

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

A *Caritas in Veritate* Foundation Report by

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Abstract

This paper aims at eliciting a reflection on the world of work, exposing the challenges that workers experience in a scenario of profound changes and accelerated speed, with the background megatrends of technology, climate change, globalisation and demography. This is done in the context of the upcoming centenary of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN Agency that has maintained two unique characteristics since its inception: its tripartite membership of governments, employers' and workers' organisations and its standard setting and supervisory system. The method of dialogue, of consensus building and acceptance of common rules via international minimum standards has worked for one hundred years. As in the past, the stick for testing its current and future relevance will be the results delivered in practice to the women and men who aspire to translate "work" in a value for personal and social fulfilment. The Social Doctrine of the Church has always been a source of inspiration and a push to go further in denouncing wrongdoings and pursuing social justice. The paper highlights some of the shortcomings of the current development model, concluding with a call to the collective actors to actively shape a new bolder governance of the world of work. It stresses that only through shared responsibility and commitment it is possible to protect both the human dignity of workers and the fair share of the fruits of labour.

1. Introduction

"Si vis pacem, cole iustitiam."²

On the eve of the 100th Anniversary of ILO in 2019, it is worth beginning this brief reflection with the motto that was chosen to reflect its goals following the ravages of World War I:

This same goal is enshrined in the first paragraph of the Preamble to the Constitution -- “Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.”³ It was also emphasised by the Nobel Committee when awarding the Peace Prize to the ILO in 1969: “Beneath the foundation stone of the ILO’s main office in Geneva lies a document on which is written: *Si vis pacem, cole justitiam* – If you desire peace, cultivate justice. There are few organisations that have succeeded, to the extent that ILO has succeeded, in translating into action the moral idea on which it is based [...]. I believe we are justified in saying that the ILO has permanently influenced the social welfare legislation of every single country”⁴.

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Today, the tripartite ILO constituents are in trouble. Ministries of Labour in national governments have lost prominence, while trade unions and employers’ organisations are losing membership. The ILO could easily become a poor player that merely brings an aspirational message to member States or to global key players (e.g. Bretton Woods institutions and multinational enterprises), issuing standards that remain a sort of benevolent guide for voluntary compliance, with no real impact or “teeth.”

The values that shaped the origins of the ILO in 1919 (labour rights, human fulfilment, solidarity and a State that supports the welfare of all its members) were reaffirmed after World War II, adding the idea of supporting the common good through democratic order based on inclusive political and socio-economic decisions. They started to weaken in the 1980s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in the North and the declining influence of democratic decolonisation in the South: by then, the idea of solidarity was replaced with that of competition, leading to both the financialisation of profits (rather than a more just redistribution through the real economy) as well as to a progressive individualisation of protection.

Furthermore, lately we have seen the emergence of a fatalistic approach in terms of who creates industrial policies and who determines industrial districts, with a sense that oligopolies have the last say in terms of market decisions on production and consumption, blocking redistributive policies; one example being the globalised production through the Sweatshop Business Model.⁵

In this brief excursus, I propose that a different outcome is possible – an outcome which can only be based on a commitment to shared responsibility and action. A commitment to “social justice” shared by the ILO constituents

after each of the World Wars, – and I would add – necessary in order to avoid a third one.

2. The social doctrine of the Catholic Church: Inspiration and catalyst for the ILO

The new century was opened by Pope John Paul II, who clearly stated in the Mass celebrating the Jubilee of Workers in 2000: “All must work so that the economic system in which we live does not upset the fundamental order of the priority of work over capital, of the common good over the private interest.” In recent years, Pope Francis has been pivotal in pushing the ILO to enlarge its scope of work through the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, which highlights the economic, social and environmental crises: He stresses that decent work, the framework for ILO action, must fully integrate the ecological paradigm, rather than being based on a selfish and outdated growth model.

