



**Deliberative Dancing:
A Critical Investigation of DisCOs' Potential to Re-Politicize the Economy**

Social Entrepreneurship & Management Masters Thesis
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Abstract

Over the last decade, capitalism has received widespread criticism due both to its inability to meet humanity's basic needs and its inability to mitigate detrimental effects. Consider both the widening wealth gap and the climate crisis. Indeed, there seems to be a growing consensus that as an economic system, capitalism is grossly unsustainable-socially, environmentally, even economically. In our view, one of the biggest drawbacks of capitalism is that it separates issues of politics from the economic sphere, in other words, subjugating society to the market, which has thus created the hegemonic market society we live in today. Since any reform attempted through the political sphere (i.e., regulation) seems to be thoroughly ineffective in addressing this issue, this paper instead focuses on alternatives on the organizational level to re-politicize the economy.

This paper then introduces Distributed Cooperative Organizations (DisCOs), a relatively new, innovative organizational model, with potential to re-politicize the economy. In order to critically analyze this potential we draw on the DisCO Framework, or governance model, to determine whether or not it recognizes alternative values and motives, employs alternative mechanisms of economic activity, and embeds democratic norms and institutions. While we do find evidence of this within the DisCO Framework, we also provide some critique of the model, especially it's orientation towards deliberative democracy, which we find an unsuitable model of democracy given their claim to promote radical workplace democracy. We conclude that the DisCO Framework indeed holds potential to re-politicize the economy. However, the extent to which this holds true is very much dependent on further developments of the framework, if any, and whether new DisCOs emerge, as well as how the model is then adapted by these future DisCOs.

Key words: Distributed Co-operative Organization (DisCO), radical workplace democracy, solidarity economy, market society, agonistic pluralism, deliberative democracy.

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List of Abbreviations

DisCO: Distributed Cooperative Organization

GMC: Guerilla Media Collective

GT: Guerilla Translation

1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the role of social entrepreneurial organizations (SEO's) in re-politicizing our present-day economy. Drawing on Distributed Cooperative Organizations (DisCOs), we seek to understand the ways in which this specific organizational model challenges dominant norms through more democratic forms of organization and governance.

Our interest in politicizing the economy is primarily driven by our belief that raising the question of politics inherent in the capitalistic economy, such as the assumed primacy of financial capital over all other concerns, is necessary for achieving a more sustainable economy, in environmental, social and ultimately, also in economic terms. Our choice to focus on the DisCO Framework is partly a practical concern. While we believe that policy is important for the long-term goal of achieving a more democratic and sustainable economy, we also believe that this is a second-order concern. Put simply, we believe that if we build the right organizations, the right policies will come. However, this choice also reflects what we hope to contribute to the field of social entrepreneurship and social sciences in general. How governance models such as DisCO, which explicitly call for a more democratic economy, *can* re-politicize the economy is, we believe, both central to the framework's aims and a question that merits further research.

1.2. Problem Area

There is growing consensus that capitalism is unsustainable and that something simply must change. It is not hard to point to the various reasons for this critique; from growing fears about the status quo's inability to tackle climate change, to rising inequality on a global level, to the continual failure to achieve acceptable living standards in the Global South, and to the pressure of an insurmountable wealth gap between the elites and the working classes in advanced economies.

However, actually achieving a change to the status quo requires dismantling entrenched interests and taking on a system apt at perpetuating itself. Since regulatory and policy approaches have largely failed to achieve this change, we contend that it is time to identify, research, and implement alternative methods and strategies that may better drive systemic change.

Given that one of the central arguments for the status quo is that "There is no alternative", a phrase adopted by Margaret Thatcher as a justification for her agenda of neoliberalism and deregulation, we see it as paramount to challenge this supposed truism, if any real change is to occur. This more so than anything lies behind our interest in the question of alternative governance models' ability to re-politicize the economy. This is, to us, not a question of increased legislation or regulation, though both have a role play, rather we are interested in alternative governance models' ability to raise questions of the politics inherent in the economy; its power structures, who benefits from its current form and whether this, in a normative sense, is right.

Economic matters have for far too long been isolated from politically charged questions by a technocratic belief in economics as a value-free field, the notion of so-called “positive economics”, by an insistence on a narrow definition of economic liberty as the foundation of all liberty and by a dominance of financial capital as the sole measure of economic success. It is these notions that we wish to call into question, not so much because we believe that we hold the answers, but rather to demonstrate that alternative economic systems can exist, and that these alternatives may be the solution to the problems listed above. At the very least, we believe these alternatives deserve a fair hearing, currently being denied them by the insistence that there are no alternatives.

1.3. Problem Formulation

In what ways can organizational models such as the DisCO Framework re-politicize the economy?

- In what ways does the DisCO Framework recognize alternative values and motives?
- How are alternative mechanisms of economic activity incorporated into the DisCO Framework?
- What democratic institutions and norms are evident in the DisCO Framework?

1.4. Contribution to the Field

Our central interest in this paper is to investigate the capability of the DisCO Framework to re-politicize the economy. As such, we hope that our work will be of interest not only to academics within the field of social entrepreneurship, but also social entrepreneurs and innovators who wish to pursue similar goals or develop

similar organizational structures that can look beyond the monolithic focus on financial wealth and personal gain that characterizes the market economy.

Therefore, this paper is primarily aimed at organizational actors interested in re-politicizing the economy through the promotion of more democratic and inclusive organizational frameworks, thereby actively challenging the hegemony of capitalism. However we also wish to engage with and add to the ongoing academic debate surrounding social entrepreneurial organizations (SEOs) and their potential for radically transforming our global economy, on the basis that this noble goal requires a strong collaboration between theoretical and practical experiences and knowledge.

Additionally, we hope that our work encourages an interest in the more radical side of social entrepreneurship and social innovation, both among academics and practitioners. While we ardently advocate for diverse perspectives in the field of social entrepreneurship, we believe that as the field has developed, it has been far more focused on approaches that either seek to reform or adapt to the status quo, to the detriment of approaches that directly challenge the status quo.

While the term 'innovation' today is more closely associated with technological developments, the term first found wide usage as a descriptor of radical religious and social doctrines, similarly the first to wear the label of 'social innovators' were radicals like Saint-Simon, Blanc and Proudhon (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). It is our hope that our work here can help rekindle interest in this radical side of social entrepreneurship.

Finally we do believe our inquiry here has the potential to add a few key insights to our field. While we have drawn inspiration from a number of thinkers, both within and outside the field of social entrepreneurship, we are, to our knowledge, the first to address the question of re-politicizing the economy through organizational structures. In addition, the object of our inquiry, the DisCO Framework is both a novel organizational model, and a relatively recent development that has yet to receive serious scholarly attention, which we thoroughly believe it deserves.

1.5. Definition of Concepts

1.5.1. Re-politicizing the economy

The notion of politicizing the economy has traditionally only been understood in a narrow sense, as moving economic questions into the political sphere of the state and thus making them subject to regulation, often with a very negative connotation (see Courchene, 1980). This is however not how we understand the term. Rather, we define politicizing the economy more broadly as *questioning the politics of the economy*. The *politics of the economy*, analogous to the politics of society, concerns issues of power distribution and resource allocation. These questions are, as far as we are concerned, no less political in nature when raised within the context of the economy, and we believe that the delegitimization of raising these questions represents one of the biggest issues of the 21st century economy. This also seems a far more fundamental issue to us than the question of regulation, though we wish to clarify that we do not share the negative view of regulation that informs the narrow definition commonly used.

Finally, our choice to frame it as *re*-politicizing the economy is to emphasize the fact that these questions of power distribution and resource allocation have not always been considered off limits. Indeed, as we expand on in our Literature Review and Theory chapters, we see this delegitimization as being a direct consequence of the development of the market society. As such, it is unsurprising, given how central the economy is to the functioning of society, and the foundational nature of these ‘political’ questions, that such issues have been raised many times throughout history, before they were declared taboo by market society.

1.5.2. Values

Values are a central concept for our inquiry here. However, we feel it necessary to define exactly what we mean by the term as it can both be used to refer to ‘normative values’, such as solidarity, equality, or obedience, and as we use it here, as a plural for forms of wealth. As such, when we talk of the capability to recognize alternative values, we understand it in terms of wealth recognition beyond that which can be measured, at least a monetary sense. For example, when we speak of social value, we speak of the worth of social benefits and public goods as they are understood in GT, not the normative positions that inform these relations.

This understanding of values shares some similarity to Bourdieu’s capitals (1986), though there are a couple of important distinctions worth mentioning. Firstly, while we are concerned with values that overlap with Bourdieu’s capitals, this is not exclusively the case, for example, the value of well-being, which is later discussed in our analysis chapter, does not directly correspond to any of Bourdieu’s ‘capitals’. Secondly, the term ‘capital’ implies a resource invested with the expectation of some return, while we have instead chosen the term ‘values’ to emphasize inherent

value as opposed to transactional value. This difference can also be seen in Bourdieu's usage of the term 'capital' as his Forms of Capitals are conceptualized as resources that people employ in social relations (Ibid.).

2. Literature review

The idea of politicizing the economy, especially in the broader way that we use the term, has largely been ignored by the field of economics. Furthermore, within the field there seems to be a general belief that raising political questions regarding the economy is an inherently detrimental action. This belief seems to stem from two specific arguments widely accepted in the field of economics, both, in our view, misinterpretations of reality. The first of these notions is that economics is a non-normative science that can achieve objectively true results, i.e. that economics is a “positive science”. The second argument that seems to motivate this belief is that economic liberty is the foundation for any and all other liberties. By this argument, intervention in the free market is a fundamental restriction of liberty.

The former of these notions is a product of *positive economics*, a term often associated with the economist Milton Friedman, though it has a far broader history. Indeed, though Friedman arguably deserves the credit for popularizing the concept, he himself credits John Neville Keynes, father of John Maynard Keynes, for whom Keynesian economics is named. In his book *The Scope and Method of Political Economy*, the elder Keynes distinguishes between *positive science* concerned with what is, *normative science* concerned with what ought to be, and *art* concerned with attaining a specific end, he further argues that confusion among the three is as common as it is problematic and a frequent source of errors and that there is an urgent need for the development of a positive science of political economy.

(Keynes, 1999)

Another antecedent to Friedman’s positive economics is Lionel Robbins’ work, which also gave us the rational choice theory of economics and restating the idea of *homo economicus*, the concept that humans act as rational self-interested, though

Robbins' would stress not necessarily egotistical, actors (Robbins, 1932). Though the concept itself dates back to the works of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, with Smith stating in *Wealth of Nations* that it is not out of the kindness of the butcher that he provides us with food, but rather out of his own interest (Smith, 2015). In Robbins' *Essay on the nature and significance of economic science* (1932), which was perhaps one of the most influential works on economic methodology in the early 20th century, he makes the claim that "...*economics deals with ascertainable facts; ethics with valuations and obligations*" (Ibid., p. 132) and the two therefore cannot be meaningfully combined into a singular discipline. It should however be noted that Robbins did not claim that economics and ethics have no relation at all. Rather, the strict delimitation he puts between the two is more rooted in his definition of economics as "... *the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses*" (Ibid., p. 15) rather than a belief that the economy is completely free of ethical questions and concerns. While not identical with Friedman's understanding of positive economics, it is apparent to us that Friedman clearly drew on this understanding in developing his own.

Besides these antecedents within the field of economics Friedman also drew heavily, if implicitly, on the Enlightenment notion of the scientific method, developed largely in what today would be called the natural sciences, for his development of a methodology of positive economics. Indeed, the method he lays out, centered on developing hypotheses and testing them against empirical data, is basically the scientific method that was first employed by Galileo and Newton, but with the examples given transplanted to the realms of economics. While Friedman was not completely ignorant that the type of "*objectivity*" implied by this methodology was problematic for the social sciences, he did not consider it

unachievable. Rather, he argued, that the issue of the researcher essentially being part of the subject matter in social science, by virtue of being a human studying human interaction, was merely analogous to the indeterminacy principle in natural sciences. (Friedman, 1966)

Though Friedman acknowledged that there existed a *normative science* and an *art* of economics, he argued that the *positive science* of economics, by virtue of its very essence as a positive science, ought to be kept independent of these in order to ensure objectivity. Further, by adopting what is essentially a positivist epistemology, he implicitly gives special status to the *positive science* of economics as the provider of objective “truth”. (Ibid.) This leads to a rather technocratic understanding of the subject matter of economics, the economy, and risks to reduce all economic issues to merely questions of finding the right approach to achieve a certain “objectively” optimal outcome. By acknowledging the existence of a *normative science* of economics in addition to the *positive science* of economics, Friedman, in a minor fashion, acknowledges that this is not an entirely appropriate understanding. However, he goes further on to argue, citing the debate concerning minimum wage legislation as a means to achieve a living wage, that differences of opinion among the public on the question of the economy mostly comes from the lack of consensus on the means to achieve agreed upon end goals, at least in the Western world. (Ibid) This shows that Friedman saw most economic issues in society around him as technocratic issues that can be solved objectively. A notion we vehemently disagree with, for reasons we will detail below.

Another element of Friedman’s understanding of economics that leads to a technocratic understanding of the field is the assumption of rational actors, which implies that given the same economic circumstances and interests, every person

will make the same decision. This concept has been critiqued for its assumption of what might be called “perfect” rationality, that we have no limits on our ability to act rationally. This critique led to the development of bounded rationality by Herbert A. Simon. While this concept left the basic principle of rational choice unchallenged, still operating on the assumption of humans as rational actors, it challenged the notion that we can achieve “perfect” rationality, as our ability to make rational decision is limited by various factors, ranging from our cognitive abilities to the availability of information. (Simon, 1982) While the concept of bounded rationality has done much to address the technocratic assumptions in rational choice theory and economics in general, it still operates on an assumption of economics as disconnected from normative questions.

While the notion of economics as a positive science has been influential in mainstream economics, it has not been without its detractors, one of which has been Kenneth E. Boulding, who has been influential within the field of evolutionary economics. Part of Boulding’s argument was that economics suffers from an epistemological problem, in that it aggregates various different elements as one, creating a taxonomy that within economics is taken for granted, but has little relevance to the real world. One example of such a taxonomy, according to Boulding, are the factors of production: land, labour, and capital. For example, he argues that land cannot be understood simply as a particular area of land, but also the land’s biological and chemical composition, which may have an important impact on the production, for example in agriculture. (Boulding, 1992)

Another epistemological issue with economics, which Boulding points out, is its supposed universality. If economics truly was a positive science, its prescriptions should, in theory, apply universally. However, as Boulding points out, one need only

look at the issue of development in the so-called Third World, to see that this is not the case. Boulding points out that following the advice of economics has been no guarantee of success for developing countries. (Ibid.) This can, if anything, be seen more clearly today, as, despite decades of additional theorizing and research, there has yet to be found a universal path to development, indicating that such a thing might not exist.

A final critique levelled at positive economics, and one we wholeheartedly agree with, is that, despite its claims to the opposite, it is full of normative statements. Indeed, Boulding questions the very notion that science and “facts” can be separated from normative questions of values, calling it “*an absurd byproduct of the now largely discarded logical positivism.*” (Ibid., p. 79) Indeed, Boulding goes as far as suggesting that the way human beings arrive at “facts”, by questioning and critiquing previous notions, is altogether not that dissimilar, if not entirely identical, with the notion through which we arrive at normative standpoints through questioning and critiquing given values (Ibid.)

The latter argument has been a foundation of the Austrian school of economics, often personified in F.A. Hayek, though it has roots going back to the birth of modern economics as a discipline, with a central tenet in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* being a preference for the free market over the mercantile system (Smith, 2015). This has been interpreted by some, including Hayek, as a demonstration of the general preferability of the free market over central planning, though it should be noted that not all agree with this interpretation. Some, such as Chomsky, argue that Smith’s preference for the free market was a product of his time, and that Smith would have been aghast by the modern capitalist economy, largely founded in his name (Chomsky, 2013).

