Toward a Sustainable and Democratic Future: *Democratize, Decommodify, Decarbonize Work.*

Competitiveness within a Safe and Just Operating Space: Reconciling economic competitiveness with societal wellbeing and planetary boundaries Conference, Luxemburg, October 20, 2026.

Isabelle Ferreras

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Directrice de recherches du FNRS (Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research)
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Senior Research Associate, Center for Labor and a Just Economy
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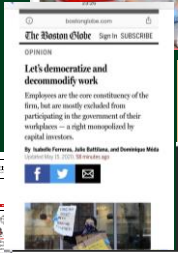
Co-founder and lead coordinator for www.DemocratizingWork.org

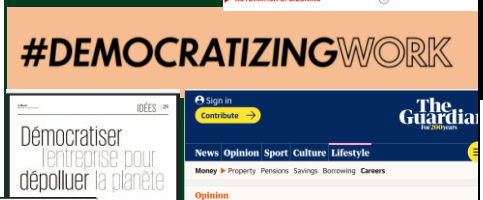



الرئيسية ‹ عاجل ‹ أخبار
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Kan du forudsige EM? Prøv Politikens
Tre tusinde forskere fra
op med arbejde som en
Den franske stjerneøkonom Thomas Piketty og tusindvis
efter coronakrisen. En kommunistisk model, mener


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Trabajo.
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Desmercantilizar.
Descontaminar
OPINIONES 16 mayo 2020 - 00:00
Académicos de todo el mundo firmaron un manifiesto conjunto, sobre la necesidad de democratizar las empresas y desmercantilizar el trabajo. Proponen una mejor representación de


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OPINION
Let's democratize and decommodify work
Employees are the core constituency of the firm, but are mostly excluded from participating in the government of their workplaces — a right monopolized by capital investors.
By Isabelle Ferreras, Julie Battilana, and Dominique Méda


#DEMOCRATIZINGWORK


il manifesto
Fase nera
Riaprituto, Conte cede ai governatori


IDÉES
Démocratiser l'entreprise pour dépolluer la planète


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Humans are not resources. Coronavirus shows why we must democratise work
Nancy Fraser, Susan Neiman , Chantal Mouffe, Saskia Sassen, Jan-Werner Müller, Dani Rodrik, Thomas Piketty, Gabriel Zucman, Ha-Joon Chang, and many others


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CORONAVÍRUS, O DEBATE ECONÔMICO
Folha publica manifesto internacional em defesa do trabalho
Após circular por universidades, recebendo assinaturas, texto é publicado simultaneamente por veículos de vários países

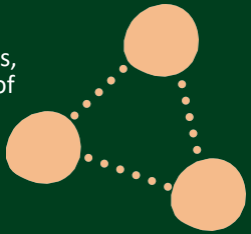

Dünyayla birlikte Cumhuriyet'te
COVID-19 manifestosu

I. 3 Principles
II. Key Concepts
III. Democratize & Decarbonize
IV. Decommodify & Decarbonize
V. To Conclude

I. Three Core Principles

Past global crises have imparted critical lessons, which paved the way to the **3 core principles** of the #DW initiative.

They offer a **human labor-centered roadmap** to reorganize our social and economic system. They must be implemented together, or we will fail to change the economic paradigm so it fits within planetary boundaries via a just transition.



Democratize

We must recognize workers as citizens. Given that workers invest their mind and body into work, and are governed by the decisions of the firm, they should bear on the rules that govern them, at work and beyond.

Decommodify

We must stop treating workers as commodities by guaranteeing the fundamental right to work, and secure everyone's essential needs in education, healthcare, etc.
So we can take care of one another and of the planet' s needs.

Decarbonize

Through rethinking the place of labor in the economy and in society, we can sustain life on this planet in the face of the accelerating transgression of the 9 planetary boundaries.

