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# Social Form and the Crisis of Social Reproduction: On Abstract and Concrete Universals

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## Résumé

This paper examines how Universal Basic Income (UBI) is represented as a solution to a trifold crisis of work, wage and social democracy, and some of the theoretical issues with and practical alternatives to this representation. Using Marxian form analysis, we suggest that these crises relate to historically-specific capitalist social forms: labour, money, and the state. Through a novel synthesis of Marxian form analysis with Marxist-feminist theory, the paper argues that these separate but interlocking crises of social form are temporary or contingent expressions of an underlying, permanent crisis of social reproduction. UBI's proposals respond to certain 'problem representations' which first, mistake the pervasive crisis of social reproduction in its totality for a temporary or contingent trifold crisis of work, wage or social democracy. Second, they seek to solve it by moving through the same social forms through which they take effect, rather than focusing on the social relations that constitute their antagonistic undertow and generate the crisis of social reproduction. The paper then considers two other 'solutions' proposed to handle the deeper-rooted crisis with which UBI grapples: Universal Basic Services (UBS) and Universal Basic Infrastructure (UBIS). Whilst both UBS and UBIS propose non-monetary ways past the impasses of the UBI, addressing much more directly the constrained basis of individual and collective reproduction that characterises capitalist social relations, they retain a link with the capitalist social forms of money and state that may serve to close rather than open the path to real alternatives. The paper concludes that in pursuit of the latter the contradictions these 'abstract universals' seek to address might best be mediated through more bottom-up, struggle-based 'concrete universals' that address the manifold crises of work, wage and social democracy that undergird them. These would leave open the dynamic tensions around work and welfare in contemporary capitalism without promise of their incomplete resolution in the name of a false universality unattainable in a world characterised by antagonism, domination and crisis.

**Mots-Clés:** Social reproduction, social form, universal basic income, universal basic services, universal basic infrastructure

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