Hayek's argument is based partly on methodological individualism, the notion that human actions should be understood as the actions of individuals pursuing individual goals. The other part of the basis for his argument is the notion that a centrally planned economy is impossible, as we have no collective ethical code, and that this makes it impossible to achieve a consensus, which thereby necessitates a centrally planned economy that is run by dictate and thereby authoritarian in nature. (Hayek, 1945) It should be noted here that Hayek was writing at a fundamentally different time, than our current situation, and he may therefore be somewhat excused for operating on the assumption that the only alternative to capitalist economy is a centrally planned one, though we dispute this dichotomous view of the economy.

Hayek's view of human action, as motivated by individual actors acting in a self-interested manner, owes a lot to Hobbesian philosophy and especially Hobbes' ideas about the state of nature and what might be called human nature. Hobbes' view on the state of nature was one of suffering and pain, with each fighting an endless war against all others to satisfy their wants and needs. For Hobbes, this meant that for a society or civilization to emerge, what was first needed was an all-powerful leader, the so-called 'Leviathan', for which his most famous work was named, to establish a social order and social contract. (Hobbes, 1996) Interestingly, Hayek starts from a similar point of departure but ends up in a rather different place. Both Hobbes and Hayek start from the premise that human beings are inherently individualistic, in the sense that they are largely driven by self-interest and concern for their own well-being. However, whereas Hobbes ends up, in effect, arguing for a centralized authority, in the form of his *Leviathan*, Hayek from a very similar analysis ends up arguing against such, with reference to economic liberty.

This may partly be explained by context because while both writers shared a similar analysis and starting point, they were writing in vastly different times and with vastly different aims. For instance, Hobbes' *Leviathan* was written during the 17th century with an aim to provide an account of and legitimacy to the emergence of states and centralized authorities in the form of absolutist monarchs. In contrast, Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* was first published in 1944, as World War II gave way to the Cold War, was written with an explicit aim to defend liberal and capitalist economic notions and ideals against the perceived threat of socialism and communism, as witnessed by the preface, in which he refers to the book as written with a sense of duty (Hayek, 1945).

Another place where the two writers have a clear commonality, and where Hayek, knowingly or unknowingly, draws on a Hobbesian view of the world, is in their conception of liberty as a fundamentally negative concept, i.e. freedom *from* rather than freedom *to*. While Hayek defined liberal freedom as "...freedom from coercion, freedom from the arbitrary power of other men ..." (Ibid. p. 19), Hobbes defined it, in rather more universal terms as "*the absence of opposition*" (Hobbes, 1996, chap. XXI). This negative definition of freedom lies behind much of Hayek's argument that liberty in any form necessitates economic liberty, since wealth, being a proxy and form of power, is what allows us freedom from coercion, essentially by being a counter-force for us to deploy at our convenience. In essence, Hayek argued that the free market and the economic liberty it provides is the wellspring from which we draw the power to achieve liberty in other areas of life (Hayek, 1945).

While we in no way wish to be interpreted as equating the Austrian school of economics with the whole of mainstream economics, we find it fair to say that the conception of economic liberty as foundational to all other liberties and the

methodological individualism Hayek employed have both been widely adopted in mainstream economics.

It is these traits of mainstream economics, positivism and the reduction of liberty to a matter of free markets, that forces us to position ourselves in opposition to it. Not only are these traits flawed, they have also enabled the very development we seek to challenge here, the de-politicization of the economy and the separation between the market and society.

Regarding the flawed nature of these traits, starting with positivism, not only do we agree with Boulding's critique of the concept, we would also go as far to add that the notion of positivism has no place within any science that centres on human interaction, that being the social sciences including economics.

The problem is the assumption of '*like units*'. Positivism is essentially an attempt to adopt the scientific method, as understood in natural sciences, in social sciences (Bryman, 2012). However, this method relies on '*like units*', that is the notion that the unit of study is the same as any other unit of the same type. Put simply, the scientific method works in natural sciences because any hydrogen atom, for example, can be expected to react in exactly the same way to the same stimuli as any other hydrogen atom, provided you control for outside interference in your experiment.

This is not the case in social sciences, where the units of study are human beings and their interactions. Human beings are unique individuals, not '*like units*', regardless of how much one controls for outside interference, there is every chance that two individuals will react differently to the same stimuli, despite the fact that

general statistical assumptions can be made about what is the most likely reaction, there exists no guarantee that this will hold for any specific case.

This not only means that positivism makes for a questionable epistemological position in the social sciences, but also makes the notion that human interactions are governed by natural laws, in the same way as physical phenomena, impossible.

As for the reduction of liberty to the free markets, the flaw here really lies in the assumptions of methodological individualism and the Hobbesian view of human nature that it is based on. Methodological individualism shares the issues of positivism, as it is essentially proposing that self-interest, by law of nature, governs all human actions. Furthermore, even causal observation of reality shows this not to be true. If it were how would one explain the countless cases of solidarity and self-sacrifice that can be found throughout history?

The traditional response to this critique has been to argue that it mistakes self-interest for selfishness and that self-interest is best understood as a set of preferences possibly including the well-being of others (Anonymous, 1998). However, we find this counterargument disingenuous, as we see little evidence of this understanding of self-interest in mainstream economics, outside of instances where it engages with this critique. For example, Routledge Dictionary of Economics defines 'self-interest' simply as "*Private interest. This desire for personal gain prompts productive activity*" (Rutherford, 2012, p. 535). Though it does make note not to confuse it with selfishness, this is done with reference to private returns on cooperative ventures (Ibid.), not some preference for others well-being.

Regardless of its validity, this counterargument does not solve the problems with methodological individualism. The only way self-interest can be understood as a

natural law, which governs all human actions that is also coherent with the entirety of human actions past, present, and future, is to define it by the actions it supposedly provokes. If self-interest is the reason why robbers rob banks and why firefighters run into burning buildings, and everything between those two extremes, then the only reasonable definition of self-interest is as *that which makes us act*, which is quite far from the definitions given by mainstream economics. It also leaves self-interest as quite an empty concept, as it covers any and all possible motivations.

We are well aware that we are not the first to take issue with the field of economics. Indeed, many writers have taken on the so-called 'dismal science'. One of these writers is Karl Polanyi, whose thoughts on the economy have formed much of our theoretical framework, as such his particular critiques of the field will be dealt with in our Theory chapter.

Another writer, whose work on the concept of economic democracy has inspired us is Robin Archer. Archer argues that those subject to an organization's authority should have a say in its decision-making. This has made him a strong advocate of workers' co-operative and worker self-management, both of which he sees as opportunities to incorporate democratic norms into the economy, where capitalism is the dominant ideology and capital the ultimate authority. (Archer, 1995)

The idea of establishing some form of democratic control of the economy has drawn the interest of many social thinkers over the years. Polanyi was fascinated by and full of praise for Robert Owen's socialist experiments with the concept (Polanyi, 1944). Additionally, the concept is central to Robert Hahnel's and Michael Albert's model of participatory economics (Albert, 2004), a direct inspiration for the DisCO Framework.

One commonality between Archer, Polanyi, Hahnel, and Albert is their focus on worker-controlled organizations as central actors in the quest for economic democracy. Archer argued that unions, especially their organization and interaction with employers and government was central to achieving economic democracy (Archer, 1995). He shared this view with Polanyi, who saw unions and government regulation as essential counter-movements to the market economy, a concept we will explain in detail in our Theory chapter. Polanyi also commended Owen's experiments with self-managed workshops and factories. (Polanyi, 1944)

It is perhaps an effect of the declining influence of unions and regulation brought on by neoliberalism and its deregulatory agenda that there has been a marked shift in the writing on economic democracy towards self-owned and self-managed organizations. This is perhaps best illustrated by the concept of participatory economics, which represents a complete economic system structured around the basis of democratically controlled worker and consumer associations. (Albert, 2004) This relationship between self-organization and economic democracy is partly the reason why we believe the DisCO Framework shows potential for increasing democratic control over the economy.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to lay out our methodological considerations and to outline the structure of our research design. We start with a brief presentation of critical theory before outlining our ontological and epistemological positions. This is followed by an introduction to our data. The chapter then concludes by laying out our analysis strategy.

3.1. Philosophy of Science

3.1.1 Critical Theory

Our point of departure for this inquiry is rooted in critical theory. Critical theory concerns itself with the critique of hegemonic structures. In order to justify our position as critical theorists, we first begin by introducing critical theory, some of its key contributors, and where we position ourselves within the field.

While critical theory has roots going back to Socrates, the modern understanding of critical theory can be traced back to Frankfurt School in the 1930s. Much of current critical theory is influenced by the original thinkers of Frankfurt School such as Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas (Bronner, 2011).

Horkheimer, who was the director of the Frankfurt Institute during the pivotal period in the 1930's, when the institute relocated to America after the rise of Hitler (Ibid.) argued that a critical theory needs to meet three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative (Bohman, 2005).

For Horkheimer this meant that critical theory must go beyond merely explaining the issues with the current social order, it must also include a practical approach changing this state of affairs, taking account of the actors in position to implement this change, and finally it must take a normative stance towards both its criticisms of the status quo and proposal for social transformation. Horkheimer would later develop this line of thinking, concluding that capitalism could only be transformed by increasing democratization. (Ibid.)

In the interest of intellectual honesty, it should however be noted that Horkheimer moved significantly to the right politically, and also towards a more metaphysical approach, in his later years, having renounced both communism and Marxism after being spurned by the totalitarian turn of the Soviet Union under Stalin. (Bronner, 2011)

It is this tradition of critical theory as understood by the younger Horkheimer, as a critical social inquiry aimed towards democratization of capitalist society, that we place ourselves, though we should also note that neither author considers themselves a Marxist. When we find ourselves drawn to critical theory, it is less a result of its connection to Marxism, but rather our belief in the emancipatory project that this version of critical theory entails.

This emancipatory project also forms the basis for our problem formulation. To reiterate, our problem formulation broadly concerns itself with how society can re-politicize the economy. Embedded within this research question is an inherent critique of the market economy as a hegemonic structure singularly focussed on

efficiency for the sake of profit maximization, a notion we explain in more detail in our Theory section.

3.1.2.Ontology

Our ontological approach is rooted in a subjective understanding of the nature of social entities. We have chosen subjectivism as we believe that the social world can only be understood from individuals' subjective perspective. In short, when it comes to the social world, we do not believe in the existence of objective facts, only subjective experiences of the world surrounding us all. (O'Leary, 2007) Our subjectivist ontology is also part of the reason why we reject the very notion of positivism in social sciences, as positivism requires the existence of an objective reality to function as a method of inquiry.

Our subjectivist position also means that we see meaning as a subjective matter, that is we do not believe it is possible to assign an objective meaning to social relations, rather the meaning of any social relations are subjectively constructed by the participants (Nicholas and Hathcoat, 2014).

Based on this understanding then, our focus and interest is in both social actors' individual perspectives of social reality as well as the shared understandings that create social reality.

A final consideration that led us to adopt an subjectivist ontology is a concern common to critical theorists, of not taking for granted specific assumptions of the social world (Schwandt, 2007), which any claim of an objective social reality would necessarily contain. Additionally, as we are both researchers and human beings, we

therefore cannot extract ourselves completely from our own subjective realities, and that this will naturally influence our inquiry.

3.1.3. Epistemology

In terms of our epistemology, we assume an interpretivist position. As researchers in the field of social science, we adamantly believe that any knowledge generated from studying social reality must be researched, analyzed and understood differently from that of the natural sciences. Thus, as we touched upon in regards to positive economics above, we reject the notion of positivism, or the stance that it is even possible for researchers to approach the field of social science using the same techniques they would in the study of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2012).

Rather, an interpretivist approach stresses the meaningfulness of interpretations in order to understand their social reality. As Richard Whitley notes, "*Interpretavists look for meanings and motives behind people's actions like: behaviour and interactions with others in the society and culture*" (cited in Chawdhury, 2014, p. 433). Therefore, we place great emphasis not only on understanding how GT members perceive the world around them but also their interpretations of these perceptions. Indeed, we see it as our fundamental role as interpretivist researchers "*...to grasp the subjective meaning of social action*" (Bryman, 2012, p. 30).

Our interpretivist epistemology is a natural extension of our subjective ontology as the subjective nature of social reality means that it cannot possibly be understood, and therefore no knowledge can be created, on any other basis than by interpreting the subjective understandings that forms the basis of social reality.

We also believe that an interpretivist approach is well suited for critical theory specifically. Partly because by basing our analysis on the interpretations of our respondents, we hopefully avoid imposing hegemonic understandings on the situation we are investigating, though we stress once again that we are aware that we cannot escape our own interpretations and that these will therefore influence our understanding, regardless of the fact that we intend to do our best to avoid imposing these over the interpretations of our respondents, as we believe their interpretations represent a far more valuable understanding of the DisCO Framework than ours, given their intimate experience of the framework.

That having been said, as critical theorists, we have no qualms with acknowledging that we are not disinterested observers, but have entered into this inquiry with a specific normative interest, namely in re-politicizing the economy and challenging the hegemony of the market society. As such, this interest will naturally shape our interpretation of the DisCO Framework.

3.2. Data

3.2.1. Documents and Materials

One of our primary sources of data is the documentation and the vast amount of textual material that GT has produced on the DisCO Framework. This includes the DisCO Manifesto, a programmatic statement of the intent and motivation behind the development of the DisCO Framework, as well as a thorough introduction to the Framework.

Another major source of data for us is the Guerrilla Media Collective Wiki, which contains a detailed description of the governance model, structures, and

procedures, which make up the DisCO Framework, as such, this is very much the core of our data. In addition, the Guerrilla Media Collective Wiki also contains a number of pages detailing some of the more complex concepts within the DisCO Framework, which we also rely on for our analysis.

The final textual source of data that we rely on is Guerrilla Translation's website, which contains the pro-bono work, or love work, published by GT and as well as a number of pages on the DisCO Framework and GT's experience as a DisCO. This gives us some insight into how GT operates, as so far the only active DisCO, including some of the considerations they have had in developing the model.

3.2.2. Interviews

In addition to the documentation of the DisCO Framework available to us, we have also conducted interviews with members of GT. In addition to these interviews we also had an initial interview with Stacco, our primary contact at GT, though this was more focused on clarifying a few factual issues that we were unsure of at the time. During this first interview, we also discussed the possibility of conducting some form of action research, an ambition we, unfortunately, were forced to abandon, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, this initial interview took more the form of a dialogue or discussion rather than a formalized interview designed for gathering qualitative data. The transcripts and interview guides are all available in the appendices 1-6.

As for the two interviews we conducted for the specific purpose of data collection, both were designed as focus group interviews, based on a semi-structured interview guide. We chose this design for our interviews based primarily on our interpretivist epistemology, as we felt a focus group design, which is more oriented

towards participants' individual perspectives, was more suitable than perhaps other designs. Although our interpretivist approach also led us to adopt elements of conceptual interviews and narrative interviews in some of our questions, asking our participants to relay their understanding of specific concepts and their experiences to us. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009)

Our first interview was conducted on 9 April 2020, and our participants consisted of Stacco, who participated in all our interviews, along with Sarah. As both Denmark and Spain were in lockdown at the time due to COVID-19, this naturally marked our interaction on this occasion, most obviously in that neither us nor our participants were able to be in the same location for the interview. Though we also find it likely, if not certain, that the general context of a crisis may have impacted the interaction in subtle and undetectable ways, as crises can shape peoples' interpretation and experience of their situation.

In this interview, our questions were mainly themed around four of the seven DisCO principles, which we had selected as the most relevant in terms of our research question. The four principles we focused on were *multi-constituent in nature*, *active creators of commons*, *centered on care work*, and *prototypes for new flows of values*. The first of these, multi-constituency, was chosen based on two considerations. Firstly, that it reflects wider society more so than the market, in which the market itself is the only constituency that is taken note of. Secondly, in that it necessitates some level of democratic norms and institutions in order to avoid the dominance of a single group.

