# Acknowledgements

This book has taken three years to complete, and has made me painfully aware of my limitations as both an intellectual and as a writer. Trained in political economy and historical sociology, I thought I had it clear from the start. Yet the more I wrote, the more questions were raised by the text, and the more unsure I was as to how to properly answer them. I felt that my ignorance of philosophy, particularly queer theory and critical theory, made (and still makes) this essay woefully incomplete.

Politically, my theory seems consistent with reformist, rather than revolutionary, solutions to the present capitalist crisis, and this stands at odds with my anti-capitalist beliefs as an activist. However, the reformist way out of the Great Recession also seems fraught with unknowns. The social regulation of capital, achieved under Fordism in the past century is theoretically possible; yet what of its ecological regulation? From Piketty’s law, we know that higher growth is needed to reduce precarity and inequality, as well as curb the power of oligarchy. But doesn’t this entail an acceleration in environmental destruction and climate instability? Whilst capitalism can conceivably be reformed via unconditional basic income, amongst other things, is carbon-neutral capitalism possible?

In essence, the fight of the precariat against oligarchy must be both expansionary and green. How to reconcile the egalitarian priority with the ecological imperative? I wonder if I have dealt with this conundrum satisfactorily in the final chapter.

From this conundrum arises the thorniest of issues: class. Is the precariat its own class, or is it just the established working-class under a new guise? It isn’t a section of the working-class, but is what labor has become. If the 21st century precariat was the equivalent of the 20th century proletariat, should it embrace communism as its revolutionary ideology? The short answer to this is: no.

We need to shed communism and go beyond anarchism because they are simply not working as anti-capitalist mass ideals. Much like what is currently happening in Barcelona and Madrid, anarcho-populism and eco-feminism must be fused into a left-populist project, and exported everywhere the right-populist politics of Donald Trump and European anti-immigration parties exist. I call this synthesis social populism. Electoral movements such as Podemos in Spain, as well as Bernie Sanders’ campaign in the last American election, evidence the possibility of a populist movement of this form. These are themselves germane to anti-systemic movements as diverse as Indignados, Ni Una Menos, Blockupy, UK Uncut, Sciopero Sociale, Nuit Debout, Notre Dame des Landes, Fight for 15, Black Lives Matter, and Standing Rock, to cite only some of the most significant movements of recent years.

The historical discontinuity of 2016 seemed to make all the chips of the book fall into place. Finally, I had a historical antagonist to test my theory against: nationalist populism. And finally, I had a publisher egging me on to finish the damned thing: Geert Lovink and his Institute of Network Cultures. I got an invitation to MoneyLab #3 and was buzzed by its mix of heretic theorizing on post-crisis capitalism. It’s the Institute of Network Cultures which believed this work should be published, and in doing so, has filled the intellectual void that I have felt in my life since the anti-globalization movement ended in the late 2000s. I am forever grateful to Geert, Leonieke, and Max for putting out, editing, and proofreading *General Theory of the Precariat*.

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