# Neg

### NC –Postwork K

#### The aff’s refusal to work is not a refusal of work – their endorsement of striking reinforces the belief that withholding labor puts people in a position of power. This reduces humans to labor capital, which causes work-dependency and inhibits alternatives.

Hoffmann, 20 (Maja, "Resolving the ‘jobs-environment-dilemma’? The case for critiques of work in sustainability research. Taylor & Francis, 4-1-2020, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2020.1790718)//usc-br/

The societal dependence on work

If work is associated with environmental pressures in at least four different ways, why do we have to maintain it at constant or increased levels? We hold that in industrial society four distinct levels of structural and cultural dependency on work may be discerned. These are to be understood as broad analytical categories which in reality comprise and cross individual and structural levels in various ways, and are all interdependent.

Personal dependence. A first aspect is individual or personal dependence on work: Work as regular, gainful employment constitutes one of the central social relations in modern ‘work society’ and is a central point of reference in people’s lives. As a principal source of income, waged work fulfils the existential function of providing livelihoods and social security. It is constructed to secure basic social rights, social integration, recognition, status, and personal identity (Frayne 2015b; Weeks 2011). This is probably why ‘social’ is so often equated with ‘work’.

State dependence. Secondly, dependence on work pertains to the modern welfare state: the revenues and economic growth generated through work contribute substantially to the financing of social security systems. Affording welfare is therefore a main argument for creating jobs. Wage labour is thus a dominating tool for redistribution; through wages, taxes on wages and on the consumption that production generates, almost all distribution takes place. Hence, what the job is, and what is being produced, is of secondary importance (Paulsen 2017). Work is moreover a convenient instrument of control that structures and disciplines society, and ‘renders populations at once productive and governable’ (Weeks 2011, 54; Gorz 1982; Lafargue 2014 [1883]). Specifically, the dominant neoliberal ideology, its condemnation of laziness and idealisation of ‘hardworking people’ has intensified the ‘moral fortification of work’. Accordingly, the neoliberal ‘workfare’ reforms have focused on job creation and the relentless activation for the labour market, effectively ‘enforcing work (…) as a key function of the state’ (Frayne 2015b, 16).

Economic dependence. Thirdly, besides the economic imperative for individuals to ‘earn a living’ and pay off debt, modern economies are dependent on work in terms of an industrious labour force, long working hours for increasing economic output under the imperatives of capital accumulation, growth and competition, and rising incomes for increasing purchasing power and demand. Creating or preserving jobs constitutes the standard argument for economic growth. In turn, work as one basic factor of production creates growth. However, the relation between growth and employment is conditioned, amongst other factors, primarily by constantly pursued labour productivity: for employment to rise or stay stable, the economy must grow at a sufficiently high rate to exceed productivity gains, in order to offset job losses and avoid ‘jobless growth’. Moreover, faltering expansion triggers a spiral of recession which not only affects economic stability but results in societal crises as a whole (Jackson 2009; Paech 2012). However, besides being unsustainable and insatiable, growth is also increasingly unlikely to continue at the rates required for economic stability (Kallis et al. 2018; IMF 2015). The individual and structural economic dependence on work and economic growth therefore implies profound vulnerability as livelihoods and political stability are fatefully exposed to global competition and the capitalist imperative of capital accumulation, and constrained by ‘systemically relevant’ job and growth creating companies, industries and global (financial) markets (Gronemeyer 2012; Paech 2012).

Cultural dependence. A fourth aspect concerns cultural dependence: The ‘work ethic’ is the specific morality described by Max Weber (1992[1905]) as constitutive of modern industrial culture, 2 and determining for all its subjects as shared ‘common senses’ about how work is valued and understood. It means an ingrained moral compulsion to gainful work and timesaving, manifested in the common ideals of productivity, achievement and entrepreneurship, in the feeling of guilt when time is ‘wasted’, in personal identification with one’s ‘calling’, in observations of busyness, even burnout as a ‘badge of honour’ (Paulsen 2014), and in descriptions of a culture that has lost the ‘capacity to relax in the old, uninhibited ways’ (Thompson 1967, 91). Even for those who do not share such attitudes towards work, in a work-centred culture it is normal to (seek) work. It is so commonsensical that it seems impractical to question it, and it continues to be normalised through socialisation and schooling. Consequently, people become limited in their imagination of alternatives, the prospect of losing one’s job usually causes heartfelt fear (Standing 2011). For a work society that ‘does no longer know of those other higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won’, there can be nothing worse than the cessation of work (Hannah Arendt, cited in Gorz 1989, 7–8).

The wage relation based on the commodity labour is, in other words, an essential functional feature of the industrial-capitalist system, and the exaltation of work remains its social ethic. For modern industrial society work is ‘both its chief means and its ultimate goal’ (Gorz 1989, 13; Weber 1992 [1905]; Weeks 2011); it is centred and structurally dependent on work, despite work’s environmentally adverse implications. This constellation constitutes the dilemma between work and the environment, and it is why we argue that work is absolutely central to present-day unsustainability and should accordingly be dealt with in sustainability research.

