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In search of organizational democracy: new opportunities and constraints

Edited by Luca Carollo, Lisa Dorigatti, Annalisa Murgia, Simon Parker, Thomas Steger

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Luca Carollo, Lisa Dorigatti, Annalisa Murgia, Simon Parker, Thomas Steger, Still in search of organizational democracy: exploring new opportunities and constraints pag. 7

Essays

Francesco Sabato Massimo, Industrial democracy between neocapitalism and postfordism. The political and intellectual trajectory of Bruno Trentin (1926-2007) » 27

Paolo Borghi, Democratizing platform work from below » 51

Francesca Gabbriellini, Angelo Moro, Arianna Tassinari, A working-class road to radical industrial democracy.Workplace industrial relations and workers mobilisation in the ex-GKN factory in Florence » 79

Martina Mori, Vincenzo Cavaliere, Fostering employee voice in the workplace: the mediating role of employment relations climate and participative decision-making opportunity » 105

Laura Azzolina, Andrea Biagiotti, Carmela Guarascio, Does the Equal Opportunities Committee make democracy work (better) in academia? » 137

Carmela Barbera, Roberto Lusardi, Stefano Tomelleri, Organizational democracy at work. Shaping participation through strategic planning in university » 162

Invited contributions

Patrizia Zanoni, Ozan N. Alakavuklar, Beyond workplace democracy: Prefiguring non-capitalist social reproduction within Marx's communist horizon » 197

Virginia Doellgast, Can democracy at work deliver mutual gains in the digital economy? » 213

Democratizing Work Italia, Democratising Work! A just economy to save the planet » 230

Book Reviews

Guglielmo Meardi, Democracy at Work: Contract, Status and Post-Industrial Justice, by Ruth Dukes and Wolfgang Streeck » 239

Simone Pulcher, The Democratic Organization, Democracy and the future of work by Thomas Diefenbach » 244

Invitati dalla redazione

Barbara Maussier, La cultura gestionale di un grande evento: Il Giubileo. Intervista a Francesco Rutelli e a Mons. Rino Fisichella » 251

Federico Butera, Obituary Domenico De Masi » 287

Authors - Notizie sugli autori »

Still in search of organizational democracy: exploring new opportunities and constraints

by *Luca Carollo*[*], *Lisa Dorigatti*[**], *Annalisa Murgia*[***], *Simon Parker*[****], *Thomas Steger*[*****]

Introduction

In the past few years, there has been a growing movement among scholars around the world to promote the topic of the democratization of work (see https://democratizingwork.org/), revitalizing a long-standing debate through scholarly discussions as well as public engagement events in many different countries. The publication and spread in May 2020 of the democratizing work manifesto – supported by more than 7,000 signatures to date – highlighted that the success of such an initiative is in doubt without the democratization of the very structures in which work is executed i.e., in organizations.

In parallel, the growing interest in the topic has been sustained by the publication of a number of special issues (Chen and Chen, 2021; Frega et al., 2019; Rhodes et al., 2020), special forums in journals (Adler et al., 2023), literature reviews (e.g., Lee and Edmonson, 2017) and monographs (e.g., Diefenbach, 2020; Dukes and Streeck, 2022; Reinecke and Donaghey, 2023) dedicated to organizational and workplace democracy and to how much it currently matters *per se*, as well as for the more general state of democracy in society.

Given the current relevance and scope of the debate, this special issue aims to enter into conversation with the international scientific community, as well as with articles previously published in Studi Organizzativi (e.g., Sacconi et al., 2019; Butera, 1999; Butera, 2020) which have advocated for

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a fundamental reconfiguration of current modes of organizing in the direction of a more democratic governance and management. Furthermore, this special issue is intended as an ideal continuation of a previous special issue on 'New Trajectories in Workplace Cooperation' (see Signoretti et al., 2022), given that a substantial degree of cooperation around commonly agreed rules is deemed necessary to realize democracy, in organizations *and* in society.

The general objective of this special issue is not only to explore whether organizational democracy is possible, but also how it can be realized. Our aim is to discuss various forms of organizational and workplace democracy, while also recognizing potential advantages and constraints, the conditions that can sustain democracy in organizations, as well as its effects at the individual, organizational and/or societal levels.

It is not easy to draw the contours of the topic as organizational solutions to democratizing workplaces range from various forms of employee involvement and participation, including employee share ownership and profit-sharing, which have recently increased considerably in Western countries and companies (Mathieu, 2022), to systems of co-management and co-determination through workers' representatives, or even the more radical experiments directly involving workers and, in some cases, other stakeholders, in the governance of organizations.[1] A relevant analytical distinction is made in the literature between democracy at the point of production, such as efforts to co-organize work and production on the shop-floor, and democracy in the administration of organizations, in the form of institutional arrangement that allows workers to be represented at the board level, thereby participating in corporate governance and influencing organizational strategic decision-making (Conchon, 2011).

Acknowledging the ambiguity and plurality of meanings surrounding the term, in this essay we adopt an open and inclusive definition of organizational democracy. Democracy has been broadly defined as a system of decision-making in which those affected by decisions participate at least to some extent in decision-making, instead of just being ruled by others (Bryde, 2011; cited in Reinecke and Donaghey, 2023). At the same time, to distinguish it from simple participation, we agree with Foley and Polanyi (2006: 174) that a substantial democracy in organizations "exists when employees have some real control over organizational goal-setting and strategic planning".

[1] For a general discussion see also Baglioni, 2001; Carrieri et al., 2015.

It is also worth noting that, to date, debates on organizational and workplace democracy have spanned a variety of academic disciplines ranging from philosophy to organization studies, sociology, industrial relations, geography, political theory, organizational behaviour, management, and economics. Therefore, in line with the spirit of organization stud*ies* and current debates (see Yu and Pekarek, 2023) as well as, we believe, of the journal Studi Organizzativi, we intend the exploration of organizational and workplace democracy in this special issue to be an interdisciplinary dialogue that should foster curiosity for further cross-discipline and cross-level theorizing.

Building on these ideas, this introductory essay is structured as follows. In the next section we revisit some of the historical legacies around the notion of organizational and workplace democracy (without the pretence of being exhaustive), and then present the major debates on democratizing work. Finally, we introduce the contents of this special issue and then tentatively advance some conclusive remarks and possible ways forward.

1. Historical legacies

Robert Michels' famous "iron law of oligarchy" (1966 [1911]) argued that – no matter how democratic it was in the beginning – eventually any organization will develop oligarchic and hierarchical tendencies. Such classic accounts seem to be extremely discouraging for the possibility of realizing democratic organizations. However, for Weber (2019 [1922]), bureaucracy was one of the principal means through which to realize more democratic societies – although not necessarily democratic organizations – based on the equal treatment of citizens and their issues. One hundred years later, contemporary accounts confirm that bureaucracy and democratic ideals are not as mutually exclusive as originally thought and, instead, there can be participative, collegial and even emancipative forms of bureaucracy based on value-rationality (Monteiro and Adler, 2022). Nevertheless, even though most of its assumptions have been contested (e.g., Diefenbach, 2019), Michels' iron law still strongly conditions the collective imaginary around organizations.

Such pessimism is surprising considering that the idea to have democracy in organizations has been rather long-lived. Indeed, already at the end of the 19th century, the possibility to bring democracy to organizations was foundational for the Industrial Relations research field. With the publication of 'Industrial democracy', Webb and Webb (2010 [1897])

associated the idea of industrial democracy with democratic trade unions and effective collective bargaining. This notion of industrial democracy, shared by the British pluralist school of industrial relations (Clegg, 1976; Ackers, 2007) and further expanded in work on democracy in internal union organization (Lipset et al., 1956), is however much narrower compared to what most industrial relations scholars would now understand. Industrial democracy is, in fact, most often associated with co-determination at workplace level, through institutions such as works councils, and at company level, through worker participation in supervisory boards. Some authors even expand it to notions of economic democracy at sectoral and national levels, through economic councils and chambers (Müller-Jentsch, 2008), and to self-management and producer cooperatives, as in the extended model developed by Poole (1986). Most typically, however, the notion of industrial democracy developed in industrial relations scholarship focuses on indirect forms of participation mediated through representative institutions.

As regards classic management scholarship, as early as 1924 Mary Parker Follett advanced a theory of self-government, mainly intended for public administrations, considering the conflict endogenous in organizations and society as a 'creative force' (Follett, 1924). In a similar vein, the founder of the organizational development field – Kurt Lewin – investigated and contrasted the characteristics of democratic and autocratic styles of leadership (Lewin et al., 1939). Although motivated by social-democratic progressive ideals (e.g., Cooke, 2007), later critical commentators have highlighted how early management theorists endorsed a unitarist view of workplace relations that largely overlooked trade unionism and conflict (Desmond and Wilson, 2019; Hassard, 2012), thus arguing that they represented simple "lubricants" of Taylor-Fordism in workplaces (Bonazzi, 2016).

In the post-war period in Europe, especially during the late 60s and the 70s, democracy at the point of production i.e., the participation of workers in workplace-level decisions, gained traction, following the critique of Taylor-Fordist models of production. At the time, intensive scholarly and political debate explored how workers could have a say on their work, and two main ways were identified: the first, anchored in the industrial relations tradition, considered indirect-representative forms of participation through work councils or other joint consultative committees, which provide a voice to workers through elected representative bodies (Rogers and Streeck, 1995). The second departs from representative notions of workplace democracy, and conceives it as inextricably bound to forms of direct participation of workers, which ensure greater control over the way in which their work is

designed and executed through, for example, self-managed workgroups, and the redesign of jobs. Scholars in the socio-technical tradition (e.g., Emery and Thorsud, 1969) were particularly active in this regard, while contributing to the development of practices of workplace democracy through an action research approach and a close collaboration between researchers and practitioners. The Swedish *Industrial Democracy* movement and the German *Humanisierung der Arbeitswelt* programme were the most evident results of these attempts.

In the US context, instead, towards the end of the 70s it was the sociologist Joyce Rothschild – based on her studies, mostly conducted within cooperative organizations – who proposed a model contrasting the 'collectivist-democratic organization' with the 'for-profit managerial firm'. The authors identified a number of distinguishing characteristics between the two ideal types, including the degree of workforce specialization, the type of leadership, differences in work values, organizational culture, etc. (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Rothschild and Whitt, 1986).

In Italy, the debate around industrial democracy lived several waves, always influenced by the specific industrial relations climate that characterises the country (see Carrieri et al., 2015; Leonardi, 2010). After the Second World War, despite the significant experience of "*Consigli di gestione*", discussions on the introduction of forms of workers' participation were restrained between diverging trade union positions and, most significantly, a fierce opposition on the side of employers. After the major gains obtained by the labour movement during the Hot Autumn, also in terms of a more pervasive capacity of control by workers over workplace organisation, proposals for organisational democracy resurfaced during the 1980s in the form of plans developed by trade unions (the "*Piano d'impresa*" formulated by Bruno Trentin, Giuliano Amato, and Michele Magno, all at the trade union research centre IRES, for the CGIL; Trentin et al., 1980) and agreements with publicly-owned enterprises (such as the so-called "*Protocollo Iri*"). It should be noted that, in a period of strong social and political turmoil, debates around organisational democracy not only focused on how to achieve more democratic workplaces, but also on whether these forms of workplace democracy fit within or work against the dominant socio-economic capitalist system, trying to reform or radically subvert it (Tomasetta, 1972) – a discussion point that remains open and debated to this day (see Wolff, 2012).

Discussions around organisational democracy re-opened in the 1990s and 2000s in Italy, this time mostly led by new management approaches which emphasised the need to foster employee involvement and direct

participation (Regalia, 1996). Such re-opening also fostered conceptual works which clarified the meaning and implications of different models of workers' participation (Baglioni, 1995; 2001) and, in some cases, fostered critical accounts questioning whether management-led programmes were anything close to participation (Cattero, 2016). During those same years, the work of the trade unionist Bruno Trentin (1997) aimed, among other things, to place work as a constitutional right of citizenship at the centre of political attention and to strengthen democracy and freedom at work, so that everyone could realise their own project of knowledge and life. Coming from a completely different background and career path, the sociologist Luciano Gallino instead offered reflections around the possibilities opened by new technologies for extending democracy into organizational contexts (condensed in Gallino, 2001 and 2007).

2. Recent developments

Although the momentum of the international debate on democratizing work seemed to wane during most of the 80s, discussions around different conceptions of organizational democracy resurfaced in subsequent years. In the 90s, scholars debated the contribution of new management models, such as High-Performance Work Practices and Lean Production, to the democratization of workplaces, asking whether they increased or actually reduced workers' autonomy and control over their work (Appelbaum and Batt, 1994; Rinehart et al., 1997; Rothschild and Ollilainen, 1999). Some scholars linked the answer to the existence and functioning of institutions favouring workers' participation in work organization: these models of work organization were found to assume different forms, more or less favourable to workers' participation, in different institutional contexts (Turner, 1991).

In the last two decades, many scholars have provided fresh arguments in favour of organizational and workplace democracy, focusing on its positive impacts on workers, companies and societies as a whole. For example, Harrison and Freeman (2004: 50) maintained that, among other things, organizational democracy aids the implementation of decisions, makes people feel more committed and responsible for organizational outcomes, enhances the organizations' capacity to innovate and change, improves the work climate, and develops individuals' skills and abilities more fully. Foley and Polanyi (2006) further pointed out that organizational democracy has a positive effect on employee health, reducing stress and burnout, as similarly

found in a study on Danish workplaces (Knudsen et al., 2011). In a comparative study on the call-centre industry in the US and Germany, Doellgast (2012) showed that even in low-end service organizations, workplace democracy is a central factor in increasing job quality. Regarding public management, Brugué and Gallego (2003) argued that a more democratic organization would improve public service efficacy and stakeholder involvement in public administrations.

Calls for the adoption of democratic forms of governance to improve organizational efficacy have further grown in recent years, in particular in knowledge-intensive firms (e.g., Grandori, 2016). Sachs and colleagues (2010) talked about an enlarged stakeholder governance of firms that, besides employees, should involve external stakeholders' representatives. The proposal by Sacconi and colleagues (2019) to establish firm-level 'work and citizenship councils' goes in the same direction, intending democracy as a way to make organizations more equal and 'really' socially responsible. In a recent essay, Grandori (2022) proposed a reconceptualization of corporations as 'republics of rightsholders' and to grant property rights to those investing labour and knowledge capital (typically employees), so that the internal diversity of ideas and backgrounds can contribute to improving collective decision-making. Similarly, inspired by political bicameralism and the principle of separation and balance of powers, Ferreras (2017) suggested a bicameral model of the firm in which two chambers, one composed of capital investors' representatives and the other by labour investors' representatives, should co-govern for-profit organizations.

Disappointed with liberal models of democracy, critical scholars have instead advanced a 'radical' view of organizational democracy, which should rely on conflict and dissensus to subvert current modes of organizing and to find alternatives (Rhodes et al., 2020). They have also highlighted the prefigurative potential of alternative organizations (Schiller-Merkens, 2022; Zanoni, 2020), conceptualizing prefiguration as the collective effort to reproduce in the present the model of society we imagine for the future (Monticelli, 2021). In the words of its proponents, radical democracy represents "an ethically motivated alternative to the potent marriage of the liberal democratic state and corporate power" which enables us "to fundamentally challenge and subvert the very foundations of the neo-liberal consensus that has generated the economic, ecological, humanitarian and political crises currently facing us" (Rhodes et al., 2020: 627-628). The search for alternatives has generated a new wave of studies on, for example, cooperatives of freelance and precarious workers (De Coster and Zanoni, 2023; Mondon-Navazo et al., 2021), employee-owned corporations and

worker-recuperated enterprises (e.g., Atzeni and Ghigliani, 2007; Vieta and Heras, 2022; Vieta, 2010), and other communal systems of organizing (for an overview see Parker et al., 2014). At the same time, expanding previous evidence on the paradoxes and dilemmas of participation and how it can be burdensome for employees (e.g., Kanter, 1982; Nurick, 1985), this literature has also acknowledged the difficulty and obstacles in realizing alternative democratic organizations (King and Land, 2018; Mondon-Navazo et al., 2021; see also Zanoni and Alakavuklar, in this Special Issue).

Recently, theoretical work has speculated on the possible futures awaiting organizations in light of ongoing digital transformation (see also Doellgast, in this Special Issue) and of the regime of public policy that constitutes their environment (Bodrožić and Adler, 2022). These works carry on the tradition of thought that considers technology as a key factor for enabling, or constraining, democracy in organizations (e.g., Gallino, 2007; Sørensen, 1985). For example, after identifying four possible future scenarios – digital authoritarianism, digital oligarchy, digital localism, and digital democracy – Bodrožić and Adler (2022) suggest that a key role is assigned to public debate and political struggle to shape the system's evolution towards either reinvigorating or weakening democracy.

Other recent empirical work, conducted jointly by scholars of industrial relations and organization studies, has focused on the changes in the supply chain practices of the garment industry after the Rana Plaza Disaster[2] in Bangladesh in 2013 (Donaghey and Reinecke, 2018; Reinecke and Donaghey, 2023). In particular, this research work has highlighted the conjoined roles of brand owners, trade unions, and NGOs in establishing a transnational regulatory regime that, in the long term, can enhance industrial democracy and labour rights in global supply chains.

In sum, there is ample consensus among scholars about the fact that more organizational democracy is needed, and that organizational democracy likely bears a positive impact not only on employees, but also on overall societal well-being. Several commentators have also talked about a possible spillover effect, with organizational democracy improving the democratic functioning of society as, for example, it can increase employees' participation in democratic processes, promote employees' active citizenship behaviours, and reduce people's willingness to support extremist political

[2] On 23 April 2023, even though large cracks had appeared in the walls in previous days and all the shops and service activities on the ground floor had been evacuated, the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed, killing 1,134 and injuring about 2,515 garment workers.

movements (e.g., Budd et al., 2018; Butera, 2021; Honneth, 2023; Timming and Summers, 2020; Weber et al., 2009). At the same time, there is still much debate around the ways in which organizational democracy can best be realized. This special issue contributes to this important debate.

3. This Special Issue

The articles selected for this Special Issue have been chosen for their contribution to the debate on organizational democracy and for the discussion of figures and cases that have significantly explored how it can be best realized.

The historical essay by Sabato Massimo discusses the political and intellectual legacy of Bruno Trentin, one of the protagonists of the Italian 20th century union movement. Trentin continuously advocated for sustained union engagement in the management and governance of companies as a means to realize more democratic organizations and workplaces. The article meticulously reconstructs and positions Trentin's efforts to pursue democratization of work ideals within their proper social and historical contexts. It also highlights the relevant implications of such efforts for reforming contemporary capitalism.

In his article, Borghi explores struggles for democratizing, decommodifying and decarbonizing the platform economy, comparing the mobilization of food delivery workers in Italy and the United Kingdom. By relying on concepts developed by the Democratizing Work movement (see Democratizing Work Italia in this Special Issue), the paper argues that the democratization of work and companies always rests on workers' struggles and the building of countervailing power on the side of labour.

Gabbriellini and colleagues' article builds upon a 'militant' action research approach, in which the authors were not only engaged as detached data collectors but also as campaigners and active members in the studied organization. Although, as the authors affirm, theirs is primarily a study of 'democratic management of an industrial dispute', the past history, as well as the present struggle of the former GKN workers of Campi Bisenzio, offer valuable insights about workers' self-organizing practices in response to adversarial relations with employers and with the broader political environment.

The paper by Mori and Cavaliere digs into the individual level, providing a micro-level analysis of how workers' attitudes and perceptions

(particularly regarding job satisfaction) affect their voice behaviours and engagement with their organizations. By focusing on the context of cooperative organizations, the authors explore the mediating role of the employment relations climate and of employees' perceptions of their influence at work. Hence, the study provides evidence about the importance of participatory organizational practices for fostering constructive employee behaviour.

The last two articles focus on organizational democracy, taking universities as case studies. In the first, Guarascio and colleagues examine the role of Equal Opportunities Committees (CUGs), designed to combat discrimination and enhance gender equality, in strengthening academic democracy. The study, conducted in four Italian universities, highlights the importance of gender competences and empowerment structures, as well as bottom-up mobilization processes and investment in governance with respect to gender issues, to promote change and foster a more participatory organizational environment.

In the second article, Barbera and colleagues adopt a strategy-as-practice perspective to examine the participatory strategic planning process at a university in northern Italy. In particular, they identify four strategic practices – collective decision-making, platform and process alignment, emotional coordination, and organizational diplomacy – that can contribute to two key factors for organizational democracy: a synergistic approach and consensus on organizational change.

In addition to the six selected articles, the special issue includes three contributions on organizational democracy, the first two written by leading authors in the field of management and organization studies, on the one hand, and labour and industrial relations studies, on the other, and the third authored by a network recently formed in the Italian context within the broader global movement 'Democratizing Work'.

In the first essay, Zanoni and Alakavuklar criticize the focus on workplace democracy as a solution within capitalist institutions, arguing that it fails to address the fundamental problems of exploitation and dispossession inherent in capitalism. Instead, drawing from poststructuralist Marxist feminist debate, the authors suggest organizing social reproduction through non-capitalist economic practices and emphasize the importance of prefiguration in envisioning alternatives to capitalism.

The contribution by Doellgast instead focuses on mutual gains (for labour and capital) potentially delivered by organizational democracy in the new phase of digital capitalism. Far from providing a representation of irenic win-win solutions, Doellgast argues that democracy at work and the mutual

gains it conveys can only be established and sustained if institutional constraints are placed on employers that reduce their capacity to take unilateral decisions and strengthen labour's countervailing power. In the absence of such constraints, she argues, companies will have strong incentives to use new technologies to undermine existing regulation, intensify control over workers and promote deskilling.

The last of the invited essays presents the experience of the network Democratizing Work Italia, the Italian chapter of the Democratizing Work global movement, which served as inspiration for this Special Issue. By mobilizing the support of over 7,000 academics worldwide around the three principles "democratizing businesses, decommodifying work, and remediating the environment", the Manifesto has been a powerful call to action, which has relaunched debates and initiatives to foster organizational democracy.

Finally, the Special Issue ends with two reviews of volumes that have recently addressed the topic of democracy in organizations and workplaces. The first, written by Guglielmo Meardi, discusses the volume *Democracy at Work: Contract, Status and Post-Industrial Justice*, published in 2022 by Ruth Dukes and Wolfgang Streeck. The second, authored by Simone Pulcher, provides his reflections around the volume *The Democratic Organization. Democracy and the Future of Work*, published in 2020 by Thomas Diefenbach.

Concluding remarks and ways forward

This special issue started with the general objective of understanding whether and how organizational democracy could be possible. We believe that the articles and contributions included in this volume reflect and extend current efforts to grapple with major questions relating to organizational and workplace democracy, stimulating further empirical research and theoretical reflection. Many of the interrogatives posited in the original call for papers have been touched upon to some extent, while others inevitably remain open. In particular, we encourage future research to further reflect on how to conciliate democratic organizations with the growing level of inequality in the distribution of resources in organizations and societies. Also, empirical research on practical cases of organizational and workplace democracy will be useful to understand the varied configurations that democracy can assume in different types of organizations.

In addition, we believe that there is much value in research on alternative organizations (e.g., De Coster and Zanoni, 2023; Mondon-Navazo et al., 2021; Vieta and Heras, 2022), especially because for-profit organizations constitute just a small minority of the estimated overall population of organizations worldwide (Parker, 2023). At the same time, business organizations currently represent the hegemonic form, which influences management principles, models and practices in many other types of organizations, including public administrations, social enterprises and NPOs. Thus, this crucial connection should be further investigated, with all its inherent problems and contradictions, adding to the few accounts that already exist in the literature (e.g., Lee and Edmondson, 2017).

In conclusion, we acknowledge that there is some degree of wishful thinking in developing a Special Issue on organizational democracy, at a time in which democracy appears to be frail, at both the workplace and societal levels. Nevertheless, we hope that the research results, arguments and theories presented in this Special Issue have some degree of 'performativity' (Cabantous et al., 2016) in advancing the cause of organizational democracy. Of course, we understand that this is not just a theoretical or research enterprise, but also a political issue that needs further alliances and collaborations with all those people, social actors and institutions committed to democratizing work and organizations.

Finally, we would like to thank all the authors who have participated in this Special Issue, as well as all reviewers for their generosity of time and constructive feedback.

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Essays

Sezione saggi e ricerche

Industrial democracy between neocapitalism and postfordism. The political and intellectual trajectory of Bruno Trentin (1926-2007)

by *Francesco S. Massimo*[*]

Abstract

During his long political trajectory Bruno Trentin (1926-2007) never ceased to question the relationship between work and democracy. The Italian intellectual and trade union leader denounced the domination of the «productivist ideology» of scientific management over the entire social and political Left. According to this ideology, trade union action was reduced to the animation of distributive conflict, while the political struggle was played out outside the economic sphere, through the conquest of the state. Contrary to this vision, the 1960s were the source of a new self-management political culture, born of the encounter between the Marxist, Christian and libertarian traditions of the labour movement, which aimed to make workers and their unions «political subjects» in their own right by gaining real decision-making power over the organisation of work. The decline of Fordism offers an opportunity for a new "contract" in which work can achieve its political recognition and autonomy within the workplace and not from outside. It is from this history that Trentin draws to defend the actuality of a project of liberation from subordinate «work». In this article I reinscribe Trentin's reflections in the long history of his career as an intellectual, trade unionist and political activist, as well as in the controversies and the *impasses* that have shaped his life and the history whole Italian and European labour movement during the twentieth century.

Keywords: Organisational democracy; Unions and labour history; Industrial relations; Neocapitalism; Postfordism; Italian and European Left.

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Abstract. Democrazia e lavoro fra neocapitalismo e postfordismo. La traiettoria politica e intellettuale di Bruno Trentin (1926-2007)

Figlio di un autorevole giurista liberale esule nel sud della Francia per il suo impegno antifascista, Trentin si forma in un ambiente cosmopolita e ideologicamente eclettico: dall'anarchismo al federalismo liberale, dal marxismo al personalismo cristiano. Dopo aver partecipato da giovanissimo alla Resistenza e alla Liberazione, conclude gli studi fra Padova e Harvard. Entra giovanissimo nel sindacato, la CGIL e legherà ad esso la sua esistenza civile e politica. Prima come ricercatore, poi come dirigente dei metalmeccanici negli anni 60 e 70 e poi come segretario generale della confederazione fra la fine degli anni 80 e l'inizio degli anni 90, vivendo in prima persona la parabola del sindacato. La sua militanza sindacale si intreccia con una ricca riflessione intellettuale, incentrata al problema irrisolto, nella cultura della sinistra e del movimento operaio, dell'emancipazione del lavoro. Trentin denuncia il dominio dell'«ideologia produttivista» dello *scientific management* sull'intera sinistra sociale e politica. Nel quadro di questa ideologia, l'azione sindacale si riduceva all'organizzazione del conflitto distributivo, mentre la lotta politica si giocava al di fuori della sfera economica, attraverso la conquista dello Stato. Contrariamente a questa visione, gli anni 60-70 sono stati all'origine di una nuova cultura politica autogestionaria, il «Sindacato dei consigli» nata dalle lotte operaie nei luoghi di lavoro e nelle quali Trentin intravede l'incontro tra le tradizioni marxista, cristiana e libertaria del movimento operaio, che miravano a rendere i lavoratori e i loro sindacati soggetti politici a pieno titolo, acquisendo un reale potere decisionale sull'organizzazione del lavoro, sulla gestione delle imprese e sugli investimenti. Il declino del fordismo offre l'opportunità di un nuovo «contratto» in cui il lavoro possa ottenere il suo riconoscimento politico e la sua autonomia all'interno del luogo di lavoro e non dall'esterno. È a questa storia, di cui è stato un attore di primo piano, che Trentin attinge per difendere l'attualità di un progetto di liberazione dal lavoro subordinato. Allo stesso tempo la lettura dei processi storici di trasformazione del capitalismo e dell'esperienza del movimento operaio non è esente da forzature, contraddizioni e aporie. Trentin propone una concezione del sindacalismo che, sebbene incarnata nei Consigli di fabbrica e al sindacato unitario italiano degli anni 70, risulta a volte astratta e incapace di prendere in considerazione il ruolo degli interlocutori del sindacato, in particolare i datori di lavoro, i partiti e la sfera democratico-rappresentativa. Eppure, questi sono fattori che spiegano almeno in parte le difficoltà del Sindacato dei consigli a consolidarsi e a saldare la sfera produttiva e la sfera politica. In questo articolo si inseriscono le riflessioni di Trentin nella lunga storia della sua carriera di intellettuale e dirigente politico-sindacale, così come nelle controversie e nelle *impasse* che hanno caratterizzato la sua vita e l'intera storia del movimento operaio italiano ed europeo nel corso del Novecento.

Parole chiave: Democrazia organizzativa; Storia del sindacato e del lavoro; Relazioni industriali; Neocapitalismo; Postfordismo; Sinistra italiana ed europea.

Introduction

Within the secular debate on contemporary democracy one question has remained open, and therefore is periodically raised: that of the relationship between work, citizenship, and democracy (for recent discussions see, Sacconi, Denozza and Stabilini, 2019; Allal and Yon, 2020; Ferreras, Battilana and Méda, 2020; Pennacchi 2021).Spanning from World War Two to the beginning of the Third Millennium, the trajectory of Trentin is particularly relevant in this regard for two reasons at least. First, because of the entanglement of political practice – the militancy in the Antifascist Resistance and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the leadership of the Italian largest union, and the involvement in the European institutions – and theoretical reflection – a broad education, fed by exchanges with some of the most important intellectual figures of the Century, and a vast collection of writings, conferences, and books. Trentin's conception of workplace and economic democracy is never abstract but embedded in the historical experience of the labour movement. Second, because of the broad reach of Trentin's intellectual reflections, ranging from Soviet Marxists to American Institutionalists. Enriched, but also constrained between these intellectual lineages, Trentin's thought strived for a synthesis between the two poles around which, according to Trentin, did turn the political plot of work in Western Twentieth century: the quest for a social contract between freedom and equality at work. In Trentin's thought, democracy at work revolves around two main concepts: the notion of *Sindacato dei consigli* (Councils Union) and, after the crisis of Fordism, that of *Sindacato dei diritti* (Union of Rights). Councils were a body of collective representation through which workers exerted collectively their individual rights to freedom and equality. They are the basic unit of the union. In front of them, stood the employers and the state as independent actors, each bringing irreducibly distinct interests. With the crisis of the labour movement, Trentin developed the conception of Union of Rights, trying to save the legacy of the Councils Union, by adapting to the new context of Postfordism.

1. A singular trajectory in the Century of the Masses: a biographical sketch of Bruno Trentin[1]

Born in Pavie, in the department of Gers (South-West of France), in 1926, Bruno Trentin grew up in Auch and then in Toulouse (his mother tongue was French) where his father Silvio, a respected figure of Italian liberalism, spent his exile as an anti-fascist. Silvio Trentin (1885-1944) was an important Italian jurist at the University of Venice. He was forced to leave the country in 1926 because of his opposition to the Fascist regime. During his childhood, Bruno Trentin witnessed his father's activism and his encounters with some of the major figures of French and Italian anti-fascism (from Georges Canguilhem to Vladimir Jankélévitch, from Carlo Sforza to Pietro Nenni) against the backdrop of the historical events of the Spanish Civil War and the vicissitudes of the Popular Front.

At the age of sixteen, Trentin joined the Resistance, within the ranks of the Party of Action (*Partito d'Azione*, PdA), a political organisation of liberal socialist inspiration, in which some of the most important figures of the Italian Left were active. After the Liberation, he continued his political activity in the PdA and, in 1949, obtained his law degree at the University of Padua. In the same year, he left for the United States to complete his law studies at Harvard. Back in Italy, he was soon called by the trade union leader and resistance fighter Vittorio Foa (1910-2008) to the study office of the Italian General Confederation of Labour (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, CGIL). In 1950, after the dissolution of the PdA, Trentin joined the Communist Party, for which he was a MP between 1963 and 1966 and of which he remained a member throughout his life, but always with an autonomous cultural stance.

A member with Foa of the CGIL's *Ufficio Studi* – one of the most dynamic areas of intellectual and political development of the Left during the earlier post-war period – Trentin soon became one of the closest collaborators of the secretary Giuseppe Di Vittorio (1892-1957), and he sided with him against the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. In 1955, Trentin went to Turin, sent by the *Ufficio Studi* to investigate the organisation of work and the life condition of the working class in the industrial city *par*

[1] For further biographical references see, Casellato, 2009; Ariemma, 2014.

excellence, where FIAT had its headquarters and factories[2]. Trentin was in charge of the investigation about the recent defeat of the CGIL in the internal elections in the FIAT factories (March 1955) and of rebuilding a trade union nucleus inside the workplaces of the industrial capital of Italy.

