

Seeking external funding

It is hard to do socialist science (i.e. CNRS as decades ago) in a capitalist society

1. Frozen or decreasing investment by governments in fundamental research push us more towards seeking personal funds for projects
2. However this funding is mostly given to individuals, not teams. Some "team" funding exists but typically only for "teams" of senior people and the effort/reward ratio is much worse than with individual grants.
3. Funding calls are typically saturated with overqualified applicants, large random factor in selection, luck with specific jury members => as much a lottery as a game of skill
4. Seeking and failing to obtain funding can be highly demotivating => most so-called "feedback" has little actual scientific value

Can we get more resources for our research, which we need, without falling into the trap of individualism and without wasting enormous time on writing grant applications?

Achieving class consciousness

As Marx once said about the working class, we need to become a research class “for itself”

I.e. consciously organised in the active pursuit of the class, not individual, interests

In relation to the funding process this means finding a way to mutualise the process of applying for funding

Provide all eligible applicants with high-quality templates for different funding calls.

Discourage individualistic thinking — in particular the desire to “have a good idea” before applying and the waste of time to polish the application. Proactively encourage applications at the “direction” level with the aim to have the maximum number of eligible people applying to the maximum number of calls every year.

Provide an editorial board of older people and those who got grants in the past to systematically & collectively review and focus all funding proposals.

Systematically prepare all shortlisted proposals for interview at the lab level.

Notice that much of this “sort of exists” in universities but usually done in a way which puts more pressure on young researchers to look for funding and make them feel like failures if they do not succeed.

The point here is to consciously organise it at the lab level to do the opposite: minimize effort for the applicant, maximize the number of grants the LAB gets per year, view the whole process as a collective effort.