#DEMOCRATIZING
WORK



La chercheuse Marseillaise Julie Battilana co-écrit un ouvrage au nom du changement et de la justice sociale

Marseillaise, chercheuse et enseignante à Harvard, elle est co-auteure de "Le Manifeste travail", ouvrage collectif qui prône la réforme du capitalisme néolibéral. Une démarche reprise par plus de 3 000 universitaires dans le monde





LIVROS DIGITAIS DE ACESSO ABERTO

O manifesto do trabalho: democratizar, desmercantilizar, remediar

25/02/2021

DOMINIQUE MÉDA - ENSEIGNANTE-CHERCHEUSE

« LA DÉMARCHANDISATION DU TRAVAIL PASSE PAR L'INSTAURATION D'U… GARANTIE D'EMPLO…

…abelle Ferreras, Julie …a, Dominique Méda, Flávia …

…inia Moreira Gomes e …Rocha Dias (Org.)

A iniciativa de lançar um Manifesto do Trabalho em plena crise pandêmica é extremamente relevante; a versão brasileira do Manifesto talvez seja mais importante ainda. Esse livro contextualiza debates sobre o trabalho no dito 'Sul Global' – onde a maioria dos(as) trabalhadores(as), mostrando a urgência de repensar não só a democratização e desmercantilização, mas a noção mesma de



Qu'est-ce qui vous a amenées à …

Le confinement et la manière dont … jeunes et de travailleurs se sont … notre ligne ont accéléré la prise de … Chacun a pu voir qu'il/elle pouvait … des caissières, livreurs, vigiles, aid… et que, malgré tout, ces professio… payées et parfois les moins consi… tribune, avec 12 femmes qui par… sujet de l'importance de ces travailleurs et travailleuses. Notre texte réclame qu'ils et elles soient désormais traité.e.s comme il



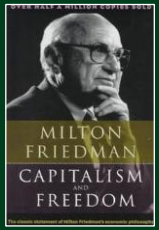
Bard Economist Pavlina Tcherneva and International Collaborators Are Rethinking How We Work



With Covid-19 ravaging economies, Bard College professor Pavlina Tcherneva, and colleagues around the globe, have issued an urgent plea: we need to transform the way we work.

On May 16, more than 4,000 researchers across all five continents signed on to the op-ed "Let's democratize and decommodify work," which was published in 41 publications, in 27 languages, in 36 countries around the world. It is an urgent call to policymakers to rewrite the rules of our economic system in the midst of an

@The University of Chicago Press



60 YEARS LATER...



1962 – 1 man

2022 – 13 women

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Spain: International High-Level Expert Committee on Democracy at Work (Febr.2025-Febr.2026)



Diagnosis

FINAL REPORT
INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON
DEMOCRACY AT WORK.

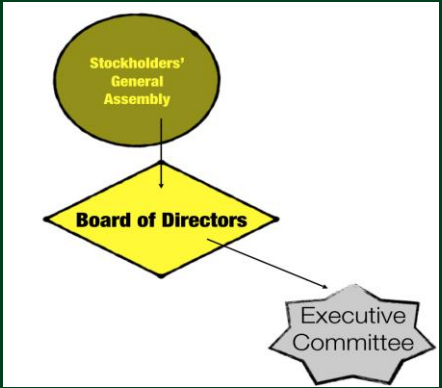
Urgent to get out of
the extractivit regime of the capitalist corporation
governing the firm which,
by design,
treats humans as the planet as disposable ressources.

Access: ReportonDemocracyatWork.org

9 Challenges as Crisis of the Extractivist Regime of Corp. Gov.

Challenge 1: Succession in SME's	**Challenge 2: Competitivity and Innovation**	**Challenge 3: Governance of AI**
Challenge 4: Territorial Resilience	**Challenge 5: Invisible Work and Global Value Chain**	**Challenge 6: Civil Society and Union Renewal**
Challenge 7: Poverty and Inequality	**Challenge 8: Democratic collapse**	**Challenge 9: Climate and Planetary Crisis**

Structure of the Corporation



!