#### Work necessitates material throughput and waste that destroys the environment, even when the jobs are ‘green’

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An ecological critique of work

What is the problem with modern-day work from an environmental perspective? A number of quantitative studies have researched the correlation of working hours and environmental impacts in terms of ecological footprint, carbon footprint, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy consumption, both on micro/household and on macro/cross-national levels, and for both ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries (Fitzgerald, Jorgenson, and Clark 2015; Hayden and Shandra 2009; Knight, Rosa, and Schor 2013; Nässén and Larsson 2015; Rosnick and Weisbrot 2007). Based on these findings, and going beyond them, we develop a qualitative classification of ecological impacts of work broadly (not working hours only), distinguishing four analytically distinct factors (Hoffmann 2017).

Fundamentally, all productive activity is based on material and energy throughputs within wider ecological conditions, which necessarily involves interference with the ecosphere. The appropriation and exploitation of non-human animals, land, soil, water, biomass, raw materials, the atmosphere and all other elements of the biosphere always to some extent causes pollution, degradation, and destruction. Thus, work is inherently both productive and destructive. However, this biophysical basis alone need not make work unsustainable, and it has not always been so (Krausmann 2017).

Contributing to its unsustainability is, firstly, the Scale factor: the greater the amount of work, the more ‘inputs’ are required and the more ‘outputs’ generated, which means more throughput of resources and energy, and resulting ecological impacts. In other words, the more work, the larger the size of the economy, the more demands on the biosphere (Hayden and Shandra 2009; Knight, Rosa, and Schor 2013). Obviously, there are qualitative differences between different types of work and their respective environmental impacts. Moreover, besides the evident and direct impacts, indirect impacts matter also. The tertiary/service sector is therefore not exempt from this reasoning (Hayden and Shandra 2009; Knight, Rosa, and Schor 2013), not only due to its own (often ‘embodied’) materiality and energy requirements, but also because it administrates and supports industrial production processes in global supply chains (Fitzgerald, Jorgenson, and Clark 2015; Haberl et al. 2009; Paech 2012).

Additionally, modern work is subject to certain integrally connected and mutually reinforcing conditions inherent in industrial economic structures, which aggravate ecological impacts by further increasing the Scale factor. These include the systematic externalisation of costs, and the use of fossil fuels as crucial energy basis, which combined with modern industrial technology enable continuously rising labour productivity independently of physical, spatial or temporal constraints (Malm 2013). Taken together, this leads to constantly spurred economic growth with a corresponding growth in material and energetic throughputs, and the creation of massive amounts of waste. The latter is not an adverse side-effect of modern work, but part of its purpose under the imperatives of growth, profitability, and constant innovation, as evident in phenomena such as planned obsolescence or the ‘scrapping premium’, serving to stimulate growth and demand, and hence, job creation (Gronemeyer 2012). These conditions and effects tend to be neglected when ‘green jobs’ are promised to resolve the ecological crisis (Paus 2018), disregarding that the systematically and continuously advanced scale of work and production has grown far beyond sustainable limits (Haberl et al. 2009).

#### Unions are intrinsically invested in labor being good – they don’t strike to get rid of work; they strike to get people back to work. Lundström 14:

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Even though there was support for environmental perspectives in LO at this time – after all, the National Congress commissioned the programme, an environmental unit was established at headquarters and a majority of the congress accepted the programme – this waned significantly when the economy was threatened. This reflects the influence of the ‘jobs vs. environment’ conflict on processes of integrating environmental perspectives into the union agenda (Räthzel and Uzzell [2011](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2015.1041212)). Union policies are embedded in a mode of production marked by what Marx called the ‘metabolic rift’. The concept is one of the pillars upon which Foster develops ‘Marx’s Ecology’ (Foster [2000](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2015.1041212), 155 f). It argues that the capitalist industrial system exploits the earth without restoring its constituents to it. More generally, Marx defined the labour process as metabolism (Stoffwechsel) between nature (external to humans) and human nature. When humans work on and with nature to produce the means of their survival, they also develop their knowledge and their capabilities, and transform their own human nature (Marx [1998](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2015.1041212)). Polanyi later reduced the concept of the ‘metabolic rift’ to the commodification of land (Polanyi [1944](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2015.1041212)), thus paving the way for a perspective that sees the solution in the control of the market, but disregards the relations of production as they are lived by workers in the production process. But to understand why trade unions have difficulties developing and especially holding on to environmental policies it is important to recognise that since nature has become a privately owned ‘means of production’ it has become workers’ Other. Unions have been reduced and have reduced themselves to care only for one part of the inseparable relationship between nature and labour. On the everyday level of policies this means that environmental strategies lose momentum in times of economic crises and when jobs are seen to be threatened. In this respect, unions are no different from political parties and governments. In spite of numerous publications by the ILO and Union organisations, which show that a move to a ‘green economy’ can create new jobs (Poschen [2012](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2015.1041212); Rivera Alejo and Martín Murillo [2014](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23251042.2015.1041212)), unions have been reluctant to exchange ‘a bird in the hand for two in the bush’ – even if the bird in the hand becomes elusive.