In 1962, Trentin was elected general secretary of Italian Metalworkers Union, the FIOM (Federazione impiegati e operai metallurgici), as part of a global process of renewal of its leadership, following the union defeats of the 1950s. The metalworkers' federation, the most important within the CGIL, was a central organisation in the history of the Italian labour movement. Trentin's term of office was to last for fifteen extraordinary years for the labour movement, a time when the country was undergoing radical economic, cultural, and political change. The labour and student movements played a central role in these transformations. During these years, Trentin and the FIOM, pressured on the right by the more conservative layers of the union and challenged on the Left by the social movements and extra-parliamentary groups that emerged with the "Hot Autumn" of 1969[3], sought to maintain their strategic autonomy by funnelling the conflict into the new union's representative bodies, namely the new *Consigli di Fabbrica* (CdF, Factory Councils). During the 1970s, Trentin was one of the main architects of the CGIL's trade union unity with the CISL (a centrist union close to the Christian Democracy) and the UIL (of Socialist, Liberal and Republican inspiration): in 1973 the unitary federation of metal workers (FLM) was officially constituted.

While at the front line of the political and trade union struggle, Trentin did not neglect theoretical reflection. At the end of his term as secretary, he published *Da sfruttati a produttori* (1977a)[4] and later *Il sindacato dei consigli* (1980). In 1988, Trentin's trade union career reached its zenith when he was elected General Secretary of the CGIL. This was a time of crisis for the union, which was suffering from the employers' offensive, the restrictions

[2] The union was not the only one to launch field investigations into the evolution of work in industry. This need was also felt in certain circles of the intellectual Left. In particular, in 1957 the magazine *Nuovi Argomenti,* directed by Alberto Moravia (1907-1990) and Giovanni Carocci (1932-2018), launched a study on FIAT, coordinated by Carocci himself in collaboration with young sociologists, including Giovanni Mottura (1937-2022) and Aris Accornero (1931-2018) (Carocci, 1958).

[3] The "Hot Autumn" was the name given to the wave of strikes that hit industrial Italy in 1969 and represented the most intense phase of workers' insurgence in that country in the '68s.

[4] Its French translation was published by *Éditions ouvrières* in 1984 under the title *D'exploités à producteurs*, with a preface by the CGT union leader Jean-Louis Moynot. For an analysis of this work, see, Fana, 2016.

of the economic crisis and the general impoverishment of political life. In this context, Trentin sought a way out of this impasse through programmatic renewal under the formula of the *Sindacato dei diritti* (Union of Rights). However, his proposals were never seriously put on the agenda. The year 1992 opened the conclusive crisis of the "First" Italian Republic. The anti-corruption judicial investigations definitively buried the party system, the monetary and public finance crisis imposed a state of emergency that concentrated power in the hands of the President of the Republic and the Bank of Italy, while the reforms of the budget law and the labour market changed the material constitution of the country. In this context of objective difficulty, the CGIL signed the agreements of July 1992 and July 1993, which definitively dismantled the *scala mobile* (the price-wage indexation mechanism; Locke 1994) and inaugurated a new era of industrial relations in Italy (Baccaro and Howell, 2017). Criticised by the political Left and the trade union base, Trentin accepted to sign the 1992 agreement and immediately resigned as a sign of dissent. His resignation was refused by the CGIL's steering bodies, and his term continued until 1994. During the following years, Trentin's political and intellectual engagement continued with the publication of new works – among them *La città del lavoro (1997)*, the summa of its social and political thought. In 1999, Trentin was elected Member of the European Parliament in the lists of the DS (*Democratici di sinistra*, descended from the PCI), in recognition of his constant commitment to the European integration process. He devoted the last years of his life to social research and theoretical reflection. He died in Rome in 2007.

2. 1960s-1980s: From Neocapitalism to the Councils Union

Already in 1957, Trentin was one of the leading figures of the PCI and the CGIL. At that time, the Italian Left and the labour movement were in dire straits. For the working-class movement the first half of the 1950s have come to be known as *gli anni duri* ("the though years") (see, Accornero, 1959; 1973; Pugno and Garavini, 1974): the employers launched a prolonged attack on the trade union power that had grown out of the Resistance and Liberation period, while unemployment and enduring poverty afflicted the working classes. At the same time, Italian capitalism was undergoing a process of radical restructuring and growth. The global post-war recovery, the opening of the economy to international trade, the massive investments in infrastructure, steel, chemical and mechanical industries by public (ENI, IRI)

and private companies (FIAT, Olivetti, Montecatini), the Marshall Plan credits, and the comparative advantage of low labour costs (favoured by internal migrations from rural South to industrialised North) pushed growth rates to a level never previously attained (Ginsborg, 1990). In those years, the PCI's strategy was summarised by the formula of "the Italian road to socialism", and was theorised by Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964), the general secretary of the party (Togliatti, 1974; see also, Togliatti, 2006). This long-term program envisaged for Italy a slow transition to socialism, through the completion of a "progressive democracy", in which the working class fulfilled the role of guide of economic and social development by building an alliance not only with the peasants but, above all – because the Italian society was in the throes of "modernisation" – with the middle classes (the so-called *ceti medi*). According to this reading, the Italian bourgeoisie was not up to this historical task of modernisation, and it was up to the working class and its collective intellectual, the Communist Party, to build a "historical bloc" to achieve it, a system of alliances between social classes, sociologically distinct but bordering on each other, aiming at the development of the "productive forces" and of Italian democracy. The task of the working class was to become the people and to fulfil its historical mission. In this conception, work as an activity and as the source of class consciousness lost its centrality. The working class was not to emancipate itself as such in the workplace, but to encourage the process of Taylorist rationalisation to prepare the ground for socialism.

The political strategy of the Left was discussed in 1962 during a famous Convention on the «Tendencies of Italian Capitalism». At the conference, the PCI's orthodoxy was represented by Giorgio Amendola (1907-1980) and Emilio Sereni (1907-1977) (Amendola, 1962; Sereni, 1962). Trentin – together with Vittorio Foa and Lucio Magri (1932-2011)[5] – had been distancing himself from this "ideology of transition" for the previous years, and, during the conference, he proposed a different reading of Italian development against the background of the international scenario (Trentin, 1956; Foa, 1957; Magri, 1962b; see also Foa's and Magri's contribution to the conference: Foa, 1962; Magri, 1962a). In Trentin's speech resonated his Marxist culture, as well as the American debate – from Commons to Pollock, from Galbraith to Drucker (Trentin, 1962). According to Trentin, Italian capitalism was not as backward as the PCI orthodoxy maintained; on the contrary, "Neocapitalism" (the modernization of the productive system

[5] For further discussions see, Strinati, 1992; Cella, 2012; Settis, 2016.

proceeding from the United States) was a reality in Italy too. Hence, the need to pay greater attention to the problems of work organisation, to the research on automation and to the experiences of the New Deal and of the French planning. In companies, the workers were increasingly exploited while being incorporated into a managerial governance by the spread of the «human relations» paradigm, imported from the United States as a modern and advanced management tool for social relations, and which in this period exerted a strong influence on the CISL of Giulio Pastore (1902-1969). In this sense, Neocapitalism was not a simple ideological «mask» (Trentin, 1962: 120), but a paradigm that coordinated the centralisation of the management of the economic cycle and the intertwining of politics and capital, a mechanism in which the working class was in a first instance subordinated to the plan (i.e., considered as an adjustment variable) and in a second instance atomised by human relations. Trentin's analysis of Neocapitalism put under question the political management of the economic cycle and the meaning of «planning». It was not enough to invoke planning to expand the space for political action by the working class: the management of the plan which emerged in the 1950s was a management "from above", in which, once again, capital and the state (at the time embodied *sine die* by Christian Democracy) were sovereign in the economy and administered the economic cycle. Within this framework, the space of the union and the working class was determined a priori by this arrangement, in a planning where the unions and the working class were a mere parameter of adjustment, objectified and integrated in a subaltern way. In this scenario, the margins of manoeuvre for the union were reduced to wage bargaining, to pure economic exchange from above within a predetermined political framework, called «concerted economy» (*economia concertata*, a term forged within the French planning experience) (Trentin, 1962: 131–132, 451). Capitalist planning extended control from the sphere of production to that of consumption, subordinating the latter to the former and the former to the logic of accumulation under a technocratic agenda. The priority, for the union and the Party, was to take Neocapitalism seriously, understanding it as cultural force and a hegemonic project in the workplace and in the wider field of society. The task was twofold: on the one hand engage with change in the new organisation of work in the workplaces, on the other hand propose an alternative planning for the Italian economy: not from above, but through the involvement of the masses in «new instruments of popular control», even beyond the representative ones already established (but eroded) by the new alliance between monopoly

capital and the state technostructure (Trentin, 1962: 140)[6]. The crucial divergence between Trentin and Amendola was about the actors of the new planning: for Amendola the question was already that of the inclusion of the Communists in a decision making which remained centralised, while for Trentin, a democratic planning had to be built from conflict in the workplaces.

Conflict did not take too long to emerge. Between the 1960s and 1970s, Italy was hit by one of the strongest cycles of class conflict in the Western world (Crouch and Pizzorno, 1978; Bordogna and Provasi, 1989: 279-282). The Hot Autumn introduced a variety of innovations in collective bargaining: campaigns for the unification of blue- and white-collar job classification scheme (*inquadramento unico*), the abolition of territorial differences in wage levels (the so-called *gabbie salariali*), equal wage increases for all workers regardless of skill levels, improvement in health and safety conditions, and reductions in the speed and duration of work were all promoted in these years.

The Hot Autumn radically changed the unions' structure at the firm level. The old *Commissioni Interne* (that performed primarily dispute-resolution tasks; Baglioni, 1969) and the *Sezioni Sindacali* (often sheer appendixes of the territorial unions), were replaced by new representation bodies known as *Consigli di Fabbrica* (CdF, Factory Councils). CdF members were «elected by secret vote, without competition among lists (and, at least formally, with more limited intervention from external unions) and within small constituencies whose boundaries followed the geography of the plant's organisations of work» (Regalia, 1988: 357; see also, Regalia, 1978; 1984, 1988; Mershon, 1988; 1989). Factory councils were at the same time recognised by the union confederations as their own workplace structures. The national industry federations also experienced an increase in their power, as a result of their capacity to increasingly absorb and generalise the most innovative practices introduced by the Factory Councils (Santi, 1993; see also, Romagnoli and Treu, 1981: 165-97): «In the late 1960s and early 1970s the unions appeared to many to be the representative bodies most able to interpret, collect, and recompose new social demands that did not seem to receive adequate attention in traditional political arenas» (Regalia, 1988:345). Unions were the protagonist of the construction of Italian welfare state, of increasing spaces of democracy in the workplace, in public services and civil society.

[6] Just three years later, Trentin would also stress the emergence of new centres of decision within «supra-national institutions» (Trentin, 1965, pp. 183–184)

This period coincided also with a sharp increase of labour costs (+59,5% between 1970 and 1974, compared to +15,1% between 1966 and 1970; Baccaro, 1999: 29). Real wage continued growing notwithstanding declining productivity growth and a higher import bill (Baccaro 1999: 29), while profits dropped sharply (Barca and Magnani 1989: 27-39). Although these patterns were common to most of Western economies (Armstrong 1991), in Italy they were particularly acute. From his position at the head of the FIOM, Trentin was a protagonist of this movement, but also a critical analyst. For Trentin, the Italian labour movement had very advanced experiences of conflict and negotiation that challenged the ideology of transition of the PCI's orthodoxy and did not spared the «bureaucratic structure of the union» (Trentin, 1980: 14; see also, Trentin, 2019: 12-14). Beyond the ritual branch negotiations, workers' struggles imposed their presence on the employers within the factories, raised the question of working rhythms, contested the systems and the principles of time and motion study, claimed health and safety at work and opened a debate on the right to vocational training. The logic of these experiments was to nuance, if not counter, the effects of Taylorism and above all to put the daily experience of work at the centre of the political debate in the name of the «defence of the workers' physical and nervous integrity and professional autonomy» (Trentin, 1965: 177); the struggle politicised the *sancta sanctorum* of Fordist capitalism – the point of production – and raised the question of «'collective knowledge' as a matter of power» (Trentin, 1977c: 212). Factory Councils represented the antithesis of the strategies that the official labour movement had developed in the face of the rise of Taylorism and Fordism. Indeed, it was also the traditional mechanism of union representation, as well as the «canonical division of tasks» between the union and the party in the class struggle (Trentin, 1965: 190), that was questioned by workers' claim for a «participated government of union conquests» (Trentin, 1980: 17). Union's autonomy was considered by Trentin to be «irreplaceable» in communist planning, which required trade union action to be «not mechanically homogeneous with that of the planning bodies, but of participation and of contestation together» (Trentin, 1965: 198).On the other hand, Trentin was also critical with some crucial aspects of the Hot Autumn, especially on the question of wage increases and its relationship to the ongoing process of capitalist restructuring. Trentin's argument, which was to recur throughout the years, was that the union should beware of the objective of equal wage increases for all workers, because of the corporative nature of this demand. In the face of capitalist reorganisation, the workers had to go beyond merely economic demands by assuming an

active role in such a process. They had to participate in the determination of the new working conditions by relying on the figure of the factory delegates.

This position put Trentin in collision with the Workerist wings of the labour movement (see, *Lotta Continua*, 1977)[7]. For Workerists, radical wage demands, especially "equal for all" pay increases, were a form of immediate political insubordination and a lever to overthrow the capitalist command at work (see, Wright, 2002: 119-125); Trentin, instead, refused this strategy, as he saw a risk of reducing the experience of work to the economic exchange between money and subordination. The core of capitalist domination was in the subordination of the worker in the productive process, but this subordination could not be undermined through "economistic" shortcomings. Instead, he plead for a union based on representative bodies of all workers, able to invest all the dimensions of life at work (and not only wage questions). Furthermore, Trentin's argued that equal-for-all wage increase were dismissive of the specific professional capacities of individual workers. The goal of the union was not only the fight for better remunerations, but for the recognition of workers' knowledge. Trentin started developing here the idea that freedom is based on work (and which would emerge in more explicit terms with the notion of *Sindacato dei diritti*). In this view, work could not be reduced to a simple factor of production; by the same token,exploitation, no matter if fairly remunerated, could not be a driver of integration in the political community. These elements constitute the originality of Trentin's thought, with respect to the official culture of the labour movement, to the Liberal tradition, and with regard to the *Operaismo*. Trentin's defense of the Councils Union led him to engage in a double confrontation: on the one hand with the Workerist stream; on the other hand, with sectors of the PCI who theorized the subordination of the union to the party:

There is therefore a 'Left-wing' reading of the phenomenon of the councils which, precisely because it is dogmatically stuck in an entirely ideological notion of the union, would argue that the councils actually expressed a spontaneous and political opposition to an irreducibly corporatist union. But what is interesting to note, at this point, is the convergence that emerged on this scheme of the councils' spontaneism, between the defenders of the primacy of the party or the 'leading' movement, and the advocates of a moderate and essentially corporatist trade unionism,

[7] For an introduction to Italian Operaism see, Wright, 2002; Allavena and Gallo Lassere, 2017; Roggero, 2023.

who looked with some concern at these drives towards union renewal, towards grassroots democracy and towards the acceleration of the unification process [of the trade unions, NdA] (Trentin, 1980: 26–27).

Against these positions, Trentin defended the Councils and the originality of the Italian union experience. They demonstrated the CGIL's ability to override narrowly sectional interests in favour of a comprehensive strategy for the political economy of the country. This ability to think in wider terms was to become something of a hallmark of the Italian trade unions and was to separate them sharply from most of their European sister organisations.

However, factory councils entered an irreversible crisis in the 1980s. On the one hand, already in the late 1970s, the thesis had been emerging that union demands and industrial conflict were undermining Italian economy (Cattabrini, 2012). Confederal union leaders began developing a new strategy of bargaining centralisation and income policy (see, for example Lama, 1976: 83-149). On the other hand, the wave of industrial restructuring which started in the 1980s, weakened the stronghold of Factory Councils, which appeared as an isolated avant-garde rather than the universal representative of the Italian working class (Regalia, 1984, Mershon, 1988; Golden, 1988).

3. 1990s-2000s: From the impasses of labour movement to the Union of Rights

The unravelling of the Fordist compromise brought about a deep crisis of the international labour movement. By the beginning of the 1990s the Italian labour movement «radically changed its bargaining behaviour and firmly embraced the cause of cooperation with management and government forces» (Baccaro 1999: 9).

Trentin led the CGIL through the beginning of this conjuncture. This experience led Trentin to revisit the whole trajectory of the Italian and international labour movement and to adapt its reflections to the new reality of Postfordism. The starting point of Trentin's analysis is the decline of Fordism i.e., the economic, social system, and above all productive system, based on economies of scale, large factories, mass production and a socio-political compromise between capital and labour (Aglietta, 1976). For Trentin, Fordism was based on a particular mode of organisation, Taylorism:

a «scientific» organisation of work that is fragmented, mechanised, and planned from above. For what concerned labour relations and the condition of the worker, the Fordist system rested, according to Trentin, on a basic assumption: that the worker exchanged economic security (through a higher wage, an open-ended contract, and various other social benefits) for his subordination in the productive process, and thus renounced his political citizenship in the workplace. However, Trentin stressed, Taylorism was not at all a paradigm imposed unilaterally by the capitalist class. The fascination with Taylorism was a global phenomenon that did not spare the labour movement and Marxist thinkers. Hence, Trentin talked about «hegemony of scientific management», pointing at an affinity between the communist theorisation of the political party (especially those of Lenin and Gramsci) and the Taylorist paradigm. These new social technologies were rooted in the "ideology of progress" that inspired the first two decades of the Twentieth century (see, Cohen, 2013: 57–65). Taylorism, as a model of productive rationalisation, was also adopted in the Soviet Union. It was seen as an objective force and even the idea in which progress was embodied. Underlying this belief was what Simone Weil, in her account of the working-class condition, calls the «religion of productive forces» (Weil, 1988: 36). Trentin reproached the Left for sacrificing the autonomy and freedom of the person in the productive process and for acting in the name of an arid realism or an abstract idea of the working class.

This subordination of the Left, whether communist or social-democratic, to productive rationality shaped its strategy of social transformation. According to this vision, the suffering and alienation generated by subordinate labour was to be alleviated by monetary compensation pending the conquest of state power, from which the foundations of property would finally be transformed. On the contrary, as already mentioned, Trentin emphasised the importance of political struggles at the point of production (see, in particular Trentin, 1997; 2004).

On the other hand, Trentin carefully distinguished his conception of the Councils Union from the German *Mitbestimmung* model or other forms of co-determination, which he saw as a downward compromise in the exchange between wages and social peace. At the same time, Trentin was critical of the original "Councilist" experiments, such as those advocated by the Gramscian *Ordine Nuovo*. He did not consider the idea of workers' self-management of the large Fordist company to be realistic at all, nor did he question the role of management, but at the same time he rejected any kind of «co-management» complicity. Trentin remained convinced of an irreducible dualism between factory and society, and he was not concerned

with removing the conflict between capitalists and workers, not even in a communist society, especially because of its immanent conception of revolution: communism was a progressive advancement going through civil society and only later in the state-political sphere. In his view, the permanent struggle for control on the work process, if regulated, allowed for progress and improvement of the production process, working conditions and for a broader transformation of society. This extract clearly sets out Trentin's view of unionism and economic democracy:

Thus, a hypothesis of industrial democracy within the conflict emerges, which indicates the possibility of an outline of a new relationship between the union, the parties, and the state. […] The only right that we have and that we want to keep is the right to be informed in advance and to be able to contrast this information with our own proposals. It is the balance of power that then decides. Once the company has informed the union in advance and in good time, after a certain period, it is free, in theory, to act. The trade union is also free to act, and to exert through direct pressure, its own direct pressure, so that the company's action is changed. The company can obviously assess whether it is in its interest to continue the negotiation to prevent action and to consider the counter-objectives that the union proposes. It seems to me that in this extremely elementary mechanism, from a certain point of view of confrontation and information, there is a substantial difference with the co-determination model. Firstly, the safeguarding of conflictual autonomy is essential, and consequently the right to action without arbitration. Secondly, the guarantee of effective worker participation in the union, of real democracy without delegation to a designated elite in participation and management in the company. Thirdly, the union and the factory council preserve their character as interlocutors acting according to a global and not only corporate strategy. It is no longer only the workers of the company, but a whole series of other social forces that the work councils try to represent. To give an image, it is the unemployed of the South, and not only the interests of the Fiat workers, who constitute a reference point for the confrontation with Fiat (Trentin, 1977b: 59–60; author's translation).

The task Trentin assigned to the councils was thus to represent labour as a permanent interlocutor of management, distinct and autonomous from it. As the last sentence illustrates, the "conflictual autonomy" that Trentin defended went hand in hand with the idea that the union does not only represent the labour within the closed system of the company, but a kind of

general interest of labour at the scale of Italian society. Trentin evoked a "city of work" where it is not so much the socialisation within the enterprise that is on the agenda but rather the change in the relationship between the governors and the governed.

Trentin's socialism was thus established in civil society and not in the state. In this respect, he distanced himself from two founding figures of the Left, such as Lenin and Gramsci. For Trentin, their conceptions of the political party as a guide for the working class echoed the theories of scientific management. Rather than understanding the irrationality and injustice of the factory's operation as the source of general social disorder, it was the inadequacy of the political and social order to the unquestioned rationality of the Taylorist organisation of subordinate labour that was questioned. But at the time Trentin was writing, the collapse of real socialism invites us, according to the author, to think of a model of socialism beyond the state and the hegemonic claims of the political sphere on civil society.

Against this statist (and to some extent opportunist) temptation – according to which access to government is almost an objective in itself – Trentin presented an alternative perspective on labour emancipation, democracy and socialism, spanning from guild socialism to liberal socialism, from Karl Korsch to Rosa Luxemburg. Trentin assigned to the trade union a role of representation independent from the party, and he claimed for the intervention of the trade union in political and social life by means of a renewed structure. Unions' territorial and trans-sectoral articulation, in and through the factory and society, would allow the achievement of a real industrial citizenship.

With the formula of the Union of Rights Trentin tried to widen the scope of inclusion of union representation (to atypical and autonomous workers, as well as to broader societal issues such as ecology, gender equality etc.). Trentin understood the imperative for the union to understand the new social issues that came with the crisis of Fordism, although he never trusted the misleading optimism of post-Fordist ideologists, as showed for instance by its *lectio doctoralis* given at the University of Venice (2002). In this speech, he refused the prophecies about the end of work and other mainstream narratives – he said: «Fordism is dead, not Taylorism» (*Ibidem*), meaning that the class compromise of post-war capitalism might have waned, but the capitalist organisation of work remained based on workers' subordination and deskilling. At the same time, in Trentin's vision, the relationship between work and knowledge – which was already present in his earlier reflections on factory councils – became all the more important for the Union of Rights: the worker is the bearer of a knowledge and of the right to master

this knowledge, both individually and collectively. Individually, through mechanisms of exchange «between a wage linked to a flexible occupation […] and the worker's acquisition of an employability […] supported by an investment of the employer, of the worker, and of the society» (Trentin, 2002). Collectively, through mechanisms of «control on the object of work (the product, the organisation of work, working time, training time, time available for private life)» (*Ibidem*). It is evident that Trentin's Union of Rights must not be grasped as a theoretical break in Trentin's thought. The post-Fordist transition did not invalidate the teaching of the Councils Union. In this regard, the Union of Rights stands as the evolution of the Councils Union in the post-Fordist era. Thus, Trentin's response to the crisis of the Left, first in *La città del lavoro* and then in in *La libertà viene prima*, became that of integrating Marxism with the liberal tradition and Christian humanism. In this respect, Trentin was part of a general movement of transformation of the theories and ideological references of the post-communist and social-democratic Left which, at the time, seemed to be a necessary movement of renewal.

4. Trentin's industrial democracy in contemporary capitalism

Trentin's thought is rooted in the historical experience of the Italian labour movement, and it reflects its vivacity as well as its aporias. Trentin played a major role in the labour movement, but he often maintained an ambiguous position and his choices were rarely equal to his theoretical reflections. This contradiction reached its paroxysm in 1993, when Trentin signed a pathbreaking agreement with the Italian government and the employers which he had strongly opposed. Furthermore, in Trentin's reflection, the role of the counterparts of the labour movements is seldom at the centre of the stage. In Italy, employers were forced to make concessions, but never accepted the legitimacy of working class revendication, always opposing a fierce resistance to the attempts of the workers to question employers' monopoly of power in the organisation of work (Magnani, 1997; Bologna, 2019). In Trentin' analysis the labour movement is studied as an isolated subject, without considering the constraints and resistances encountered by the organised working class in its political affirmation. Another question that Trentin failed to answer was the place of the Communist Party in his theory of a Councils Unionism, in which unions appeared as the only legitimate actor to determine the design of social

reforms. This form of "pan-syndicalism" was to be the reason for a constantly tense relationship between Trentin and the leaders of the PCI, especially those on the PCI's right hand.

Trentin argues that the unions *were* the Factory Councils, and that the PCI (as well as the Workerist Left) never accepted this reality. However, what Trentin does not admit is that Italian trade unions were not able to fully recognise and promote the struggles of the 60s and the 70s. These struggles were in fact the product of a movement which went beyond the official union organisations (Loreto, 2006). In part, the union's ambiguous attitude towards the movement was the result of a cleavage in the union movement itself. The Councils Union included those sectors of the labour movement that had been most active during the Hot Autumn (the metalworkers federations, the CdFs of some of Italy's largest plants in the North-West). These sections were a numerical minority, although they were able to leverage on their power and legitimacy to mobilise the base and to shape the strategic choices of the entire labour movement. On the other hand, the rest of the labour movement, which rotated around the confederations, had a conception of the union as a partner of government and management in the process of economic change (Golden, 1988; Mershon 1988; 1989). This ambiguity on the part of the union, was combined with the PCI's mistrust for spontaneous mobilisations. The result was that these forms of workplace democracy were not transmitted to any specific organisation, but rather diffused into a working-class culture which, after the worker unrest of the 1960s-70s, started to decline, as reminded by Trentin himself reflecting about the case of the so-called *150 ore* (Trentin 2002; see also, Causarano, 2015). Ironically, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, some forms of enterprise-level bargaining were taken over by the unions' counterparts, the state and employers, within an original "micro-corporatism" framework (Regalia, 1995; Regini, 2000; Causarano, 2015). At the same time, while the neo-corporatist systems in Northern Europe were undergoing a profound restructuring, they were being revived in Italy to cope with the double financial and political crisis of the "First" Republic (Schmitter, 1974; Rusconi, 1984; Baccaro, 1999).

The end of the PCI and the crisis of the parties as institutions of political representation in the 1990s could have been an opportunity for the union to realise this hypothesis of industrial democracy. However, the historical movement that brought about the crisis of the PCI was rather broader in scope, and the crisis of "intermediary bodies" brought about by Postfordism affected the union no less than the PCI. In this context, Trentin's departure from the Union was dramatic, as testified by its personal journal posthumously published (Trentin, 2017). After being forced by the urgent

circumstances to sign the agreements of 1992-1993, he resigned with deep regrets and resentments. These agreements were a watershed in the history of the unions: the CGIL embraced that neo-corporatist stance that he harshly criticised (Trentin, 1997: chap. 8), while the Left parties supported the Neo-Liberal restructuring of industrial relations (Baccaro and Howell, 2017). The labour market reforms pursued since the 1990s deregulated industrial relations to the advantage of employers; the expansion of non-salaried forms of activity, from voluntary work to self-employment, entailed a normalisation of precariousness and an even greater subordination of labour to capital, while concealing it behind an illusory appearance of autonomy. Ironically, many of these reforms were designed by centre-left governments either in agreement or with the feeble opposition of the unions (Tassinari, 2019). Trentin warned, in vain, the post-communist Left about the demise of work in post-Fordist societies. The processes of work restructuring was far from realising the promises of workers empowerment fed by the new *lean* management: on the contrary the technological innovation in the workplace, if not contained by a union and political strategy, could transmit an authoritarian and bureaucratic turn in labour relations (Trentin, 1997: chap. 2), as recent studies on algorithmic management and digitalisation tend to confirm (Massimo, 2020; Moro and Rinaldini, 2020; Tirabeni and Miele, 2020; Cirillo *et al.*, 2021; Wood, 2021). This has been accompanied by a parallel decline in political participation and the legitimacy of representative institutions in the political sphere.

Against this background, Trentin not only noticed the deterioration of working conditions and the crisis of the status of labour in Western democracies, but he also remarked the unbalance between democracy and capitalism, in the workplace as well as in the political realm. He understood that the union was caught between two dominant and contradictory discourses: one that proclaimed the end of work as a central locus of social; the other that exalted post-Fordist's ability to overcome the capital-labour contradiction. It was in this difficult context that Trentin theorised the Union of Rights, trying to adapt the union's vocation to the new context of Postfordism. However, while the Councils Union was embedded in the ascending slope of what was called *la parabola del sindacato* (Accornero 1993), the Union of Rights had to navigate against the stream. Trentin's analysis was correct, but not in phase with a political and economic debate which was enthusiastic about the promises of post-Fordist narratives.

Finally, there were key changes that Trentin missed: its scepticism against purely economic claims, dismissed as *salarialisti* (see, for instance Trentin, 2004, p. 59), led him to underestimate the wage question in Italy, whose roots

are precisely in the 1992-1993 agreements (Tronti, 2007, 2010; Fana and Fana, 2019), and other (only apparently) «economistic» revendications, such as the basic income. Even more narrow appear its dismissal of the question of working time, and his hard critique of the 35 hours reform of 1998 in France (Trentin, 2004: 60), on the ground of its supposedly «egalitarian» nature (*Ibidem*: 137). Furthermore, as stressed by other commentators (Durand, 2013), Trentin failed to assess the expansion of financial circuits and their hold on the political and productive spheres; other commentators remarked the fading away of class conflict from the notion of Union of Rights (Cella 2008), thus making the union vulnerable in the face of the new processes of capitalist centralisation and intensification of exploitation that lied behind the rhetoric of a post-work society. Finally, with the benefit of hindsight, it is evident how Trentin's vision of the European integration suffered from a normative bias, which prevailed on a more critical view that yet, in some circumstances, had already emerged in his reflections (see *infra*, note 6)[8]. Despite these limits, Trentin's call for political freedom and the questioning of the relationship between rulers and ruled in the place of production remains all the more relevant today. The theorisation of a democratic planning of the economy is also crucial in light of the problems of the ecologic transition faced by our society. Recent reflections on economic democracy call for the workers' (and other stakeholders') participation in the management of the economy (Sacconi, Denozza and Stabilini, 2019; Ferreras, Battilana and Méda, 2020). Trentin's theorisation of unionism presented here, offers an opportunity to think these issues starting from a concrete historical experience. In this sense, Trentin's analysis of Neocapitalism too deserves to be revamped and revitalised: the attention to the concentration of economic power resonates with the contemporary centralisation of economic transactions in monopoly platforms; the critical analysis of the ideological aspects of a capitalism, that cyclically presents itself as moderniser and progressive, while managing to co-opt large sectors of the working class; the connection between the sphere of production and the realm of consumption, that capital tries to control simultaneously (see especially, Trentin, 1962: 443–446).

[8] In this paper, I did not focus on the important role played by Trentin in the post-war history of the European and International labour movement. Important elements in this respect, included an interview to Trentin, are included in a study of the relationship between the French unions and the international labour movement, especially the close but difficult liaison with the Italian one (Pernot, 2001; on the trade union movement and European integration in the years of Trentin's leadership in the FIOM and the CGIL, see Del Biondo, 2007; Andry, 2022).

These two aspects of Trentin's analysis – on the one hand, a concrete theorisation of economic democracy, and, on the other hand, a sophisticated critique of capitalism – constitute precious and concrete reflections about organisational and economic democracy nowadays.

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Democratizing Platform Work from Below

by *Paolo Borghi*[*]

Abstract

This article aims at contributing to the debate on democratizing work by looking at platform work and food delivery in particular. Based on an extended multi-sited ethnography, the article analyses two relevant case studies of workers' organisations, the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain in the UK and the grassroots group Deliverance Milano in Italy. First, it shows how efforts to democratise and decommodify platform work, as well as the issue of decarbonisation, take shape collectively from below and through conflict in order to compensate the absence of a robust and effective regulatory system. Therefore, it is primarily an effort to create a *dêmos* with the right to demand rights. Second, the conflict emerges as a means of improving working conditions, denouncing greenwashing practices, an opportunity for collective learning and experimenting practices of resistance. Due to these reasons, practices of conflict inspire the renewal of collective representation strategies in non-standard working contexts with a workforce scattered and casualised. Finally, the struggles for democratization, decommodification and decarbonisation in food delivery show that the contribution of independent unions and grassroots group plays a fundamental role, complementary to that of well-established trade unions and public institutions.

