

Perspectives

- Next steps are path dependent: we do not begin with a blank slate.
- We need to problematise unions, as we seek their renewal as a vehicle for worker voice
- The question: ‘What are the best ways to increase the power and voice of workers to improve the conditions of working people?’
- As institutions with their own internal interests, history, exclusions, as well as their power and possibilities, we need to make sure the question is :
 - *‘How can unions increase the power and voice of workers and improve the conditions of working people?’*,
 - not *‘How can unions grow?’*. They are not the same thing.

Context

- Worker voice is always contested, never settled.
 - ‘institutions are a result of a contingent balance of class forces’ (Hyman) – set in a social context
- What were the sources of union power in the post-war period, what are they now? To answer this we need to consider context
- And this needs to be located in more than the workplace:
 - in BOTH the processes and places of
 - material production and
 - social production

Tools of worker representation/sources of power

1. Substantive rights

1. at national, state, local levels (eg minimum wages, dismissal rights....)

2. Procedural rights

1. Industrial tribunals/machinery. Anti-discrimination tribunals

3. Social security/support (opportunity to decommmodify labour)

4. Unionisation – creates power and voice at workplace, and beyond

1. Power through collective organisation, withdrawal of labour, monopoly of supply
2. Power through political partnership with Labor Parties, others
3. Discursive power: through stance, projection of union voice around justice