#### The alternative is rejecting the affirmative to embrace postwork – it questions the centrality of work and ontological attachments to productivity to enable emancipatory transformation of society to an ecologically sustainable form.

#### Your ballot symbolizes an answer to the question of whether work can be used as the solution to social ills. The plan doesn’t “happen,” and you are conditioned to valorize work – vote neg to interrogate these ideological assumptions.

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What is postwork?

How can a ‘postwork’ approach contribute to resolving these issues? The notions critique of work (Frayne 2015a, 2015b) or postwork (Weeks 2011) have emerged in recent years in social science research and popular culture, building on a long intellectual tradition of (autonomist and neo-)Marxist, anarchist, and feminist theory (Seyferth 2019; Weeks 2011). The critique of work targets work in a fundamental sense, not only its conditions or exploitation. It is aimed at the centrality of work in modern ‘work society’ as a pivotal point for the provision of livelihoods through monetary income, the granting of social security, social inclusion, and personal identity construction, on which grounds unemployed persons and unpaid activities are excluded from recognition, welfare provision and trade union support. Moreover, the crucial role of waged work in the functioning of the welfare state and the modern industrialised economy is part of this critique (Chamberlain 2018; Frayne 2015b; Paulsen 2017). Although commonly taken as naturally given, this kind of societal order and its institutions such as the wage relation, labour markets, unemployment, or abstract time are historically and culturally exceptional modes of human coexistence (Applebaum 1992; Graeber 2018; Gorz 1989; Polanyi 2001 [1944]; Thompson 1967). This critique of the structures and social relations of work society is accompanied by the critique of its cultural foundation, the work ethic; an ideological commitment to work and productivism as ends in themselves, moral obligations, and as intrinsically good, regardless of what is done and at what cost (Gorz 1982; Weber 1992 [1905]; Weeks 2001).

Postwork, however, is not only a critical stance. Criticising work and work society, aware of their historical contingency, implies the potential for an emancipatory transformation of industrial society. The focus is thereby not necessarily on abolishing work tout-court, but rather on pointing out and questioning its relentless centrality and asking what a more desirable, free and sustainable society might look like; a society in which work is no longer the pivotal point of social organisation and ideological orientation, including all questions and debates around this objective (Chamberlain 2018; Frayne 2015a; Weeks 2011).

As a relatively new and dynamically developing approach, postwork is, despite similar political claims, not uniform in its reasoning. Some, drawing on the classical ‘end-of-work’ argument (Frayne 2016), assume an imminent technology-induced massive rise in unemployment. This is welcomed as an opportunity to reduce and ultimately abolish work to liberate humankind (Srnicek and Williams 2015). Others emphasise the remarkable fact that throughout the past two centuries technological development has not challenged the centrality of work in modern lives, despite the prospect that technological change would allow for much shorter working hours (e.g., Keynes 1930). This has not materialised due to the requirements of a work-centred, work-dependent society. On the contrary, work has become more central to modern societies. These deeper structural and cultural aspects and dependencies seem to remain unaffected by technological trends (Paulsen 2017; Weeks 2011).

The ecological case for postwork

The perspective of postwork/critiques of work may enrich sustainability debates in many ways; here, our focus is again on ecological concerns. First, postwork offers a much needed change in focus in sustainability debates, away from narrow critiques of individual consumption and the overemphasis on ‘green jobs’, towards understanding work as one central cause of sustained societal unsustainability. Postwork directs the focus towards crucial overlooked issues, e.g. the ways in which work is ecologically harmful, or which problems arise due to the social and cultural significance of modern-day work, including existential dependencies on it. Postwork seeks to re-politicise work, recognising that its conception and societal organisation are social constructs and therefore political, and must accordingly be open to debate (Weeks 2011). This opens conceptual space and enables open-minded debates about the meaning, value and purpose of work: what kind of work is, for individuals, society and the biosphere as a whole, meaningful, pointless, or outright harmful (Graeber 2018)?