Keywords: democratizing work, food delivery, grassroots group, independent unions, conflict, collective representation

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Abstract. Democratizzare il lavoro di piattaforma dal basso

Questo articolo intende contribuire al dibattito sulla democratizzazione del lavoro ragionando sul lavoro di piattaforma e, in particolare, sul contesto del food delivery. L'analisi qui proposta, che si basa su un'attività etnografica realizzata fra il 2019 e il 2021 in Italia e nel Regno Unito, prende in considerazione le attività di due organizzazioni di lavoratori, Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain e il gruppo autorganizzato Deliverance Milano. Nel fare ciò, in primo luogo, l'articolo mostra come gli sforzi per democratizzare e demercificare il lavoro di piattaforma, così come la questione della decarbonizzazione, prendano forma collettivamente dal basso attraverso il conflitto, come strategia per compensare l'assenza di un sistema di regolamentazione solido ed efficace. Pertanto, si tratta innanzitutto di uno sforzo per creare un dêmos con il diritto di chiedere diritti.

In secondo luogo, l'analisi evidenzia come il conflitto emerga, nelle sue molteplici sfaccettature, come un mezzo per migliorare le condizioni di lavoro, per denunciare le pratiche di greenwashing, come opportunità di apprendimento collettivo e per sperimentare pratiche di resistenza. Per queste ragioni, le pratiche di conflitto sperimentate del food delivery sono da stimolo per il rinnovamento delle strategie di rappresentanza collettiva anche in altri contesti lavorativi non standard, caratterizzati da una forza lavoro dispersa e casualizzata. Infine, le lotte per la democratizzazione, la demercificazione e la decarbonizzazione nel contesto del food delivery dimostrano come il contributo dei sindacati indipendenti e dei gruppi di base svolga un ruolo fondamentale e complementare a quello dei sindacati tradizionali e delle istituzioni pubbliche.

Parole chiave: democratizzazione del lavoro, food delivery, gruppi autorganizzati, sindacati indipendenti, conflitto, rappresentanza collettiva

Introduction

The renewed debate on the democratization of work and the numerous examples of collective struggles of platform workers has stimulated discussion about how, in some emerging labour contexts, rights and protections are not conceived as part of new work domains, but the result of collective efforts that embed capitalist experiments within a framework of social and environmental sustainability. Democratizing work in these contexts, therefore, cannot easily be conceived as an agreement between capital and labour, much less as the adjustment of democratizing trends in other labour contexts. The paper aims to link debates on democratizing work and platform work trends, showing the specific traits of platform work, thus offering a new perspective on that context and fostering the general discussion on democratizing work. In doing so the paper focuses on two

emblematic case studies of collective organizations operating in close contact with food delivery workers in the United Kingdom and in Italy.

1. A renewed debate on the democratisation of labour

Since the time of the Industrial Revolution, the creation of trade unions and the spread of socialist and Marxist ideas, the fight against inequality, the power relations between capital and labour and between society and the market have been the focus of a centuries-long fight by collective organisations and of debate among scholars. Struggles to obtain and strengthen forms of collective representation have marked the history of the labour movement from the end of the 19th century for many decades. From the seminal work of Webb and Webb (2010 [1897]) onwards the potential of collective representation has been scrutinized. On one hand, the place of democracy and participation in enterprises has been widely debated (Baglioni, 2001; Carrieri *et al.*, 2015; Cattero, 2016) and a real empowerment of people, conceived as a necessary step to protect quality of life in fast evolving socio-technical systems, has been theorized (Butera, 2020). On the other hand, the potentialities and limits of bottom-up democratisation projects as in the case of workerism (Bologna, 2014a, 2014b; Feltrin and Sacchetto, 2021; Tronti, 2010), and the cooperative movement (Jossa, 2005; Williams, 2016), including platform cooperativism (Scholz, 2016) and recovered factories (Atzeni and Ghigliani, 2007; Monteagudo, 2008) became part of the industrial relations debate. This helped attempts to understand the multiple paths leading towards a more structured democratisation of labour (Trentin, 1997; Wright, 2000).

The recent contradictory developments in contemporary capitalism, whose scope has long since gone global, have raised pressing questions about its social and environmental sustainability. Cyclical economic crises, aggressive extractivist logics that leave entire populations in poverty and enrich a minority, and environmental damage that seriously jeopardises the stability of vast territories contributing to a significant deterioration in living conditions across the globe all require a serious rethinking of modes of production and consumption on the one hand, and of work organisation on the other.

A recent debate promoted by Ferreras, Méda and Battilana (2020) and supported by a global appeal[1] signed by thousands of researchers and activists around the world, has laid the groundwork for a renewed discussion on the urgent need to democratise and decommodify labour, while thinking about the environmental crisis that seriously threatens life on Earth. This approach considers the need to combine a global perspective, able to tackle the scope of the big corporations, and territorial peculiarities. Such a vision requires a refined and yet-to-be-completed strategy of action to support virtuous processes that can combine democratisation and decommodification of labour while fostering an effective ecological transition.

Democratizing work through the democratization of firms means in its most straightforward version "vesting workers with decision-making power" (Landemore, 2022, p.53), enabling their participation in organizational decisions. Democratizing work in this sense focuses on the relation between labour and capital, overlapping with the concept of organisational democracy.

In this respect, Ferreras (2017) points out that capitalist firms have two constituents, one of which is neglected: capital investors whose risk is limited to the sum they invest; and labour investors who devote their time, knowledge and energy to the production system, without a proper voice in the decision-making process and receive an unfair return on their investment. The democratization of work therefore also passed through a linguistic turning point, claiming an epistemic justice (Herzog, 2022) by revealing what is in fact denied, namely the specific investment made by workers and the right to play a role in the decision-making process. Similarly, Lafuente (2022) advocates the need to institutionalise dual majorities for firms' government – going beyond the Work Councils – where the voice of workers can be heard and play an effective role in fundamental decisions affecting them (see also Sacconi *et al.*, 2019; Grandori, 2022).

Within this frame, the implementation of collective bargaining processes aims to improve employment and working conditions and limit the extractive approach of capitalist firms, thus favouring decommodifying trends. Moreover, decommodifying work implies a strong public role in creating jobs able to improve human conditions (Tcherneva, 2022) and considering the strategic role of specific sectors such as healthcare and education, which require appropriate protection contrasting commodifying market logics. Moreover, the decommodification of work – here conceived as a process aimed at reducing forms of exploitation, casualisation and alienation –

[1] https://democratizingwork.org/

should be a constant and transversal objective for collective actors representing workers, both in claims and in collective bargaining processes.

The fight against the exploitation of workers relies on the same principles of equity, sustainability, and the need for care that, according to Méda (2019; 2022), should guide ecological reconversion against the self-destructive course of the Anthropocene. In this perspective, the struggle for ecological sustainability is inextricably intertwined with struggles for the democratisation and decommodification of labour. The gaze is at the same time on social and environmental dimensions that can imagine and foster a just and inclusive transition (Cassiers *et al.*, 2017). It is in fact a matter of meaning and perspective of the production system, which, having reached the limits of sustainability, must rethink itself in order become compatible with humans and other living beings on Earth.

This is even more urgent in the light of two relevant factors that have emerged in recent years. On one hand, since the Covid-19 pandemic began, so-called essential workers – most of them migrants or belonging to ethnic minorities – ensured that the wider society could continue to function, exposing themselves to relevant risks (Crampton, 2021; The Lancet 2020; Stevano *et al.*, 2021).

On the other hand the diffusion of predatory forms of capitalism causes the circumvention of the most basic workers' rights and the maximisation of profits, choosing the most favourable tax jurisdiction (Crouch, 2019). Within this frame platform work spreads by exploiting the grey areas of regulation (Dieuaide and Azaïs, 2020) with little interest from platforms in contributing to social dialogue within the perimeter of industrial relations (Kilhoffer *et al.*, 2017). Platform work is therefore one of the testing grounds for further disembedding the capitalist economy from society (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]) forcing rules to its advantage. At the same digital labour platforms are embedded in and hybridise previous neoliberal trends (Piletić, 2023) coping with relevant institutional differences at national level that shape their trajectories (Azzellini *et al.*, 2022). Many authors show that organizing and representing platform work is possible (Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas, 2018; Piasna, 2022) and food delivery sector proved to be one of the first to develop forms of collective organisation among platform workers. Different scholars, indeed, analysed the relevant role played by self-organised groups and independent unions (Cini and Goldmann, 2020; Leonardi *et al.*, 2019; Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2020) and the possibility of alliances between grassroots groups and traditional unions ((Borghi *et al.*, 2021; Marrone, 2021).

In food delivery, the resistance towards collective representation is high, and experiments with organisational democracy have been quite limited in scale and particularly difficult (Bunders *et al.*, 2022), despite the engaging debate on platform cooperativism (Scholz, 2016). Moreover, workplace democracy mainly passes through radical forms of dissent (Rhodes *et al.*, 2020), able to craft the germs of fundamental rights that in other more traditional working contexts have already gained a certain stability, despite constantly being under threat.

The specific context of food delivery combines a mobile workplace, high turnover, high work casualisation, and a predominantly young and unorganised workforce. This imposes a strong rethinking about both what organising and representing workers as well as what democratisation, decommodification of work and decarbonisation all mean.

As mentioned above, the literature produced to date has privileged on the one hand the analysis of how the old and new collective actors of workers' representation compete or coordinate, on the other hand, how algorithmic despotism is exercised and how platform workers deal with it. Combining the gaze on democratisation, decommodification and decarbonisation processes offers the opportunity to explore how workers' fights are articulated in a dialectical and alternative relationship to both the rhetoric and the organisation of work imposed by platforms. In particular, while the distinction between demands for decommodification and democratisation can show how struggles for better working conditions evolve legitimising claims for more sustainable organisational processes and workers' participation, the focus on decarbonisation sheds light on how this argument is used by platforms and how it is interpreted in platform workers' struggles.

In dialogue with the literature on democratizing work and on platform workers' organizing, this contribution addresses bottom-up attempts to democratise platform work, focusing on two organizations representing food delivery riders in the UK and Italy. Platform work is here considered as one of the experimental grounds upon which capital renews itself, therefore new and old collective actors representing workers in this context need to reframe their strategies to tackle workers' demands. In other words, this paper aims at contributing to the well-established debate on platform workers' representation, using the theoretical lens on democratizing work, thus also implementing the debate on the renewal of the workers' movement.

In doing so it answers the following questions: what are the ongoing democratisation, decommodification, and decarbonisation processes in the context of food delivery platform work? What specificities emerge from this

sector? Is there a role for social movements, unions and civil society organizations in democratizing workplaces in the gig economy?

2. Research context

The focus of this paper is on two relevant case studies, the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB) in the United Kingdom and Deliverance Milano in Italy. The aim is to understand how two organisations active in the same sector (food delivery) with similar purposes (representing platform workers), but acting in different industrial relation systems, implement their struggles for democratizing platform work, and what this means for platform workers more generally.

Regarding the UK, Forsyth (2022) underlines how since 1979, when Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party came to power, the union density was in constant decline (as happened in many European countries, Italy included), especially in the private sector. One of the reasons was the systematic dismantling of the decentralized collective bargaining operated by Thatcher's government, which favoured in this way the increase of employers' unilateral decisions (Howell, 2007). The negative trend did not change when the New Labour government took power in 1997, maintaining substantial continuity with the neo-liberal policies of its predecessor. In recent years, the controversial growth of platform work, broadly accepted by the Conservative government, has stimulated a collective reaction of workers who, for the first time, organised a strike against Deliveroo in 2016.

The IWGB was the main collective actor focused on platform workers (especially couriers and drivers) in the UK, supporting workers from the beginning through wildcat strikes, international networks of activists, legal actions and shaming campaigns as a way to develop effective strategies against platforms' despotism (Woodcock and Cant, 2022). IWGB was created in 2012 to represent migrant workers, especially cleaners in the beginning, then progressively expanding its range to gig workers. Its main headquarters is in London with branches in other cities. The range of migrant and gig workers represented included care workers, cleaners, security guards, private hire drivers, and food delivery riders. Each branch was quite independent and organised at local level, focusing on mobilisation of workers at company level.

The relevant role of national trade unions such as UNITE, UNISON, PCS, and GMB in supporting precarious workers had no corresponding interest in platform workers (Bertolini and Dukes, 2021) until recent times

when GMB signed two different deals with Uber for drivers and Deliveroo for couriers, being strongly contested by IWGB[1] (Gall, 2020; Aslam and Woodcock, 2020). The marked opposition between well-established trade unions and independent trade unions in representing platform workers characterises the British context and differentiates it from others, including Italy, where the interactions between independent trade unions, grassroots groups and well-established trade unions has seen not only contrasts in the early phase but also relevant coordination attempts (Borghi *et al.*, 2021).

Regarding Italy, and differently from the UK, Eberwein and colleagues (2018) underline the role played through the years by the consensus model as the main route for conflict regulation and a tendency towards trade union unity, which favoured these processes that, nevertheless, did not involve grassroots unions. The three ideologically orientated national union confederations (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2018 [2013]) and the more significant role of the representative bodies at workplace level are other relevant traits that distinguish Italy from the UK (Forsyth, 2022).

In the late 1990s the three confederal trade unions created separate branches to progressively represent non-standard workers (Fullin, 2002; Regalia, 2012). This choice contributed to limiting the solidarity between standard and non-standard workers, although paths of inclusion have been detected, for example in the case of agency temporary workers, therefore configuring a selective inclusiveness towards atypical workers (Benassi *et al.*, 2019; Durazzi, 2017).

Trade unions' hesitations emerged in recent years in relation to the growing number of platform workers while different grassroots groups in Turin (Deliverance Project), Milan (Deliverance Milano) and Bologna (Riders Union Bologna) from 2016 onwards began to represent food delivery riders ((Borghi *et al.*, 2021); Cini, Maccarrone and Tassinari, 2022). Only a couple of years later CGIL and UIL started with the first experiments at local level in Milan (CGIL-NIDIL and UIL-TUCS), Pavia (CGIL-FILT), Florence (CGIL-NIDIL), and Bologna (CGIL). Simultaneously, the same trade unions started lobbying with the aim to favour conditions for collective bargaining, while also grassroots unions such as SI COBAS and USB have been recently more involved, since Just Eat has shifted to an employed workforce (1st March 2021). The evasive behaviour of digital labour platforms made (and still makes) collective bargaining difficult (Quondamatteo, 2021) although it should be compulsory according to act 128, approved in 2019. The act

[1] See also https://www.thesocialreview.co.uk/2022/08/07/deliveroo-gmb-deal-a-closer-look/# (Accessed on 25/08/2023) for an articulated analysis and different points of view.

regulates food and goods delivery at national level, limiting piecework and imposing a compulsory dialogue between platforms and the most representative trade unions to define collective agreements. In September 2020, the association representing the main food delivery platforms (Assodelivery) signed an agreement (then sanctioned as illegal by the courts) with UGL, a minor right-wing trade union, pretending it was the most representative union.

Deliverance Milano was a grassroots group created in 2016 by young activists with the aim of fighting the increasing diffusion of precarious work. The organisation played a relevant role at national level despite being based and operating at local level in Milan. Its initial conflicting attitude towards the confederal trade unions gradually subsided into forms of coordination in dialogue with local and national institutions. Deliverance Milano promoted the public debate on riders' working conditions, organised national protests and strikes, offered legal advice, and promoted a national coalition (*Rider per I Diritti*/Riders for Rights) of grass-roots groups and unions.

3. Methodology

The research was based on a multi-sited ethnography (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995) in two different periods, both in the UK (Mar. – Aug. 2019, with some further interviews realised in May 2021; Jul. – Dec. 2021) and Italy (Jul. – Dec. 2018; Jul. – Dec. 2020 with interviews in Feb. – Apr. 2020 when the fieldwork was originally planned but then stopped because of the pandemic). Access to the two fieldworks took place through a direct agreement between the researcher (author of this paper) and the coordinators of the organisations studied[2]. The participation in activities of the two organisations and access to WhatsApp and Telegram groups (in the Italian case) was negotiated with coordinators and participants (as well as the use of anonymous quotation of chat excerpts), in line with the ethical guidelines followed by the research project. The fieldwork was mainly based in London and Milan, but participant observations was also conducted in other cities following key actors and relevant conflicts (Marcus, 1995). The ethnography was conducted in English, Italian and Spanish; data collected was

[2] The agreement included total transparency in sharing the research project, which included other organisations, the use of data collected just for scientific purposes limited to the research team and the guarantee not to disclose sensitive information that could jeopardise the activities of the organisations studied or the privacy and safety of members.

transcribed, translated into English and shared with the research team thorough a remotely accessible server; the data collected is part of a wider research project on collective representation of self-employed workers.

During the fieldwork, several interviews were planned with unionists and workers members or followers of IWGB and Deliverance Milano who had been met during specific public events or meetings. More precisely, 31 semi-structured interviews (16 in the UK and 15 in Italy) and 34 informal interviews (16 in the UK and 18 in Italy) have been conducted. Informal interviews are here intended as unstructured short interviews, during the participant observation, with activists, riders and supporters.

Documents collected included field-notes, audio recordings of the interviews then transcribed and translated in English when the original was in Italian or Spanish. All the documents collected were processed identifying relevant thematic axes for the analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). All the data was coded according to an inductive approach defining categories and sub-categories with the support of Atlas.ti software. The data analysis applied a thematic analysis to the material collected, using Atlas.ti 8.4. The inductive approach included the iterative reading of each set of texts (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013) to identify relevant themes in both research contexts; the analysis aimed to find specific traits of the core dimensions studied. The coding phase implied a constant reorganisation of data and relevant issues to address our research questions.

4. Democratising, decommodifying, decarbonising

The three driving concepts – democratizing, decommodifying, decarbonizing – are mobilised here to interpret a specific weakly regulated labour context in which the imbalance of power between capital and labour is extremely significant. Therefore, the cognitive effort implies an attempt to understand, through empirical evidence, how the instances related to the three driving concepts take shape.

4.1 Democratising from below

The UK was the first country in Europe where platform workers' protests emerged before spreading throughout the continent. As testified by different riders and activists who followed the evolution of the food delivery sector

(and private hire vehicles) from the beginning, at that time the everyday working experience totally excluded democratic mechanisms – the work was just a reaction to the input of the app, looking for the best place to get the best delivery offers:

I was used to reaching the areas where delivery orders were most likely to arrive. It was simply that… at the beginning, I had to do a lot of attempts before understanding what was best to do. At the same time I had to learn ways and strategies to receive positive evaluations and have more opportunities to receive orders. I was in the game and had to play but no way to set or change the rules. (UK2_ interview, rider and unionist, 11/12/2021)

The beginning of food delivery, as witnessed above, implied a total adaptation of workers to the rules of a game with no enforceable rights. Before IWGB started organising food delivery riders, riders' dissatisfaction was already growing due to platform abuses and low payments. The individualist approach to food delivery was being challenged by the first hints of networking through digital tools (chats on Telegram and WhatsApp or Facebook groups for workers of specific platforms). As testified below by the unionist interviewed, the organisation of the first spontaneous strike began online, when Deliveroo lowered its fees, and riders were readily supported by IWGB:

Protests against Deliveroo were organised for the first time through the WhatsApp groups by Deliveroo workers. It was a spontaneous process started without the support of unions. During the organisation of the first strike that took place in London in August 2016 some riders contacted IWGB, which proved to be already effective in organising campaigns for cleaners and couriers. This is how we started with food delivery riders… (UK1_informal interview, trade unionist, 4/04/2019)

Digital infrastructures and organisational skills therefore played a relevant role in fostering a collective approach to workers' rights. Since then IWGB has played an increasing role in the collective organisation of food delivery riders, as well as other platform workers such as Uber drivers, becoming the main union representing platform workers in the UK.

Support for the first protest helped to legitimise the voice of food delivery workers, which until then had no place in the public debate, denouncing the unconditional power of platforms. Over time, the advocacy for riders' rights evolved, combining different practices. IWGB combined

the constant work of legal protection of workers in cases of discrimination, the organisation of wildcat strikes and picket lines, as well as specific campaigns. In some cases, the campaigns were designed to support workers of specific platforms (e.g. Deliveroo, Stuart); in other cases they involved specific restaurant chains or even specific food shops, as the case of the McDonald's located in Dalston (East London), an area affected by significant gentrification processes:

For a few weeks now, the owner of this McDonald's has been forbidding riders and bikers to stand in the square next door because – he claims – they make too much noise, annoying the inhabitants. At the same time, however, he does not want to make the car park of his shop available, which is always empty. If the riders don't park near the shop, they can't accept a delivery order, so they can't work. The owner claims that riders wait for orders in a different area at least five minutes away or keep moving in the street without stopping near the shop. This way you would simply miss out the order because the application offer new orders if you are very close to the shop. (UK2B9, interview, rider, 26/11/2021)

The protest was an opportunity to challenge the authoritarian organisation of work, thus contributing to revealing the absence of democratic and worker-friendly decision-making processes. The campaign against McDonald's included several waves of pickets in front of the shop during which riders, bikers and trade unionists from IWGB informed customers of McDonald's about the reason for the protest, trying at the same time to maintain contact with the manager of McDonald's and dialoguing with the people passing in front of the shop:

There are at least thirty people blocking the entrance of the McDonald's: some distribute leaflets, others talk to passers-by, while others ask the riders who have just accepted an order to cancel it in solidarity with the protest; many of them accept and head – as suggested – to other areas to continue making deliveries. In the meantime, two of the riders coordinating the protest, together with a trade unionist of IWGB talk to some members of the local municipality to ask them to support riders' claims. (Fieldnotes, 16/10/2021)

The protest at the McDonald's in Dalston represents a relevant example of the complex attempt to legitimate a negotiation process from below, also through the conflict, with the aim to legitimise workers' needs. The solidarity

of clients stimulated by workers and activists, the solidarity of riders working in the same area, and the involvement of local representatives interested in mediating represent essential and complementary elements of a strategy aimed at damaging the platform's reputation, uninterested in riders' working conditions, and of the unfair restaurants, influencing their decisions.

Deliverance Milano in Italy, as with IWGB in the UK, played a pioneering role in platform workers' representation, when digital labour platforms, especially focused on food delivery and ride-hailing transport, were emerging as relevant players, especially in urban areas. As one activist of Deliverance Milano said, the initial storytelling was totally shaped by platforms, which were experimenting with both the digital infrastructure and the flexible (and cheap) organisation of labour under the veil of innovative start-ups. When I started my ethnography, participating in the assemblies of Deliverance Milano, the public debate on digital labour platforms was mainly dominated by techno-enthusiastic rhetoric surrounding digital innovation and smart cities. Activists' criticism was therefore focused on a toxic narrative where work and workers were belittled, becoming merely cogs in the wheel mechanism, or even hidden by naive descriptions celebrating bike lovers instead of recognizing them as workers. In Italy as in most countries, food delivery digital platforms controversially imposed themselves by circumventing the guarantees of standard work, relying mainly on casual employment:

When the struggles of riders in Turin exploded, we realised that something was happening. We were a group of five young people based in Milan and we were part of a network of self-organised workers. We decided to organise a protest in Milan too. Back then, the confederal unions didn't even know what riders were. What happened? We set up an informal group to bring together workers interested in sharing information and claiming their rights. (IT2O1, interview, activist, 05/10/2020)

The first protest in Turin was the spark that stimulated activists in other cities, Milan included. Differently from IWGB, Deliverance Milano actively stimulated the rise of riders' protests, starting a daily activity aimed at gathering information about riders' working life experiences. The micro-interactions through the app and the overall organisation of work became the knowledge base to start a democratisation process from below. The lightweight and automated platform management also implied a minimisation of human interactions with riders and often a circumvention of minimum labour rights as witnessed in the following interview excerpt:

We gathered the contracts, checking whether workers had insurance. At that time, the deregulation was such that platforms did not even share a copy of the contract with workers. Most of the time people didn't save the contract signed through the app and when a rider asked for a copy by e-mail, platforms didn't even reply. (IT2O3_informal interview, 11/10/2020)

When the first attempts to organise riders took place, collecting and analysing basic information about contracts, working conditions, micro-interactions through the app and attempts to interact with managers in case of problems emerged as the first steps towards a collective approach to work. Sharing information meant therefore reframing an individual dimension, imposed and naturalised by the algorithmic infrastructure, with early instances of workplace democratisation. The constant interaction between activists and workers, similar to what happened in London with IWGB, resulted in fundamentally building a common ground to foster the protest. In this case, solidarity among riders of different platforms emerged more as an unexpected result rather than a self-evident premise as testified by an activist who coordinated the protest:

When we organised the first strike of Deliveroo riders in Milan, surprisingly many other riders participated in solidarity. It was the first multi-platform strike in Italy; it was 15 July 2017. In the following period, we started a dialogue with the Municipality of Milan and the Prefecture to improve the working conditions of riders. (ITO1, informal interview, 06/02/2021)

The same activist underlined the efforts aimed to keep riders constantly informed and a wider activity of counter-information on social networks to foster the emerging protests promoted by Deliverance Milano. This led to some relevant results, as noted by another activist during an online assembly:

Participants (ten included me) comment on the relevant results of the protest organised few weeks before. One of the activists involved shared his point of view: 'The combination between sharing information through WhatsApp and Telegram, as well as activities at street level and on social media, have been effective. We gained visibility also on mainstream media. The strike we organised in March [2021] *was the largest in Italy, and probably ever organised in Europe'.* (fieldnotes, April 2021)

The counter-information progressively changed the dominant narrative, supported workers' attempts to fight isolation showing that challenging platforms was possible, and informed the public about the dark side of platform work. As in the case of IWGB, the constant support of workers and the visibility in the public debate contributed to strengthening trustworthy relations with riders, legitimating the social existence of workers' collectives fighting against the platforms. Democratizing instances implied therefore both the definition of a shared collective and public critical discourse on platform workers' working condition, and the legitimation of effective actions able to claim rights.

4.2 Decommodifying during Covid-19

The previous section outlined attempts and meanings of democratizing the food delivery sector as mediated by digital labour platforms. This section addresses attempts at and meanings of decommodification in the same sector. It is worth emphasising how democratisation and decommodification are closely linked, being complementary parts of the same goal. At the same time, however, for analytical purposes it is interesting to understand at which moments the attempts at labour commodification and, particularly, the struggle against commodification becomes more pronounced. As mentioned above, since platform work is weakly regulated and, where forms of regulation do exist (e.g. in Italy), platforms retain wide decision-making margins on the organisation and remuneration of labour, thus the conceptual framework related to decommodification processes presented above requires further detail.

Decommodification is here conceived as the action aimed at curbing, through collective action and public condemnation, the arbitrariness of platforms in defining compensation and working conditions. Digital labour platforms structurally rely on commoditised labour based on piecework options, casualization and gamification of work, free-login (therefore a constantly available reserve army) and workers embody the highly commoditised working condition, most of the time naturalizing them as untouchable rules of the game. Due to these factors, resistance to commodification usually emerges when commodification trends significantly increase. Thus, this section focuses on the recent case of the pandemic when resistance to commodification processes became visible and significant.

The evidence gathered in the UK with respect to the first phase of the pandemic testified to the difficulties experienced by riders and the strategic role played by their organisations to counteract a pronounced deterioration in working conditions:

I always believed in being a Union member and, you know, experienced many difficulties and stresses of doing the job. At the same time, I felt like there was a few unwritten rules [between platforms and riders]. *I was naive to think that flexibility and floating of delivery rates was just a way to test a business model. I genuinely felt that there were lines that they wouldn't cross… When coronavirus hit, I just realised that that wasn't the case. When they're in crisis, they will throw us under the bus if they need to. And that's what they did…central London was just emptied out and honestly, I was earning like £10 a day. […] When you experience such bad working conditions, you really understand the importance of unionising.* (UK2B4, interview, rider and unionist, 11/10/2021)

Commodification of labour has different paths and the case of food delivery riders showed that a standard level of commodification was somehow embodied as a standard condition of the settling market, hoping that its growth would lead to better working conditions. The combination of a potential growing market, the learning process when a worker starts, and the experience accumulated day by day, keeps alive the idea of being able to optimise work performances and earnings. With the outbreak of the pandemic, the difficulty of interpreting market developments and the impossibility of platforms to guarantee the usual delivery flows drastically decreased rider earnings and expectations. It was during this same period that IWGB's activities focused on publicly denouncing the multiple fragilities of riders:

When the coronavirus stopped many activities and a significant number of people stayed at home, our work almost came to a standstill. The City emptied out… it was a very good area for food delivery riders. Suddenly they had to ride around for hours to earn a few pounds, risking contagion. We denounced several times that almost all the riders had no access to the protective measures reserved for workers and employees. (UK2B6, interview, rider and unionist, 09/11/2021)

The sudden absence of work in such an exceptional context as the pandemic thus laid bare the precarious conditions of the riders. Almost all of

them classified as self-employed; they could not enjoy the same protections of workers and employees and piecework, in exceptional periods, revealed its brutality. At the same time, as another of IWGB unionist said:

When the pandemic exploded Deliveroo, to protect its reputation, announced a 'multi-million' pound hardship fund to help riders who had to go into quarantine. Deliveroo estimated that it was equivalent to statutory sick pay for 14 days. We repeatedly denounced that riders could not access this fund because Deliveroo required proof of illness with a doctor's note, which was almost impossible to obtain because it was forbidden to go to the doctor if there was a suspicion of having contracted the virus. (UK2B7, interview, unionist, 23/10/21)

The pandemic exacerbated the marginality of riders in the (public and corporate) welfare system, further exposing them to blackmail (work or perish) and forcing them to accept worse working conditions. Riders' work emerged therefore as a totally commoditised variable of the market dependent on profit logics.

Focusing on the Italian context, the onset of the pandemic coincided with an increase in rhetorical celebrations of riders, considered as essential workers like nurses, doctors, and supermarket workers, while hiding the risks linked to their poor working conditions:

When the pandemic broke out and many people were stuck at home, food delivery suddenly became one of the essential services in the public debate. […] We were the only ones on the street, along with ambulances and other categories of workers who could not choose to work from home. So we provided a service under very risky conditions and without any kind of protection. The platforms initially did not provide individual protection devices and did not recognise that it was their duty to do so. Platforms sent instructions to comply with safety regulations because they were interested in protecting customers, but we had to buy our individual protection devices. (ITO2,interview,rider,09/12/2020)

The onset of the pandemic, in Italy as well as in the UK, revealed the idea platform managers had of labour and workers. In the WhatsApp and Telegram groups in which activists and workers exchanged information during that very hectic period, the absence of individual protection devices

provided by the platforms was a recurring theme. One month after the outbreak of the pandemic one comment revealed:

In this phase people are returning to their own habits. I'd say dangerously. So certainly there are signs of recovery… restaurants are starting work again and food delivery too […] We have to insist on DPI… we can't work safely in this way. (WhatsApp chat, 05-04-2020)

Most of the comments in the following weeks were about promises made by managers for an adequate provision of DPI, but promises, in many cases, remained unsolved according to what several workers active on social media declared. While work gradually resumed after the first few weeks of complete standstill, working safely and at the same time guaranteeing a safe service to the customers – according to detailed instructions shared by the platforms – implied an economic investment by workers rather than the company. Not only did platform-work emerged as a pure commodity, but workers' safety did too. The treatment of riders by the platforms during this period sowed widespread discontent, which increased further in the autumn of the same year.

Two events contributed to the further degradation of working conditions. The lowering of rates for deliveries implemented by the main platforms (Deliveroo, Uber Eats, Just Eat, Glovo); and the national agreement signed by Assodelivery (the association representing the main food delivery platforms in Italy) and a right-wing union, UGL (15 September 2020). This agreement reaffirmed piecework despite Law 128, approved by the Italian Parliament in 2019, clearly limiting its use. On 30 October 2021, the day before the national agreement entered into force (one year after its signing), riders began a national strike and the protests in Milan lasted for five days.

Both case studies considered show how the pandemic triggered riders' discontent, fuelling the protests against the fast commodification of labour, which had heavy economic consequences and produced significant health risks for riders.

4.3 Decarbonizing is something to be… beyond greenwashing

The previous sections focused on attempts to democratize and decommodify the food delivery sector mediated by digital labour platforms, questioning their functioning, the algorithms that govern them, and

managers' strategies. In this section, the topic of decarbonisation and how it emerged is addressed.

