The Crisis of Social Reproduction Under Capitalism: And Two Distributive Justice Theories as Possible Solutions

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THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION UNDER CAPITALISM

And Two Distributive Justice Theories as Possible Solutions

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Introduction

Doing the dishes, reading to a child, cleaning the bedroom, caring for an elderly or having sex are all activities that have one thing in common: they are focused on (re)making people. Those kind of activities can be categorized as 'socially reproductive labor'. Social reproduction involves all the work people do to (re)make people on a daily and generational basis and indicates the processes by which a social system - individually and generational – reproduces itself (Federici, 2019, p. 55). Socially reproductive activities are essential for the functioning of societies, including capitalistic ones: under capitalism, many socially reproductive activites are focused on (re)producing labor power. In other words, social reproduction is essential in maintaining and (re)producing the workers that are the engine of the labor market.

Recently, the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the fundamental role social reproduction plays in contemporary societies. It has revealed and further deepened the centrality of households - in which most social reproduction takes place - in the functioning of capitalism and welfare provisioning. The 'stay-at-home' policies, central in the governments' response to the pandemic, intervened and reshaped the home and world of work and emphasized the necessity of appreciating how workers live in their households (Stevano et al., 2021, p. 271). The household shapes the laborer's ability to go to work as well as their additional burdens in terms of care, domestic work, health et cetera (Stevano et al., 2021, p. 279). In other words, analyzing the pandemic – and our current global economy in general - through a lens of social reproduction stresses the fact that we cannot understand the notion 'labor' without considering social reproduction. So, besides the fact that the pandemic is a threatening crisis to our organization of work and life, we could simultaneously appreciate it as transformative potential to make social reproduction starkly visible as an essential sector in the economy.

In many analyses on globalized capitalism and the current economy, social reproduction is a completely neglected aspect. This negligence prevents us from recognizing the (structural) crisis in which social reproduction finds itself: socially reproductive labor is not acknowledged as 'real work' and there is no reciprocity between, on the one hand, the formal and waged labor sector and, on the other hand, the informal realm. Fortunately, there are some important theorists – such as Alessandra Mezzadri and Silvia Federici - who have written about social reproduction and who critically addressed the current state of social reproduction under capitalism.

However, those theorists seem to have trouble defining which labor activities can be categorized as social reproduction. This is not surprising since social reproduction is a complex

notion including many activities, institutions, and relations. The demarcation problem leads to inconsistent definitions of the notion in academic research and troubles a clear view on the crisis in social reproduction. This research aims to find a (working) definition of social reproduction and, from there, research the crisis. Moreover, I will try to answer the question on how we can solve the crisis in social reproduction. In my attempt to answer this question, I will study two different distributive justice theories: justice as fairness – a theory by John Rawls – and a Unconditional Basic Income, defended by Philippe van Parijs. I will argue that a basic income is the most promising theory of the two to (partly) solve the crisis, but that it is still insufficient as a policy tool to structurally solve the profound crisis of social reproduction under capitalism. The distributive theories I study in this research are applicable to Western, liberal societies and institutions with capitalism as the dominant regulating mechanism of the economy. It is outside the scope of this research to address the crisis of social reproduction on a world scale.

I will begin this research – after giving a working definition of social reproduction – by arguing that the crisis in social reproduction is caused by the exploitative relationship between capitalism and socially reproductive labor. I will substantiate this claim by appealing to an argument of fairness - in contrast to a materialist argument - and claim that the crisis in social reproduction is caused by an unfair disbalance between the formal and informal labor market and general lack of reciprocity in capitalist societies. Since the crisis lies in a structural lack of reciprocity, I will look for possible solutions in distributive justice theories: theories which define economic, political, and social frameworks that results in a certain distribution of benefits and burdens across the members of a society (Lamont & Favor, 2017). The first theory I will study is Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1972) in which I will explain his conception of 'justice as fairness'. I will argue that Rawls neglects social reproduction in his social cooperation scheme by focusing on three aspects: wage, social status, and general reciprocity. I will try to 'save' his theory by specifically applying one of Rawls' principles of justice to socially reproductive labor, but I will conclude that people carrying out socially reproductive work are still worse-off than people who do not in a Rawlsian society. Although *A Theory of Justice* enhances general reciprocity in society, this is not sufficient to refute the fairness argument and function as a proper solution to the crisis in social reproduction. Therefore, I will discuss another theory, defended by Van Parijs: an Unconditional Basic Income. After giving an overview of the general discussion, I will include some feminist arguments regarding the implementation of a basic income and show the implications these arguments have for our discussion about social reproduction. I will claim –based on the feminist arguments - that the

implementation of a basic income merely has a substantial effect on enhancing the general reciprocity in capitalist societies but not on other crucial aspects of the crisis. I will propose, however, some flanking policies that could accompany a basic income in being a successful policy that solves the crisis in social reproduction. Finally, I will conclude that an Unconditional Basic Income is not a satisfactory solution because it does not address the structural problem underlying the crisis: social reproduction is still not appreciated in the same way as formal and waged work. The two distributive justice theories we will discuss in this research cannot give us definite answers on how to solve the crisis in social reproduction, but I will end this research by making a short suggestion for communal forms of social reproduction as part of the solution.

The (academic) relevance of this research is twofold. Firstly, this research sheds light on the concept of social reproduction – a notion so many theorists neglect in their socio-economic and political analyses on contemporary capitalism. It is necessary to include social reproduction in these kinds of analyses, since socially reproductive work is essential to the existence of all others forms of labor on the capitalist labor market. In addition, since this research helps us understand what social reproduction is and how essential its role is in capitalist societies, it will simultaneously enable us to recognize the crisis in social reproduction (and to think of possible solutions). Secondly, an Unconditional Basic Income is a hot topic nowadays, discussed by politicians, economics, philosophers, and policymakers. However, we cannot talk about those proposals in terms of political feasibility or economic cleverness without first clarifying the normative basis of implementing a basic income. In other words, this research contributes to an understanding of the ethical justifications for a basic income in capitalist societies. This is crucial since the justification will shape the public opinion on a basic income and, thereby, influence the political feasibility of such proposals.

I will give a very brief outline of the coming chapters. In the first chapter, I will define the notion of social reproduction and explain why there is a crisis. In the second chapter, I will study the first distributive justice theory – *A Theory of Justice* by Rawls – and investigate if this could be a possible solution to the crisis. In chapter 3, I will present a general discussion of basic income proposals to see if a Unconditional Basic Income could be a (part of) the solution to the crisis in social reproduction under capitalism. In chapter 4, I will predominantly reflect on the findings of this research. I will also propose some flanking policies - which could be implemented together with a basic income – as well as make a short suggestion for communal forms of social reproduction.

Chapter 1 – Social Reproduction and Its Crisis

In this chapter, we will focus on the concept of social reproduction and the crisis it finds itself in. In section 1.1, I will give a (working) definition of socially reproductive labor and explain which labor activities can – at least in this research - be categorized as social reproduction and which cannot. In section 1.2, I will show that the crisis in social reproduction is caused by the exploitative character of capitalism and lack of general reciprocity in capitalist societies. There exists a profound disbalance between the formal and informal labor market under capitalism, in which the latter is not waged and (socially) valued in the same way as the former. Furthermore, I will explain – based on the fairness argument - how this capitalist exploitation results in a crisis for social reproduction. In the section 1.3 to 1.5, I will give three examples of how the unfairness leads to exploitation. Important to note is that those three aspects do not entail *all* aspects of the crisis, since it would be outside the scope of this research to involve the whole complex of activities, institutions, and relations that social reproduction entails.

1.1 What is Social Reproduction?

Social reproduction involves all the work people do to (re)make people on a daily and generational basis. Federici defines social reproduction as 'the processes by which a social system - individually and generational – reproduces itself' (Federici, 2019, p. 55). Examples of reproductive activities are bearing children, cooking, doing the dishes, educating children, health- and eldercare. Federici's definition is, however, too broad, and not very helpful since it implies that a baker selling his bread on the market can also be categorized as socially reproductive labor. Many – if not all – activities of human beings bear an element of reproduction in them: growing vegetables, baking bread, organizing communal activities, volunteering for political parties, and founding educational institutions. This fact makes it for many theorists who have written reproductive labor hard to formulate a clear definition that demarcates socially reproductive activities from other reproductive activities. Helen Hester, for example, writes that we can categorize social reproduction in three domains: caring directly for oneself and others (caring for children, healthcare, and eldercare), indirectly caring for oneself and others by maintaining physical spaces and organizing resources (cleaning, shopping, repairing), and the biological process of reproduction (bearing children) (Hester, 2018, p. 345). There are two problems with her distinctions. First, the three domains are not exclusive: when one cares for his or her child – categorized in the first domain – that person simultaneously

raises a future taxpayer which benefits the rest of society in the coming years. Secondly, Hester's three domains are not exhaustive enough to cover all forms of social reproduction. Think, for example, of someone volunteering for a political campaign during the elections. The volunteering work cannot be categorized in one of the three domains Hester defines, but politics – all activities included – does entail work that '(re)makes people on a daily and generational basis'. Does politics, then, fall in the same category of activities as bearing children, doing the dishes, and cleaning the house?

