

Between Carcerality and Community: Transformative Justice, Cancellations, and Call-Outs

“the most concerning thing about our current political climate is that we are so easily pulled into divisive distractions, smaller and smaller bubbles, that keep us from attending to, and building collective power to shape and solve for the material needs of our communities and our planet” (brown, 2024)

1. Introduction

Calling out and cancelling can be important tools when there are power imbalances to gain:

- accountability
- support
- representation
- safety

(Asam, 2017; brown & Cyril, 2020; Clark, 2020)

Also used by antifascists and others attempting to address social and structural violence (Shaw, 2020).

Community is vital to resisting oppression and building liberatory structures (Hayes, 2024; Lebowitz, 2020).

But! Communities using cancellation and calling out amongst themselves can end up replicating punitive and carceral practices.

- these are antithetical to community and liberation (brown & Cyril, 2020; Hayes, 2024)

Idea of community and capitalism in contested reproduction can help us explain this:

- capitalism and carcerality related and mutually supportive
- two systems in a dialectical relationship (Lebowitz, 2020, pp. 125-126)
- can also help understand how to create new structures that promote collective liberation

2. Cancelling and Calling Out

Cancelling and calling out interfere with:

- ability to work together to address injustice
- ability to support each other
- amount of time and energy available to transform systems
- ability to transform harm long-term

(brown & Cyril, 2020, p. 75; Hayes, 2024)

Sometimes, calling out or cancelling might be the only viable option (Asam, 2017; brown & Cyril, 2020, p. 45).

3. Contested Reproduction

Contested reproduction refers to opposing organic systems that are locked in a co-determining relationship.

- based on Marxist thought and Hegelian dialectic
- capitalism and community as organic systems in contested reproduction

(Lebowitz, 2020)

An organic system is an arrangement of self-reproducing logics and material circumstances (Lebowitz, 2020).

Opposing logics and circumstances are always being taken on and transformed by each system.

- our world exists between those tensions
- nothing remains pure throughout interactions

(Lebowitz, 2020)

Cancelling and calling out are not purely community-based or purely carceral practices.

