
EDITORIAL

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Democracy has been an integral part of bourgeois revolutions and the development of capitalist societies during the past 200 to 300 years. It is still a cornerstone of liberal ideology and still confined to the state or the political sphere in general. Socialist ideas, however – and especially those inspired by Marxist theories – have always claimed that the limitations of bourgeois rule and democracy should be overcome by a proletarian revolution, which should widen democracy to include everyone in society, as well as democracy in working life. This would also mean an end to the capitalist mode of production and profound social change.

Political democracy has gradually expanded to include almost all mature citizens, but the expansion of democracy into working life has not taken place. In many countries, workers have obtained more rights and social protection against capitalist exploitation – for example, the right to organize in trade unions and bargain working conditions, as well as co-determination committees and representatives on company boards – but working life is still ruled by employers and management.

The theme of this issue of *Transfer* is ‘working life democracy’, focusing on the trade union (and political) struggle to expand democracy into the sphere of working life. It perhaps sounds very simple and straightforward but in fact it is very complicated and varied in terms of the theories, concepts and strategies that underlie it and its historical and current structures.

The articles collected here reflect this variety. They range from basic questions about democracy in working life in capitalist societies to analyses of related structures and behaviour. This gives us an impression of the broad understanding of and experience with efforts to democratize working life in European countries. This collection of articles does not provide a common interpretation of the various concepts and configurations of working life democracy, however.

Richard Hyman explores some of the contrasting understandings of industrial democracy during the past century and across countries. Socialists and some liberals have had the conviction that political democracy should be expanded to working life, but during the past 30 years or so, the debate has been narrowed to such an extent that it has almost faded away. Trade unions and labour movements are concerned by the deterioration of working and living conditions under the present dominance of the neoliberal ideology, policies and economic paradigm. To reverse this situation, trade unions and other relevant social forces must develop a vision of a better society and economy, a convincing alternative to the mantra of greed, commodification, competitiveness and austerity, a set of values that connects with everyday experience in the workplace.

Citizenship at work is the key concept in Ulrich Mückenberger’s article. Private ownership of companies in a capitalist society is a direct contrast to civil rights, which are based on democracy, so how can democracy and citizenship take place in working life? In fact, it is surprising that it is so widely accepted that ‘citizenship at work’ is not a recurrent demand. In a slightly more limited perspective – although based on the basic structure of subordination in the workplace – the article

discusses freedom of speech and the right to protest against abuses and the right to refuse to work if workers are exposed to working conditions that threaten to harm or endanger them.

Although trade unions have been active for many years in promoting 'citizenship at work' by struggling to reduce employers' and managements' prerogatives, citizenship should be a focal point and strategic goal for trade unions in their interest representation.

Walther Müller-Jentsch points out that the concept of 'industrial democracy' has many meanings and is used in a variety of ways. The narrowest is the one found in English-speaking countries, where it tends to be synonymous with collective bargaining. In the German context, however, he prefers to understand it as co-determination, which in that context means works councils and board-level representation. He analyses the creation and history of this system and concludes that, although trade unions have been weakened, co-determination has remained firm. Furthermore, he points out that the system has not been discredited and there is every chance it may survive.

Antoine Bevort examines the rationale and outcome of two patterns of social democracy, namely negotiated (which he finds in the Netherlands) and adversarial (which he finds in France). Applying seven dimensions in his analysis – welfare state regime, collective actors, collective bargaining, industrial disputes, social and economic arenas and institutions, employee representation and decision-making processes – he finds significant differences between the two countries. Perhaps not surprisingly the negotiated and more democratic system is more consensual and conflict-free than the adversarial system.

In his article Salvo Leonardi focuses on the development of employee participation and involvement in Italy since the Second World War. He outlines the links between the social actors involved, ideologies, the prevailing modes of production and the industrial relations practices. He understands participation as a tool for emancipating work from being merely the object to being the subject of production, an instrument that allows workers to control work organization within the framework of capitalist business and, at the same time, integrating workers, preventing industrial conflict and overcoming conflicts between labour and capital. Traditional, collectivist interest representation – the system of industrial relations – seems to be on a collision course with management HRM and its related participatory practices. Leonardi also sees a possibility for improvements in working life democracy.