The answer is negative, and to fully grasp this we need to focus on the (capitalist) labor market. Under capitalism, many (but not all) socially reproductive activities are focused on producing and reproducing labor power: people's capacity to work (Carlin & Federici, 2014). Socially reproductive labor is essential for the existence of the capitalist market since it maintains and reproduces the engine of that market: the workers. Social reproduction is thus not an abstract or neutral set of activities, because under capitalism it nurtures future workers and regenerates the current work force (Hester, 2018, p. 345). Understanding reproductive activities in the category of *capitalist* social reproduction is very important, since it shows how essential reproductive labor is for contemporary societies: those activities (re)produce laborers who, in turn, create wealth and economic prosperity. The (re)production of laborers distinguishes socially reproductive labor (e.g., domestic work) from other forms of reproductive activities (e.g., politics and baking and selling bread): the former is not part of the (formal) labor market but is, however, fundamental for the very existence of that market.

Some socially reproductive labor can be commercialized or marketized, for example healthcare institutions and education. But the fact that some forms of social reproduction can be marketized does not imply anything for the desirability of this. Some authors (Anderson, 1990; Satz, 2010) argue that marketization alters certain goods and, therefore, those authors claim that there are (moral) limits to the market. Elizabeth Anderson, for example, considers three domains in which the market should be limited with respect to commodification of goods of civil society, goods of the political sphere, and goods of the personal life (Anderson, 1990, p. 147). Without addressing each domain in detail, social reproduction could be categorized in the latter: the personal sphere includes personal relations based on commitment and intimacy (e.g., caring for an elderly or bathing a child). According to Anderson, caring for one's grandfather cannot be defined in market norms: 'Personal goods are undermined when market norms govern their circulation' (Anderson, 1990, p. 152). Market norms could destroy the reciprocity which is required to realize human reproductive labor as a shared good and both parties would merely value each other instrumentally, not intrinsically (Anderson, 1990, p.

154). Anderson's argument provides grounds for wariness about proposals to (fully) commodify socially reproductive labor. In short, the market is a centralized way of distribution – and the predominant one under capitalism – but we should critically question the desirability of extending this distributive mechanism into the personal sphere. Anderson's argument does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that social reproduction can never be waged or marketized – this conclusion would be too hasty – but it does problematize the (labor) market as regulating mechanism for all social reproduction.

Before turning to the next section, in which I will discuss the crisis in social reproduction, there is one important comment to be made regarding the definition of social reproduction. It differs from time, place, and culture which activities fall in the realm of (semi-market) social reproduction. However, some forms of informal and unpaid work (e.g., raising children, cooking, and cleaning the house) are *always* involved when discussing the social reproduction of human beings. In this research, the focus lies on this sector of informal and unpaid - but necessary and fundamental – labor activities maintaining and reproducing the work force. It is not, however, a fixed definition from which we can derive essentialist claims about human social reproduction, but it does comprise the informal aspect of social reproduction that we find continuously through time, place, and culture.

1.2 The Materialist Versus the Fairness Argument

In the sections that follow, several aspects of the crisis in social reproduction will be discussed. Before discussing those aspects, however, we need a better understanding of what exactly causes the crisis. The crisis lies in the exploitative relationship between capitalism and social reproduction. Or, in other words, the crisis lies in the disbalance between the waged, productive realm of labor and the informal, unwaged sector under capitalism. The disbalance can be seen in the process of value-generation: socially reproductive labor is essential in (re)producing the labor force, but it is not waged and valued:

> 'To deny the productivity of unpaid work activities is to assume that much of the world population is irrelevant to capital accumulation, which means that it cannot make the claim that the wealth that capitalism produces is also the fruit of its labor' (Federici, 2019, p. 56).

Waged production *is* and *appears* value-generating, whereas socially reproductive labor is *naturalized* and *non-valued*. 'Naturalized' refers to the general disposition in society that regards domestic work (and other socially reproductive activities) not as 'real work' (Federici, 2020). We simply categorize social reproduction as necessary activities that – whatever the circumstances - need to be done on a daily basis, mostly by women. 'Non-valued' means that social reproduction is neither waged (financially valued) nor socially valued (it enjoys a lower social status than waged work). Understanding the naturalized and non-valued character of social reproduction helps us understand the exploitative relationship between capitalism and social reproduction. Exploitation consists in taking unfair advantage of someone else's work (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 137) and this is what capitalist economies do with social reproduction: where capitalism takes advantage – on a daily basis – of social reproductive workers, those workers never see their labor reciprocated in the form of money or social status. Waged workers, in contrast, do see the value of their labor recognized under capitalism. In short, the crisis in social reproduction comes down to the exploitation between capitalist economies and socially reproductive labor where the former takes unfair advantage of the work of the latter.

Although the question has been – at least to a certain extent – answered about what the exploitative relationship between capitalism and social reproduction entails, this does not tell us much about the crisis in social reproduction. After all, it is impossible to draw the conclusion that social reproduction is in a state of crisis merely from the fact that capitalism exploits social reproduction. We need to specifically address the theoretical argument underlying (the conditions of) the crisis in social reproduction.

A first suggestion is to adopt a materialist argument: there is a crisis in social reproduction because the current exploitative system – consisting of all economic activities, institutions, and relations – will (eventually) result in crises situations. Following the Marxist line of argumentation, material life conditions social life (Wolff & Leopold, 2021), therefore the material structures of our current system determine the crisis in social reproduction. For example, the structure of our current labor market causes women making double work weeks (I will further explain this in section 1.3) which might lead to an increase in burnouts, which makes it, in turn, impossible for burned-out workers to carry out (socially reproductive) work. Or suppose that the 40-hourworkweek deprives us from cooking healthy meals (see section 1.4), which increases obesity rates in Western, capitalist societies to the extent that many people will suffer from obesity, which excludes them from participating (as able-bodied workers) on the labor market. Or, to give a last example, suppose that socially reproductive workers are – after endless exploitation – so outraged that they do not receive wage and social status (see

section 1.3), they will quit their activities altogether. To sum up, a materialist line of argumentation would define and explain the crisis in social reproduction based on material conditions (the exploitative labor-relationships, economic institutions, capitalist classes and exploited workers) and would draw the conclusion that social reproduction under capitalism simply does not work: it will eventually collapse or cease to exist under capitalism.

I find the materialist line of argumentation unconvincing, for two reasons. Firstly, I could not find a convincing argument for the materialist approach to the crisis in the literature on social reproduction. Although many theorists (Federici, 2020; Mezzadri, 2021; Hester, 2018) suggest in their writings that the crisis in social reproduction is rooted in material conditions (by linking the notion of 'crisis' to institutions, classes, and economic structures), no author could convincingly argue that our social reproduction system will – in a Marxist way - collapse under capitalism if we continue with the current forms of social reproduction. Hester, for example, describes the crisis in social reproduction as the increased struggle of many people to meet demands of both unpaid reproductive work and waged work (Hester, 2018, p. 349). This struggle is intensified, Hester argues, by low wage growth and inflated private rents that forces people to spend even more time to their working lives, which diminishes the time that is available for social reproduction (Hester, 2018, p. 350). Although Hester shows how the material conditions – such as wages, unhelpful policies, or renting prices – are part of the crisis in social reproduction, she does not show how these conditions result in a *crisis situation*. Secondly, I find the materialist argument unconvincing since it is – at least in my view – simply not plausible that the crisis of social reproduction will ever result in crises situations which are untenable to such an extent that social reproduction will 'collapse' or 'cease to exist'. I find this implausible since many socially reproductive activities are not merely done out of necessity but also from intentions based on love, care, or solidarity. Arguably, social reproduction is a human condition and those activities have always been present in many of our daily actions. It is therefore implausible that (unhelpful) material conditions will prevent people from carrying out socially reproductive labor altogether.

So, for both those reasons, I will not focus on the materialist argument to substantiate my claim that social reproduction is in crisis. I will argue that the crisis of social reproduction is a *moral* crisis: social reproduction entails incredibly important and valuable work that is structurally undervalued. The rest of this research will, therefore, revolve around the *fairness* (rather than the materialist) argument. The fairness argument describes, in contrast to the materialist argument, a normative problem: there exists an unfair disbalance between the formal labor market and social reproduction. In other words, the current system of social reproduction

under capitalism is unfair because there is no reciprocity between the (labor)market and the foundational pillar of society realizing the conditions for this market. The fact that people who carry out reproductive work are worse-off than people who do not is unfair – this is a problem of justice.

Although most materialist arguments – which will also be discussed in the coming sections – bear a moralistic undertone, this is not sufficient to explain the profound crisis in social reproduction. The fairness argument, in contrast, does suffice in explaining the crisis since it emphasizes the unfair disbalance and lack of reciprocity between the formal and informal sector of labor as the essence of the crisis in social reproduction. The fairness argument will be addressed in more depth in chapter 2 and 3, when Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1972) and Van Parijs' argument for real freedom will be discussed. For now, however, it suffices to understand that the crisis of social reproduction is a *moral* crisis rooted in *unfairness*. In what follows, I will give three examples of how this unfairness leads to the exploitation of social reproduction. Sections 1.3 – 1.5 are not the only aspects of the crisis but those examples show the exploitation of social reproduction under capitalism which causes the moral crisis. Also, those examples show that there exists - besides a fundamental moral crisis – a social and practical crisis for social reproduction under capitalism. It will become clear that the crisis of social reproduction is a problem of justice, that simultaneously includes social and practical problems.

