Employee Involvement
and Workplace Democracy

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The article aims to bridge divides between political theory and management and organization studies in theorizing workplace democracy. To achieve this aim, the article begins by introducing a new definition of democracy which, it is contended, is better suited than mainstream accounts to highlight the democratizing potential of employee involvement. It then defines employee involvement as an offshoot of early twentieth-century humanistic psychologies, from which it inherits an emancipatory ambition. In a third step, the article presents employee involvement as a set of organizational practices liable to transform dominant patterns of authority and social interaction in the workplace. The article concludes by contending that, apart from representation/participation and the employee's voice, employee involvement must be considered the third necessary pillar of workplace democracy, endowed with distinctive normative features that neither representation/participation nor voices can aptly capture.

Key Words: workplace democracy, employee involvement, voice, democratic theory, participatory management

Afterer a decades-long decline, the idea that workplaces need more democracy has come of age once more.[1] Whilst the idea that firms are political entities is gaining a considerable consensus (Ciepley, 2013; Ferreras, 2017; Singer, 2018), workplace democracy remains under-theorized. In particular, it is still unclear what exactly the democratization of the workplace should entail. This is not only for substantive reasons concerning the economic nature of firms but also for predicative reasons pertaining to the very meaning of the concept of democracy itself. Indeed, for more than a century, the democratization of the workplace has been predicated upon a variety of arguments and has been claimed to consist in a broad variety of institutional forms, usually derived from our longer experience of democracy as a political regime. This approach to workplace democracy has over-emphasized the role of institutions aimed at reproducing workplace-level systems of self-government akin to those Western political thought has devised for political communities. Methodologically, most theories of workplace democracy rely upon some kind of state-firm analogy—the so-called parallel-case argument—to reclaim democracy as a norm for the workplace (Frega, 2020a) and usually reduce the scope

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[1] In a rapidly burgeoning list of publications: see Anderson (2017), Ferreras (2017), Landemore and Ferreras (2016), Yeoman (2014), González-Ricoy (2014), and Malleson (2014). For an overview of the debate, see Frega, Herzog, and Neuhäuser (2019).

of the democratic norm to mechanisms of political representation or of direct employee participation. The recent deliberative turn,[2] too, belongs to this analogical strategy. Whilst the importance of self-government as a necessary condition for democratizing firms cannot be overestimated, this approach has neglected work-related dimensions whose democratizing implications are significant. The aim of this article is to recover some of the ideas that have been explored in work psychology, management, and organization theory concerning employee involvement and to distil their implications for theorizing workplace democracy. Whilst in most of the cases, these ideas have not been framed in the conceptual terms of "democracy," I believe they possess a democratizing potential that deserves to be taken seriously by all those committed to a more democratic view of the workplace.

With a little simplification, the various meanings that the idea of workplace democracy has assumed during its centuries-long modern trajectory can be subsumed under four major institutional schemes. The first scheme is that which is most indebted to political theory. It refers to institutional features aimed at granting workers self-government, by allowing them to participate—either directly or indirectly—in decision-making at the level of the firm. The underlying intuition is captured by the principle "one person, one vote." According to this view, the political community which is the subject of democratization is composed of the employees of a given firm, which are sometimes called "citizens of the firm" (Dahl, 1986). Workers' councils and mixed supervisory boards in the tradition of co-determination represent to date the most diffused instantiations of this view (Rogers & Streeck, 1995).

The second scheme locates democracy beyond the level of the workplace to encompass an entire economic sector, on the assumption that employees can achieve self-government only if they are organized at the level of an entire industrial sector or of the whole society. Since at least the time of Beatrice and Sidney Webb (Webb & Webb, 1897), this is the basic justification for trade unionism and, later, for concertation in coordinated economies. This model assigns to sectoral trade unions, rather than to councils or other firm-based institutions, the role of privileged agent of democratization. The political principle "one person, one vote" remains central, but the firm ceases to play the role of the basic political community. This view has dominated the theory and practice of industrial relations in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Procedurally, it identifies democracy with the appointment of trade union delegates entrusted with the authority to bargain wage and working conditions at a level that is usually higher than the single firm (Budd, 2004).

A third conception, more closely linked with views of economic democracy, contends that democracy at work requires shared ownership of the firm. This view establishes a direct and strong link between property rights and control rights, contending that the former are the necessary condition for the latter. Ownership rights can be entrusted to workers themselves as individual assets, such as in workers' cooperatives, or collectively owned by the political community, either as

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[2] See, for example, this journal's submissions call for a special issue "The Challenges and Prospects of Deliberative Democracy for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility," https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2019.2.

social rights—as in the Yugoslavian model of self-management—or through state ownership (Greenberg, 1986; Schweickart, 2011). When assets are individually owned, the political community coincides with the firm, whereas in the second case, it encompasses the entire society (Dow, 2003). The umbrella term *property-owning democracy* (O'Neill & Williamson, 2012) captures the essential features of this view.

More recently, under the concept of "voice," emphasis has been placed on the protective function of rights embedded in institutional devices whose purpose is to allow employees to articulate their grievances without the risk of incurring retaliation (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington, & Ackers, 2004; Mowbray, Wilkinson, & Tse, 2015). Whilst often confused with participation, in its specific and distinctive meaning, voice does not aim at giving workers decision-making rights, and its democratic function is more similar to that of courts than that of parliaments. Voice schemes may be mandated by states, voluntarily set up by companies, or jointly agreed with trade unions. In all cases, the democratization of the workplace is predicated upon the creation of mechanisms allowing the separation of powers and the rule of law, thus giving rise to a kind of "workplace constitutionalism" (Jakob & Neuhäuser, 2018).

Their great differences notwithstanding, these four schemes share a common trait, which is the acceptance of the state-firm analogy as a basis for reclaiming workplace democracy. One of their major shortcomings is that, by definition, they exclude all those arrangements—practices, institutions, procedures—which do not fit with the structural features of the analogy. It is particularly the case of those participatory practices which are management initiated, such as improved communication programmes, upward problem-solving schemes, quality circles, suggestion schemes, profit-sharing schemes, joint consultative committees, and employee involvement programmes. Despite their democratizing potential, these practices have usually been discarded by political theorists as forms of more or less benevolent despotism, because they fall short of the basic requirement of democratic rule, which is the free consent to be governed.[3] Whilst it is certainly true that when taken in isolation from other institutional conditions, their democratic pedigree is suspicious at best, these schemes nevertheless bear a democratizing potential which stems from their capacity to transform the patterns of social interaction in the workplace. Indeed, by transforming the way work activity is carried out, and by modifying dominant patterns of social interaction among employees as well as among employees and

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[3] By speaking of a democratic "potential," I signal my awareness that democratic practices, like any human practice, can be perverted to other ends, a point widely discussed notably in organizational and managerial literature on "fake" participation (Strauss, 2006). To establish whether a practice is fake or authentic, we need to refer to a normative framework so as to check whether its application violates the normative expectations it is supposed to fulfill. In this article, I do not deal with issues of abuse and misuse, because my focus is instead on a neglected potential which needs to be taken seriously. I discuss the conceptual requirements of an appropriate normative framework for workplace democracy at greater length in Frega (2020b, in press). For an insightful discussion of "meaningful work" as a norm for the workplace and how different managerial practices can either realize it or pervert it, see Bowie (1998).

managers, these schemes possess an extremely powerful democratizing potential that is not accessible to other types of democratic practices.