The principle of active creators of commons was chosen partly as it goes directly against personal gain as a motive, as there are few gains to be made in being the creator of commons. Closely related is that commons are reciprocal in nature,

another factor that we felt spoke to including this principle as a point of focus in our interview. Similarly, the principle on care work clashes with the notion of personal gain as motive and requires a certain amount of reciprocity to function. Here, however, an additional consideration was the specific operations of GT. Given that so much of their operations take place online, and that care work traditionally is done informally, we saw several potential issues that could rise from this focus on care work. As such, whether and how our informants had experienced those issues was an additional concern in including this principle.

Regarding the final principle, on prototypes for new flows of value, we had conflicting reasons for including it. One of us saw this largely as an effort to quantify and measure values and was therefore worried that this could lead to commodification of the value-flows the prototypes were designed to track. The other argued that tracking these value-flows could be central to recognizing alternative types of value, and therefore this principle was relevant for us here. These conflicting viewpoints led us to include the principle not only on the basis of testing these assumptions, but also as we felt, given our own very different interpretations of this principle, that it was crucial to get a perspective on this principle from within the organization.

The second of our data gathering interviews was based on an interview guide based on three thematic codes derived from our theoretical framework, namely, recognition of alternative values and motives, redistribution and reciprocity as mechanisms of economic activity, and democratic institutions and norms. How we understand these codes and how we derived these from our theoretical foundations is detailed in our Theory chapter.

We chose to theme this interview around our theoretical codes partly to test our theoretical assumptions against reality. However, another reason for this approach was to investigate any possible disconnect between DisCOs in practice and in theory.

The DisCO Framework as it is detailed in the documentation, carries many elements of these codes, which is promising to our research, however it is also, in our view, largely meaningless if it is not carried into the actual praxis of organizations adopting this framework. As GT can be considered the originator of the DisCO Framework, we consider it likely that if it is not the case that these elements carry over into their praxis, it is unlikely to do so in other cases, though the non-prescriptive nature of DisCO means that this is largely an assumption that can only truly be checked once a more diverse variety of DisCOs exists.

3.3. Analysis Strategy

Our analysis strategy is based on abductive reasoning. Blaikie defines abduction as *"...the logic of inquiry used to produce social scientific accounts of social life by drawing on the social actors' accounts of their everyday activities, including the symbolic meanings, motives, and rules that orient their actions"* (Blaikie, 2019). Thus we place great emphasis on understanding the subjective perspectives and experiences of our interviewees in our analysis.

Our analysis strategy is based on a thematic analysis of our data. Most of our themes are theory-based and thus are derived from our theoretical framework which we describe in detail in the Theory chapter below. The theoretically derived themes we employ are recognition of alternative values and motives, reciprocity and redistribution as alternative mechanisms of economic activity, and democratic

norms and institutions. In addition to these theoretically derived themes, additional themes emerged during our interviews and the coding process and thus developed ad hoc based on a number of indicators of their significance.

These empirically derived codes were carefully selected based on repetition, indigenous typologies, and metaphors and analogies. We chose these indicators of significance on the logic that repetition, or recurring topics, is indicative of a topic of importance to our respondents. Similarly indigenous typologies, allows us to better understand how our respondents frame the world around them, in our case with a specific concern for the indigenous typologies that make up a lot of the DisCO Framework's terminology. Finally metaphors and analogies are essential in understanding the perspective of our respondents, as metaphors and analogies are essentially a way of explaining a concept by relating it to another.

The purpose of our analysis is to thoroughly understand how GT, and thus the DisCO Framework, embeds society through the recognition of alternative values and motivations, redistributive and reciprocal economic mechanisms, and democratic norms and institutions. We intend to address this through document analysis to identify what policies and processes DisCO and GT have in place and through interview analysis to understand how this is enacted through the GT members' subjective experiences.

4. Guerilla Translation and the DisCO Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the subject of our research by providing background information on our case organization, its governance model, and our interviewees. Thus, this chapter is divided into three sections and starts with an introduction to Guerilla Translation, followed by an overview of the DisCO Framework, and finally concludes with a presentation of interviewees.

4.1. Guerilla Translation

Guerilla Translation (GT) is a self-described “...*activist translation and general communications collective*” (Guerilla Translation, n.d.1). Originally founded in Spain in 2013, GT was born out of a need for a more equitable “*livelihood vehicle*” for translation activists to be fairly compensated for contributing their time and energy into producing more socially meaningful content (Guerilla Translation, 2019).

The cooperative boasts a small but diverse cast of contributing members that identify as “...*avid readers, content curators, and social/environmental issue-focused people who love to translate and love to share*” (Guerilla Translation, n.d.1.) Further, roles and responsibilities within GT are determined based on level of commitment and engagement (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2). There are two levels of commitment-*casual* and *committed*-with casual relationships referring to Supporters and Contributors and committed relationships referring to Transition Translators and Guerilla Translators (Ibid.).

Essentially, Transition Translators are those contributors that wish to become Guerilla Translators, with all the roles, responsibilities, rights, and compensation

that come with the latter's role. But first, Transition Translators go through what is termed the *dating phase*, a nine-month period in which they commit themselves to caring and working with the collective and learning more about the rhythms of the organization. (Ibid).

The work GT does is two-fold: on the one hand, they produce pro-bono work, or love work, that is both commons-generating and socially or environmentally oriented. On the other, they use their translation and communications services for income-generating livelihood work, that is paid work (Ibid). In the Guerilla Translation Handbook, both types of work are described as *productive*, which we describe below, before briefly highlighting their second focus on *reproductive* work (2019).

GT defines *productive* work as the actual translation and communications content they produce (Ibid). Besides translating, GT offers a wide variety of communication services including direct editing, transcription, A/V adaptation, subtitling and dubbing, website translation and localization, and simultaneous interpretation (Guerilla Translation, n.d.4). All services completed by GT translators are done without the use of any automated software to aid in the translation process so as to maintain the integrity and honor the intentions of the original piece (Ibid).

Productive work constitutes both pro-bono work and paid work, with the latter considered to be livelihood work, or work that is done to maintain the livelihood of the individual members. Proceeds from paid work are then funnelled into a collective fund that is redistributed to all members based *both* on members contributions doing paid work and pro-bono work.

Additionally, all productive work-whether paid or pro-bono-is produced for the commons. This means that most of their work is published under a Peer Production License, making material available to all those that seek to share information rather than use the material for a profit (Guerilla Translation, n.d.3).

Further, GT only works on content that they consider socially meaningful. This is evidenced by the themes on their website under which content is published. These themes include Activism, Environment, Feminism, Mind, New Economy, P2P/Commons, and Post-Capitalism (Guerilla Translation, n.d.1).

Reproductive work in GT is any work completed that is done for the care of either the collective or for the care of other members. Reproductive work in this sense then can be understood as the work needed to either maintain the livelihood and well-being of both individual members and the collective as a whole.

Lastly, it is important to note that GT and the DisCO framework were simultaneously developed and thus GT "*...serves as a practical example to illustrate the model*"(Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.3.). So while it is true that our inquiry here is focused on the DisCO Framework, we cannot adequately do so without also discussing GT, as it is the only practicing DisCO. Next, we turn to present the DisCO Framework.

4.2. DisCO Framework

Distributed Cooperative Organizations, more affectionately known as DisCOs, are "*...a governance/economic model for self-sustaining, mission-oriented, distributed*

organizations" (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2., *Overview*). Broadly speakly, DisCOs seek to encapsulate the traditions and theories within the P2P, commons, cooperative, and feminist economic movements into a holistic organizational structure that both recognizes and rewards not only livelihood work but also love and pro-bono work (Ibid.).

DisCOs do *not* operate under capitalist values and assumptions and values but rather function "*...to extract people from the capitalist marketplace so they can use their unique talents to do fulfilling, socially and environmentally meaningful work*" (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2., *Overview*). One way this is done is through DisCOs emphasis on contribution tracking, which accounts for individual members' contributions doing pro-bono work, or love work, and financially compensates such work through a monthly income distribution system that funnels profits from livelihood work (Ibid).

The foundation of the DisCO Framework is based on the 7 Principles of Open Value Cooperativism, which are as follows:

- (1) *Oriented towards social and environmental ends*
- (2) *Multi-constituent in nature*
- (3) *Active creators of commons*
- (4) *Transnational in nature*
- (5) *Centered on care work*
- (6) *Prototypes for new flows of values*
- (7) *Designed to be federated* (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2).

However, it should be noted that these principles, and the entirety of the DisCO framework is non-prescriptive. Therefore, it is up to the discretion of those starting a DisCO to adopt what they see fit within the framework.

Lastly, the DisCO framework operates on an “opt-in engagement” model, meaning that membership is open to *committed* members. That is, voting rights are granted and participation is expected from those members that demonstrate a meaningful level of commitment, with fully-committed members given the most equitable form of influence and control (Ibid).

4.3. Presentation of Interviewees

Before moving on to our Theory chapter, we first wish to present our interviewees: Sarah Escribano, Silvia López, and Stacco Troncoso, all of whom are Guerilla Translators, or fully committed members of GT, and provide our reasoning for selecting these interviewees.

As we are primarily interested in understanding member experiences in GT, our ultimate selection was based on a single criterion, an active involvement and association with GT. While our original intention was to interview six members, in order to embrace a diversity of perspectives, we were only able to secure commitments from three members. However, we believe this largely due to external constraints out of our control, namely the COVID-19 pandemic which may have limited other members’ time and commitment to participate in our project. That being said, we still contend that even with three interviewees, we are still able to draw on the perspectives of multiple members’ experiences.

Sarah Escribano: Guerilla Translator

Sarah started working with GT in October 2018 although she was aware of the organization well before. Her responsibilities include translation, social media

content, and of course, productive work, that is livelihood and love work. Before her involvement in GT, Sarah worked in the translation sector for three years.

Silvia López: Guerilla Translator and Editor-in-Chief

Silvia López first got into contact with GT back in 2015 after stumbling upon their website. While she exchanged a few emails with them, she was unable to further her involvement due to her impending acceptance into a masters program at the time. However, after completing her studies, Silvia re-established contact with GT and officially started in October 2018, the same time as Sarah. Her work involves English to Spanish translation, Spanish copy editing, community building, as of recent, investigation into the Spanish regulation regarding legal coop structures.

Stacco Troncoco: Guerilla Translator and Co-Founder

Stacco is one of the co-founders of GT and further, of the DisCO Framework. He was motivated to begin this work in an attempt to embed theories of Commons and P2P into a practical governance model. His strong interest in a variety of social and environmental issues and his experience in professional translation led to his commitment to work on GT and the DisCO Framework.

5. Theory

In this section we present our theoretical framework and our inspirations for developing it. We start by presenting Karl Polanyi's concepts of the double movement and market society, which form the foundation for our framework. From there we draw in other inspirations which have informed our framework and explain our reasoning as to why, as well as the relation to Polanyi's work. Finally, we present our theoretical framework along with our argument for adopting it and how we plan on having it inform our analysis.

5.1. The Double Movement and Market Society

In his book *The Great Transformation* (1944), economic historian and social thinker Karl Polanyi analyzed the rise and fall of the market society and laid out two very important and often overlooked concepts.

The first of these is that ever since the creation of the self-regulating free market as a theoretical concept, there has been a double movement in Western, and later global, society between those trying to develop and maintain such a free market and those trying to preserve a notion of 'society', whether in a traditional form or in some new form. Indeed he laid the chaos and rise of fascism in the early 20th century squarely at the door of the free marketeers, who had sacrificed so many of society's traditional safeguards in order to maintain a flawed system. (Polanyi, 1944)

The second concept of Polanyi is, if anything, far more damning for the notion of the self-regulating free market, as he points out that it is inherently contradictory and based on a number of false assumptions about human nature. Not only is the free market's disdain for government intervention a half-truth at best, as it relies on government intervention for its existence, it's supposed basis in human nature was

also largely a result of misreading human history. For example, Polanyi shows, with reference to anthropological research, that humanity's supposed predilection for barter, which forms the very basis of the notion of the "economic human" in liberal economics, is a historical falsehood. He further shows that where markets did exist throughout the history before liberalism, they were strictly local, often heavily regulated and altogether auxiliary to the overall function of the economy. Finally, he documents how production for gain, or to use a more modern term, profit was largely an invention by economic liberals, not a product of human nature. (Ibid.)

This incongruity with human nature was, to Polanyi, at the heart of the contradiction of the self-regulating free market, as it meant that in order to maintain itself, it had to rely on government regulation keeping, for lack of a better term, more human concerns, out of the market. (Ibid.)

Polanyi wrote *The Great Transformation* while in America during WWII. However, the main thesis of the work was developed between 1939 and 1940 while he was teaching "Tutorial Classes", organized by the Workers' Educational Association, at Morley College in London. Polanyi completed the book while at Bennington College, Vermont in 1941-1943 and it was finally published in 1944. (Ibid.)

Perhaps as a reflection of the time he was writing in, Polanyi was more concerned with explaining how the world had spiralled into two unbelievably destructive world wars, and the lure of fascism than he was with laying out a blueprint for change. However, towards the end of this work, he gave a suggestion for how to rectify the underlying causes that had led to such awful developments.

Polanyi sees the rise and subsequent fall, under the weight of its own contradictions, of market society as the central cause for both world wars and the

rise of fascism. The central tenet of market society is that production is organized by markets. This in turn requires that the means of production and ultimately, humanity itself, is reorganized and commodified in the market. (Ibid.)

Polanyi untangles the liberal conceptions of land and labor and shows how market society, by marketizing and commodifying these, subjugates the very essence of society to the market. This subjugation is due to the nature of these concepts and their relation to society. The concept of land, as understood in economics, is merely the economic product of nature. Similarly, labor, as economics understand it, is merely the economic product of human activity. Not only does market society commodify nature and the activity of humanity, by reducing them to their economic elements it also completely disregards all other elements, thereby subjugating society completely to the market. (Ibid.)

The ruinous long-term consequences of such a development was obvious to Polanyi, who noted: *"The proposition is as utopian in respect to land as in respect to labor. The economic function of land is but one of many vital functions of land."* (Ibid. p. 178) As this quote shows, it was clear to him how this development was unsustainable in the long run, as well as the integral link between society and the non-economic functions of nature and human activity.

Polanyi is not the only person who has pointed out the inconsistency in these concepts. Marx's concept of alienation of labor dates back to his *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1959) and Kenneth Boulding would later critique these concepts as being aggregates that confuse more than they enlighten (Boulding, 1992). However, Polanyi deserves credit for illuminating the mechanisms by which the rise of the market society necessitated the subjugation of society to the market.

A final component of the rise of the market society was an intelligentsia, which was both highly favorable of the notions of the market economy and ascribed to its workings the attributes of natural law (Polanyi, 1944). However, upon inspecting the history of economics, Polanyi rejects the naturalism of 19th century economics as a gross misinterpretation and rather suggests that the seeming ‘inevitability’ of market society was not due to some law of nature, but its broad favorability among large groups of society. As he puts it:

What made economic liberalism an irresistible force was this congruence of opinion between diametrically opposed outlooks; for what the ultrareformer Bentham and the ultratraditionalist Burke equally approved of automatically took on the character of self-evidence. (Ibid. p. 127)

While Polanyi saw the rise of the market society as inevitable given the specific circumstance under which it arose, he did not believe it was given by natural law, as the quote above shows, nor did he believe it was the sole force directing the course of society. As we mentioned in the beginning of this section, one of the concepts that defines Polanyi’s work is that of the double movement as the lynchpin of modernity. This double movement was created by the interactions between the push for a market society (i.e. the subjugation of society to the market) and a diverse set of counter-movements aimed at maintaining the market’s subjugation to society, or, to use a term that would later be adopted by scholars influenced by Polanyi, embed society into the emerging market economy. These counter-movements were, in Polanyi’s view, as central to the advancement of modernity as the development of market society. He also believed that these counter-movements were central to the maintenance of modern society. Indeed, when we say that he believed that the double movement was the lynchpin of modernity, we mean that

analogously, in that Polanyi points directly to the ultimate failure of this double movement as the root cause of two world wars and the rise of fascism. (Ibid.)