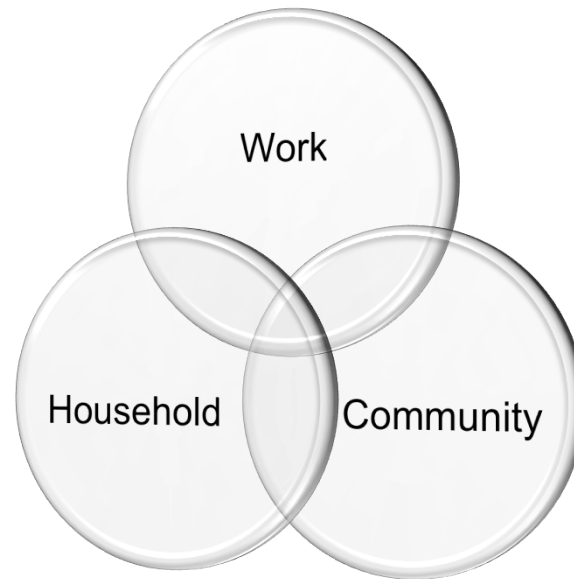
5. Other channels of representation

1. Workers councils. Occupational health and safety. Women's committees.
Union learning reps

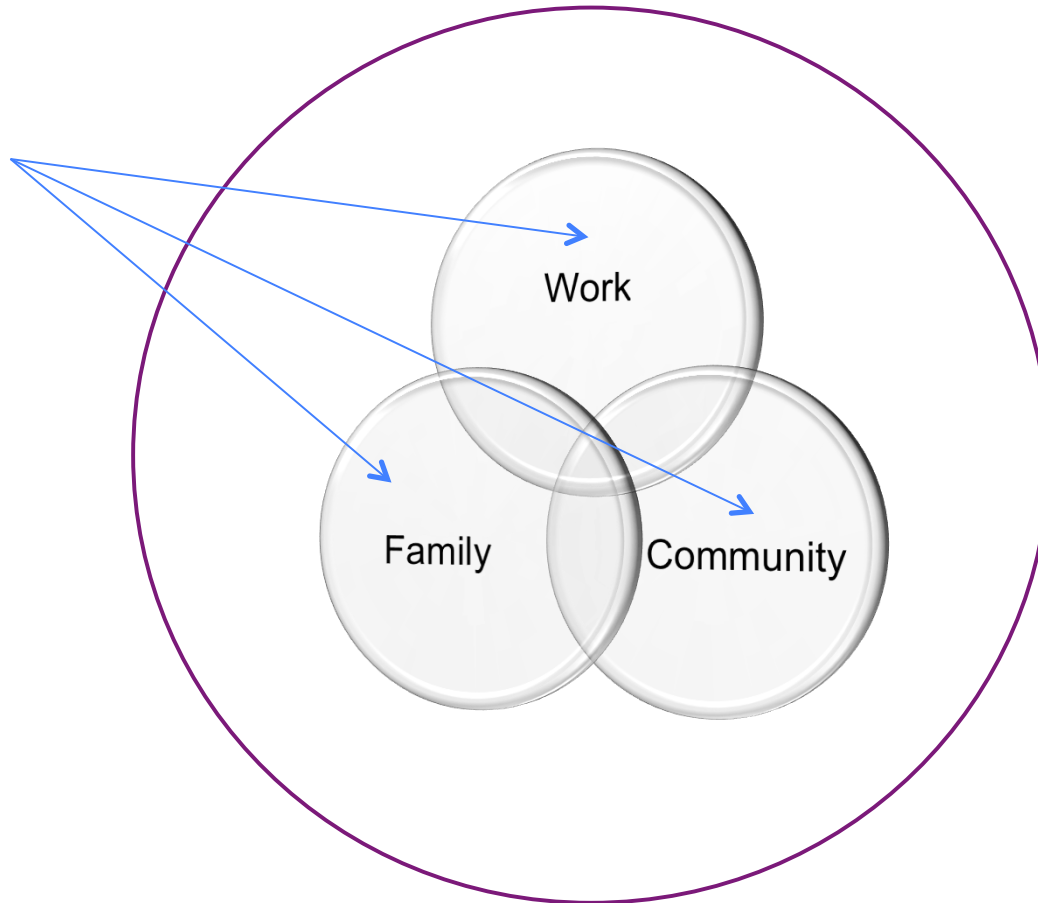
6. Workers centres

7. Community-union coalitions

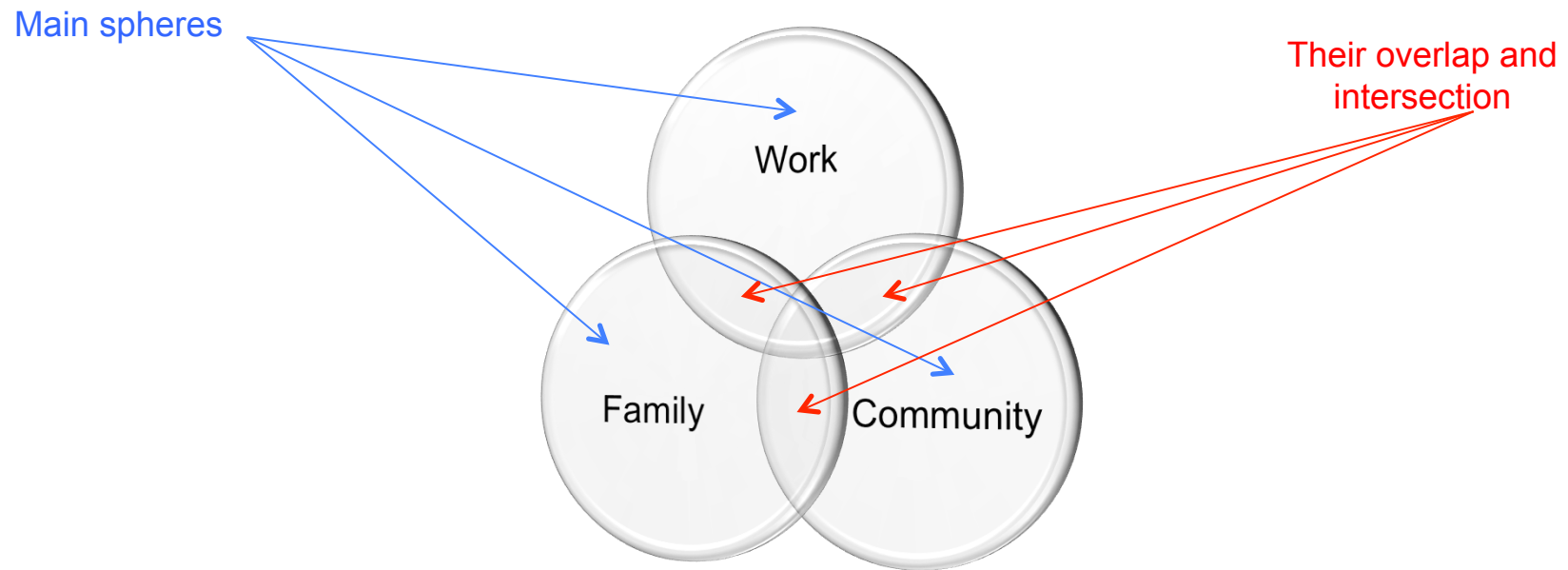
**These sources of power shaped by three spheres, and their interactions
and national and international contexts
Nothing new about this proposition**



