

The Workers United: Interaction Among the Variety of Collectivities

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Marx on Co-operatives

- “The value of these great social experiments cannot be over-rated....they have shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behest of modern science, may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands.”
- “It has therefore become superfluous for this work of supervision to be performed by the capitalist. A musical conductor need in no way be the owner of the instruments in his orchestra, nor does it form part of his function as a conductor that he should have any part in paying the ‘wages’ of the other musicians. Cooperative factories provide the proof that the capitalist has become just as superfluous as a functionary in production.”
BUT
- “Restricted to dwarfish forms, the cooperative system will never transform capitalist societies.”
- “To conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working class.”

Marxists on Co-operatives

- Those who believe:
 - Socialism is a system of self-managed firms
 - Co-ops seen prefigurative of socialism
 - Socialism is a state-planned command economy
 - Co-ops seen as eroding class solidarity

Co-ops as a Commons

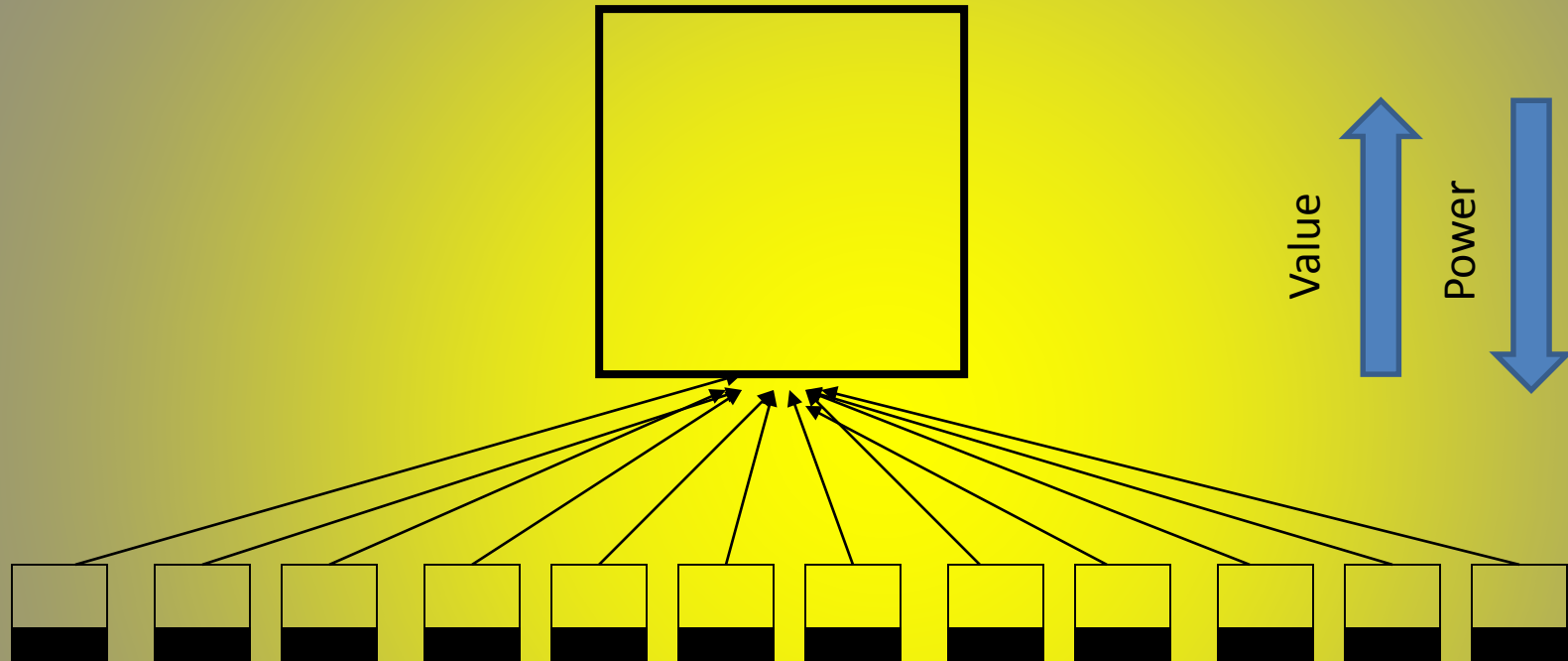
- People's space; new, vibrant response to failures of neoliberalism; anti-corporate, anti-capitalist
- A way of talking about collective ownership (without talking about socialism)
- Caffentzis: the commons as "Plan B" for capitalism "voluntary cooperation does not so much subvert capital as subsidize it"
- de Peuter & Dyer Witherford: "Talk of commons less frequently intersects with the lexicon of unions, solidarity, and strikes. It thus risks being disassociated from issues of work and wealth, class and poverty."