Polanyi did not believe that the proponents of the market society in any way wished to create this outcome. Further, neither Polanyi, nor us for that matter, believe that the mistakes made by proponents of market economy were done out of malice but rather out of misinterpretation. Indeed, Polanyi blames the fundamental contradiction of the market economy. By its inherent nature it requires the subjugation of the very foundations of society, human activity and nature, but by doing so it risks destroying the very society that it, contrary to capitalist belief, depends upon. (Ibid.)

The naturalism with which the proponents regarded the workings of the market, arguably formed the foundation for the notion of positive economics, previously discussed in our literature review above. While the concept of positive economics had yet to be fully developed, it is likely that Polanyi would have been as critical of the concept as us, given how critical he was of the naturalism of writers such as Malthus, Ricardo and Marx (Ibid.).

Another central misunderstanding on the part of the proponents of market economy concerned the double movement. Where Polanyi saw the double movement between the market society and a diverse set of counter-movements, many liberal thinkers saw a similar double movement between the natural development of the market economy and a collectivist conspiracy of various entrenched interests. (Ibid.)

Not only did Polanyi disprove the notion of a conspiracy by noting the independence and ubiquity, despite divergent interests, of these so-called

“collectivist” responses (Ibid.), he also noted that the proponents of the liberal creed, as he called it, were not above such measures themselves, stating:

No more conclusive proof could be offered of the inevitability of antiliberal or “collectivist” methods under the conditions of modern industrial society than the fact that even economic liberals themselves regularly used such methods in decisively important fields of industrial organization (Ibid. p. 148-149)

This quote, and the history it reflects, not only shows a certain amount of hypocrisy on the part of those subscribing to the collectivist conspiracy, but also makes explicit Polanyi’s belief in these methods as a natural response to the emergence of the market society. Despite its inaccuracy, the collectivist conspiracy has not disappeared since Polanyi’s time. Indeed, it forms the central premise and *raison d’être* of Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* (1945), discussed above, and still informs many contemporary proponents of the market economy.

Our decision to base our theoretical framework on Polanyi’s work is not just an expression of our general agreement with his thesis in *The Great Transformation*, but also a reflection of our belief that there is a general similarity between the time in which Polanyi wrote, and which he sought to explain, and our present day state of affairs. While one interpretation of the emergence of the post-war welfare state in the West is that the counter-movements successfully asserted themselves and thus restored the balance of Polanyi’s double movement, this interpretation no longer applies. The rise of neoliberalism and deregulation, exemplified in the ascension of Thatcher and Reagan, have upset this balance once again. One interpretation of our current conditions, and one that we subscribe to, is that much of our current troubles are rooted in the same cause as Polanyi identified in his time—the subjugation of society to the logic of the market.

While Polanyi is perhaps not the most well-known critic of market society, we are far from alone in this interpretation. Several academics and practitioners have drawn explicitly on Polanyi as inspiration for their work on our current social problems. This includes the FairShares Model¹, The EMES Network, which co-hosts a Polanyi Seminar with the Polanyi institute, along with the writings of Jean-Louis Laville, and Nina Boeger, the latter of which has been a direct inspiration for our inquiry here. (Laville, 2014; Ridley-Duff, 2015; Boeger, 2017; EMES Research Network, 2020)

Since the foundation for the market economy's subjugation of society, in Polanyi's view, was that the economic liberals had been successful in disembedding the market from wider society (Polanyi, 1944), it is perhaps unsurprising that writers inspired by Polanyi adopted the term "embeddedness" to describe the counter-movements that kept the market economy balanced in the double movement. Perhaps another reason that the term has caught on is that it highlights the importance of institutions constraining the market, a point noted by Laville (2010a), among others. This perhaps also explains Polanyi's emphasis on regulations (Polanyi, 1944), a point we shall return to below.

5.2. The Necessity of a Plural Economy

One inspiration Laville explicitly drew from Polanyi is the emphasis on a plural economy, or an economy consisting of multiple different parts, rather than just the market with its logic of production for gain (Laville, 2010a). Polanyi's historical analysis and review of the anthropological research of his time had shown that throughout history markets had been an auxiliary feature of the economy. Rather

¹ In the interest of full disclosure: both authors have previously done work on this model and became members of the FairShares Association on this basis of that work.

most economic activity took the form of redistribution through centralized bureaucracies or reciprocity in local communities (Polanyi, 1944). Laville thought that these alternative forms of economic activity were essential to embed society and its institutions back into the market (Laville, 2010a).

Polanyi is far from the only person to remark on the plural nature of the economy, as we mentioned previously, Boulding (1992) made a similar point later in his criticisms of mainstream economics. Laville would draw from a number of these pluralistic understandings of the economy to develop his own notion of solidarity economy. In solidarity economy, Laville combines an economic dimension, incorporating the elements of redistribution and reciprocity emphasized by previous work on plural economy, and a political dimension consisting of both the community's potential for action and the institutions whose power shapes the form of the economy. (Laville, 2010b)

It is this political dimension that makes solidarity economy of interest to us, as the stated goal of our inquiry here is to investigate the possibility of re-politicizing the economy. By incorporating the political dimension of the economy, solidarity economy shows potential as a theoretical foundation for understanding how such a process can take place. Another reason why Laville stresses the pluralistic nature of the economy in his notion of solidarity economy is to avoid overemphasis on the capitalist ideal of the firm, another point we shall return to below (Laville, 2010a, 2010b).

One reason why a plural understanding of the economy is so influential in Polanyi's and others' work is that it allows for more than just profit, or personal gain, as the motive for production (Polanyi, 1944; Laville, 2010a). This dates to Aristotle's differentiation between *Oikonomia*, the allocation of resources in the effort of

individual and communal welfare, and *Chrematisticke*, the pursuit of wealth for the sake of wealth itself (Ridley-Duff and McCulloch, 2019). While the modern economy may have its etymological roots in *oikonomia*, the reduction of the economy to the market has, in our view, led to an economy that in practice has more in common with *chrematisticke*.

As a driving force behind our interest in re-politicizing the economy, there is an intent to challenge the hegemonic position of the profit motive in the global economy today, therefore we consider it essential that our understanding of the same allows for alternative motives. The arguments of writers such as Polanyi and Laville, along with our own experiences and understandings of modern-day capitalism as being obsessed with the idea of growth for the sake of increasing profit, convince us that this necessitates a plural understanding of the economy, that includes more than the market as the sole mechanism of economic activity and more than just personal gain as a motive.

Another reason for our insistence on a plural understanding of the economy, closely related to that of motive, is value. Another detrimental effect of the market economy is that it is ignorant to all but financial wealth (Ibid.). This is why it requires society and nature be commodified in the forms of labor and land (Polanyi, 1944). As with motive, here too we find it essential to challenge this hegemony in order to be able attempt a politicization of the economy.

5.3. An Organizational Perspective

As we mentioned previously, our inquiry has been directly inspired by the work of Nina Boeger, specifically her working paper *Embedding Society in the Firm* (2017). It is from here we got the inspiration to investigate the possibility of re-politicizing the

economy through such a process. Before we explain the concept of how such a process can take place and how this has informed our theoretical framework, we would like to briefly address our choice of a slightly different terminology. While Boeger refers exclusively to firm as the subject of her paper (Ibid.), we have chosen the more generic, and in our view, inclusive term 'organization'. This is in part a reflection of the different contexts of our disciplines. While the term 'firm' carries a generic meaning for an economic organization within the context of legal studies, the colloquial understanding, which we see as far more relevant for the field of social entrepreneurship, of 'firm' is too conflated with the profit-motive, market economy, and the legal form of the company to be appropriate in our context here. Another closely related consideration is that we believe such a process, if to be successful in practice, must be open to and adopted by organizations that may not readily be identified as, or self-identify as, a 'firm'.

When it comes to how this paper has inspired us, it has been the central inspiration behind our research question, as we see the questions of re-politicizing the economy and embedding society in the economy as in many ways two sides of the same coin. To re-politicizing the economy is to raise the questions of what sorts of motives and values we want the economy to reflect and to challenge the hegemony of personal gain and wealth in our current economy. As such, while we do not wish to completely equate the two concepts, we see them as strongly interlinked, and while re-politicizing the economy in itself may not be enough to meaningfully embed society in the economy, we are convinced that it is a crucial first step.

This leads us to the second inspiration we drew from Boeger's paper, which was to focus our inquiry on alternative organizational structures as a method for achieving this. In this we are incorporating one of the paper's central arguments into the

premise for our inquiry; according to Boeger the development of neoliberalism, especially the focus on deregulation, have severed the traditional channels of mediations between society and the market (Ibid.). According to Polanyi the central mechanisms by which the counter-movements asserted themselves and balanced the double movement was through regulation and collective bargaining through trade unions (Polanyi, 1944). Not only has neoliberalism severed these channels, it has also created a societal context in which the efficacy of these channels has been significantly diminished.

[Because] *the power of shareholder corporations builds up in our political democracies, their privileges are being taken for granted while arguments that question the salience of these privileges are discouraged, even (or especially) by those in government whose role it is to generate regulation that contains the adverse effects of markets.* (Boeger, 2017, p. 4)

These conditions necessitate a new approach, given the significantly higher level of resistance that can be expected through the traditional channels. Another consideration that drew us towards the organizational level is our belief that there is no panacea for the problems of the market society. While we believe most of the problems facing current day society can be traced back to the disconnection of the market from society, brought on by neoliberalism after the post war period, and the resulting dominance of the market, it is equally clearly to us that this manifests differently depending on the specific local context. Being able to adapt to that specific context is therefore, in our eyes, paramount for any realistic solution for these problems. For example, the cultural norms of a society is likely to shape how it can be embedded into an organization. Furthermore the size and nature of the given organization is also likely to influence the opportunities and challenges of embedding society. While we do not believe regulation and collective bargaining as

inflexible as their reputations suggest, we do consider them incapable of achieving this level of flexibility and sensitivity to local context.

This is not to say that we consider regulation and collective bargaining as irrelevant. While we no longer see them as suitable mechanisms for social counter-movements, as Polanyi did in his time, we do believe they can serve two important roles in embedding society into the economy. First, while we consider them ill suited as mechanisms for achieving a more embedded economy, we consider both regulation and collective bargaining, to the extent it still exists, as vital to avoid a less embedded one. The institutional memory, the capabilities for mass mobilization and the legacy of labor activism makes labor parties and trade unions ideal for protecting what few concessions are afforded to society by the market. Second, both regulation and collective bargaining has the potential to serve as a vector of transmission between the micro-level of the organizations and the macro-level of the society in which they operate. Regulation could be used to collect best practices, establish standards and disseminate them, though we would argue flexibility would be key for such an effort. Similarly trade unions could adopt methods and models regarding wages for example as part of their collective bargaining agreements. This would spread these models and their benefits beyond the organizations that originated them and into the economy at large. It should be noted however that this second possible role for regulation and collective bargaining is, in our view, wholly contingent on successfully embedding society into organizations.

5.3. A Theoretical Framework for Re-politicizing the Economy

Overall, these considerations have led us to develop a theoretical framework based on three elements, which we see as central to embedding society in the organization.

Recognition of alternative values and motives.

One of the, if not *the*, issue of market society is how it ignores values and motives beyond financial profit and personal gain. As such it is essential to counteract this by explicitly acknowledging the existence of values and motives beyond these.

Mechanisms of economic activity based on reciprocity and redistribution.

Reciprocity and redistribution have traditionally functioned as the primary mechanisms for economic activity driven by other motives than personal gain. Regarding this we find it important to note that we are not only concerned with formalized mechanisms, but also informal ones, as we consider both as capable of serving this function, at least within the organization.

Democratic institutions and norms.

Democratic institutions and norms are not only essential for re-politicizing the economy and challenging the current hegemony, it is also, to us, the best insurance against entrenched power developing into another hegemonic structure. Finally, we see little reason to embed society into the economy, unless the society in question is democratic, as at that point we would merely be supplanting the authoritarianism of the market with the authoritarianism of the state.

6. Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how the DisCO Framework re-politicizes the market economy by drawing on the DisCO governance model and the interviews we conducted with GT members. Thus, this chapter is structured into four sections, the first three of which are based on our theoretical framework as described in the previous chapter: 'Recognition of Alternative Values and Motives', 'Reciprocity and Redistribution as Alternative Mechanisms of Economic Activity', and 'Democratic Norms and Institutions'. The last section, titled 'Analysis Summary', concludes this chapter with a brief summary that draws on the three previous analysis sections in order to effectively address our problem formulation and answer our research question.

6.1. Recognition of Alternative Values and Motivation

Of the many issues of the market society that we have discussed above, we believe that the central issue is the lack of recognition of alternative forms of motivation and values than personal gain and financial value. This willful ignorance is what has allowed the market to take over not only the economy, but the whole of society. It is therefore central to our inquiry here on whether DisCOs can meaningfully challenge this status quo, whether the DisCO Framework is capable of recognizing more than these hegemonic values and motives.

In this section of our analysis we will go through some of the alternative motives and values that we see recognized in the DisCO framework, we have chosen to pair some of these up in the following subsection as we see them as closely related to each other.

6.1.1. Sense of purpose and Social Value

One motive that is not only recognized by the DisCO Framework, but that is also behind its development, is a sense of purpose. This is evident from our interviews with members of GT, who all cited a strong sense of purpose tied to their work, both regarding translation and the development of the DisCO Framework. All of our respondents made specific reference to their motivation being, at least partly, driven by a sense of doing meaningful work. At the same time, the DisCO Manifesto contains multiple passages where they state their hope of seeing purpose-driven DisCOs (Troncoso and Utratel, 2019). It therefore seems natural to us to start our analysis by investigating how the framework structurally recognizes this motive.

One way that the framework recognizes a sense of purpose as a motive for economic activity is the concept of *love work*, the term used in DisCO terminology to describe pro-bono/commons-generating work (Ibid.), which is recognized in the form of *love credits* (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.3). That *love work* is based on a sense of purpose for its motivation is clear from the process by which it is done. Namely that it is chosen by the members themselves based on interest and belief in the value of the work. This process is incredibly clear in the specific case of GT, where it is functionally the same as their *livelihood work*, the paid work they take on to ensure financial sustainability. The work is the same, translation, however whereas *livelihood work* is contracted to GT by clients, *love work* is initiated by an interest from the members who then try to organize a translation.

This on its own however is not that interesting to us. That the framework makes allowance for pro-bono work is, in our minds, the bare minimum of recognizing a sense of purpose as motivation. Where this does become interesting to us is in that

the framework not only makes this allowance, but actively rewards it, through the *love credit* stream. This, to us, fundamentally changes how the framework recognizes this motive, in that it not only passively acknowledges its existence, but actively rewards it by incorporating it into their incentive structure, to use a term borrowed from the economists. Another interesting element here is that while *love work* does not generate revenue for GT, they have chosen to still give members the option of having their *love credits* paid out. This stands in stark contrast to the dominant norm in the market economy, where labor is, supposedly, rewarded according to its productivity, on the logic that more productive labor leads to higher profits. By integrating pro-bono work into its income distribution structure, the DisCO Framework not only recognizes a sense of purpose as a motive for economic activity, and rewards it accordingly, it also places itself in direct opposition to this norm.