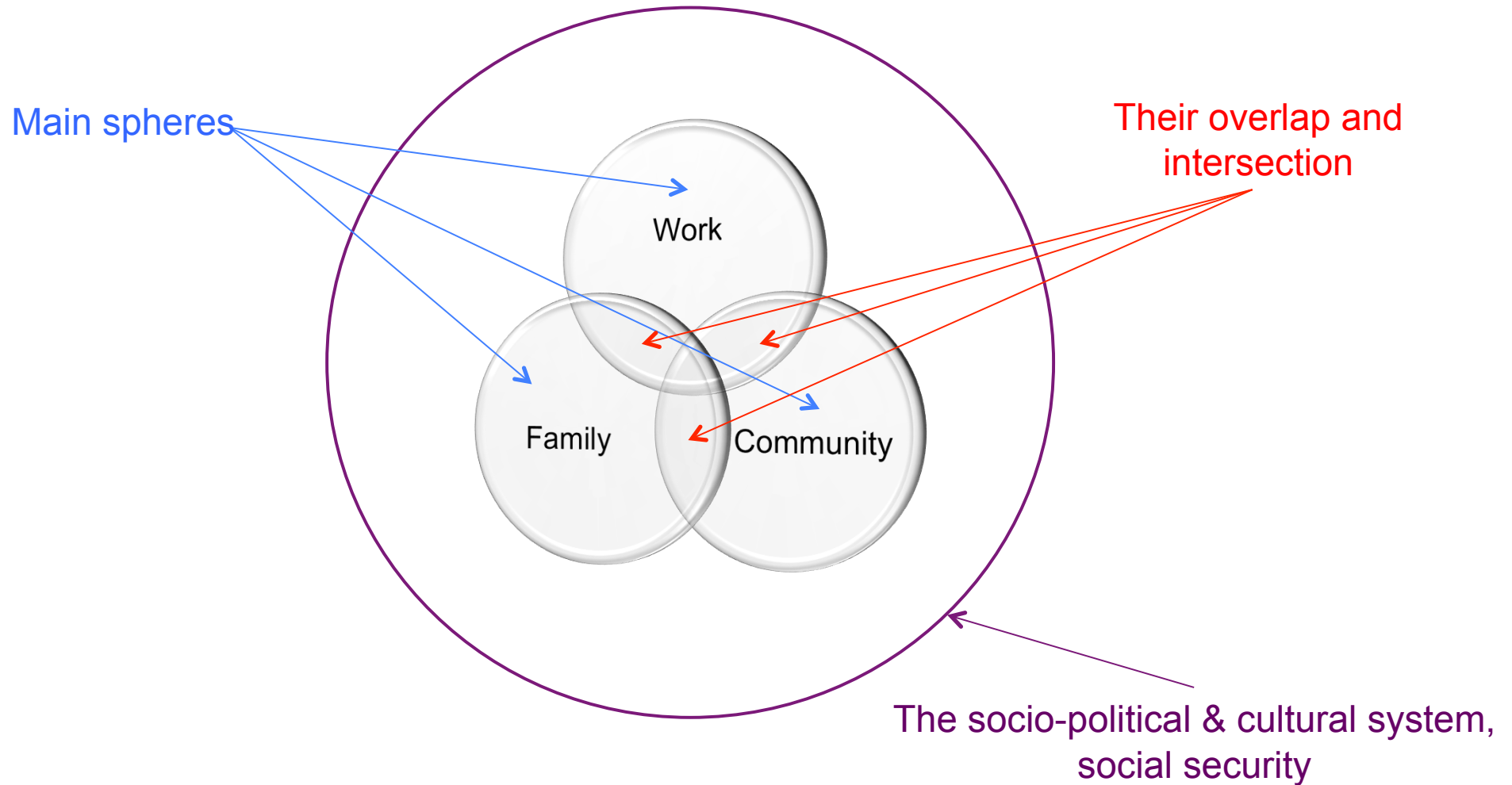
Main spheres



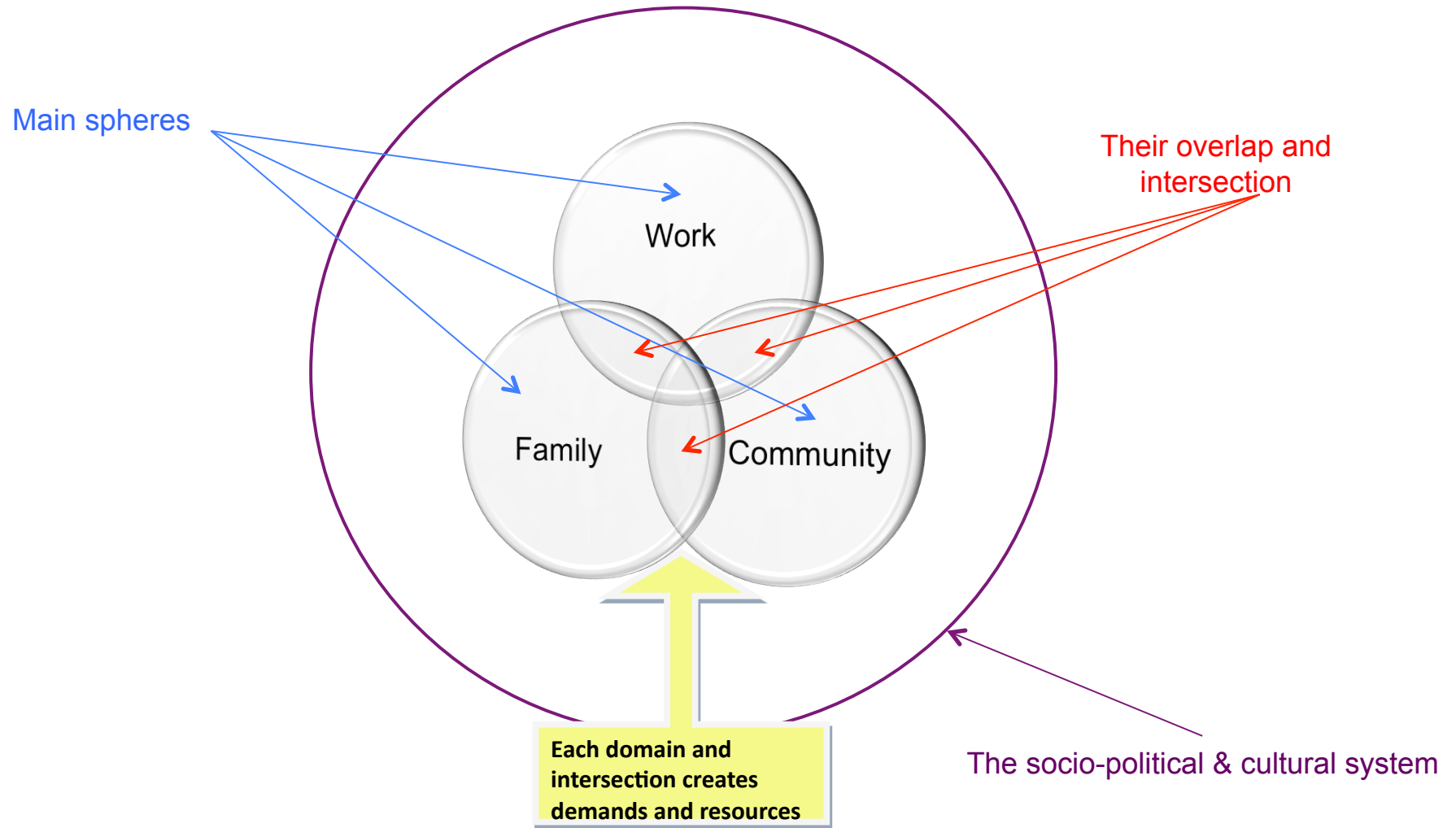
With overlap



Set in a socio-political context, including social security/state



Together, they construct demands and resources



20th century unionism/unionist	21st century unionism/ unionist
Decline of manual workers	
Masculinised, male dominated	
Stable job, for decades	
Interest formation around job	

20 th century unionism/unionist	21 st century unionism/unionist
Decline of manual workers	Rise in white collar workers More physically safe at work (mentally?) Better paid
Masculinised, male dominated	More feminised, more sensitive, individualised new age males
Stable job, for decades	Unstable job (stable occupation?), more insecure work. More transitions at work (& thru care, educ)
Interest formation around job	Interest formation around occupation/ service? Family/friend/partner relationships, work and personal identity overshadow job/ occupational collectivity

