

MANIFESTO OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Knowledge is at the core of the mechanisms of the current capitalistic valorisation, but has also had a fundamental role in the productive processes of the past; today, though, it has turned into the main factor on which accumulation is grounded.

During Fordism knowledge had more to do with machines than with labour itself; but today it is a prerequisite, a quality and a distinctive element of professional performance; today knowledge inheres with the worker's brain and heart. And this is the very reason why it is being subjected to attempts of control, commodification and expropriation. Contemporary accumulation is based on the misappropriation of living labour and social cooperation. The implementation of mortification strategies, at times persuasive, addressed to living labour perfectly reflects the logics of the current capitalistic enhancement.

The nature of knowledge

Knowledge is a common good. It is, by its nature, neither a private nor a State-owned good. It cannot be a private good because it derives its value from socialization. It does not belong to the State because knowledge exists outside the limits and conditioning imposed by State institutions. Knowledge implies learning and the kind of self-awareness that is reached through time and experience. Knowledge only develops in an environment of cooperation and transparency: that's why we need to protect the free circulation of knowledge and thus the opportunity of choice of those who participate in the learning process.

Knowledge is intrinsic to those who produce and spread it. As such, it is always unique and different, that is, it carries the mark of the knowing subject; those who produce or assimilate knowledge cannot ever be completely dispossessed of it. Consequently knowledge always produces a surplus that's potentially hostile to any kind of hierarchy.

At the same time knowledge is never just an individual process. It is structured and develops throughout the subject's life, by means of formative and learning processes, the roles covered, social relationships and the entirety of the changeable conditions that every subject (or group) is bound to undergo. Knowledge is a dynamic process that develops historically through the relationship between the singularity and the generality that characterize it.

No matter how hard we try, we will never succeed in turning knowledge in an exclusive private propriety. Because of its very nature, it will always shun fences. Transmitting one's knowledge never means to lose it.

The subjects of knowledge

A knowledge worker is someone who makes use, either largely or completely, of his/her intellectual, cognitive, relational, linguistic, experiential and emotional capabilities to carry out his/her job.

Knowledge workers produce and pass on, each in his/her own personal way, a common good. They need to be aware of this, so as to become responsible subjects, able to assert the common point of view with respect to the privatistic misappropriation of the cognitive cooperation outcome.

The contractual relation typical of the knowledge worker lends itself to an individual work relationship. In a way it is the emblem of contemporary contractual individualism. But the truth is it proves to be made of a very wide range of personalized contracts, atypical individual relations and various forms of individual cooperation. Even in collective work-contests it ends up giving grounds for an individual negotiation that lead to supplements for minimum pay, individual incentives and productivity bonuses.

Due to these mechanisms, the working conditions of knowledge workers are typically apt to be subject to the law of blackmailing and consent. Blackmailing derives from the individual work relation, that often leads to occupational precariousness, let alone the unstableness of the income and of life perspectives. Consensus is rooted in the fact that the individual working sphere is based on a double illusion: that of being able to express oneself freely, recognising oneself in one's work; and the one that makes us believe that sooner or later our capabilities and talent will be recognized and enhanced.

Knowledge workers live between the illusion that one day they will be realised and obtain personal success, and the real misery caused by the depreciation of their work. The potential of the aware subjectivity – in its collective dimension – of knowledge workers hasn't yet been understood nor explored all the way.

Through this Manifesto, knowledge workers mean first of all to make themselves visible, to come out into the open, detecting their own needs and claims, opposig at the same time the ruthless and dominant logic that keeps them separated, impoverish them materially and intellectually and makes them rivals.

We bet that knowledge can also be used as a means to streghten the value and the power of the individual, both in social and everyday contexts freely lived, and in unpredictable professional contexts, in which a deep knowledge allows mindful choices. We thus take a first step towards the shaping of a a shared and appropriate answer for all those impersonal and subjective forces that have decalred war on intellingence.