1.3 Double Work Weeks

The first aspect of the crisis in social reproduction entails the double workweeks that – predominantly – women make. In the last few decades, women have massively entered the workforce (Federici, 2020). Women leaving the home, finding jobs in the waged sector, and earning their own financial resources are, needless to say, great developments for the feminist movement. However, the discussion regarding women emancipation has been so heavily centered around women leaving the kitchen and their right to find waged jobs, that the social reproductive aspects of labor are neglected and ignored - also in feminist circles. Although most women entered the labor market, social reproductive work never stopped: children still need warm meals every evening, houses still need to be cleaned, elderly still need to be cared for, and groceries still need to be done. Consequently, (predominantly) women do the dishes, cook dinner, read to their children, and clean the house *besides* their waged job. OECD statistics show that in all OECD countries – expect in Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and New

Zealand – women spent more time in total work than men, mainly because women spent more time doing unpaid work besides their regular job than men (OECD, 2022a). In short, many women work outside the home nowadays, but domestic work and other familial affairs are still considered as predominantly *her* responsibility. I am not arguing, to repeat my argument from section1.2, that her double workweeks and the increase in burn-out rates leads to a crisis situation per se. I do argue, however, the double work weeks describe a moral crisis and problem of justice since women (or men) who carry out socially reproductive activities are worse off than the people who do not.

One could argue that domestic work and other informal activities to (re)produce human beings simply needs to be done and some people must carry the burden of that work. Although this is in a certain sense true, it is unfair that predominantly women suffer from those exhausting workweeks while not being valued for it by the rest of society. 'Valued' in the monetary sense – socially reproductive workers do not earn wage – but also (not) valued as a general disposition towards these kind of labor activities: domestic work and other socially reproductive activities do not enjoy a high social status in Western societies. I do not claim that housewives or domestic laborers are not valued on a micro-level – I believe many households truly appreciate those workers – but there exists a general attitude in Western, capitalist societies that defines a successful, pursuable live in activities and achievements *outside* the domestic sphere. It could be argued that, in some cases, men have stepped back from their waged jobs and that some households nowadays try to share the burdens of domestic work. However, this does not weaken the fairness objection: socially reproductive laborers are simply not valued and reciprocated by the very system – capitalism – they continuously maintain and structurally make double work weeks for.

1.4 The Global Care Chain

Parents nowadays struggle to find balance between fulfilling their parental expectations as well as meeting their work-related obligations. The main reason is the change that the traditional nuclear family unit has undergone in which most women found jobs outside the domestic sphere. Because fathers have, generally speaking, not been pushed back into caring activities, the change in the family unit results in a constant struggle of balancing all obligations (Wilding, 2018, p. 65). Families respond differently to this struggle and one of those 'solutions' is the global care chain: a system wherein women leave their family to take care of the children of well-off families in more affluent parts of the world. Commercialized reproductive labor is

mostly done by immigrant women who work as maids, nannies, cleaners, and care workers (Federici & Jones, 2020, p. 155).

The global care chain entails the second aspect of the crisis in social reproduction. It might not be very intuitive why the global care chain is a form of crisis and how integrating reproductive labor in the broader economy is problematic. However, as Federici and Raelene Wilding show in their work, the global care chain is embedded in structures of economic precarity. Commercialized reproductive work is mostly done by immigrant women who, in turn, leave their families to work - mainly in the USA or Europe - as nannies, maid, cleaners, care workers. The women who leave their families, hire even poorer women to take care of their own children. It must be highlighted that the primary losers, emotionally and economically, of this global chain are the children of the poorest women who cannot afford to hire substitute mothers (Wilding, 2018, p. 74). Thus, the global care chain is embedded in and reproduces socio-economic inequality:

> 'The poorer households had to absorb the overgrown responsibilities by extending their workday, taking up a variety of poorly paid and insecure jobs, and juggling reproductive and productive work, with significant gendered implications owing to women's and children's disproportionate responsibilities for domestic work' (Stevano et al., 2021, p. 274).

Thus, the commercialization of social reproduction has - nationally and internationally speaking – severe consequences for poorer households regarding their ability to carry out reproductive work. The crisis lies – especially for poor households - in the precarious economic situations and emotional damage caused by the global care chain. Again, we see that the crisis is founded in a lack of reciprocity: people carrying out socially reproductive work – especially from less affluent countries and socio-economic backgrounds– are worse off than people who do not carry out those kinds of labor or household which have the financial resources to hire employees to do it.

1.5 A Complete Lack of Time

A third aspect of the crisis of social reproduction, which relates to the previous two, is the complete lack of time everyone who lives in a capitalist society experiences to carry out reproductive work. The average workweek in capitalist societies does not leave much time for

households to cook dinner or spend time with their children. Besides the disputable fact that working 40-hours a week is a desirable economic structure, a direct - and worrisome - consequence of the systematic lack of time for reproductive work is the rising obesity rates worldwide (Federici, 2020). The fact that obesity is one of the world's most prevalent health problems nowadays is caused by the fact that many people lack the time to spend (sufficient) time in the kitchen. Many households buy fast food after a long day of work while their children are spending more time alone (Federici & Jones, 2020, p. 155). It goes without saying that obesity is a healthcare crisis but there is a normative problem underlying this crisis. The capitalist socio-economic structures demand a full focus on acquiring *financial* resources for survival, thereby leaving no time and space to carry out reproductive work well. Thus, the alarming increase of obesity rates confronts us with a public health crisis which, among other things, is caused by a normative problem that everyone living in capitalist societies is obliged to focus on spending most of their time on the acquisition of financial resources to survive.

The focus of this research – on the unfairness that underlies the lack of reciprocity in capitalist societies – begs the question: how is the systematic lack of time for social reproduction unfair? After all, we *all* lack the time and, in this sense, *everyone* is worse off under the current system. Yet, we can still make the claim that the universal lack of time for socially reproductive activities is unfair. The unfairness lies in the fact that *because of* the 40-hour capitalist workweek, many people are unable to cook proper meals (with rising obesity rates worldwide as a direct consequence). Simultaneously, however, eating healthy and cooking proper meals is *essential* for the maintenance and (re)production of the workforce. It should, of course, be noted that the extent of this deprivation differs greatly between richer and poorer households: wealthy households will have the financial resources to buy healthy, more expensive food (or buy services, such as HelloFresh, which provide it), whereas lower income households purchase less healthy food (French, 2019). Despite the differences between households within capitalist societies, I will make the general claim that sufficient time for social reproductive activities is *necessary* for people to be able to work 40 hours a week, and it is precisely the by capitalism dominated workweek that *deprives* people of that sufficiency and quality of time. Thus, the essence of the crisis in social reproduction lies, again, in the fact that it is unfair how capitalism merely extracts value from socially reproductive labor without reciprocating this kind of work.

The three examples we discussed stress the social as well as practical problems for social reproduction under capitalism. But more importantly, all examples show the prevalent unfairness in capitalist societies in which people carrying out reproductive work are worse-off

than people who do not: predominantly women make double workweeks by carrying out most reproductive work, there exists prevalent economic precarity (especially for poorer households) caused by the global care chain, and our structural lack of time in capitalist societies prevents many of us from carrying out socially reproductive work well, with alarming health problems as a consequence. All those examples point to the problem of justice underlying the crisis of social reproduction: socially reproductive workers are treated unfairly by the capitalist system and are worse-off than people who do not carry out socially reproductive labors.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established a working definition of social reproduction that will be used throughout the rest of this research. I have also argued that the crisis in social reproduction is caused by the exploitative character between socially reproductive labor and capitalism. More specifically, it has become clear that there is a complete disbalance between the unwaged (domestic) sector and the waged sector within capitalism, in which the latter merely extracts value from the labor activities in the unwaged sector without reciprocating this kind of work in the form of wage and or social status. I showed – based on the fairness argument – that the crisis in social reproduction lies in the unfairness of this disbalance. The three examples (double workweeks, the global care chain, and the constant lack of time) concretized how this unfairness leads to exploitation. In the next chapter, I will address Rawls' work *A Theory of Justice* in which he describes 'justice as fairness' as the basic structure of liberal democracies. I will address the question if Rawls' distributive justice scheme could be (part of the solution) for the profound crisis in social reproduction.

Chapter 2 – Rawls' Scheme of Social Cooperation

In the previous chapter, it has become clear that there is a crisis in social reproduction because of a profound unfairness in capitalist societies: there exists an exploitative relationship between the formal, waged sector and the informal realm of the economy. The structural lack of reciprocity between the formal and informal labor market implies an unfair distribution of the burdens of social reproduction over the rest of society. Studying distributive justice theories - in our search for possible solutions to the crisis – could be very useful, since those theories define an economic, political, and social framework that results in a certain distribution of benefits and burdens across the members of a society. Although distributive theories vary in numerous dimensions, they all try to supply normative, moral guidance for political processes in society (Lamont & Favor, 2017). Considering this context, I will study *A Theory of Justice* (1972) by Rawls in this chapter since it is the most widely discussed theory of distributive justice in political philosophy. In the first section, I will (shortly) explain Rawls' theory of justice for liberal societies, based on the two principles of justice. In section 2.2, I will show how Rawls' neglects social reproduction in his theory by considering three aspects: wage, the social status of social reproduction, and the general reciprocity between the formal and informal sector. In section 2.3, I will draw the conclusion that 'justice as fairness' is still unfair. Although Rawls' theory works anti-exploitative, therefore enhances general reciprocity in society, it is insufficient to address the wage and social status problem in the crisis of social reproduction.

2.1 The Two Principles of Justice

In *A Theory of Justice,* Rawls describes 'justice as fairness' as the theory of justice for liberal societies which describes the basic structure of society: some basic principles are underlying the political and social institutions. The Rawlsian principles do not apply merely to the state and its institutions, but also to the political constitution, the job market, the legal system and even the family (Wenar, 2021). In this way, the principles of justice are the foundation for all forms of social cooperation. The primary subject of justice, however, is the basic structure underlying the liberal *institutions*, since those play a fundamental role in the distribution of rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation (Rawls, 1972, p. 7). Institutions greatly influence and affect people's initial chances in life: they favor certain starting places over others which – in most cases – contributes to inequality. In short, social justice should, according to Rawls, be concerned with the basic principles underlying

societal institutions because those distribute the main benefits and burdens of social life, such as basic right, opportunities, distribution of wealth and income, and so on.

