

Creating Integrated Collaboratives to Democratize Work

David Kristjanson-Gural
Professor of Economics
Bucknell University
Lewisburg, PA 17837
kristjan@bucknell.edu

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Abstract:

I summarize the main arguments in *Democratize Work: The Case for Reorganizing the Economy*. and provide a number of observations arising from feminist and Marxian theory that engage the intersection of class exploitation, class struggle and the important role of domestic and reproductive labor. I draw on these observations to assess under what conditions the reforms of the Manifesto may be realized, and how they may be undermined. Finally, I outline a new institutional structure – the integrated collaborative – that addresses the contending justice claims of workers and stakeholders in democratic enterprises. I argue integrated collaboratives may help overcome key obstacles to creating solidarity and political support for the transformative reforms of the Manifesto. I.e. developing integrated, collaborative workplaces can provide a basis to build the political clout needed to democratize, decommodify, and decarbonize work in the global economy along the lines that the authors recommend.

Key Words: Democratize Work Manifesto, Worker Cooperatives, Integrated Collaborative, Marxian Class Analysis, Unpaid Labor

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

Bio: David Kristjanson-Gural is Professor of Economics at Bucknell University. His current research explores: 1) how labor-time contributes to the formation of values and prices in capitalism; 2) the ethical, practical and institutional dimensions of worker cooperatives. He has published in *Research in Political Economy*, the *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education*, *Historical Materialism*, and *Rethinking Marxism*. He is a former member the Center for Popular Economics, and a former organizer for the Graduate Employee Organization of the United Auto Workers at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and he is a current member of the Association for Economic and Social Analysis. He recently co-edited the *Routledge Handbook of Marxian Economics*.

Introduction

The Democratize Work collective published a Manifesto in May of 2020 calling for work to be democratized, decommodified, and decarbonized. The Manifesto garnered thousands of signatures from academics across the globe, and the authors continue to engage activists, policy makers and academics through a series of online conferences devoted to examining and creating broad support for concrete policy proposals directed toward supporting the three pillars of the Manifesto.¹

The three principal authors, Ferreras, Battilana and Méda, make the case that addressing the current crisis, predating but heightened by the Covid pandemic, requires a rapid ecological upshift “a radical and very concrete shift in our behaviors and mentalities” (Meda, p. 112). This means exchanging our current exploitative and extractive economy for “the imperative to care – not just for nature but for all species, including human beings” (*op. cit.*). In order to shift rapidly from our current degenerative path towards a regenerative economy without incurring massive displacement, they argue persuasively for the need to implement policies to democratize the workplace, decommodify labor and decarbonize industry. Each of these dimensions – democratize, decommodify and decarbonize (or remediate) – is explored in their recent edited volume entitled *Democratize Work: The Case for Reorganizing the Economy* with contributions from ten academics and activists in addition to chapters by the three principal authors.

I will briefly summarize the main arguments of the collective of writers and highlight the way the three pillars of the Manifesto each provide and receive support from the others. I then offer three observations in an effort to address concerns that arise from a feminist and Marxian standpoint - sightlines that are made visible by engaging the intersection of class exploitation, class struggle and the important role of domestic and reproductive labor. I note, also that the authors only very briefly discuss what a fully democratic workplace might look like and argue that elaborating such a vision provides an important means to determine under what conditions the reforms they are recommending may be fully realized, and how they may be undermined. How, in other words, the transformative nature of their vision could prevail, or how it might inadvertently be used to strengthen elements of the status quo. Further, I argue that taking steps to both imagine and then actually create fully democratic, integrated, collaborative workplaces can provide a basis to build the political clout needed to democratize, decommodify and decarbonize work in the global economy along the lines that the authors recommend.

1. The Democratize Work Manifesto

1.1 Democratize

Ferreras, et al. argue that workers have a right to voice and vote in the enterprises into which they are hired, but they are currently deprived of these rights. “Workers have no political rights to govern the firm, despite the fact that these firms govern the everyday lives of their workers” (Ferreras 2022, p. 26). Referencing the work of Elizabeth Anderson (2019), the authors note that workers are subjects in a private government – a form of political dictatorship – and this violates

¹ The Democratize Work Manifesto is published in Ferrara, Battilana and Méda 2022.

their right, as human beings, to be treated as equals and given both voice and vote in the governance structure of the firm (Landemore 2022, p. 48).² As Máximo notes, labor law, by identifying subordination as the core of the labor contract, “breaks with abstract contractual egalitarianism, which claims that all contracts are entered into by equal parties” (2022, p. 98). Workers, therefore, are not on equal footing with employers: “With no true parity and no collective veto rights, workers cannot enter negotiations on equal footing with their employers, who continue to represent the interests of those who contribute capital to firms” (Lafuente 2022, p. 74). This situation is true even for unionized workers, and even in the case of the German coal and steel industries where workers, under the system of codetermination, have equal representation on the corporate board of directors, since the president of the board, who casts a deciding vote, is appointed by representatives of capital investors (*op. cit.*).

The first important requirement for protecting the rights of workers in the workplace, then, is to ensure that they are represented by unions which can help to enforce norms of employment internationally, nationally, and by sector and firm, to avoid the current race to the bottom efforts by firms who employ non-unionized workers (Ferrerias 2022, p. 31). Unionization, in addition to enforcing important norms for worker health and safety, hours and pay, provides workers with at least a limited censure on boards of directors, by giving recourse to bargaining and ultimately to strike. Several authors note that current levels of unionization vary considerably across the globe, but the prevalence of informal sector work, and its crucial place in global supply chains, means that even this limited goal of representation, remains a serious challenge for two thirds of the global workforce (Máximo 2022, p. 98; Chandhoke 2022, p. 91). Solidarity between formal sector unions in the North and non-unionized, informal sector workers in the South is therefore vital if even these modest efforts toward democratization are to benefit more than a small proportion of the global labor force.

For those unionized workplaces, democratization means bargaining with employers for policies, and pressuring governments to pass laws, that provide equal representation by workers on boards of directors so that workers can effectively veto any decision that is unfavorable to their interests, putting worker-directors and capital-directors on equal footing. This system reproduces the policy of co-determination in Germany coal and steel industries but prevents owners from appointing the chair who gives the deciding vote on their behalf. Alternatively, for enterprises with works councils, unions may bargain and advocate politically for a bicameral (two house) board of directors, one comprised of workers and one comprised of investors’ representatives.

² “The economic system of the modern workplace is communist, because the government—that is, the establishment—owns all the assets, and the top of the establishment hierarchy designs the production plan, which subordinates execute. There are no internal markets in the modern workplace. Indeed, the boundary of the firm is *defined* as the point at which markets end and authoritarian centralized planning and direction begin (Anderson 2019, p. 39). Note that Anderson uses the term communist to refer to authoritarian (i.e. undemocratic) central planning.