From the very beginning, food delivery platforms promoted themselves as 'green' by applying hi-tech infrastructures and quick bicycle deliveries in urban spaces congested by motor vehicles. Very quickly, however, motorbikes and more recently e-bikes became an option to expand the service and increase profits. The use of e-bikes and e-cargo bikes supported the 'green rhetoric' of new companies entering the growing market of food delivery, as explained by a rider and unionist of IWGB:

I started off with Stuart, I went to Deliveroo, did Uber Eats for a while. And then eventually I came across a company called ECargo bikes […] I think the main strand of it was, they consider themselves to be like a green employer. So their ideal target was first of all people who like climate activists or at least were interested in the topic of climate justice. The whole idea was that they were green and fair, offering better contracts to the riders: contracted hours, holiday pay, sick pay […] salary that was at least London living wage… which for a lot of couriers is kind of like the dream. (UK2B5, interview, rider and unionist, 11/10/21)

The e-cargo bikes, with their greater carrying capacity, represented a good option to implement an eco-friendly delivery service for a specific target sensitive to green transition and fair work. Well-paid, experienced riders could guarantee efficient deliveries, therefore a high-quality service. The pandemic emerged for the company as an opportunity to conquer a bigger portion of the market but also as a turning point in circumventing the engagement rules for workers:

However, kind of… as the pandemic came along, the volume of orders became higher and higher and higher, and became harder for the company to kind of sustain itself. […] a lot of new riders were self-employed even after the probation period, while the company was officially promising hourly payments.

Although the company was promising payment per hour to expert riders, therefore avoiding them competing for piecework, it opted for a new undeclared strategy due to the fast-increasing business. According to the worker/unionist interviewed, the E (Eco/Electric) option, a strategic element for its corporate identity, changed its meaning: instead of being a solid option combined with social sustainability, it revealed itself as an opportunistic

market choice, totally disconnected by fair worker treatment. This story showed how a green and fair option could quickly turn into a clear case of greenwashing.

The Italian case study offers more nuanced, but similar considerations. The green redemption promised by digital labour platforms remained in the background but ready to use:

Since the first food delivery platforms appeared in Italy, they invested heavily in appealing communication for an innovative service. In this sense, talking about young and energetic bike lovers ready to deliver food at clients' homes has always been a clever rhetoric that uses the environmental sustainability as a market leverage. After a short time, however, the growth of the market diversified delivery methods, introducing motorbikes, cars and, more recently, e-bikes. (IT2, informal interview, activist of DM, 18/12/21)

The interviewee focused on the storytelling that shaped the public image of food delivery platforms at the outset. 'Bike lovers' was indeed a way to avoid the word 'workers', suggesting that delivering food was more than a gig work for people who basically enjoyed cycling. At the same time, cycling was an implicit 'meaning vector' that combined the hi-tech innovation for delivering food with an ecological option. The greenwashing was part of an early narrative then overtaken by the rapid growth of the market.

The latest platforms to enter the Italian market, I am thinking in particular of Getir, make extensive use of electric bicycles. Paradoxically, they do not even openly claim this choice as if it were due to a greater ecological sensitivity. Perhaps they know that no one would believe them! Then, there are start-ups that claim this option. It is a very recent phenomenon so it is not clear if it is just a strategy to reach new market niches or it is based on values that are more consistent. (IT2, informal interview, rider and supporter of DM, 13/11/21)

The excerpts from the interviews reported, similar to the case of IWGB, testify to a strong awareness that the topic of ecological transition and eco-sustainability was strategic for digital labour platforms because of its relevance in the public debate. Consequently, such an attractive topic can became leverage to attract customers; its utilitarian use implies greenwashing attitudes, well-known by workers and activists. The positive image of the company supported by illusory virtuous trends toward a green transition often hides toxic logics that do not deviate from predatory forms of

capitalism. The fight for decarbonisation, therefore, in the context of food delivery, started from a strong public condemnation of greenwashing attempts of dominant digital labour platforms and new start-ups.

Discussion and conclusions

This paper focused on two organisations (IWGB and Deliverance Milano) representing platform workers in countries with different industrial relation systems, respectively the UK and Italy. In doing so we analysed data collected through an extensive multi-sited ethnography (Hannerz, 2003), which led us to follow the key actors and conflicts (Marcus, 1995) located particularly but not exclusively in London and Milan.

Platform work in general and food delivery in particular emerged as a new frontier where the classical perimeter of industrial relations blurred, acquiring new meanings. Similarly, the democratisation of firms, the decommodification of labour and what decarbonisation is or should be (Battillana *et al.*, 2022) acquire specific senses that have been investigated in this paper. This focus shed light on specific attempts to embed platform capitalism in stronger social frames, rebalancing power relations between capital, labour and environment. The analysis of struggles and contradictions in platform capitalism is here conceived considering a wider scenario, different from platform work, where the three driving concepts – democratisation, decommodification, and decarbonisation – can rely on institutionalised frameworks where the dialectic between capital and labour take place. Platform work instead, being poorly regulated, relies on conflict between labour and capital as the only way to limit platforms' despotism from below, embedding the aggressive digital labour platforms in a fairer social frame.

Only recently has the European Parliament and the European Council proposed a directive to regulate platform work [COM 2021 (762) final]. This could also influence the conflictual interactions between workers' collective organisations and platforms in a near future.

The evidence collected shows that seeds of democratisation and decommodification have spread thanks to the interaction between workers and activists both in the case of IWGB and Deliverance Milano, but with different dynamics. In the former case, the spontaneous aggregation of riders was supported by IWGB, while Deliverance Milano triggered workers' discontent to organise the first strike. In this respect IWGB's previous

experiences with other gig workers, and DM's familiarity with precarious workers, represented an important know-how that proved crucial in organising workers (August 2016 in the UK; end of 2016 in Italy).

The struggle for democratising the food delivery sector, rooted in urban spaces, involved since the beginning riders of specific platforms and urban areas with specific shops, in the case of IWGB, with significant attempts to involve customers in the protests. In these cases, customers' solidarity was immediately useful to foster the protests creating a stronger social front; this aspect deserves further research in light of its strategic nature as Culpepper and Thelen (2020) point out. Similarly, also transnational networks and struggles as well as a systematic analysis of the judicialization process, require a specific in-depth analysis not present here due to limited space.

As regards the Italian case, from the beginning, riders of different platforms joined the protests promoted by DM; this emerged as an unexpected result rather than as a premise.

In both cases, democratizing meant first and foremost to foster an aggregation process able to challenge the highly ideological individualistic approach to work promoted by platforms, in favour of a collective approach able to claim rights and better working conditions. It was therefore an effort to create a *dêmos* with the right to demand rights, in contrast to the authoritarian and commodifying intent of platforms that preferred an army of flexible, replaceable, expendable and above all voiceless individual workers. In this respect, democratizing mainly means laying the foundations for collective voice, imposing a public debate necessary to denounce the unbalanced power relations between platforms and workers. This is far from dual majorities for firms' government evoked by Lafuente (2022) in other contexts, or gaining structured decision-making power (Landemore, 2022), but it is the necessary premise. While in the Italian case the struggles led to the opening of institutional negotiation tables, in the UK case they fuelled a public debate, which indirectly informed and supported the legal case-based strategy.

Democratizing attempts on the one hand, and decommodification processes on the other, are closely interconnected when observed on the ground and they pass through radical struggles (Rhodes *et al.*, 2020). Democratizing attempts were indeed the first step to questioning the algorithm operation logic, thus claiming an organisational democracy that has yet to materialise substantially. These are important examples that should be analysed in light of and in relation to the actions of other collective actors, such as well-established and grassroots unions, the currently limited attempts to create workers' cooperatives able to challenge dominant players, and

national and transnational public initiatives aimed at regulating platform work. The analysis of such a complex scenario goes beyond the scope of this paper but constitutes the horizon for necessary future research.

Similarly, claims for better payment conditions, for a non-discriminatory organisation of work, for minimum and fundamental rights, directly call into question how the peculiar workplace of food delivery is conceived and practiced by platforms, restaurants and clients. Commodification processes are inherent in the business model of platforms whose interest is generating benefit and value for customers and investors. During the pandemic commodification violence reached its peak, becoming unbearable even for many workers who, on a daily basis, were struggling to embody the rules imposed by the platforms. This generated a strong and decisive workers' reaction whose protests shook the industry and fuelled a public debate that no longer looks at food delivery platforms with the naive gaze of the early days.

Furthermore, regarding decarbonisation (Méda, 2019; 2020), claims assumed a specific meaning that was strictly interconnected to democratization and decommodification processes. Decarbonisation indeed emerged mainly as a form of greenwashing performed by companies or, at best, as a tool for market positioning aimed at customer niches not yet involved in the food delivery market. Denouncing greenwashing attempts took different forms in the two countries more because of the different evolutionary stages of the food delivery market than because of substantial differences in the sector and actors. What is relevant to emphasise here is that risks associated with the possible manipulation of the 'decarbonisation argument' were quite familiar to workers and activists. For that reason, attention to how the topic of 'decarbonisation' fits into discourses and practices of the platforms has been a key topic in their analyses. When environmental sustainability does not go hand in hand with substantial attention to social sustainability, which includes fair treatment for workers, decarbonizing becomes a pure tool to feed the market. Decarbonisation claims therefore clearly passes from the protest against greenwashing attempts perpetrate by platforms but they are certainly at an early stage in terms of alternative proposals that arise from workers who are still struggling for basic neglected rights.

In light of what has been said so far, platform work, mentioned but not tackled in depth by Ferreras, Méda and Battillana (2020), as one of the fields that urges democratisation, decommodification and decarbonisation processes to be implemented, has specific traits that should be recognised and addressed appropriately and effectively.

First, it has so far proved to be a quite new hostile context for any form of social dialogue within the classical industrial relations framework. Therefore, many of the aspects addressed in this paper take on a double meaning: they are in fact actions and claims aimed at democratising the food delivery sector but at the same time they are experiments where collective learning takes shape and dynamically structure a fast-evolving relationship between workers, workers' organisations, digital labour platforms and customers.

Second, the combination of a widespread urban and online workplace that is highly casualised calls into question the need to rethink both the well-established forms of workers' collective organisation, thus also how struggles take shape, and the very concept of democratizing work in specific contexts like that. The two aspects, in fact, while detachable from an analytical point of view, are unequivocally intertwined in workers' protests and claims.

Through the analysis of specific democratisation, decommodification and decarbonisation processes, this paper also contributes to the growing debate on platform workers' organising ((Borghi *et al.*, 2021; Cini and Goldmann, 2020; Leonardi *et al.*, 2019; Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2017, 2020). Focusing on the medium term, the action of different collective actors such as grassroots groups and independent unions (subjects of this paper) together with well-established and grassroots unions and the active role of public institutions can play a significant role in giving voice and representing an extremely weak and fragmented workforce involved in highly hostile techno-environments. This implies a significant investment of resources and energies going beyond membership logics and the classical collective actors of the industrial relations system. The agency and coordinated efforts of different collective actors are therefore crucial to transforming specific struggles into stable, general, and unavoidable claims, fostering social and environmental resilience as well as the renewal of the labour movement.

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A working-class road to radical industrial democracy.
Workplace industrial relations and workers mobilisation in the ex-GKN factory in Florence

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Abstract

Can workplace industrial democracy be a tool of transformative working-class empowerment in the contemporary context of liberalised industrial relations? We argue that in the presence of specific historical legacies and organisational circumstances, radical forms of workplace industrial democracy can contribute to the strengthening of workers' structural, associational, societal and ideational power resources, even under hostile conditions of labour-capital balance of power. After providing a conceptual definition of radical industrial democracy, we develop our argument by showing its workings in practice in a salient case of industrial restructuring, that of the former GKN plant in Florence, Italy. Since summer 2021, GKN workers have undertaken a long-lasting mobilisation against the plant closure and for its reindustrialisation, in the perspective of a productive reconversion compatible with the concept of just transition. We show how the practices of radical industrial democracy embedded in the GKN plant played a key role in shoring up workers' power resources, supporting the long-lasting mobilisation and the convergence with other social movements. Our findings underscore that radical industrial democracy can be a key asset to cultivate autonomous working-class power. It needs, however, to be backed up by broader institutional and political infrastructures to lead to transformative outcomes.

Keywords: industrial democracy, labour, power resources, restructuring, mobilisation.

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Absract. Una via operaia alla democrazia industriale radicale. Relazioni industriali e mobilitazione operaia nella fabbrica ex-GKN di Firenze

La disciplina delle relazioni industriali si è a lungo interrogata sulla capacità della democrazia nei luoghi di lavoro di rappresentare uno strumento di emancipazione della classe operaia, soprattutto nella presente fase storica di liberalizzazione delle istituzioni delle relazioni industriali e debolezza dei sindacati. In questo articolo sosteniamo che, in presenza di specifiche eredità storiche e circostanze organizzative, forme radicali di democrazia industriale nel luogo di lavoro possono contribuire a rafforzare le risorse di potere strutturale, associativo, societale e ideazionale dei lavoratori, anche in condizioni ostili di equilibrio di potere tra lavoro e capitale. Dopo aver contestualizzato nel dibattito disciplinare e definito i contorni teorici del concetto di democrazia industriale radicale, sviluppiamo questa tesi analizzando un caso significativo di ristrutturazione industriale, quello dell'ex stabilimento GKN di Firenze. Dall'estate 2021, i lavoratori della GKN hanno intrapreso una mobilitazione di lunga durata e grande impatto contro la chiusura della fabbrica e a favore della sua reindustrializzazione nell'ottica di una riconversione produttiva compatibile con il concetto di giusta transizione. Sulla base di una ricostruzione approfondita del caso basata su pratiche di ricerca partecipativa e su una dettagliata raccolta documentaria, mostriamo come le pratiche di democrazia industriale radicale, attuate da lungo tempo nello stabilimento GKN, abbiano giocato un ruolo chiave nel rafforzare le risorse di potere dei lavoratori, sostenendo la mobilitazione nel lungo periodo e facilitando il processo di convergenza con altri movimenti sociali, in particolare quello ecologista. I nostri risultati evidenziano come tali pratiche possano essere un fattore chiave per coltivare l'emancipazione della classe operaia. Tuttavia, esse devono essere sostenute da infrastrutture istituzionali e politiche più ampie per portare a risultati davvero trasformativi.

*Parole chiave***:** democrazia industriale, lavoro, risorse di potere, ristrutturazioni, mobilitazione.

Introduction

From the Webbs onwards, the concept of industrial democracy – i.e. the principle that workers have a legitimate voice in decision-making in the world of work – has had a long lineage in industrial relations (IR) scholarship and practice (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2019: 91). Yet, both in its theoretical and practical development, industrial democracy has been conceptualised and implemented in many ways, varying as much in the form

and extent of workers' involvement as in the ideologies that underlie them and the agents who promote them (Poole, Lansbury and Wailes, 2001)[1].

Such ambiguity continues to the present day. Practices of industrial democracy in their varied meanings are alternatively invoked in managerial discourses as potential avenues of firms' performance improvement; discussed by critical scholars as possible ways out of the contemporary crisis of capitalism (Dukes and Streeck, 2022; Ferreras, Battilana and Méda, 2022); or regarded as exhausted due to the liberalisation of IR in advanced capitalist democracies (Baccaro and Howell, 2017). The question therefore arises: what is the status of workplace industrial democracy in contemporary capitalism? Can it hold a transformative potential for workers' empowerment? And if so, under what conditions?

In this article, we aim to contribute to this debate by showing how specific forms of what we call *radical* workplace-level industrial democracy – based on the active involvement of workers in decision-making processes, on the deepening and broadening of representation and on the advancement of claims aiming at a fundamental transformation of the existing relations of production – can, even under hostile macro-conditions of labour-capital balance of power, constitute a pathway to consolidate workers power resources, and even to prefigure alternative, more sustainable models of production and accumulation. To develop this argument, we analyse a recent significant case of industrial restructuring, that of the former GKN plant in Florence, Italy. Since the summer of 2021, ex-GKN workers have been undertaking a highly politically visible mobilisation against the plant closure and for the reindustrialisation of the site as part of a broader vision of industrial conversion compatible with the concept of *just transition* (Barca and Velicu, 2020; Galgóczi, 2020). The GKN Florence plant stands out as an almost-unicum in the Italian IR landscape, as it had in place, up to the closure and beyond, well-developed organisational practices of industrial democracy "from below" operating alongside the regular institutional channels of workplace representation.

[1] The authors express their deepest gratitude to all the ex-GKN workers, members of the Factory Collective and members of the GKN Support Group for the time dedicated to us in countless conversations over the years. Previous versions of this paper were presented at the SISEC 2022 Conference (Bologna, Italy) and at the ILERA Europe 2022 Conference (Barcelona, Spain). We are grateful to all participants, as well as to the two anonymous referees and the journal editor, for all comments and remarks on the paper. We gratefully acknowledge Benedetta Rizzo for allowing us to draw on the findings of her research conducted on the GKN case for her MSc thesis at the University of Florence (Rizzo, 2021).

Through an in-depth case history based on longitudinal participant observation of the GKN mobilisation, archival documentary collection and a process of co-construction of knowledge with the workers themselves, we show that these forms of what we call *radical industrial democracy* contributed crucially to augmenting the structural, associational, societal and ideational power that the GKN workers could deploy in the mobilisation against the closure of the plant. Overall, we contend that expanding industrial and union democracy can therefore represent a successful strategy for working-class empowerment in the age of liberalisation, that might even pave the way to a broader reconstitution of industrial citizenship (Dukes and Streeck, 2022) on a larger scale.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section 2, we reconstruct the debate around the notion of industrial democracy in IR theory and practice. In section 3, we outline our conceptualisation of *radical industrial democracy* and the mechanisms through which it can augment workers' different power resources. Section 4 introduces the GKN Driveline Florence's case-study and the research strategy and methodology informing the paper. Sections 5-8 present our empirical findings. Finally, we conclude by outlining the main contributions, strengths and limits of the study.

1. Industrial democracy: a multifaceted notion

The notion of industrial democracy has been interpreted differently in the IR discipline, in the political debate and in its concrete implementation. In its most all-encompassing definitions, e.g. the one adopted by Karl Korsch as early as 1922, industrial democracy denotes a spectrum of practices ranging from participation in collective bargaining at workplace level to co-determination in the national economy (Müller-Jentsch, 2008). In their classification effort, Poole, Lansbury and Wailes (2001) combine underlying ideologies and initiating agents to identify a typology of industrial democracy that distinguishes (a) worker-led initiatives, (b) union-based forms of participation, (c) state initiatives supported by legislative action, and (d) worker involvement devices activated by management. Focusing on the initiating agents allows to distinguish different industrial democracy forms by tracing the underlying power of each of the actors in the industrial relations system (*ibid.*).

Throughout history, industrial democracy initiatives were not only promoted to increase employee participation, but often introduced or sanctioned by governments and employers as an attempt to contain more

radical initiatives coming from unions or workers directly (Sorge, 1976). Moreover, the substantive content of industrial democracy has fluctuated non-linearly, ranging from the guarantee of civil rights and freedom of association to the democratisation of control and sovereignty in the workplace (Eidlin and Uetricht, 2018), including collective bargaining, forms of union-management partnership and worker representation on corporate boards.

The German case illustrates this multifaceted unfolding of industrial democracy. The first attempt to introduce workers' committees by the Prussian bureaucracy in the early 1900s in the coal mines was in fact intended to prevent labour unrest in the event of war, but was opposed by the autocratic attitude of the mining employers. During the war, the imperial state was forced to recognise unions as legitimate workers' representatives and to prescribe the establishment of workers' committees in war-essential companies (Müller-Jentsch, 2008). By the end of 1918, however, the November Revolution had led to the creation of revolutionary workers' councils (*Arbeiterräte*), which were transmuted into the works councils (*Betriebsräte*) of the Weimar Republic (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2019). After World War II, legislation on the rights of works councils and workers' representation on company boards gradually extended the principle of co-determination until it became a characterising feature of the German system of industrial democracy and more widely of Germany's social market economy model (Müller-Jentsch, 2008). However, although unions had always demanded perfect parity of representation on supervisory boards, this demand was never entirely met (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2019).

Similar instances of institutionalisation of worker voice through, for example, the introduction of forms of board-level representation were introduced in the 1970s in several West European countries, often at the request of trade unions, as a response to rising levels of workplace militancy that they could not quite control (Sassoon, 1996, quoted in Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2019: 94). However, throughout history, labour mobilisation has also had the ability to establish independent representative bodies, capable of promoting workers' autonomy and pursuing radical goals of social transformation (Ness and Azzellini, 2011).

For instance, in the context of general "resurgence of class struggle" of the 1970s (Crouch and Pizzorno, 1978), the Italian case stood out both for the «greater extension, duration and intensity of the conflicts» (Crainz, 2005: 272) and for the depth of the changes that affected industrial democracy at workplace level. The system of employee representation in Italy was disrupted by the events of the so-called *Autunno caldo* ("Hot Autumn") of

1969 and its institutions underwent a process of profound renewal (Regalia, Regini and Reyneri, 1978). A new configuration emerged, based on directly elected factory councils and line or workshop delegates. Besides, especially during the mobilisation phases, workers won the right to actively participate in directing union life in the factories, especially through the instrument of the workshop or factory assembly, later (1970) also recognised through legislation by the so-called *Statuto dei lavoratori* ("Workers' Statute").

The peculiar model of industrial democracy developed in Italy during the 1970s has been labelled "conflicting participation" (Gambilonghi, 2020). It envisaged a form of participation in decision-making processes that was external to corporate boards, whilst aiming at impacting on managerial strategic decisions and at negotiating investments and work organisation by relying on the works council as the main actor (*ibid*.: 23). Such a model of industrial democracy allowed workers and unions not only to claim control over work organisation, but also to develop ideas and discourses about alternatives which could overcome the Taylorist model by inventing a "more humane way of producing" (Regini, 1981). In addition, workers and unions demanded the "non-monetisation of noxiousness", refusing to do noxious work in exchange for wage compensation and denouncing the environmental degradation caused by their companies (Barca, 2011). In its most radical experiences, the Italian labour movement of the 1970s also advanced an ecological critique of the capitalist mode of production by developing an "antagonistic-transformative approach" and proposing to constitute a counter-power capable of determining "what, how and how much to produce" on the basis of common needs, including environmental protection (Feltrin and Sacchetto, 2021).

Such processes of political appropriation of managerial prerogatives over production are not exclusive to the Italian case. During the 1970s and 1980s, for example, the German and Swedish automobile industry unions also developed "humanising work" strategies, with the aim of changing the organisation of work by enriching tasks and increasing work group autonomy, and of strengthening workers' participation in firm decision-making (Rutherford and Frangi, 2021). More radical initiatives, such as the Green Bans in Australia or the Lucas Plan in the United Kingdom, saw the workers leveraging their structural power and demanding to decide, through the democratic structures and procedures they had independently adopted, for which purposes they would perform their work (Atkins, 2023).

Since the 1980s, however, with the shift from Keynesianism towards neoliberalism, union gains have been increasingly challenged and plans for further democratisation abandoned in almost all industrialised countries. In

countries like Italy and the United Kingdom, where unions had failed or had been unwilling to institutionalise their advances as long as the balance of power was favourable to them, employers quickly re-established managerial prerogatives on the organisation of production. On the contrary, countries such as Germany and Sweden, where industrial democracy had undergone greater institutionalisation, were taken as models because they allowed greater protection of established labour standards and of the power of labour representatives against increased managerial discretion (Turner, 1991). Within the IR discipline, however, theorists of neo-corporatism, while valuing the institutional solutions typical of coordinated market economies, believed that "too much" democracy was detrimental, as it induced union leaders to follow overly radical demands contrary to the collective interest (Baccaro, 2001). On the contrary, interest coordination had to take place at the central level and grassroots demands restrained by limiting members' decision-making power within labour organisations.

With the rise of new managerial ideologies inspired by Toyotism and Total Quality Management, industrial democracy began to be increasingly conceived in terms of employee involvement capable of generating organisational commitment and thus improving firms' economic performances (Poole, Lansbury and Wailes, 2001). Managerial initiatives aimed at soliciting workers' participation (e.g. team meetings, suggestion gathering, kaizen, etc.) spread rapidly in manufacturing and into the service sector as well. The expectations of the workers, who had initially viewed such initiatives favourably, were, however, soon to be disappointed (Milkman, 1997; Rinehart, Huxley and Robertson, 1997). As further research has shown, in fact, in response to contradictory pressures, in most cases managers choose to "satisfice" with only nominal worker empowerment (Vidal, 2022). However, due to declining labour power and rank-and-file militancy, unions were either unable to oppose these initiatives or rather chose to accommodate them, opting for partnership strategies subordinate to the company's economic objectives (Upchurch *et al.*, 2008).

Although there remain considerable differences between countries, largely related to the shape of supportive legislation, the role played by management in introducing participatory mechanisms shows that organisational transformations at the firm level are one of the factors that best explain overall changes in systems of industrial democracy (Poole, Lansbury and Wailes, 2001). Consequently, even contexts such as Germany or Sweden have experienced an erosion of co-determination and industrial democracy institutions, which have become «less of a 'constraining'

influence on firms and more of an 'enabling' one promoting the latter's competitive interests» (Rutherford and Frangi, 2021: 997).

2. Democratising work "from above" or "from below"? The case for a *radical* conception of industrial democracy

The pervasiveness of managerial ideology linked to lean production has meant that, even among critical scholars, the idea has gained ground that the only possibilities of industrial democracy left open today are within the participation and empowerment devices typical of this production system (Vidal, 2022). Are we therefore to regard the transformative potential of industrial democracy in the workplace as a means of working-class emancipation merely as a relic of the past?

Over the last few years, debates around "democratising work" (Ferreras, Battilana and Méda, 2022) have contributed to bringing a larger concept of industrial democracy back to fashion. In these discussions, organisational democracy is usually interpreted as a beneficial input that can help to make corporations more sustainable and advance socially and environmentally desirable goals, by giving greater decision-making powers to workers in corporate governance. In the context of neoliberal globalisation, such proposals embody a transformative ethos. Nonetheless, this conceptualisation of industrial democracy is underpinned by a pluralist view of employment relations where the goals and interests of labour and capital are conceived as being somehow reconcilable and eventually amenable to harmonisation. Organisational democracy, thus, is depicted as a pathway for capitalism to save itself from its worst excesses.

In a recent contribution, Dukes and Streeck (2022) partially depart from such a view, starting from a perspective that instead considers democracy at work as an end in itself, since it contributes to the emancipation of the working classes. They argue that the deconstruction of Fordist industrial citizenship initiated by the neo-liberal turn was intended to depoliticise the governance of companies and the economy, privatising and contractualising the citizenship status of workers, eliminating its public protection and making it subject to local power relations between capital and labour. For this reason, no form of organisational democracy – not even codetermination – can be effective without a new industrial citizenship that is inclusive of the entire working class and based on public guarantees and State intervention to protect workers.

These latest contributions in the debate around industrial democracy leave various questions open: what room remains for workers' initiatives to expand the spaces of industrial democracy within the workplace? And towards what goals – other than company profit – can these forms of participation be oriented? Can these practices help to accumulate labour power resources and thus contribute to altering "from below" the current framework of political and economic relations between capital and labour?

In this paper, we aim to articulate a tentatively optimistic answer to these questions, arguing for the transformative potential, even in the current historical juncture, of what we call practices of workplace-level *radical industrial democracy*; and illustrating their operation as tools of workers' empowerment in the case of the ex-GKN plant in Florence.

What is meant, exactly, by practices of *radical* industrial democracy? A first meaning of radical pertains to the goals that industrial democracy practices aim to achieve. Forms of workplace democracy that aim to fundamentally transform the power relations between capital and labour and the broader production paradigm have numerous historical precedents (Ness and Azzellini, 2011). Picking up on this legacy, scholars recently elaborated proposals for radical democracy that empower the role of *dissent* within corporations. Expanding on the theoretical framework developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), these authors consider radical democracy as «an ethically motivated alternative to the potent marriage of the liberal democratic state and corporate power» which makes it possible «to fundamentally challenge and subvert the very foundations of the neo no-liberal consensus» (Rhodes *et al.*, 2020: 627-628). In this conception, organisational democracy is not granted by the company or guaranteed by the state in the form of legal interventions, but is won through direct action and protest and emerges directly from solidarity and struggle.

Several theorists have similarly posited workers' appropriation of managerial prerogatives over the organisation of production as essential to any deeper social transformation. An example of this approach is for instance expressed by Cressey and MacInnes (1980), who argue that labour control in the workplace can be prefigurative of workers' capacity to imagine alternative forms of production and demand. The strategic purpose, from this point of view, is to develop, within the capitalist system, forms of organisation of production subject to workers' control that can aim at overcoming the system itself rather than patching it up. Essentially, according to this perspective, in industrial democracy can lie the prefigurative roots of workers' control in a more general sense, as «capitalism cannot be relied upon to dig its own grave» (*ibid*.: 22-23).

Such a radical view of the goals of industrial democracy, however, arguably requires an equally radical conception of union democracy and practices to be implemented. Indeed, in a context of diminishing structural and associational union power, the effectiveness of union action increasingly requires the commitment of members to mobilise (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2019: 103). Internal union democracy is arguably essential to generate this kind of grassroots support. A participatory, not merely bureaucratic, procedural or leaderistic conception of union democracy implies that «any union democracy worthy of the name should be about membership participation and decision making» (Fairbrother, 1984: 23). Members must be constantly involved both formally – through meetings that determine the union's policies and activities – and informally – through dialogue with their delegates, particularly at workplace level. Furthermore, they must always be informed of the delegates' activities, so that they can mandate, monitor and advise them, ensuring that decision-making processes always follow a participatory process. In this vision, union democracy ends up coinciding with industrial democracy "from below", since it represents «a continuous process rooted in the daily experience of most workers and involving a continuous struggle about the conditions of employment, the authority of employers and the organisation of work» (*ibid.*).

A radical conception of industrial democracy thus lies as much in the practices – which entail the direct involvement of workers and the ongoing dialogue with their delegates – as in the objectives – which contest managerial prerogatives over the organisation of production and prefigure a fundamental transformation, both at the workplace and at the societal level, in the relations of production and in the underlying economic paradigm.

Contrary to widespread opinion, there is no trade-off between this conception of industrial democracy and unions' ability to win campaigns. On the contrary, a democratic system in which the rank-and-file participation in and influence on union decision-making is substantial can generate the resources of solidarity and militancy needed to win union battles (Lévesque and Murray, 2002; Levi *et al.*, 2009).

In this paper we aim to show that, under specific conditions, even in the hostile context of neoliberal capitalism, radical forms of industrial democracy of this kind can emerge and embody a strong emancipatory potential for the working class, as well as increase the transformative power of workplace struggles. The cases of the Green Bans and the Lucas Plan, although occurring in an entirely different macro-political context, have shown how forms of radical industrial democracy allow not only to reinforce solidarity and increase workers' capacity to mobilise, but also to elaborate

transformative projects of production, in line with the concrete needs of the population and the imperatives of environmental protection (Atkins, 2023). This in turn enables other social movements and civic and political actors to be federated alongside the workers' struggle (*ibid*.).

The case of GKN, we argue, fits into the same framework: the presence of embedded forms of radical industrial democracy at the workplace level, partly autonomous from and parallel to the official channels of workplace, union-based representation, fostered an ethos of workers' democratic participation and constituted a key instrument to consolidate various power resources that workers have employed in a mobilisation which has also entailed a profound re-imagination of the very production paradigm.

Conceptualisations of labour power resources usually distinguish between four categories: structural power, deriving from workers position in the labour market or in the production process, which grants workers leverage over managerial prerogatives in economic or organisational terms (Wright, 2000); associational power, deriving from workers associating among themselves (Wright, 2000); institutional power, deriving from the presence of institutional channels of labour intervention in decision-making and recognition, either at workplace level or at higher levels of representation (Dörre, 2001); and societal power, which refers to labour's capacity to successfully influence public opinion and build coalitions with other actors to pursue their goals (Lehndorff, Dribbusch and Schulten, eds., 2018). To this, Preminger (2020) adds the concept of ideational power, i.e. labour's capacity to use ideas to construct a persuasive discursive understanding of reality that supports its agenda. We contend that radical industrial democracy can act as a tool for the construction and exercise of these different forms of workers' power, in ways that the case study will illuminate. Overall, we argue and show how practices of radical industrial democracy can be a key asset and strategic repertoire for the cultivation of autonomous working-class power, which should thus be theoretically and pragmatically re-centred in the analysis of IR and labour mobilisation.

3. Case study and methodology: a participatory research approach to the GKN dispute

To illustrate our theoretical argument, we present an in-depth case study of the former GKN Driveline factory in Campi Bisenzio, in the hinterland of Florence. Owned by the British multinational automotive and aerospace components business GKN, the plant produced axle shafts for the automotive

industry and about 90% of the its production was destined for the Stellantis group. The private equity fund Melrose Industries acquired the company in 2018, and on 9th July 2021 hastily announced the closure of the plant via an email sent to the workers. At the time of the dispatch of the layoff letters, the factory employed 500 workers, 422 directly employed and 80 outsourced.