The three “T”s of Pope Francis – *Tierra*, *Techo*, and *Trabajo* – push us to rethink the standard developmental paradigm based on the market economy, economic growth and bulimic consumption. Instead, he asks us to reassert the inner value of developmental principles based on that of dignity. In particular, the concept of *Tierra* – land – is transformed: from just a tool at the service of humanity to an ecosystem with its own rights. Let’s recall that recent projects estimate that, while the world’s 7.6 billion people represent just 0.01% of all living things, yet since the dawn of civilisation, humanity has caused the loss of 83% of all wild mammals and half of the plants, while livestock maintained by humans is on the rise.⁶

Public pressure is fortunately building a much-needed ecological reflex, on the other hand we cannot leave the social sphere out of the equation. As J. Pfeffer puts it, “As companies obsess over their carbon footprint, they would do well to consider their effects – their footprints – on the human beings, a carbon-based life-form, who work for them.”⁷

This ecological and social reflection takes us straight to the choices to be made in the world of work.

With this complex scenario as background, current ILO Director-General Guy Ryder has asked the organisation’s tripartite constituents – governments, workers’ and employers’ representatives – to begin reflection on the role and value of work and of the future of work through an analysis on the theme of “Work and Society.”

The starting point of the reflection is the ILO Constitution, under which the Declaration of Philadelphia recalls the societal dimension of work: the fact that the war against want requires concerted action among governments, employers and workers in order to promote the “common welfare,” but also the personal dimension, “the right to pursue material

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well-being and spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunities.”⁸

All of these historical dimensions, for at least a large part of the history of the ILO, have been associated with work, but it hasn't been always the case.

In ancient Greece work was basically associated with slavery – the free person did not have to work. This concept continued through the centuries forging the classic divide between “haves” and “have nots” – between those who could live without working and those who had nothing but their capacity to toil. It is through the emergence of workers' organisations and trade unions, who demanded rights associated with work, that the value of workers in their own right has been affirmed.

Some would say it was driven by the fear of communism, others would say it was the genuine distress after so many lives were lost and societies ripped apart in World War I. Whatever the motivation, it is almost incredible that in 1919 the International Community was able to agree with Albert Thomas, former French Minister and charismatic first ILO Director-General, that countries were ready to establish a level playing field via international labour standards – standards which would be ratified by member States, in so committing to upgrade labour law and agreeable to be monitored and supervised by a new and unique tripartite organisation.

That the human person was foremost at the centre of the new system was clearly articulated by the decision of the first ILO Convention to recognise the long-standing request of the labour movement for eight-hour work days: promoting a cycle that would recognise the need for the three elements in daily life – eight hours for work, eight for rest and eight for family and social interaction.⁹ In so doing, the ILO recognised work as a necessary component of human fulfilment. At the same time, it affirmed the person as a whole, not just as a worker, but also as a member of a family and a community: a person in need of rest and leisure.

The same sentiment of wholeness can be found in other ILO instruments. ILO Convention 122 proposes three conditions for work to become dignified employment. Employment must be, “full, productive and freely-chosen.”¹⁰ Meanwhile, the State is called upon to establish policies that secure work for all, committing employers and workers to work together to ensure that the quality of production settings and beyond. The Convention also emphasises an element of free choice by the worker, who must remain master of his or her life through “freely chosen” employment.¹¹ These three criteria give both workers and employers dignity at work.

It was the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work that finally established, in 1998, that all members of the ILO have an obligation to urgently promote and realise specific universal principles and rights, especially in light of the growing economic interdependence of the world. Those principles are “freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced

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and compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.”¹² This obligation was renewed by the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization in 2008, which defines the four pillars of decent work (Employment, Social Dialogue, Social protection which comprises Social Security and Labour Protection and Fundamental Rights at Work, with the cross-cutting element of gender equality and non-discrimination).¹³

3. Rethinking the world of work: Dignity at work

The concept of decent work implies a societal dimension and it is not a simple workplace issue. It is based on the mutually supportive dimensions of employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work.