This article makes the case for the democratic potential of a series of management-initiated participatory practices to which I refer collectively as *employee involvement.*[4] By speaking of a potential, I emphatically underline that my focus of attention is not directed towards the (more or less successful) practices that have seen the light in the last decades but towards the normative presuppositions which it is possible to distil from their theorization as well as from what some of them, in the best of cases, can reveal. I am, in other words, following a bottom-up approach inspired by non-ideal theory so that, rather than arguing from a free-standing normative notion of democracy, I distil the normative implications of existing social practices. What I wish to show, in other words, is that at the heart of some, admittedly minority and enlightened, theories and practices of management and organization, we can find normative intuitions which are not only compatible with our basic ideas about democracy but which, moreover, can help us enlarge, refine, and improve this idea. That real-life practices contradict these normative expectations will certainly prove that these practices do not live up to the normative standards they have set up for themselves. It does not, however, mean that the normative ideal they embed is false or illusory. That practices do not live up to the ideal they endorse provides a fruitful tool for criticizing existing practices from an internal point of view—what is usually called *immanent criticism*[5]—as well as for devising new conceptions of the workplace.

To appreciate the relevance of employee involvement for theorizing workplace democracy, we need therefore to dispose of a notion of democracy that is broader than those usually utilized in debates on workplace democracy, because these theories are generally too thin to allow for much more than the types of institutional mechanisms described earlier. I call this a "wide view of democracy"[6] to signal the broader perspective taken, and I propose to define democracy as *the form of social cooperation that is appropriate among free and equal individuals.* Whilst minimalist, this definition is normatively complete, because it includes an explicit reference to all three of the constitutive pillars of the modern Western conception of democracy, which are freedom, equality, and fraternity (cooperation). The wide view, which I present at some length in the next section, vindicates the democratizing potential of a broad array of practices usually considered unfit for this aim. This

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[4] This article is the latest in a series of four. Although the article is self-standing, some of its key concepts have received a more extensive examination elsewhere. Frega et al. (2019) provides an overview of recent debates on workplace democracy. Frega (2020a) argues against using firm-state analogy arguments to interpret and justify workplace democracy. Finally, Frega (2020b) explains at greater length the normative implications of the wide view of democracy for the workplace.

[5] Immanent criticism is a distinctive feature of American pragmatism and critical theory. It consists in identifying normative standpoints within existing practices that can be used to criticize a practice without resorting to external norms. For a review of different meanings of *immanent practice*, see Sabia (2010) and Shijun (2006). For an example of the use of the method to criticize capitalist malpractices from an internal standpoint, see Honneth (2014).

[6] For a full-blown account of this theory, see Frega (2019b).

move clears the ground for more sustained attempts at improving the democratic quality of the workplace by enlarging our horizon to dimensions of workplace life to which democratic theory is usually blind. To understand what democratizing the workplace means exactly, we should therefore abandon standard accounts of democracy based on a purely political conception of this notion to embrace a broader view of democracy as a social norm. Such a view does not rule out the normative requirements brought up by political conceptions of democracy and remains firm about the necessity for participative and representative schemes without which the employees' voice will always lack adequate expression and protection. My point is, rather, that by enlarging the scope of the concept of democracy, the wide view identifies *additional* dimensions of workplace experience for which democracy can be seen as the appropriate regulative norm. The result will be an enriched account of what is required for a workplace to be a democratic space.

In this article, I retrace the origin of the idea of employee involvement and reconstruct it in a way that is better suited than existing accounts to appreciating its normative potential for theorizing workplace democracy. To do this, I proceed in four steps. After a brief presentation of the theoretical framework of the wide view of democracy in the next section, the third section retraces the origins of the idea of employee involvement in the humanistic psychology of the early twentieth century. The fourth section presents employee involvement as a set of organizational practices capable of transforming patterns of social interaction in the workplace. This section shows that the emancipatory vision set out by the humanistic psychology demands a radical redesign of work activity and of the workplace which goes way beyond the establishment of participatory and representative institutions. The fifth section contends that employee involvement provides a third necessary pillar of a full-blown theory of workplace democracy and brings the article to a close.

THE WIDE VIEW OF DEMOCRACY

Although a complete outline of the wide view of democracy cannot be offered here,[7] in this section, I provide a brief outline sufficient for the purposes of the article. The wide view of democracy stems from the awareness that, historically as well as conceptually, our understanding of democracy as a political regime is inseparable, and indeed presupposes, a social understanding of democracy as a form of society. Indeed, as historians of modern Europe have shown (Innes & Philp, 2013; Kurunmäki, Nevers, Te Velde, 2018; Mayer, 1981; Palmer, 1959/2014; Rosanvallon, 1993), the idea of democracy enters the modern era as a double-barrelled concept: on one hand, as denoting a political regime based on popular sovereignty, on the other hand, as denoting a post–ancien régime society in which hierarchic schemes of social organization are jettisoned in favour of a democratic model in which status does not impose on individuals their position in society, their roles, their rights, and their obligations. The idea of democracy, in other words, denotes at the same time a

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[7] This section summarizes in a concise way ideas that I have exposed in much more extended detail in Frega (2019a, 2019c, 2019d, 2020b), to which I refer readers for an extensive discussion.

political regime whose source of legitimacy is the people (Montesquieu's republic) and a *form of society* that has rejected aristocracy as its organizing principle (Tocqueville's society of equals).

Closer to us, this social view of democracy has been defended by political theorists like John Dewey (1927), Carole Pateman (1970), C. B. Macpherson (1973), Claude Lefort (1986), Axel Honneth (2014), and Pierre Rosanvallon (2013). Common to these political thinkers is the idea that formal political institutions are the tipping point of an all-encompassing "form of society" (Lefort) or "way of life" (Dewey) with unique distinguishing traits. Intellectuals confronted with totalitarianism, such as Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, or Claude Lefort, had a similar understanding of the deep interconnections existing between political regimes and ways of organizing a society and the relations among its members. As a social norm, democracy prescribes the patterns of social cooperation that are appropriate among free and equal individuals, patterns that define the type of interactions in which we enter not only as political citizens but also as employees and employers, students and teachers, parents and children, public officials and ordinary citizens. So conceived, democracy refers to a norm that applies to all social institutions and not only to political regimes. As a social norm, democracy refers not only to power-sharing and decision-making mechanisms but also to appropriate ways of treating other individuals, to patterns of authority within social interactions, and to the types of relations that diverse organizations and procedures institute among individuals in all walks of life.