The principles of justice are justified in an original agreement, like in social contract theory, and govern cooperation in society. In other words, people accept, as free and equal citizens, the principles of justice as the basic structure of their society. The principles of justice are the principles 'free and rational personal concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality' (Rawls, 1972, p. 11). This initial position is, what Rawls calls, the original position which is a (purely hypothetical) situation characterized by the fact that it puts us in a choice situation and, eventually, leads to a certain conception of justice. The original position is the initial status quo in which no one knows their place in society, their abilities, their social status, their essential features, their intelligence, and so on. Thinking about the principles of justice in the original position happens, therefore, behind a 'veil of ignorance': people are ignorant of morally irrelevant facts (e.g., one's talent or socio-economic background) and must therefore evaluate the principles of justice from *general considerations* rather than exploiting those contingent outcomes to their own advantage (Rawls, 1972, pp. 136 -137). The principles of justice which are formulated behind the veil of ignorance are fair because everyone's relation to each other is rooted in equality and symmetry. In short, the original position can be seen as a tool to set up a fair procedure to envision the objectives of justice, and this is justice as fairness: 'It conveys the idea that the principles of justice are agreed to in an initial situation that is fair' (Rawls, 1972, p. 12).

There are two principles that are chosen from the original position (Rawls, 1972, p. 60):

1) Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.
2) Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that both are a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage and b) attached to positions and offices equally open to all.

The first principle requires equality in the assignment of basic right and duties: liberty of conscience and freedom of association, freedom of speech and liberty of the person, the rights to vote, the right to hold (private) property, and so on. The second principle holds that socio-economic inequalities are just as long as these will be to everyone's advantage, and specifically to those who will be worst off (Wenar, 2021). The second principle is the difference principle: this principle allows economic inequalities if these will be to everyone's advantage. It,

therefore, requires an allocation in resources to improve the long-term expectation of the least favored (Rawls, 1972, p. 101). Positively stated, the difference principle views society as an ideal social unity in which the economy works for everyone. Negatively stated, the difference principle points to the fact that no one is entitled to (morally) arbitrary features: the distribution of natural assets (e.g., being rich or poor, male, or female) is undeserved (since nobody deserves their natural endowments) therefore they do not deserve the advantages that these endowments give access to. The second principle is also based on the liberal principle of fair equality of opportunity which requires that positions and offices are equally open to all. This does not imply, however, that everyone must get the same shares, since 'it may be possible to improve everyone's situation by assigning certain powers and benefits to positions despite the fact that certain groups are excluded from them' (Rawls, 1972, p. 84). Concluding, the two principles of justice – and the institutions that satisfy them - are foundational to a fair (and therefore just) social cooperation scheme for mutual advantage: the principles deal in a fair way with the arbitrariness of nature or fortune (Rawls, 1972, p. 102).

From Rawls' principles of justice derive two mechanisms that regulate society: the job market and the difference principle. Fair equality of opportunity – one of the principles of justice – demands a job market in which all positions and offices are equally open to all. All citizens have the basic liberties and opportunities to enter the job market and earn a wage. The difference principle – the second principle of justice – demands a fair redistribution of wealth and income afterwards. So, where the job market regulates people's wage and fair equality of opportunity, the difference principle is the distributive mechanism (underlying all of society) which ensures a fair allocation of resources. In the next section, it will become clear that those two mechanisms are insufficient to fairly distribute the burdens of social reproduction among the members of society.

2.2 Wage, Social Status, and General Reciprocity

To what extent can Rawls' welfare regime diminish the unfair disbalance between capitalism and social reproduction? I will address three aspects to answer this question: wage, the social status of socially reproductive labor, and the (enhancement of) the general reciprocity between formal and informal labor in society. I choose to focus on these aspects because the prevalent unfairness between the waged and unwaged sector in capitalist economies is (predominantly) caused by those three aspects. It will become clear that Rawls' distributive scheme merely has

a substantial and sufficient effect on the increase of societal reciprocity but lacks to function as a solution for the first two aspects.

How can Rawls' welfare regime, based on the principles of justice, address the wage problem for socially reproductive labor? A possible answer lies in the difference principle. The difference principle demands that the socio-economic inequalities experienced by the least well-off – in this case, reproductive workers – are compensated for. In a welfare state, this takes the form of subsidizing socially reproductive activities. Under a welfare regime the state could, for example, implement policies that subsidize childcare or domestic help, or provide state pension to every citizen. These kinds of policies certainly (re)distribute the burdens of socially reproductive work and make people who carry out reproductive work better-off (compared to their position in non-welfare states). In the most optimistic Rawlsian scenario, every form of social reproductive labor is subsidized and the burdens of this kind of labor are, thereby, fairly distributed across all members of society.

But subsidizing socially reproductive labor does not fundamentally address the crisis in social reproduction for two reasons. Firstly, subsidies do not solve the wage problem in the informal labor sector since subsidies can only be differentiated to a certain extent. Rawls' welfare scheme allows for subsidy for socially reproductive labor – for example by granting every parent child allowance – but it does not allow for much wage differentiation: a single mother caring for her children 24 hours a day receives (in the best case) a bit more child allowance than a couple who share the household's financial burdens. In contrast, the formal job market allows for wage differentiation - the more one works, the more wage one will receive – and acknowledges that not all work is equal in terms of workload, therefore rewards it differently. Through subsidizing socially reproductive labor, this differentiation is hard – if not impossible – to make.

In a Rawlsian society, the subsidies will (probably) be subjected to some kind of means test, since inequalities should be to the benefit of all, especially the least well-off. In this way, subsidies can be differentiated, but we must critically address on what this differentiation is based. The differentiation is based on *the productive value* one generates for society. Means-tested subsidies incentivize (especially poor) people to be economically productive, but 'productivity' is defined in terms of one's productivity *on the formal labor market*. Therefore, subsidies for social reproduction will (presumably) be too low, since socially reproductive labor is not included in the category of productive labor activities. Concluding, Rawls' welfare scheme cannot address the wage problem in social reproduction since it 1) does not

(completely) acknowledge the existing inequality in workload of informal labor and 2) allows for means-tested subsidies that define productivity purely in terms of the formal labor market.

Some sectors in a capitalist economy - such as education, culture, and health care - cannot 'survive' by pure marketization and will therefore receive subsidies. Social reproduction would be, in Rawls' welfare regime, categorized as such a sector. How does this influence the social status of socially reproductive work? I claim that as long as social reproduction is merely subsidized and regarded as a sector 'needy' for subsidy, it will continue to be structurally undervalued. Subsidizing social reproduction generates a dependency relationship between, on the one hand, the 'productive' and economically sustainable sectors and, on the other hand, the sectors in need of subsidy. If we aim to solve the crisis in social reproduction, socially reproductive labor must be regarded as real work and acknowledged as the foundational pillar of capitalist societies. The dependency relationship between the formal and informal sector – in the 'productive' sectors finance the 'unproductive' sectors - undermines this aim. I do not argue that people – on an individual level – undervalue social reproduction or subsidized economic activities in general. But acknowledgement on a micro-level does not address the structural crisis in social reproduction that exists on a societal level. In short, as long as socially reproductive labor is financially dependent on the 'productive' economic sectors, it will continue to bear an undervalued social status which, in turn, contributes to the prevalent unfairness between the informal and formal labor market.

Despite the inability of Rawls' theory to address the social status and wage problem in social reproduction, a Rawlsian welfare scheme does increase the general reciprocity in society: the burdens of carrying out reproductive work is more fairly distributed since the difference principle demands compensation for informal labor activities. The difference principle fails to address, however, the structural disbalance between social reproduction and capitalism. Although the social reproduction sector is better off in a Rawlsian welfare state than in a purely market-driven society, socially reproductive workers are still deprived of their fair share in the fruits of the market because they still do not receive a wage for their work. In addition, the income those workers will receive is probably too low because the subsidies are (in the best scenario) means-tested on 'productive' value. Concluding, state support for the worst-off in a capitalist society is not enough to ensure that everyone benefits and receives a fair share of the system, and this problematizes Rawls claim that 'the division of advantages should be such as to draw forth the willing cooperation of everyone taking part in it, including those less well situated' (Rawls, 1972, p. 15). Thus, to answer question asked in the beginning of this section, we must conclude that Rawls' welfare regime – by taking wage, social status, and general

reciprocity into consideration – cannot sufficiently address the crisis in social reproduction, mainly because social reproduction is still not (economically and socially) valued in the same way as the formal labor sector.