That this recognition has had a real impact is clear in all our conversations with members of GT. For example, when we asked Sarah how she came to work at GT she noted, "*Well I was already working as a translator but I was really burnt out by all these stupid translations about things that don't really matter so much ... So I was really trying to translate some other things with more socially meaningful content*" (Appendix 5, p. 1), which clearly shows that deriving a sense of purpose has been important to her. Similar statements were made by all of our respondents, Silvia even explicitly noted how a sense of purpose was ingrained in their motivation and how this has seen GT through some of the challenges they have faced, saying: "*So sometimes it's not really easy but we do have this motivation and this sense of purpose that keeps us going and it keeps us wanting to work on this.*" (Appendix 5, p. 4)

This sense of purpose and the motivation our respondents get from it, is, in our estimation, closely connected to GT's commitment to, what can best be termed as social value, that is value benefitting the wider society. It should be noted however, that social value is a notoriously nebulous concept and while GT's basic understanding of the term can be somewhat inferred from the content they produce, to our knowledge, there does not exist any explicit reference to how they understand social value. One reason why this is kept somewhat nebulous, at least in the context of the DisCO Framework, may be that the framework is non-prescriptive and therefore, obviously does not wish to prescribe a specific understanding of social value. A normative argument can also be made for keeping this definition vague on the basis that what constitutes social value ought to be mutually agreed upon by the members of the specific DisCO in question, something which aligns with the DisCO Framework's commitment to democratic ideals, a subject we shall return to later. For example, in arguing for basing the framework on cooperativism the Manifesto argues that, "*Co-operatives offer a way for people to be rewarded for their labour while committing to **shared** [emphasis added] social values.*" (Troncoso and Utratel, 2019, p. 8) In line with this it could be argued that in order to ensure that these values are truly shared by the members, they cannot be defined *a priori* within the framework.

Despite the ambiguous nature of what constitutes social value, the DisCO Framework does attempt to recognize it. As already mentioned, the DisCO Manifesto makes multiple calls for *purpose-driven* DisCOs, which is hard to interpret as anything but recognition of social value. In addition to this, many of the elements that structurally recognize and reward a sense of purpose as a motive for economic activity serve a similar function of recognizing social value. If we return to the concept of love work, this is, pro-bono or commons-generating work,

undertaken based on the members' interests, though with the requirement that it aligns with the collective's values (Guerilla Translation, n.d.3). While the selection criterion of interest is tied to a sense of purpose as a motive, the pro-bono/commons-generating aspect speaks, in our minds, to a recognition of social value. For one thing, the term pro-bono comes from the Latin phrase *pro-bono publico*, which literally translates to 'for the public good', and is colloquially used for work done free of charge for common benefit (Merriam-Webster, 2020). As such, we feel it is fair to say that by recognizing pro-bono work as love work, the DisCO framework recognizes social value. We believe that the same argument holds true for love work that can better be described as commons-generating. After all, the concept of a commons is the quintessential example of a public good, and while we do not want to impose a definition of social value as being exclusively public goods, we have a hard time imagining a meaningful definition of social value that would *not* include public goods.

If we turn to the specific context of GT, our conversations with members shows clearly how this focus on social value has carried over. This is perhaps unsurprising, given how closely social value is tied to their sense of purpose, which they all highlighted as central to their motivation. This is probably best illustrated by the quote from Sarah above about her desire to translate more socially meaningful content, as this statement highlights how the two are inextricably linked.

Another element that embeds recognition of social value in the DisCO Framework is the sliding scale employed for *livelihood work*. While this is the work taken on to ensure that the DisCO is financially sustainable, hence the name, prices are determined on a sliding scale which is dependent on the nature of the client, in GT's

case on a per word basis. (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2, *Livelihood Work Sliding Scale*)

GT charges what they call their base rate to Free/OS software startups, smaller NGOs, and regular co-operatives. Meanwhile activist collectives and ethical co-ops are charged a lower rate, while larger NGOs and regular starts are charged above the base rate. Finally, corporate clients are charged the highest rate. (Ibid.)

The most obvious way in which this sliding scale recognizes social value is in the pricing structure, which gives favorable rates to clients that serve a social purpose. We find it interesting that GT has chosen to term the rate offered to Free/OS software startups, smaller NGOs, and regular co-operatives their 'base price'. This may be largely symbolic; however, it does signal an assumption about their presumptive clients mostly fitting in this category. This fits well with a statement Sarah made during our interviews on the overlap between *livelihood work* and *love work*: "*Yeah, it's practically the same in terms of content-the livelihood and the love work. Also we don't translate things that we don't agree with and we don't translate things that we don't see are meaningful.*" (Appendix 6, p. 5) Given that the content chosen for *love work* is chosen on a criterion of social value, this overlap of content means that the same holds true for a significant amount of the *livelihood work* as well.

While the 'base price' in itself is mostly symbolic, we believe that it is representative of GT's commitment to what they deem *meaningful* content even in their *livelihood work*, which is also expressed in the quote above and the pricing structure of the sliding scale. This commitment is further reinforced by the DisCO wiki; "*This [livelihood work] may also produce Commons, as GT encourages (and sets lower prices) for Commons-oriented or social or environmentally valuable work*" (Guerilla

Media Collective, n.d.2, *Livelihood Credits*) which makes explicit reference to GT's commitment to socially valuable and Commons-oriented work, along with a recognition of environmental value, which we return to later in our analysis. In turn it is clear to us that it is the sliding scale price structure resulting from this commitment, which ensures that the DisCO Framework recognizes social value in the context of livelihood work.

6.1.2. Fun and Well-being

One motive which has been severely neglected by economic literature, and which the DisCO Framework explicitly expresses recognition of, is fun. The DisCO Manifesto quotes the radical Emma Goldman's famous words "*If I can't dance, it's not my revolution!*" (Goldman in Troncoso and Utratel, 2019, p. 9) and further elaborates:

Humour, joyfulness and wellbeing are routinely disregarded in politics and changemaking projects. ... The name DisCO is no coincidence, nor are what we think of as the DisCO aesthetics. We think that true inclusivity needs to be an engaging and fulfilling process. When much of our leisure time has been hijacked by online platforms designed to encourage addictive behaviours, why can't we offer enjoyable alternatives which also fulfill a social mission? Relationships within a DisCO (including the DisCO CAT platform) have to factor in fun! (Ibid. p. 61)

This statement is nothing, if not a clear recognition of the importance of fun as a factor of an engaging and fulfilling work life. It is also a clear rejection of the humorless approach taken by many progressive actors seeking social change. The Manifesto elaborates on this rejection; "*Aesthetics and semantics are important as tools to build better conditions for inclusivity*" and states "*Humor, especially as a way to help unpack more historically complex and convergent political, social and philosophical movements, is experiencing a heyday in social media*" (Ibid. p. 62).

While these quotes make clear the relationship between the DisCO aesthetics, including their humor, and the political aims of the framework, the Manifesto makes note of Hannah Arendt's caution that aesthetics married to politics leads to fascism and specifies that their wish is not to impose their aesthetics, but merely to implore that aesthetics, especially humor, should be considered as a factor in movement-building and mobilization. (Ibid.)

While the link between mobilization and fun is, to us, both interesting and worthy of further investigation, what is of more immediate interest for our inquiry here is that GT and the DisCO Framework clearly recognizes fun as an important part of motivation.

This recognition is however not directly embedded in the DisCO Framework's structures. This may strike some as problematic in terms of ensuring this recognition is maintained in the framework. However, given the nature of the subject here, we see it as unavoidable, as embedding this recognition of fun would require some form of formalizing the concept, and the notion of formalized fun strikes us as a very oxymoronic one.

Furthermore, while it may not be structurally embedded in the DisCO Framework, this commitment to fun interactions does show through in our interviews with members of GT. As Stacco commented on their relationships within the collective, "*I think that we have really good boundaries set and also have really good availability. And we're friends. I mean we've become friends over the process of this and we laugh a lot.*" (Appendix 6, p. 6). This statement touches on a number of issues of importance in interpersonal relationships, and how GT approaches them, however what is most interesting in our immediate regard is the link that he draws between their boundaries, availability, friendships, and their ability to laugh together.

While some may see this focus on fun as somewhat frivolous, to us, this also ties into the significant value GT places on the well-being of their members. The above quote already makes clear the role humor plays in maintaining good relations. This is further backed by Stacco's statement on their interactions when they have the chance to meet in-person: "*When we're in the same physical space, we do a lot of the practices that we also do online- picking up after each other, making sure we're all ok. We love being together*" (Appendix 5, p. 9). Which, if a bit less explicitly, also ties their commitment to reproductive work, or *care work* in DisCO terminology, and well-being to a sense of enjoyment in their relationships.

Perhaps the strongest indicator that the DisCO Framework not only recognizes well-being as a value, but is also deeply devoted to it, is the focus placed on reproductive *care work*, which is given equal prominence to the productive labor of *love work* and *livelihood work*. This focus is further reinforced by the fifth principle, which orients DisCOs towards care work (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2.). The inclusion of this principle shows that this focus is a programmatic statement for DisCOs.

The inclusion of *care work* is a significant deviation from the assumptions made by market economies and mainstream economics. The concept was developed by feminist economics, especially to encapsulate the value created by unpaid caregiver, often women, whose contribution is ignored by mainstream economic metrics (Williams, 2018). As such, incorporating *care work* into the DisCO Framework represents a strong diversion from the mainstream understanding of the economy, towards a model explicitly designed to both recognize and reward reproductive work, even more so considering the central position it has been given.

An argument could be made that this reproductive value corresponds with what we have termed 'well-being'. However, we would argue that while these concepts are

clearly interrelated, they do represent two *different* forms of value and while the difference is subtle, to us, it is significant enough to warrant mention. While we interpret reproductive work, quite literally in this regard, as the work needed to sustain the collective, we interpret reproductive value as the value inherent in sustaining the collective. While well-being is certainly closely connected to this, we believe that the value of well-being goes *beyond* just what is necessary for sustaining the collective and therefore, represents a separate value to that of reproductive value. Finally, it is important to note that both forms of value are recognized in the DisCO Framework through the mechanism and structures concerning *care work*.

This is backed by our experience interviewing members of GT, with well-being being one of the areas of concern that a significant amount of our conversations revolved around. One notable example of this was during our second interview, when Sarah drew this analogy between GT and a plant; "*That's why community is the heart of DisCO and GT. It's like a plant you have to be watering everyday. You bond with the people, you care about the people*" (Appendix 5, p. 9). Not only does she draw the analogy between taking care of the collective in GT and taking care of a houseplant, in the latter part of the quote she also, quite clearly, links this not with a concern of maintaining the collective, but with the well-being of her fellow members, as she said, "*... you care about the people*". A similar sentiment can be found in this statement from Stacco: "*At least in this collective, we like to get things done organically but we don't have a culture of 'You have to do this now.'* We are more concerned about emotional well-being and material well-being" (Appendix 5, p. 12). Once again, we see the metaphor of GT as an organic organism, we also once again see an emphasis on well-being, here with an explicit reference to both material and emotional well-being. An argument could be made here that the term 'organic'

could be an indicator of a more 'informal' approach to well-being within the collective. So while well-being as a value is formalized, to a degree, within the DisCO Framework, perhaps a more 'organic' or 'informal' understanding of well-being helps the collective grow more naturally and create more genuine connections.

GT's understanding of *care work* consists of two elements, care for the collective and care for the individual members. However, Stacco stressed in one of our interviews, that these elements are interconnected; "*There's also no hard fast distinctions between care work for the members of the collective and the collective. They often go together. If the members are healthy, the collective is healthy. If the collective is not doing well, we all get sad and we need to do something about it.*" (Appendix 5, p.7) This shows that Stacco sees individual and collective well-being as not just related, but mutually dependent, as they feed into one another.

If we look at how well-being and reproductive value are structurally embedded in the DisCO Framework, there are far too many elements of the framework which relate to care work for us to address them all in detail, which seems likely to be a reflection of the commitment to being *centered on care work* as the fifth principles states. As such, we focus more on the broader structures that embeds these values into the framework, rather than the individual procedures.

If we start by looking at care work done for the well-being of the collective, we find an apt description of it on the GMC Wiki, where it is at one point described as "... *the category formerly known as ADMIN*" (Guerrilla Media Collective, n.d.5, *How to care for the health of the collective*). This description captures how GT has reconceptualized what has traditionally been considered administrative work, as reproductive work. However, one important difference between this *care work* and traditional administration, is that it is not 'outsourced', as GT phrased it, to a

coordination class with associated privileges of higher salaries, access to information, and decision-making. Another deviation from traditional administration practices is that rather than having specialized managers with specific roles, DisCO's distribute *care work* through working circles where all members participate. (Ibid.) In our minds, this represents a far more humane approach to administration than the traditional top-down approach of professionalized management.

By adopting this structure for *care work* for the collective (i.e. what would traditionally be called admin), GT both enables and requires all members to participate in this work. This fits well with the understanding that the well-being of the collective is interdependent with the well-being of the members, as it allows all members to be active in both the care work orientated towards the collective, and towards the members. Furthermore, by rejecting the notion of 'professional management', and instead vesting the members as a group with this responsibility, the DisCO Framework moves away from the technocratic notion that management is an objective task done through a set of technical skills, and reframes it instead as a communal task, best done through active participation of the whole community.

While we do not wish to engage with the larger debate on whether 'professional management' is actually appropriate here as it is far too large a debate for us to do it justice within the scope of our inquiry, we do believe that this communal approach to management is far better suited for an organization model such as the DisCO Framework. Furthermore, we believe that this is an important part in recognizing the value of well-being, exactly because it puts the responsibility of caring for the collective in the hands of the members, rather than a disconnected manager or group of managers. This approach to management arguably requires a

high degree of solidarity and commitment amongst members, a point we shall return to later, since the well-being of the collective as a whole is framed as a collective issue rather than an issue to be dealt with by 'management'.

Moving on to the concern for individual members' well-being, two central elements in the DisCO Framework addressing this are the embedded mentoring and mutual support schemes in the framework. Mentoring here goes beyond mere instruction on productive activities, as it also includes guidance regarding general cooperative culture and the various tools and practices that reflect that specific cooperative's culture. Mentoring is done through a peer-to-peer system and is open to any committed member, though special attention is put on newer members going through what GT calls the *dating phase*, which is essentially a trial period. (Ibid.)

The DisCO Framework defines mutual support as "*Looking after people, being attuned to other's moods, needs and larger realities beyond the collective, caring for our well-being...*" (Ibid., *Caring for the health of the members of the collective*) and is seen as critical to maintaining a good work environment, once again demonstrating how individual and collective well-being are interlinked in the DisCO Framework. Every member has a person assigned to them as a *mutual support pal* and serves in turn as a *mutual support pal* for another member, though importantly not the member that is their mutual support pal (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.4).

This mutual support system not only shows that GT clearly values the well-being of their members, and has incorporated that into the DisCO Framework, it also creates a network of interpersonal relationships between the members, which we believe is important considering their inclusion of mental well-being in their understanding of well-being, as issues concerning mental health can be problematic to address in a

larger forum, or without a high degree of intimacy. While we have not had the opportunity to investigate whether this system in practice can achieve this high level of intimacy between the members and their respective *mutual support pals*, our conversations with members, including some of quotes above, suggest to us that it is certainly possible. Furthermore, regardless of its effectiveness in practice, the intent in itself is, to us, praiseworthy considering how easily mental health issues can become taboo, especially in a workplace context where one's livelihood may be threatened if these issues are perceived as impacting one's productivity.

All in all, we believe that the DisCO Framework not only recognizes wellbeing as a value, but does so to a truly radical degree. As mentioned above, there are far too many elements of *care work* in the DisCO Framework for us to address them all in detail, however this quantity in itself shows how *care work* is indeed central to DisCO, as stated in the principles. Finally, not only is *care work* recognized, it is also directly rewarded, to an extent, as "fully committed" members are compensated for their time spent on *care work*, though members in *the dating phase* are not, a point we will return to later.

6.1.3. Environmental Value

When it comes to environmental value, the value ascribed to environmental sustainability, this is perhaps better understood as a statement of principle, than it is as a value recognized by the structure of the DisCO Framework. When we say this, it is because there is no mechanism within the DisCO Framework that directly embeds this value into the structures of the framework.