“Producers”

- Concept of “producers” (those who produce value and who work under conditions of subordination and dependency)
 - traditional employed workers (old subordination)
 - New subordination
 - self-employed
 - even some who employ others
 - e.g. owners of fishing boats, farmers, small contractors
 - subordination & dependency are not necessarily hierarchic

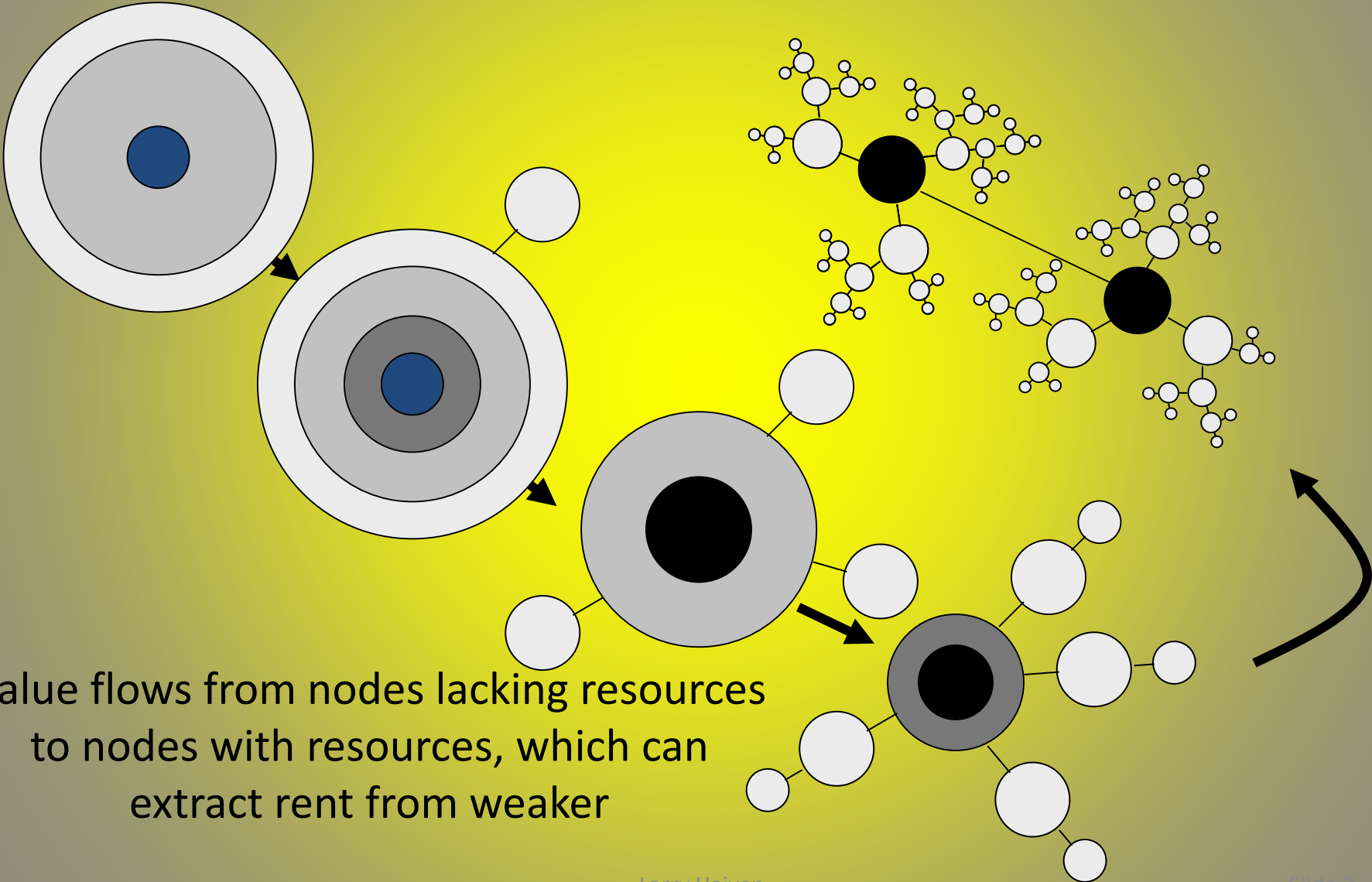
Old subordination

- value created mostly at factory



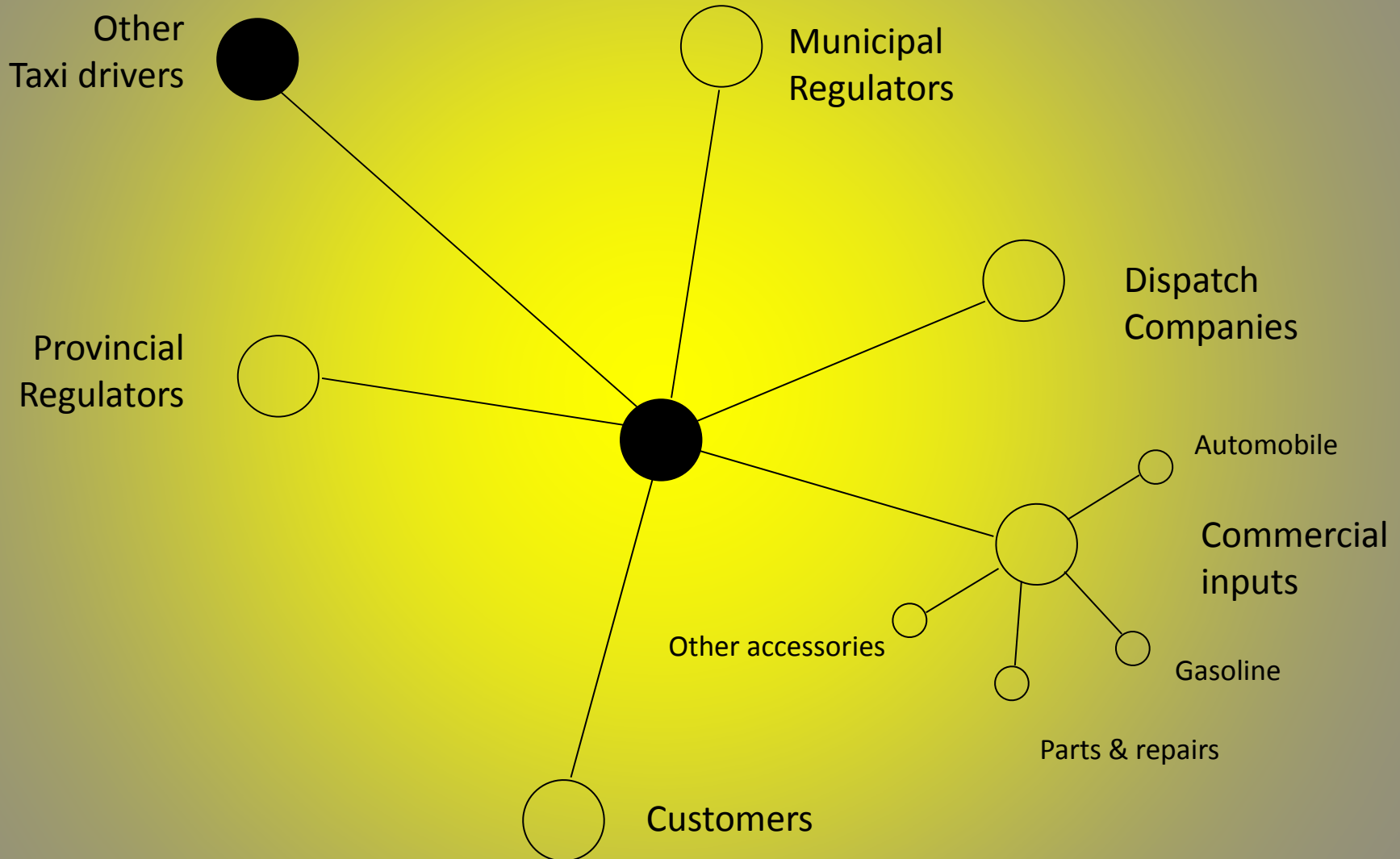
- Formal (means of prod'n), then real (lbr process) subordination
- Production is centre of value creation (not consumption, distribution)
- Power flows downward, value flows upward