Such debates and enhanced understanding about the means and ends of work, and the range of problems associated with it, would be important in several regards. In ecological regard it facilitates the ecologically necessary, substantial reduction of work, production and consumption (Frey 2019; Haberl et al. 2009). Reducing work/working hours is one of the key premises of postwork, aiming at de-centring and de-normalising work, and releasing time, energy and creativity for purposes other than work (Coote 2013). From an ecological perspective, reducing the amount of work would reduce the dependency on a commodity-intensive mode of living, and allow space for more sustainable practices (Frayne 2016). Reducing work would also help mitigate all other work-induced environmental pressures described above, especially the ‘Scale factor’ (Knight, Rosa, and Schor 2013), i.e. the amount of resources and energy consumed, and waste, including emissions, created through work. A postwork approach facilitates debate on the politics of ecological work reduction which entails difficult questions: for example, which industries and fields of employment are to be phased out? Which fields will need to be favoured and upon what grounds? Which kinds of work in which sectors are socially important and should therefore be organised differently, especially when altering the energy basis of work due to climate change mitigation which implies decentralised, locally specific, intermittent and less concentrated energy sources (Malm 2013)? These questions are decisive for future (un-)sustainability, and yet serious attempts at a solution are presently forestalled by the unquestioned sanctity that work, ‘jobs’ or ‘full employment’ enjoy (Frayne 2015b).

Postwork is also conducive to rethinking the organisation of work. There are plausible arguments in favour of new institutions of democratic control over the economy, i.e. economic democracy (Johanisova and Wolf 2012). This is urgent and necessary to distribute a very tight remaining carbon budget fairly and wisely (IPCC 2018), to keep economic power in check, and to gain public sovereignty over fundamental economic decisions that are pivotal for (un-)sustainable trajectories (Gould, Pellow, and Schnaiberg 2004). An obstacle to this is one institution in particular which is rarely under close scrutiny: the labour market, a social construct linked to the advent of modern work in form of the commodity of labour (Applebaum 1992). It is an undemocratic mechanism, usually characterised by high levels of unfreedom and coercion (Anderson 2017; Graeber 2018; Paulsen 2015) that allocates waged work in a competitive mode as an artificially scarce, ‘fictitious’ commodity (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). 4 It does so according to availability of money and motives of gain on the part of employers, and appears therefore inappropriate for distributing labour according to sustainability criteria and related societal needs. As long as unsustainable and/or unnecessary jobs are profitable and/or (well-)paid, they will continue to exist (Gorz 1989), just as ‘green jobs’ must follow these same criteria in order to be created. An ecological postwork perspective allows to question this on ecological grounds, and it links to debates on different modes of organising socially necessary work, production and provisioning in a de-commodified, democratic and sustainable mode.

Finally, postwork is helpful for ecological reasons because it criticises the cultural glorification of ‘hard work’, merit and productivism, and the moral assumption that laziness and inaction are intrinsically bad, regardless the circumstances. Postwork is about a different mindset which problematises prevailing productivist attitudes and allows the idea that being lazy or unproductive can be something inherently valuable. Idleness is conducive to an ecological agenda as nothing is evidently more carbon-neutral and environment-sparing than being absolutely unproductive. As time-use studies indicate, leisure, recreation and socialising have very low ecological impacts, with rest and sleep having virtually none (Druckman et al. 2012). Apart from humans, the biosphere also needs idle time for regeneration. In this sense, laziness or ‘ecological leisure’, ideally sleep, can be regarded as supremely ecofriendly states of being that would help mitigate ecological pressures. Moreover, as postwork traces which changes in attitudes towards time, efficiency and laziness have brought modern work culture and modern time regimes into being in the first place and have dominated ever since (Thompson 1967; Weber 1992 [1905]), it provides crucial knowledge for understanding and potentially changing this historically peculiar construction. It can thereby take inspiration from longstanding traditions throughout human history, where leisure has usually been a high social ideal and regarded as vital for realising genuine freedom and quality of life (Applebaum 1992; Gorz 1989).

Conclusions: postwork politics and practices

We argued that modern-day work is a central cause for unsustainability, and should therefore be transformed to advance towards sustainability. We have contributed to this field of research, firstly, by developing a systematisation of the ecological harms associated with work – comprising the factors Scale, Time, Income, and Work-induced Mobility, Infrastructure, and Consumption – taking those studies one step further which investigate the ecological impacts of working hours quantitatively. One of the analytical advantages of this approach is that it avoids the mystification of work through indirect measures of economic activity (such as per capita GDP), as in the numerous analyses of the conflict between sustainability and economic growth in general. Our second substantial contribution consists in combining these ecological impacts of work with an analysis of the various structural dependencies on work in modern society, which spells out clearly what the recurring jobs-environment-dilemma actually implies, and why it is so difficult to overcome. While this dilemma is often vaguely referred to, this has been the first more detailed analysis of the different dimensions that essentially constitute it. Reviewing the literature in environmental sociology and sustainability research more generally, we also found the work-environment-dilemma and the role of work itself are not sufficiently addressed and remain major unresolved issues.