Board policy would need majority approval by both boards to be enacted, effectively giving workers veto power over firm decisions (Lafuente 2022 p. 77).³

Ideally, through concerted political organizing and struggle, enterprises would evolve from non-unionized workplaces, to unionized workplaces to either holding half the board or forming one of two boards depending on the existing institutional environment. Ultimately, the proposal “would serve as a bridge toward the complete democratization of firms via labor investors’ buyback of shares in their firm from capital investors, helping expand the democratic model of the [worker] cooperative, democratic firm to the economy as a whole” (Ferreras 2022, p. 35). Workers would thus be pressuring firms and governments for the opportunity to buy out the shareholders creating fully democratic worker cooperative enterprises.⁴

1.2 Decommodify

The authors recommend decommodifying work to support democratization.⁵ For the authors, decommodifying work means expanding unionization and collective bargaining in non-unionized workplaces, and through the implementation of a job guarantee. As people, workers deserve to participate in decisions that affect them (Landemore 2022, p. 48).⁶ The call to decommodify work is a call to bolster the workers’ fallback position to ensure workers have a voice and vote in their workplace, such that they are treated as equals and not subordinated to capital-directors. [D]ecommodifying work means accepting that work is a right, not a commodity” (Battilana 2022, p. 13). The two main strategies to decommodify work are to support workers’ efforts to unionize and participate in collective bargaining, and to insist on the implementation of a job guarantee.

³ Although as Anderson notes (2019, p. 70), the U.S. National Labor Relations Act, which prohibits company unions, would have to be amended or replaced to permit bicameral representation of workers vis-à-vis shareholder representatives.

⁴ The proposal thus echoes the original intention of the Rehn-Meidner plan in Sweden which similarly sought to institutionalize a graduated buyout of up to 20% of company shares by workers in large enterprises. For a history and assessment of this strategy, see Erixon 2010.

⁵ The authors appear to rely on Polanyi’s notion of decommodifying labor. For Polanyi labor is seen to be a fictitious commodity (Polanyi 1957[1944], Chapter 6) and decommodifying thus involves efforts to regulate the sale and purchase of labor-power and/or provide workers with democratic rights in the workplace to limit the effect of the market. For a discussion of Polanyi’s argument see Peredo et. al, 2018, p. 98; Peredo and McLean, 2020, p. 822, and Jossa 2020, Chapter 3. Decommodifying labor can also refer to the abolishment of labor markets in favor of workers having full citizenship and rights in the enterprises that they join. Ellerman 2015 argues that the renting of people is immoral for the same reasons that buying and selling people is immoral – i.e. it treats people inconsistently as things when their actions create value and as people when their actions cause harm (Ellerman, 2015). Ellerman’s argument implies that decommodifying labor means that labor markets are abolished in favor of converting enterprises into worker cooperatives.

⁶ This rationale for being enfranchised applies equally to stakeholders who are not subject to the governance structure of firms. Ferreras points out that workers, for this reason, are distinct from stakeholders (p. 33). She argues that stakeholders “should have... consultative positions in diversified works councils...” and “firms must commit to consulting with and informing stakeholders representatives...and some of these consultations should be binding” (p. 40-1). The moral rationale for including workers but excluding stakeholders from governance needs to recognize these distinct roles as I argue below.

Collective bargaining allows workers to weigh in on the terms of employment and gives workers leverage, to refuse terms that are unacceptable by providing recourse to strike. It therefore provides a voice and a vote to workers over their working conditions, pay and hours, although not over the strategic decisions of the firm. “Collective bargaining ... is the most intelligent solution already at our disposal for today’s work world to decommodify labor” (Ferrerias 2022, p. 30).

To support union representation and give more teeth to collective bargaining, the authors call for the implementation of a job guarantee. “A job guarantee, combined with working time reduction policies set at industry and national levels, would ensure that work’s current grip on everyone’s life would not be stifling... [and] building a solid floor for the labor market with a universal job guarantee will permit our societies to shape employment and labor conditions for the better...” (Ferrerias 2022, p. 39). Because unemployment is “the most powerful coercive tool firms wield over ... workers,” the job guarantee would provide an employment safety net and employment offers would no longer be primarily driven by how profitable it is to hire people (Tcherneva 2022, p. 85-6). Further “the job guarantee establishes an uncompromising standard of work with dignity as well as an exit option to protect against employer abuse (Tcherneva 2022, p. 87). “It would provide greater leverage in union negotiations since workers need not be faced with the prospect of unemployment, thus giving workers immediate benefits through improvements in negotiated labor contracts.

A job guarantee would also enable the redeployment of workers into those sectors of the economy that need to be rapidly expanded in response to our exceeding our ecological limits (Méda 2022, p. 115). It may also support an ecological upshift through reducing workers’ resistance to shifting from extractive to regenerative techniques and industries since they would not be faced with unemployment in industries that are being reduced or eliminated (Barristoni 2022, p. 108). It would also help to expand the care sector of the economy, which can be considered a type of green sector, through a participatory bottom-up approach to allocating work through community-based job deployment centers (Tcherneva 2022, p. 88). Simply by funding existing organizations devoted to training and allowing non-profit organizations to apply to these centers for government funded-workers to provide needed social services, workers could refuse private sector jobs that are not unionized, poorly paid, dangerous or otherwise undesirable. Instead, workers could be deployed toward green jobs to support a transition away from fossil fuels and care jobs to support needed services that the corporate firms do not adequately provide.

Several authors reference the success of India’s MNREGA policy that provides a 100 day per year job guarantee as well as the Zero Unemployment regions that are being implemented across France as evidence of the effectiveness of the proposal (Tcherneva 2022, p. 89). As Chandhodu notes, the policy, because it depends upon for its implementation maintaining political power at the State level, is vulnerable to the loss of political power by liberal or progressive governments (Chandhodu 93-4). Even so, a strong case can be made that the job guarantee is an effective counter-cyclical macroeconomic policy and that it reduces the social costs borne by tax-payers of unemployment (Tcherneva 2022, p. 87).