Unravelling of vertical firm into networks

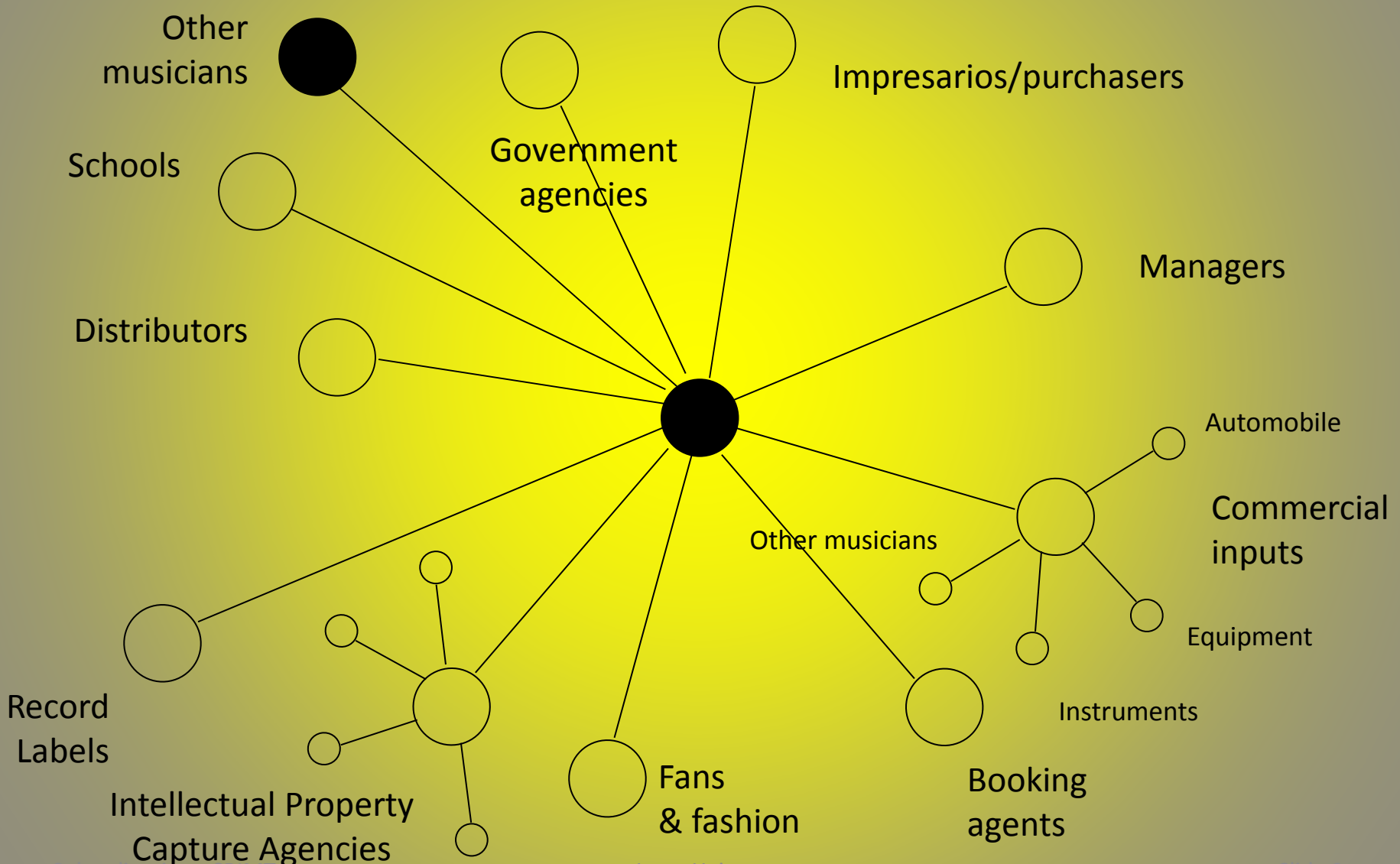


Value flows from nodes lacking resources to nodes with resources, which can extract rent from weaker