We proposed the field would benefit from taking up the long intellectual tradition of problematising modern-day work, through the approach of postwork or critiques of work. While the described problems of unsustainability and entrenched dependencies cannot easily be resolved, we discussed how postwork arguments can contribute to pointing out and understanding them, and to opening up new perspectives to advance sustainability debates. A third contribution is therefore to have introduced the concept of postwork/critiques of work into sustainability research and the work-environment debate, and to have conducted an initial analysis of the ways in which postwork may be helpful for tackling ecological problems. Besides being ecologically beneficial, it may also serve emancipatory purposes to ‘raise broader questions about the place of work in our lives and spark the imagination of a life no longer so subordinate to it’ (Weeks 2011, 33). In order to inspire such ‘postwork imagination’ (Weeks 2011, 35, 110) and show that postwork ideas are not as detached from reality as they may sound, in this last section we briefly outline examples of existing postwork politics and practices.

The most obvious example is the reduction of working hours during the 19th and 20th centuries. These reforms were essential to the early labour movement, and the notion that increasing productivity entails shorter working hours has never been nearly as ‘radical’ as today (Paulsen 2017). As concerns about climate change are rising, there is also renewed awareness about the ecological benefits of worktime reduction, besides a whole range of other social and economic advantages (Coote 2013; Frey 2019).

Worktime reduction is usually taken up positively in public debate. Carlsson (2015, 184) sees a ‘growing minority of people’ who engage in practices other than waged work to support themselves and make meaningful contributions to society. Frayne (2015b) describes the practical refusal of work by average people who wish to live more independently of the treadmill of work. Across society, the disaffection with work is no marginal phenomenon (Graeber 2018; Cederström and Fleming 2012; Paulsen 2014, 2015; Weeks 2011); many start to realise the ‘dissonance between the mythical sanctity of work on the one hand, and the troubling realities of people’s actual experiences on the other’ (Frayne 2015b, 228). Public debates are therefore increasingly receptive to issues such as industries’ responsibility for climate change, coercive ‘workfare’ policies, meaningless ‘bullshit jobs’, or ‘work-life-balance’, shorter hours, overwork and burnout; topics ‘that will not go away’ (Coote 2013, xix) and question the organisation of work society more fundamentally. 5

The debate about an unconditional basic income (UBI) will also remain. UBI would break the existential dependency of livelihoods on paid work and serve as a new kind of social contract to entitle people to social security regardless of paid economic activity. In addition to countless models in theory, examples of UBI schemes exist in practice, either currently implemented or planned as ‘experiments’ (Srnicek and Williams 2015).

The critique and refusal of work also takes place both within the sphere of wage labour and outside it. Within, the notions of absenteeism, tardiness, shirking, theft, or sabotage (Pouget 1913 [1898]; Seyferth 2019) have a long tradition, dating back to early struggles against work and industrialisation (Thompson 1967), and common until today (Paulsen 2014). The idea of such deliberate ‘workplace resistance’ is that the ability to resist meaningless work and the internalised norms of work society, and be idle and useless while at work, can be recognised and successfully practised (Campagna 2013; Scott 2012). Similarly, there is a growing interest in productive practices, social relations, and the commons outside the sphere of wage labour and market relations, for example in community-supported agriculture. This initiates ways of organising work and the economy to satisfy material needs otherwise than by means of commodity consumption (Chamberlain 2018; Helfrich and Bollier 2015).

For such modes of organising productive social relations in more varied ways, inspiration could be drawn from the forms of ‘work’ that are prevalent in the global South in the so-called informal sector and in non-industrial crafts and peasantry, neither of which resemble the cultural phenomenon of modern-day work with its origins in the colonial North (Comaroff and Comaroff 1987; Thompson 1967). This, however, contradicts the global development paradigm, under which industrialisation, ‘economic upgrading’, global (labour) market integration and ‘structural transformation’ are pursued. Modern work, especially industrial factory jobs and ideally in cities, is supposed to help ‘the poor’ to escape their misery (Banerjee and Duflo 2012; UNDP 2015). Many of these other forms of livelihood provisioning and associated ways of life are thus disregarded, denigrated or destroyed as underdeveloped, backward, poor, and lazy (Thompson 1967), and drawn into the formal system of waged work as cheap labour in capitalist markets and global supply chains – ‘improved living conditions’ as measured in formal pecuniary income (Rosling 2018; Comaroff and Comaroff 1987). There are indications that these transformations create structural poverty, highly vulnerable jobs and an imposed dependence on wage labour (while few viable wage labour structures exist) (Hickel 2017; Srnicek and Williams 2015). There is also clear evidence of numerous struggles against capitalist development and for traditional livelihood protection and environmental justice (Anguelovski 2015). These are aspects where a postwork orientation is relevant beyond the industrialised societies of the global North, as it puts a focus on the modern phenomenon ‘work’ itself and the conditions that led to its predominance, as it questions the common narrative that ‘jobs’ are an end in themselves and justify all kinds of problematic development, and as it allows to ask which alternative, postcolonial critiques and conceptualisations of ‘work’ exist and should be preserved.