Political rights to govern

= attached to =

$ ownership $

Justification ? = risk-takers



Max. risk for capital investors?

=> value of the share = 0







How about the *labor investors*?

=> Health, physical and mental?

=> Housing?

=> Skills?

=> Social identity? Network? Sense of worth?



Firms govern their labor investors' lives.
They govern their users' lives.
They govern people's lives. They allocate investments.
They decide on the shape of the future.

Firms are Political Entities.

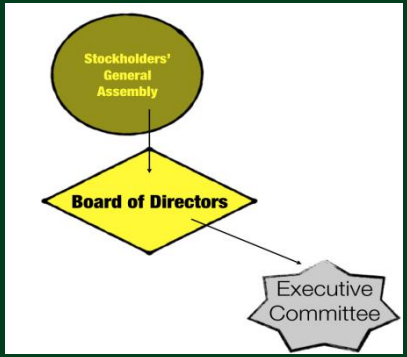
Cfr. Ferreras, 2017, *Firms as Political Entities. Saving Democracy through Economic Bicameralism*. Cambridge University Press ; Ferreras, Malleson, Rogers ed., 2024, *Democratizing the Corporation. The Bicameral Firm and Beyond*. Verso.

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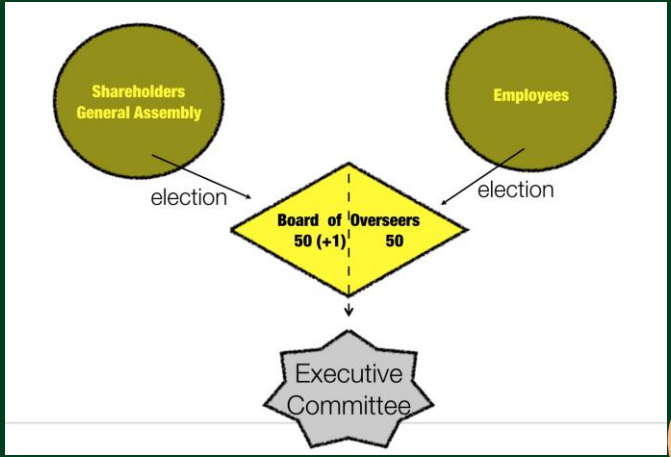
Firms are Political Entities. And we need them to treat workers as citizens i.e. to democratize corporations.

Cfr. Ferreras, 2017, *Firms as Political Entities. Saving Democracy through Economic Bicameralism*. Cambridge University Press ; Ferreras, Malleson, Rogers ed., 2024, *Democratizing the Corporation. The Bicameral Firm and Beyond*. Verso.

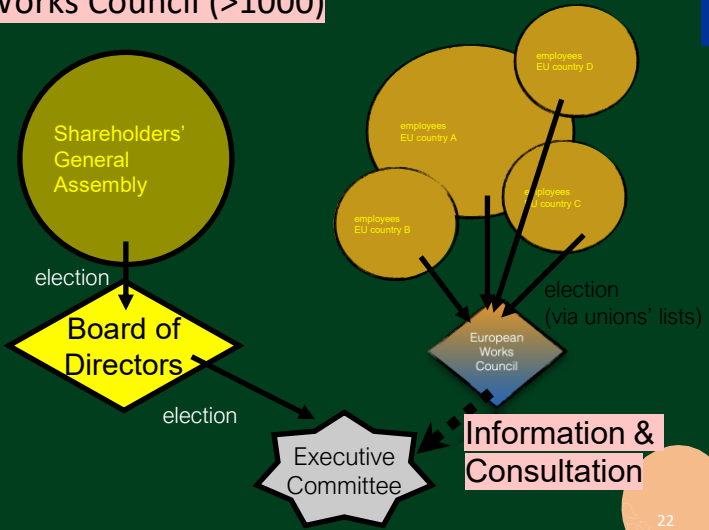
The Corporation: Ownership = Political Rights