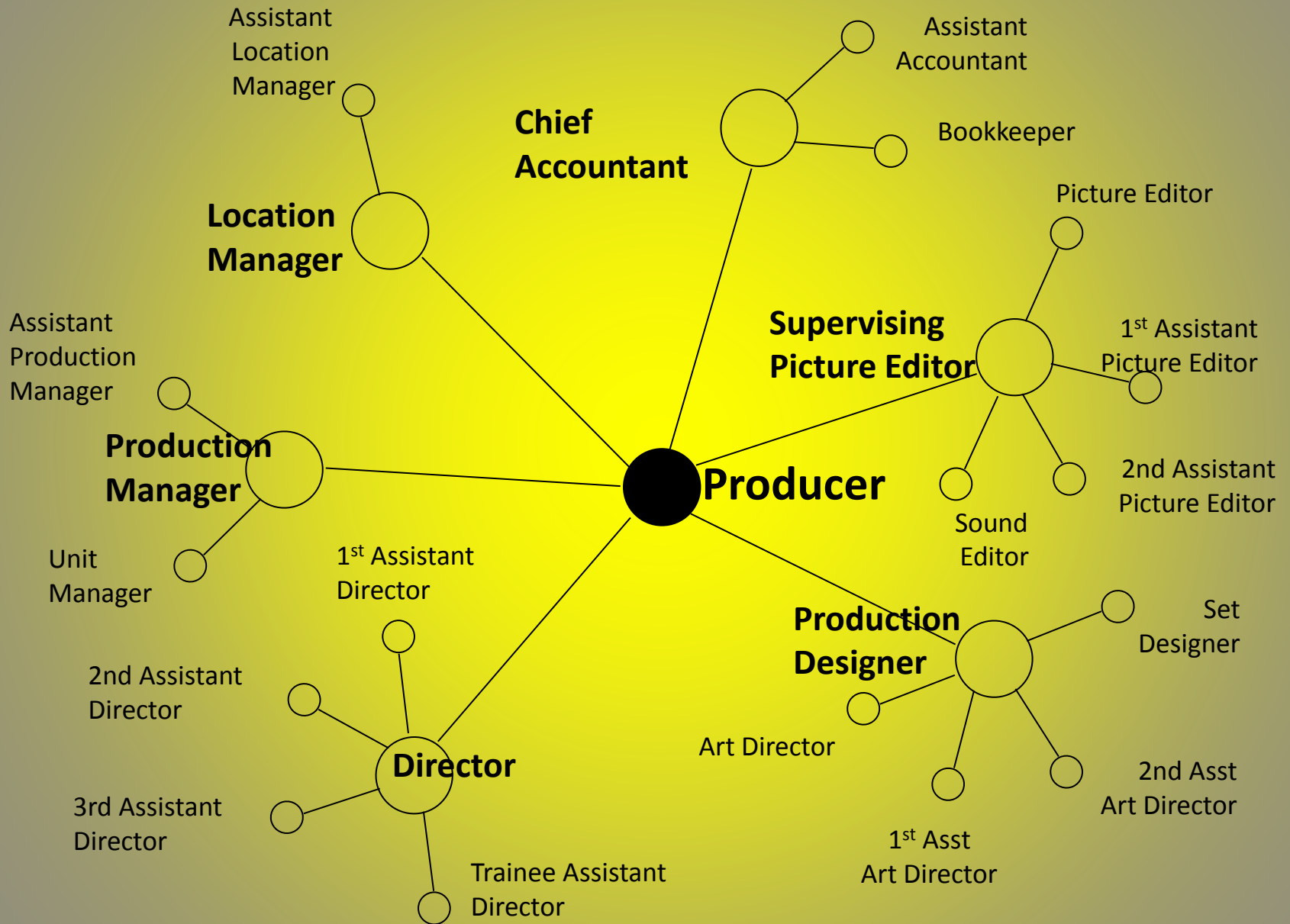
Taxi drivers



Musicians



Film & video artisans



The value of labour power

- Marx's concept, less well-known
- Labour is commodity, with a value that rises & falls
 - "The value of labour-power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of its owner."
- Not the same as wage or income
- Depends on:
 - the wage
 - psychological contract; feeling of entitlement
 - struggle or concession
 - the social wage
 - necessities & amenities provided by the state & civil society
 - prices of inputs to
 - reproduction of labour power
 - production