To conclude, we clearly find traces of postwork organisation and politics in the present. However, these ideas are contested; they concern the roots of modern culture, society and industrial-capitalist economies. Waged work continues to be normalised, alternatives beyond niches appear quite impractical for generalisation. Powerful economic interests, including trade unions, seek to perpetuate the status-quo (Lundström, Räthzel, and Uzzell 2015). Job creation and (global) labour market integration (regardless of what kind) are central policy goals of all political parties, and presently popular progressive debates on a Green New Deal tend to exhibit a rather productivist stance.

There is one particular aspect that appears hopeful: the present socio-economic system is unsustainable in the literal sense that it is physically impossible to be sustained in the long run. It was Weber (1992[1905]) who predicted that the powerful cosmos of the modern economic order will be determining with overwhelming force until the last bit of fossil fuel is burnt – and exactly this needs to happen soon to avert catastrophic climate change. 6 This is the battlefield of sustainability, and lately there has been renewed urgency and momentum for more profound social change, where it might be realised that a different societal trajectory beyond work and productivism for their own sake is more sustainable and desirable for the future.

# Case

## Econ turn

#### Growth is surging.

Halloran ’9-14 [Michael; 2021; M.B.A. from Carnegie Mellon University, former aerospace research engineer, Equity Strategist; Janney, “Despite Potential Headwinds, Key Labor Market Indicators Bode Well for the Economy,” https://www.janney.com/latest-articles-commentary/all-insights/insights/2021/09/14/despite-potential-headwinds-key-labor-market-indicators-bode-well-for-the-economy]

However, we remain encouraged by the recovery that has been unfolding since the economy began reopening. We continue to see improvement in important cyclical sectors of the economy while consumers are historically healthy and still have pent-up demand. Business confidence has rebounded with strong corporate profits that should support further capital spending and hiring (there are now more job openings than there are unemployed people by a record amount).

We expect to see further improvement in the international backdrop, supported by unprecedented fiscal and monetary stimulus and accelerating rates of vaccination. Although the impact of the Delta wave is still being felt, recent evidence confirms the effectiveness of vaccines in limiting deaths and hospitalizations. With the pace of vaccination now picking up in the areas most impacted by this wave—Asia and Australia—the case for fading headwinds leading to improving economic growth later this year remains positive.

The signals from financial markets themselves remain positive. Despite consolidating last week, stocks remain near record highs while the 10-year Treasury remains well above the lows of earlier this summer when concerns about Delta first emerged.

#### These factors support our view of a durable economic recovery from the pandemic that should continue supporting stock prices. A healthy labor market is a critical element for a sustainable recovery that supports profit growth and last week’s news from the labor market remains

#### COVID creates an economic brink---recovery is strong now because of effective monetary policy, but we’ve hit the zero-lower bound.

Christopher Rugaber 21. Associated Press. “Federal Reserve keeps key interest rate near zero, signals COVID-19 economic risks receding.” https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-fed-interest-rates-economy-20210428-bumyc3ynpza6ri4ygsntmdsmya-story.html.

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve is keeping its ultra-low interest rate policies in place, a sign that it wants to see more evidence of a strengthening economic recovery before it would consider easing its support.

In a statement Wednesday, the Fed expressed a brighter outlook, saying the economy has improved along with the job market. And while the policymakers noted that inflation has risen, they ascribed the increase to temporary factors.

The Fed also signaled its belief that the pandemic’s threat to the economy has diminished, a significant point given Chair Jerome Powell’s long-stated view that the recovery depends on the virus being brought under control. Last month, the Fed had cautioned that the virus posed “considerable risks to the economic outlook.” On Wednesday, it said only that “risks to the economic outlook remain” because of the pandemic.

The central bank left its benchmark short-term rate near zero, where it’s been since the pandemic erupted nearly a year ago, to help keep loan rates down to encourage borrowing and spending. It also said in a statement after its latest policy meeting that it would keep buying $120 billion in bonds each month to try to keep longer-term borrowing rates low.

The U.S. economy has been posting unexpectedly strong gains in recent weeks, with barometers of hiring, spending and manufacturing all surging. Most economists say they detect the early stages of what could be a robust and sustained recovery, with coronavirus case counts declining, vaccinations rising and Americans spending their stimulus-boosted savings.

#### Strikes hurt critical core industries that is necessary for economic growth

John McElroy, 2019, Strikes Hurt Everybody.Wards Auto Industry News, October 25, https://www.wardsauto.com/ideaxchange/strikes-hurt-everybody