However this is not to say that GT does not recognize environmental value, this can be evidenced by an examination of their website, which lists the various topics they

center their love work on. Indeed, one of these topics is titled 'Environment'. Furthermore, the DisCO Manifesto in its explanation of the first DisCO principle *Geared towards a positive outcome* specifies that *"In DisCOs, production is guided not by profit but by social and **environmental** [emphasis added] priorities"* (Troncoso and Utratel, 2019, p. 33), and further on mentions the climate crisis specifically as one of the largest issues of our time (Ibid.).

As such we do not believe that the lack of embedded structures are a result of a lack of interest, rather we believe it more likely due to context. After all, the DisCO Framework was developed in the context of a translation agency, where it is easier to communicate the importance of environmental sustainability rather than to establish a mechanism that effectively measures their direct impact on environmental sustainability, and thus would capture any environmental value created.

An argument could also be made that the democratic structures in GT, which we return to later in our analysis, safeguards GT's orientation towards environmental value, based on the assumption that the members are truly committed to this principle. In this sense then, it seems to us that DisCO's democratic decision-making structures could serve as a structural mechanism that, at least theoretically, is capable of embedding environmental value into their productive work.

However, since the DisCO Framework was not created solely for organizations in the communications industry, we believe that both the framework itself, as well as any potential future DisCOs with a more direct impact on the environment, would benefit from the development of such structures and mechanisms. One possibility would be to use a pricing structure similar to the sliding scale developed by GT, but instead with a focus on clients' environmental impact. This then would internalize

the externality of environmental degradation, as clients would be charged according to their environmental impact, something that has often been met with stiff resistance when attempted through regulation (e.g., carbon-taxes). Approaching this on the organizational level has the benefit of bypassing this resistance, though with a lesser impact than if done through regulation, since only the client organization in mind would be held accountable. As this model is focused on minimizing negative impact, we believe it would be best suited for potential DisCOs in industries where it is impossible, at least for the moment, to completely avoid pollution, such as transportation and manufacturing.

This is however largely speculative at the moment, given the lack of such DisCOs. Regardless, any mechanism to recognize environmental value, whether positive or negative, would likely have to be adapted to the specific context. However, we do believe that the DisCO Framework would benefit from developing structures that directly recognize the environmental value created by the given organization, especially if the framework is to be adopted in a variety of industries.

6.2. Alternative Mechanisms of Economic Activity: Reciprocity and Redistribution

We now turn our attention to reciprocity and redistribution as alternative mechanisms of economic activity. As outlined in our Theory chapter, we contend that the utter domination of the market economy has led organizations to engage in economic activity for the sole purpose of generating financial wealth for personal gain, usually for owners of capital. However, we believe that this single-minded pursuit and prioritization of financial wealth blatantly ignores, and thus undermines, the importance and even the *existence* of alternative mechanisms.

Therefore, we next consider whether the DisCO Framework incorporates reciprocity and redistribution as alternative mechanisms for economic activity and if so, how that is then captured by the experiences of our interviewees.

Throughout this section, we alternate between discussing reciprocity and redistribution. To separately discuss these mechanisms in our analysis would be impractical since they are tightly interwoven concepts in the DisCO Framework, and thus we see no value in examining them as completely separate mechanisms. With this in mind, this section analyzes the following themes as they relate to reciprocity and redistribution: Care Work, The Commons and Commoning, Relations with External Partners, Labor Remuneration, and the Monthly Payment Pipeline.

6.2.1. Care Work

To reiterate, our interest here concerns reciprocity as a mechanism of economic activity. That said, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss the reciprocal relationships between members of GT without bringing up care work. The DisCO Framework explicitly commits to care work as evidenced in Principle 5, which states that DisCOs are "*centered on care work*" (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2, *The Seven Principles of Open Value Cooperativism*). As we have mentioned before, there are two types of care work that the DisCO Framework technically differentiates between, that is caring for the well-being of the collective and caring for the well-being of the individual members that belong to the collective (Ibid). Although, as mentioned in the previous section, Stacco remarked that there is no hard and fast distinction between these two types of care work since they are so closely interrelated (i.e., the health and well-being of the entire collective is dependent on the health and well-being of the individual members and vice versa).

That the DisCO Framework holds both reciprocity and care work in high regard is highlighted in the following statement: "*Above all, we value reciprocity and care work*" (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2, *GT Applicant Evaluation Criteria and Procedures*). One way that GT formalizes this assertion and *ensures* that members dedicate their time and energy to the health and well-being of both the collective *and* its members is through the Commitment Statement (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2). The Commitment Statement is a contract signed by both Transition Translators, or those in the dating phase, and Guerilla Translators, or fully-committed members who have completed the dating phase. While the primary purpose of the Commitment Statement is to align members to collectively agreed upon responsibilities, processes, and procedures, it also functions as an accountability tool (Ibid). This comes into play during quarterly retrospectives, where members individually and collectively compare their contributions and commitment levels over the previous period to what in the Commitment Statement they had agreed to. In this sense then, the Commitment Statement serves as a sort of *baseline* for members to self-reflect and self-evaluate and supports members in upholding their commitments to the collective (Ibid).

The Commitment Statement includes a number of measures that safeguard the functioning, and thus the livelihood, of the collective. By signing this contract, members effectively agree to create and adhere to community rhythms, norms and boundaries (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.1). Refer to Appendix 7 to see the full Commitment Statement.

For our purposes here though, we are mostly interested in the Commitment Statement's seventh point which clarifies members' commitment to care work. Indeed, by signing this document members explicitly agree to "*systemically distribute care work,*" a measure that includes the following statements:

7a. My level of care work will correspond to the benefit I get from the coop;

7b. I will care for the well-being of the collective as a living entity, and make sure it's healthy and thriving;

7c. I will care for the well-being of all members of the collective, specially the person I am supporting (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.1).

Each of these sub-clauses commits members to the full range of responsibilities that constitutes care work-both care for the well-being of the collective and the individual members. To us, the explicit inclusion of care work in the Commitment Statement speaks to the DisCO Framework's orientation towards reciprocity as a mechanism of economic activity and further, formalizes this orientation.

Moreover, as seen above, the first statement specifies that members receive a return equitable to the amount of care work invested, something which establishes a reciprocal relationship between the expected level of care work and benefits received by members of GT. This was further clarified by Stacco when he said, "*But for what we can say about the care work, it's basically time banking. It's also kind of like economic planning*" (Appendix 5, p. 12). This statement is of interest to us because it mentions that the amount of care work invested by individual members is time tracked, and thus subject to compensation, which we understand as an element of redistribution. While Stacco does not explicitly use the term

redistribution here, his mention of economic planning is a clear indication to us that he understands care work, and its measurement, as redistributive in nature. Thus, in the DisCO Framework, we see timebanking as a redistributive mechanism and care work as an economic activity.

However, it should be noted though that only committed members, or Guerilla Translators, are eligible for compensation based on care work (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2.). This is backed by Stacco when he stated, "*But it's time banking after we've been through this process [the dating phase] that we know and that we trust by the people who are doing the care work using their time wisely*" (Appendix 5, p. 12). Thus, while those in the dating phase still commit to care work, and their compensations are time banked, their contributions are not compensated.

Additionally, we find that the second statement committing members to "*...care for the well-being of the collective as a living entity*" (Ibid.), confirms the relevance and significance of Sarah's analogy of GT as a plant, or a living organism, to be thoughtfully tended to and nurtured. To us, this indicates that reciprocity is indeed evident in both the DisCO Framework and GT since the taking care of the collective requires taking care of the individual members, which includes taking into account their economic well-being.

Another point of interest to us is that the Commitment Statement seemingly functions as an employment contract since both dictate how those subject to the authority of an organization will use their time, and thus their labor. In other words, as a valid contract, the Commitment Statement still contractually organizes labor,

however it does so in a significantly different way than under traditional employment contracts which we explain next.

However, while there are interesting comparisons to be made between these contracts, there are also two points of contrasts we wish to bring up here. The first point is that the Commitment Statement, being the same contract signed by all members, is only subject to change through *collective* negotiation, meaning that any changes suggested would have to be collectively discussed and agreed upon by the members. In fact, the Commitment Statement even requires members to agree that if they wish to alter, add, or remove anything in the contract, that they will bring up these issues on Loomio so that members may collectively discuss if such a change is needed (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.1). Indeed, this latter point seems to speak to the deliberative democracy model employed by GT, as we discuss later on. The second point is that since the DisCO Framework is a co-operative model, therefore meaning that members are part-owners, the contractual relationship that is created by the Commitment Statement is *not* one between employee and employer, but rather between an equal member of the organization and the organization as a whole. This is of importance because it fundamentally changes the relationship between the workers and their place of employment, by rejecting the notion of labor as a commodity sold to an 'employer' thus making workers subject to the complete authority of that 'employer'.

Overall then, since care work includes responsibilities that are necessary for the health and longevity of the collective (i.e., "*coop and business development, seeking and attending to clients, making sure...accounts and administrative papers are up to date,*" etc. (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2, *Caring for the health of the*

collective)), we therefore deem that care work constitutes economic activity. Thus, we would argue that the Commitment Statement is an important tool for the economic activity of care work, which functions through mechanisms of reciprocity.

6.2.2. The Commons and Commoning

Another indication of reciprocity as a mechanism of economic activity in the DisCO Framework is seen in Principle 3, which positions DisCOs as "*active creators of commons*," or commons which are "*...created through market **and** [emphasis in original] value-tracked pro-bono work*" (ibid, *The 7 Principles of Open Value Cooperativism*). Note here that pro-bono work is synonymous with love work, or content produced for the commons. The significance of this latter statement is that it proves that the commons and commoning, both of which are inherently reciprocal in nature, to economic activity.

The commons essentially refers to a shared set of resources, in the case of GT, the commons they seek to create and contribute to is a "*plurilingual knowledge commons*" (Guerilla Translation, n.d.2). Thus, commoning is understood as actions or contributions that both create and govern commons. An example of commoning within GT is love work, that is pro-bono work freely published for the commons, but that also represents economic activity, as members are then equitably compensated for such work. Further, when we asked about commoning in GT, Stacco answered, "*...within that commoning, care work is to us essential*" (Appendix 5, p.6). When he speaks of care work as essential, we understand that this refers to care work done for the well-being of the collective. For instance, part of care work includes formalizing practices and procedures, thus creating the DisCO framework. It is then the choice to make this framework publicly available that care work can be

seen as a reciprocal mechanism. Indeed, Stacco highlights that care work is a form of commoning as *both* concepts are inherently reciprocal. Therefore, we believe that reciprocity indeed functions as an economic mechanism within the DisCO Framework.

One critique that has been raised concerning the commons is this idea of the tragedy of the commons, which based on, what we strongly believe to be the *false* assumptions that humankind lacks the reciprocal nature necessary for a functioning commons and that a commons cannot be governed. When we inquired into the commoning processes in GT, Stacco said, "*I don't think that it's our role so much to critique the tragedy of the commons, we think it's been thoroughly debunked'* (Appendix 5, p. 5). To us, this shows that GT rejects the entire notion of the tragedy of the commons and takes a position that reciprocity and governance are certainly possible for the maintenance of the collective. Furthermore, taken together, we see that by embracing these two notions, GT seemingly creates strong grounds for reciprocal activity through commoning practices such as love work.

6.2.3. Relations with External Agents

Besides the internal reciprocity evident within the DisCO Framework in the form of care work and love work, we were also interested to know if reciprocity was evident in regards to GT's relationships with external agents, or outside partners. During our last interview, when we asked about reciprocal relations, Stacco said:

I think that the way we see it and the way it's designed, it's more based on like gift economic dynamics, so it's indirect reciprocity. So, I mean with outside agents, it's the love work that's given us our reputation and that gives us our work, and that gives us the network of people that we collaborate with, and all the

conversations that have led to DisCO. And then internally, it's part of the value model. So, I mean to me the feeling of reciprocity is like from-the-collective to outside-the-collective. Within the collective, there's an acknowledgement of that love work, and it's highlighted and it's discussed. I don't know if that's exactly reciprocal but it's not lost. It's not seen as, 'Oh we did this charitable thing but no one took it into account, etc.' It's very much visible. (Appendix 6, p. 7).

While Stacco does not per se acknowledge that this is reciprocal, this fits perfectly well with Polanyi's understanding of reciprocity, which includes the notion of gift-giving as an element of reciprocity (Polanyi, 1944). Stacco's statement also highlights the relational dynamics *from-the-collective to outside-the-collective* and that this is where he feels reciprocity, while also mentioning the importance of reciprocity within the collective.

During our interviews, we asked our interviewees whether they would deem relationships they have with outside agents as reciprocal, to which Stacco replied, *"Yes, but indirectly. It's not like a tokenized/market dynamic relationship where we'll say like, 'Hey, we did this voluntarily now you have to do something'"* (Appendix 6, p. 7). Here we find it interesting that while Stacco acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between GT and outside agents, it is not something that can be reduced to mere measurement. Furthermore, we find that this statement closely relates to Polanyi's argument that reciprocal relationships cannot be systematized.

When we asked further about how these types of relationships manifest, Sarah said:

I mean it's a classic kind of agreement sometimes because imagine you just discovered this collective, they are doing great things and you promote them. But you don't even talk to them, you just promote them. They realize and they're promoting you the following week. Like sometimes, basically on occasion in which we agree, you know, "OK we will translate this article, you will publish this article and we will promote each other" (Appendix 6, p. 8)

Indeed, her statement above illustrates the example of a reciprocal relationship based on mutual benefit. Although, when asked the motivation behind pursuing such relationships, Silvia responded:

I wouldn't say our main drive would be to get more views or something. We connect with people that we feel we have an affinity with or that we share values with and then things will play out in one way or another. We just try to make connections. I think it's a very organic thing. We don't really have a plan. Like, "We have to contract these people because they will give us." No, it doesn't really work like that" (Appendix 6, p. 8)

To us, the statement above shows that GT's relationships with external agents are truly reciprocal as they are informally or organically, in their words, formed. When we say truly reciprocal, we mean in the sense that they are relationships not fostered for the sole purpose of financial or material gain but rather that they mutually benefit based on collaborating with others with similar values and further, we believe that relationships with external agents is a key component to engage in economic activity.

6.2.4. Labor Remuneration

Labor remuneration refers to the compensation received by an individual as a result of employment. In a market economy, labor remuneration is determined on wage labor, that is compensation is determined based on position, experience and responsibilities. However, in the DisCO Framework, labor remuneration is not based on wage labor, consider how care work is seen as a collective responsibility of all members, and that these tasks are equitably distributed amongst members.

Indeed, the DisCO Framework rejects the notion of wage labor, evidenced by when Stacco said, "*There's no wage labor, you're the worker **and** [emphasis added] you're the owner*" (Appendix 4, p. 5). Furthermore, Stacco adds that there is a 1:1 pay ratio between the members in GT (Appendix 6, p.12). Though it is important to note here that the 1:1 pay ratio is only applicable to fully-committed members of GT, or the Guerilla Translators. In other words, Transition Translators, or those still in the dating phase, are ineligible for financial compensation based at this rate until they have completed the nine-month dating.

However, during one of our interviews Stacco maintained that the DisCO framework is, "*...based on fairness and fairness in a market society [which] also has to do with your material condition so it's important for us to know that contributions have been rewarded in a fair way*" (Appendix 5, p. 12). While Stacco here highlights the importance of equitable compensation for equitable contribution, we do question the meaning of this, since to us then, Transition Translators are not per se fairly compensated, nor are they rewarded with democratic rights, a point to which we return to later on.

Furthermore, to become a member of DisCO does not require monetary buy-in, as some other cooperatives require, but rather uses meaningful contribution through productive and reproductive work as a way to secure membership, and thus rights to income distribution, pay-ratio and meaningful participation in decision-making. In fact, in this sense, it seems that the DisCO Framework functions similarly to worker coops in that workers and owners are synonymous, every member has the right to participate and vote. Although the DisCO Framework goes a step farther in that it addresses pay inequality, evident in both worker coops and traditional businesses, and then redistributes in the most equitable of ways, a 1:1 ratio.