Value of labour power has 2 sides

Cost of Inputs (for reproduction and production)

- food, housing
- health care
- other consumer goods
- equipment
- information
- capital
- education
- community & social cohesion
- leisure activities

**The
producers
(workers)**

Price of outputs (for labour power and products)

- labour market
- labour and employment law
- sense of “entitlement” or disentitlement
- *costs of inputs*



Producers unite, form collectivities to

- Lower the cost of inputs
 - Through purchasing power e.g. buying groups,
 - consumer co-ops
- Raise the price of outputs
 - Through solidaristic activity e.g. withholding of labour, production
 - Unions & other collectivities

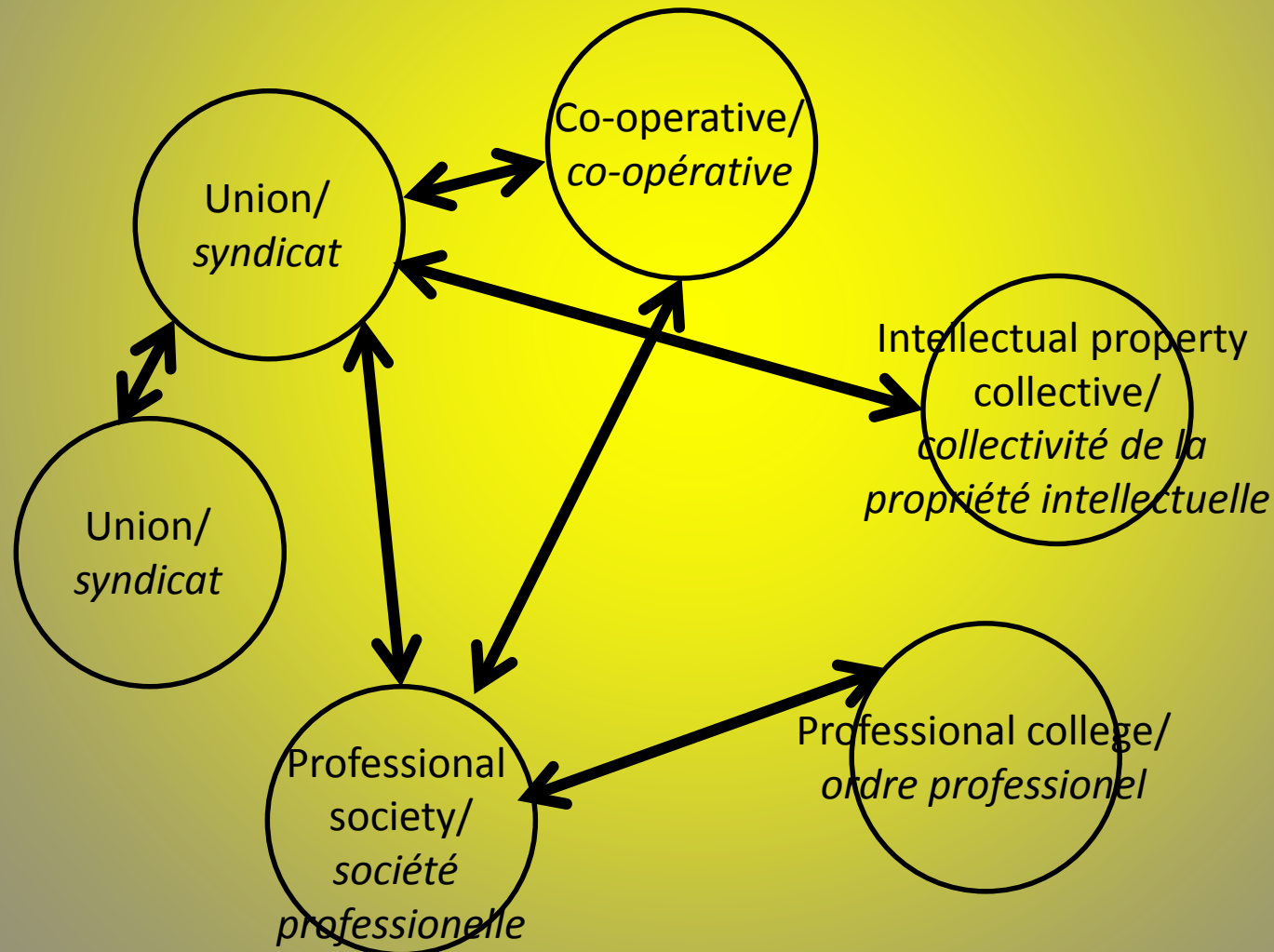
Types of *collectivity*

- Guilds
- Trade unions
- Professional societies
- Professional college/order
- Intellectual property capture collectives
- Co-operatives