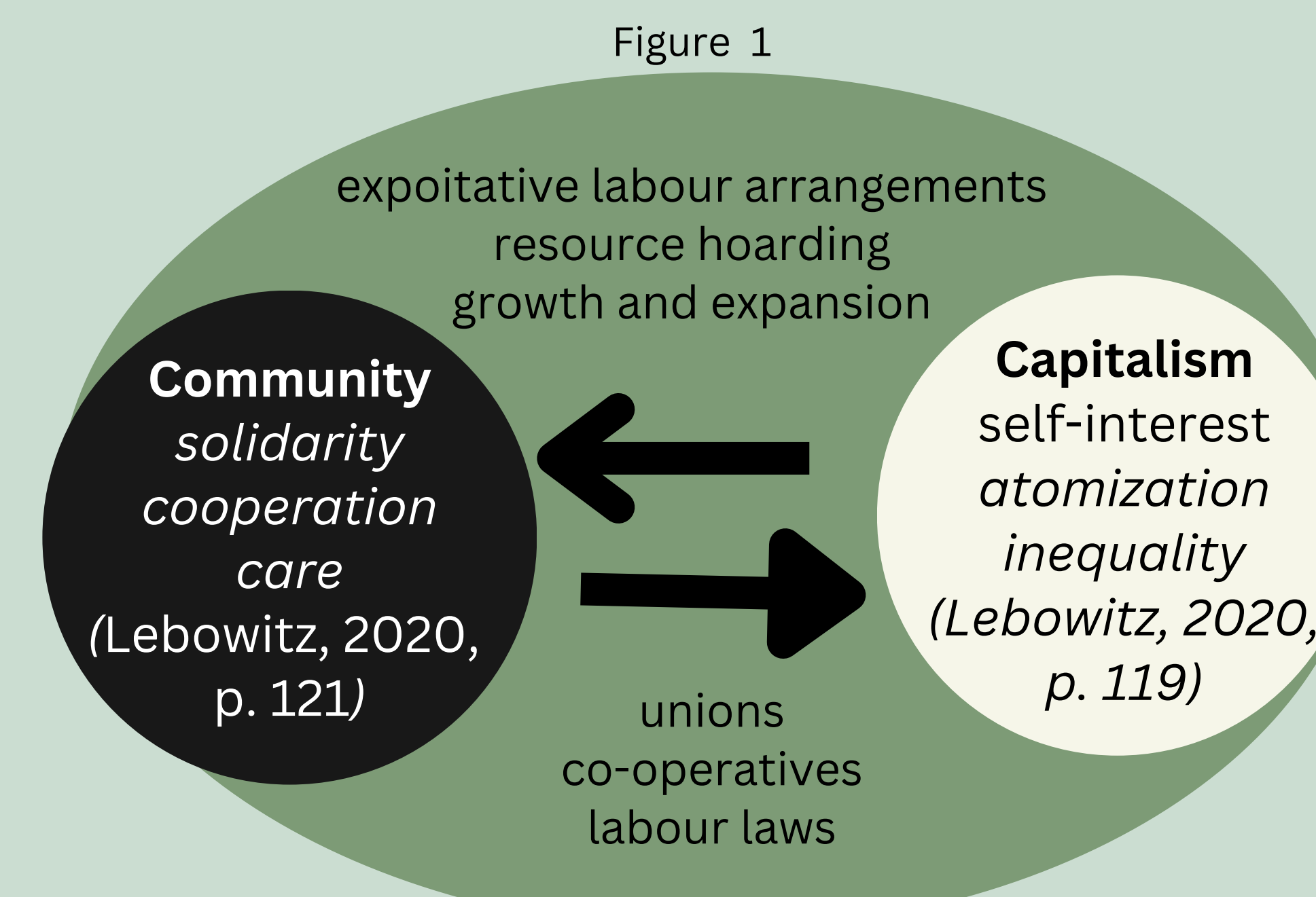


Figure 2

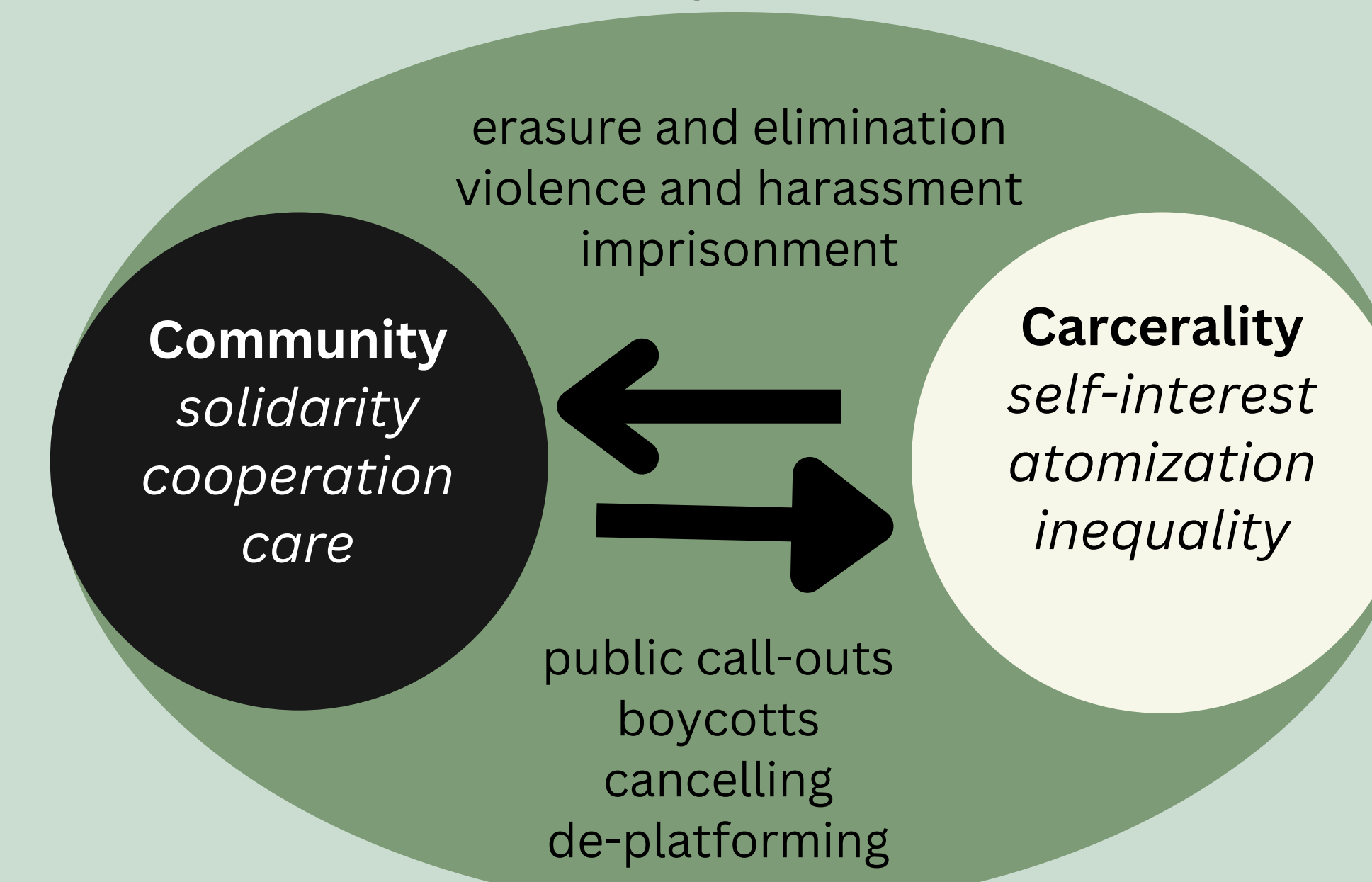


Figure 1: diagram of community and capitalism in contested reproduction, with the logics of each within their respective circles. Each system's contributions to the world listed above or below arrow that indicates direction of exchange. Figure 2: same as above, but capitalism has been replaced by carcerality. Adapted from “Hegel’s Dialectics” by J. E. Maybee, 2020 (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics/>). Copyright 2020 by Julie E. Maybee.

4. Conclusions

“Flood the entire system with life-affirming principles” and community premises (brown & Cyril, 2020, p. 8)

- subordinate capitalism and carcerality to community (Lebowitz, 2020, p. 162)
- requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation

Much of how we view and interact with the world is informed by our social position (Mills, 2005, pp. 169, 175).

- opportunities to be less harmful support personal development and liberatory community (brown & Cyril, 2020; Lebowitz, 2020; Ross, 2025)

In many cases, communities have the space to support people who have been harmed while supporting others in their journey to be less harmful.

People who have been harmed are not responsible for the well-being of parties who have harmed them.

- de-prioritizing their feelings and needs reproduces dynamics of privilege and domination
- privileged people, particularly white people, need to work on our fragility and entitlement

(Asam, 2017)

Marginalized communities contributed to practices of call-outs and cancellation.

- initially a community-based response to systemic exploitation, exclusion, and violence (Clark, 2020, p. 89)

Call-outs and cancellation can be disorganizing.

- they are not always so
- the way that we respond to them can be deprioritizing and disorganizing

(Heyes, 2024)

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