20 th century unionism/unionist	21 st century unionism/unionist
<p>Clearly defined wage/effort bargain. Clarity about justice and wage/profit shares.</p> <p>Job bound in time and space</p> <p>Work a 'bad'</p>	
<p>Collective bargaining – a cause and a consequence of collectivity</p>	
<p>Wages matter most</p>	
<p>A legislative regime that legitimises unionisation (to varying degrees) and regulates 'standard' jobs</p>	

20 th century unionism/unionist	21 st century unionism/unionist
<p>Clearly defined wage/effort bargain. Clarity about justice and wage/profit shares.</p> <p>Job bound in time and space</p> <p>Work a 'bad'</p>	<p>Weakly defined wage/effort bargain – starves 'anger-hope-action'.</p> <p>Increasing living standards</p> <p>Technologies that blur time-space work boundaries</p> <p>More love of the job. Jobs a 'good': More positive identity through working self</p>
<p>Collective bargaining – a cause and a consequence of collectivity</p>	<p>Less collective bargaining, esp women, youth; weaker impulse towards collectivity</p>
<p>Wages matter most</p>	<p>Wages and various aspects of working time, leave and employee-centred flexibility matter much more</p>
<p>A legislative regime that legitimises unionisation (to varying degrees) and regulates 'standard' jobs</p>	<p>Legislative regime that is hostile to unionism. Regulation that does not apply to new work concerns or large minorities of workers (casuals, part-timers, contract and 'self-employed')</p>

20 th century home/community	21 st century home community
Breadwinner households – production lies with men at work, social reproduction by women at home	
Stable housing/community	
Living and working ‘in-class’ place and space	
Time for solidarity	
Interest formation around job in workplace	

20 th century home/community	21 st century home community
Breadwinner households – production lies with men at work, social reproduction by women at home	Dual earner and sole earner households – production with both sexes, social reproduction with women.
Stable housing/community	Household/community mobility
Living and working ‘in-class’ place and space	Disparate places of home and work
Time for solidarity	Less time for solidarity, more spatially fractured life,
Interest formation around job in workplace	Family/friend/partner, work affiliations and personal identity compete with job/workplace affiliation

20 th century home/community	21 st century home community
Intergenerational class consciousness	
Priority of work, over household, familial ties	
Justice concerns rooted in workplace	

20 th century home/community	21 st century home community
Intergenerational class consciousness	Weak intergenerational class or union consciousness
Priority of work, over household, familial ties	More priority to home, family, friends
Justice concerns rooted in workplace	Justice concerns more rooted in immigration, ethnicity, access to work, sexuality, gender.

What does all this mean for power through representation?

- **Alongside traditional forms of unionisation...**
- **Morph union affiliation from job to occupation?**
- **More options than a collectivity that is job/workplace-based**
- **Building union power less through** withdrawal of labour and control of labour supply, **more through discursive** means and coalition and non-union membership based organisation
- **Speaking to justice beyond 'job'**, to occupation, social life
- **Speaking to the 'good'** that workers see in their jobs, as well as the bad
- **New kinds of union leadership**
 - That speak to new communities of interest, reflect worker populations
 - Can rise above historical sediment, custom and affinities

What does all this mean for power through representation?

- **More non-union channels of representation**
 - occupational health and safety
 - Consultation ctees on changes in workplace
 - bargaining?
- **Building affiliation/interest around decent work/home/community**
- **More non-work opportunities for affiliation**
 - Worker centres
 - Coalitions
- **New substantive and procedural rights around non-standard work**
 - That can be relied on outside collective bargaining

What does all this mean for power through representation?

- **New systems of enforcement –**
 - Janice Fine's policing by a community of employers, or of citizens as well as state
- **Social security provisions that facilitate transitions**
- **Stronger care systems,**
- **A new collective bargaining agenda**
 - New actions – non-standard workers
 - Arrangements that facilitate decommodification over life-cycle (eg paid leaves, 'banking' of time and income over life-cycle...)
 - That strengthen job security

Transcending and building upon existing institutions

- **Can the new be born out of the old?**
- **What would help....?**
- **A role for research**
 - about what works,
 - what needs to change,
 - holding up a mirror to unions now, and in historical context
 - More knowledge about what non-unionist men, women and children, and their households and communities think and want...
 - ...Located in their work, home and community contexts