Types of co-operative

- Producer co-ops
 - Both lower input costs, raise output price
 - Primary producer (farmers, fishers, artists) co-ops
 - Worker co-ops
- Consumer co-ops
 - Lower input costs
 - Types:
 - Financial
 - Retail/wholesale
 - Housing
 - Utilities

Clashes among collectivities/*les conflits parmi des collectivités*



Co-ops and Unions – two of a kind

- Unitary, pluralist, radical perspectives
- Both co-ops and unions are unitary organizations devoted to pluralist, or radical, ends
- Campaigning, mission-driven organizations
- All participants headed in same direction
- Low tolerance for interest groups, dissent, pluralism

Example: unions against unions

- Buzz Hargrove on 1994 CAW staff strike
 - “...I could not fathom why senior union leaders would take such drastic action. Our staff have privileges most workers can only dream of...I don’t quarrel with any of that because they work long and hard and deserve what they get. But they definitely are privileged, and I could not understand how they could perceive the CAW leadership as “management” or the “employer.”
 - “Nothing personal? You’re shutting down the best union in the country in the middle of the worst attack by governments on the rights of working people...You treat me like I’m the head of some big corporation. You treat this organization like it was a profit machine instead of a social movement. You’re goddam right this is personal.”
 - “...it had a traumatic effect on a lot of people – especially me. I found it a real challenge to maintain my broader beliefs and principles in a labour dispute so close to home.”

Union-co-op conflict

- Nipawin Co-op Saskatchewan strike (1985-1993)
 - RWDSU, Longest strike in SK history, scabs
 - SFL boycott of RW-certified Co-ops
- Dairy Producers Co-op Saskatchewan strike 1984
 - Farmer members operate plant
 - Gov't ends strike; SCC case on right to strike
 - Sexual harassment case 1990s
- First Ontario Credit Union strike 2006-7 (8 mos)
 - Set up by unions; hire CEO from CIBC; concessions
 - COPE; 70 tellers; workers occupation; firings

Union-co-op conflict II

- Fogo Island Co-op Newfoundland 1968-present
 - Co-op founded 1968; union foregoes organizing
 - Decline of co-op; membership problems
 - Fishers unionize
 - Human rights case 1999; unionization followed
- Farmers Dairy Nova Scotia lockout 2010
 - CEP; single-table bargaining preceeds
 - 250 wkrs; pension cutbacks;

JustUs Dispute 2013

- Majority of workers not members
- Fault lines among workers/members
 - Production vs retail
 - Manager vs worker
- Small organizations don't do h.r. well
- Atomistic vs pluralistic democracy
- Overriding goal – serve southern producers
- High expectations of a co-operative whose motto is “People and planet before profits.”

Unions & co-ops other countries

- Italy
 - Large retail, worker, services co-ops
 - Highly centralized, political trade unions
 - Central bargaining
 - Unions
 - Co-ops should be the best, leading employers
 - Co-ops
 - We are the best employer; unions squeeze us
 - Worker co-ops near Bologna
 - Management wins “the wars”
- Spain
 - Mondragon Co-op in Basque country
 - Battle to unionize in 1960s; union rejected
 - Shopfloor contested terrain
 - Internationalization problems (China, Mexico, Poland)

From *Compete to Cooperate: The Cooperative District of Imola*

Matt Hancock

“If the private sector is increasingly producing examples of radical reorganization, flattening hierarchies and placing employees in self-managing teams with increasing levels of responsibility and autonomy - in everything from work organization, to managing relationships with clients and suppliers, to hiring new employees - the cooperatives still have a significant amount of catching up to do. The management in the cooperatives seems to be highly skeptical about forms of direct participation that including delegating power to teams of workers.

Often, management is jealous of the authority and autonomy it's won. In many cases, "authority and hierarchy are... indicated as a 'conquest,' as a sign of maturity." It is a sign that the cooperatives have overcome the limits of the cooperative tradition prior to the 1970s and 1980s."