As mentioned above, “dignity” at work must start with the recognition of core labour standards¹⁴, which were enshrined twenty years ago in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998). Certainly, many governments have moved towards ratification and implementation of the core labour standards, but much remains to be done. Some figures give the sense of the profound injustice underlying the contemporary world of work. At least 40 million people live in forms of modern slavery. 152 million children are caught in child labour. More than 15 million women and girls are trapped in forced marriages. Women continue to be paid, on average, 23% less than their male colleagues. While freedom of association and collective bargaining are key importance as enabling rights, more than 50% of all workers in the world live in countries that have not ratified Conventions 87 and 98, which enshrined these fundamental rights. Particularly affected are workers in old and new non-standard forms of employment (precarious jobs, informal economy, platform economy, rural areas). Many of them are women and young workers.¹⁵

A movement has also been formed, asking for the addition of health and safety to fundamental rights, since the first value has to be the integrity of the human being and the integrity of the environment within and outside the workplace, in so reflecting the commitment already taken by the International Community through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family”.¹⁶

Dignity at work means also addressing the widening wage inequality in both developed and developing countries. The polarisation of the labour market, the decline of middle-class jobs and the surge in top executive compensation is leading to an unsustainable concentration of wealth, with as little as 10% of the world’s public corporations accounting for 80% of all profits.¹⁷

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Starting from and not forgetting these basic challenges, the ILO is currently reviewing a range of topics – old topics that have not yet been resolved and new topics emerging from contemporary settings – through a High-Level Commission on the Future of Work, which will release its report for discussion during the June 2019 International Labour Conference. Notwithstanding the impossibility of pre-defining the outcome of such work, it is relevant to consider some of the broad topics that are under discussion among the ILO constituents, linking some brief reflections coming from the Social Doctrine of the Church.

4. The Employment relationship

Rights and benefits should not be disposable and all workers, regardless if they are classified as standard or non-standard (temporary, part-time, short-term, platform economy) should receive a fair treatment. A labour contract, exactly because it involves a transaction between human beings, cannot be considered as a commercial relationship; the ILO Constitution is clear in this regard: “Labour is not a commodity”.¹⁸

Pope Francis stated that “there are jobs that humiliate people’s dignity [...] precarious work is an open wound for many workers, who live in fear of losing their occupation. I have felt very often this anguish: the anguish to lose a job, the anguish of the person who has a job from September to June and does not know what will happen next September. Total precarity. This is immoral. This kills: it kills dignity, it kills their health, it kills the family and it kills society. Undeclared work and precarious work kill.”¹⁹

The ILO, therefore, needs to find answers for all workers (addressing inclusion, representation equity and security), including for those often categorised as part of the “gig economy.” This disparaging term undermines the value of the work performed by the person, as if it were a choice to work on a piecemeal approach, such as at the beginning of the previous century. It is a challenge that requires innovative tools and labour regulation from workers in global supply chains - where profits are unequally shared between and within countries, between capital and labour – , to platform workers who are denied rights and social protection since these forms of work are not regulated, up to workers in the survivalist informal economy, who do not even see their work considered as such.

5. Social protection

Already in 2013, the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* stated: “While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few”²⁰ and the global current picture is still grim:

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only one person in four is covered by social security in the world, with 5.2 billion people without any coverage. Only 45% of the global population has access to at least one social benefit. The remaining 55%, four billion people, are left totally unprotected.²¹

Ensuring universal social protection therefore is a goal which must be speedily pursued. Inclusive social protection facilitates the transition from the informal to the formal economy and allows societies to support workers with family responsibilities, to respond to the necessities of people and communities, and to care for those in need.

Furthermore, while it is true that the expansion of the working life is a possibility given the longer lifespan, the insistence on cutting pensions and having people work instead of cultivating other interests in the third phase of life is a very narrow perspective. The older generation should be free to dedicate themselves to the passing on of knowledge and to supporting those who are younger in a positive cycle of solidarity among generations, with younger workers able to access fulfilling employment opportunities.

While Europe, for example, has been a cradle for the expansion of the welfare State in the past, it is upsetting to reflect on the current *status* of social protection, considered as a cost more than an investment in people, shifting to the personal ability to pay private services in order to get a quality return with rapidly shrinking public financial means. Other regions of the world are still struggling to establish social policies due to the lack of resources, or because of the inability to affirm democratic and public governance structures. The challenge is to implement fair macro-economic and social policies that allow for investing in quality of personal and communal life in order to achieve a truly human society.

6. Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) – technology and automation – with its impact on jobs and the planet, is among the most discussed topics of our times. It will be analysed in depth in a specific section of this publication (see “The Challenges of Digitalisation on Jobs and Welfare” by P. Garonna and A. Pastor – page 189 and the subsequent case studies), so I will touch only upon few issues.

Fear is often associated with AI, fear to lose jobs, failure to see the redistribution of gains – including the distribution of knowledge and power between developed and developing countries -, lack of clarity on the implications of certain choices and the non-participatory approach in terms of choices in automation in the manufacturing as well as in services at large, including public services. Technology has also been used to divide work into micro-tasks that are remunerated as such, with workers sometimes paid by the minutes spent on the actual task, not considering the daily work as a

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whole. Furthermore, the use of data in algorithms deprives workers of their personal data, with possible serious breaches of confidentiality.

There is also a societal dimension: having only machines in train stations at night or having a robot dispense medicine or investing only in e-banking means not only less redistribution via wages, but also a lack of consideration of the added value that interacting among human beings brings in terms of empathy, of access to needed services for all and even of democratic social control. (See case studies of chapter 4 - New and Emerging Challenges: Technology at the Service of the Human Being, page 211)

Laudato Si' boldly addresses the issue: “We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are, in reality, decisions about the kind of society we want to build”.²²

One solution that can be envisaged is to make “common” the data on which AI and machine learning are built, i.e., available for every citizen, organisation, business and government. Furthermore, workers and their representatives should have access and control over their own data.²³

7. Lifelong learning²⁴

The concept of clearly defined stages in life, with education being part only of pre-working life, is certainly a *modus operandi* of the past and it is now generally agreed that it is through lifelong learning that human development will be enhanced. But lifelong learning can only be achieved first through access for all to quality free, public education and learning skills, including valuing non-formal education. Recent data shows that about 263 million children and youth are out of school²⁵, equivalent to a quarter of the population of Europe. The total includes 61 million children of primary school age, 60 million of lower secondary school age, and includes the first ever estimate of those of upper secondary school age at 142 million.

The ability to progress in knowledge and skills during work life is an asset for the person, for enterprises and, above all, for societies at large. In order for workers to benefit from their acquired knowledge, opportunities to share the fruits of progress equally and for the recognition of education and training including across country borders must be advanced in a more inclusive way. Let's think of migrant workers or refugees who can currently only access jobs at the lowest entry level; an entire chapter is dedicated to decent work of migrants – refer to chapter 3 “Migration and Decent Work Conditions in Countries of Origin and Destination” – page 125.

Education and knowledge are concepts that need to be broadened, not considered through a technocratic point of view. To this end, *Laudato Si'*

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offers a poignant example when, in line with ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous People, it states that, “It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions”²⁶. Pope Francis has also often spoken against “meritocracy,” providing an interesting perspective: “Meritocracy fascinates because it uses a beautiful word ‘merit,’ but it exploits and uses it, deviating and perverting it. Meritocracy, beyond the good faith of the many who invoke it, is becoming an ethical acceptance of inequality [...]. The poor are considered as without merit hence culpable.”²⁷

We need therefore to adopt a holistic approach, from basic education to adult learning and non-formal education, trying to build “communities of trust” in anticipation of future skills requirements but also in making sure that current capabilities are recognised and valued, including for the worker who acquire new competencies and skills at work and who should therefore naturally access career advancement, with a return to the person, the company and society. ILO Recommendation 195 provides valuable guidance in this regard.²⁸

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8. Rural development

The ILO is often considered an organisation that is concentrated on industrial issues and on developed economies. Actually, throughout its history, it has also often addressed agriculture and rural development. However, unless a new development model includes sustainable and equitable rural economies, the vast majority of those workers and communities will be left out from the fruits of progress. 88% of the extreme poor live in rural areas, where poverty rates are four times higher than in urban areas and decent work deficits are severe. Nearly 20% of people employed in rural areas live in extreme poverty, compared with just over 4% in urban areas.²⁹ There is sometimes the tendency to look for short-cuts, such as simply linking farmers to agri-business, promising an “agri-entrepreneur” *status* that is often a deceptive mischaracterisation of a reality still based on exploitation.