This creates a **poisonous relationship** between the company and its workforce. Many GM hourly workers don’t identify as GM employees. They identify as UAW members. And they see the union as the source of their jobs, not the company. It’s an unhealthy dynamic that puts GM at a disadvantage to non-union automakers in the U.S. like Honda and Toyota, where workers take pride in the company they work for and the products they make. Attacking the company in the media also **drives away customers**. Who wants to buy a shiny new car from a company that’s accused of underpaying its workers and treating them unfairly? Data from the Center for Automotive Research (CAR) in Ann Arbor, MI, show that **GM loses market share during strikes and never gets it back**. GM lost two percentage points during the 1998 strike, which in today’s market would represent **a loss of 340,000 sales**. Because GM reports sales on a quarterly basis we’ll only find out at the end of December if it lost market share from this strike. UAW members say one of their greatest concerns is job security. But causing a company to lose market share is a sure-fire path to **more plant closings and layoffs**. Even so, unions are incredibly important for boosting wages and benefits for working-class people. GM’s UAW-represented workers earn considerably more than their non-union counterparts, about $26,000 more per worker, per year, in total compensation. Without a union they never would have achieved that. Strikes are a powerful weapon for unions. They usually are the only way they can get management to accede to their demands. If not for the power of collective bargaining and the threat of a strike, management would largely ignore union demands. If you took away that threat, management would pay its workers peanuts. Just ask the Mexican line workers who are paid $1.50 an hour to make $50,000 BMWs. But strikes don’t just hurt the people walking the picket lines or the company they’re striking against. They hurt **suppliers, car dealers and the communities located near the plants.** The Anderson Economic Group estimates that 75,000 workers at supplier companies were temporarily laid off because of the GM strike. Unlike UAW picketers, those supplier workers won’t get any strike pay or an $11,000 contract signing bonus. No, most of them lost close to a month’s worth of wages, which must be financially devastating for them. GM’s suppliers also lost a lot of money. So now they’re cutting budgets and delaying capital investments to make up for the lost revenue, which is a further drag on the economy. According to CAR, the communities and states where GM’s plants are located collectively lost a couple of hundred million dollars in payroll and tax revenue. Some economists warn that if the strike were prolonged it could knock the state of Michigan – home to GM and the UAW – **into a recession.** That prompted the governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, to call GM CEO Mary Barra and UAW leaders and urge them to settle as fast as possible. So, while the UAW managed to get a nice raise for its members, the strike left a path of destruction in its wake. That’s not fair to the innocent bystanders who will never regain what they lost. John McElroyI’m not sure how this will ever be resolved. I understand the need for collective bargaining and the threat of a strike. But there’s got to be a better way to get workers a raise without torching the countryside.

#### Strikes create a stigmatization effect over labor and consumption that devastates the economy

Tenza 20, Mlungisi. "The effects of violent strikes on the economy of a developing country: a case of South Africa." Obiter 41.3 (2020): 519-537. (Senior Lecturer, University of KwaZulu-Natal)