To appreciate the political relevance of this social view of democracy, one need only consider how the overturn of ancien régime society and the advent of modern society revolutionized patterns of social interaction among members of the same society. As a political regime, democracy can exist only in a society that rejects all forms of dependence and status-based subordination. Applying the democratic norm to the workplace should be seen, therefore, as a mere extension of this original move to spheres of social life that so far have remained shielded from it. If workplaces—some of them, at least—continue to be despotic, this is not only because, as private governments, they lack democratic legitimacy (Anderson, 2017). It is moreover because in those workplaces, patterns of social interaction continue to be organized in ways that violate our identity as free and equal individuals: as social environments in which human interactions are governed by the undemocratic norms of hierarchy, discrimination, dependence, and status.

Theories of relational equality have recently tried to recover this intuition. Although valuable, this move remains, however, insufficient, because egalitarianism, even in its more sophisticated relational variants, fails to capture the full complexity of the democratic norm. To appreciate this point, it may be useful to deconstruct the concept of democracy into simpler notions. From there, it will also be easier to see in what sense ordinary workplaces, even if representative or participatory mechanisms are in place, still violate the basic standard of the democratic norm, and why employee involvement can help redress this situation. The core of democracy is composed of three normative principles which I suggest formulating as follows: 1) relational parity, 2) inclusive authority, and 3) social

involvement. These three principles are meant to capture the essential content of the revolutionary triad whilst couching it in terms that are more consistent with a social view and hence more adequate to describe the essential features of a democratic form of life.[8]

Relational parity refers to the status of individuals in social interactions. It obtains when each individual in a relation is treated in ways that do not depend upon his or her social status. In particular, it requires that stigma and disadvantages not be imposed on the basis of status and that religion, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and other social markers not affect our status within social interactions. This is the part of the normative core of democracy that is effectively captured by relational egalitarianism. Contrary to theories of redistributive justice, relational egalitarianism contends that "in an egalitarian society people should relate to one another as equals or should enjoy the same fundamental status (and also perhaps the same rank and power)" (Arneson, 2013). Accordingly, the goal of egalitarian justice is "to create a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others" (Anderson, 1999: 289).

Inclusive authority requires that individuals be the authors of the decisions whose consequences they will suffer rather that their passive recipients. So conceived, authority is not a purely political phenomenon but pervades the entire society. Contrary to radical egalitarian perspective, my view accepts that authority is an ineliminable fact of human associated living: hierarchical authority relations held between parents and children, teachers and students, managers and the rank and file in workplaces. Here, as well as in other patterns of social interaction, hierarchy is unavoidable. What defines the democratic quality of these relations is not the absence of hierarchy but, instead, the way it is exercised, that is, the extent to which subordinates are involved in making decisions. Eckstein and Gurr (1975) suggest, for example, that hierarchical relations comply with the democratic norm when superordinates exercise only limited directiveness and are highly responsive to a subordinate's claims and influence, and when subordinates are in turn entitled to a high degree of participation and comply on the basis of perceived legitimacy. According to this view, the democratization of hierarchical relations, rather than their abolition, is the normative expectation consistent with democracy.

Social involvement refers to a social unit's capacity to include its members in the plurality of practices that are relevant to the achievement of some form of common good. This requirement is stronger than the more standard condition of inclusion in decision-making processes. Indeed, apart from the protective function of inclusion in decision-making processes, participation in social intercourse has intrinsic value, because through social participation, individuals contribute to shaping their own identities and simultaneously cooperate in solving the problems which affect their social world (Frega, 2019d). The major implication of this assumption is a rather wide understanding of participation as taking part. Partaking means being socially and morally included in the concrete activities of a community. It certainly includes

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[8] The discussion of these three principles in the next three paragraphs draws from Frega (2019a: 384ff.), where I discuss extensively their place within a broader theory of democracy.

participation in decision-making—the enlightenment ideal of autonomy—but also, and in a more basic way, unrestrained access to social practices and spaces and integration within the workplace, in the neighbourhood, and in the school system. Formal or informal segregation and segmentation preventing equal partaking in social life are incompatible with the democratic norm.

Therefore, when I suggest defining democracy as the form of social cooperation that is appropriate among free and equal individuals, what I mean is that democracy is a norm that applies to social interactions and not only to political procedures and institutions. Whereas institutional arrangements, rules, and procedures remain a necessary ingredient of democracy, their meaning changes: their democratic value depends upon their function as social stabilizers of democratic human interactions. Their role consists in promoting interactions consistent with this norm, no matter whether in the relations between citizens and political authorities or in any other social sphere, such as the workplace. With this notion of democracy to hand, we can now move to the second step of the argument. In the next section, I will show how some leading ideas in humanistic psychology, which later inspired more applied research on managerial and organizational approaches to employee involvement, resonate closely with the basic normative expectations brought forth by democracy, once this is understood in the wider view suggested here.

THE ROOTS OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT
IN HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Management scholars did not invent the concept of involvement from scratch. Indeed, the basic intuition behind recent theories of employee involvement, high performance, workplace empowerment, holacracy, and related theories of human resource management dates back to the militant work of educators, social workers, and welfare workers—vocationalists who sought to reform and transform the capitalist firm during the last decades of the nineteenth century, in the attempt to reduce the arbitrary exercise of authority, exploitation, and the plight of alienating working conditions. These struggles gave rise to the first personnel departments, later to be transformed into what came to be known as human resource management departments (Jacoby, 2004). Closer to us, and in more academic milieux, the roots and the theoretical background of this approach can be traced back to the work of two generations of social psychologists, usually referred to collectively as the Human Relations school of psychology, and whose main representatives are Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), Elton Mayo (1880–1949), and Abraham Maslow (1908–70). Theoretical differences notwithstanding, these social psychologists have inquired into the motivational roots of human action, searching for the factors responsible for the varying degrees of agents' involvement in social situations. They defended a holistic approach to the workplace, conceived as a complex and unified social situation that could not be reduced to the mere instrumentality of job activity. This social view of human action has then paved the way for the recognition of the motivational force of non-pecuniary incentives. This focus upon an enriched understanding of human motivation has been connected with a deep concern for the social dimension of

human action, a reason why interactions within groups and manager–employee relational patterns have received a degree of attention previously unheard of. This view is the root of subsequent attempts to reconcile productivity and the meaningfulness of work, in a way not dissimilar to social democracy's reconciliation of labour and capital. In striving to devise a middle path, or a third way between options previously taken to be incompatible, humanistic psychology has given rise to an approach that reconciles the normative expectations of democracy with the efficiency constraints of economic organizations within a capitalist system. In this section, I provide a sketch of humanistic psychology's major contributions to understanding the democratic potential of the managerial practices and organizational forms described in the next section.