National agricultural policies need to ensure that rural people maintain choices about their land and communities including whenever possible through land ownership, self-sufficiency with a decent return for their productive activities. Local value chains need to be scaled-up, thereby promoting a virtuous cycle between producers and consumers with benefits to larger communities. A positive path can be established through the promotion of local socio-economic development through decentralised and de-bureaucratised governance as well as through examples such as the experiment in India of the 100-mile communities³⁰, social enterprises and the social economy in general; (see the case study “A Korean Perspective on Social Economy” by L. Kwark – page 63).

Addressing a new and more sustainable development of both rural and urban areas, where the worker is not alienated but fully participates in his or her activity as part of a larger contribution to community and society, needs to address also the accessibility to primary resources: land but also water.

In this respect, *Laudato Si'* is clear: "Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights".³¹

Rural development and agriculture are topics where labour policies cannot - once more - be discussed in isolation. It is evident for example that trade policies have negatively influenced the development perspective of Africa both in manufacturing and in agriculture: Africa remained a net food exporter until the 80s, while with the current regime of agricultural trade liberalisation it has tragically become a net food importer.³²

9. Empowering women

Women continue to be left behind in the world of work. Globally, they are paid 20% less than men for work of the same value, they have 30% less chance to be in paid employment than men and the majority are in low-paid jobs or informal or non-standard forms of employment without rights.³³ The Report of the ILO Director-General to the International Labour Conference in 2018 says it clearly "During the past 15 years, women's employment has become increasingly concentrated in specific, generally low-paying occupations in the service sector. As a result, women's earnings have contracted still further."³⁴

It would be a profound omission to look at the future of work without discussing women's work and how it has been discriminated and undervalued in terms of non-participation in the formal economy, of pay inequality as well as a lack of recognition of the work done in the family or in society (see also "Ethical Reflections on Youth Unemployment" by S. Beretta, E. Colombo, M. Maggioni - page 71). Women's economic and social empowerment is made manifest through the value of their work, their ability to choose freely how to work, their legal protection and collective representation. The case of the Odisha Kendu Pata Workers Union by C. Nathan ("How Trade Union Assistance Empowered Informal Women Forest Workers in India" - page 53) is an encouraging example of women being able to find solutions among innumerable hardships.

Although the ILO already affirms equal pay for work of equal value among its core principles, there are many dimensions that still need to be addressed in a gender perspective. For example, in June 2018 the ILO Conference started a two-year discussion on a standard on violence and harassment at work, which, while certainly valid for all workers, is of particular importance for women. If successfully adopted in June 2019, it will follow

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other key ILO instruments that have found a tripartite agreement with a clear gender equality perspective: from the core ILO Conventions on pay equity and non-discrimination, to *inter alia* the standards on workers with family responsibilities, maternity protection and domestic workers.³⁵

The picture though has both light and shadows. Since it is through ratification and implementation of international labour standards that we evaluate the real commitment of governments to affirm rights in practice, it is a sad reminder that only 34 members have ratified ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection³⁶ (adopted in the year 2000), and only 44 have ratified Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities³⁷ (adopted in 1981). The commitment to equality cannot be simply stated in Geneva, it has to be translated in policy and action at country and workplace level.

If we look further down the line, we see a new issue emerging in the ILO agenda which is particularly important for women workers. It is the “care economy,” addressing all the needs in society along the demographic spectrum. It will be interesting to see how it will be dealt by the constituents, since clearly this is part of a general rethinking of the term work, a term that cannot only be connected to individual benefits, but also as a contribution to the needs of families, communities, and society at large. The risk of transforming everything “for profit” is there, hence it is better to speak only about “care” and how its social value will be affirmed.