2.3 Justice as Fairness is Still Unfair

Let us conclude by asking a fundamental question regarding *A Theory of Justice*: is justice as fairness as fair as Rawls claims it to be? We have seen that the two dominant regulating mechanisms in a Rawlsian society – the formal labor market and the difference principle – are neglecting social reproduction as necessary labor activities that form the foundation of capitalist societies. Even if we try to 'save' Rawls' theory by applying the difference principle specifically to social reproduction – for example by means of state-subsidy for social reproductive activities – the answer to the initial question is still negative. And although the difference principle is anti-exploitative and enhances general reciprocity in society, the crisis in social reproduction continues to exist if the unfair relationship between the capitalist labor market and the informal sector of the economy is not specifically addressed. Therefore, solutions to this crisis must be based on a *real* fair distribution of the burdens of social reproduction. Rawls' theory was very promising but, as became clear, insufficient as a proper solution. Although Rawls' liberal egalitarian framework is very attentive to equality of opportunity and fair distribution, it is hard to claim that its outcomes are *really* equal and fairly distributed if social reproduction is – besides completely neglected in the analysis – still not acknowledged as real work and as fundamental to the capitalist economy. Rawls offers us a socio-political framework for welfare states that attacks the unfair outcomes of laissez-faire regimes, but - unfortunately - not *all* unfair outcomes are dealt with. Socially reproductive labor is in Rawls' theory still treated as an inferior form of labor which is, in the best case, needy for subsidy.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained Rawls' principles of justice that underlie a social cooperation scheme for mutual advantage in liberal societies. I argued that Rawls ignores social reproduction in his analysis and fails to incorporate these kind of labor activities in the social cooperation scheme for 'mutual advantage'. Although the difference principle - because of its anti-exploitative character and ability to enhance reciprocity in society – could specifically be applied to social reproduction by subsidizing (all) socially reproductive labor activities, I have

argued that this is not enough to refute the fairness argument. In conclusion, Rawls' theory based on justice as fairness is not as fair as it seems to be, and this is mainly caused by the fact that the two regulating mechanisms (the difference principle and the formal labor market) in *A Theory of Justice* fail to incorporate social reproduction and value it as real work. In the next chapter, I will consider the distributive justice theory of Van Parijs, in which he defends an Unconditional Basic Income as the regulating mechanism to fairly distribute burdens and benefits across all members of society.

Chapter 3 – An Unconditional Basic Income

In this chapter, I will study another distributive justice theory that could (possibly) solve the crisis in social reproduction. More specifically, I will consider an Unconditional Basic Income (hereafter: UBI) and address the question if a UBI could function as proper social policy in capitalist societies that diminishes the disbalance between the formal and informal labor market. The (academic) debate on UBI is an interdisciplinary one: it touches upon economic, sociological as well as philosophical questions regarding the desirability, implementation, and justification of a basic income. Much research has been done on this subject, especially from the economic field, and it would be superfluous to repeat all those arguments and proposals here. Rather, I have written this chapter from a philosophical standpoint: I scrutinized the ethical justifications for UBI as a socio-economic policy program. I mainly focused on Van Parijs' theory, since he (together with Yannick Vanderborght) presented one of the most comprehensive, interdisciplinary defenses of a basic income. In section 3.1, I will explain what a UBI is and discuss the three requirements (universal, individual, and obligation free) it must meet to be unconditional. Then, in section 3.2, I will address Van Parijs' real-freedom-for-all argument in which he argues that real freedom means that one has the *means* to do what one might want to do. I will furthermore explain why the real-freedom-for-all argument assumes a basic income in capitalist societies. In section 3.3, I will compare Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* with Van Parijs' distributive theory and show how the theorists differ in their answer to the question *which* burdens and benefits should be fairly distributed across the members of society. In section 3.5 and 3.4, I will refresh the debate with bringing in several feminist arguments for and objections to UBI. These (general) arguments critically evaluate the consequences UBI will have on gender equality on the (informal) labor market. In section 3.6, we will see how the feminist arguments have implications for our discussion on the crisis in social reproduction. I will conclude by arguing that the implementation of a basic income merely has a substantial effect – because of its anti-exploitative characteristics - on enhancing the general reciprocity in capitalist societies but has no similar effect on the social status of social reproduction or the wage problem in the informal sector.

3.1 What is an Unconditional Basic Income?

UBI moves away from the idea of (re)distributing certain primary goods in society, as we have seen in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and focuses on increasing every citizen's purchasing power by paying a regular cash income paid to all, on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p.1). UBI should be interpreted as a steady floor for one to stand on: 'It is a foundation on which people can build their lives in various ways, including by topping it up with income from other sources' (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 10). UBI as economic floor is unconditional – and therefore steady – in three ways: it is individual, universal, and obligation free (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 8). A UBI is individual since the income is a strictly individual entitlement, as opposed to an entitlement that is linked to one's household. A UBI is also universal since every citizen will receive it: the rich are entitled to the same amount of basic income as the poor. A UBI does not, in contrast to other existing minimum-income schemes, involve some kind of means test and is paid upfront to every citizen (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, pp. 16 - 17). Lastly, the income is obligation free, as opposed to incomes that are means-tested or tied to obligation or prove of willingness to work (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 8). These three unconditionalities make a UBI fundamentally different from social protection in the form of assistance or social insurance. This is not to say, however, that UBI cannot be combined with those other models: it is all about fitting a modest unconditional floor under the whole of our distribution of income, including social transfers linked to social insurance or assistance. UBI enables those policies to do a better job, Van Parijs argues (Van Parijs, 2016).

3.2 Extending the Libertarian Notion of Freedom: Real Freedom for All

A basic income is not a new idea, fairly old actually (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, pp. 8 – 9) but today it is more popular than it has ever been. Why is that? According to Van Parijs, we have been confronted with the disadvantages of neoliberal capitalism during the last couple of years. Our current economic system has – besides its undeniable virtues - one major drawback: it enslaves us and subjects us as individuals to the dictates of the market (Van Parijs, 2016). UBI is, as Van Parijs argues, the solution to reach a sane economy and free society that gives real freedom for all citizens.

The ethical justification of a basic income – which is the focus of this chapter – is structured around Van Parijs' real-freedom-for-all argument. According to Van Parijs, a free society is a society in which *its members* are as free as possible. More specifically, a real free

society meets the following three conditions: there exists an enforced structure of rights (security); this structure is such that each person owns herself (self-ownership), and this structure is such that each person has the greatest possible opportunity to do whatever she *might* want to do (leximin opportunity, I will return to this notion shortly) (Parijs, 2003, p. 25). However, real freedom for all is not merely a matter of having the right to do what one might want to do, but also a matter of having the *means* for doing it (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 4).

Thus, Van Parijs stretches the libertarian notion of freedom, which is predominantly based on the idea of self-ownership: people have a strict set of rights over their persons. Control rights are central to idea of self-ownership since those distinguish things that can or cannot be done to a person and, thus, protect individuals from doing thing against their will (Van der Vossen, 2019). Libertarians define freedom too narrow in this way, according to Van Parijs, and he extends the notion by pointing out that there should be no limits on what a person *may* do but also what he or she *can* do. Real freedom can thus be restricted 'by any limit to what a person is permitted or enabled to do' (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 4). This means that, for example, a person's purchasing power is crucial to that person' freedom: (the lack of) purchasing power can increase (or limit) one's real freedom. This does not imply, however, that everyone possesses the rights and means to do whatever he or she might like to do. Rather, a free society - in Van Parijs' view - is institutionally designed in a way that it offers the greatest possible real opportunities to those with least opportunities, while respecting everyone's formal freedom. In other words, opportunities of citizens should be equal or, if that is not possible, leximin: one can have more opportunities than another but only if this having does not reduce the opportunities of those with less (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 5).

The institutions in a real free society are set-up in such a way that they distribute 'mays' and not merely 'cans' (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 23). The most striking institutional implication that can be derived from this claim is a basic income: 'If real freedom is a matter of means, not only rights, people's incomes are obviously of great importance' (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 30). Real freedom, Van Parijs argues, lies not purely in one's purchasing power but in the freedom to live as one might like to live. The unconditionality of UBI is of great importance to this aim: it should grant people purchasing power irrespective of one's (willingness to) work (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 30). In conclusion, real-freedom-for-all assumes the implementation of a basic income, since *real* freedom is focused on *real* opportunities: it should not merely give individuals the right to do whatever they might want to do, but – in order to generate opportunities – give people the *means* to do it. A basic income would give people those means and be the central

pillar of a free society, since it fairly distributes real freedom to all citizens (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p.2).

3.3 What Should be Fairly Distributed in Society?

The ethical foundation – real freedom for all – of a basic income bears some similarity with Rawls' moral arguments in *A Theory of Justice*. Both Rawls and Van Parijs are focused on natural inequalities not turning into social inequalities. However, what counts as a natural inequality is something on which the authors do not agree, and their theories are, therefore, based on different assumptions. Although Van Parijs himself claims that Rawls' 'Difference Principle would recommend a basic income' (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 95), he and Rawls give quite different answers to the question on *which* burdens and benefits should be fairly distributed in a just society. I will shortly explicate their differences to get a thorough understanding of what UBI, as proposed by Van Parijs, tries to achieve in society.

Rawls, as explained in the previous chapter, argues that no one can make a special claim on morally arbitrary features, such as intelligence and beauty. The difference principle allows for highly intelligent person A to have a higher income than person B, who is less intelligent, only if person's A intelligence can be productively used for the rest of society. In other words, inequality is only just if it is to the advantage of the rest of society, and especially the worst off. Rawls is thus not hesitant to 'tax' internal endowments and argues that every capacity that enables one to earn more, or to be extra happy, or any other extra opportunity resulting from internal endowments is morally irrelevant.

Van Parijs is also focused on opportunities but in a very different way. Van Parijs is more reserved with regards to taxing internal endowments and does not claim that the productive gain from certain talents (e.g., the increase of GDP due to the talents of high-skilled IT people) should be fairly distributed in society. Van Parijs does claim, however, that many opportunities we experience (natural and social) must be ascribed to external factors – such as social organization, capital accumulation, technological processes, civility rules et cetera – rather than our own efforts. Because those opportunities 'fell from the sky' – most of us put no effort into receiving them – they need to be fairly distributed: 'The underlying criterion of fairness is that some people should not be better off, and others worse off, as a consequence of an unequal distribution of assets' (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 135). UBI could function as the societal mechanism that regulates this distribution by making sure that every citizen receives his or her fair share of opportunities that can be ascribed to external resources. Every citizen is then

equally enabled to use those resources to be productive. However, Van Parijs' fair distribution argument stops after the implementation of a basic income: the productive gain made by citizens after receiving a basic income (and using it as an asset) does not need to be fairly distributed. For example, when one is naturally endowed with green thumbs, Van Parijs would *not* claim that the advantage someone gains from his productive labor – resulting from her ingenious way of cultivating land - is something that should be fairly distributed to the rest of society. Recall that Rawls' difference principle *does* imply a fair distribution of the advantages gained by productive labor resulting from one's talent. Arguably, Rawls is a stronger egalitarian in this sense than Van Parijs, since Rawls includes internal endowments (e.g., talents) in his distributive scheme, whereas Van Parijs does not and emphasizes the need for distribution of 'the gifts from nature, and the past' (*Van Parijs*, 2014).