Whilst Lewin's contribution to the sociopsychological basis of work experience is the least direct, he is credited with having given scientific respectability to concepts later to become the building blocks of the Human Relations approach to workplace organization, such as motive, goal, cognitive dissonance, need, and intention (Bargal, Gold, & Lewin, 1992), and his field theory is clearly acknowledged by later management and organization scholars as the major inspiration for an approach to the study of the workplace capable of taking the complexity of human interactions into account (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Through his theoretical reflections and experimental studies, Lewin has decisively contributed to overcoming the atomistic psychology dominating the study of organizations, thus opening the way to a study of human activity centred on social groups rather than lone individuals. Lewin notably contended that group membership is a central psychological background determinant of individual behaviour. In this way, Lewin helped displace the focus of social psychology from the study of the execution of individual tasks to the broader ecology of social environments as decisive determinants of agents' activity. This ecology was considered to be decisive for agents' well-being and for the quality of agents' performance. It was also a promising starting point from which to understand the workplace as a social unit, rather than as a mechanical assemblage. Implicit in this approach is the idea that organizational factors have a deep impact on workers' well-being and performance and that technological and social factors have an equal impact in determining the overall performance of any organizational unit.

Mayo was perhaps the first professional psychologist to systematically focus upon the workplace, which he conceived of as the central location for the formation of human identity in the contemporary world.[9] Throughout his writings, Mayo systematically contended that the industrial world and human personality are inextricably connected. From this assumption, he drew two major implications. The first, a cornerstone of the Human Relations approach, was that a science of management deprived of a deep understanding of the human factor was doomed. The second, which provides the distinctive starting point of the humanist programme in workplace studies, was that workplace conditions are crucial for the formation of the

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[9] For a general overview of Mayo's contribution to this field, see O'Connor (1999) and Smith (1998). See Bruce (2006) and Wren and Bedeian (1987) for more nuanced and contextualized views of Mayo's contribution to the humanistic turn in the history of management.

human personality, so that industry has a social function that should not and cannot be neglected. Both implications are epitomized in the idea that work activity is the result of the "employee's total situation" (Wren & Bedeian, 1987: 292ff.) rather than of analytically isolated ingredients easily definable through a contractual agreement. Mayo was not particularly open to democratic ideas, and his views of management remained directive and hierarchical. To that extent, he can hardly be seen as a pioneer of workplace democracy.

This approach to the workplace must be distinguished from the two which became mainstream in the first decades of the twentieth century and, to an extent, continue to dominate debates about workplace organization even today. The first, issuing from the work of Taylor,[10] reduces problems of fit to objective problems of job design. Its assumption is that an accurate design of tasks is all that is needed to organize work in a modern workplace. The second approach, common to several economic schools ranging from liberalism to Marxism, admits the possibility of alienation but tends to explain it in terms of the material conditions of work. Either way, the subjective and interactive dimensions of work are neglected. Indeed, in contrast to Taylorism, the Human Relations approach viewed workers as more than self-interested optimizers. Workers "were viewed as complex psychosocial beings who are at once individuals with diverse needs, desires, and goals but who, at the same time, are also members of social groups (fellow workers, wider society, etc.) where such associations modify their individualistic impulses" (Bruce, 2006: 180). The Human Relations school focuses upon the psychosocial dimensions of work, and this in two ways: on one hand, by exploring the inner motives that connect workers to their activity, and on the other hand, by interpreting worker–manager relations as full-blown human relationships rather than as mere authority relations. This focus upon meaningfulness as a necessary ingredient of work, and on redefining the manager as a supervisor rather than a boss, explains why employee involvement is not a mere technology of management but has a direct relevance to the question of democracy at work.

Subsequent research in this tradition has further emphasized the relevance of cooperation instead of competition as a source of human motivation.[11] With a second generation of scholars, the still somehow vague intuitions developed by Mayo obtain additional clarity in a theory of motivation that emphasizes the importance of anti-authoritarianism as a condition for individual self-fulfilment. Particularly in Maslow's well-known theory of human needs (Maslow, 1943), the satisfaction of material needs is seen as providing only the first step of human motivation to action. Indeed, the more an agent climbs the ladder of less material forms of motivation, the more likely the agent will be to achieve a higher state of personal satisfaction. Maslow's theory of motivation has a built-in normative orientation insofar as he saw human needs as the ascending rungs of a ladder, at the top of which stood the need for self-actualization. The sense of autonomy, the meaningfulness of one's job, and the quality of interactions with other human beings at

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[10] But see Nyland (1998) for a more nuanced appraisal of Taylor's legacy.
[11] For a more recent variant of this view, see Gagné (2014).

work are usually invoked as the major determinants of human satisfaction.[12] Motivation and job efficacy are considered to be directly related to the degree to which a worker is autonomous in planning and conducting work activities; the capacity a worker has to exercise his or her skills; the capacity of a worker to relate his or her tasks to a final and meaningful aim; and the possibility a worker has to interact with colleagues, customers, and other agents in the course of work.[13] The connection between motivation and autonomy provides a first clue to why the design of jobs and the organization of the workplace have such a prominent place not only in determining the quality of work experience but also in determining its political orientation.

The psychologist Gordon Allport has tellingly spoken of a "psychology of participation," thus emphasizing the political implications of an organization of work that would endow the worker with broader opportunities to be actively engaged in the worker's activities, "busily engaged in using his talents, understanding his work, and having pleasant social relations with foreman and fellow-workers" (Allport, 1945: 122). The Human Relations tradition has been adamant in contending that personal involvement in what one is doing is the pre-condition of personal self-fulfilment in every dimension of human life. These theorists clearly stated that personal involvement consists not only in having the right to have a say in decisions affecting one's life but also in being meaningfully involved in activities conducive to the achievement of some common good. To this extent, policy implementation (contributing to achieving the goal) had to be conceived of as being as important as policy making (setting the goal).

Thus the implications of employee-centred management techniques for the democratization of the workplace were not missed by philosophers, social scientists, and management scholars alike. Indeed, as the historian of management Daniel Wren has noted, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, it was common to conceive of "industrial democracy [as] the workplace application of a human-relations philosophy with organized labor's support" (Wren and Bedeian, 1987: 337)—a point that has unfortunately been lost in subsequent decades, when the political relevance of the workplace has mainly been apprehended in the political terms of a struggle over power resources (Poole, 1986). Yet scholars steeped in the humanistic tradition clearly understood that the nature of work is not fully captured by its contractual dimension, because workplaces are complex social units where issues of power, autonomy, conflict, self-realization, oppression, humiliation, equality, and freedom are constantly in play. Even when they did not explicitly use the word *democracy*, their analyses are in line with the assumption that the firm is a political entity; that power relations are an inescapable fact of organizational life;

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[12] For a moral justification of the same claim, see Bowie (1998), Yeoman (2014), and Veltman (2016). Bowie (1998) has notably shown the strong family resemblance between moral arguments in support of meaningful work and the quality movement that stemmed from the psychological tradition I am discussing in this section. As he contends, "these good management practices embody Kantian language that respects employee autonomy and responsibility" (1088).