10. A call to action for ILO constituents: Democracy at stake

In this brief excursus, a mix of old and new topics has emerged. The sense is that both, old and new, need to be addressed with contemporary lenses in order to redefine social justice for the years to come. This requires first of all a strong assumption of responsibility by governments, employers and workers towards the choices that have to be made regarding the issues at stake.

Many consider democracy a casualty of globalisation – a reaction not limited to inward-looking nationalism, but also xenophobia and quite possibly fascism.

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This is why a fully political (as based on a *polis*) response is needed and, in the case of the ILO, a renewed pact among governments, employers’ and workers’ organisations.

Such organisations need to collectively provide answers and rights to those who are unemployed, under-employed, exploited, and under-valued.

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Urgent action is needed to address the needs of those who – as many women do – see their work not considered as such, those struggling to make ends meet, those who lack benefits and rights in the informal economy, and those who are denied an employment relationship.

It is for the State to regain its role of regulator, which has to be complementary to, and not a substitution for, its role as provider of quality public services or administrator of public welfare provisions. A new and more democratic articulation can be established, including a stronger role for local governments and communities, but the rule of law, the ability to establish a credible system of labour inspection, administration and a set of developmental policies, starting with fiscal and macroeconomic policies, need to remain at the national level. Furthermore, regional and international bodies need to be strengthened in reference to regulatory frameworks, in particular with a strong commitment to legal principles and legal norms.

Trade unions, who have been the first actors to fight for and win a “social dimension” via collective agreements with employers and national standards in order to improve labour protection and social security, are at a crossroads. They must reinvent themselves in a way which reaches all workers, including those outside the formal employment relationship. Non-governmental organisations are often presented as alternatives to trade unions as more effective voices, but trade unions are the only democratic organisations that do not speak for the workers – they are the workers. This is why a progressive alliance can and should be made, but without undermining the role of freely chosen workers’ organisations, autonomous from political parties and any financial interference. Whatever the form and structure unions will need to assume in order to reinvent themselves, the important thing is that they would be allowed to organise workers based on the principles of freedom of association for the interest of the common good. “Freedom comes first.”³⁸ Certainly freedom of association, but also freedom to access the tools for personal fulfilment and growth, freedom to know and continue learning in order to participate in choices linked to production, freedom to participate in societal changes with an active contribution to socio-economic policies.

The third group that must come into the equation is that of employers. Among this group are the big winners of the current economic order: usually multinational enterprises which have been able to expand the supply chain across borders, often escaping regulation or taxation policies (implanting themselves into countries within export-processing zones, which provide no rights for workers and require no taxation for enterprises), but also small and medium-sized enterprises which are not always the beneficiaries of a deregulated economy. Next to this group is that of the “own-account” workers and workers in the informal economy. Employers’ organisations should strengthen the ability to create a positive link between large and small

companies, securing a shared responsibility of the major actors towards the value chains in terms of wages and benefits, occupational safety and health, commitment to support orders for medium and small enterprises, hence securing stability of income for suppliers and subcontractors, and enhancing responsibility in general.

The sense of the discussion, and of the whole exercise on the future of work, should, in the end, stimulate collective responses and “democratic decisions,” which are able to respond to the person, the social partners and the communities, who must be empowered in terms of choices.

11. Rethinking the ILO for the new century

This excursus started with the inextricable link between peace and justice – a link that is developed in one of the subsequent articles in reference to the ILO action in Africa; (see case study “Decent Work Leading to Peace and Resilience in Africa” by F. Negro, page 43).

The need to be anchored in the larger picture brings us, finally, to a reflection on reaffirming social justice from an ILO perspective. While the tripartite structure underlying standard-setting that was established in 1919 was indeed visionary, as well as the idea to create a global benchmark through international standards, the ILO needs to revisit its two characteristics – standards and tripartism – through the lens of the globalised world of work.

In reference to standards, their ratification and implementation at the national level, although still very much important, is not sufficient anymore to secure in practice the respect of rights at work for all.