Although Rawls and Van Parijs thus differ in their assumptions in their distributive theories, they both realize – more than laissez-faire ideologists – that the market cannot be the sole regulating mechanism in society and market-regulating policies should be applied if we care about more in human life than merely efficiency. But can the regulating mechanisms they propose, such as the difference principle and a basic income, sufficiently diminish the disbalance between the formal and informal labor sector? In the previous chapter, we saw that Rawls' scheme was not sufficient to address to inequality between social reproduction and the formal economy. The next section will scrutinize – based on feminist arguments - whether a basic income could be a solution to the crisis in social reproduction. I will consider feminist arguments since those are focused on the gendered division in labor and specifically take unpaid and informal work into consideration. In the last chapter (section 4.1), I will further argue why a feminist perspective is necessary when considering UBI proposals.

3.4 A Feminist Perspective on Basic Income

UBI as a social policy program is a hotly debated subject in feminist circles since it is a very promising social policy to achieve gender equality. Some feminist theorists argue that a UBI would successfully attack the gendered division of labor and, thereby, the negative consequences experienced by (mostly) women. In this section, we will look at several feminist arguments and objections regarding the implementation of a basic income. In what follows, I will discuss, on a very general level, the strengths and shortcomings of UBI from a feminist point of view. It is necessary to discuss those arguments – I endorse some of them but reject

others - since they have implications for our subject of interest: social reproduction. In section 3.6, I will specifically turn to social reproduction and address its relation to UBI in more detail.

There are general feminist arguments that can be made that support the implementation of a basic income. Firstly, UBI enhances economic autonomy, especially for women since women – in general – earn lower wages than men (OECD, 2022b). A strictly individual basic income would, other things remaining equal, be of great financial benefit to them: 'It will thereby help reduce the pro-male bias in the distribution of earnings and social insurance benefits' (Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 185). Increased economic autonomy will, consequently, diminish the power of the wage earners over unpaid caregivers (Zelleke et al., 2021). In addition, economic autonomy will increase people's ability to *choose* for unpaid work, rather than being forced by existing biases in favor of 'career-oriented' against 'care-oriented' (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 187).

Secondly, UBI is a desirably policy since it attacks the gendered division in labor. Traditional gender roles prescribe a specialization in *paid productive work* for men and *unpaid reproductive work* for women (Elgarte, 2008, p. 2). This division is unjust since it affects men and women differently: generally speaking, women lose from this division where men win in terms of opportunities. Women have less opportunities due to the gendered division of labor in two ways: either women have double jobs by staying predominantly responsible for familial affairs besides their formal job, or women solely focus on the household thereby undermining their economic autonomy. In short, the gendered division of labor reinforces gender inequality (in the form of power structures and gendered hierarchy) since it diminishes the (economic) opportunities of women. UBI would diminish this division since it protects women from economic risks due to the gendered division of labor: UBI improves women's fallback option from any relationship by increasing her voice and power in relationships (Elgarte, 2008, p. 3). Besides improving women's fallback option in personal relationships – a woman with an individual income can exit or not enter undesirable relationships – a UBI also improves a woman's power on the formal labor market. Women would now have a stronger bargaining position while men are, arguably, encouraged to work parttime which will increase gender equality on the labor market (Robeyns, 2001, p. 89). Again, real freedom – the main aim of Van Parijs' proposal – gains by implementing a UBI.

Thirdly, implementing a basic income might lead to revaluation of unpaid care work. Currently, care work is structurally naturalized, non-valued, and not recognized as real labor, as explained in section 1.2. A basic income will, in an indirect way, contribute to a revaluation of unpaid work which, arguably, might help to increase the respect people show for this kind

of work' (Robeyns, 2001, p. 89). However, if a basic income can and should be interpreted in this way is based on problematic assumption, but I will return to this in section 3.6.

Lastly, and most importantly, UBI is desirable since it is a social policy that best supports a 'universal caregiver' model: the father's hours of caregiving are equal (or even higher) to those of the mother (Chou et al., 2015, p. 34). This model encourages and supports both men and women to participate in the labor market as well as to take care of the home (McLean, 2016, p. 285). The model thus induces men to be more involved in sharing care work, thereby allowing men and women to share the responsibilities of socially reproductive labor and diminish work-family conflict (Chou et al., 2015, p. 34). The universal caregiver model is preferrable over the caregiver parity model: a model not focused on *sharing* care work but *supporting* informal workers. The caregiver model supports income that is directed toward caregivers specifically and aims to promote gender equity principally by supporting informal care work (e.g., childcare allowance or other state provision of caregiver allowances). The universal caregiver model is also preferrable over the universal breadwinner model. This model promotes women's employment, whereby the state provides childcare services so women can enter (fulltime) the labor market (Chou et al., 2015, p. 34). Income supported by the universal breadwinner model is tied to paid employment and aims to achieve gender equity principally by promoting woman's employment.

The universal caregiver model is preferrable over both other models because the outcomes of the previous models are undesirable from a feminist point of view. The caregiver parity model leads to marginalization of care workers: it secludes women in the private sphere and, thereby, reinforces gender essentialism. The universal breadwinner model generates an androcentric disposition towards female emancipation: it emphasizes masculine life-patterns and requires women to conform to men's standards to be considered equal (McLean, 2016, p. 285). The universal caregiver model – best supported by a basic income - counters both negative outcomes (marginalization and androcentrism) and challenges the fundamental assumption of the autonomous, independent worker as the model citizen (Zelleke, 2008, p. 3). Concluding, UBI is a valuable policy because it supports the main aim of the universal caregiver model: to distribute the burdens of domestic and care work more fairly within households. In addition, UBI counters the negative outcomes of both universal caregiver as well as breadwinner model because a basic income works both anti-marginalizing and anti-androcentric. UBI works anti-marginalizing since its universality provides an economic floor for everyone to make their own choices. UBI also works anti-androcentric because it avoids assumptions about the nature of

work and values care work that cannot be provided by the market of the state (McLean, 2016, p. 285).

3.5 Why a Basic Income Does Not Do Justice to Women

Basic income would not be a hotly debated topic between feminist theorists if everyone would have agreed on its desirability. A first major concern according to some feminists (Elgarte, 2008; Robeyns, 2001; Zelleke, 2008) is that UBI might reinforce – rather than attack – the gendered division of labor. A UBI will be interpreted as a housewife wage - hush money that incentives women to stay home – and will bring women back in the domestic sphere and temper emancipation (Robeyns, 2001, p. 89). Ingrid Robeyns argues that many feminists in favor of a basic income do not recognize that the existence of both internal and external conditions with a gender-related character are crucial in women's 'real free choice'. External conditions are related to the option set one has, whereas internal conditions regard internal autonomy (such as being able to plan your life, being able to bargain, and reflect on your actions and the consequences) (Robeyns, 2009, p. 101). Real free choice, according to Robeyns, requires fostering external conditions (e.g., public support trying to enlarge the option set for all individuals) as well as internal conditions (e.g., thoughtful education and raising of children). One can see how UBI increases real free choice through fostering external conditions, but a basic income does not necessarily and automatically foster the internal conditions that are just as crucial to real free choice. Even if it turns out that UBI does *not* reinforce traditional gender roles, it certainly does not *attack* the current division of labor (e.g., implementing a UBI does not automatically imply men to accept parttime jobs and put more hours in care work). Thus, Robeyns argues, UBI should be implemented alongside other social policies that liberate women from traditional gender roles. We will return to the importance of UBI in the form of a social policy package in the last chapter (section 4.2) of this research. Although Robeyn's objection is not a final refutation of UBI, it weakens Van Parijs' claim that a basic income generates 'real freedom for all': 'Real freedom for all does not only boil down to a basic income for all, but also the transformation of certain cultural and social patterns, like gender roles and gender hierarchies, which are now constraining individuals in their freedom' (Robeyns, 2001, p. 103). Van Parijs, in contrast, does not hesitate to claim that implementing a basic income will fundamentally change society and help solve many crises societies face (*Van Parijs*, 2014). Van Parijs is, generally speaking, very optimistic regarding the implications of a basic income for people's work ethic, on the economy and on other existing social policies. Arguably, real

freedom for all is all there is to social justice (Van Parijs, 2003, p. 29), but the level of trust Van Parijs ascribes to UBI as the key tool to achieve this might be – as Robeyns argues– too high.