The job guarantee effectively eliminates a race to the bottom strategy by private sector firms and provides workers with the ability to use their voices in the workplace in the effort to democratize

work without fear of losing the ability to provide for themselves or their dependents. It supports epistemic justice: the ability to speak truth to employers in order to address issues in the workplace that need attention. Honoring human dignity in the workplace means allowing workers to say what they think without fear of dismissal (Herzog 2022, p. 55-6). Furthermore, it addresses the exclusion of the informal sector as well, since informal workers would also have options for employment if workers in the global North partnered with workers in the global South to advocate for programs such as India's MNREGA policy. The global supply chain would need to lift its standards if workers are able to win a job guarantee: firms that continued to pursue a race to the bottom strategy may lose significant markets. Finally, workers' resistance to decarbonization, based on fears of job loss, would be mitigated by an effective system of retraining and redeployment in secure jobs that respect workers' dignity (Méda 2022).

1.3 Decarbonize

The authors argue that the call to decarbonize work relies primarily on government policy. By implementing a job guarantee, governments could fund new and existing enterprises to hire workers away from sectors dependent on carbon to those green sectors needed for remediating ecosystem failure, providing regenerative and sustainable energy, and supplying regenerative goods and care services. In order to prioritize ecological repair, governments would replace or supplement current economic indicators including Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with wealth indicators that incorporate our impact on the climate and on societal health (Battistoni 2022). Given the urgency of the challenge, it is vital to immediately address these challenges. The proponents of the Democratize Work Manifesto urge governments to map needed skill sets in industry and match these to people in need of paid employment. Implementing the job guarantee program would thus facilitate a rapid expansion of green sector employment and activity including retrofitting, green building, repair and recycling centers, and creation of green infrastructure (Méda, 2022, p. 114-5).

Union support would be vital in this transition. The authors note that historically unions have been an effective voice for environmental protection including important battles over pollution and environment destruction from coal mining, the use of pesticides and herbicides and asbestos (Battistoni 2022, p. 104-5). A bargaining for the common good organizing framework could expand union efforts to include the effect of workplace practices on the local community and ecosystem providing another effective means of pressuring corporate boards to limit environmental damage. And decarbonization would support democratization. "Unionizing green jobs is an important step toward making them good jobs" (Battistoni 2022, p. 107).

The authors of the Manifesto offer these three pillars – democratize, decommodify and decarbonize – as mutually supportive efforts: acting to establish one pillar helps support efforts to establish the other two. Unions are seen as key institutions – ideally providing resources, as well as organizing and bargaining expertise. Their commitment to internal democratization is therefore also vital. For these efforts to coalesce into a movement with sufficient political sway three types of activity are needed. Agitators, to interrupt the exploitative and extractive status quo; innovators, to develop new democratic and regenerative institutions and proposals, and orchestrators, to organize the necessary political pressure to direct public sector institutions and representatives to undertake the necessary changes (Battilana 2022 p. 9). The collective of

writers is connecting the innovative ideas with those agitators and orchestrators through global online conferences and workshops to increase the political impact of their work.⁷

1.4 Applying a feminist and Marxian lens

The intention of the Manifesto is clearly to advance, within our current institutional practices, a number of transformative reforms, i.e. changes to capitalist institutions and practices that are intended to move us beyond capitalism to a participatory democratic system that is worker directed rather than directed by shareholder representatives.⁸ Three questions arise in response. One, how does the authors' reliance on a Polanyian concept of decommodification obscure important insights that might be available by viewing commodification and resistance through a Marxian lens?⁹ Two, to what extent are the three pillars likely to succeed as political goals, and what danger might there be that they will inadvertently strengthen the exploitative extractive system through cooptation, inadvertently reinforcing existing forms of oppression, or by provoking further anti-worker backlash? Three, how might a proposal to create integrated collaboratives, which I will define and explain below, help address concerns about the potential of the Manifesto to inadvertently reinforce the status quo?

1.4.1 Decommodify

For Marx, a commodity is a good or service produced by human labor for exchange. The commodity workers sell (i.e. labor-power – the ability to work) is both a commodity and not a commodity. It is produced by human labor; it is exchanged; but it is produced outside of the market.¹⁰ Decommodification for Marx thus means more than regulating the purchase and sale of labor-power: it means taking labor-power out of the market altogether. The worker cooperative is the institution that treats labor-power as a condition of citizenship, rather than a thing to be purchased and sold. Workers who receive membership are citizens of their workplaces. So decommodification of labor-power, for Marx, means replacing capitalist firms with worker cooperatives. As Ferreras indicates, this is the long-term goal of the Democratize Work Manifesto: it is a transitional strategy to create a realistic interim goal of giving workers equal say in their firms *vis-à-vis* capital investors (Ferreras 2023, p. 209-10).

But unionizing and creating workers councils, as important as they are to supporting workers' rights in the workplace, are not the same thing as making labor-power something that is not for sale – it is not decommodifying, it is regulating the purchase and sale of a fictitious commodity.¹¹ The first sympathetic critique of the manifesto is to highlight the ethical position that workers must be members, not hired hands, and therefore the establishment of bicameral firms does not

⁷ See <https://democratizingwork.org/global-workshop-series>.

⁸ I refer to transformative reforms as synonymous with non-reformist reforms as developed in Gorz (1967).

⁹ Polanyi 1957[1944], Chapter 6 discusses labor as a fictitious commodity. Marx 1992[1867], Chapter 1 and 6, discusses the commodity and the concept of labor-power as a commodity.

¹⁰ For a discussion of Marx's failure adequately to theorize unpaid household labor and reproductive labor see Federici 2021.

¹¹ So the terms 'decommodify work' might best be understood as 'reducing the extent to which labor is treated as a fictitious commodity'.

decommodify labor. The call to decommodify labor-power means making workers members of their firms not merely giving workers representation in order to be better poised to sell their labor-power. Unions and works council can play an important role in fighting to secure the demands of workers for representation on boards. But unions have not always been sympathetic to democratic processes in their own internal governance, and few have supported efforts to transition individual workplaces to worker coops.¹² In some cases, then, supporting greater unionization may be at odds with the goal of democratizing workplaces, particularly if the unions concerned are not supportive of democratic governance.

Similarly, the call for a job guarantee insulates workers from the vagaries of the labor market and improves their bargaining power with employers in low-wage industries. From a Marxian perspective, it does not decommodify labor-power, although along with the establishment of bicameral firms, it may represent an important step towards doing so. It is important also to note, from a feminist standpoint, that the workers do not create the fictitious commodity they sell, nor do they alone bring it daily to the workplace. Labor-power is created outside the market and requires unpaid labor on a daily basis to maintain. So a feminist, Marxian analysis offers an important lens to examine what exactly is being decommodified (labor-power; not work) and what the implications are for both paid and unpaid workers.