While many forces push towards nationalism and fear, the challenge in the upcoming years will be to strengthen the multilateral system and regional bodies in order to define the global playing field that contributes to social justice.

ILO labour standards need to become an entrenched component of such new architecture as well as the necessary link to the supranational level of regional and international institutions. The Bretton Woods Institutions need to be fully integrated into this picture, in following the exhortation of *Evangelii Gaudium*: “A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule”³⁹.

Furthermore, the ILO needs to go one step further to realise the potential of its standards, which are quoted by everybody but weakly respected. To do so, it must follow the Constitutional mandate⁴⁰ and to establish a body capable of final interpretation of its norms, going beyond the current necessary, but not sufficient, supervision by the established machinery.

The sense of the discussion, and of the whole exercise on the future of work, should, in the end, stimulate collective responses and “democratic decisions,” which are able to respond to the person, the social partners and the communities, who must be empowered in terms of choices.

Furthermore, the ILO needs to go one step further to realise the potential of its standards, which are quoted by everybody but weakly respected. To do so, it must follow the Constitutional mandate⁴⁰ and to establish a body capable of final interpretation of its norms, going beyond the current necessary, but not sufficient, supervision by the established machinery.

The second issue that must be boldly addressed is the commitment to and affirmation of social dialogue across borders. It is encouraging that the ILO constituents in March 2017 were able to unanimously adopt a revision of the 1977 Declaration on Multinational Enterprises (MNE) and Social Policy.⁴¹ The document not only elaborates principles to be implemented by companies to realise decent work, but also establishes a method in order to carry out “due diligence” to ensure respect for internationally-recognised human rights: to respect the central role of freedom of association and collective bargaining as well as industrial relations and social dialogue to conduct this process.

The follow-up to the MNE Declaration is also based on dialogue: at the national level, tripartite focal points able to discuss investments and local development; for enterprises, voluntary “company-union dialogue” facilitated by the ILO upon demand.⁴² The most promising example of the latter, besides collective bargaining agreements at national level, is in the form of Global Framework Agreements among companies and global trade union bodies, wherein companies take responsibility for what happens along the supply chain, while trade unions create a link between national trade unions in order to empower workers wherever they are to be part of the negotiation of a fair deal. To commit to such a path is also to reaffirm that corporations’ privileges come also because they are established for a wider public purpose besides prosperity for shareholders: stakeholders and public benefit need to be back in the picture.⁴³

It is a commitment that, if pursued with vigour and truth, can help fulfil the exhortation of *Laudato Si'*: “Let us keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity, which grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power.”⁴⁴

The path, difficult but necessary, must nevertheless go even further, toward what Ivan Illich⁴⁵ called the “political community” which “can dialectically choose the dimension of the roof under which its members will live,” in order to remove the “radical monopoly” of the corporate and the industrial structure imposed by the production-oriented society.

So, our own standard system, to use the language of Illich, “can be decentralised, demystified and de-bureaucratized” in order to become a tool for a convivial life.

Furthermore, the ecological limits that are clearly embedded in the current model of development need to be recognised and addressed through a fully political process. On this again Illich gives us a hint: “Such a political choice of a frugal society remains a pious dream unless it can be shown that it is not only necessary but also possible”.⁴⁶

An organisation like the ILO, which was established exactly on the recognition of the “legitimacy of conflicting interests”⁴⁷ and where “the structures of political and legal procedures are integral to one another”

“Let us keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity, which grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power.”

maintains the full potential to serve for the “social reconstruction”⁴⁸ of the upcoming century.