[13] For recent statements, see, e.g., Deci and Ryan (2014), Yeoman (2014), and Veltman (2016).

and that, as a consequence, the democratic question could and should be raised in relation to the workplace. Humanistic psychologists, in conclusion, subscribed to the claim that democracy is hollow, unless it can tell us how individuals should be allowed to organize their lives and the appropriate ways for one individual to treat another, whether peer, superior, or subordinate. It is precisely the political implications of this approach, so evident for previous generations of scholars and now almost forgotten, that I wish to recover. And because employee involvement is the organizational offshoot of this theoretical tradition, it is here that we should seek more concrete proposals to democratize the workplace.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Since the seminal works of organizational psychologists and management scholars like Rensis Likert (1967), Richard Walton (1985), Richard Hackman (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and Edward Lawler (1986), the question of employee involvement has come to the fore of theories and practices of management and organization seeking to cope with the challenges of post-Fordist capitalism (Dahl, 1986). These and other scholars sought to adjust working conditions to changing economic circumstances, whilst remaining faithful to the humanist inspiration of the tradition described in the previous section. At the heart of their work stands the intuition that a less mechanistic and more complete involvement of workers in the social contexts of their jobs would at the same time increase the meaningfulness of work and promote organizational success. The conditions identified as crucial for improving employee involvement, as it will turn out, are also crucial for improving workplace democracy, because they concern directly the way individuals are integrated into the social and material worlds in which they live in ways that deeply affect their status as individuals, the patterns of authority to which they are subjected, and the autonomy of action they are allowed. Involvement, as these studies often remark, presupposes and yet does not stop at the door of participation. Indeed, "employee involvement is more than simply taking part in decision making; it can include incentives (gainsharing), group behavior (quality circles), and training (self-directed work teams)" (Cotton, 1993: 14).

This concern for forms of involvement that go beyond representation also echoes in workers' preferences. As scholars have noted, "a consultative approach is more significant for job satisfaction than a trade union presence, . . . [which] suggests that having a voice, albeit not necessarily one with bargaining rights, is more important than the form of it" (Wood & De Menezes, 2011: 1602). Indeed, when asked about their expectations, workers demand more rather than less participation (see, e.g., Lawler, 1986; Freeman & Rogers, 2006). One of the largest surveys of employee expectations conducted in recent decades reports that "over three-quarters of workers (76 percent) said it was very important to have influence on how to do their job and organize their work" (Freeman & Rogers, 2006: 47). In a way which would surprise supporters of mainstream accounts of democracy but which is consonant with the view defended in this article, influence on how one goes about one's job and organizes one's own work, rather than the right to elect representatives, was the most important

item. It is also noteworthy that the same survey showed that workers taking part in some kind of employee involvement programme displayed a significantly lower gap between the influence they wanted and the influence they thought they had. Other studies have shown that the highest effects on workers' democratic attitudes—the so-called spillover effect[14]—are reached when workers are directly involved in participatory practices, whereas delegative mechanisms produce only a negligible effect on overall democratic attitudes (Timming & Summers, 2018; Verdorfer Pircher, Weber, Unterrainer, & Seyr, 2013). In addition, other studies have shown that the highest results in terms of well-being are achieved by practices of employee involvement that affect the organization of everyday tasks rather than by practices of political representation (Wood & De Menezes, 2011; Wood, Van Veldhoven, Croon, & de Menezes, 2012). Workers want to be able to influence *how* they do their work, how their working lives unfold on a daily basis, and how they interact with other people. Moreover, this kind of concrete and lived experience of being in control is likely to affect more directly and permanently workers' attitudes towards democratic values. What seems to be an unquestioned result of these programmes is their capacity to increase workers' autonomy and voice and to reinforce their awareness that autonomy and voice are important values. For example, Freeman and Rogers (2006) report that "employee involvement raises the proportion of workers who have a lot of influence on deciding how to do their job, but it also raises the proportion of those to whom this is important."[15]

This section will briefly describe some of the most relevant features of these management and organizational practices before turning to examining its unique potential for democratizing the workplace. In this regard, the distinctive feature of employee involvement to which I pay most attention is that it extends the reach of employee integration in workplace life beyond the participation in decision-making bodies, as currently understood by mainstream theories of workplace democracy. As its name makes clear, it makes possible a more complex and encompassing involvement of workers in the various dimensions of workplace life. To achieve this goal, a thorough redesign of jobs, of patterns of interaction, and of organizational routines is required, and it is, indeed, through this radical redesign that the workplace can be transformed into a social unit more consistent with the democratic norm.

In the vast literature that has grown over more than half a century, and out of a burgeoning set of more or less successful practices, the 1980s and 1990s saw a systematization of concepts and practices that cluster around two major dimensions through which organizations may try to increase employee involvement, each of

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[14] The spillover effect, firstly conceptualized by J. S. Mill and later defended by other democratic theorists such as John Dewey (1927) and Carole Pateman (1970) refers to a practice's potential to form habits and dispositions that will then be exercised also outside this practice. Mill notably called democratic workplaces and families the "schools of democracy." The obvious example here is that by working in a democratic firm, workers develop civic attitudes, learns the importance of deliberation, participate actively to solving collective problems. This 'democratic ethos' is then exercised also outside the workplace.

[15] For similar results, see also Verdorfer Pircher et al. (2013) and Timming and Summers (2018).

them having a direct yet different relevance for workplace democracy.[16] On one hand is the transformation of job profiles so as to render individual work more meaningful. Under the label of "job enrichment," a new approach to job design has been devised, aimed at increasing the variety of tasks and at broadening the range of discretion, autonomy, and responsibility of workers in what they do. On the other hand is the redesign of workplaces to enhance employees' involvement in a firm's life. Under the label "teamwork," the social dimension of individual agency at work has been taken into greater consideration, paying higher attention to its relational structure and opening new ways of understanding work as a form of joint or cooperative action. Conceived in sufficiently broad terms, both strategies provide concrete clues for approximating work experience to the democratic idea of *a form of social cooperation that is appropriate among free and equal individuals.*

Job Enrichment

Based in particular on research conducted by Hackman, Oldham, and Lawler in the 1970s, the basic idea of job enrichment is that the degree of involvement in one's job is a function of a set of variables that Hackman and Oldham (1976) defines thus: 1) variety of skills, 2) task identity, 3) autonomy, 4) feedback, and 5) task significance. The job-redesign movement contends that, whenever possible, jobs should be designed in ways that maximize the variety of tasks so as to avoid repetitiveness (job enlargement), whilst at the same time giving workers the sense of accomplishment which derives from being in charge of a broad range of actions leading to the production of a whole product or service. Autonomy in the organization of one's work, responsibility for a clearly identifiable final product or service, and feedback received on the quality of one's work are considered the variables most conducive to giving workers a full sense of the meaning and value of their activity. Hackman (quoted in Katz, 1986: 29–30) also suggests

> following principles for redesigning jobs to maximize the beneficial effects of these five factors: 1) forming natural work units in the assignment of tasks so that workers feel they own their work; 2) combining tasks, putting together tasks that had been fragmented; 3) establishing client relationships; 4) vertical loading—giving job incumbents responsibility for deciding on work methods and work priorities; 5) opening feedback channels and removing blocks to communication—where possible developing feedback directly from the work process.