Overall, we recognize that both the absence of wage labor and 1:1 pay ratio are strong redistribution mechanisms in the DisCO Framework since both address one of the biggest issues with capitalism, that is pay inequality and the widening wealth gap.

6.2.5. Monthly Payment Pipeline

One indication that redistribution is incorporated into the DisCO framework is partially evident by their inclusion of Principle 6: "*Reimagining the Origin and Flows of Value*" (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2). However, this is further strengthened by the incorporation of the Monthly Payment Pipeline, a system which "...*distributes income received across the board on a monthly basis while allowing everyone a proportional cut every time.*" (Ibid., *What this looks like in practice*) It is important to note here that by "across the board" they refer to both members and contributors that have acquired love and livelihood credits over the course of the month, and by "proportional" they refer to the redistribution of net income based on the total

number amount of credits each individual has earned in comparison to what all the others have earned (Ibid.)

The Monthly Payment Pipeline, as described in the DisCO framework, explains step-by-step exactly how income is divided amongst both members and contributors. The first thing to note is that *all* monthly income generated from livelihood, or paid, work is kept in a centralized account that is then distributed at the end of the month. Around this time, the collective must then determine (a) the *net* income retained in this account and (b) the *total* number of credits each member and contributor has earned over the month-which is determined by adding their love and livelihood credits. When it comes to dividing the net income in the account each month, there is a 75/25 split where 75% of the net income is used to pay those who have acquired livelihood credits and 25% of the net income is used to pay those who have acquired love credits. Thus, each individual is paid based on the percentage of credits held in comparison to how many credits all the other members and contributors hold (Ibid.)

We see the redistribution in the Monthly Payment Pipeline as two-fold. On the one hand, it equitably redistributes net income from productive work based on *all* contributing member's collective efforts. In other words, "*...members share work and income proportionate to their investment and commitment to the collective*" (Ibid., *What Guerilla translators get out of a committed relationship*). On the other, the system is redistributive in the sense that all members are paid on the same scale (i.e., the credit system), meaning that income is *not* allocated based on seniority or position. Based on this, we feel that the Monthly Payment Pipeline in

the DisCO Framework seems to directly challenge the status quo of market society, where income is distributed through the mechanisms of the labor market.

GT is currently in the process of developing an accounting prototype to better visualize the redistribution of these credits. When describing the process GT goes about co-designing this software, Stacco said conversations revolve around such questions as: “...*How much will it make this month? How much do we distribute? Then let's have a conversation. What does a person need? What is your situation?*” (Appendix 4, p. 8). This speaks to GT’s commitment to create a transparent and accessible prototype for members to understand exactly how income is then redistributed to members based on the amount of credits they have acquired over the course of a month. Furthermore, this quote seems to highlight a commitment by GT to develop a deliberative democracy when it comes to the decision-making process, a subject we return to in the next section.

Based on our analysis of the DisCO Framework and the interviews, it is clear to us that reciprocity and redistribution are indeed important, if not *central*, mechanisms of economic activity for DisCOs. Indeed, it is likely these mechanisms, combined with collectively shared values and motivations of the framework, that create the conditions for a tight-knit, cohesive collective. Next we turn our attention to whether this GT, based on the DisCO Framework, embeds democratic norms and institutions in any meaningful way.

6.3. Democratic Norms and Institutions

6.3.1. Democratic Solidarity

Solidarity is vital for any democracy to function, arguably more so within the context of a democratic organization as they, unlike states, cannot rely on the assumed legitimacy granted by the history (i.e., the notion that this is how things are done, because this is how they have always been done) nor the imagined community of nationhood to legitimize their democratic structures.

However, the nature of that solidarity is also of importance, as Laville has pointed out when he differentiates between democratic and philanthropic solidarity.

Whereas democratic solidarity assumes equality, draws on reciprocal and redistributive mechanisms, and therefore forms a viable basis for democratization through collective action, philanthropic solidarity accepts social hierarchies and inequality, creating dependent relationships where the beneficiaries of philanthropy are placed in an inferior position to the philanthropists (Laville, 2014). On this basis, it is not only the promotion of solidarity in the DisCO Framework that has our interest, but also the nature of that solidarity, namely whether it is democratic or philanthropic.

Our conversations with members of GT certainly indicate a high level of solidarity within the collective. That is certainly how Stacco sees it, when he noted that, *"There's an amazing degree of solidarity within the group"* (Appendix 5, p. 3). Similarly, there is this perspective in GT of the collective as a shared household where members commit to take care of each other and share responsibilities, seems to provide, to us at least, a strong foundation for building solidarity amongst members. This perspective was something that both Sarah and Stacco mentioned

in our interviews with them. For instance, in response to a question on whether more informal tasks, akin to housekeeping, had played a role in their considerations on care work, Sarah said, "*Well there are similar roles to that. I mean, during a meeting some people are taking notes, some are preparing things, all these things are necessary and sustain a correct functioning of the collective. I think it just comes naturally out of the people'*" (Appendix 5, pp. 8-9). Stacco further elaborated:

And when you talk about informal work, it's also funny because there's this expression of housekeeping and housekeeping can be applied to digital realms. So again, if you go to Oikos as the economy, you know the management of the household. So for us, GMC is this shared household in virtual space and no, you don't have to get a broom out but there's cleaning, you have to do all the things and make things understandable. But there's also the mutual support and I think that we have one of the safest online spaces. (Appendix 5, p. 9)

These statements lead us to believe that GT has a strong degree of solidarity. Furthermore, the DisCO Framework, or rather its strong focus on care work and structures in place to ensure and maintain that focus, seems to be a strong foundation for fostering this solidarity.

Next we turn to the question of the nature of this solidarity. Firstly, the very nature of a cooperative ensures a certain level of equality by putting ownership of the means of production into the hands of the members, a point that Stacco also noted, "*So the means of production: Not in the hands of our proprietor class, but in the hands of the worker-owners.*" (Appendix 4, p. 5). Secondly, we believe that the reciprocal and redistributive mechanisms in the DisCO Framework, covered in the previous section, form a solid basis for democratic solidarity to flourish, given that these mechanisms reinforce relatively equitable relationships amongst members, though as previously noted not necessarily for members in the dating phase. Thus, we feel that the solidarity amongst members of GT certainly seems to be more

democratic than philanthropic. Indeed, in our first conversation with Stacco, when we inquired into the development of prototypes to capture new value flows, he said, "*In the design phase to us, this means a lot of visualizations. Meaning, how much will it make this month? How much do we distribute? Then let's have a conversation. What does such a person need? What is your situation?*" (Appendix 4, p. 8). This is indicative of a more democratic approach that attempts to be mindful of members' needs, not by making general assumptions of what their needs might be but rather by allowing members to participate in conversations vital to the prototype development phase.

That there seems to be strong foundations for democratic solidarity in the DisCO Framework is not, overall, surprising to us, given both the reciprocal and redistributive mechanisms we discussed above and the norms and institutions that form the basis of DisCO's model of democracy which we will address below.

6.3.2. DisCO's Model of Democracy

Both the DisCO Framework in the abstract and GT, so far the only operating DisCO, rely on a deliberative understanding of democracy for their democratic norms and institutions. This can be seen by their emphasis on clear communication between members and consensus in their decision-making structures.

Deliberative democracy is a model of democracy that emphasizes consensus, open deliberation, and public reasoning, though it should be noted that the understanding of the last element varies between different schools of thought within deliberative democracy. In short, advocates of deliberative democracy argue that consensus achieved through open deliberation is *the* legitimate basis for collective action in a polity. (Held, 2006).

While GT was not, to our knowledge, directly inspired by thinkers within deliberative democracy, the model of democracy that they have created in the DisCO Framework bears the hallmarks of a deliberative democracy. As mentioned, they place a clear emphasis on communication as seen through the 'community rhythms' which requires members to check-in on various platforms on a daily, weekly, and biweekly basis, as well as the commitment expected of members to "*communicate clearly, create and observe explicit norms and boundaries*" (see commitment statement in Appendix 7).

Another element that indicates a deliberative model of democracy in GT is their focus on reflective re-evaluation, an element that is emphasized in deliberative democracy, and which Stacco brought up in relation to decisions they have faced on issues where they have been uncertain on the best course of action, such as taxation and legal structures, when he said; "*We support each other in the unknown. It's like, 'We're gonna try this. Don't know if it would work.'* It's like, 'OK, so we're here for you.' ... *And revaluation and accommodation is built into the culture that we have.*" (Appendix 5, p. 4) This is a central element of deliberative democracy, due to its focus on what is called refined and reflective preferences, rather than immediate preferences. Refined and reflective preferences refer to preferences developed as a result of confrontation between a person's immediate preferences and opposing points of view (Held, 2006). Such a process requires a communicative structure that emphasizes revaluation, as it allows for a continual process of reflection and refining one's preferences. This is perhaps especially true in situations such as the ones Stacco is referring to, a lack of information can complicate the decision-making process.

As mentioned, another element of the DisCO Framework which leads us to conclude that it conforms to a deliberative model of democracy is the emphasis they place on achieving consensus. This is partly evident in their voting system, which gives all committed members an effective veto, a 'block' in their terms along with the ability to vote 'agree', 'disagree' or 'neutral', the latter being effectively an abstention from the vote (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2). This creates a decision-making structure that emphasizes consensus, as any member that feels the suggested course of action would significantly detrimental can block the decision, requiring a consensus to be formed to resolve the block. However, it should be noted that blocking a proposal requires that the member casting a 'block' vote justify this or suggest an alternative course of action (Ibid.), this is in our view a necessary safeguard against obstructionism, as otherwise a member could simply block any proposal they disagree with, rather than voting 'disagree' and letting the majority decide, as is the intent with this voting system.

That GT places a premium on consensus was also evident in our conversation with them. Communication and discussion were two things that were brought up multiple times, to the point where Silvia remarked in our last interview, "*So you're probably bored by now because we're just saying we talk a lot but this is what we actually do. We just talk all the time. It's the way it works*"(Appendix 6, p. 11). While she was incorrect in the assumption that we were bored by this, that their approach very much prioritizes continual communication and discussion had not escaped our notice.

The final element of the DisCO Framework that we wish to address here, and which speaks to a deliberative model of democracy, is its focus on mediation and outside guidance as a way of navigating controversial or complex decisions. One element of

this is seen in their incorporation of Richard D. Bartlett's Patterns for Decentralised Organizing, based on his eponymous book, one of which is "*Get Unstuck With An External Peer*" (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2, *Patterns for Decentralised Organising*). One way GT enacts this pattern is through the Stakeholder Board, which consists of attendees of the 2018 Guerilla Translation Reloaded Workshop, that are non-committed members of GT. Similarly Loomio, the discussion and decision-making platform GT uses, allows for external advisors/mediators to be brought in on a case-by-case basis, though it should be noted that while the votes of the Stakeholder Boards and committed members are binding, other external advisors'/mediators' votes are only considered advisory and therefore not counted as a binding vote. (Ibid.)

While we do consider GT's commitment to democracy undeniable and even admirable, we question whether the deliberative model of democracy is best suited for an organizational model such as the DisCO Framework, which aspires to radical workplace democracy, as they state in the Manifesto (Troncoso and Utratel, 2019).

When we question the suitability of the deliberative model of democracy in this context, it is due to the implicit assumption that underlies the very notion of deliberative democracy, that a consensus can *always* be achieved through rational deliberation. This premise results from deliberative democracy's failure to acknowledge that arriving at a consensus necessitates excluding points of views and the mistaken assumption that there exists a universally accepted model of rationality. This leaves the deliberative model of democracy blind to both the unavoidable nature of conflict in a democracy and the inherent power dynamics that so often ends up dictating what is considered 'rational'. (Mouffe, 2000)

The term agonistic, in agonistic pluralism, refers to the view of conflict as being constitutive and, if approached correctly, beneficial to democracy. The ideal of agonistic pluralism is not eliminate conflict, as in deliberative democracy, but rather ensure that all parties sees their opponents as legitimate adversaries, so that 'defeat' is not seen as counterproductive, but an accepted part of existing within a democratic context, that embraces a diversity of positions. (Ibid.)

We do however not wish to delegitimize the democracy present in GT specifically. Indeed, while we have philosophical disagreements with the deliberative model of democracy, the democracy in GT seems to be well-functioning based on our, admittedly limited, experience of it. Furthermore, while deliberative democracy generally disregards power dynamics, this is not necessarily true in the specific case of GT. In relation to a question on how the emphasis on care work affected their social well-being, Stacco stated, "*... we do have power dynamics but we discuss them very explicitly and that's a massive relief, just to be able to talk about it*" (Appendix 6, p. 9). Not only is this an direct acknowledgement of the existence of power dynamics within GT, it was also brought up without any direct prodding from us, which indicates that the awareness of power dynamics is significant for him. Finally, we do not feel it is our place to dictate what model of democracy any specific organization adopts, as that, to us, is a decision that very much ought to be made by the members of the given organization.

As such, when we say that deliberative democracy is not the ideal model for the DisCO Framework, it is more to take into account the fact that the entire framework, including its democratic norms and institutions, is intended to be adopted by others. In addition to our belief that deliberative democracy is an incongruous model for radical workplace democracy, we believe that the conditions

that allow this model of democracy to function in GT should not be assumed, much less form a prerequisite for forming a DisCO, though the latter is less of an issue, due to the DisCO Framework's non-prescriptive nature.

In place of deliberative democracy, we would suggest that the DisCO Framework should adopt a model closer to Chantal Mouffe's model of agonistic pluralism. This model explicitly accepts that power is constitutive of social relations and that power dynamics are therefore unavoidable. Furthermore, rather than attempt to minimize or avoid conflict, agonistic pluralism embraces conflict as part and parcel of democracy. Finally, where deliberative democracy assumes a matter settled once a consensus has been reached, agonistic pluralism sees consensus and compromise as but temporary *détentes* in an continual confrontation between opposing positions. (Mouffe, 2000)

As for how such a model of democracy would look in the context of the DisCO Framework, a full incorporation of "agonistic pluralism" into the existing framework is beyond the scope of this inquiry, however on a couple of points we feel confident enough as to suggest how this might be achieved.

On the most general level, there would be less focus on establishing consensus, and more attention paid to allowing conflicts to be played out but ensuring that this happens in productive, agonistic, ways. One simple change that could be made, which would also decrease the risk of obstructionism, would be to overrule block-votes by qualified majority. This would maintain the individual members ability to block a proposal they strongly disagree with, which we consider an important and positive element of the framework, however it would mean that blocks could be lifted through a majority of, for example, two-thirds or three-quarters, rather than requiring a consensus or resorting to vote-by-credit, a point we shall return to

shortly. Similarly, unanimous consensus, which is required in several cases in the current iteration of the DisCO Framework could also be changed to a form of qualified majority vote.

Finally, embracing an agonistic pluralistic model of democracy would not mean doing away with the notion of conflict resolution, nor do we see a reason for any change to the procedures employed by the DisCO Framework for conflict resolution, however it would require that emphasis be placed on ensuring conflicts being handled in an agonistic way, rather than establishing consensus as a method of conflict resolution.

6.3.3. Limitations of DisCO's democracy

While there is no doubt that the DisCO Framework represents a far more democratic organizational model than the traditional hierarchical model, it does contain elements that go against the notion of a democratic organization.

The first of these, which we mentioned briefly above, is that in specific situations, a blocked proposal with no resolution, such as structural changes to the governance model and changes of legal form, decisions are not made on the basis of 1 vote per member, but rather vote by historical credit-majority. That is each member's vote is weighted according to the amount of historical credits they have accrued. This is essentially transplanting the vote-per-share scheme used in shareholder companies to the context of the DisCO Framework, as historical credits, just as with shares in a traditional company, are a reflection of your equity in the organization (Guerrilla Media Collective, n.d.2).