Strategically this is an important distinction because it speaks to the relationship between workers struggling for recognition as political subjects, the institutions that have been developed to give them voice and power, and the people left out. It speaks to how unions, seeing themselves as representatives of workers simultaneously reinforce the legitimacy of the category of worker as a rented human and obscure the existence of the unpaid worker whose labor is vital to the replication of the worker.¹³ The way the authors argue for decommodifying work therefore may unwittingly reinforce the two main oppressions it is intended to correct. The oppression of the working subject who is renting themselves, and the oppression of the unpaid and unrecognized subject who supports their oppression. Workers are encouraged to identify their interests with their ability to sell their labor-power at favorable terms. Unpaid workers are left to see themselves as unimportant and unvalued in their difficult and vitally important roles of caring for those unable fully to care for themselves. I contend it is better to name commodification of our ability to work as the thing to be solved, and then develop an alliance between those who need to perform work for money and those who perform unpaid work in support of those who require care. The call to decommodify work, as a call to unionize, a call for equal political representation in a bicameral firm or a call for a guaranteed job thus contains a fatal and entirely unintended flaw – it divides precisely those constituencies it needs to unify.¹⁴

1.4.2 Legitimizing Capital-Investors

Secondly, the Democratize Work Manifesto is certainly a call to implement transformative reforms and would naturally support the idea that all forms of work need to be liberated from the system of human rental represented by our current system. All three of its pillars seek to replace

¹² For an important exception see Witherell, Cooper and Peck, 2012.

¹³ For a discussion of Gramsci's critique that unions typically reinforce the identity of laborers as wage workers and therefore rarely challenge the wage relationship, see Jossa 2011.

¹⁴ For this reason the policy of a basic income is more unifying than the call for a job guarantee as I argue below.

investor control and the imperatives of degenerative growth that currently dominate our carbon-based capital-dominated economies. The call to democratize works seeks to organize non-union workers, gain equal representation on corporate boards as a means to empower workers to buy out capital-investors, with the goal, in the longer term, to establish a non-exploitative, worker-directed, non-capitalist economy. The call to decommodify seeks to dramatically limit the punitive threat of unemployment corporate boards use to discipline and politically disempower workers, undermining a key means by which capitalist employers discipline workers to accept their subservient position. A job guarantee directed by grass-roots community organizations and public sector investments directed to care, creating green infrastructure, undertaking ecological remediation directly weakens the role capital-directed enterprises play and targets those industries that produce oil, gas and its chemical and plastic byproducts. The push to decarbonize seeks to direct public spending away from the goal of unlimited growth toward meeting real social needs and ecological remediation rather than wasteful consumer spending to generate ever greater returns for already wealthy investors. Together these pillars, as noted above, seek to enable a “radical and very concrete shift in our behaviors and mentalities” (Méda, p. 112), directly challenging the individualistic, materialist ethic that is a keystone holding in place our current system and driving us relentlessly toward an ecological cliff. Certainly, many of the authors would welcome the idea that really decommodifying labor-power, really making the human rental system obsolete is the long-term goal.

On the other hand, the writers may not wish to play up the transformative nature of their proposal. Strategically, this choice certainly may be necessary to reach more moderate public officials and policy-makers and union leaders they may wish to influence, as these individuals often dismiss proposals that are perceived to be anti-capitalist or judged to be politically unrealistic. For this reason, it is important to appeal to those ideas that represent real utopias – utopias that exist within the limits of our current institutional structures.¹⁵ Beyond these considerations, the different authors understandably may disagree about how the three pillars of the Manifesto ought to be understood, who the audience is that needs to be reached, and what the priorities of the proposal should be. That is the nature of collaborative scholarship.

Is the issue of democratizing formal sector labor and protecting workers with a job guarantee in the global north a sufficiently broad goal to address the racial and gender disparities encoded in colonial institutions and encrypted in labor law and multinational supply chains? As Máximo argues, “modern-Eurocentric legal labor theory...is constituted from an anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and antifeminine foundation imposed by the colonizer... the most oppressed subjects in labor relations are, and always have been, the least protected by labor law because free/subordinate labor was and continues to be a legal construction intended for a single type of worker-body...(100). In Blackett’s words: “Truly acknowledging the equal dignity of all workers requires nothing less than a fundamental rethink of the idea of labor law. We must recenter distributive goals beyond borders. We must, in other words, decolonize” (70). An important danger facing the democratize work proposal is that those subordinated in the global supply chain, not only will be left out of reforms to the formal labor-market, but will be further subjugated, in spite of the transformative intent of the Manifesto. These two perspectives in particular challenge the more reformist proposals of the other authors.

¹⁵ Ferreras (2023) writes, “The goal here is not to depreciate the institutional design already in place for capital investors in firms. It is highly developed, and recognized by corporate law; we wish to take it seriously (p. 195).”

Here are two concrete examples of how these tensions may threaten to undermine the transformative intent of the Manifesto. In justifying the right of workers to participate in governance by casting workers as labor-investors, in counterbalance to capital-investors, the writers do effectively distinguish workers from stakeholders – groups that have a stake in the decisions of the firm including suppliers, community members, consumers, government agencies but do not fall under the direct internal governance of the enterprise. The authors provide a compelling moral argument to include workers in firm governance on the basis of their democratic right to participate in deciding the rules to which they are subject.¹⁶ Rhetorically, however, this move acts to reinforce rather than delegitimize the rights of capital owners. It positions capital owners as having a legitimate right to co-govern the firm and provides no moral reasoning to support or deny their right to participate in governing workers' daily lives. As Ellerman (2015) argues, holding property rights does not provide any justification for directing the activities of those who you permit to use the property. It is the labor contract, not the ownership of property that allows the shareholders' representatives to direct the workers' labor. The corporate legal structure that legitimizes the capital investors' role is itself illegitimate.¹⁷ Including labor investors in governance does not legitimize the role of capital investors in firm governance. The provision of capital does not provide shareholders or their representatives with the moral right to govern workers. The labor-investor rationale for giving workers equal say, inadvertently and incorrectly legitimizes the continued right of capital to participate in governance.

Why is this problematic? Even without a numerical majority on corporate boards it remains easier for capital-directors to impose their will on workers through their ability to withhold capital than it is for workers to do so by withholding labor. Capital-directors can redirect their capital with far less burden than workers can redirect their labor. Without access to an independent source of new value themselves, the subordinate role of labor is reproduced and the legitimacy of capital's withholding of livelihoods is reinforced, not weakened. While rhetorically it is easier to convince policy makers that an even split is fair and legitimate – a real utopia - the strategy threatens to reinforce the inequality that it seeks to undermine and inadvertently strengthen the domination of capital that is the source of the problem. A transformational strategy thus threatens to devolve into a reinforcement of a key element of the *status quo*. If economic bicameralism is to be a bridge to a democratic workplace, then pointing to the illegitimacy of capital investors participation in governance and mounting a sustained political campaign to delegitimize the idea that ownership justifies rulership may be a better means of securing the bicameral moment. The bicameral moment, after all, is not to be intended as a goal, but as a compromise.