Relations between these five factors and the democratic norm are quite straightforward, because jobs cannot be enriched unless workers are given improved knowledge of production processes, greater autonomy on how to work, and a more active role in value chains. In all these ways, workers move progressively from the status of a passive subject to that of an active citizen.

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[16] The following texts provide the best account of employee involvement conceived of as a specific approach not only to management but, more broadly, to the organization of the workplace: Wood and De Menezes (2011), Lawler (1986), Hackman and Lawler (1971), Hackman and Oldham (1976), Cotton (1993), Appelbaum and Batt (1994), Budd et al. (2010), and Wilkinson, Gollan, and Marchington (2010).

The feature that is, perhaps, politically most relevant is that job enrichment requires vertical, not only horizontal, enlargement.[17] Vertical enrichment signifies, for example, that workers should be given autonomy not only on how they achieve their goals, but also in setting these goals (Sashkin, 1984). Thus job enrichment has the power to alter the authority structure of the workplace, because it endows employees with greater autonomy in their tasks, transferring to them decision-making and monitoring responsibilities otherwise exercised by managers. Enriched jobs are not only more interesting and therefore more motivating. They are also jobs designed to address workers in their status of autonomous, deliberative, and reflecting beings capable of setting goals for themselves, establishing priorities, evaluating the results of their actions, and modifying their behaviour in response to its consequences. Treating individuals as autonomous and reflective agents capable of setting goals and pursuing them is the first condition required to respect them in their status of free and equal individuals, which is the cornerstone of any conception of democracy. Indeed, if we look back to the origins of the modern democratic revolution, the major achievement of political democracy consisted in relieving individuals of the status of passive subjects, elevating them to that of autonomous citizens. Indeed, democracy is, in the first instance, the institutional translation of a new consideration of human beings in their autonomy and capacity for self-determination. From this standpoint, the contribution of a worker in a Taylorist chain,[18] like that of a slave on a plantation, is mostly reduced to animal power, energy to be put to efficient use, with no consideration of his or her status as a thinking and perceiving human being. Politically, this corresponds to the status of a subject in pre-democratic or anti-democratic regimes. Not only does the subject have no voice but, more than that, he or she is deprived of autonomy, denied a capacity for thinking, and ignored as a source of knowledge. All in all, the subject is denied the status of an active and contributing member of a larger social unit, be it the city, the plantation, the firm, or the state.

Its democratizing benefits notwithstanding, however, given its narrow focus on individual work, job enlargement offers limited opportunities to democratize the workplace, unless it is included in a broader organizational strategy through which the entire set of patterns of interaction is transformed, which is what teamwork strives to do.

Teamwork and Workplace Redesign

A somewhat simplified view of the Taylorist firm contends that workers are hired to fulfil specified tasks and that to do this, they need not be involved in anything other than the task. They need not know what others do, the meaning of the job they have been assigned, how the firm where they work is doing, or what its general strategies are. Similarly, to run the business, managers need not seek workers' support.

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[17] Horizontal enrichment refers to the increase in the number of tasks required so as to produce variety.

[18] This is of course a narrow vision of Taylor's theory of management. As scholars have shown, Taylor himself had a broader vision of industrial work. See Nyland (1998) for a more nuanced appraisal of Taylor's legacy.

Workers are there to do what they are told, and managers, who know best, take care of all the rest. The simpler and more atomized the tasks, the closer reality is to this view. Employees are seen neither as sources of valuable knowledge nor as autonomous agents. This model presupposes a sharp division between deciding and executing, and between thinking and acting, the political implications of which are unmistakable. Indeed, under these conditions, workplaces cannot be democratic, since the basic conditions of autonomous human agency are violated. Workplaces so conceived do not satisfy the requirements of the democratic norm. They can be, at best, islands of enlightened despotism.

Employee involvement strives to transform social life in the workplace through organizational redesign, by which it aims to create a socio-technical environment which promotes the kind of autonomous human agency which is a precondition for democracy. Workplace redesign, as opposed to job redesign, is about transforming social environments, rather than merely changing the content of individual jobs. The focus shifts from what employees do as individuals to how they interact among themselves. As I note subsequently, to appreciate the democratizing potential of these practices, we need to go beyond mainstream economic interpretations, because they deny the motivational role of non-pecuniary factors and the social dimension of work experience.

Organizational strategies may include practices for enhancing communication, through which the management can provide information concerning diverse aspects of the firm's functioning, such as financial reports, prospects for hiring, changes in mission or in business model, and practices for promoting bottom-up communication so as to inform management of employees' views, suggestions, and grievances, such as suggestion boxes, surveys, and open-door policies. Other practices often associated with employee involvement aim at involving employees in improving quality and more generally by providing solutions to existing problems. Programmes such as upward problem solving, quality circles, and total quality management actively involve employees in the diagnosis of solutions to specific problems on a temporary or permanent basis. Besides their instrumental value in improving performance, these schemes should be prized also for their capacity to enhance the quality of social interactions, because they assign workers the status of valuable sources of knowledge and information and of reliable partners in joint action.

A third series of programmes usually associated with employee involvement are gainsharing schemes such as Scanlon plans or employee stock ownership plans, through which employees share in the gains resulting from their work. The meaning of these plans, too, need not be reduced to their economic value. Indeed, besides their financial consequences, gainsharing plans have social implications, because they allow employees to partake in the results of their work. Since profit is what firms aim at, by sharing profits, employees accede to the same status of shareholders. This motivational factor explains why adopting gainsharing plans increases the rate of success of employee involvement programmes (Lawler, 1986; MacDuffie, 1995; Warr, 2007).

Finally, the programmes almost universally considered to be the most effective in promoting employee involvement are those which organize employees in teams enjoying significant degrees of autonomy. Through teamwork, task significance is achieved at the level of a social unit, rather than of individual action.[19] In addition, teams are usually endowed with greater decision-making power, so that employees can achieve greater control than they can through job enrichment. Considered as members of teams, workers are addressed in their social constitution as members of a cooperating social unit. If one distils the normative assumptions that are at the heart of these approaches, one can construe teams as social units with clear political properties. Indeed, if we go back to my suggested definition of democracy as *the form of social cooperation that is appropriate among free and equal individuals*, it is easy to see how the design of work teams is a decisive step toward the democratization of the workplace. We need now to understand what types of redesign are more consistent with the democratic norm.