The decision to close the plant is part of a broader process of corporate financialisation (Thompson, 2013), representative of the affirmation of speculative principles of shareholder capitalism and perfectly summed up in Melrose's motto "buy, improve and sell" (Rizzo, 2021). Moreover, the closure of the Florence site is part of a general trend of dismantling of the Italian automotive sector, aggravated by the pandemic. Announcements of closures or large-scale restructuring at automotive suppliers and assembly plants have in fact multiplied over 2021-2022.

The GKN workers' fight began immediately with the transformation of the workplace into a permanent assembly. This has become a meeting point for associations, social movements, other workers disputes, students and solidaristic researchers from across the Florence area and beyond. The occupation of the factory has continued for 2 years at the time of writing, with tens of public events with mass participation. The goal throughout has been to pressurise public institutions to implement a concrete re-industrialisation of the site against the loss of production assets and jobs.

After a huge national demonstration in September 2021, supported by a network of social movements, trade unions and organisations under the slogan "*Insorgiamo*" ("Rise up"), the Florentine Labour Court declared the dismissal procedure illegal, and the dismissals null and void. This stalling of the dismissal process gave time to the workers to upscale the mobilisation and design what they called the "convergence of struggles" to create a common terrain of mobilisation connecting working-class issues to the environmental and students movements (Leonardi and Perrotta, 2022).

In December 2021, the advisor appointed by Melrose to handle the plant's divestment, the entrepreneur Francesco Borgomeo, proposed himself as the company's buyer. In January 2022, the newborn company signed a framework agreement with ex-GKN delegates, unions and the Ministry of Economic Development outlining the stages that the buyer had to respect to arrive at the productive reactivation of the plant. However, the new owner continually delayed revealing the details of the business plan. In response to this void, workers began to reflect on the possibility of initiating and managing the re-industrialisation of the factory "from below", starting fundraising initiatives to support the creation of a new workers cooperative, eventually founded in July 2023.

Our decision to study this case as an example of transformative industrial democracy practices has both theoretical and substantive reasons. GKN stands out at once for its representativeness of broader trends of industrial crisis and restructuring in Italian manufacturing, and for its exceptionality as a case of largely unprecedented and, so far, unmatched workers' mobilisation in the landscape of Italian industrial relations over the last decades. A close analysis gives us the opportunity to identify theoretically the conditions that account for the emergence of transformative practices of experimental workers' democracy, and how they can then translate into workers' power resources and help account for the long duration of the struggle.

The article operates within an epistemological approach of "militant" or "activist" participatory research (Russell, 2015; Valenzuela-Fuentes, 2019) which draws on the insights of diverse traditions of politically engaged research such as the Italian Workerism practice of "workers enquiry" (Woodcock, 2014) and the Latin American Participatory Action Research tradition (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991). Such an approach is based on researchers' direct engagement with the movements under study, where researchers take up a role as active members as well as being analytical observers. This research strategy reduces the distance between the researcher and the object of study (Valenzuela-Fuentes, 2019). All three authors were involved in diverse capacities in the GKN workers' struggle from its inception, first as participants in the events organised by the Factory Collective, and then, for author 1 and author 2, as members of the Solidarity Research Group responsible for drawing up the first ecological re-industrialisation plan, presented in March 2022 (AA.VV., 2022), and the following proposals.

This process of participatory observation in the mobilisation allowed for the collection of information and salient qualitative data about the case from the start of the dispute until the present. First, we had the chance to follow directly the unfolding of the dispute in its various stages, participate in the majority of relevant meetings, engage in repeated, ongoing conversations with workers, members of the Factory Collective and plant-level union representatives. The insights gathered were recorded in detailed field notes and validated in occasional, more structured conversations with key representatives of the Factory Collective.

Additionally, in autumn 2021, author 1 and 2 carried out original archival research in the union delegates' room inside the factory, collecting both a repertoire of original documents useful for reconstructing second-level bargaining at the plant level over time, and numerous secondary sources,

such as newspaper articles and material relating to the trade union-political campaigns promoted by the Factory Collective.

Finally, our understanding of the GKN case was greatly enhanced by engaging with the research work conducted by Benedetta Rizzo for her master's thesis, titled «Bargaining Industry 4.0: The role of union representation at company level. The GKN Driveline case in Campi Bisenzio» (Rizzo, 2021).

4. From the Factory Collective to the "Liaison Delegates": union democracy and industrial relations at the former GKN

Well before the mobilisation against its closure, the former GKN was a peculiar factory in the Italian industrial landscape. The factory has its origins in the Fiat plant, opened in 1939 and initially located in the Florentine working-class district of Novoli. Due to the composition of its workforce, mostly made up of unskilled or semi-skilled blue-collar workers, Fiat Novoli was one of the few Florentine factories where the *Autunno caldo* of 1969 brought a radical change in the system of IR and the new forms of industrial democracy that had emerged in the factories of the North took deeper root (Causarano, 2020). The factory was fully crossed by the wave of labour insurgency, which changed the repertoires of union action, brought new demands and created new institutions of workers' representation. Moreover, contrary to the skilled workers in the other factories in Florence, Fiat Novoli workers embraced the policies of wage egalitarianism by demanding collective career advancements. At the same time, they began to contest the Taylorist organisation of work, importing to Florence those innovative tensions of disruption of the legitimacy of managerial authority developed in the factories of the North (*ibid*.).

From the mid-1970s, a process of relocation of the factories outside Florence began, gradually emptying the industrial city and the working-class neighbourhoods formed during the 20th century (*ibid.*). Starting from 1980, Fiat embarked on a phase of overall firm restructuring that implied a change in production strategies, which focused on the core (manufacture of engines and final assembly of vehicles), outsourcing the production of components previously carried out in-house. Fiat in Novoli suffered this double fate in the 1990s, when it was first sold to the British multinational GKN and then moved to the hinterland, in Campi Bisenzio.

Despite the combativeness shown in the 1970s, in the 1990s the GKN did not escape the fate of union moderation that affected the entire industry.

A turning point occurred in 2007, when a conflict broke out within the factory union field. The management had imposed on the unions an agreement that would have radically changed the work schedule. The union leaders at the time were inclined to continue with the strategy of concertation. On the contrary the younger generation of workers and union activists – mainly members of the Fiom-CGIL[2] and supporters of its left-wing faction – , who had joined the factory starting from the mid-90s, opposed the agreement. Their opposition gave rise to an intra-union struggle which led to the resignation of the old RSU[3] and to new elections. The new RSU, revitalised by generational change, set itself the objective to return decision-making power to the workers (Rizzo, 2021). The legacy of this experience can still be seen today within the factory, whose workforce is largely unionised with Fiom-CGIL, to which the vast majority of workers' representatives are also affiliated.

In this context, a process of rediscovery of the organisational and discursive heritage of the *Autunno caldo* took place. Between 2007-2008, workers and union activists gave rise to a "Factory Collective". This is an autonomous body – not recognised by the company – whose main task is to strengthen workers' participation in union decision-making. While operating independently of the formal union representative bodies, the Factory Collective is closely linked to them, since most of the union representatives are active members. Its existence already made the ex-GKN factory one of the most advanced sites in the Italian manufacturing sector in terms of workers' self-organisation. This self-organisation also had positive repercussions on union participation: the rate of unionisation in the factory at the time of its closure was over 60% and participation in union assemblies and mobilisations was considered as very high (Rizzo, 2021).

With the aim of strengthening workers' representation on the shop floor, in 2018 the RSU negotiated with company management the introduction of the so-called "liaison delegates", explicitly modelled on the delegates and factory councils of the *Autunno caldo*: shop stewards who remain in office for 12 months, distributed among all shifts and departments to represent all the various working conditions in the factory, in charge of facilitating the

[2] The *Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici* (FIOM) is the union of blue- and white-collar workers in the metalworking sector that is part of the CGIL (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, Italian General Confederation of Labour).

[3] In Italy, the Unitary Union Representations (*Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie*, RSUs) are the collective bodies representing all workers, without any reference to their membership of a trade union, who are employed in the same workplace. Established in 1993, these bodies replaced the old factory councils that came into being with the *Autunno caldo*.

collection and transmission of information and knowledge between the workers and the RSU delegates and assisting them in the organisation of union activity (Longo, 2021).

The RSU delegates, the liaison delegates and workers' safety representatives (RLS) make up the bulk of the Factory Collective. Nevertheless, the Collective retained a certain degree of informality: although about thirty militants participated constantly, it was addressed to a wide area of sympathetic workers and, at particular times, assemblies were held with the participation of a hundred workers (Rizzo, 2021). In this way an avant-garde participatory structure was created, based on the Italian experience of line and workshop delegates and factory councils of the 1970s. Composed of many left-wing political activists, the Factory Collective acted as an organised "militant minority": a group of workplace activists dedicated to militancy and involved in the day-to-day union activities, capable of linking grassroots to leadership and workplace struggles to community struggles (Uetricht and Eidlin, 2019; Darlington, 2002). The activity of the Factory Collective was characterised by horizontality and decentralised decision-making: direct knowledge of production processes was thus able to circulate and become collective knowledge among all workers.

This institutional configuration also proved capable of guaranteeing a high degree of responsiveness of the representatives towards the represented, thus contributing to consolidate the legitimacy of the RSU. Broadening participation and representation made the relationship between the RSU and the general assembly of all workers more fluid, avoiding a top-down logic whereby workers are only called upon to approve or reject proposals made by union representatives. This process also reinforced the RSU's power and negotiating capacity *vis-à-vis* company management, because it could count both on the in-depth knowledge of the organisation of work guaranteed by the flow of information ensured by the liaison delegates, and on the active support of all the workers and their readiness to mobilise resulting from their substantial participation in union life in the workplace.

5. A *radical industrial democracy* that obtains gains: collective bargaining and contractual achievements of the Factory Collective

This model of participatory union democracy resulted in considerable contractual gains. The power relations with the company management built up over time by the GKN workers enabled them to achieve noteworthy results through workplace-level negotiations. The analysis of company

agreements and informal bargaining practices reveals the link between the democratic processes existing within the factory and the radical objectives of union activity aimed at extending the workers' capacity for control over production.

The 2007-2008 dispute around which the Factory Collective was born exemplifies this. Management had proposed a trade-off between flexibilising the work schedule and liberalising the principle of working weekends in exchange for a new company contract and new hires. However, accepting this deal would have weakened workers' structural power, depriving them of the weapon of the overtime strike. By rejecting the proposed shift system, the workers instead forced the company to bargain every single Saturday for overtime. If the demands for overtime were excessive, they would demand more maintenance of the machinery or new hires. In addition, the RSU was also able to safeguard and monitor health, safety and ergonomic standards within the plant, and to extend union protections to the segments of workforce employed with non-standard employment contracts or employees that manage outsourced services (e.g. cleaning, logistics, concierge, etc.). In February 2020, for instance, it negotiated an agreement for the progressive stabilisation of agency workers, which could be used only in agreement with the RSU.

Moreover, in recent years, the RSU and the Factory Collective had also actively negotiated the adoption of new technologies at GKN. Particular attention was paid to safeguarding workers' rights in the face of the potential for remote control inherent in the new digital technologies, and to protecting worker professionalism in the digitalisation process (Rizzo, 2021). Thanks to the contribution of the liaison delegates and the involvement of the workers in the Factory Collective, the RSU also proactively suggested solutions to improve the factory's production capacity, as well as winning a package of training hours for employees in the usage of Industry 4.0 technologies.

Finally, the Factory Collective also impacted on managerial strategic decisions by negotiating several agreements on information rights (in 2012, 2018 and most recently in 2020), aimed at preventing even veiled forms of relocation of production. In particular, the collective agreement signed in July 2020 committed the company to inform the RSU every Wednesday on any issue concerning the life of the factory, from shifts and overtime to the productivity performance of the plant. As recognised by the Florence Labour Court, this agreement enabled the union to widen its room for manoeuvre and strengthen its capacity to defend workers, for example by sanctioning the right to be informed in advance of the possibility of collective dismissals

(Frosecchi, 2021). The model of radical industrial democracy elaborated within the ex-GKN factory over the last fifteen years allowed workers to accumulate resources of structural and associational power that later proved indispensable in the phase of mobilisation and defence of the factory from closure.

6. From the occupation of the factory to the mobilisation of solidarity networks

Since its creation the Factory Collective has acted as a site of radical workplace democracy and it became a crucial organisational asset that strengthened the workforce's structural and associational power during the process of mobilisation that followed the announcement of the site closure.

First, the in-depth knowledge of the production process and plant work organisation gained over time through the information-gathering and monitoring activities of the RSU and Factory Collective gave credibility to the workers' representatives when the closure occurred, allowing them to become active interlocutors at the negotiating tables, questioning management claims on the factory's alleged inefficiency and mobilising their acquired knowledge to formulate their own proposals for the re-industrialisation of the site.

Second, the embedded ethos of participation in factory life made it possible for the workers to mobilise quickly and *en masse* when the site closure was announced, and ensured that participation remained high over time. Already being used to practices of collective action in the factory, the vast majority of the workforce was indeed ready and determined to take part in the mobilisation called by the RSU and the Factory Collective, which enjoyed high credibility among workers, to oppose the closure.

Third, the Factory Collective played a key role in coordinating the struggle, being crucially involved in political and logistical aspects. As a result, the vast majority of workers took an active part in the mobilisation, thus allowing it to be sustained over time. This organisation involved, among other things (see Cini *et al.*, 2022), the establishment of a permanent worker's assembly managed through a democratic decision-making process, in charge of dealing with the most urgent issues on a day-to-day basis as well as with the larger strategic decisions around the unfolding of the mobilisation.

The democratic management of the mobilisation process sustained workers' associational power in various ways. Using democratic methods of

decision-making to set the strategy of mobilisation and negotiation to be followed in the dispute, rather than delegating these decisions to union officials, avoided the common problems of alienation and disconnection between the union's grassroots and leadership. Workers developed a sense of direct ownership of the dispute and consolidated a profound consciousness of belonging to the GKN "family". This turned into an affective or emotional source of associational power, as it allowed to keep up commitment in the hardest junctures. One of the latest manifestations of this dynamic was the founding of a workers' mutual aid society, created in October 2022 to provide income support for workers during the production transition.

Besides, long before the announcement of the closure, the GKN workers had established relationships of solidarity and support with other labour conflicts in the Florence and Prato area, regularly participating in picket lines and assemblies. The members of the Factory Collective had also long been involved in various political and militant activities (self-managed social centres, political parties or extra-parliamentary left-wing movements) or socio-cultural activities at local level.

This density of local ties allowed for the mobilisation of disparate organisational and political resources from outside the workplace in support of the ongoing conflict. In particular, the solidarity group "*Insorgiamo con i lavoratori GKN*" ("Rise up with the GKN workers"), made up of supporters of the GKN struggle from outside the workforce, played an essential role in supporting the development and organisation of activities related to the struggle. This process of networking has been characterised by a distinctive participatory and democratic ethos, where issues and strategies are regularly discussed in open assemblies, and the potential contribution of all groups and individuals is valorised and channelled through various working groups. This democratic management of the dispute has in turn enhanced workers' societal power, by facilitating the consolidation of alliances and ensuring the continuous supply of external energies and sources of political, material and logistical support to the mobilisation.

7. The politics of *convergence*: transforming the production paradigm to pursue a just transition

The dynamic of alliances triggered by this mobilisation was not limited to receiving actions and declarations of solidarity, but increasingly took the form of coalition building with other actors and social movements to pursue common transformative goals. The Factory Collective consistently

expressed its intention to transcend the particular dimension of the struggle, to build with other social actors a shared plan for the reconversion of the entire national economy within the framework of the *just transition* – an ambition consistent with the radical democratic practices implemented by the Collective throughout the dispute. It thus practised a "convergence method" aimed at bringing together different actors and social movements around a common purpose. This made it possible to create a two-way connection with climate justice movements, facilitated by a redeployment of radical notions of working-class environmentalism (Feltrin and Leonardi, 2023), aimed at reimagining the mode of production on the basis of common needs rather than on the profit motive (Barca and Leonardi, 2018).

This connection has been facilitated by the discursive frames recently developed by the environmental movement on the distinctly anti-capitalist nature of the environmental struggle. Collective reflections that problematise the ecological footprint of commodity production or the extraction of raw materials and the exploitation of productive and reproductive labour are indeed multiplying in Italy (Imperatore, 2023).

That said, the solidarity between the GKN struggle and the Italian climate justice movements (Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion) was not only found on an ideational level, but also practised through the convergence method, as the two movements promoted and participated in each other's mobilisations throughout 2021-2023, highlighting the links between (de)industrialisation, pollution, socio-economic injustices and the necessity of a just transition.

The convergence with the ecological movements has also consolidated with the drafting "from below" of an ecological re-industrialisation plan for the factory. In November 2021 an interdisciplinary Solidarity Research Group was formed, called upon by the Factory Collective to draw up a plan for the reindustrialisation of the factory. The attempt was to revitalise scientific research as a form of participatory action that allows researchers to actively work towards the joint creation of knowledge useful to support social struggles. Operating within this framework and working jointly with the Factory Collective, the Solidarity Research group presented in March 2022 a «Multi-level Plan against delocalisation, for employment and income stability, towards the creation of a Public Hub for Sustainable Mobility» (AA.VV., 2022). The plan sought to give shape to the Factory Collective's goal of creating a "socially integrated factory", i.e. one capable of responding to the social needs of the territory and the country within the an ecological mode of production. The plan proposed alternatives in the areas of automotive components for sustainable mobility or clean energy production,

calling for a redefinition of the managerial structure that would enhance workers' knowledge. It also emphasised the need for greater intervention by public actors not only to save the factory but to manage the ecological transition more broadly. A new version of the plan is now being drawn up to support the ambition to transform the former GKN into a worker-run cooperative (Gabbriellini and Gabbuti, 2023). The workers' collective ability to sustain a process of co-production of knowledge has thus been a pivotal power resource for the prefiguration of an alternative, more sustainable and democratic model of production.

Discussion and conclusions

As the empirical analysis has made clear, the model of *radical industrial democracy* developed by the GKN workers over the last fifteen years allowed them to accumulate and mobilise various types of power resources which proved essential to sustain their struggle against the plant closure and corroborate a process of convergence with other actors and social movements. First, our findings have shown how practices of radical industrial democracy contributed to augmenting workers' *structural power* (Wright, 2000). The articulated system of workplace democracy, in particular the embeddedness of the Factory Collective and of the liaison delegates, gave workers a deep knowledge of the production processes and a right of surveillance over key managerial decisions before the plant closure. This allowed workers to acquire critical know-how about the production process which could then be used as a source of strategic advantage also in the negotiations after the closure.

Second, radical industrial democracy contributed to augmenting workers' *associational power* (Wright, 2000). The consolidation of the Factory Collective and the various contractual gains achieved over time enabled the acquisition and consolidation of organisational capabilities, social networks of trust and organic leadership within the factory that allowed the mobilisation to emerge rapidly and to sustain itself over time. The foundation, in October 2022, of a workers' mutual aid society to provide income support for workers testifies to the continuous growth of the networking resources that workers are able to activate as needed.

Third, the radical conception of industrial democracy which informed the whole mobilisation of GKN workers provided a source of *ideational power* (Preminger, 2020) that underpinned and enabled the coalition-building effort with a broader array of social forces – environmental

movements, academics and so on – thus strengthening the workers' *societal power* (Lehndorff, Dribbusch and Schulten, eds., 2018). This in turn allowed for the collective drafting of an ecological re-industrialisation plan "from below" and for and a re-imagination of the role of the factory within its social and economic context. Essentially, radical industrial democracy conceived as workers' power and control over the function and scope of production (Eidlin and Uetricht, 2018) and practised through ongoing grassroots participation acted as a vehicle to construct prefigurative forms of alternative production, going beyond the profit motive towards the notion of the "socially integrated factory".

Whilst highlighting its noteworthy elements, it is nonetheless important to reflect on the limits of the GKN experience. While enjoying the support of the surrounding community and of national social movements, the dispute has not found political leverage in decision-making institutions. On the industrial policy front, with particular reference to the automotive sector, the government's strategy detailed in the National Resilience Plan continues to fit into a well-established paradigm, characterised by «strictly horizontal interventions, without specific targets or constraints to achieve predetermined environmental, social or even employment objectives» (Cresti, 2021: 227-228). The Factory Collective has been challenging this approach, also by forging links with metalworking unions abroad, in Germany especially, but still with limited results.

On the political side, the support of national trade unions and political forces has been limited. First, apart from a small group of parliamentarians, the political forces in Parliament ignored an Anti-Relocation Bill promoted by GKN workers in association with a group of legal experts (Franchi, 2021). Second, the Italian metalworking unions have been reluctant to mobilise and to propose new plans for the automotive sector, preferring instead to wait for a commitment from the government. This fact is indicative of the absence of a radical vision of democracy at work in current union ideology, a vision that could offer «a galvanising framework for reaffirming the fundamental idea that the people should rule» (Eidlin and Uetricht, 2018: 77).

Nonetheless, the GKN dispute shows the possibility, continued relevance and prefigurative transformative potential of practices of radical industrial democracy to pursue workers' empowerment and social justice goals even in the context of advanced neoliberal capitalism. Such transformative potential becomes even more relevant in the context of the climate crisis. The study of practices of radical industrial democracy in action offer thus valuable insights into how a transformative just transition (Clarke and Lipsig-Mummé, 2020) could be imagined and managed "from

below"; and demonstrates how the workplace remains a crucial site of construction and mobilisation of workers' power and transformative political consciousness for a broader problematization of the current capitalist paradigm.

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Fostering employee voice in the workplace: the mediating role of employment relations climate and participative decision-making opportunity

by *Martina Mori*[*] *and Vincenzo Cavaliere*[**]

Abstract

The present article addresses the debate on workers' participation in organisations by exploring members' participation within cooperatives. By proposing voice as a way of implementing participation at work, this research provides a micro-level analysis of how individuals' attitudes and perceptions affect employees' voice behaviours. Drawing on the attitude-behaviour theory, the research investigates how employee job satisfaction influences supportive voice behaviours, focusing on the mediation effects of the employment relations climate at work (ER climate) and participative decision-making opportunity (PDM). The data analysis reveals two specific indirect effects of job satisfaction on employee voice: the first through PDM, the second through both mediators investigated in serial (ER climate then PDM). The findings suggest that perceptions about the power of influence on decisions are critical for encouraging individuals to express their voice. The theoretical and practical implications are thus discussed, proposing avenues for further research.

Keywords: employee voice; participative decision-making; employment relation climate; cooperatives.

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Abstract. Favorire la voce dei dipendenti sul lavoro: il ruolo delle relazioni di lavoro e dei processi decisionali partecipativi

Il presente articolo affronta il dibattito sulla partecipazione dei lavoratori nelle organizzazioni esplorando la partecipazione dei membri all'interno delle organizzazioni cooperative. Proponendo la voce come modalità di partecipazione sul lavoro, questa ricerca esplora a livello micro come le attitudini e le percezioni degli individui influenzano i comportamenti di voice sul lavoro. Sulla base della Attitude-Behaviour Theory, la ricerca indaga come la soddisfazione lavorativa dei dipendenti influenzi i comportamenti di voice supportiva, concentrando l'attenzione sugli effetti di mediazione del clima organizzativo riguardo le relazioni di lavoro e delle opportunità decisionali partecipative (PDM). L'analisi empirica rivela due effetti indiretti specifici della soddisfazione lavorativa sulla voce dei dipendenti: il primo attraverso il PDM, il secondo attraverso entrambi i mediatori indagati in serie (clima delle relazioni di lavoro e poi PDM). I risultati suggeriscono che le percezioni riguardanti il potere di influenza sulle decisioni sono cruciali per incoraggiare gli individui a esprimere la propria voce a lavoro. Le conseguenti implicazioni teoriche e pratiche sono quindi discusse, proponendo alcune riflessioni sulle potenziali ricerche future.

Parole chiave: voce dei dipendenti; decision-making partecipativo; relazioni di lavoro; organizzazioni cooperative.

Introduction

The current debate around workers' participation within organisations comes from afar (Carrieri, Nerozzi and Treu, 2015; Chamberlin, LePine, Newton *et al.*, 2018).

For organisations, the most common form refers to ongoing, broad-based, and institutionalised employee participation in processes of organising and decisions (Harrison and Freeman, 2004; Weber, Unterrainer and Höge, 2020). Various forms of employee participation exist in organisations, from indirect to direct, from formal to informal. The rationale behind all these forms is the same: allowing people to manifest their opinions and interests to increase their power and influence over organisational decisions. Participation thus denotes influence or power-sharing over organisational decisions (Wilkinson, Gollan, Kalfa *et al.*, 2018). Employee voice behaviours represent a way to carry out individuals' participation, and it is broadly defined as any opportunity for individuals to have a say in the workplace and thus influence the work context and the organisation (Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014; Wilkinson, Dundon, Donaghey *et al.*, 2020b). Employee voice and participation have a longstanding association: they are

strongly related but differ in meaning. Scholars indicate "voice" as a specific term that does not necessarily lead to "participation" itself; it is better to say voice can be a precursor of participating in every aspect of the organisation (Wilkinson, Donaghey, Dundon *et al.*, 2020a; Wilkinson and Fay, 2011).

Individuals can manifest multiple types of voice behaviours and orientations, included supportive voice (Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014). Supportive voice is the focus of this article, known as a subset of voice behaviours referring to promotive communication intended to support worthwhile work-related policies, programs, objectives, and procedures and to defend these things when they are being unfairly criticised (Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014).

Studies devoted continuous attention to employee voice from different perspectives, extending the traditional focus of the critical aspect of representation and protection of employees' interests to contributing members' input to organisational improvement (Casey, 2020). Studies have shown that allowing workers to speak out can bring relevant issues to light and thus contribute to problem-solving, organisational growth and performance improvement (Chamberlin, Newton and Lepine, 2017; Kim, MacDuffie and Pil, 2010).

This article joins the employee participation debate by focusing on the micro-level of the organisation. Aiming to contribute to the literature on how organisations can foster participation, this study proposes individual voice behaviours as relevant for observing employees' participation and democracy at work (Budd, Gollan and Wilkinson, 2010) in a particular type of organisation: cooperatives. For cooperatives (coops hereafter), people's centrality and voices should represent a consolidated and widespread identity element, realising members' participation, which is a mandatory implementation of the principle of ownership and management of daily activities made by the same people (Fici, 2016). The resulting complexity determines the needs for cooperatives to find new forms of expression of their democratic principles, which literature indicates are jeopardised by the need to survive in increasingly competitive contexts (Cheney, Santa Cruz, Peredo *et al.*, 2014). This need is also expressed by LegaCoop Toscana, the regional and cross-sector division of the National League of Cooperatives and Mutuals that has been operating with a focus on the interests of Tuscan cooperatives since 1974 and supported the present research's development.

By focusing on how individuals' attitudes and perceptions affect employee voice, the research applies the conceptual framework of the attitude-behaviour theory (Ajzen, 2012) to explore the influence on voice

behaviours of job satisfaction, which literature indicates as crucial for individuals' voice behaviours (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers *et al.*, 1988).

Specifically, this study dedicates special reference to answer the following question: *What is the underlying process explaining how overall job satisfaction is associated with supportive voice of cooperatives' members?*'

Building on the Social Exchange Theory and the reciprocity norm (Blau, 1964), more satisfied employees infer that their organisations provide them with benefits and support. As a result, they develop a sense of need to reciprocate by contributing to the organisation with their knowledge and opinions and expressing thus their voice in support of it (Lin, Lam and Zhang, 2020).

We consider that the feelings of individuals about their opportunity to participate in the cooperative play a critical role in motivating them to participate effectively (King, Shipton, Smith *et al.*, 2021; Österberg and Nilsson, 2009). In greater detail, the feelings employees infer about the participation practices, policies and interactions influence their attribution about the relations between management and workers in the cooperative, affecting in turn, their perception of the power of influence over decisions (Chamberlin *et al.*, 2018; Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt *et al.*, 1988). Based on this, the study involves the employment relationship climate (ER climate), which encompasses the overall vibe, standards, attitudes, and actions related to the interactions between workers, unions, and managers in the workplace (Pyman, Holland, Teicher *et al.*, 2010; Valizade, Ogbonnaya, Tregaskis *et al.*, 2016), and the perceived participative decision-making opportunity (PDM), which refers to an individual's subjective perception of their level of influence in decisions that impact their job and the degree of involvement they have in such decisions (Lam et al., 2002). The aim of this study is to investigate how these factors contribute to supportive communication within the organisation.

The contribution of this paper develops under three main themes: first, constructive employee responses (such as supportive voice behaviours) arise from positive attitudes toward the work (such as job satisfaction); second, employees' perception of their influence at work plays a critical role in motivating them to participate; third, ER climate related to the relationship between management and employees can be a proxy for conveying the effect of job satisfaction on participative behaviours only if it affects individuals' beliefs of participation and influence over decisions. The findings thus enrich the practice of workers' participation and democracy in everyday activities.

The following section describes our research model's theoretical background and rationale.

1.Research framework and conceptual model

1.1 Participative organisations: cooperatives as the research context

Participative organisations are characterised by people t*aking part* in every aspect of organisational life instead of merely *being part* of it, and by complex interactions and interpersonal relationships representing the base of their functioning and pursuing objectives. Scholars have focused on how people are encouraged and manifest their attitudes and behaviours by embracing various perspectives of enquiry: on the one hand, literature has explored the dimensions, practices and policies that encourage participation in organisations and their often-complex interdependencies; on the other hand, scholars have focused on activities that reflect individual participation and effects at work (Cotton *et al.*, 1988). This research joins this second perspective by offering a micro-level analysis that focuses on how individuals' attitudes and perceptions affect employees' participation in the workplace (Chamberlin *et al.*, 2018).

Participation of individuals is a core element of a specific type of participative and people-oriented organisations, cooperatives, defined by The European Commission as «autonomous associations of persons united to meet common economic, social, and cultural goals» that attempt to serve «the needs of their members who contribute to their capital»[*] foundation of coops is the shared ownership by all members rather than a small group of investors or manager-owners. The right of each member to participate in decisions about managing the firm generates an inevitable complexity and potential conflicts in decisions due to heterogeneity in the goals and interests of individuals (Cheney *et al.*, 2014).

By proposing employee voice as a new expression of workers' participation in workplace-level decisions, this research joins the debate about the regeneration thesis of coops: despite the increasing challenges, coops still maintain their founding principles of democracy by developing

[*] European Commission – Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs – Cooperatives – https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/cooperatives_en – Last visit: September 2022

new forms of participation that support a more informal hierarchy and fluid interactions (Bretos, Errasti and Marcuello, 2020; Storey, Basterretxea and Salaman, 2014), such as through voice behaviours.

For coops, the relationship between job satisfaction and employee voice might be particularly critical because members' attitude likely has a crucial influence on their behaviour, as Bhuyan (2007) found. The subsequent section presents the conceptual rationale at the base of our research.

1.2. Job Satisfaction-employee voice research model

In general, scholars refer to employee voice as 'the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say, formally and/or informally, collectively and/or individually, potentially to influence organisational affairs relating to issues that affect their work, their interests, and the interests of managers and owners' (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2020b: 5). According to this inclusive definition, the ultimate aims of employee voice are to improve the organisational functioning and increase employees' participation in decision-making (Mowbray, Wilkinson and Tse, 2015).

Scholars investigated employee voice within multiple types of voice behaviours and orientations, such as challenging, supporting, promotive, and prohibitive (Liang *et al.*, 2012; Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014; Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero, 2003). Among these different orientations, supportive voice includes a set of promotive behaviours that intend to preserve and support the status quo of work-related issues (Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014). Scholars have demonstrated an association of employee supportive behaviours with their involvement and participation at work, including voluntarily expressing individual opinions and ideas through voice (Marchington, 2015; Ruck, Welch and Menara, 2017), which is considered as a precursor of participation at work (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2020a; Wilkinson and Fay, 2011). Accordingly, we thus consider supportive voice behaviours relevant for observing employees' participation in the workplace and focus on exploring the determinants of this discretionary behaviour (Morrison, 2011).

To do this, the research model applies the conceptual framework of the attitude-behaviour theory (Ajzen, 2012), postulating that attitude is a crucial determinant of individuals' behaviour.