This is done on the argument that "*those who have made larger efforts over the years* [as reflected in their accrual of Historical Credits] *will hold true to the*

collective's purpose"(Ibid., *Type of Approval, Credit Majority*). While we have some sympathy for this perspective, and understand the logic behind it, it is however far from democratic, as it completely breaks with the notion of one-member-one-vote, which is a foundational tenet of democracy. Furthermore, we question the need to resort to weighted voting of this kind, given that alternative measures do exist. Especially in the case of an unresolved blocked vote, we see no reason why a qualified majority of, for example, three-quarters (on a one-member-one-vote basis), could not serve the same function, without breaking from the democratic ideals of the framework.

Finally, while we understand the logic of entrusting members with the most historical credits accrued to hold true to the collective's values, we question the underlying assumption, that there exists a direct and positive correlation between relative efforts and commitment to the collective purpose. After all, this ignores the fact that those who have been members for a longer period have a larger potential for accruing Historical Credits, than newer members and that differences in Historical Credits holdings among members just as well could be a reflection of seniority rather than commitment.

Another limitation of DisCO's democracy is that members during the first 6 months of the dating phase have only an advisory vote, that is a vote that is non-binding or counted. Similarly, for the last three months of the dating phase, while votes of agreement or disagreement are binding, they are not granted a binding block vote (Ibid.) This means that for the first nine months of involvement, the so-called dating phase, members essentially do not have full voting rights on the level of committed members, despite that fact that Transition Translators sign the same Commitment Statement, and thus agree to a similar amount of responsibilities as do fully

committed Guerilla Translators. While the DisCO Framework makes specific effort to mention that these votes are “... *accounted for and taken very seriously*” (Ibid. *Type of Approval, Stakeholder Board*), this nevertheless breaks with the democratic principle that authority is derived bottom-up from those subjected to that authority, as members in the dating phase are subject to the authority of the collective, but have no direct say in that authority.

Furthermore, we find this voting scheme incongruent with the apparent interest in incorporating multiple constituencies into the decision-making structures of the DisCO Framework. After all, it seems, to us at least, that a relatively simple way to include “... *the voices and opinions of its wider community*” (Ibid. *Type of Approval, Multi Constituent vote*) would be to fully enfranchise members in the dating phase.

It has however been the subject of some controversy among the authors how problematic this deviation from democratic principles is in the context of the DisCO Framework, with one arguing that it is only fair that members are asked to demonstrate a commitment before being granted full voting rights, while the other argues that a model that claims to stand for radical workplace democracy ought to fully commit to democratic principles, including the inconveniences and risks that it brings with it.

Finally, we wish to reiterate that these critiques are directed towards the DisCO Framework as a governance mode and *not* GT, as an organization in itself, as we very much do not want to be seen as dictating organizational matters to an organization we are not directly involved with ourselves.

6.4. Analysis Summary

Before moving on to the Discussion chapter, we wish to briefly summarize our analysis. In the following paragraphs, we relate our findings to the DisCO Framework and its capability to recognize alternative values and motives, employ alternative mechanisms of economic activity, and embed democratic norms and institutions. In doing so, it is our intent to effectively address both our problem formulation and our research questions.

In the first part of this analysis, we explored the DisCO Framework's recognition of alternative values and motives. First, we found that all members interviewed were strongly motivated by a *sense of purpose* as opposed to solely for personal gain. The DisCO Framework seemed to recognize this motivation by rewarding love work through a redistributive payment system. We also associated this *sense of purpose* motivation to the DisCO Frameworks orientation towards social value, which it recognizes through the same mechanisms. Next we drew a connection between the DisCO Framework's notion of well-being and fun, arguing that the latter was a vital concept underlying the essence of well-being. Furthermore, we identified fun as a key motivation for DisCO members. We also saw that the DisCO Framework recognizes *well-being* as value, as evidenced by the inclusion of care work-that is work concerned for the well-being of both the individual and the collective. Lastly, we touched on the framework's commitment to environmental value, asserting that while this is a value they seemingly hold in high regard, there are some limitations on how the value is structurally embedded into the framework, although this is likely due to the industry in which the framework was developed.

The next section of the analysis focused on reciprocity and redistribution as alternative mechanisms of economic activity. In this section, we focused on a variety of different mechanisms including care work, the commons and commoning, relations with external actors, labor remuneration, and the monthly payment pipeline. We drew a line between GT's commons-generating love work as a mechanism of economic activity since love work, or pro-bono work, is indeed financially compensated through the Monthly Payment Pipeline. Then we discussed labor remuneration and clarified that in the DisCO framework compensation for work is *not* based on wage labor but rather distributed on a 1:1 basis. Lastly, we framed the Monthly Payment Pipeline as redistributive in two ways: in terms that it redistributes profit on a similar scale and that it further redistributes income on a 1:1 payment ratio.

In the third section of the analysis, we started by stating that solidarity was at the foundation of any well-functioning democracy. We then pointed out that the solidarity amongst GT members was representative of a *democratic solidarity* as opposed to a *philanthropic solidarity*, borrowing from Laville's understanding. Additionally, we discussed how GT, as the only functioning DisCO, employs a deliberative model of democracy and how this might not be the most suitable model of democracy given that the DisCO Framework, as indicated by the Manifesto, strongly emphasizes radical workplace democracy, something we explore a bit further in the next chapter. Our reason being that deliberative democracy is consensus-driven and therefore has a blindspot for power dynamics and the inevitability of conflict in a democracy. As an alternative, we suggested that the DisCO Framework adopt an agonistic pluralistic model of democracy which both recognizes power dynamics and understands that conflict is unavoidable and thus

embraces the notion that consensus cannot always be achieved. Lastly, we identified some limitations of DisCO's democracy.

Given our analysis, we have come to the conclusion that the DisCO Framework does indeed have potential to re-politicize the economy. This particular model, to us, clearly has the capacity to recognize alternative motives and values, incorporate alternative mechanisms of economic activity, and embed democratic norms and institutions. Through the incorporation of democratic, and humane characteristics, we feel that the DisCO Framework, as a governance model, provides a sound alternative to more traditional organizational forms and thus, challenges the status quo. Having addressed the central questions of our inquiry, we move on to the Discussion chapter to provide further reflections on DisCO, specifically in relation to the framework's capacity to model alternatives, its similarity to solidarity economy, and also in relation to radical workplace democracy.

7. Discussion

Having concluded that the DisCO Framework carries the potential to re-politicize the economy, we would like to discuss this potential, including some of its limitations.

The core of DisCOs potential for re-politicizing the economy lies in its organizational structures and radical departure from the assumptions of the market society. We do not believe that this is a coincidence considering that GT define themselves as anti-capitalists (Guerilla Media Collective, n.d.2).

However, this potential is largely contingent on the adoption of the DisCO Framework, which is why we would like to address this. As we have mentioned a few times previously, the DisCO Framework is non-prescriptive, in the sense that there is no requirement to adopt the entirety of the framework, nor is there any 'authority' ensuring compliance with the framework, such as through certification as is the case with B Corporations or FairTrade.

Rather than trying to enforce compliance and promote full adoption of the DisCO Framework, GT, as the progenitors of the framework, instead encourages adoption to whatever degree those adopting the framework feel is suitable. We would describe this approach as 'modelling an alternative', as the logic behind it seems to be that if the DisCO Framework is seen as an attractive alternative to the status quo, it will be adopted by those interested in an alternative approach.

We see some distinct advantages to this approach, for one thing ensuring compliances would require committing resources to this, which would carry with it the opportunity cost of diverting these resources either from GT's core work of translation or from the development of the DisCO Framework. Another advantage

of this approach is that it allows the framework to be adapted depending on context, something we are very much in favor of, as we do not believe there exist any universally applicable organizational model that would be ideal in all cases.

Finally, while the potential for re-politicizing the economy is inherent in the DisCO Framework's structures, its recognition of alternative values, reciprocal and redistributive mechanism and its democratic norms and institutions, the impact of this potential is very much dependent on the framework being adopted by other organizations, as such we view it as beneficial in this regard that the framework does not include major barriers to entry.

However this approach also carries with it a risk of the DisCO Framework being co-opted and becoming window dressing for organizations that wish to signal alternative value, without committing to the ethos of the framework, akin to the issue of 'greenwashing' that has been a subject of concern among some in the environmental movement. This risk is however not a major issue, as we see it, at least not for the moment, as the DisCO Framework is a relatively unknown model and for there to be any benefit in adopting the trappings of a DisCO, without committing to the principles of the framework, the DisCO brand, such as it is, would have to be widely recognized.

This does however mean that if the DisCO Framework gains widespread appeal, that risk increase, and there may come a time where it would be beneficial, in the interest of maintaining the ethos of the framework and its potential for re-politicizing the economy, to revisit this approach and perhaps adopt some form of enforcement mechanism to avoid co-option. Though again we stress that this very much depends on the future trajectory of the framework.

Another insight we would like to discuss here is the similarities we see between the DisCO Framework and Laville's notion of solidarity economy. As mentioned in our theory section, Laville characterizes the solidarity economy as being made up of a pluralistic economic dimension, consisting of market-based, reciprocal, and redistributive elements, and a political dimension made up of norms and institutions (Laville, 2010b). The notion of solidarity economy was also a significant influence on the development of our theoretical framework for this inquiry, though one major difference between our approach and Laville's understanding of solidarity economy is that we chose to focus on norms and institutions internally in the organization, whereas Laville emphasizes the wider society and how the surrounding institutions shape the possibility space for organizations (ibid.).

This divergence is largely a result of a difference in focus. Whereas our inquiry here has been focused on embedding society into the economy on an organizational level, Laville developed the concept of solidarity economy as a framework for understanding the development of the so-called 'third sector' in a European context (ibid.). However we would like to acknowledge one element that is perhaps better encapsulated in Laville's formulation of the solidarity economy than in our theoretical framework, which is that organizations cannot be understood in isolation from the wider society, and its institutions, they exist in (ibid.). This was also evident in our conversations with members of GT, as they brought up issues surrounding legal form and taxation as unique challenges for them as an organization.

That being said, we hope it will not be considered misappropriating the term, when we suggest that one way of understanding the DisCO Framework is as a solidarity economy in itself, as we believe it contains the elements of one. We would hope our

analysis serves as ample evidence of the reciprocal and redistributive economic mechanisms in the model, and while market-based mechanisms have not played much of a role in our analysis, they are clearly present in the framework, as it is design for organizations operating within the market economy, as GT operates in the market for translation. The framework also clearly contains a political dimension, made up of the democratic norms and institutions we also addressed in our analysis.

When the notion of the DisCO Framework as a solidarity economy interests us, it is because of our belief that a solidarity economy represents a far more sustainable and humane economy than the market economy. Indeed, if the result of a re-politicized economy were to be an economy closer to Laville's conception of the solidarity economy than the market economy, we would very much consider that a beneficial result.

As such, while we acknowledge that these similarities between the DisCO Framework and solidarity economy are far from enough to meaningfully conclude anything on the likelihood of such a trajectory, we nonetheless find the possibility encouraging, and suggest that both the question of how to establish a solidarity economy as opposed to the current market economy, and the DisCO Frameworks' possible role in such project represents fruitful areas for further research.

The final topic we would like to discuss here is that of workplace democracy. While we consider the DisCO Framework a strong model for creating democratic workplace, we would suggest that there is a need for a broader perspective on this particular point, one that goes beyond what the DisCO Framework can achieve in itself and can incorporate collaboration with a broad coalition of actors with similar goals.

When we see the need for a broad coalition, and a program for workplace democracy that goes beyond the DisCO Framework itself, it is a reflection of the fact that employment in a democratic workplace is a privilege available to far too few. Firstly, because democratic workplaces are a rarity, secondly because seeking out such employment opportunities often requires financial resources to withstand long periods of unemployment or a social connection to one of the rare cases of democratic workplace. People without either of these privileges are likely to see themselves forced by very necessity to accept the working conditions of the status quo.

This is not to say that we think the commitment to democratizing work is lacking in the DisCO Framework, nor do we think there is a need to redirect efforts away from developing the framework towards some form of movement building.

Rather our suggestion is merely that far more stands to benefit if this development is linked to a broad coalition of actors pushing for democratic workplaces. This could also form the basis for a wider effort for re-politicizing the economy, linking the work of DisCOs with that of potential allies, such as unions, progressive political parties, other co-operatives, and organizations committed to challenging the status quo. As we mentioned in our theory section above, Polanyi identified that the seeming inevitability of the market society was down to the broad coalition, from staunch conservatives to liberal reforms, behind it. As such, it seems that the logical approach to counteract the market society would be to assemble a similarly broad coalition against it, and DisCO, with its structures that manage to embed society into the organization itself, would certainly fit right in such a coalition.

As we are convinced of the need for radically more democratic workplaces, and the need for a broad coalition in order to achieve this goal, one development that has

us somewhat optimistic for the future is the appearance of a recent opinion piece in *The Guardian*, calling for the democratization of work in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This showed that we are clearly not alone in considering workplace democracy a necessity, as it was signed by over 3000 scholars representing more than 600 universities, including such luminaries as Nancy Fraser, Chantal Mouffe, and Thomas Piketty. (Fraser *et al.*, 2020) We whole-heartedly agree with this call for increasing workplace democracy, and see it as further backing for our belief in the need for radical approaches such as the DisCO Framework and for the need of a broad coalition for workplace democracy.

8. Conclusion

Our primary purpose in this thesis was to critically investigate the DisCO Framework's potential to re-politicize the economy. We found this to be a worthy line of inquiry due to our long-standing interest in the potential for SEO's through more democratic organizational models to radicalize the field of social entrepreneurship.

Our literature review began with an explanation on how questions of politics have widely been separated from economic concerns due to long-standing conceptions both of economics as a positive science and the belief that economic liberties can adequately be met through free markets. However, after drawing on *The Great Transformation* from the economic historians Karl Polanyi, we began to question the logic of these notions, which ultimately led us to reject them. Indeed, we further went on to argue that these notions, both of which underlie mainstream economics, have thus *created* the conditions central to our inquiry here, or the unjustified separation of market from wider society questions of politics.

Through the lens of critical theory, we analyzed the hegemonic system of market society and the subjugation of society to the market. We then moved on to laying out the necessity of plural economy, or alternative economic systems, before moving on to present our theoretical framework towards re-politicizing the economy.

In our analysis, we drew on our theoretical framework, interview transcripts and the DisCO governance model to better understand how the DisCO Framework recognizes alternative values and motives, implements alternative mechanisms,

such as reciprocity and redistribution, and embeds democratic norms and institutions. We thus concluded that the DisCO model incorporates recognition of alternative values and motives, employ reciprocity and redistribution as mechanisms for economic activity, and democratic norms and institutions, though with a point of critique being that a democratic model based on agonistic pluralism rather than a deliberative democracy, as employed by GT, would be better suited to the framework's commitment to radical workplace democracy.

In the Discussion chapter, we further reflected on the DisCO Framework's potential to re-politicize the economy, and raised some concern over limitations. Such as the risk of co-option due to the non-prescriptive model, although we did note that this was very much dependent on the future of the DisCO Framework. Furthermore, we drew a comparison between the framework and Laville's understanding of a solidarity economy. In the sense, that both recognize alternative motives and values, alternative mechanisms of economic activity, and democratic norms. We put forth that there was even an argument to be made that the DisCO Framework, in itself, could be seen as a solidarity economy. Finally, while we recognized the DisCO Framework as a more democratic organization than other more traditional organizations, we also suggested that, if they wish to strengthen their commitment to radical workplace democracy, they may want to consider linking with other actors in the field to build up a coalition for radical workplace democracy.

As we conclude our investigation, we believe it fair to say that the DisCO Framework clearly contains a reasonable amount of recognition of alternative values and motives and reciprocity and redistribution as mechanisms of economic activity to embrace a more democratic organizational model. While we do contend that the

DisCO Framework carries with it a potential to re-politicize the economy, just how the DisCO Framework develops and unfolds, remains to be seen.

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