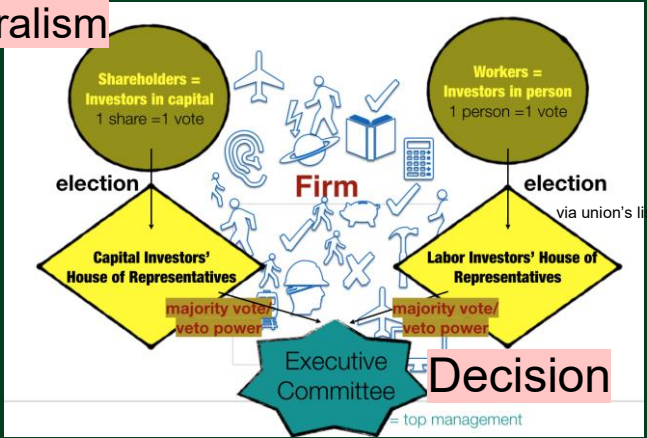
Political Rights ✂ Ownership = *Voice*



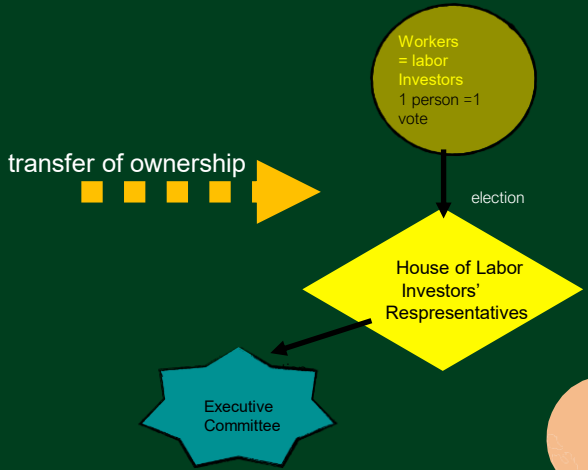
European Works Council (>1000)



History of Democratic Revolution: Bicameralism



A Path toward Shared Ownership too <viz. Worker Cooperatives>



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Redress the Power Imbalance between Capital and Labor

73% of global energy use could be saved by practically achievable design changes, which are labor intensive.

ENVIRONMENTAL Science & Technology

ARTICLE

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Reducing Energy Demand: What Are the Practical Limits?

Jonathan M. Cullen, Julian M. Allwood,* and Edward H. Borgstein

Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1PZ, United Kingdom

Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: Concern over the global energy system, whether driven by climate change, national security, or fears of shortage, is being discussed widely and in every arena but with a bias toward energy supply options. While demand reduction is often mentioned in passing, it is rarely a priority for implementation, whether through policy or through the search for innovation. This paper aims to draw attention to the opportunity for major reduction in energy demand, by presenting an analysis of how much of current global energy demand could be avoided. Previous work led to a "map" of global energy use that traces the flow of energy from primary sources (fuels or renewable sources), through fuel refinery, electricity generation, and end-use conversion devices, to passive systems and the delivery of final energy services (transport, illumination, and sustenance). The key passive systems are presented here and

shed articles.