Alan Stoleroff explores the relevance of various conceptions of industrial democracy to the modern Portuguese labour movement. The article seeks to explain the limitation of such conceptions mainly to the institutional practices of collective bargaining and concertation, the general lack of participatory demands and the shared politicized approach to economic democratization as a struggle for economic justice. During the revolutionary period in the 1970s the quest for democracy focused on the political regime, excluding for most participants the radical idea of workers' control. Various structural constraints on the development of industrial democracy are discussed and industrial democracy is assessed in terms of the realities of worker representation in the workplace by means of unions and workers' committees. Finally, the article looks at the consequences for industrial democracy of the present crisis and 'adjustment', arguing that the precarious situation has limited the labour movement to politicized strategies for economic justice.

During the 1970s working life democracy in the Nordic countries was discussed mainly in terms of 'economic democracy'. Bengt Furåker reveals the story of such a system, which took place in Sweden in 1983 when the Social Democrats proposed a bill on wage-earner funds, which was adopted by parliament. The legislation was a long-standing wish of the Swedish LO, and the idea was to develop economic democracy and counteract the concentration of capital ownership,

but also to increase collective savings and supply capital for investment. The wage-earner funds were abolished again in 1991 when a conservative government took office, and it seems very unlikely that this type of reform will reappear on the Swedish political agenda in the foreseeable future.

These contributions to this issue of *Transfer* cannot claim to tell the whole story of working life democracy, not even in Europe. But they may be an inspiration for further research and for trade union visions and strategies.

Jens Lind

ÉDITORIAL

La démocratie a constitué une partie intégrante des révolutions bourgeoises et de l'évolution des sociétés capitalistes au cours des 200 à 300 dernières années. Elle constitue toujours une pierre angulaire de l'idéologie libérale et reste limitée à la sphère de l'État et de la politique en général. Les conceptions socialistes, en revanche – et en particulier celles qui sont inspirées par les théories marxistes – ont toujours prétendu que les limites de la démocratie bourgeoise devaient être abolies par une révolution prolétarienne qui élargirait la démocratie pour inclure chaque membre de la société et pour introduire la démocratie dans le monde du travail. Cette mutation signifierait également la fin du mode capitaliste de production et un profond changement social.

La démocratie politique s'est progressivement élargie pour inclure presque tous les citoyens majeurs, mais l'expansion de la démocratie dans le monde du travail n'a pas eu lieu. Dans de nombreux pays, les travailleurs ont obtenu davantage de droits et de protection sociale contre l'exploitation capitaliste – par exemple, le droit de s'organiser dans des syndicats et de négocier leurs conditions de travail, ainsi que la création de comités de cogestion et la présence de représentants dans les conseils d'administration – mais le monde du travail demeure dominé par les employeurs et les responsables des entreprises.

Ce numéro de *Transfer* a pour thème la « démocratie au travail », en se focalisant sur le combat syndical (et politique) qui cherche à étendre la démocratie au monde du travail. Cette question peut sembler très simple et évidente mais elle s'avère en fait extrêmement complexe, comme le montre la multiplicité des théories, des concepts et des stratégies sous-jacentes, ainsi que des structures historiques et actuelles.

Les articles qui sont rassemblés ici reflètent cette variété. Ils vont de l'examen de questions fondamentales sur la démocratie dans le monde du travail dans les sociétés capitalistes, à des analyses des structures et des comportements. Ils nous permettent de mieux comprendre et de partager les efforts qui visent à démocratiser le monde du travail dans les pays européens. En revanche, ils ne fournissent pas une interprétation unique des différentes conceptions et configurations de la démocratie dans le monde du travail.

Richard Hyman explore certaines des interprétations contrastées de la démocratie industrielle au cours du siècle écoulé, et entre les pays. Les socialistes et certains libéraux ont eu la conviction que la démocratie politique s'étendrait au monde du travail mais, durant les quelque 30 dernières années, l'importance donnée à cette problématique s'est tellement réduite qu'elle a pratiquement