NOTES

1. Anna Biondi Bird is Deputy Director of the Bureau for Workers’ activities of the International Labour Office. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author.
2. Translation: “If you desire peace, cultivate justice”
3. International Labour Organization, Constitution, Preamble, available at http://www.ilo.ch/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO [Accessed 27 July 2018]
4. Nobel Peace Prize, 1969, page 6
5. See E. Dirnbach, *Global Sweatshops, Solidarity and the Bangladesh Breakthrough*, Jan 2016
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/21/human-race-just-001-of-all-life-but-has-destroyed-over-80-of-wild-mammals-study> [Accessed 14 September 2018]
7. J. Pfeffer “Dying for a Paycheck”, *Stanford Graduate School of Business*, Harper Collins, 2018
8. Declaration of Philadelphia - Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organisation (1944), II.a, available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-islamabad/documents/policy/wcms_142941.pdf [Accessed 25 July 2018]
9. ILO Convention n°1 (1919); Convention Limiting the Hours of Work in Industrial Undertakings to Eight in the Day and Forty-eight in the Week; Article 2b and 2c, available at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C001 [Accessed 15 July 2018]
10. ILO Convention n°122 (1964) - Employment Policy Convention, Article 1; available at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312267 [Accessed 15 July 2018]
11. *Ibid.*
12. ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998); Article 2; available at http://blue.lim.ilo.org/cariblex/pdfs/ILO_Declaration_Work.pdf [Accessed 15 July 2018]
13. ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008); available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/genericdocument/wcms_371208.pdf [Accessed 15 July 2018]
14. Which are: Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining (Convention No. 87 & No. 98), the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour (Convention No. 29 & No. 105), the effective abolition of child labour (Convention No. 138 & No. 182), and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Convention No. 100 & No. 111)
15. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/departments-and-offices/governance/fprw/lang--en/index.htm> [Accessed 14 September 2018]
16. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Article 25; available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf [Accessed 28 July 2018]

17. The Economist, quoted in *The Future of Work: A Literature Review*, ILO 2018
18. International Labour Organization Constitution; Annex; available at http://www.ilo.ch/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO [Accessed 14 September 2018]
19. Videomessage to the 48th Italian Social Week (48th *Settimana Sociale dei cattolici italiani*), Cagliari, 26-29 October 2017
20. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013); paragraph 56
21. ILO http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_604882/lang--en/index.htm [Accessed 14 September 2018]
22. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 2015 ; paragraph 107
23. UNI http://www.thefutureworldofwork.org/media/35421/uni_workers_data_protection.pdf [Accessed 14 September 2018]
24. Also refer to Chapter “the challenges of digitalisation on jobs and welfare” by P. Garonna and A. Pastor
25. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2017. Available at <http://uis.unesco.org/> [Accessed 14 September 2018]
26. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 2015 ; paragraph 146
27. Incontro con il mondo del lavoro, Genova 27 May 2017, in « Il lavoro é dignità », Ediesse, page 129
28. Available at ILO http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R195 [Accessed 28 July 2018]
29. ILO <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/rural-economy/lang--en/index.htm> [Accessed 28 July 2018]
30. Ela Bhatt, Anubandh: Building Hundred-Mile Communities, Navajivan Trust, 2015
31. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*(2015) ; paragraph 30)
32. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Globalization, Inequality, Convergence, Divergence, 2018
33. The Women at Work Initiative : the push for equality, Report of the ILO DG to the 107th Session ILC, 2018
34. *Ibid.*
35. ILO C. 100, 111, 156, 183, 189.
36. http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312328:NO [Accessed 28 July 2018]
37. *Ibid.*
38. Bruno Trentin « La libertà viene prima », Editori Riuniti, 2005
39. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), paragraph 58
40. as foreseen in Art 37.2: International Labour Organization, Constitution, available at http://www.ilo.ch/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO [Accessed 28 July 2018]
41. <http://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/mne-declaration/lang--en/index.htm> [Accessed 28 July 2018]
42. *Ibid.*
43. <http://bostonreview.net/class-inequality/lenore-palladino-public-benefit-incorporated>
44. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (2015) ; paragraph 196
45. Ivan Illich, “Tools for Conviviality” (2001), page 102
46. *Ibid.*

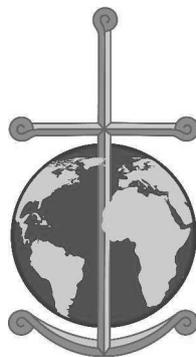
47. *Ibid.* page 122

48. *Ibid.* page 126

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Rethinking Labour

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