The basic intuition of teamwork is that jobs become more meaningful and satisfying when the work group has responsibility for a task:

> A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems (for example, business unit or the corporation), and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries (Cohen & Bailey, 1997: 241).

In a work team, members are usually cross-trained so as to be able to accomplish more than a task and to rotate and, in that way, increase group self-sufficiency as well as providing individuals with a more complete sense of the activity. Given the larger scope of teams, members also receive higher than usual levels of information: "If the teams take responsibility for vertical skills such as scheduling and purchasing, then information about costs, business operations, and so forth, which were not previously available to lower-level participants, will be" (Lawler, 1986: 109). Team members also receive higher levels of training. Moreover, because work teams tend to make decisions collectively, they will tend to promote deliberative—hence democratic—ways of sharing power.

Of particular relevance to a theory of workplace democracy are so-called self-managing or self-directed work teams. The most distinguishing feature of teams so described is their relatively high degree of autonomy: they are given whole work tasks to accomplish and are allowed a significant amount of autonomy and control over their work. This means notably that team members benefit from high discretionary autonomy over decisions, such as task assignment, methods for carrying out work, and activity scheduling. In many cases, they appoint their own supervisors, choosing them from their members, rather than having this task being fulfilled by an external manager. They organize their own work, autonomously deciding who does

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[19] Researchers at the Tavistock Center contended that the small work group rather than the individual had to be considered as the basic unit providing satisfaction and spurring motivation for its members in their cooperative, interdependent accomplishments (see Katz, 1986; Manz, 1992).

what, when to take breaks, how to solve problems, and so on. It is part of the idea of teamwork to empower teams also by letting them interact directly with a greater number of non-team individuals, such as suppliers and customers. They may also exercise some of the human resource functions, such as performance appraisal, hiring and firing decisions, and electing supervisors (Cotton, 1993). Teams usually receive feedback on their performances and are responsible for monitoring them against various standards. They may have small budgets which they manage autonomously. The principle of rotation of tasks provides workers with a broader set of skills and improved knowledge, whereas the autonomization of teams incentivizes the transfer of information from higher levels of management. For all these reasons, "work teams make an important difference in the participative structure of organizations. Individuals end up with knowledge and skills, information, rewards, and power that they do not have in traditional organizations" (Lawler, 1986: 109).

Employee involvement comes in degrees, and several scales have been offered to describe the ascending process going from Tayloristic organizational forms in which employees are reduced to the proverbial cog in the machine, with close to no autonomy and authority, to almost autonomous teams, which are only rarely found in reality (Hackman, 1986; Lawler, 1986; Likert, 1967; Manz, 1992). This extreme variety of organizational forms, with respective implications in terms of degrees of individual and collective autonomy, is a useful reminder of the extremely powerful political implications of organizational design. It reminds us of the extent to which the smallest details of ordinary life are loaded with normative implications. Far from being normatively neutral, organizational choices have extremely powerful political consequences precisely because they determine the quality of social interactions. Here we find a curious situation: on one hand, from a democratic theory standpoint, whether a team can set its own standards and goals or whether it receives them from a superior makes all the difference; on the other hand, mainstream conceptions of workplace democracy flatly ignore this dimension. Indeed, the mere presence of formal structures of collective decision-making, such as work councils and joint committees, has no direct bearing on this fine-grained dimension of organizational life. This fact explains in what sense employee involvement embodies a normative intuition about democracy that is conceptually independent from the normative intuition that lies at the heart of representative and participatory conceptions of workplace democracy. Employee involvement, on one hand, and representation and participation, on the other, point to different but complementary normative dimensions. Indeed, the democratizing potential of employee involvement does not derive from the increase of workers' control on those who govern them but stems from its concrete capacity to transform patterns of social interaction among employees and between employees and managers and to transform the patterns of authority. This is possible because redesigning jobs to make them more involving requires the diffusion of information, knowledge, autonomy, and decision-making power to the lowest levels of an organization.

The basic intuition of employee involvement is that if employees have to accomplish the complex functions the new organization of work assigns them, then they

need to know a lot more about the functioning of the firm, its strategic positioning, productive processes, and so forth. They also need to possess a broader array of competences; be in charge of larger portions of the productive process; be allowed to interact autonomously with individuals in remote parts of the company or outside it, such as customers and suppliers; and be able to autonomously control the execution of their work. This entails a form of empowerment which is based neither on higher bargaining power nor on increased recognition and that gains traction by the change in status that follows from the transformation of jobs, because this form of empowerment concretely reduces the gap between managers and employees in terms of knowledge, power, and status. By mastering knowledge, achieving autonomy, becoming the source of valuable information and the bearer of many skills, being allowed to interact freely with all the social partners of an economic enterprise, and discussing on an equal footing with one's superiors, workers are concretely transformed into autonomous human agents. This kind of empowerment is not reserved to the happy few who in standard accounts of workplace democracy are endowed with political responsibilities (usually trade union representatives), because it potentially affects all workers. This is the unique democratizing potential of employee involvement: it taps into the normative resources of workplace practices in which all workers may partake.

This article is not the place in which to discuss the conditions that favour or prevent the success of employee involvement practices or to assess whether this ideal has been oversold. Variations in technology, firm size, nature of product or service, worker and management attitudes and values, societal views of the economy, social and political institutions, phases in the economic cycle, and so on will hugely affect the chances of success. My aim here is much more modest: it consists in establishing the distinctively political implications of these practices and their potential for theorizing and achieving democracy in the workplace. And, as sociologist Joyce Rothschild (2000) has remarked, "because the teams haven't gone far *enough* for many of us social scientists is no reason to shut our eyes to the advances that *are* being made in shop floor and office democracy" (201; emphasis original) Like any other normative theory, the wide view of democracy states the direction in which workplaces must be transformed if they are to become more democratic. As a type of non-ideal theory, it points to practices that embody its normative ideal at a higher degree. Whether this ideal can be achieved extensively is, of course, an entirely different question.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT AS THE THIRD PILLAR
OF WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY

In the previous section, I have shown that employee involvement captures an essential ingredient of democracy in the workplace. I have also stated that as long as we approach workplace democracy from the theoretical perspective of mainstream political theory, we lack the theoretical resources needed to acknowledge the democratizing potential of these practices. Indeed, no matter whether we understand democracy as a method for selecting the elites (Schumpeter, 2008), for aggregating

plural interests (Dahl, 1986), or for decision-making based on deliberation (Habermas, 1996), or as a strategy for equalizing power (Barber, 2003), each and all of these conceptions, once applied to the workplace, will mainly result in prescribing board-level participation. This, it bears repeating, remains a badly needed condition if workplace democracy is to be achieved. Yet, as this article insists, this is only part of the story, because democracy requires more than this. To see this point, however, we need a different theory of democracy, one that allows for a broader understanding of democracy as a social norm organizing the life of a community in all its social institutions.