When South Africa obtained democracy in 1994, there was a dream of a better country with a new vision for industrial relations.5 However, the number of violent strikes that have bedevilled this country in recent years seems to have shattered-down the aspirations of a better South Africa. South Africa recorded 114 strikes in 2013 and 88 strikes in 2014, which cost the country about **R6.1 billion** according to the Department of Labour.6 The impact of these strikes has been hugely felt by the mining sector, particularly the platinum industry. The biggest strike took place in the platinum sector where about 70 000 mineworkers’ downed tools for better wages. Three major platinum producers (Impala, Anglo American and Lonmin Platinum Mines) were affected. The strike started on 23 January 2014 and ended on 25 June 2014. Business Day reported that “the five-month-long strike in the platinum sector pushed the economy to the brink of recession”. 7 This strike was closely followed by a four-week strike in the metal and engineering sector. All these strikes (and those not mentioned here) were characterised with violence accompanied by damage to property, intimidation, assault and sometimes the killing of people. Statistics from the metal and engineering sector showed that about 246 cases of intimidation were reported, 50 violent incidents occurred, and 85 cases of vandalism were recorded.8 Large-scale unemployment, soaring poverty levels and the dramatic income inequality that characterise the South African labour market provide a broad explanation for strike violence.9 While participating in a strike, workers’ stress levels leave them feeling frustrated at their seeming powerlessness, which in turn provokes further violent behaviour.10 These strikes are not only violent but **take long to resolve.** Generally, a lengthy strike has a **negative effect on employment, reduces business confidence and increases the risk of economic stagflation**. In addition, such strikes have a major setback on the growth of the economy and investment opportunities. It is common knowledge that consumer spending is directly linked to economic growth. At the same time, if the economy is not showing signs of growth, employment opportunities are shed, and poverty becomes the end result. The economy of South Africa is in need of rapid growth to enable it to deal with the high levels of unemployment and resultant poverty. One of the measures that may boost the country’s economic growth is by attracting potential investors to invest in the country. However, this might be difficult as investors would want to invest in a country where there is a likelihood of getting returns for their investments. The wish of getting returns for investment may not materialise if the labour environment **is not fertile** for such investments as a result of, for example, unstable labour relations. Therefore, investors may be reluctant to invest where there is an unstable or fragile labour relations environment. 3 THE COMMISSION OF VIOLENCE DURING A STRIKE AND CONSEQUENCES The Constitution guarantees every worker the right to join a trade union, participate in the activities and programmes of a trade union, and to strike. 11 The Constitution grants these rights to a “worker” as an individual.12 However, the right to strike and any other conduct in contemplation or furtherance of a strike such as a picket13 can only be exercised by workers acting collectively.14 The right to strike and participation in the activities of a trade union were given more effect through the enactment of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 199515 (LRA). The main purpose of the LRA is to “advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace”. 16 The advancement of social justice means that the exercise of the right to strike must advance the interests of workers and at the same time workers must refrain from any conduct that can affect those who are not on strike as well members of society. Even though the right to strike and the right to participate in the activities of a trade union that often flow from a strike17 are guaranteed in the Constitution and specifically regulated by the LRA, it sometimes happens that the right to strike is exercised for purposes not intended by the Constitution and the LRA, generally. 18 For example, it was not the intention of the Constitutional Assembly and the legislature that violence should be used during strikes or pickets. As the Constitution provides, pickets are meant to be peaceful. 19 Contrary to section 17 of the Constitution, the conduct of workers participating in a strike or picket has changed in recent years with workers trying to emphasise their grievances by causing disharmony and chaos in public. A media report by the South African Institute of Race Relations pointed out that between the years 1999 and 2012 there were 181 strike-related deaths, 313 injuries and 3,058 people were arrested for public violence associated with strikes.20 The question is whether employers succumb easily to workers’ demands if a strike is accompanied by violence? In response to this question, one worker remarked as follows: “[T]here is no sweet strike, there is no Christian strike … A strike is a strike. [Y]ou want to get back what belongs to you ... you won’t win a strike with a Bible. You do not wear high heels and carry an umbrella and say ‘1992 was under apartheid, 2007 is under ANC’. You won’t win a strike like that.” 21 The use of violence during industrial action affects not only the strikers or picketers, the employer and his or her business but it also affects innocent members of the public, non-striking employees, the environment and the economy at large. In addition, striking workers visit non-striking workers’ homes, often at night, threaten them and in some cases, assault or even murder workers who are acting as replacement labour. 22 This points to the fact that for many workers and their families’ living conditions remain unsafe and vulnerable to damage due to violence. In Security Services Employers Organisation v SA Transport & Allied Workers Union (SATAWU),23 it was reported that about 20 people were thrown out of moving trains in the Gauteng province; most of them were security guards who were not on strike and who were believed to be targeted by their striking colleagues. Two of them died, while others were admitted to hospitals with serious injuries.24 In SA Chemical Catering & Allied Workers Union v Check One (Pty) Ltd,25 striking employees were carrying various weapons ranging from sticks, pipes, planks and bottles. One of the strikers Mr Nqoko was alleged to have threatened to cut the throats of those employees who had been brought from other branches of the employer’s business to help in the branch where employees were on strike. Such conduct was held not to be in line with good conduct of striking.26 These examples from case law show that South Africa is facing a problem that is affecting not only the industrial relations’ sector but also the economy at large. For example, in 2012, during a strike by workers employed by Lonmin in Marikana, the then-new union Association of Mine & Construction Workers Union (AMCU) wanted to exert its presence after it appeared that many workers were not happy with the way the majority union, National Union of Mine Workers (NUM), handled negotiations with the employer (Lonmin Mine). AMCU went on an unprotected strike which was violent and resulted in the loss of lives, damage to property and negative economic consequences including a weakened currency, reduced global investment, declining productivity, and increase unemployment in the affected sectors.27 Further, the unreasonably long time it takes for strikes to get resolved in the Republic has a negative effect on the business of the employer, the economy and employment. 3 1 Effects of violent and long strikes on the economy Generally, South Africa’s economy is on a downward scale. First, it fails to create employment opportunities for its people. The recent statistics on unemployment levels indicate that unemployment has increased from 26.5% to 27.2%. 28 The most prominent strike which nearly brought the platinum industries to its knees was the strike convened by AMCU in 2014. The strike started on 23 January 2014 and ended on 24 June 2014. It affected the three big platinum producers in the Republic, which are the Anglo American Platinum, Lonmin Plc and Impala Platinum. It was the longest strike since the dawn of democracy in 1994. As a result of this strike, the platinum industries lost billions of rands.29 According to the report by Economic Research Southern Africa, the platinum group metals industry is South Africa’s second-largest export earner behind gold and contributes just over 2% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).30 The overall metal ores in the mining industry which include platinum sells about 70% of its output to the export market while sales to local manufacturers of basic metals, fabricated metal products and various other metal equipment and machinery make up to 20%. 31 The research indicates that the overall impact of the strike in 2014 was driven by a reduction in productive capital in the mining sector, accompanied by a decrease in labour available to the economy. This resulted in a sharp increase in the price of the output by 5.8% with a **GDP declined by 0.72 and 0.78%**.32

## Links

#### None of their cards make any attempt to say they solve all of income inequality. No brink for how much income inequality they actually have to solve for to avoid this extinction scenario- reducing inequality isn’t enough

## Solvency

1. Working society incrases climate change—turns case