¹⁶ For a further elaboration of this argument see Ferreras 2017, Chapter 8, and Ferreras 2023.

¹⁷ This relation of command and obedience, the right of the employer to direct his or her employees that is granted by the [labor] contract, is not so much a byproduct of exploitation as its very precondition" (Weeks 2011, p. 21). However, common property (indivisible mutual ownership) "is most significant as a factor in prosocial organizing... [because of] its potential for decommodifying 'fictitious commodities'," according to Peredo and McLean (2018). Both property rights and the labor contract clearly need to be reconsidered to democratize work, but it is the labor contract, not the ownership of property that empowers corporate boards to govern workers.

Underneath this quandary is the fact that workers' livelihoods are dependent on their wages while investor's ownership and income can be dispersed across firms. Added to this is the ideological subordination of workers via the internalization of those ideas and beliefs that are needed for us to accept being governed by capital investors.¹⁸ It is this very ideological subordination that the manifesto seeks to upend in order to encourage us as worker-citizens to claim the right to self-governance. But the project does not address the institutional changes that are needed to begin to unlearn the dominant ideology that drives our economy beyond the idea that workers should have the right to participate in governance – the belief that more is better, that our well-being is enhanced primarily by consumption, the belief that we are naturally at odds with each other and need to compete in order to perform; the belief that our worth is determined and signaled not by our actions and character but by our ability to wastefully consume. Without challenging these internalized beliefs and values, workers may well co-direct enterprises in ways that reproduce rather than mitigate harm and that further intensify the divisions within the working class that need to be overcome for workers to effectively press for the political changes needed to secure those rights.

For example, sectoral bargaining by unionized workers, some of whom may have parity with capital investors on their company's boards of directors, may well be directed to securing even higher standard of living for formal sector workers in the North at the expense of black and brown workers in the South. Those relatively privileged workers benefit at the expense of workers already marginalized through colonialism and imperialism, workers who already are paying a price for the failure of the North to reign in the use of fossil fuels. In this case, democratizing work might well inadvertently strengthen what the authors seek to oppose – may well reinforce the divide and conquer strategy between workers in the global North and South that currently aids and abets an exploitative, extractive capital-dominated system.¹⁹

Decommodifying work is an important element of a transformative strategy, and the authors' recommendations, if implemented, would certainly benefit many workers. But the authors do not discuss reforms to the institutions that reproduce the ideas and values we bring to work. Without a strategy to commodify cultural industries – education, information and entertainment media, as well as the advertising and public relations industries that support these media – the beliefs and values by which workers govern their unions and works councils are unlikely to challenge the priorities of growth and consumption that drive our current system. Cagé offers the modest suggestion to commodify the information media by altering the structure of their corporate boards toward a non-profit structure (2022, p. 83-4). But non-profit organizations also disenfranchise workers and, unless restructured to limit commercial pressures, are subject to similar competitive dynamics as for-profit media. Some further means of reinforcing and

¹⁸ I recognize that this observation opens the analysis to a discussion of Gramsci's idea of hegemony which extends beyond the feasible limits of this article. The authors, with the exception of Cagé, do not interrogate how the democratizing the institutions of ideology might support the call to democratize work. I argue below that doing so is a vital component of political organizing toward democratizing work.

¹⁹ The Mondragon Cooperative Corporation, for example, secures employment and incomes in the Basque region in part by employing wage workers in factories abroad. The inability to create worker cooperatives to service multinational supply chains remains an important quandary and points to the need for the development of cultural institutions to promote international solidarity and cooperative values and practices. See Errasti et. al. 2016 and Fletcha and Ngai 2014.

internalizing prosocial, collaborative values and beliefs is urgently needed to support solidarity along the lines of race and class, and gender, as well as age, sexuality and ability. Otherwise how can workers avoid creating democratically run workplaces that reproduce the values and practices that further marginalize traditionally marginalized communities? Democratizing these important cultural institutions that produce and reinforce ideas, seems vitally important to maintain the non-reformist nature of the movement to democratize. Strategically, it speaks to engaging those workers most engaged in creating meaning, work that ultimately can help to undermine the hegemony of the *status quo*.

1.4.3 Supporting Worker-Directed Firms

I raise the question of supporting worker-directed firms because I believe that working toward creating integrated collaboratives is one means by which all three dangers, the danger of marginalizing the unwaged, the danger of reinforcing a structural dependence on capital and the danger of ideological subordination, can be addressed in the medium and longer term. I believe that only by recognizing our dependence on unpaid labor, and by securing our structural and ideological independence from capital, can we as worker citizens create the conditions to learn practices that reinforce and demonstrate the virtues and benefits of solidarity and mutual care.

Workers are dependent on unpaid labor because as humans we are dependent on each other, at birth, during infancy and childhood, during sickness and incapacity, and in old age. Paid care is vital but cannot replace unpaid care because our human relationships require that we care for one another. “[R]eproducing the individuals in which labor-power subsists requires a variety of emotional, as well as physical, services that are interactive in nature and, therefore, very labor-intensive” (Federici, 2021, p. 59). Asking the market to accommodate all our needs ignores our interdependence and the relationships we forge by caring for those we love. So any proposal for reform that does not incorporate unpaid care does not fully acknowledge our real human need for connection. Unpaid care has to be foregrounded in any proposal for democratizing work.²⁰ Unpaid work is fully decommodified work, so the call to decommodify work needs to center a discussion of how this decommodified work is to be undertaken in a way that overcomes the gendered and racialized inequalities that currently characterize domestic and reproductive work in capitalism.

How does this relate to strategy? I argued above that workers are structurally dependent on capital because the labor contract entitles capital-directors to claim and distribute new value created through paid work that produces goods and services for exchange and the unpaid work that enables workers to be productive. Workers, paid and unpaid, are thus dependent, to a greater or lesser extent depending on circumstances, for securing a livelihood by maintaining this subordinated relationship. In the absence of effective collective action to support workers’ demands, any threat to the conditions needed to maintain this relationship can be met by capital-directors through distributions of value that workers have produced, to ensure workers continue to arrive and offer value-producing labor services with few viable alternative options. In other

²⁰ As Federici argues: “...by expanding Marx’s theory of productive work to include reproductive labor in all its different dimensions, we cannot only craft a theory of gender relations in capitalism but gain a new understanding of the class struggle and the means by which capitalism reproduces itself through the creation of different labor regimes and different forms of uneven development and underdevelopment” (2021, p. 56).

words, workers, paid and unpaid create value that employers utilize to ensure workers are kept subservient.

