

Call for book chapters

Book title: *Debating Workplace Democracy*

Editor: Chris Mathieu, Department of Sociology, Lund University

christopher.mathieu@soc.lu.se

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Workplace democracy is a persistent topic. It has been debated and acted upon in different manners not just in recent decades, but centuries. Debates and activities for and against different forms of workplace democracy are sometimes rooted in universal claims about rights and/or efficiencies, sometimes more immediate, contextual or contemporary concerns. Though long-debated and acted upon both for and against, the issue is never exhausted, nor antiquated, as circumstances, exigencies, interpretations, perspectives, values and priorities continuously change and develop, all impacting how we relate to workplace democracy.

This is an auspicious time to revisit the issue of workplace democracy, as on the one hand our workplaces, the organisational forms within which we work and the technologies with which we work are rapidly and possibly radically changing, and on the other, the status and conceptualisations of democracy are in flux. The topic is not just current in academic research (Anderson 2017; Frega, et al 2019; Hyman, et al 2023; Stehr, 2023) but also on the policy agenda, with for example the adoption by the European Parliament of *Democracy at work: A European framework for employees' participation rights and the revision of the European Works Council Directive* in December 2021 (European Parliament 2021) and the exploratory opinion furnished by the European Economic and Social Committee on *Democracy at work* adopted in April 2023 (Hoffmann & Balon 2023).

This call for chapters solicits contributions to an edited volume gathering contrasting perspectives on the topic of workplace democracy, from across academic disciplines, practitioner perspectives, employers' associations and trade unions, thinktanks and research agencies.

Workplace democracy is a concept open for interpretation with no singular definition (Atzeni, 2017). *Workplace* can be interpreted as connoting an entire establishment, firm or organisation, or a subsection, such as an office, factory, shopfloor, ward, team, workgroup, or now even a platform and the space and the interactional contexts in which gig-work is carried out. Likewise, *democracy* can be interpreted as connoting anything from “voice,” participation, and influence to formal and informal, representative and direct forms of negotiation and decision-making.

Both advocates and critics of workplace democracy often appeal to the same generic factors but different dimensions. Advocates of workplace democracy can appeal to basic *rights* of participation and non-domination and the progressive passage from subject to citizen enshrined in universal human rights, while opponents of workplace democracy appeal to property rights and the right to exercise direct or indirect control over assets owned and the

right of free contract, also of labour. Advocates of workplace democracy often appeal to the *health and wellbeing* effects of democratic worker participation, control and autonomy in reducing stress, enjoying recognition and promoting self-efficacy (Gallie et al, 2017). Opponents counter that vagaries of democratic processes and outcomes create unpredictability and unclarity that can lead to insecurity and act as a stressor, in addition to an added extra burden of democratic participation beyond one's work tasks, both of which authoritative management shields employees from. Advocates of workplace democracy have argued that it promotes *efficiency*, often through mechanisms of higher quality and holistic input into decisions; greater innovation generation, adoption and adaptation capacity; greater employee commitment; and increased organisational learning (Inanc, et al 2015). Critics argue that especially under conditions of increased competition, complexity, and dynamism in the environments that organisations operate, the need for sophisticated analysis and swift decision-making necessitate elite, authoritative and expert control for efficiency. Advocates of workplace democracy contend that there are *positive externalities* in terms of democratic spill-over into wider society from accruing democratic skills and practices at the workplace level. Opponents of workplace democracy contend that authoritative control generates positive externalities such as increased employment, wealth, products, services, and tax-base produced by the predominant authoritative organisational forms we currently have.

Current thinking sets even perennial, core questions in new light. Who is the demos (Stehr 2023) – and what is or should be the polis (πόλις) or polity of workplaces, corporations and other types of organisations? Regarding the demos, should not just direct workers or employees within a workplace, but also other indirectly impacted parties or stakeholders be given democratic affordances? Does impending climate catastrophe alter our appraisal of this? Or is the concept of demos inappropriate for employing organisations? Regarding the polity, how can or should mechanisms for channelling input, expertise, opinion and preferences from all or specific quarters of workplaces into policy, strategy and decision-making forums be developed and realised? What expanding or limiting impact can increased digitalisation and AI play in this? What is the future of workplace democracy if relational employment declines and platform-based contracting increases? Can platform work and algorithmic management be democratised? Do we need to move from categorical thinking in terms of rights to pragmatic considerations about what degrees or forms of democracy are appropriate for different types of workplaces or organisations? Whether workplace democracy is a categorical good or anathema, or something to be pragmatically used as an instrument to obtain other goals or objectives – such as employee health, wellbeing, loyalty, branding, learning or efficiency?

This volume invites contributions for and against workplace democracy, however conceptualised or interpreted, that add new thinking to continuing debates as well as contributions that take new points of departures based on the changing conditions we are facing in contemporary working life and organisational management and governance.

Timeframe and deadlines:

Abstracts / declarations of intent to submit a chapter: **1 March 2024.**

Notification of acceptance: **10 March, 2024.**

Submission of full draft chapters: **1 September, 2024.**

Review period: **1 September – 15 November, 2024.**

Final revisions by authors **16 November 2024 – 15 January 2025.**

Submission of final versions of chapters: **15 January 2024.**

Tentative submission of manuscript to Palgrave Macmillan: **25 January 2025.**

All queries, contact and submissions should be sent to: Christopher.mathieu@soc.lu.se

Form and style

Abstract / declarations of intent to submit a chapter:

There is no specific format for the abstracts / declarations of intent, but these should be between 250 – 500 words, and give an indication of:

- the basic lines of the argument and conclusions presented in the chapter,
- whether the chapter is of a philosophical, conceptual, theoretical or empirical nature,
- if the article is grounded in a specific contextual setting, be it national/regional, sectoral (public, private, voluntary), industrial, professional, etc.

With the abstracts / declarations of intent, please include a brief bio up to 200 words, indicating the occupational affiliation for each of the authors and co-authors. Please indicate who is the corresponding author and preferred email address.

Chapters

Chapters should be approximately 6000 to 8000 words, including references, figures, tables, and any appendices or supplemental materials.

A style guide for the volume will be provided to the authors contributing full chapters, but please note the following:

- Chapters should use US English spelling and punctuation.
- Chapters should use the APA reference system. DOI tags should be provided if possible.
- No colour images or material requiring acquiring copyright permission should be included in the chapters.

Additional information on the book series Palgrave Debates in Business and Management: <https://link.springer.com/series/16112>

This series takes a refreshing and creative approach to business management research, showcasing diverse opinions and angles on some of the major debates in Business and Management. Each title examines one specific topic and includes a number of chapters from authors around the world, presenting their differing points of view on the question in hand. Without taking an editorial stance on the issues, this series takes stock of controversial and complicated topics of debate within Business and Management, and clearly presents the variety of positions within it.

Contact:

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