Literature defines job attitudes as the evaluations of one's job, comprising one's feelings toward, beliefs about, and attachment to one's job. Scholars explored job attitudes based on various models. For instance, three

attitude components are prevalent in the literature, affect, behaviour, and cognition, known as the ABC model or tripartite model of attitude (Breckler, 1984; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). In addition, job attitudes are various and depend on different dimensions, such as the target, the specificity, and the nature. Scholars additionally investigated job attitudes from different levels of analysis, starting from the global attitude as composed of lower-order, more specific attitudes (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012: 343). According to the hierarchical attitude structure, under the first level's overall job attitude, the second level of job attitudes focuses on a more relatively specific entity, such as overall job satisfaction. In this regard, scholars indicate job satisfaction as the most focal employee attitude (Judge, Weiss, Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2017; Judge, Zhang and Glerum, 2020; Saari and Judge, 2004), which is particularly critical for individuals (Saari and Judge, 2004; Woznyj, Banks, Whelpley *et al.*, 2022) and organisational performance (Kessler, Lucianetti, Pindek *et al.*, 2020). At the more specific levels of job attitude structure, job satisfaction can be represented by various facets, often differentiated by specific targets of satisfaction based on the perspective of research, such as pay or supervision, which in turn can be broken down by studies into sub-facets (e.g., raises, benefits, supervisor competence and supervisor human relations, etc.) (Judge *et al.*, 2020).

Focusing on overall job satisfaction, defined as a global, evaluative judgment of one's job ranging from positive to negative (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Judge *et al.*, 2020), studies informed by social exchange theory and the reciprocity norm (Blau, 1964) have demonstrated that more satisfied employees infer that their organisations provide them benefits and support. As a result, they develop a sense of obligation to reciprocate by contributing their knowledge and opinions and thus expressing their voice (Lin *et al.*, 2020).

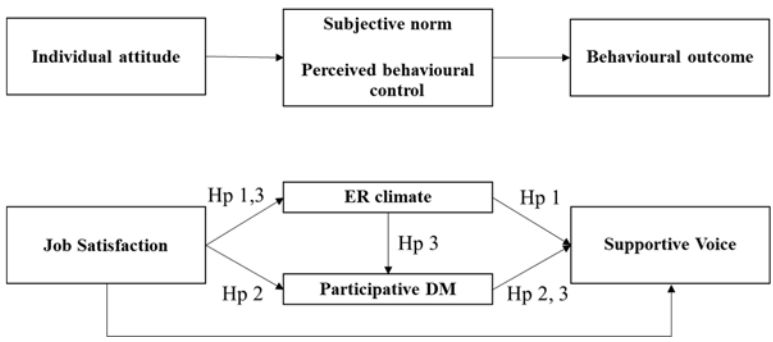
Voice literature shows that job satisfaction plays a role in employees' decisions to voice their opinions and perspectives in the workplace promoting constructive employee voice responses (Chamberlin *et al.*, 2017; Hagedoorn, Van Yperen, Van De Vliert *et al.*, 1999). For example, Hagedoorn *et al.* (1999) found that when employees are generally more satisfied with their jobs, they manifest their voices in support of organisational improvement.

Therefore, job satisfaction likely encourages employees to manifest their voice supporting their organisation (Lin *et al.*, 2020). We thus focus our study on exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and employee supportive voice.

According to the attitude-behaviour theory (Ajzen, 2012), in addition to individual attitudes, two other significant factors influence human action: perceived social pressure related to the behaviour (known as subjective norm) and perceived capability to perform the behaviour (known as perceived behavioural control).

The former result from social signals about the expectation of performing a specific behaviour; therefore, it refers to others' perceptions and beliefs about behaviours expected in the workplace. The norms, beliefs and expected behaviours about participation at work involve management and colleagues and their relationship. Specifically, an employee is more likely to consider participation essential and expected in the workplace when he perceives that high levels of involvement in decisions (1) characterise the relationship between managers and colleagues, and (2) are embedded in the workplace climate. By narrowing the above down in our perspective, ER climate, is thus a critical element embedding subjective norms about participation at work, as it is defined as a subset of the organisational climate that refers to the atmosphere, norms, attitudes and behaviours resulting from the interactions between organisational members (management and employees included) (Pyman *et al.*, 2010; Valizade *et al.*, 2016).

Figure 1 Conceptual and research models



As for the latter, perceived behavioural control focuses on the extent to which people believe that they are capable of, or have control over, engaging in the given behaviour. Consistently, we consider the perceptions of participation and influence over decisions as the extent to which an individual believes to have the opportunity to participate successfully in the decision-making (DM) process (Lam, Chen and Schaubroeck, 2002).

Figure 1 shows the conceptual and related research models. Based on Ajzen (2012), subjective norms (ER climate) and perceived behavioural control (Participative DM) are proxy elements that influence the process of linking employee attitude (job satisfaction) to behavioural outcome (supportive voice).

The following section describes the research context and discusses the rationale of the hypotheses considered in the research model.

2. Hypotheses development

2.1 Subjective norms: the role of ER climate

"Employment relations" is an umbrella term for a broad field covering different perspectives on the relationship between employees and the employer.

In the realm of cooperatives, at the micro level of workplace relationships, a substantial alignment exists between the employer and employees. This is due to the fact that they are essentially one and the same group of individuals who collaborate to administer the cooperative on a day-to-day basis, guided by the principles of mutuality and democracy.

Considering this context, two main reasons motivate our research to involve ER climate in cooperative contexts. First, our study about the underlying mechanisms through which job satisfaction affects voice behaviour focuses on the mediating links inside the 'black box' of HRM, which aims to achieve the competitive advantage of the organisation by the 'alignment advantage' with workers who have the skills and potentials the organisation needs (Boxall, 2014). Second, even though our study takes a broader concept of voice, including the opportunity for employees to influence work-related issues beyond the unique aim of benefitting the organisation, which implies differences of interests between workers and employers (i.e. destructive voice), the basic assumption of voice literature refers to the primary purpose of improving the organisation.

Therefore, the ER perspective adopted in this study includes multiple forms of direct participation of employees in the workplace partnership with management (Johnstone, 2015) and the related climate refers to individual perceptions shaped by affect, culture, and interpersonal dynamics with management rather than just formal policies and systems for managing people.

The ER climate is consistently influenced by the atmosphere and the subjective norms that arise from the interactions between management and workers (Pyman *et al.*, 2010; Valizade *et al.*, 2016), which affect «the perceived tenor or 'good-bad' quality of relations between management and workers in organisations» (Kaufman, 2015: 32).

Although the literature considers perceptions of organisational climate and its sub-dimensions as contextual factors that signal to individuals the conventional level of participation, openness and support for voice, thus affecting employees' willingness to speak and voice behaviour (Klaas, Olson-Buchanan and Ward, 2012; Morrison, 2011), the mediating role of the ER climate is yet to be tested in the specific context of employee voice behaviours.

In this research, we propose the mediation effect of ER climate building on two primary considerations: first, ER climate has been identified as a key mediating factor enhancing the participation of employees in organisational decision-making (Pyman *et al.*, 2010; Valizade *et al.*, 2016); second, previous studies proposed similar mediation explanations of organisational climate sub-categories on voice behaviours (Cheng, Bai and Hu, 2022; Ohana and Stinglhamber, 2019).

Consequently, we argue that ER climate may be the mediating factor that translates job satisfaction's effects and encourages participants to voice their ideas in the workplace.

Therefore:

Hp 1. ER climate mediates the relationship between employee job satisfaction and supportive voice behaviour.

2.2 The role of beliefs of influence over decisions: participative DM opportunities

Personal feelings of influence over decisions refer to the extent or degree of participation employees believe in having in decisions affecting their jobs. It results from the diverse attributions employees may make about management practices allowing the opportunity to participate in decision-making and on the power of influence on the process (Boxall, 2014; Lam *et al.*, 2002). Thus, it affects employees' perception of the capability to participate in decision-making, which is consistent with the concept of perceived behavioural control by Ajzen (2012).

For the effective participation of individuals in decision-making, employees need to sense the opportunity to participate (Liang, Huang and

Chen, 2013), as suggested by studies showing that a lack of perceived influence at work can lead to alienation, withdrawal and silence (Morrison, See and Pan, 2015).

It is particularly critical in coops (Bhuyan, 2007), whose one of the founding principles of its existence is the participation of its members in decisions. Indeed, Österberg and Nilsson (2009) found that members' perceptions of their participation in decisions explained most of the differences in members' commitment to the coops.

In line with this, the degree to which employees believe they have the opportunity to speak up in the workplace is a critical proxy for employees' voice behaviours. This view is consistent with Prince and Rao (2021), who found a path between self-efficacy and voice behaviour by revealing the mediating effect of perceived influence at work.

Moreover, Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012) demonstrated that perceived influence at the workplace encourages employees to use their power of influence constructively by engaging in voice behaviours when they possess a favourable attitude toward work, such as overall job satisfaction.

Therefore, arguing that individuals who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more willing to manifest their voice, the opportunity to participate might be the instrument of explanation of how individual attitudes determine voice behaviour. Accordingly, satisfied employees infer that participation opportunity allows them to contribute to quality decisions; consequently, they express their voice.

Hp 2. Participative decision-making opportunities mediate the relationship between employee job satisfaction and supportive voice behaviours.

2.3 The complementing role of ER climate and Participative DM

According to the definition of ER climate, in cooperatives it fosters a sense of direct access to management and the decision-making process for employees, resulting from their perceptions of the participation practices and policies that are in place (Boxall, 2014). Consequently, such perceptions significantly impact employees' perception of their power of influence over decisions.

Based on this perspective, a sequential mediation of the mediators discussed in previous hypotheses exists between job satisfaction and supportive voice. As noted, the attitude-behaviour theory (Ajzen, 2012) postulates that attitude, perceived social pressure related to the behaviour and

perceived capability to perform the behaviour are crucial determinants of individuals' behaviour. We consider that the perceptions of ER climate (subjective norm) and participative opportunities (perception of control over the decision) explain the underlying process of how job satisfaction determines employee voice behaviours.

It is consistent with the study by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012), which explored and found a mediation role of perceived influence in the relationship between management consultation of employees in decisions and voice behaviour. Accordingly, we propose that a positive ER climate likely enhances employees' sense of influence at work, thus enhancing in turn employees' supportive voice. More in detail, ER climate strengthens employees' sense of influence over decision-making at work. This perceived influence then increases voice because it enhances the confidence of satisfied employees to take individual initiative and engage in voice behaviours. Thus, we expect job satisfaction to relate positively to employees' voice via ER climate and their perceived influence acting as mediators.

Hp 3. ER climate, then participative decision-making opportunities, mediate the relationship between employee job satisfaction and supportive voice behaviours.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Data collection and sample

Supported by LegaCoop Toscana, the study involves individuals in nineteen worker coops in Tuscany, a region in central Italy. Consistently with the Italian coops system (Istat, 2019), we identified and involved the coops able to represent the regional context in collaboration with LegaCoop Toscana. These cooperatives operated in agri-food, production and services, culture, tourism, communication and social sectors, and most are small organisations.

Data for this study were collected through a web-based survey using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The data collection started in November 2020 and ended in April 2021. First, participants received an email containing an introduction to our research and a web link to an anonymous online survey. After 15 days from the start, we sent the participants a reminder to complete the survey. Participants are from two

group members of coops, for which we presented two symmetrical questionnaires. The first group includes coop members composing the board of directors (BoD), namely executives and managers; the second group involves the other members, identified according to specific criteria. First, we involved in the research immediate supervisors and skip-level leaders (Detert and Treviño, 2010). Furthermore, individuals with formal responsibilities were involved and individuals with key roles, such as those who represent hubs for the exchange of information flow within the organisation. Finally, we contacted other individuals who, for their relevant professional experience, receive special attention from their cooperatives. Thus, they have central opportunities for voice in the workplace and in the decision-making process.

We sent a total of 808 invitations and received 335 responses, 96 from members of boards of directors and 239 from coop workers (response rate: 41%). However, we found out that out of the 335 questionnaires returned, 34 were only partially completed. These partial questionnaires had missing data for some items, so they were treated as nonresponse items. Despite this, we considered the need to test nonresponse bias by running t-tests between fully and partially completed questionnaires. The latter offered responses limited to personal information in most cases, so the t-test was conducted only on such variables. The analysis showed no statistically significant differences between the two subgroups, thus proving that nonresponse bias did not affect the findings. After eliminating these incomplete questionnaires with missing data, we had 301 usable responses in all subsequent analyses. The sample is homogeneous (50.17% of participants are females, 49.83% are males). Most participants (40.53%) are between 41 and 50 years old and over 50 (33.89%). The remaining part is between 31 and 40 years old (20.93%) and under 30 (4.65%). Most participants have a high school degree (34.88%), followed by a master's degree (30.23%). Bachelor graduates represent 14.62%.

3.2 Measures

We operationalised the variables included in the survey through self-perception measures (Spector, 2019) based on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree unless otherwise indicated). The survey was in Italian, based on the adopted English version of the original scales (appendix 1). In line with existing research (Cavaliere, Sassetti and Lombardi, 2021), self-reports allow measuring variables that are not

verifiable by other means as they capture individual perceptions, individuals' intentions, attitudes, and orientations that are, by nature, inherently internal to the target person. The complete list of each variable's items is included in Appendix 1.

Job satisfaction (Job Satisf). The study uses three items from Fast, Burris and Bartel (2014). This measure indicates the global satisfaction commonly used to assess overall employee attitude (Holland, Pyman, Cooper *et al.*, 2011). An example of this item is 'Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job'($\alpha = 0.87$).

ER climate. The first mediator is the modified version by Pyman *et al.* (2010) of the single measure of employment relations climate used by Freeman and Rogers (1999) in the original Workplace Representation and Participation Survey (WRPS) (Freeman and Rogers 1999). The use of single-item measures is often discouraged due to the potential reliability and validity issues. However, scholars challenged this view of single-item measures and demonstrated that they are not necessarily worse than using multi-item scales (Wanous and Reichers, 1996; Wanous, Reichers and Hudy, 1997). Regarding climate single-item measure, it has been used in the British Social Attitudes Survey and the Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) 2004. The item is «In general, relations between management and employees are good».

Participative decision-making opportunity (PDM). The second mediator uses four items from Lam *et al.* (2002) that essentially seek individuals' degree of participation in decisions affecting their jobs, such as: «In this organisation, I have a high degree of influence in company decisions» ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Supportive voice. The measure of the dependent variable is four adapted items from Maynes and Podsakoff (2014). An example of item is: 'I defend organisational programs that are worthwhile when others unfairly criticise the programs.' ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Control variables. Five control variables allowed for to reduce of the power of alternative explanations for the results. We have based the selection on previous studies that have illustrated their influence on the extent to which members speak up (Fast *et al.*, 2014). The variables were: hierarchy level (1=member of Board of Directors; 2=coop worker), organisation (n=19), education (1= the lowest level of education; 6=the highest level of education), gender (1=female; 2=male) and organisational seniority (in years). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlations.

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlations.

	Mean	*Median*	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
1. Job Sat	5.5	6.0	1.29	1									
2. ER climate	4.9	5.0	1.39	.487**	1								
3. PDM	4.0	4.0	1.63	.315**	.328**	1							
4. Supportive voice	5.5	5.7	1.17	.188**	0.086	.419**	1						
5. Age	3.0	3.0	0.85	-0.001	-0.086	-.122*	-0.011	1					
6. Education	4.0	4.0	1.38	-0.074	-0.030	.123*	0.090	-0.093	1				
7. Gender	1.5	1.0	0.50	-0.051	-0.050	0.095	0.053	0.035	-.181**	1			
8. Hierarchy level	1.7	2.0	0.45	-0.053	-0.018	-.359**	-.228**	-0.095	0.087	-.173**	1		
9. Organisation	9.0	7.0	6.07	-.134*	-0.096	-0.073	-0.099	-0.075	-0.071	-0.033	-0.029	1	
10. Seniority	15.1	15.0	9.36	0.045	-0.066	0.006	.165**	.553**	-.139*	0.012	-.171**	-.118*	1

* The correlation is significant at 0.05
** The correlation is significant at 0.01

Table 2 – Quality measurement indexes

Construct	*Items*	*Factor loading*	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*rho*	*Composite Reliability*	*AVE*
Supportive Voice	q1a	0.897	0.92	0.920	0.950	0.799
	q1b	0.906				
	q1c	0.881				
	q1d	0.890				
ER climate	q26	1.000	-	-	-	-
Partipative DM	q7a	0.942	0.92	0.926	0.944	0.809
	q7b	0.827				
	q7c	0.890				
	q7d	0.935				
Job Satisfaction	q28a	0.794	0.869	0.921	0. 919	0.791
	q28b	0.935				
	q28c	0.931				

Table 3 – CFA measurement models comparison

Models	*χ2/df*	*CFI*	*TLI*	*RMSEA*	*SRMR*
5-factor model	1.476	0.991	0.988	0.04	0.0286
2-factor model	13.382	0.742	0.68	0. 203	0.2014
Single-factor model	25.91	0.473	0.356	0.288	0. 222

4. Data analysis

Data were analysed using partial least squares (PLS)-based structural equation modelling (SEM) approach with SmartPLS v4 (Ringle, Wende and Becker, 2015). PLS-SEM handles a broader range of sample sizes and model complexity efficiently and is ideal for studies with smaller sample sizes. It is also less sensitive to violations of assumptions of normal distributions as PLS-SEM does not assume the normal distribution of data.

4.1 Partial least square-structural equation modelling results

4.1.1 Evaluation of the measurement model

Before evaluating the mediation model, all quality criteria of the measurement models need to be respected. First, the study analyses the model's scale reliability, composite reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity to evaluate the PLS measurement model.

Table 2 shows that Cronbach's alpha (CR) coefficients for all research variables are higher than 0.7, indicating acceptable constructs' reliability. Moreover, both Jöreskog rho and the composite reliability values (>0.75) indicated satisfactory internal consistency reliability of the constructs. Moreover, to verify the validity of each construct, we checked the index validity (factor loadings of indices). After removing an item that presented low factor loading (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2013), we calculated both convergent and discriminant validity. For convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) respected the threshold of 0.50. As for the constructs' discriminant validity, first, the outer loadings of all indicators on their respective constructs were greater than the loadings on other constructs; second, no measurement items cross-loaded highly on another construct, supporting discriminant validity. Finally, we compared the square root of the AVE of each construct with the inter-construct correlation coefficients. We found that in each case, the former was more significant than the latter (Campbell, 1960). These checks confirmed the validity of the measures used, as shown in Table 2.

4.1.2 Common method variance.

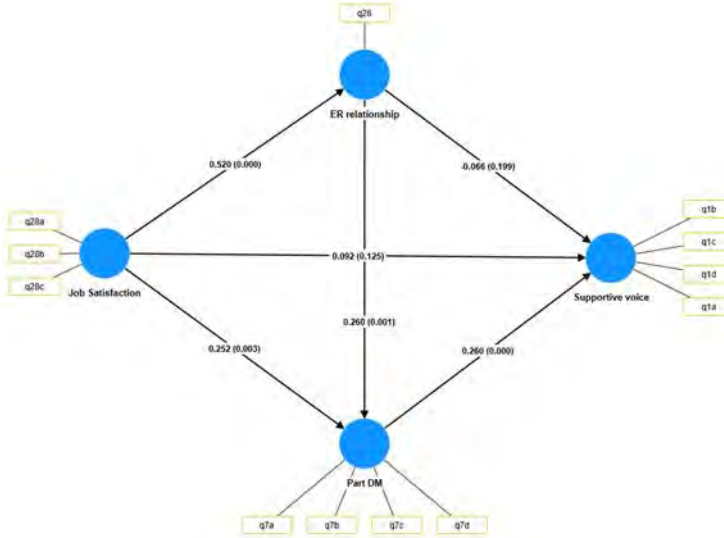
We carried out several procedures to avoid common method variance (CMV) – a limitation of self-report data. First, based on Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee *et al.* (2003), the items examined were part of a broader questionnaire on other constructs and measurements associated with employee voice. We translated these measures into Italian using simple, specific and concise statements to eliminate any ambiguity in interpretation. We presented all the items randomly to participants and separated the dependent variable from the independent variables. In the survey instructions, we communicated to the respondents that there were no right or wrong answers and that they should answer the survey questions in a quiet environment to select the answers that most fit their opinion. To address the potential social desirability effect, we ensured the anonymity of responses. Secondly, we employed Harman's (1976) one-factor test once we gathered data, using principal component factoring. The unrotated and rotated factor analyses using the eigenvalue greater than one criterion revealed five factors. In addition, the unrotated factor solution accounted for 34% of the covariance among the measures, well below the threshold value of 50% (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Moreover, the first single-factor model showed a poor data fit, indicating that it did not account for the majority of variance in the data (Malhotra, Kim and Patil, 2006), as shown in Table 3. Finally, we check multicollinearity using the variance inflation factors (VIFs) results, which were lower than 3.3 as required (Kock, 2015; Roldán and Sánchez-Franco, 2012).

4.2 Hypothesis testing and path analysis.

We carried out a preliminary analysis of hypotheses using PROCESS MACRO for SPSS. Then, based on previous studies (Ashiru, Erdil and Oluwajana, 2022; Dhir, Dutta and Ghosh, 2020), we adopted SmartPLS 4, which uses partial least squares (PLS) to test the mediation hypotheses through more powerful results. By considering all mediators simultaneously in one model, SmartPLS offers a complete picture of the mechanisms through which an exogenous construct affects an endogenous construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle *et al.*, 2021) and bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) generates the path coefficient, mean value, standard error, t-value, and R2 and adjusted R2 values of the hypothesised proposed model.

Figure 2 – Path coefficients and p-value of the mediation model



Mediation hypothesis testing requires the significance of each indirect effect (Table 5) and the direct effect between Job Satisfaction and supportive voice behaviours (Table 4).

Table 5 shows each path between the investigated variables. Regarding the control variables, Table 4 shows that any control variable significantly affects the dependent variable, except for seniority, which has a slight impact (b=0.024). Interestingly, most of the control variables have a significant effect on PDM, suggesting us some implications discussed in the following section.

As for the basic assumption, Table 4 revealed a significant *direct effect of job satisfaction on supportive voice* (b=0.158; p<0.01).

Regarding the indirect effects of ER climate, Table 4 shows a significant association with job satisfaction and the absence of a significant path with supportive voice, suggesting that *ER climate does not explain the effect of job satisfaction on the dependent variable*. Table 5 consistently shows that the mediation effect is insignificant, and the bootstrap CI confirms the absence of association between the variables investigated, straddling zero. Hypothesis 1 is thus not confirmed.

Table 4 – Path coefficients simple model and mediation model

	B	*Mean value*	*STdev*	*T-test*	*p-values*	*Bootstrapping CI*	
						2.5%	*97.5%*
Simple model							
Job Sat -> SupportV	0.158	0.155	0.056	2.822	<0.01	0.044	0.262
Mediation model							
ER climate -> PDM	0.260	0.261	0.077	3.378	<0.001	0.112	0.402
ER climate -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.166	0.041
Job Sat -> ER climate	0.520	0.518	0.059	8.753	<0.001	0.397	0.632
Job Sat -> PDM	0.252	0.258	0.084	3.008	<0.01	0.096	0.404
Job Sat -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.020	0.214
PDM -> SupportV	0.260	0.259	0.044	5.926	<0.001	0.171	0.343
Control variables							
Age -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.308	0.044
Education -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.040	0.148
Gender -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.197	0.295
Hierarchy -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.449	0.049
Organisation -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.029	0.012
Seniority -> SupportV	0.024	0.024	0.008	3.020	<0.01	0.010	0.040
Age -> ER climate					n.s.	-0.291	0.102
Education -> ER climate					n.s.	-0.120	0.088
Gender -> ER climate					n.s.	-0.352	0.168
Hierarchy -> ER climate					n.s.	-0.372	0.274
Organisation -> ER climate					n.s.	-0.034	0.014
Seniority -> ER climate					n.s.	-0.030	0.007
Age -> PDM	-0.300	-0.292	0.113	2.663	<0.01	-0.518	-0.095
Gender -> PDM	0.303	0.316	0.155	1.962	<0.05	-0.001	0.607
Education -> PDM	0.218	0.215	0.053	4.076	<0.001	0.120	0.318
Hierarchy -> PDM	-1.272	-1.255	0.179	7.123	<0.001	-1.608	-0.905
Organisation -> PDM					n.s.	-0.034	0.017
Seniority -> PDM					n.s.	-0.013	0.031

Table 5 – Mediation hypotheses test

Hp	*Mediation model*	*b*	*Mean value*	*ST dev*	*T-test*	*p-values*	*Bootstrapping CI*		*Decision*
							2.5%	*97.5%*	
1	Job Sat -> ER climate -> SupportV					n.s.	-0.092	0.021	Rejected
2	Job Sat -> PDM -> SupportV	0.066	0.067	0.025	2.650	<0.01	0.022	0.118	Accepted
3	Job Sat > ER climate -> PDM -> SupportV	0.035	0.035	0.012	2.879	<0.01	0.014	0.062	Accepted

Table 6 – Effect Size of mediation analysis (F-Square)

Hp	*Relationship*	*b*	*Mean value*	*STdev*	*P values*
1	Job Sat -> ER climate	0.334	0.366	0.097	<0.001
1	ER climate -> SupportV	-	-	-	n.s.
2	Job Sat -> PDM	0.301	0.329	0.080	<0.001
2	PDM -> SupportV	0.245	0.273	0.067	<0.001
3	ER climate -> PDM	0.313	0.340	0.083	<0.001

As for the mediation effect of *Participative Decision Making*, Table 4 shows the significance of paths with Job Satisfaction and supportive voice. Following the same procedure above, regarding hypothesis 2, Table 5 shows that the *mediation effect* on the relationship between Job Satisfaction and supportive voice is *significant* (b=0.066, $p<0.001$), and the bootstrap confidence interval (CI) entirely above zero confirms the positive indirect effect. Hp2 is thus confirmed.

As for the *serial mediation*, Table 4 shows the *significant paths* of Job Satisfaction–ER climate, ER climate–PDM and PDM–supportive voice. Table 5 shows that the serial mediation effect on the relationship between Job Satisfaction and supportive voice is significant (b=0.035, $p<0.001$), and the bootstrap confidence interval (CI) entirely above zero confirms the positive indirect effect. Hp3 is thus confirmed.

Finally, looking at the hypotheses tested, Cohen's f2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 indicate a weak, medium or large effect size between an exogenous and endogenous variable (Cohen, 2013). The results from Table 6 suggest that all relationships assumed in the hypotheses are acceptable because the effect sizes of these paths are >0.02, except for the association between ER climate and support voice, consistent with the analysis above.

Figure 2 shows the results of the mediation model.

5. Discussion

The present article addresses the debate on democracy in organisations by exploring how organisations can foster members' participation, which this study investigates by exploring supportive voice behaviours. By proposing voice as a precursor of participation in the workplace, this research provides a micro-level analysis of how individuals' attitudes and perceptions affect employees' behaviours in the workplace. Drawing on the attitude-behaviour theory (Ajzen, 2012), the study explores how employee job satisfaction influences supportive voice behaviours, focusing on the mediation effects of the employment relations climate and participative decision-making opportunity. The data analysis shows two specific indirect effects of job satisfaction on employee voice: the first through PDM, the second through both mediators investigated in serial (ER climate then PDM). The implications of these results are discussed below.

5.1 Theoretical and practical contributions

The first contribution of this study involves the general literature focused on exploring workers' participation in everyday activities (Cotton *et al.*, 1988). Constructive employee responses, such as supportive voice behaviours, allow employee taking a step towards direct participation in decision-making processes. This allows them to personally share their information, preferences, and opinions about work-related decisions (Black and Gregersen, 1997; Budd *et al.*, 2010).

Therefore, from a general point of view, inspired by the SET and the reciprocity norm (Blau, 1964), the above findings corroborate previous research about the rise of constructive employee responses from positive attitudes toward the work, such as job satisfaction (Chamberlin *et al.*, 2017; Hagedoorn *et al.*, 1999). It could be even more critical for cooperatives, owned, run and managed by their members.

Complementing previous research (King *et al.*, 2021; Österberg and Nilsson, 2009), the second contribution of this study is on employees' perception of their influence at work, which plays a critical role in motivating them to participate. Indeed, the results indicate that beliefs individuals infer about their participation and influence over decisions is the critical link through which job satisfaction affects voice behaviours.

A third contribution of this study regards the focus on the interactions between management and employees in the broader perspective of employees' participation in decisions (Johnstone, 2015). The findings indicate that more than the perceived favourable ER climate is needed to encourage employees to participate in decisions. It is instead a proxy for conveying the effect of job satisfaction on participative behaviours only if it affects individuals' beliefs of participation and influences over decisions, which then impact voice behaviours. In other words, ER climate explains how job satisfaction determines voice behaviour only if it impacts individual perceptions of participation and influence in decisions.

Taken as a whole, the above findings more generally suggest that the opportunity to participate is a prerequisite for effective participative decision-making (King *et al.*, 2021; Liang *et al.*, 2013).

The findings of this research suggest implications for cooperatives and organisations focused on the participation of their members and democracy. First, this study has proposed that individuals infer ER climate from the employment relations involving daily employee–management interactions, which can occur in direct and indirect, collective and individual forms (Pyman *et al.*, 2010; Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey, 2013;

Valizade *et al.*, 2016). In the wake of this, our results suggest that to explore and encourage members' participation, cooperatives should consider the synergistic effect ER climate, embedding social norms about the relationship between management and employees, has on the sense of direct access to management and the decision-making process, and as a consequence, on the power of influence over decisions. As such, cooperatives should focus on developing an employment relationship climate, including the relationship between management and individuals, opened to individual input and ideas, which creates an atmosphere of direct access to influence decisions that, in line with our findings, increase employees' perceptions of influence. Moreover, cooperatives should create well-functioning opportunities to participate by encouraging members' voice expression in everyday activities and decisions. Besides cooperatives, the above considerations might also be critical for other organisational contexts, which place individual participation as critical of their functioning. In this regard, future research might extend the results of this study by exploring other contexts focused on employee participation.

5.2 Limitations and future research suggestions

Despite the promising findings, our research has limitations. First, our study on a sample of 301 members of worker-cooperatives in Italy is cross-sectional: although PLS-SEM allows us to explore predictive relationships that can be interpreted as causal relationships (Hair *et al.*, 2021), due to the data collection at a single moment, this study cannot establish the definitive direction of the relationship between the variables investigated (Wang, Gan and Wu, 2016). Therefore, further research should adopt a longitudinal approach to gathering data to clarify the nature and form of this relationship.

Moreover, different elements might intervene in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee voice. For instance, the critical role of perceptions of opportunity to participate and influence in decisions might result from other elements besides ER climate, involving the management dimensions, such as their leadership approach and orientation toward new inputs. Moreover, contextual factors such as cultural norms, voice mechanisms, and systems might impact the models (Kwon and Farndale, 2020).

This study focuses on supportive voice behaviours, which represent constructive, communicative behaviour in supporting or defending work-

related situations, that literature associated with individual involvement and work participation (Ruck *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, the above concept does not include the support or defence of peers' contributions. Therefore, scholars might enlarge the understanding of the potential power of supportive voice by exploring other voice behaviours, which might amplify others' contribution in a more straightforward way, such as praising the other's idea, or implicitly, such as clarifying the idea or calling for it to be considered (Bain, Kreps, Meikle *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, although supportive voice behaviours are relevant for observing employees' workplace participation, exploring different voice behaviours could be interesting. Future research could thus expand this study by including other voice orientations that are more demander and riskier for employees, such as challenging and prohibitive voice behaviours (Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014), because their expression requires the employee more effort, exposing them to potential consequences (Morrison, 2014). These voice behaviours represent a different form of participation in the workplace; therefore, future studies might explore the effects that job satisfaction, ER climate and PDM opportunity have on these.

Some avenue for future research originates from the results of the subjective variables included in the model. First, this study found a significant relationship between seniority with supportive voice behaviours. Employees who have spent more time working in the same organisation might develop more confidence in engaging in discretionary behaviours such as expressing ideas and opinions at work (Gyekye and Haybatollahi, 2015). A longitudinal approach could be adequate for future research to explore the effect of time and seniority on voice behaviours.

Moreover, personal characteristics of individuals, such as age, gender, and educational levels, seems to affect perceptions about participative decision-making opportunity. Interestingly, the effects of these characteristics are various. Future research could expand these results by replicating this study in other contexts and organisations to understand this influence's extent better. Finally, in addition to the above suggestion emerging from our results, personality traits, emotions (Heaphy, Lilius and Feldman, 2022), and individual's motivations to speak out might affect their inclination to express their voice (Zhou, Mao, Liu *et al.*, 2022), representing thus avenues for future research.

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Appendix 1

Original scales adopted in this study.

7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

Independent variable
Job satisfaction (Job Satisf) - Fast et al. (2014)

a. All in all, I like working on this job.
b. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.
c. Overall, I think I'm as happy as I could be with this job.

Mediators
ER climate - Pyman et al. (2010)

a. In general, relations between management and employees are good.

Participative decision-making opportunity (PartDM) - Lam et al. (2002).
In this organisation…

a. …I have high degree of influence in company decisions.
b. …I often participate in decisions regarding my job.
c. …I have high degree of influence in the decisions affecting me.
d. …I can participate in setting new company policies.
e. …my views have a real influence in company decisions.