In the last resort, employers withhold capital. A capital strike enforces workers' subordination since workers' ability to survive depends on the ability to rent labor-power to employers while the ability of investors to survive does not encounter that limit: capital can be withdrawn for extended periods without threatening the class position of capital investors.²¹ A job guarantee would mitigate the pressure felt by workers and would be helpful in shifting the balance of power in their favor in some industries. However, support for a job guarantee would itself require the ability of workers to organize effective political pressure and resist the threat of a capital strike without having a job guarantee upon which to fall back. Furthermore, it is unlikely to offset the cost of job loss for many or most workers sufficiently to give them parity *vis-a-vis* capital investors in decisions that matter.

A further aspect of our structural dependence is that the means of subsistence and paid care services we rely on for our education, health care for ourselves and our dependents, and paid care for those with special needs are largely the product of capital-dominated enterprises. Unfortunately, this is true even for public sector goods and services which, due to the ability of capital-dominated firms to influence procurement, are often provided by for-profit enterprises, or non-profit, investor-dominated enterprises (e.g. hospitals, universities, long-term care facilities).²² To offset this aspect of dependence on capital, workers would need to create alternative sources of the services most vital to our maintenance and well-being. Finally, as I argue above, securing workers structural independence from capital would require recognizing, organizing and supporting important unpaid labor that reproduces our ability to work, unpaid labor that is disproportionately undertaken by women who incur economic costs and political subordination as a result. Recognizing and supporting this vital unpaid element of our economy must be included in any effort to democratize work.

How might it be possible to break this cycle of dependence on capital investors of all workers, paid and unpaid? I argue, next, that we can greatly strengthen our structural independence from capital by developing integrated collaboratives in order to truly decommodify labor and secure those services most vital to our collective and individual well-being, to recognize and support the important role of unpaid labor, and to begin the process of undoing our ideological subordination.

²¹ Fiorio et. al. (2021) provides empirical evidence that suggests it is the power resources of workers that determine the extent to which the state is structurally dependent on capital – i.e. whether redistributive policies of the state can be effectively implemented to benefit workers. This finding is consistent with the idea the argument offered here, that in order for workers to effectively resist the imposition of policies and practices that empower capital directors at their expense, they need to develop greater independence from capital.

²² The non-profit status of these enterprises does not obviate their exploitative nature nor does it give workers representation on the board. For a Marxian analysis of non-profit enterprises and non-worker cooperatives, see Kristjanson-Gural 2024.

2. Integrated Collaboratives to Support Democratizing Work

2.1 The Integrated Collaborative

As noted above, Ferreras characterizes the Manifesto as “a transitional proposal [that]... could serve as a bridge toward the complete democratization of firms via labor investors’ buyback of shares in their firm from capital investors, helping expand the democratic model of the [worker] cooperative, democratic firm to the economy as a whole” (35).²³ None of the authors, however, elaborate the enterprise structure that would allow workers to fully self-govern, while giving stakeholders a say over decisions affecting them.²⁴ Nor do they point to example where workers are effectively engaged in self-directing their own enterprises.

Elsewhere, I’ve draw on a number of proposals for worker self-direction, as well as the example provided by Mondragon Cooperative Corporation, to develop a theory of the collaborative enterprise – an integrated, worker-directed system of enterprises structured to allow workers to self-direct their enterprises, while giving stakeholders a voice and vote over decisions affecting them (Kristjanson-Gural, 2024). Here, I will provide a brief overview of this new corporate structure and explain how the transformative potential of the efforts of Democratize Work outlined above can be supported by working both locally and across borders to create integrated collaboratives.

Independent worker cooperatives are enterprises owned and managed by their working members. Workers or their elected representatives serve on a board of directors and are fully responsible for determining the the rules, policies and practices, governing each worker in the firm. This structure both fully enfranchises the worker and decommodifies work since, once membership is awarded, there is no renting of the workers’ time or sale of labor-power.²⁵ As noted above, this institutional structure is consistent with the long term aims of the Manifesto (Ferreras 2022, p. 35).

However, by excluding stakeholders from representation on the board of directors, fully enfranchising workers leaves the other stakeholders disenfranchised. Ferreras is right to point out that these stakeholders are not subject to the governance of the firm, and therefore should be treated differently than workers (p. 40-41). But even if people are not governed by the enterprise, if they are affected by decisions made by that enterprise, then they ought to have a say in those decisions.²⁶ So the institutional structure of the worker cooperative contains a moral dilemma.

²³ Ferreras (2023) states: “Economic bicameralism makes it possible for firms to transition from unicameral capital ownership and control in the form of the corporate firm, to unicameral worker ownership and control...”(209).

²⁴ For Ferreras’ discussion of unicameral worker-directed firms see Ferreras 2023.

²⁵ The U.S. Federation of Worker Coops provides further information about worker coops at <https://www.usworker.coop/what-is-a-worker-cooperative/>. For the importance of how worker coops form their boards of directors and some implications of worker-self direction for viability and desirability of this institutional structure see Wolff (2012, part 3). For a critique of non-worker cooperatives see Gonza and Ellerman 2024 and Kristjanson-Gural 2024.

²⁶ Ferreras (2023) argues stakeholders could be given a consultative role on a firm by firm basis but their ability to elect political representatives charged with regulating firm practices in the economy is sufficient (p. 200). Many enterprises, even in highly industrialized countries are able to avoid regulation, so the inclusion of stakeholders in

How does one give stakeholders a voice and vote, while fully respecting the right of workers to self-govern?

Furthermore, independent worker coops, are competitive in a wide range of industries and occupations, but do face significant challenges to their viability in a capital-dominated economy.²⁷ These challenges include the fact that laws and practices are designed to accommodate shareholder enterprises, access to capital often limits scale and thus precludes competitiveness in capital intensive industries, managerial expertise that supports and empowers democratic decision-making is scarce, and members may lack experience and skills necessary for group decision-making and/or may have internalized values of competition, materialism and individualism that run counter to the ethic of cooperation and solidarity (Dow 2024).

Internationally, the worker cooperatives that have overcome these obstacles most successfully are integrated, either with other worker cooperatives in a formal corporate governance structure, as in the case of the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC) in Spain, or with each other and the government through the creation of networks, as in the case of Emilia Romagna in Italy.²⁸ While these integrated cooperatives address the challenges of viability, they only partially overcome the dilemma of how to integrate stakeholders without undermining worker sovereignty.