Secondly, the salary gap between men and women will widen if a basic income is implemented. For several reasons – which are outside the scope of this research to discuss – women earn less per hour than men (OECD, 2022b). If a UBI incentivizes couples – as it aims to do – to reduce hours of paid work to spend more time for childcare or other socially reproductive activities, it is in most cases less costly if the woman steps back to pick up those activities than the man. Every time a woman makes this choice, the salary gap between men and women widens (Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 187). For this reason, implementing a UBI will – if we consider breadwinner economics as the objected model – not be beneficial to women in the long run at all. Arguably, women lose – in terms of financial resources – rather than gain when a basic income is implemented. This claim is disputable though, since we can ask the question: can we speak of a real *loss* when women step back from the labor market? It is only a loss if we mainly focus on a breadwinner economic model. It would not be a loss considering the increase of one's *choice*: a basic income enables a care-oriented life rather than a career-oriented, so women stepping back to choose for care work freely and truly should not be a fatal objection to UBI. However, the long-term problems regarding the wage gap between men and women is something to be worried about by proponents of a basic income: women structurally earning less than men undermines the economic autonomy of the former and increases the dependency relationships women have with men. A structural salary gap between men and women reinforces, in short, gender inequality and power inequalities.

The last objection to UBI points to a dilemma: low-skilled women with low-labor market attachment will gain from the implementation of a UBI, whereas high-skilled women will lose from the reinforcement of gender roles (Robeyns, 2001, p. 102). The dilemma boils down to the question: how do we maximize an individual's capacity to make real choices, while at the same time attack gender constraints' that individuals face when making these choices? The dilemma seems to find roots in the tension between, on the one hand, individual freedom and, on the other hand, equality:

> 'If we want to fully and unconditionally respect choices women make in the given gender-structured society, we see that some of those women are putting their own future well-being at risk, and at the same time worsen the constraints on other women's choices. We cannot simply assume that all housewives have a 'false consciousness' and therefore we cannot impose a paternalistic social policy. However, neither can we

pretend to live in a society where no gender-related preference formation mechanisms and gender-related constraints on choices exist-in other words, the pure liberal concept of autonomous fully informed choices is not helping us either' (Robeyns, 2001, p. 102).

3.6 Could a Basic Income Solve the Crisis in Social Reproduction?

In the previous sections, I have addressed several arguments and objections regarding the (desirability of) a basic income, formulated from a feminist perspective. Navigating through those arguments gives us insight in the effects a UBI can have on the gendered division of labor. However, I have not yet touched specifically upon the more fundamental question of this research: to what extent can a basic income diminish the inequality – and thereby exploitation – that exists between capitalism and socially reproductive labor? I will address the same aspects as in chapter 2 to answer this question: wage, the social status of socially reproductive labor, and the general reciprocity between formal and informal labor in society. As will become clear, UBI merely has a substantial effect on the last aspect.

UBI cannot and should not be interpreted as a 'wage for housework'. Wage is, on the formal labor market, differentiated based on the number of hours one works. In other words, the number of hours a person labors has a positive relationship with the amount of wage the person receives. If we accept a UBI as 'wage' for the informal labor market, it should allow for wage differentiation too. If we do not allow wage differentiation on the informal labor market, we would make the absurd assumption that all informal labor activities are equal regarding duration. Consequently, a person doing groceries for her neighbor twice a month 'earns' the same as a daughter carrying out intensive care for her mother on a daily basis. However, UBI precludes such a differentiation since it is a fixed, universal payment. In short, UBI simply cannot function as a (fixed) wage: care work (and other socially reproductive activities) cannot be defined in the same way as formal jobs in terms of defined hours and responsibilities, since this suggests that it is comparable with a formal job (e.g., being sometimes off duty and enjoy leisure) when, in fact, it is not (Zelleke, 2008, p. 5).

In addition, if the income would – hypothetically - be high enough to formally wage all labor hours of even the most productive informal care workers, it is still undesirable to interpret a basic income as a wage for housework. This interpretation suggests that all informal labor is equal in terms of workload which is not a compelling intuition. In general, we assume that one's income should be positively affected by one's work: the more effort someone puts in their labor, the more his or her income should increase. UBI does not, on the formal labor market,

undermine this intuition since a basic income still allows one to work as much as he or she wants (thereby topping up the basic income from other sources of income). But qualifying a basic income as a housewife wage for the informal market *does* counter this intuition since the number of hours a reproductive worker puts in his or her labor does not affect the amount of (basic) income this person will receive.

Thus, UBI cannot and should be a solution to the wage problem in social reproduction. Could UBI, however, positively affect the (inferior) social status of socially reproductive labor? Given the current gendered-structured society, it is very unlikely that a basic income will increase the social status of socially reproductive workers, as convincingly argued by Robeyns. For reasons mentioned in section 3.5 (and there are probably even more), it would be naïve to assume that a basic income would substantially diminish the gendered division of labor and generate a reappreciation of care work and other socially reproductive labor. There are, however, policies – combined with a basic income – that could weaken the gendered-division of labor and, thereby, the gendered-hierarchies and power division in capitalist societies. I will return to those in the last chapter, in section 4.2.

Lastly, we can ask ourselves if implementing a basic income could increase (economic) reciprocity in contemporary capitalist societies. UBI is, in this aspect, a promising policy since it (partly) attacks the unfairness prevalent in capitalist societies between the formal labor market and the informal realm. Most importantly, UBI contributes specifically to anti-exploitation since the income – being unconditional, individual, and duty free - is not linked to dependency relationships (such as benefits related to heads of households or an employer): 'This is a key strength of basic income proposals as opposed to other forms of social security: it has the potential to reduce the power of 'bosses, boyfriends, and bureaucrats' over women's lives' (McLean, 2016, p. 287). UBI reduces the power of the employer because it increases the bargaining position of the worker, and it reduces the power of 'boyfriends' because it redresses inequalities within households between men and women. Also, UBI decreases the power of the state over citizens because it removes – in contrast to for example means-tested incomes – the need for eligibility enforcement. In other words, UBI reduces the power and oversight of the state (e.g., caseworkers and officials) over benefit claimants' personal lives which is 'an issue that is especially pertinent for women, who are more likely to be claimants and more likely to be subject to scrutiny of their coupled relationships based on household-level means-testing' (McLean, 2016, p. 288).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered a distributive justice theory based on a basic income as a possible solution to the crisis in social reproduction. I have explained what a UBI is, which requirements it should meet, and which ethical justifications underlie this social policy. The feminist arguments completed the debate on UBI, since those arguments also considered the consequences of a UBI on the gendered division of labor. I have (shortly) touched upon the implications the feminist arguments have for (the crisis in) social reproduction, whereby I concluded that UBI merely has a substantial effect on the general reciprocity between the formal and informal labor market. Most importantly, UBI addresses the unfairness complaint by providing socially reproductive workers with an own income, thereby diminishing the dependency relationships they have with the head of households, the state, and employers. In the next and final chapter, I want to further reflect on what the feminist theorists substantially contributed to our discussion and address some flanking policies they propose. I will also use the last chapter to return to the question if the crisis in social reproduction can be solved considering the distributive theories and arguments we have discussed.

Chapter 4 – Flanking Policies and Communal Forms of Reproduction

I want to use this fourth, and conclusive, chapter to reflect on what we have learned in this research and return to the question if and how the crisis in social reproduction could be solved. In section 4.1, I want to emphasize (in more detail than in the previous chapter) how the feminist perspective on a basic income has been very valuable in our search for solutions, since those arguments – in contrast to other proposals – include the non-formal labor sector. It will become clear, however, that this inclusive, feminist view on the implementation of UBI is not enough to claim that a basic income is a proper solution to the crisis in social reproduction. Therefore, I will propose some flanking policies (in section 4.2) that should accompany the implementation of a basic income to become a more successful policy to solve the crisis. In section 4.3, I will give a short recap of this research and conclude that a UBI (even with flanking policies) would not be a satisfactory solution to the crisis because it merely (and partly) solves the exploitation problem under capitalism but does not address the structural problem underlying it: social reproduction is not valued as real work. I will end this research by making a (short) suggestion in section 4.4 for communal forms of social reproduction, which will steer future discussions about the crisis in social reproduction and possible solutions in the right direction.

4.1 What the Feminist Perspective Added to the Debate

I argued in the previous chapter that a UBI is not fully satisfactory as a social policy to counter the crisis in social reproduction, especially taking into consideration the wage problem and the (inferior) social status of social reproduction. However, it also became clear that implementing a UBI is a good first step: UBI could be a very successful policy to enhance general reciprocity in capitalist societies since it weakens the exploitative relationship between capitalism and social reproduction. Because of its anti-exploitative character, UBI is a tool to address the crisis in social reproduction and enables us to *explicitly* involve social reproduction when deliberating on income, the labor market and capitalist relationships in contemporary capitalist societies. In contrast to other distributive theories – for example Rawls' theory of justice - UBI proposals explicitly acknowledge the existence and importance of social reproduction (e.g., by suggesting an interpretation of basic income as a compensation for care work and social reproduction or pointing out the importance of family life, leisure, and choice in labor activities (Van Parijs, 2003; Van Parijs & Vanderborght 2017)). It is very valuable in our search for possible solutions

to the crisis in social reproduction that many UBI proponents address socially reproductive work explicitly in their proposals.

There is, however, a persistent and general problem in all UBI proposals: they are heavily focused on the *formal* labor market. A basic income predominantly aims to increase every citizen's purchasing power, strengthen bargaining positions on the formal labor market, and offer more choice regarding (formal and informal) labor activities. Admittedly, none of these aims are undesirable in contemporary capitalist economies but the proposals do not have fundamental implications for the crisis in social reproduction. The general defenses of a basic income fail to formulate a regulating mechanism that *structurally appreciates* socially reproductive work. Although most UBI proponents acknowledge the existence (and importance) of social reproduction more explicitly than other welfare or distributive theories, they still do not fully appreciate socially reproductive labor in the same way as they appreciate formal labor. This is where the feminist theorists - discussed in the previous chapter - shift the focus of the debate on UBI: they all critically analyze how a UBI will turn out for the formal labor market *as well as* the informal realm. Adopting a feminist perspective when thinking through a basic income proposal has enabled us better than any argument discussed so far to understand where the solution for the crisis in social reproduction must lie. On the one hand, the feminist theorists explicitly show what the implications of a UBI are not merely for the formal sector but also the informal one. This makes the feminist defense of UBI more extensive and complete than other proposals which structurally ignore social reproduction. On the other hand, and this is even more important, the feminist perspective shows that a basic income – on itself - is not enough to attack the gendered division of labor and we need flanking policies. In the next section, I will discuss some of those policies which should be implemented besides a UBI to achieve a less gendered division of labor. This does not imply, however, that a diminished gender division on the labor market solves the crisis in social reproduction - I will return to this point in section 4.3.