Supportive voice - Maynes and Podsakoff, (2014)

a. I defend organisational programs that are worthwhile when others unfairly criticise the programs.
b. I express support for productive work procedures when others express uncalled for criticisms of the procedures.
c. I speak up in support of organisational policies that have merit when others raise unjustified concerns about the policies.
d. I defend effective work methods when others express invalid criticisms of the method

Does the Equal Opportunities Committee make democracy work (better) in academia?[1]

by *Laura Azzolina*[*], *Andrea Biagiotti*[**], *Carmela Guarascio*[***]

Abstract

The democratization of organizations is studied in this article with reference to the university system. In recent years, Italian universities have followed the European trend in redesigning themselves as organizations attentive to performance, excellence, and achievement. This has resulted in the enhancement of mechanisms of 'adverse selection' for women, both in career advancement and in access to decision-making positions. But compared to other European countries, Italian universities have lagged behind in policies to promote gender equality. However, they have for some time been endowed with bodies, the Equal Opportunities Committees (Comitati Unici di Garanzia, CUGs), established in order to reduce discrimination and to promote greater participation in the academic organization. The functioning of the CUGs, which varies greatly at local level, is linked to the possibility of benefiting from resources of various kinds. Research shows that the resources that central governance makes available to a CUG are important. So too are the relational networks in which the members of the CUG are involved and which increase their visibility, legitimacy, and motivation. The interaction between top-down and bottom-up resources furnishes an analytical framework useful for interpreting the variable effectiveness of the CUGs in the democratic quality of Italian universities. It also helps to conduct more detailed specification of some theoretical dimensions already brought to the attention of scholars in the perspective known as 'fixing the organizations'.

Keywords: Italian universities; university governance; equal opportunities committee; gender parity, organizational democracy.

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[1] The work is a result of a joint research and a joint processing of data, nevertheless, paragraphs 1 and 5 are attributed to Laura Azzolina, paragraphs 2 and 3 to Carmela Guarascio, and paragraph 4 to Andrea Biagiotti.

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Abstract. La commissione per le pari opportunità fa funzionare (meglio) la democrazia nell'ambito accademico?

La democratizzazione delle organizzazioni è qui studiata con riferimento all'Università. Negli anni passati le università italiane hanno seguito con determinazione la tendenza europea a ridisegnarsi come organizzazioni attente alla performance, ai percorsi di eccellenza e di merito, acuendo meccanismi di "selezione avversa" per le donne, sia nelle fasi della carriera che nell'accesso alle posizioni decisionali. Ma rispetto ad altri paesi europei hanno accumulato ritardi nelle politiche di promozione della equità di genere. Tuttavia, da tempo le università italiane sono state dotate di organismi, i Comitati unici di Garanzia -CUG- istituiti con l'obiettivo di promuovere la qualità democratica dell'organizzazione. Il funzionamento del CUG, molto variabile a livello locale, è legato alla possibilità di beneficiare di risorse di diverso tipo. La ricerca mostra che sono importanti le risorse che la governance centrale mette a disposizione del CUG, ma che rilevano anche le reti di relazioni in cui i membri del CUG sono coinvolti e che ne accrescono la visibilità, la legittimità e la motivazione. L'interazione fra risorse top down e bottom up offre una griglia di analisi in grado di interpretare l'efficacia variabile dei CUG nei processi di democratizzazione delle università italiane, nonché di formulare, su un piano teorico, una più dettagliata articolazione analitica di alcune dimensioni di analisi già poste all'attenzione della letteratura nella prospettiva nota come 'fixing the organisations'.

Parole chiave: Università italiane; Governance universitaria; Comitato Pari Opportunità; Parità di genere, democrazia organizzativa.

Introduction: why study the CUGs?

In this article, organizational democracy is addressed with reference to the university, considered as an organizational context suited to the production of particular services (scientific research, training, technology transfer, etc.).

In the literature on organizational models and in that on the historical evolution of educational and research institutions, the university is generally associated with advanced forms of democratic management. Grandori (2016: 167) notes that «in organization and management theory (…) the knowledge-based perspective on the firm has drawn the general implication that affective firm organization is expected to become more horizontal and integrated». Harrison and Freeman (2004: 52) remind us that «democracy is much more likely to work in business settings in which work requires creativity and innovation». Also, for universities, the imperative to utilise knowledge, foster creativity, and generate innovation is an important driver away from

top-down and hierarchical models (Grandori, 2016: 169; Masten, 2014) and it nurtures loosely coupled organizational structures (Weick and Orton, 1990; Zan, 2011). In Mintzberg's (1983: 197) classic description, academics are professionals who «not only do (...) control their own work, but they also seek collective control of the administrative decisions that affect their decisions, for example, to hire colleagues, to promote them, and to distribute resources».

However, in the recent Italian experience, the profound redesigning of universities due to Law 240/2010 has introduced a distribution of powers that – as some observers have reported (Capano *et al.,* 2017) – has been described as «anti-democratic». What would make the Italian university less participatory is the concentration of power in the rector and the governance bodies (H-ermes 2014), an accentuated verticalisation of powers that has distanced decision-making processes from the direct participation of the faculty (Facchini *et al.,* 2018).

In such a redefined academic environment, the risk is that of a further erosion of the influential capacity of the faculty members most exposed to discriminatory dynamics. The issue of gender is useful for investigating this aspect.

Indeed, gender studies underline that the recent academic reforms have pursued, among others, some goals for change that have impacted on the conditions of gender equity: the introduction of systems to assess the quality of research and teaching; and the introduction of competitive mechanisms for funding by results. Moreover, the new procedure for entry into the university system, with the introduction of fixed-term posts (Rtd-a; Rtd-b), as well as cutbacks in public funding, as documented by a large body of literature, has translated into mechanisms of 'adverse selection' for women in the initial stages of their careers (Gaiaschi, 2022; Gaiaschi *et al.,* 2018; Picardi, 2019; Rossi, 2015). Research has highlighted the negative impact of reforms inspired by New Public Management on the chances of achieving gender parity (Riegraf *et al.,* 2010; Ferree and Zippell, 2015), as demonstrated by phenomena such as the 'glass door', i.e. the differentiated access to a career between men and women (Picardi, 2019); the 'glass ceiling', i.e. the invisible barrier that prevents women from becoming full professors (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Marini and Meschitti, 2018; Filandri and Pasqua, 2019); the 'leaky pipeline', i.e. the disadvantages accumulated by women throughout their careers (Bozzon *et al.,*, 2017; Murgia and Poggio, 2018) – which induce women to exit from the academic labour market (Alper, 1993; Le Feuvre *et al.,* 2019).

These phenomena are all manifestations of the same difficulty encountered by women in both entering and remaining in the university system; a difficulty exacerbated by the inaccessibility of the representative or governance bodies of universities on which the reform has centralized decision-making powers (Regini *et al.,* 2015, Facchini *et al.,* 2018). It is worth noting that of the 97 state and non-state Italian universities, today only 10 are governed by female rectors. This condition adds to the risk of gender inequality within academic pathways a breach of the principle of justice which deprives universities of fair representation. As a result, the legitimacy of decision-making and governance processes is weakened, also because of a university's reduced capacity to meet the demands of all its members.

In Italy (but not only) the reforms have therefore slowed down the achievement of equality in universities. To cope with these trends, for more than a decade the European countries, also driven by EU, have sought to promote various policies. One of the objectives is to increase the presence of women in decision-making bodies.

The importance of this objective rests on the more or less implicit assumption that ensuring a critical mass of women in governing bodies makes it possible to modify the agenda and the decision-making style of organizations, thereby fostering change (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021). Indeed, also the political science literature stresses the importance of the presence of women in decision-making bodies in order to enhance the quality of democratic representation when the items to be included on the agenda are selected (Kittilson, 2016), to make it more likely that they act in favour of women with respect to men (Ayata and Tutuncu 2008), and to prompt the reframing of debates so that they reflect the interests of women (Childs and Lovenduski, 2013). Higher education systems that have firmly embraced this perspective have, for example, adopted gender quotas, with which they have ensured greater progress in female representation (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021). In Italy, by contrast, the already only modest attempt contained in Law 240/2010 to strengthen equality on a normative level[2] was further weakened by the autonomy maintained by each university in defining the rules for the composition of its decision-making bodies (Rostan, 2015). Overall, in Italy the level of feminization of university governance bodies has remained largely tied to the political-discretionary exercise of the

[2] In the wake of consolidation of the principle of gender equality defined at the constitutional level, Law 240/2010 mandated respect of the principle of equal opportunities between men and women, albeit limited to the composition of the *board of directors* (Consiglio di amministrazione, CdA).

rectors' power of appointment to the governance team (Rostan, 2015) and to their ability to informally influence the choice of candidates for collegial bodies (Capano, 2015).

Whilst acknowledging progress in closing the representation gap of the university systems of the countries considered «proactive» in equality policies (EU, 2014: 17), the literature has recently highlighted the shortcomings of a perspective based on numbers (*fixing the numbers*). The assumption of this perspective is that the equality of numbers in decision-making bodies does not in itself ensure elimination of the discriminations that occur throughout the academic careers of women (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021). The approach currently prevalent in European policies – known as *fixing the organizations* – has focused more closely on the role that organizational structures, procedures, and processes play, and on the importance of placing them at the core of a systemic and integrated change process.

Adopting this perspective, some analyses highlight that strengthening the structures for the promotion of gender equality in universities and ensuring the gender competence of top managers are necessary requirements for an effective gender equality policy (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021). At the core of this approach is the difference between the existence of structures dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the real capacity of these structures to exercise critical action, to counter – and even block, if necessary – current policies and practices. Similarly, besides ensuring equality in the proportions between men and women, given the important role that leading governance figures can play in promoting gender equality, attention should be paid to the experience and specific skills required to cover a managerial position. This concerns an organization's ability to ensure that top managers have a *gender competence*, by which is meant the ability to *recognize* the significance of inequalities in the workplace, *analyse* them with the support of gender experts and holders of scientific expertise on gender, and *devise* actions to counter them. Gender competence and the empowerment of dedicated structures must support each other: gender equality policies can be efficacious provided that «powerful structures meet gender competent stakeholders» (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021: 178).

In Italy, universities have been equipped with structures dedicated to combating inequality, such as the Equal Opportunities Committees (*Comitati Unici di Garanzia*, henceforth CUGs) – bodies which have been assigned

proposal, consultancy and verification tasks.[3] Although the CUGs are not the only actors responsible for combating gender inequalities (consider, for example, the *Confidential Counsellor* or specific pro-rectors), the CUGs are distinguished by the fact that they do not depend on the discretionary choices of the rector in office and that they have been present for over a decade in all universities as a result of a regulatory provision.

In theory, their high degree of institutionalization and their widespread presence put the CUGs at the centre of systemic measures and actions for the promotion of change in the university system, enabling them to promote integrated, long-term, and structural policies in favour of gender equality. In theory, therefore, the CUGs are among the structures with which to improve the democratic quality of universities.

But in practice, although there are no empirical studies on the matter (apart from reports issued by individual universities or working documents), we know from preliminary interviews that the ability of CUGs to trigger change is highly variable. Their heterogeneous composition (academic and administrative) and the weakness of the competences attributed to them, sometimes restrict the CUGs to performing modest functions in the production of pro-forma documents (as in the case of *gender budgets*, *bilanci di genere*, which are often only reports that do not entail any real budgetary allocation for positive actions), to exercising a consultative role in the form of a ritual bureaucratic process, and to formulating actions that remain unimplemented.

What causes this variability? What are the factors that explain the effectiveness and efficacy of some CUGs and the weakness and rituality of others?

In an attempt to identify the main factors that make policies for the promotion of gender equity more effective, this article focuses on the modes of action of CUGs. Studying these bodies, besides filling a gap in empirical research on their functioning and their influence on the democratization of the academic system, is a good way to test the results reported in the international literature regarding the role of the 'empowerment of structures' and the *gender competence* of their leaders (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021) in the contexts that we investigate.

After defining the characteristics and evolution of CUGs in Italian universities (Section 2) and describing the research design and methodology

[3] Directive of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Guidelines on the functioning of the *Equal Opportunities Committees in Public Administrations for Workers' Well-being and against Discrimination*, 4 March 2011.

(Section 3), the article continues with presentation of the results (Section 4). It then discusses the latter and finally draws conclusions (Section 5).

Also, for our selected cases, the article shows empirical evidence that goes in the direction of the hypotheses in the literature on the centrality of gender competences and the empowerment of structures by academic governance according to a top-down logic. But it also furnishes insights into the importance of mobilizing widespread and bottom-up legitimation resources for change: a dimension neglected by the existing literature, and which constitutes the original contribution of this study.

1. CUGs: their definition and evolution

The CUGs were established by art. 21 of Law 183/2010, which expanded legislative decree no. 165/2001 providing for the establishment of CUGs in all public administrations, with the aims of promoting equal opportunities, enhancing the well-being of workers, and countering discrimination in the workplace.

The CUGs have several actors: representatives of the technical-administrative staff; the academic staff; the student body; and the most representative trade union organizations at the administrative level – because when they were created, they absorbed various instances. In fact, the CUGs have replaced the equal opportunities committees set up in the public administration through collective bargaining, in implementation of article 16 of Presidential Decree no. 395 of 23 August 1988 («defined during negotiation in the sector will be measures and mechanisms that ensure real equality between men and women in the public sector»). This transition was not painless; in the first phase, concerns had been expressed that the CUGs, in absorbing the competences of both the equal opportunities committees and of the joint committees on mobbing, could assume a weakened configuration and a lesser propensity for the scientific activity associated with them. This is demonstrated by the facts, for example, that the Italian National University Council (CUN), together with the National Conference of the Equal Opportunities Committees of the Italian Universities, explicitly expressed its concern, and that the provision was also the subject of parliamentary questions (Taricone and Broccoli, 2012).

The original purpose of the CUG was to broaden the scope of the guarantees covered by the Equal Opportunity Committees. Besides gender discrimination, the CUG addresses all the other forms of direct and indirect

discrimination, also intervening in the contractual provisions of the national collective labour agreement (CCNL). These bodies are entrusted with a strictly organizational task, but their actual functioning is unclear, so much so that in some universities there is both an equal opportunities committee and a unique guarantee committee, each with its own tasks.

Both because of its particular structure and because of the issues on which it is called to express an opinion, the CUG is configured as a body able to ensure the effective participation of all components of the university's life. In general, however, the committee's members have a clear gender or equality protection competence. In many cases, among the members of a CUG there are participants engaged in counselling services, or in the previous equal opportunities committees, who convey the particular interest of a specific part of the administrative and teaching staff, for equal opportunities in terms of gender.

The CUGs are structured according to the university regulations that independently establish the appointment criteria, which can be both elective and by rectoral nomination so as to represent all the individuals that study or work in universities. The participation mechanisms are very heterogeneous, and the election or nomination process frequently takes place through internal consultation conducted to evaluate the willingness to participate and serve in the CUG.

Regarding gender composition, the CUGs should by regulation guarantee equality. However, their composition is predominantly biased in favour of the female gender, as often happens with the marginalization of women in soft policy areas, including that of gender issues, or their segregation into time-consuming activities (Reskin, 1993). Moreover, when there is greater gender inequality in the teaching staff, the CUG is predominantly made up of the less represented gender and therefore of women, as if participation were privileged for that component of the organization which directly experiences disadvantage. The responsibility for action is therefore off-loaded onto the disadvantaged component. Conversely, in universities where the feminization of the teaching staff is higher, the composition of the CUG is also more egalitarian.

The CUG statutes in universities usually regulate the number of times that the assemblies are convened, but this is not a feature common to all universities. The agenda of a CUG is very often dictated by pre-established institutional appointments. The report on the actions carried out must be submitted annually to ensure constant monitoring of the situation. The positive action plan (PAP), which states the actions to support equal opportunities in universities, in accordance with the university's strategic

plan, must be defined every three years. Also the PAP is mandatory for universities, as stated by Legislative Decree no. 198 of 2006 which, in article 48, mandates that public administrations draw up three-year plans of positive actions aimed at ensuring the removal of obstacles which prevent the full achievement of equal opportunities in the workplace. The same provision introduces – as a sanction in the case of failure to adopt the aforementioned three-year plan – a prohibition on hiring new personnel by the administration, including those belonging to protected categories.

For years already the CUGs at some universities began to prepare a gender budget that provides a 'snapshot' of the situation of their personnel by analysing data provided by the governance offices. This instrument facilitates the preparation of positive actions for gender rebalancing in favour of the less represented sex. In many other universities, however, only a report is drawn up, without reference to budget lines, which becomes a communication tool without institutional constraints and without a real allocation of resources for positive actions. In fact, the budget allocation does not follow common rules.

In many cases, as required by the guidelines, the action of the CUG is coordinated with that of other institutional bodies tasked with promoting equality within the university. There is, for example, the university's confidential counsellor, who has been appointed to assist individuals, both employees and students, experiencing discrimination, bullying, harassment and other inappropriate behaviour. Moreover, there is a psychological counselling service that provides support to help overcome work-related psychological distress. In many cases, the CUG is also in contact with the gender study centre, which brings together researchers on this topic. The rector may appoint a pro-rector or his/her own delegate on this issue to cooperate on political strategy and, in some cases, also create an administrative office that supports the CUG in drafting mandatory documents, and also the annual gender budget.

In 2021 it was made mandatory for universities intending to participate in the Horizon Europe calls for proposals to prepare a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) within the PAP and the strategic plan. Before this initiative no university had adopted the GEP. Since the devising of actions is closely tied to the initial situation – as described for example by the gender budget – the European Commission insists on considering the specificities of local contexts, thus activating «participatory practices, able on the one hand to involve the university governance, and on the other to enhance research, skills and experiences conducted locally by all the stakeholders involved in gender equality policies» (Addabbo *et al.,* 2021: 7). This specification

requires the opening of spaces within universities for democratic discussion on gender issues that include both the bottom-up participation of formal and informal networks and institutional involvement.

2. Research design and methods

The research presented in this article was conducted within the larger Prin Gendering Academia (GEA). The overall project was carried out in four universities of different sizes (two small and two large) and geographical locations (two in the North and two in the South of Italy), which, to ensure anonymity, will be identified in what follows with four colours: blue, green, red, yellow. Considering that it has been shown that a university's geographical macro-area and size are influential on the available resources and functioning (Viesti, 2016) and on rectoral choices and governance (Capano *et al.,* 2017), the selection of the four case studies on the basis of these two macro-criteria made it possible to conduct a comparison between «the most different cases» (Yin, 1994; Gerring, 2007; Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

For the analysis, semi-structured in-depth interviews with top managers were used for each of the four case studies, for a total of 52 interviews (see Table I). In order to study the internal functioning of the CUG, its rootedness in the broader governance of the university and relations with other bodies, the interviews were conducted by distinguishing two groups of respondents: group A relative to the members of the CUG; group B relative to the members of other governing bodies of the university (senators, pro-rectors, members of the board of directors). The interview guides were partially differentiated for the two groups of interviewees. All of them were divided into four sections. Interview guides A shared with Interview guides B the sections relating to the interviewee's background, perception of the state of female representation in government bodies, perception of the effectiveness of policies to promote equal opportunities. But they also had a section on the decision-making style, the formulation of actions, and the ways in which the agenda of the CUG was implemented. For group A, the chairpersons and members of the CUG were interviewed for each case, for a total of 15 interviewees. For group B representatives of the collegial bodies and the rectoral staff of the four universities were interviewed, for a total of 37 interviewees diversified according to scientific sector (STEM or SSH) and department, in order to have a representation as broad as possible of the

structure by area and by basic organizational unit. For all the interviews, only members of the academic staff were involved.

Table 1 – The interview plans

	YELLOW University			BLUE University			GREEN University			RED University		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Group A												
CUG	0	3	3	1	3	4	1	4	5	1	2	3
Group B												
Senators	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	3	3	0	2	2
Pro-Rectors	2	2	4	1	5	6	0	2	2	1	2	3
Heads of Dpts.	1	0	1	2	1	3	0	1	1	1	1	2
Board of Directors	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	2
TOT	6	6	12	4	11	15	3	10	13	4	8	12

All the interviews were carried out between October 2021 and December 2022. Although in the original plan the interviews had to be conducted face-to-face, reasons of health prudence amid the Covid pandemic induced the research team to adapt its fieldwork method. The interviews were therefore carried out remotely through the use of online platforms. This reorganization of the data collection had several positive aspects: in particular, greater ease in fixing and scheduling the interviews. On the other hand, among the negative aspects there was the need to restrict the average duration of the interview to about an hour due to the greater likelihood that the interviewee would be distracted. No forms of reticence or less willingness to dialogue with the interviewer due to the use of the online platform were found.

The interviews, which lasted one hour on average, were recorded, fully transcribed, and then analysed in terms of content through identification and control of the variability of the significant thematic areas.

Of particular interest, as already underlined in other studies (e.g. Bellè *et al.,* 2015), was the unexpected reflexive content yielded by the interviews on power dynamics. The interviews were mainly conducted by female lecturers and female researchers or research grant-holders, in fact not dissimilar from the interviewees, and therefore directly involved in the practices described

by the interviews. In many cases, the working group shared reflexive opportunities on biographical pathways and on how the circumstances defined in the interviews were perceived.

3. Analysis and results

3.1 Feminization and variability in CUG activities

If we consider, in accordance with the theoretical framework presented in the first section, the ability of universities to rebalance access to decision-making positions as a measure (one of those possible) of the endeavour to increase internal democratic quality, we can recognize in the cases studied situations in which feminization had assumed – by extension and configuration – very different features. Before proceeding with reconstruction of the role played by CUGs in universities, it is therefore useful to reconstruct the pattern of feminization as summarized in Table 2, where the positioning of the universities above or below the national average percentage of women full professors (using data from Cineca) cross the feminization level observed in the decision-making bodies (for a more detailed description, see Azzolina *et al.*, 2023).

Yellow University was the one in which the female component was most excluded from the positions considered important. While the presence of women among full professors was low (significantly less than the already low national average of 26%[4]) and the disciplinary areas most present were the most masculinized ones, also the configuration of actual decision-making processes seemed to preclude female protagonism. Indeed, department heads appear to have major roles in these processes, since their coordination – in the perception of most of the interviewees – guided the choices of the senate. These roles are mainly covered by men (70%). The picture is only slightly mitigated by a certain female presence in rectoral staffs and in senates, given that the positions considered most important by the interviewees were all male.

In the case of Blue University, the presence of women in central decision-making bodies was instead decidedly high, and women occupied the most strategic positions in the decision-making body reported as being

[4] Data are omitted to prevent making the university recognizable.

the most important, i.e. the senate, and among the positions considered most important in the rectoral staff. This framework of greater inclusiveness stemmed from an explicit commitment by successive rectors and resulted in an effective rebalancing practice. This stance by the rector had thus been able to influence the connotation of the central positions and also to support measures designed to remedy the gender imbalance of the academic body inherited from the past. At the more decentralized level, however, there was apparently still much to be done. The weight of women in the management of departments was minimal (and the department is certainly an important administrative level in the functioning of universities), and the presence of women among full professors was very limited (significantly lower than the national average).

Green University was the most gender balanced, and it therefore revealed the operation of more effective channels of democratic expression by the female component of the power structure. In central governance, a female professor supported the rector in the position of deputy pro-rector, and some of the most important positions were assigned to women. Both in the senate and the board of directors, the composition was less unbalanced than in the other cases. Also at the decentralized level, the presence of women was greater than in the other case studies, in terms of both percentages of full professors (a percentage above the national average), and of positions at the head of departments (women governed more than one third of the departments).

Table 2 - Feminization of the universities

Feminization of decision-making bodies			
+	BLUE University	GREEN University
-	YELLOW University	RED University
	-	+
	Feminization of full professors	

Source: Cineca and websites of the universities observed

Finally, at Red University, women seemed to have access to important decision-making arenas, but still occupied marginal roles. Hence there was an equal distribution of pro-rectors, even if those considered most significant remained a male preserve and, in the academic senate and the board of directors, the presence of women was marginal. At the decentralized level,

although the share of female full professors was relatively high (above the national average of 26%), there was a clear exclusion of them from departmental leadership roles.

It is therefore in a context of active female participation in the highly differentiated political life of the universities that the CUGs operate.

The CUGs exhibit high levels of heterogeneity, despite the isomorphic pressure (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991) exerted on individual universities by extra-local legal and regulatory provisions, by exposure to operational models conveyed through the coordination networks, and by their interfacing with relevant central organizations. Emblematic is the variability in the mechanisms for recruiting the teaching staff, who can be identified through electoral competition among candidates, direct appointment by the rector, or, in intermediate cases, a 'request' for availability to the academic community and a subsequent selection by the rector or the academic staff.

The heterogeneity is apparent not only in the different regulations but also, and above all, in the different roles that central governance attributes to CUGs. The central governance can effectively condition and inhibit the functioning of a CUG through 'divestment', i.e. the removal of material and economic resources, the inertial non-fulfilment of certain procedures, the lack of operational and symbolic support. This is how, for example, an interviewee described the problems during the mandate of a rector perceived as unwilling to support the development of the university's CUG:

We look for support but we don't get it. We find ourselves in an incredible situation: to begin with, we don't have an assembly room (...) an assembly room [is important] not only for the symbolic content that it may have, as it is an acknowledgment of the committee, but also because we have to work (...) We have to ask for a lecture room and book it incredibly long in advance, and we have a lot of documentation, and at the last committee meeting (...) we were a bit upset because we found that already published was the 'agile work plan' on which they hadn't asked us for our opinion, which as you know is mandatory, and about which they had inserted a sentence, so charming in Italian, which stated 'We knew we had to ask for your opinion but we didn't'. So, – the interviewee concluded – *we are really doing voluntary work, because we are working, but spending our own time, our own resources* (uniYellow_Alessandra).

Also, the agendas appeared to be very heterogeneous, as a consequence of a mission with high degrees of indeterminacy. This is how a female chair described the situation:

The topics that refer to the CUG are so many and so wide-ranging that there is certainly someone at a university who has activities relevant to those thematic areas (…) there's a bit of everything (uniGreen_Rosanna).

In the context of a very broad mandate, in which the issue of contrasting gender discrimination tends to predominate, there is room for the CUG to choose on what to focus.

Amid the heterogeneity of specific actions, however, at the functional level it is possible to distinguish some regularities which define a recurrent managerial component and a proactive one.

A first set of activities through which the CUG exerts its influence is its operation as an internal administrative hub providing opinions on documents and initiatives, preparing administrative acts, and performing explicit consultation tasks. This often requires a considerable degree of interaction with the university bureaucracy, so that the skills possessed by the components are particularly important. An example concerns the ability to manage practices that require responsibilities distributed among different offices. A CUG councillor operating in a supportive organizational context put it thus:

In my opinion, at a preliminary level, you need a mapping of the data you require and whoever has them, (...) there is a description of what each administrative unit does on the portal, but then one does not know what these individual competences are (uniGreen_Jenny).

In a case with weak organizational support, on the other hand, wanting to urge recruitment of the confidential counsellor.

It was very very difficult to understand how we should proceed in the jungle of university offices, and also who managed the CUG budget. What should the CUG do to send things to the Senate and to the Board of Directors? Who should I contact? We are bounced from side to side (uniYellow_Alessandra).

Critical issues may thus arise due to the lack of organizational support and the inadequacy of the skills and knowledge present.

On other matters, the CUG has instead a more proactive function. It explores emerging issues, pushes for the inclusion or enhancement of items on the institutional agenda, or undertakes autonomous initiatives. In these activities the proactive – rather than managerial – nature of the body is accentuated, which opens spaces for the representation of the interests of a constituency distinct and autonomous from the organizational top management. The ability to listen, relationality with other actors, territorial specificities and cultural movements often appear to be important. In this case, the capacity to achieve an impact seems to depend on favourable complementary conditions related to the stance of the university's top management and the availability of motivational and cultural resources which can be strengthened by the membership of CUG councillors in local networks of lecturers.

3.2 Resources for the operation of CUGs

The governance of universities – both the orientation of the pro-tempore top management and its more consolidated institutional architecture – significantly defines the room for manoeuvre of the CUGs. In particular, the recognition of human, material and symbolic resources and the integration of this body into an 'ecosystem' of organizational structures with which it can cooperate (confidential counsellor, delegates competent on similar issues, administrative offices dedicated to the collection of information or to action on these issues) can support the functioning of the CUG, providing support which can be defined as *institutional-organizational* that may be of variable intensity. Since there are no significant formal incentives for participation in and commitment to the CUG – instead, the specific skills of its members strengthen its capacity to perform its managerial and representational function – the resources possessed by the councillors acquire particular importance. The availability of adequate motivation and knowledge depends on personal attitudes and cultural resources which are not available to the administrative system but are instead linked to the scientific commitment or to the civic and political activism which the members of the CUG cultivate in a logic which can be individual or, when it is nourished by participation in *scientific or local activism networks*, collective. The motives rooted in the scientific commitment link the individual interest and professional competence to gender issues that can be developed in the CUG. Although cultivating these interests generally

corresponds to inclusion in some scientific community, it appears that embeddedness in local networks of scholars operating at the same university – for example, within thematic research centres – is particularly important. These affiliations seem to guide people in the decision to join the CUG, support them in competitions, and offer them a situated context for recognition of the value of their commitment. Furthermore, they can strengthen the legitimacy of a candidature, even when 'mediated' by an investiture from above. Moreover, in the case of bottom-up processes these affiliations provide cognitive resources, understood as the «availability of relevant information or interpretative models» (Dente, 2011: 71).

Analytically, we can thus locate the CUGs in contexts characterized by high or low *institutional-organizational* support from the university and by a greater or lesser linkage of their members with *scientific or activism networks* present in the academic community. Our cases lend themselves to exemplifying the different situations, although evolutionary tensions are also present, and changes are possible as a consequence of the strategies of the actors involved.

Table 3 – Resources for the operation of CUGs

Institutional resources			
	+	BLUE University	GREEN University
	–	YELLOW University	RED University
		–	+
		Networks	

Source: authors' elaboration

At Yellow University there was little organizational investment, due to the scant interest of the university leadership and to the weakness of the institutional architecture. The CUG had a modest budget which was subject to unilateral cuts. It had no premises and received minimal administrative support – *my guardian angel* (uniYellow_Alessandra) – and it could also be bypassed even when it was mandatory to consult it. For a long time, many proposals developed within the framework of the Positive Action Plan remained a dead letter, and only recently, also because of more stringent pressures by the EU, had they been recovered by the current governance with the drawing up of a Gender Equality Plan. However, the CUG could not count on a confidential counsellor because the university did not have one. Its members, although they were motivated and belonged to circles of friends and colleagues sensitive to the characteristic issues addressed by the CUGs,

did not have the assistance of networks structured to support their action. The sharing of scientific interests did not take material form in stable research centres, and there were no networks that sought to influence the running of the university. Overall, in this context it is difficult to affirm the relevance of the CUG's function and themes, as one of our interviewees admitted when he said: *The most significant action [of the CUG] is its resumption of functioning after years in which it was not put in a position to operate* (uniYellow_Mirco).

Also at Red University there was scant institutional-organizational investment in the CUG, as shown by the lack of premises, resources, robust administrative support, and a confidential counsellor. However, some interventions prepared in past years in the context of positive actions were perceived as effective and significant. Furthermore, unlike in the previous case, some councillors had connections with activism networks seeking to promote certain issues culturally and to influence the management of the university. They constituted, in the words of an interviewee, a *ghost community* (uniRed_Federico) of scholars in contact with each other and sensitive to the university's position on gender matters or actively engaged in 'imposing' the question of the presence of women in senior posts; issues then effectively thematized in the electoral campaign for the renewal of the Rector and assimilated into the programme of the new university leadership, which seems to have initiated change in the institutional-organizational variable of the context (for example, with large investment in creation of the GEP through wide participation and under the coordination of a dedicated pro-rector).

At Blue University, the organizational investment appeared to be extremely high. The CUG was supported (as testified by the fact that: *there have never been many problems with money* (uniBlue_Stefania). For some time, it had been active in the preparation of a gender budget and positive action plans, and it collaborated on related issues with the rector's delegates, the confidential counsellor, and a qualified administrative office. In the past, the university's top management had taken measures to address the gender imbalance among researchers which were reconfirmed thereafter. The robust institutional-organizational context for the CUG was therefore mainly of top-down origin. Scientific networks attentive to the gender issue were present; but what stands out is the involvement and personal commitment of some individuals co-opted by top management and who had become protagonists of these processes. Bottom-up mobilization by teaching staff was lacking. Sometimes, the institutional roles created to counter the gender gap were

more numerous than the people actually involved, with a consequent overlapping of responsibilities.

