infamous nowadays.

In 2002 workers from Bangladesh, Germany and Sri Lanka met for the first time at a tie-conference in Germany and discovered that they hardly knew anything about each other's working conditions while they were all working in the same global industry. It was then decided to start an international cooperation with the objective of mutually supporting each other along the subcontracting chain of the textile, garment and retail sector.

ExChains consists primarily of women workers since they make up the vast majority of workers in the Global Garment Factory and are at the same time underrepresented in the trade union movement. Traditional culture, patriarchy and downright sexism make that women often suffer from physical and emotional abuse on the job as well as in the union, if there is any.

The goal of the project is that young women workers in the garment industry gain control over their own work and lives. Therefore it is crucial for workers to have the right to organize and for women workers to be able to hold leadership positions within their organisations. But also knowledge of the global economy and the role of the garment industry and its workers is essential for the emancipation and liberation of workers.

## Network Rail without Borders

Rail workers unions and associations in favor of railways of various countries meet annually since 2005 in Dakar. In 2010, when we met in Casablanca, we decided to give visibility to our business by giving us a name: Network Rail Without Borders, an information „Together“ newsletter, an association of solidarity against anti-union repression and by adopting a resolution „Resolution Casablanca“:

„With the global offensive of capitalism against services and common goods of humanity for the benefit of private interests, trade unions and associations of railway met in Casablanca from 10 to 14 May 2010 with the idea to make everything possible to promote a different logic.

In railway and transport sector, we believe it is urgent to defeat the logic of privatization and profit pursue by private interests world-wide.

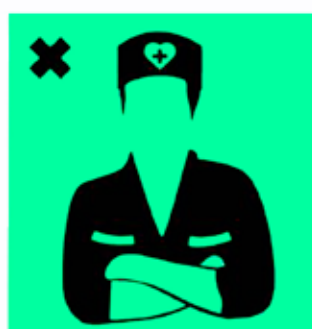
We instead want to promote railways and transport policy to meet the needs of the population, do not sacrifice safety issues for profitability, ensure good social conditions for workers in this sector, and truly reflect the issues energy and environmental. This struggle, we want to carry more widely across all public services and common goods of humanity.

At the union level, we refuse to participate in simple social arrangements of capitalism because we want a society with other values of justice, equality and solidarity. We prefer struggles largely open to all segments of society, ensuring the autonomy of those who are leading those fights, unity of action, and seek to promote genuine international solidarity.

We lead these struggles together, as unions and associations, because we put citizens at the center of the economic system, within the international network - we want to build - for railways and utilities.

Defend and promote public services, protect the environment, common property of humanity against the financial appetites, coordinate our actions to achieve egalitarian distribution of wealth in the world, but also to fight against the pressure against union activists. These are some reasons that make us act together today and tomorrow. ...”

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**BLOCK AUSTERITY:  
STRIKE AGAINST PRECARIETY AND CRISIS**