In MCC, for example, stakeholders are included on the board of directors, giving stakeholders voice and vote over enterprise decisions.²⁹ Typically only one third of the board of a first order cooperative enterprise (one producing goods and services) is comprised of workers; two thirds is comprised of representatives of second order cooperatives (those providing support services for first order coops) and other stakeholders (e.g. consumers or clients and community members) (Morrison 1991). Worker-members are also represented both at the general assemble of all MCC members to vote on the policies and practices to which all enterprises agree to conform, as well as through a workers' council that acts to represent workers' rights in their individual workplaces and to ensure the decisions of the general assembly do not unfairly impose sanctions or disadvantage workers in other ways. The integration of stakeholders and the debate over and eventual agreement on the overarching goals and practices of the corporation go a long way toward reconciling worker and stakeholder interests. But workers are in a minority on the boards of their enterprises, leaving open the possibility that the policies and practices decided on by the board may compromise their interests. The workers' council has not always been successful in defending workers' rights. Furthermore, given the presence of stakeholders on the boards, workers do not claim the value they create and stakeholders who do not produce that value form the majority to claim and distribute that value.

firm governance may be an important and effective means of empowering them provided the ability of workers to self-direct is not undermined.

²⁷ Fakhfakh et. al. (2012) and Fakhfakh et. al. (2023) analyze data from French work cooperatives to show their relative competitiveness and resilience to economic downturns vis-à-vis traditional capitalist firms. As Dow (2024) notes, challenges in the start-up phase are the more significant barrier to the proliferation of worker coops than their relative productivity and competitiveness once established.

²⁸ For an overview of MCC, see Morrison (1992) and Davidson (2011, Chapter 2); for Emilia Romagna see Menzani and Zamagni (2010).

²⁹ The individual coops in MCC are therefore hybrid, stakeholder cooperatives, not worker cooperatives.

In order to resolve this justice dilemma, I argue that a new enterprise structure is needed – the collaborative enterprise – which adopts a two-board structure. A board of production, comprised of workers, makes decisions concerning work practices, policies, wages, hours and staffing, and claims the value created by the enterprise. After distributing that portion of the value to themselves as workers, they then engage an expanded board of distribution that includes stakeholders to make strategic decisions concerning how to reproduce their conditions of existence.³⁰

The structure of the collaborative enterprise is designed to enable workers to claim the new value they create and to self-direct their workplaces, democratically deciding on the rules and practices, pay scales and hours they will adopt. Worker-members make these decisions subject to a set of principles agreed upon by a general assembly in which all members of the integrated collaborative have a vote. The board of distribution, which includes stakeholder representatives, decides how to use the remaining value to secure the enterprises conditions of existence and support its mission. It will decide on what proportion of the remaining value to devote to various contending requirements including but not limited to pay rent, interest, retaining earnings, setting management salaries, coordinating retail sales, handling advertising and branding, undertaking research and development, making donations, and paying taxes. This two-board structure allows workers to self-govern the workplace, and it empowers and enfranchises stakeholders to deliberate and vote on decisions related to the strategic choices concerning supply relationships, financing, retail strategy, advertising expenses, materials and technology, and any externalities that affect them. A union or works council, comprised of elected representatives from across the integrated collaborative ensures individual workers are treated fairly and address any workplace issues that are overlooked by the board and the general assembly.

The entire integrated collaborative is comprised of an system of worker-directed collaborative enterprises whose goal is to create and maintain meaningful, socially beneficial work with economic viability acting as a condition of existence. The collaborative develops and maintains an overarching governance structure designed to create and support the viability of the individual collaborative enterprises in a manner similar to the MCC. Each enterprise is created either to provide directly for the needs of community members or to provide services that increase the viability and resilience of the other collaborative enterprises in the group. This structure is able to address the contending justice claims of workers and stakeholders while respecting the right of workers to self-govern. It also strengthens enterprise viability by providing what the existing capital-dominated economy withholds – institutions that value cooperation and provide important conditions of existence for enterprises based upon an ethic of cooperation,

³⁰ For an elaboration of the structure of the collaborative ecosystem see Kristjanson-Gural (2024). This bicameral structure is suggested by a Marxian analysis that defines value as being created by workers in production and subsequently appropriated and distributed by a board of directors. Exploitation results when the board who claims the new value is not comprised by the workers who produced the value. By replacing shareholder representatives with workers, exploitation is overcome because workers claim the value they collectively produce. By including key stakeholders on the board of distribution, those most directly affected by the strategic choices of the firm are included in discussion and decision-making concerning how the firm distributes value to reproduce its conditions of existence. For an earlier value-theoretic analysis of worker cooperatives see Kristjanson-Gural (2011).

transparency and solidarity, rather than competition, opacity and exclusion (Kristjanson-Gural 2024).

2.2 Create Collaboratives to Support Democratizing Work

The structure of the collaborative corporation is consistent with the goals of the Manifesto. This institutional structure also helps to resolve the problem of workers' structural dependence on capital, the marginalization of unpaid labor, and the internalized ideology of competition, materialism and individualism by consciously reinforcing collaborative values and providing meaningful livelihoods, care and provisioning that does not rely on private capital.³¹ Working for and purchasing necessities from collaborative enterprises reduces reliance on private capitalist firms and deprives them of both access to the labor they require to reproduce capital and the market they require to realize the sale of capitalist commodities. It represents a transformative reform because it undermines both the economic and cultural/political conditions of existence of the *status quo*. Furthermore, supporting and facilitating the learning and practice of collaborative values, and experiencing the dignity of being treated as an equal member of an economic enterprise, erodes the ideology of individualism and competition that supports and normalizes the exploitative class relationships most workers currently accept as given and immutable.³² The inclusion of unpaid caregivers as equal voting stakeholders on boards of distribution would recognize the important role of this work and allow unwaged workers to weigh in on the policies and practices in the paid workforce that often directly affect their conditions of work. Their work, though unpaid, is also necessary for the success of the enterprise, and may also merit their inclusion on the board of production.

For these reasons, I reject the argument that creating non-capitalist workplaces diverts individuals from the important political work of resisting capitalist exploitation.³³ While this may be true for independent worker cooperatives, due to the challenge of maintaining viability in an economy hostile to cooperation, integrative cooperatives and collaboratives may instead produce exactly the type of political citizen needed to push for the kind of reforms defined in the Manifesto. Worker-citizens, paid and unpaid, who have both the experience and the expectation of being able to weigh in on decisions that affect them, who regularly consider the effect of their actions on the community, and who strive to attain not individual enrichment at the expense of others, but meaningful work in community. These are the kinds of citizens needed to organize politically to change laws, policies and practices at the local, regional, national, and international level. Integrated collaboratives thus represent an important element of class politics, not a diversion from class politics.