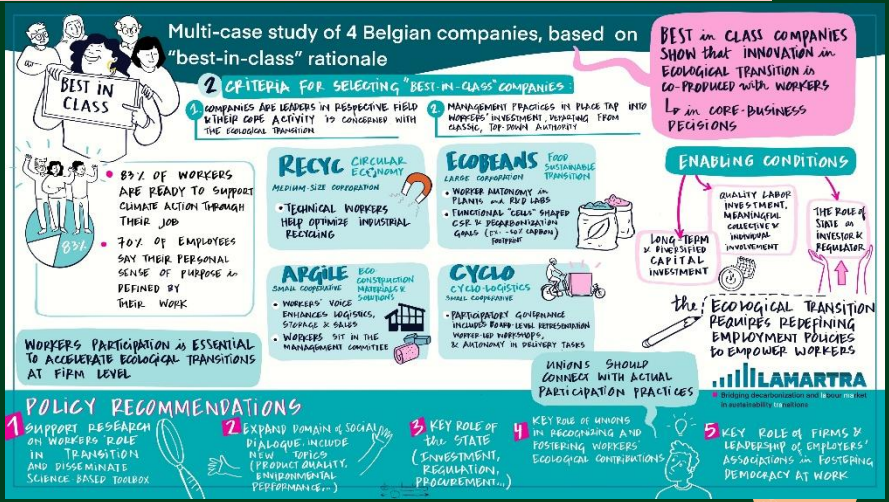
Align Labor Investors' Rights with Expectations

A survey of 8,000 employees across 10 countries and various industries found that
"83% of employees say they are ready and willing to support climate action in the context of their work,"
but...

See: Kite Insights, 2022, *Every Job Is A Climate Job,* London.

Deepening Democracy at Work Accelerates the Transition

https://lamartra.be/







Under specific enabling conditions, worker participation plays a decisive role in consolidating firms' core ecological activities and outcomes. This participation takes place outside traditional channels of industrial relations, which currently lack ecological relevance. We conclude that expanding the scope of such channels at firm-level – and thereby deepening democracy at work – is an indispensable strategy for accelerating the ecological transition and achieving better work.



Pérez Sepúlveda, Sebastián & Isabelle Ferreras. 2026. "Accelerating the Ecological Transition through Worker Participation in Best-in-Class Firms in Belgium: Four Cases of Institutional Experimentation". *International Labour Review* 165 (4) forthcoming.

Key Lessons to Take Us Forward

•**1/ Multi-level participation:** Coherently integrate worker participation across all levels—from shop floor to boardroom—to strengthen the worker voice in strategic decisions.

-Union and cooperative opportunity: Leverage this need to reinforce participatory channels.

-Expanding discussion scope: Overcome the limits of traditional industrial relations by bringing strategic environmental issues into these forums.

•**2/ Stakeholder capacity building:** Mobilize the state, employer associations, and unions to upskill workers and their representatives to foster workplace democracy.

•3/ Align the public policy framework to **set in motion a democratic transition for every firm** (See Democratic Corporate Development Index in Report on Democracy at Work for the Spanish Government)

.4/ Reframe the "Just Transition": Shift the framework from *social justice* to *political justice*.

Necessary but Insufficient Condition

Democratizing firms is a « necessary but insufficient condition » **for humanity to be able to fit the economy between the 9 planetary boundaries.**

See: Ferreras, 2019, "Democratizing Firms. A Cornerstone of Shared and Sustainable Prosperity," Center for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity Essay Series, University of Surrey, Dir. Tim Jackson, Essay #10, July.

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Amid Rapid Change, People Need Security.

Decommodify

ILO Philadelphia Declaration Preambule (1944)

Article 23 UDH (1948)

Decarbonize

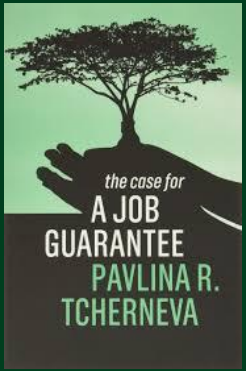
Limits to Growth (Meadows and Meadows 1972)

9 planetary boundaries (Rockström 2009)

Au-delà du PIB (Méda 2015)

Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017)

Secure the Transition Path



Example : Territoires Zéro Chômeurs de Longue Durée (France, Belgique). See: (Julien Charles)

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There is a pathway to a democratic and sustainable future.



Access: ReportonDemocracyatWork.org

The three principles hold the key to a democratic and sustainable future.



They must be pursued together, or we will fail.