4.2 Promoting and Enabling Policies

If we aim for more gender equality on the labor market by implementing a basic income, we need flanking policies that *promote* as well as *enable* people to pursue gender equality in the division of labor. These policies should increase the attractiveness of care activities and other socially reproductive for both men and women. Enabling policies are policies that 'enable couples to share the breadwinner and homemaker roles and act according to their will' (Elgarte,

2008, p.6). Policies of this kind would entail, for example, the implementation of a shorter workweek for all workers, a right for workers to reduce working hours to attend care work or a variety of leaves. Promoting policies are policies that will increase the number of couples willing to share roles: fighting stereotypes in textbooks, educating (young) children on how to combine formal and informal work, or creating incentives for couples to raise their children based on egalitarian gender norms. Both enabling and promoting policies contribute to an abolishment of a gendered division of labor, since the former redefines the demands that society sets on socially reproductive work whereas the latter aims to change traditional gender roles (Elgarte, 2008, p. 6).

Implementing more social policies – as a package – alongside a UBI is thus essential. Implementing solely a basic income would, as argued in section 3.5, merely incentivizes the gendered division of labor, since it would reinforce women to withdraw from the labor market without fear of poverty or economic dependency. I will not, however, claim that these social policy packages guarantee the fact that men take more responsibility for socially reproductive work. I do claim, however, that implementing a basic income alongside other policies will *decrease the costs for men doing so* and this, in turn, will increase the opportunities to break out the gendered division of labor:

> 'Only basic income, by virtue of its universality, unconditionality, and unmonitored status, recognizes that all citizens have responsibilities and obligations outside the sphere of paid employment. Thus, basic income has the best chance of creating the social and economic conditions required to institutionalize the universal caretaker, allowing all citizens – men and women – to participate in care work and other unpaid work in the domestic sphere in addition to paid employment in the public sphere' (Zelleke, 2008, p. 7).

An important objection to the abovementioned promoting policies is that they seem to suggest that the responsibility of diminishing the gendered division of labor can be assigned to individuals and households. In other words, promoting policies suggest that individuals and households can be held responsible – by incentivizing couples to change their behavior and cultural patterns – to reach gender equality in the division of labor and change traditional gender roles. Although to a lesser extent, enabling policies – facilitating the right socio-economic structures in society – still require individuals to take the actual step towards a less gendered division of labor. This objection could be refuted by pointing out that reaching gender equality

on the labor market *is* a case of individual responsibility, but it is outside the scope of this research to discuss this in detail. It can certainly not be argued, however, that solving the crisis in social reproduction is the responsibility of individuals and households, since the crisis in social reproduction is caused by *structural* problems explained in chapter 1 (e.g., the structural lack of time) which are embedded in our institutions and the general socio-economic structures under capitalism. Therefore, the flanking policies proposals – argued for by feminist theorists – are (arguably) convincing solutions to gender inequality but less plausible as solutions to the crisis in social reproduction.

4.3 Is the Crisis Solved?

In this research, I have discussed several possible solutions for the crisis in social reproduction. I started this research by looking at one of the most prominent distributive justice theories in political philosophy: *A Theory of Justice* by Rawls. We saw that his theory of distributive justice - in a scheme of social cooperation - neglects social reproduction and that the two regulating mechanisms in a Rawlsian society (the market and the difference principle) are insufficient to solve the crisis in social reproduction. I tried to apply the difference principle specifically to social reproduction - by suggesting to subsidize (all) socially reproductive labor – but concluded that it was nonetheless impossible to formulate an adequate and satisfying Rawlsian solution to the crisis in social reproduction. Thereafter, I studied an unconditional basic income as the main regulating, distributive mechanism in capitalist societies. I discussed – based on Van Parijs and Vanderborght – the most general defenses of a basic income and showed that something crucial was missing in their analysis: all arguments and defenses were heavily focused on the formal labor market by emphasizing the increase of every citizen's purchasing power. I discovered that including feminist arguments in the discussion on UBI added something substantial to the debate: those arguments all included the non-formal labor sector in their analyses by looking at the implications a UBI has for the informal realm of capitalist economies. The feminist arguments had important implications for this research since they showed how a basic income weakens (or, in the long run, even abolishes) the gender division of labor. It became clear that UBI can especially be very efficient in diminishing gender inequality on the labor market when it is accompanied with flanking policies. Together with other social policies, a basic income could function as a formal, regulating mechanism that (more) fairly distributes the burdens of socially reproductive labor across all members of society.

But the crisis in social reproduction is more profound than this and seems to require

more than a formal and fair distribution of the burdens. A fair distribution does not solve the crisis since it does not attack the structural problem in society that social reproduction is treated as a marginal – rather than essential - sector of the capitalist economy. Even if a basic income functions as a wage (which is nor desirable nor possible, see section 3. 6) and, thereby, solves the exploitation and reciprocity problem in capitalist societies, we cannot claim something has been truly done to solve the crisis because socially reproductive work is still not valued as real work. Although UBI certainly contributes to more individual freedom (as Van Parijs convincingly argues) and generates less exploitative relationships in capitalist societies in the form of less gender inequality on the labor market (as many feminist theorists argue), it does not denaturalize housework and does not see social reproduction for what it is: the pillar of capitalist societies.

This is not to argue that I am against a basic income. I am convinced that everyone who condemns exploitation in capitalist societies and cares about reducing the major socio-economic inequalities, should be a proponent of UBI. Because of the anti-exploitative character of a basic income, it seems one of the most promising policies to help solve the crisis in social reproduction. After all, UBI redistributes the benefits and burdens across all members of capitalist societies more fairly than any other social policy and diminishes the contemporary disbalance in which capitalism merely extracts wealth from social reproduction rather than paying for it. In addition, on a micro-level (for individuals within households) a basic income could have substantial effects: it enables people to balance the burdens of socially reproductive more fairly. However, the interest of this research is in social reproduction on a societal level, as explained in the previous section and chapter 1. Structural problems need structural solutions, and it seems that a UBI – even with flanking policies - is not one of them.

4.4 Communal Forms of Social Reproduction

It was never the aim of this research to provide definite answers to the question on how the crisis in social reproduction could be solved, but I do want to end this research by making a short suggestion. This will steer our way of thinking in the right direction when deliberating on (the crisis in) social reproduction. If we want to formulate policies that structurally address the problematic relationship between capitalism and social reproduction, we need to think about ways to reorganize our public spaces as well as our private lives. We need to transition to more communal forms of reproduction (Carlin & Federici, 2014, pp. 4 - 5) to fairly (re)distribute the burdens of reproductive work and to (eventually) abolish the exploitative labor relations in

capitalist societies. An example one could think of is communal cooking for the neighborhood: a few people cook dinner, in exchange for a wage, for the rest of the neighborhood. Communal cooking solves the exploitation problem in two ways. Firstly, the people preparing communal dinner will *choose* to do so while simultaneously earn a *wage.* Secondly, communal cooking distributes the burdens (and benefits) of cooking *on a societal level* since it is not just the responsibility of individuals and households to provide dinner and balance it with other labor activities. In short, communal forms of social reproduction will reorganize domestic work and other socially reproductive labor in more cooperative ways. Public hospitals are an example of how reorganizing public spaces can decrease the burdens of socially reproductive work in personal lives (Carlin & Federici, 2014, p. 5). Naturally, reorganizing public and personal life in communal forms of social reproduction cannot stand on itself:

> 'We cannot think of reorganizing the home and the process and space of our everyday reproduction without at the same time transforming our relation to every form of work and without challenging the divisions that have been created in our society especially along the lines age, gender, and race' (Carlin & Federici, 2014, p. 5).

In addition, it is highly undesirable that communal forms of social reproduction generate 'gated communities' which are oblivious to the misery of other communities. This would contradict our aim to increase general solidarity and reciprocity in capitalist societies to solve the crisis in social reproduction. The length and aim of this research limits me to expand on this suggestion of communal forms of social reproduction and it is outside its the scope to discuss the details (e.g., the ethical justifications and political feasibility of this proposal). However, I believe this suggestion is a first step in changing our perspective on capitalist labor markets and the exploitative relations that underlie it. It helps us to reframe the by capitalism defined categories that demarcate which activities are seen as 'productive' and 'value-generating'. It, furthermore, enables us to reevaluate our answer to the question on who should receive a fair share of the fruits of the capitalist market.

Conclusion

In this research, I have studied the profound crisis in social reproduction under capitalism in Western, liberal democracies and searched for possible solutions. I have criticized the welfare state, and a radical reform of the welfare state in the form of UBI. I argued that a basic income is the most promising social policy to address the crisis, but that it is an insufficient tool to structurally solve the crisis in social reproduction in capitalist societies. I showed that social reproduction will always be undervalued both in forms of monetary reward and social status under these schemes. My speculation is that even though the Marxist analysis of the crisis of social reproduction is implausible, there might be something to their solution in communal forms of social reproduction.

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