It should now be clear why, from the standpoint of the wide view of democracy, the establishment of political mechanisms of direct participation and indirect representation is a necessary yet insufficient condition for democratizing the workplace. Until the workplace is dominated by patterns of interaction which do not reflect the three normative principles of relational parity, inclusive authority, and social involvement, it will remain an undemocratic space. My contention is that schemes of employee involvement are particularly apt to promote patterns of interaction consistent with the normative core of the democratic norm, advancing its hold on the workplace. In particular, self-autonomous work teams can be seen as small democratic units whose organizational form reflects the three principles that compose the normative core of democracy. For this reason, a workplace organized to maximize employee involvement will also be one where relations are more egalitarian, where authority is more inclusive, and where individuals are more thoroughly included in the activities through which they participate in the life of the workplace. Let me quickly show how employee involvement promotes the three normative principles that compose the normative core of the concept of democracy.

With regard to *relational parity*, employee involvement reduces differences in status among employees by abiding by the principle of competence. In a work team, tasks are assigned to and decisions are made by those who are more expert on a given issue, not by those who are higher in grade or have lengthier terms of service. Team work increases reciprocity among team members by allowing each to develop a plurality of skills and by enabling rotation to avoid the more demeaning tasks being assigned on the basis of status. This practice helps to eradicate forms of social discrimination based on social status, such as gender, race, and religion.

With regard to *inclusive authority*, employee involvement distributes authority and monitoring functions to individuals (through job enrichment) and teams (through team work), hence increasing personal autonomy and reducing status differentials. In this way, more horizontal forms of authority can be achieved. Subordination is not abolished but is limited and submitted to a right of justification, insofar as the principle that decisions should be made where expertise is best, accompanied by processes of training and competence transfer, implies that the range of topics on which employees may have authority is enormously increased. Symmetrically, managers see their discretionary power reduced and their role progressively transformed into that of facilitators. In addition, team work is based on collective rather than individual decision-making. Team work enhances the space of collective deliberation, rendering decision-making more democratic.

Regarding *social involvement*, employee involvement directly tackles the causes of alienation. By giving each worker ownership of the realization of a product or service, by including the worker in broader networks of social relations, and by establishing a clearer link between a worker's abilities and the contribution to the achievement of a collective good, employee involvement makes sure that employees are—and feel that they are—contributing members of the social unit to which they belong. Moreover, the principle of rotation gives employees a fuller sense of ownership and responsibility for the final product and hence a sense of joint participation in setting and pursuing collective goals. Overall, these changes have the effect of giving employees a concrete sense of inclusion, meaningfulness, and belonging which has a powerful effect in terms of prosocial behaviour, willingness to cooperate, and the establishment of a more solidaristic workplace (Kuhlmann & Schumann, 2001).

Workplaces are social settings in which individuals encounter others in intense social relations that are normatively loaded. When the members of a work team together decide who should act as supervisor, perhaps on a temporary and rotating basis, they have the deeply democratic experience of cooperation among free and equal individuals. When employees are offered extensive training to learn more skills and are assigned tasks according to competence, they are having the profoundly democratic experience of being treated as equal: what counts in distributing opportunities is no more privilege, social status, or hierarchical position but personal desert. When low, repetitive, dull tasks are assigned on a rotation basis instead of according to status, employees have the profoundly democratic experience of solidarity among equals. In all these ways, they experience living in a more democratic environment, one that is more thoroughly consistent with the social norm of democracy. As a form of society, democracy refers precisely to the lived experience of democratic patterns of social interactions at all levels of social life, something that is possible only if organizational structures, procedures, and roles are specifically designed to promote them.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A FULL-BLOWN ACCOUNT OF WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY

This article attempts to show that, far from pointing towards rival conceptions, the notions of representation/participation, voice, and involvement refer to three distinctive, complementary, and equally necessary normative pillars of the concept of workplace democracy. Representation/participation provides employees with the basic decision-making rights they need to be active members of the firms in which they work. They transform employees into citizens of the enterprise (Dahl, 1986). Voice provides them with a system of basic rights allowing them the necessary protection to formulate their grievances or ask for redress when their basic rights are violated. They protect them from the risk that firms may operate as despotic governments (Malleson, 2013). Finally, employee involvement transforms workers' everyday lived experience. It makes democracy the norm governing their social interactions. As a consequence, a full-blown democratic design for the workplace

will need to provide room for each of these three institutional requirements, clearly identifying the functions each fulfils within an all-embracing democratic architecture that will then have to be translated into a full-blown organizational model.

At a sufficiently abstract level, it can be contended that a given regime, or institution, complies with the democratic norm if and only if the following three requirements are fulfilled: 1) there exist institutional mechanisms that allow all those who are subjected to the normative regulations of the regime to have a say in final decisions; 2) there exist institutional mechanisms that protect individuals against violations of their prerogatives from the system or some of its parts; and 3) there exist institutional mechanisms that promote democratic forms of human interaction, that is, forms of interaction that comply with the three normative principles of relational parity, inclusive authority, and social involvement.

An overview of intellectual debates and of historical practices shows that the theoretical and practical concerns with workplace democracy have essentially remained confined to the first requirement. Systems of codetermination, workers' councils, and collective bargaining are but the best-known institutional solutions so far devised to allow workers direct or indirect participation in the decisions that affect their working lives. Less discussed but increasingly present in the debate is the awareness that, apart from these, institutional protections, too, are required to provide employees with the right to voice their grievances. State-based legal protections, such as workers' statutes, trade union prerogatives, ombudsmen, and business-initiated voice mechanisms, are the most common forms through which employees enjoy the right to voice their grievances and to seek redress in cases of mistreatment (Budd, Gollan, & Wilkinson, 2010; Mowbray et al., 2015). Each in its own way, these devices translate at the workplace level institutional solutions that had previously been devised to democratize political regimes, such as equal representation, constitutional protection, and separation of powers. None, however, tackles directly the otherwise important issue of how democracy can become the social norm that organizes the workplace by giving shape to patterns of social interaction in which each is treated as free and equal. Fulfilling this condition requires that the organizational structure of the workplace be profoundly transformed, and employee involvement provides to date the most promising set of arguments by which to do this.

If democracy is the overarching social norm that Western societies have chosen to govern themselves, there is no reason why their most important social institutions should remain beyond its influence. This predicament should not be understood as another attempt to justify workplace democracy through the state-firm analogy. More broadly, and more ambitiously, this predicament stems from the idea that democracy denotes, first and foremost, the social norm which in the last two centuries Western societies chose as the main normative guide with which to organize their internal functioning. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the values of relational parity, inclusive authority, and social involvement which compose democracy's three-fold core have become the guiding ideas of social life in all its spheres. This historical fact alone demands that the workplace, like any other major social institution, be organized in a way consistent with this norm. Employee

involvement, to that extent, proves to be one of the best avenues to pursue this goal and should therefore be at the centre of our theoretical and practical efforts to render the workplace a more democratic space.

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