³¹ Capital for the collaborative corporation relies on two sources, the savings of worker-members and allies that are held within the collaborative bank and the retained earnings of the collaborative enterprises. Over time this accumulated social capital provides a source of expansion for the collaborative corporation in a similar manner to the MCC.

³² In this way the collaborative represents the type of worker directed political organization that Gramsci recommended that would play an important role, along with unions and political parties, in helping to develop counterhegemonic beliefs and values needed to counter the hegemony of capitalist institutions. For further elaboration of Gramsci's view of the relationship between workers councils, unions and political parties, see Annunziato (2011), and Jossa (2020, pp. 52-3).

³³ Recent expositions of this position can be found in Nieto (2022) and Haunel (2022). For an argument in support see Sharzer (2017) and Jossa (2011; 2012).

Furthermore, the lack of existing laws and policies to support collaborative enterprises is not a reason to despair. New organizational forms often prefigure the laws and policies necessary for their establishment.

The developmental process is one in which new organizational forms emerge and evolve first as operational, social phenomena before receiving the *imprimatur* of legal recognition. What is crucial, however, is the way that some urgent need, such as access to healthcare, employment, access to affordable house, and the multitude of other needs arise in communities, calls forth a prosocial response that employs common property as a primary instrument for delivering benefits.

Peredo and McLean 2018, pp. 594

To illustrate, take the example of the job guarantee, the second pillar of the Manifesto. Convincing governments to guarantee employment for those unable to find jobs in the profit, non-profit or state sectors, means funding grassroots initiatives to provide work that attends to community needs. In Emilia Romagna, the government subcontracts service work to worker cooperatives who provide care services and even employ individuals in worker coops who would otherwise rely on government support (Menzani and Zamagni, 2010). The urgent social need to establishment of these worker cooperatives prompted the passage of law necessary to legally incorporate these agencies and fund them through tax revenues, effectively decommodifying their work. (Peredo and McLain, 2018, pp. 594).³⁴ A strategy to decommodify work that seeks to create and support integrated collaboratives, could provide employment outside the capital-dominated private for-profit and non-profit sectors, helping those disenfranchised workers to develop both the practical skills to democratically self-direct their enterprises and to begin to internalize the values of solidarity and collaboration needed to politically support the goals of the Manifesto.

But the strategy of demanding a job guarantee threatens to further marginalize important unpaid (and therefore decommodified) work and divide rather than uniting paid and unpaid workers. A policy of subcontracting care work to worker cooperatives does not have to be part of a job guarantee; it could be pursued alongside a demand for universal basic income. As Weeks argues:

First, [a universal basic income] offers tangible assistance to a variety of differently positioned workers. Its benefits include much-needed support for the unemployed, underemployed, and precariously employed; a stronger position from which to negotiate better working terms and conditions; a measure of relief from the economic forces that can constrict choices about family membership and household formation; and support for the unwaged domestic and caring labor that has long been central to feminist political agendas.³⁵

(2011, p. 149-50)

³⁴ Ranis (2016) makes a similar argument with respect to Argentinian factory legislation. He further argues that existing eminent domain legislation may be an effective way of enabling the conversion of capitalist enterprises to worker-directed firms in the U.S.

³⁵ For an analysis of the economic sustainability of UBI see Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017, Chapter 6. They conclude that the gradual implementation of a universal basic income via the expansion of family allowance and pension programs would overcome uncertainty concerning the economic sustainability of this type of program.

At the same time, pursuing the development of integrated collaboratives internationally could help create the political unity and economic solidarity necessary support demands for a universal basic income and to interrupt the race to the bottom capital-dominated economy based on unsustainable and environmentally disruptive growth.³⁶ Integrated cooperatives and collaboratives are an important and underappreciated means to develop, within the existing extractive system, a post-capitalist economy of solidarity, sustainability and care and to provide a political base, to demand and win support for policies and laws needed to support efforts to democratize work.³⁷

Conclusion

By creating alternative means of employment and finding ways to secure our necessities by diverting expenditures away from capital-directed enterprises, and by producing and procuring necessities from one another, worker-citizens of integrated collaboratives could substantially reduce their structural dependence on capital. By withdrawing support from toxic, carbon-dependent, extractive systems, it may also be possible to find and support new ways to protect personal and community health and create political solidarity and pressure to change laws and policies that continue to permit the destruction of the biosphere. Time is short to begin to remediate the ecological harm our current system has wrought. By working collaboratively, workers may start to overcome internalized ideological subordination, begin to recognize, value and actively support unpaid work, and more effectively protect individuals, families and communities from precarity, marginalization and ecological harm that our current system produces.

The three pillars of the Democratize Work Manifesto – democratize, decommodify and decarbonize – contain the transformative potential to address our current economic, political, and ecological crisis. I believe the effort to institutionalize these practices and policies can help support a transition to an economy that supports multiple dimensions of justice and that respects the equal dignity of all people. As with all transformative reform, there exists a potential to be coopted or to inadvertently strengthen systems of oppression the authors of the Manifesto are attempting to re-envision and replace. Chief among these concerns is the need to build solidarity between geographically and culturally disperse groups, the need to create a structural independence from capital, the need to recognize the role of unpaid work, and the need to emphasize the creation of prosocial cultural institutions to reinforce the values and practices of solidarity and collaboration.

³⁶ International solidarity to create cooperative supply chains is an important element of the struggle to democratize work. For an analysis of the effect of global competition on MCC's viability see Errasti, Bretos and Nunez (2017). For an analysis of the obstacles facing worker cooperatives attempting to create cooperative free trade zones see Susman and Schneider (2008). For an analysis of the role of colonialism and its effect on international labor law see Maximo (2022) and Blackett (2022).

³⁷ For historical examples of the role of cooperatives to promote marginalized black communities see Nembhard 2014. For examples of an integrated cooperative effort to address economic and racial marginalization in Jackson Mississippi, see Akuno and Meyer (2023), and in Cleveland, Ohio, see Rowe, et. al. 2017, in Cincinnati, Ohio, see Young and Dworkin 2023. For an early argument in support of this community development strategy see Nembhard and Haynes 1999.

The creation of integrated cooperatives and collaboratives can support the efforts of the Democratize Work movement by supporting and reinforcing the transformative elements of their proposal. Specifically, integrated collaboratives provide both an important degree of structural independence from capital, simultaneously erode the conditions of existence of capital-dominated institutions, create the potential for solidarity between paid and unpaid workers in the global North and global South, and, at the same time, create and strengthen cultural foundations needed to build the political viability of a truly democratic economy.

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