The Green University case exemplifies a model in which both conditions are present. The CUG and the organizational ecosystem were regularly set up and operational on the Positive Action Plan; and their functioning was fuelled by both scientific-professional and activist resources present in the university and which were recognizable in the networks to which the members of the CUG belonged. Consolidated coordination among scholars working in several disciplines catalysed the commitment to, monitoring of, and promotion of the institutional initiatives on many issues relevant to the gender gap. With regard to the CUG, besides a habit of collaboration, there was also a direct interest to serve as president. There was also an extensive network of lecturers who intervened 'from below' in the university's policy, but also informal networks linked to specific issues to be promoted at the university that supported candidatures and emerged in the interviews as useful referents for the CUG's members. These networks supported the functioning of the CUG both by making 'professional' contributions, deriving from the scientific specializations of its members, and by preserving and promoting critical contents and approaches which ensured a certain degree of proactive autonomy with respect to the policy of the university's top management.

As will be shown in the next section, the summary scheme in Table 4 enables in-depth analysis of the organizational dimension at the centre of attention of the literature, highlighting its main features.

Discussion and conclusions

The comparative analysis of the four case studies has shown that the functioning of the CUGs was strongly influenced by some specific contextual conditions of the universities considered; conditions that varied along two dimensions. The first, which depended on the commitment of the university's top management to gender rebalancing, indicated the availability of *institutional-organizational resources* to support the CUG's activity. The analysis allows us to recognize in this dimension of the CUG the main components of the processes of *organizational empowerment* and *gender competence* recommended by the literature (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021).

However, this study has also shown the importance of a second resource, which is instead linked to the presence of networks, scientific or activist, consisting of lecturers involved in the issue of gender discrimination. In fact, the activity of a CUG is nourished by the presence of a network of researchers and of mobilization initiatives relating to the governance of universities that can provide motivational and cognitive resources useful for its functioning. With respect to the conditions for countering gender discrimination indicated by Lipinsky and Wroblewski, these resources perform a twofold function. First, they construct the *gender competence* that the two authors indicate as preparatory to initiatives to combat gender discrimination. Second, they fuel the *organizational empowerment*, both directly by providing personnel willing to engage without recompense in the organizational structure set up in the universities, and indirectly by performing a monitoring and potentially critical function with respect to the policies of the university. The latter is thus required to be accountable for its conduct on gender issues and finds a privileged institutional interlocutor in the CUG.

Table 4 – The dimensions of analysis

	Gender Competence		Empowerment of structure		Feminization	
	Top down	Bottom up	Top down	Bottom up	Of central governance	Of full prof.
YELLOW University	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low
RED University	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	High
BLUE University	High	High	High	Low	High	Low
GREEN University	High	High	High	High	High	High

At this point, it is useful to review the operational profiles of the four CUGs by integrating the relevant components of the two dimensions, in the context of the different feminization profiles of the universities studied. We can thus distinguish organizational investment (empowerment) according to whether it is the result of top-down processes (choices by top management) or bottom-up ones (network mobilization processes) and the process of enhancing competences according to whether it is the result of top-down processes (selection of competent figures in the CUG by the top management) or bottom-up ones (presence of structured networks, with distinctive competences, which act in the CUG).

The table 4 is constructed so as to integrate the analytical dimensions emerging from the research (top-down and bottom-up) and those highlighted in the literature (gender competence and empowerment of structure) (Lipinsky and Wroblewski, 2021). Top-down investment in knowledge is high in all cases: chairpersons are appointed by the top management, which generally selects trusted but nonetheless committed and competent people. The bottom-up cognitive contribution appears more differentiated. In the cases of the Yellow and Red Universities (medium), experts on the subject are present but in a disjunct manner, whilst in the cases of the Green and Blue Universities (high) they also belong to research groups and centres strongly recognized in the local academic community. Organizational investment is even more discriminating both from a top-down and a bottom-up perspective.

This summary scheme allows some conclusions to be drawn in regard to the importance of the organizational dimension. The gender competence of the heads of the CUGs remaining equal, the strength of this body increases in the presence of widespread and structured organizational resources. When these are minimal, the functioning of the CUG is severely compromised (Yellow University) even if it is formally established. In the presence of a certain degree of organization and the ability of lecturers to exert bottom-up influence, the CUG's capacity to influence increases (Red University). When gender competence is strong and there are significant organizational investments by top management (Blue University), the CUG's operationality is even stronger. Finally, when, alongside high levels of gender competence, organizational resources deriving both from below (due to the presence of activism among lecturers) and from above (due to the choices of top management) are integrated, the effectiveness of the CUGs is maximum.

The fact that the CUG is an important but not exclusive component of the empowerment resources deployed in universities invites us to be cautious about its direct impact on the feminization pattern that differentiates among

them. However, it is also possible to recognize a congruence between the CUG model and the feminization profile of universities with reference to the full professors and decision-making positions.

The foregoing analysis, which was prompted by the deficient democratic quality of the academic community highlighted by gender discrimination, thus provides interesting insights into the importance of internal bodies set up to democratize organizations.

CUG are organizational structures aimed, in the academic context, at identifying and combatting discriminatory dynamics through activities and actions capable of affecting the routine functioning of universities. By involving faculty members in the management of certain issues, the mission of the CUG resembles that of the functional bodies of organizational democracy which, in the words of Weber, Unterrainer and Schimd (2009: 1127), «structurally supported workers' substantive participation», creating the possibility of an «institutionalised employee participation that is not ad hoc or occasional in nature» (ibid.). Because of the issues it deals with and its position as an interface in the organizational architecture of universities – between central governance and faculty – the CUG can contribute to organizational democratisation (Sacconi *et al.,* 2019), giving institutionalised representation to faculty in order to intervene on certain important issues in management dynamics (innovations, welfare, gaps, etc.). In general, the role that the CUG is called upon to play introduces elements of democracy, in the sense indicated by Harrison and Freeman (2004: 52) of «allowing a broader group of employees a higher level of influence over processes, decisions and outcomes of their organizations». In the fight against the gender gap – a problem that has not ended with recent reforms – the case studies show that the intervention of CUGs can be useful, but its effectiveness is significantly conditioned by internal factors relating to the organizational structure of individual universities, and by external factors, in particular the cultural mobilisation and activism that characterise the organizational environment in which CUGs operate.

Hence the CUG experience in the university suggests that the conditions most favourable for combatting discrimination and for promoting a more participatory organizational environment seem to exist not only when the organizational structure comprises spaces recognized as legitimate, but also when these spaces are recognized by the top management and supported by the entire organizational community. Further research can therefore investigate, through the same lens, discriminatory processes generated by other factors, for example background in terms of social class or educational credentials, and the role in combatting them that bodies representing

democratic interests can play, alongside the efforts of the university authorities or the autonomous mobilization of the interested parties.

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Organizational democracy at work. Shaping participation through strategic planning in university

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Abstract

This article discusses whether and how strategic planning can promote the development and dissemination of organizational democracy in knowledge-intensive organizations. This research is inspired by the theoretical approach known as strategy-as-practice, in which strategic planning is considered a process of co-construction of meanings and actions involving multiple actors engaged in negotiation dynamics, through situational interactions in daily practice. Adopting a strategic ethnography approach from a methodological point of view, we examine the participatory strategic planning process conducted from January 2022 to April 2023 at the University of Bergamo. By analyzing ethnographic reports, formal documents, and working drafts, four strategic practices (Collective decision making, Platform and process alignment, Emotional coordination, and Organizational diplomacy) are identified as connected to two key enabling factors (synergic approach and consensus on organizational change) that can support and facilitate the spread of work environments more sensitive to the principles of organizational democracy. Implications for both theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Strategic Planning; Strategy-as-practice; Organizational Democracy; Higher Education; Action Research.

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Abstract. Favorire la democrazia organizzativa attraverso un approccio partecipato alla pianificazione strategica.

In questo articolo si indaga se e come la pianificazione strategica possa favorire lo sviluppo e la diffusione della democrazia organizzativa in contesti ad alta intensità di conoscenza. La ricerca si ispira all'approccio teorico denominato strategia come pratica ("strategy-as-practice"), secondo il quale la pianificazione strategica viene considerata un processo di co-costruzione di significati e azioni attraverso il coinvolgimento di diversi attori impegnati in dinamiche di negoziazione, attraverso interazioni situazionali nella pratica quotidiana. Adottando la prospettiva metodologia dell'etnografia strategica, viene esaminato il processo di pianificazione strategica partecipativa realizzato da gennaio 2022 ad aprile 2023 presso l'Università degli Studi di Bergamo. Analizzando i resoconti etnografici, i documenti formali e le bozze di lavoro, vengono identificate quattro pratiche strategiche (Processo decisionale collettivo, Allineamento della piattaforma e del processo, Coordinamento emotivo e Diplomazia organizzativa), a loro volta connesse a due rilevanti fattori abilitanti (l'approccio sinergico e il consenso al cambiamento organizzativo) che possono sostenere e facilitare la diffusione di ambienti di lavoro maggiormente sensibili ai principi della democrazia organizzativa. Il contributo fornisce implicazioni sia di natura teorica sia pratica.

Parole chiave: Pianificazione strategica; strategia come pratica; democrazia organizzativa; università; ricerca azione

Introduction

In recent years there have been calls for the adoption of democratic forms of governance within organizations as a way to enhance their effectiveness, especially in knowledge-intensive organizations (see Grandori, 2016). More generally, democracy represents a core value and an objective promoted at the international level by international organizations such as the UN and European institutions, both within organizations and in society. However, despite its relevance, democracy still requires to be further explored, especially with reference to the ways in which it can be fostered by organizations (Sacconi, Denozza and Stabilini, 2019; Butera, 2020).

This is the aim of this article, which explores how democracy can unfold during the implementation of a strategic organizational practice, the creation of a new strategic plan. Strategic planning represents an activity where different subjects take on different roles (Mantere, 2008) and whereby power relations are particularly manifested (Narayanan and Fahey, 1982). While past research has conceptualized strategic

planning as a 'communicative process', i.e. a process in which different actors iteratively and recursively interact in practice (Paul Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011), its democratizing potential does not appear to have received particular attention.

The setting for the study is a public university, which represents one example of knowledge-intensive organizations. Knowledge-intensive organizations, like other organizations, operate nowadays in extremely uncertain contexts that require them to draw on the competences and knowledge of members in order to cope with environmental challenges and to foster their institutional aims (Grandori, 2016). Indeed, such an involvement should lead to improved decision making thanks to the contribution of different ideas and backgrounds (Grandori, 2022). This is also in line with studies that, building on social network research (Kilduff and Tsai, 2003), and especially in the public sector, have increasingly highlighted the importance of relying on governance principles to make decisions and to provide answers to complex needs through enhanced active participation and networking among different stakeholders (Rhodes, 1997; Obsorne, 2006). Public universities, in particular, have gained recognition as examples for highlighting the unsuitability of the hierarchical-bureaucratic model, and are commonly perceived as organizations with loose connections (Bleiklie, Enders and Lepori, 2015). The different tensions investing these complex organizations at the interface between bureaucratic and managerial logics and the presence of different rationalities and stakeholders involved make public universities an interesting field for the purposes of this contribution.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical background offering a discussion of strategic planning as a (potential) democratizing tool and of public universities as a context in which to investigate the introduction of new democratic forms of organizing through the implementation of participatory strategic planning mechanisms; Section 3 describes the methodological approach adopted in the study and the context of analysis; Section 4 presents the findings in terms of four strategic practices emerging from the analysis, which are then discussed in Section 5, showing the democratizing potential of participatory strategic planning in universities. Section 6 concludes the article and provides some implications, offering suggestions for future research.

1. Theoretical background

1.1 Strategic planning as a (potential) democratizing tool

Strategy can mean different things, such as a plan, a manoeuvre to outsmart competitors, a pattern of actions, a way to make decisions about products and markets, and a vision (Mintzberg, 1987). It can also improve an organization's core competences (Steiner, 2010). Strategic decisions are fundamental decisions that affect the nature and the direction of activities and, more generally, the future of an organization. *Strategic planning*, in particular, is «central to helping managers discharge their strategic management responsibilities» through «intuitive-anticipatory planning and formal systematic planning» (Steiner, 2010: 10–11). More precisely, it consists of different activities, such as identifying objectives and goals, developing targets and performance indicators, and allocating resources (Ansoff, 1991). It also represents an activity characterized by and/or affecting power relation dynamics (Narayanan and Fahey, 1982; Vaara, Sorsa and Pälli, 2010) and one in which different subjects take on a different role (Mantere, 2008). Strategic planning tends also to alter interpersonal relationships, raising doubts, misunderstandings and insecurities in the organization (Steiner, 2010).

The more complex an organization is, such as in the case of knowledge-intensive organizations, the more difficult strategic planning can be because more interests need to be taken into consideration. Public universities, for example, need to pursue, at the same time, different aims linked to their typical three main streams – research, teaching and Third Mission[1] – in an unstable environment such as contemporary society. Public sector universities must also respond to the requirements set by upper governmental levels on which, for example, the distribution of funds depends. Different types of stakeholders, in addition, interact to pursue university societal and organizational aims (Shattock, 2013). This implies that the involvement of different actors is, at the same time, difficult but relevant. From this perspective, scientific literature has shown that universities can benefit significantly from managerial orientations inspired by *organizational democracy* (for a general discussion on this topic see Carrieri, Nerozzi, and Treu 2015). Advocates

[1] The Third Mission collects all scientific, technological and cultural transfer activities from universities, which include, for example, public engagement activities.

of a democratic approach to university management claim that knowledge-intensive organizations are efficient and effective when academic and administrative staff operate in a transparent and fair working environment, where power is distributed among different organizational levels, participation and collaboration are stimulated and people feel entitled to freely express forms of criticism (Turabik and Atanur Baskan, 2019).

While past research has widely debated the different strategic management activities that can be deployed and the tools to be used to conduct organizational activities (see Grant, 2016), it is only in the last decade that researchers have started to focus on *strategy as a practice* (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007) and, in particular, to consider the role of actors in implementing strategic actions and the interactions underpinning strategy making. This has shifted the focus at the micro level where strategy is intended not as «something that an organization *has* but [as] something its members *do*» (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007: 7). Viewing strategy as a practice thus implies a shift from a traditional focus on strategy as a top-down process to a view of strategy as a shared and participatory process that is continuously adapted based on the contribution of different organizational and external actors (Denis, Langley and Rouleau, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Paul Spee, 2019).

An organization's identity and its culture typically are reflected in its corporate strategy and, consequently, are defined in the context of strategic design as a process and in the strategic plan as a tool for business planning. Previous studies have shown that strategic planning is, first of all, an interactive and situated process of collective negotiation – a practice – that develops through communicative interactions (e.g. board meetings, PowerPoint presentations, emails) and shared activities (e.g. teamwork, public events, social dinners), involving multiple actors and several plans of actions (e.g. political, economic, relational) over time (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007). Following this approach, the strategic plan should not be understood as a formal document, a sort of static photograph of the vision and objectives of the organization elaborated separately from organizational life (as often happens). Rather, it should be conceptualized and concretized in dynamic terms and can have significant effects on workplace interactions. It can represent «an organizing device for embedding social order during strategic planning activities» (Paul Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011: 22). According to this, strategic planning processes can promote organizational democracy in two ways: first, participation and involvement, sharing decision making,

transparency and accountability become values and principles for developing the vision and the mission; second, through activities and communicative interactions of the strategizing process, such democratic ideals are incorporated into organization everyday life.

1.2 Public sector universities: From professional bureaucracies to shared governance

Universities are among the most complex public institutions from an organizational point of view and have distinctive peculiarities: precise hierarchies and complex power relations; internal division into multiple sub-units that pursue distinct objectives, although aligned with the general objectives of the overall organization; and a trade-off between professional autonomy and bureaucratic logic that has traditionally led to define universities as *professional bureaucracies* (Kallio, Kallio and Blomberg, 2020).

Reforms inspired by the *new public management* (NPM) movement have aligned the higher education sector with the wave of neoliberalism that has been taking hold all over the planet since the ’80s (De Vries and Nemec, 2013; Shattock, 2013). Ritzer (2021) summarized in four basic principles (at the same time value orientations and ideal operational references) the changes that have occurred in production and business within the neoliberal paradigm: efficiency; calculability; predictability; and control. In pursuing similar aims – namely, increasing efficiency, effectiveness and organizational performance – national governments have pursued new strategies to guide the higher education sector, following two fundamental principles: the reduction of public expenditure; and the market as a coordination mechanism (Middlehurst and Teixeira, 2012). Moreover, these principles have become fundamental aspects of the structural platforms between universities and national governments, with regard to the definition of institutional objectives, perimeters of action and available resources (Maassen and Stensaker, 2019), calling into question the formal autonomy of individual university institutions (Capano, 2011; Maassen and Stensaker, 2011). These reforms have significantly influenced management practices and organizational culture, introducing new «administrative structures, planning and control systems, coordination mechanisms» (Kallio, Kallio and Blomberg, 2020: 82) and leading to a new role for staff units and new power allocations, even questioning the overall aim of public universities.

One of the most relevant effects consists in the shifting from the traditional characteristics of universities on the professional and managerial side (a loose coupling between administration and the academic core, high professional autonomy, weak leadership and management), to greater centralization of decision-making processes, stronger executive leadership and professionalized management structures (Enders, de Boer and Weyer, 2013). Kallio and colleagues (2020) link these changes to a move from a traditional professional bureaucracy ideal type of organization to a competitive bureaucracy new ideal type. More recently, Butera (2021), reflecting on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Italian organizations, discussed how organizational models in which bureaucratic and hierarchical components predominate are more exposed to authoritarian and irrational drifts. He argued that, on the contrary, organizations that have internalized and developed flexible and democratic approaches are better able to control and mitigate these drifts through a common orientation toward shared goals and active social control, based on participation and collaboration. At the same time, it has been argued that NPM-type managerial reforms may have contributed to building organizational capacities to cope with complex issues only in limited cases, while, in others, approaches inspired by values which do not fall into the NPM paradigm proved successful (Barbera and Steccolini, *in press*). The latter include practices based on internal collaboration and networking that are associated with a governance paradigm (see Osborne, 2006), rather than NPM, and which, we argue, are examples of organizational democracy. The way in which these approaches are fostered requires further research (Grandori, 2016; Barbera and Steccolini, *in press*).

Inspired by the above considerations, through this contribution we explore whether active participation is achievable in knowledge-intensive organizations such as universities, how it can be realized and how it can promote organizational democracy. More precisely, building on a case study of an Italian public university, namely, the University of Bergamo, and based on a strategic ethnography, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- By means of which practices can strategic planning stimulate active participation within (knowledge-intensive) organizations?
- How can participatory processes enable organizational democracy?

2. Method

The empirical material and reflections discussed in this article are the result of an organizational action-research project that saw the three authors in the dual roles of organizational members and researchers. As insider action-researchers, the authors played (along with other colleagues) the dual role of subjects operationally involved in the organizational change project conveyed by the strategic plan and of researchers, seeking to highlight the practices that strategizing activates and the main critical issues encountered during the process (see Coghlan, 2019). Playing this dual role brings with it both positive and negative consequences. Indeed, while positive aspects can be (and actually were) data accessibility, strong commitment, familiarity with the research context and with people involved, knowledge about the main cultures and internal structures, negative aspects included time limitation and some communication difficulties. The latter were mainly due to internal scepticism and misunderstandings, especially at the beginning of the project and linked to the role assumed by the authors of this contribution (however, scepticism later unravelled during the evolution of the project). In order to cope with these negative aspects, from the beginning the authors were very careful never to take their role or internal cultures for granted.

Conducting research in your own organization also implies a political meaning. Again, the use of a «reflective self-critical perspective» (Coghlan, 2019: 71) and specific strategies proved useful in order to cope with the political implications of being insider action researchers (Buchanan and Badham, 1999). On the one hand, the authors actively participated in the change process of which they too were a part and adopted rational, commonly used and methodologically sound tools usually adopted in strategic management, which could be defended against any possible internal resistance. On the other hand, one of the three authors in particular had a strong role in negotiating and continuously managing internal tensions and resistance (mostly informally), trying to make people understand the reasons for the choices undertaken but at the same time carefully considering every possible positive input coming from the organization, even when part of an unfavourable instance to the change process.

Overall, the purpose of the author-researchers was twofold: to produce reflexivity to facilitate organizational change, and to make this know-how available for confrontation within the scientific community,

in order to contribute to the epistemic debate related to strategizing and organizational democratization processes. The process of strategic planning was investigated through the perspective called *strategy-as-practice* (Jarzabkowski, 2004). Following this approach, we analysed strategic planning as a process of co-construction of meanings and actions where multiple and heterogeneous actors were engaged in negotiation dynamics through situated interactions in daily practice. For this reason, instead of referring to "strategy", it would be more appropriate to use the term "strategizing" to emphasize its dynamic nature and its embodiment in practice (Johnson, Melin and Whittington et al., 2003). An emphasis on strategy as not just a set of activities or tasks, but rather an interactive process that involves individuals, groups and artefacts in their social context, is also given by Balogun and colleagues (2014) who introduced the concept of *strategic work*.

From the methodological point of view, the action-research was informed by the *strategic ethnography* approach (Vesa and Vaara, 2014), which combines collaborative and reflexive participant observation and document analysis. The observational starting point was the Prorectorate for Participatory Planning (PPP) of the university.[2] From its inception, this unit pursued two distinct objectives: the first was organizational in nature, involving the development and implementation of a participatory approach to design, develop and monitor the strategic path of the university; the second was gnoseological, focusing on narrating the process for scientific purposes and emphasizing micro and meso dimensions. These two objectives were pursued concurrently and involved staff members with different roles, depending on the task assigned to them. Each staff member was both a witness and a contributor to the advancement of the strategizing process and the collection of empirical material. The study was placed within an ethnographic framework, as the participatory strategic plan required direct participation in the natural environment, and the empirical material was derived from meeting minutes, ethnographic accounts, personal notes, email exchanges, transcription of communicative interactions, photographs, formal documentation and PowerPoint presentations.

The database is thus wide and heterogeneous, and has gradually been accumulating during the strategizing process. The empirical material was classified according to the type of content (e.g. research

[2] For more details see Section 4.

notes, minutes) and then analysed relying on a grounded method (Charmaz, 2016), through an iterative back and forth loop between data and theory involving categorization and data coding according to both emerging sociotechnical patterns and pre-existing theories (Bryant, 2017). The goal was to extrapolate, from the seemingly indistinct flow of ordinary activity, those sociotechnical patterns through which strategy is accomplished over time and how these enable democratization in the academic organization. Starting from the research notes (personal and ethnographic), the codification phase began, the focus of which was to identify and categorize the symbolic repertoires, routines and rituals in the narratives of ordinary strategizing. This phase generated several exploratory theoretical hypotheses that were then investigated looking for evidence and connections in the rest of the empirical documentation, subjected to analysis of the thematic content, and in the scientific literature. At the end of this second phase, four practices (described below) and their combinations emerged as the substantive theory that best suits the phenomenon studied.

Further qualifications of the method are needed to better clarify the dual positioning of staff members with respect to the object of study. First, research activities can be qualified as *collaborative* because the empirical data are the result of the joint effort of staff members, who contributed in variable and coordinated forms to produce and gather empirical materials (e.g. writing minutes or personal notes about formal and informal meetings or collecting texts produced by departments). They carefully looked at the daily dimension of strategizing for bringing out the emotional, cognitive, behavioural, procedural, discursive, motivational and material aspects that are implicit and how this heterogeneous set of elements combined, maintained and changed during the different stages of the process (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007). Second, staff members exercised spaces of *auto-observation* of situated practice, interpreted by each as moments of reflection on their own practical experience. The peculiarity of this perspective in the study of strategic design lies in allowing «access to privileged knowledge not usually available to outsiders and an intimate understanding of what it is and feels like to do strategy—with all its limited information, unpredictability, emotional upheaval, lack of resources, and constraining sociomaterial conditions» (Vesa and Vaana, 2014: 291).

2.1 The case of the University of Bergamo (UniBG) Participatory Strategic Planning

The starting point of UniBG's strategic planning project was the intent of the newly elected rector to foster a higher collective participation and involvement of the administrative and academic staff in organizational life. One of the main points of his electoral programme concerned precisely this:

A participatory planning approach adopted by the entire academic community should be encouraged, offering the opportunity to contribute collectively with opinions, initiatives and solutions for improvement through the development of a system of suggestions in accordance with the principles of "lean thinking".

After being elected in November 2021, he created a new functional unit called the Prorectorate for Participatory Planning of the University (PPP), tasked with developing and implementing a participatory process for the drafting of the university strategic plan for the next five years. The functional unit consisted of the Deputy Rector (full professor of sociological area) and its staff, composed of five fixed-term researchers with different backgrounds (legal-criminology, management, organization studies, and sociology). The unit became operational from January 2022 and followed the deliberative process until April 2023, when the project ended, and the Strategic Plan was approved by the Academic Senate and the Management Directors board. The underlying main principle characterizing the overall UniBG project was that of creating consensus based on a common understanding, through the promotion of an active dialogue among the members of the governance, between the governance and the different university departments, and between academics and administratives. Consensus should also be achieved through specific efforts aimed at adequately organizing shared governance. Each department was responsible for the creation of its own Strategic Plan, following the governance guidelines and producing the expected outputs (e.g. SWOT and stakeholder analyses; goals, actions and indicator cards). The reflections conducted in each department during the path of drafting its own strategic plan served as a basis for the creation of the final University Strategic Plan. The process followed a rigorous agenda, identifying both the main steps, outputs and the deadlines to be respected, as summarized in Figure 1.a–b. Further process details are provided in the findings section.

Figure 1.a – Key steps of the UniBG strategic planning process.

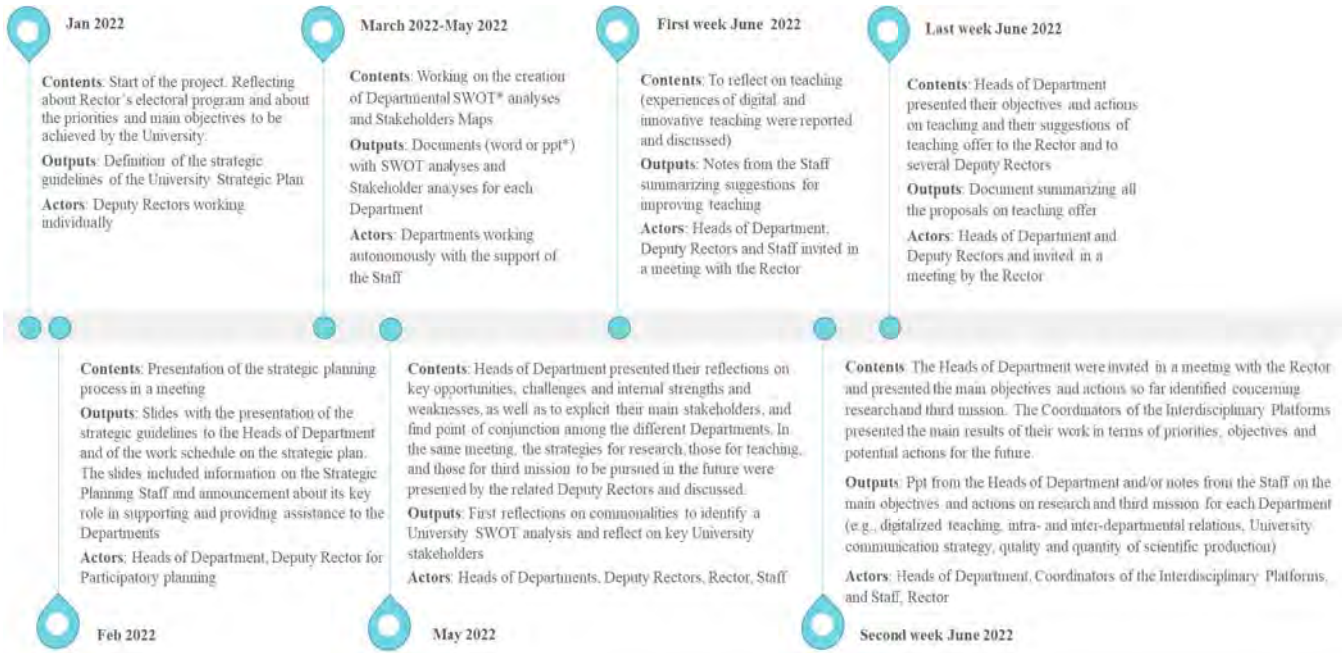


Figure 1.b – Key steps of the UniBG strategic planning process (cont'd).

4. Strategic practices at UniBG

The empirical analysis of the strategizing process pointed out four strategic practices – collective decision making, platform and process alignment, emotional coordination, and organizational diplomacy – that enabled UniBG to move toward a more participatory culture in which transdisciplinary and transdepartmental cooperation and contamination were conceived as shared values. Each strategic practice has a pragmatic focus and involved specific strategic devices and sociotechnical elements around which each practice unfolded (Table 1).

Table 1 – Overview of strategic practices and main characteristics at UniBG.

Strategic practice	*Pragmatic focus*	*Actors involved*	*Main strategic device*	*Examples*
Collective decision making	Principles, values and goals sharing	Governance board, PPP staff, academic staff	Strategic Think Tank (STT)	STT meetings for discussing strategic priorities and drafting the expected outputs; debates activated in the context of formal department meetings where the STT outputs were presented and discussed
Platform and process alignment	Homogenization of technical platforms and operational procedures	PPP, Prorectorate for University Quality, PPP staff, STT, Heads of Department	Platform AVA3	Departments were asked to fill in a preset PPT-document identifying the main contents required by the PIAO, in turn reflecting the AVA system
Emotional coordination	Team building and emotional engagement	Governance board, PPP's staff, admin managers	Residential event	Residential events organized in tourist facilities
Organizational diplomacy	Strategic orientation and politicking	Governance board, PPP staff, admin managers, Heads of Department	Dialogic conversation	Ongoing informal interactions throughout the strategizing process

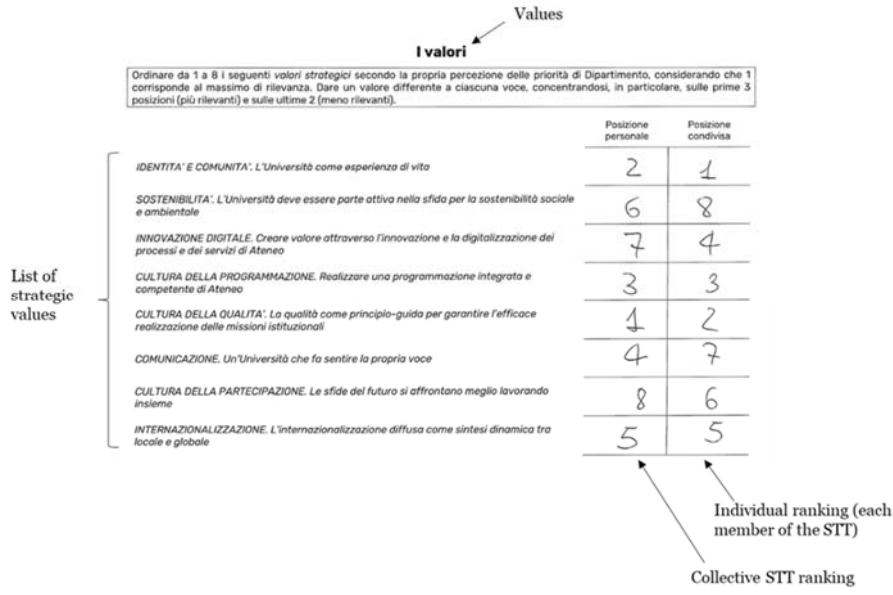
4.1 Collective decision making

An internal dialectic within each university department, aimed at improving the shared vision and goals among departmental members, and at fostering transdisciplinary teamwork, was incentivized during the strategic planning process. This was done through a participatory planning approach for collective decision making, inspired by the consensus methods used in social research (Bertin, 2011), and realized through a specific practice in which different aspects converged. While a traditional strategic planning process is characterized by the fact that those who are in a leadership position have the responsibility to identify the main priorities and objectives, the UniBG's purpose was to support collective decision making by including even the peripheral areas of the organization.

To ensure broad representation of the different roles and functions, in each department a Strategic Think Tank (STT) was established. This was the main strategic device in this practice, and it worked by making different disciplinary cultures and interests comparable in a very informal and friendly environment. The composition of each STT was determined by priorities indicated by the PPP. Each STT had a maximum of 15 members, including researchers with institutional responsibilities and representation from scientific and disciplinary fields not yet represented by colleagues with institutional responsibilities. Gender equality was also ensured with the participation of at least three researchers of each gender, as well as different levels of seniority. The STT was guided and supported by the members of the PPP's staff, who, although with different personal styles, maintained a pleasant and informal working atmosphere and stimulated free discussion among members. Each STT met at least seven times within six months to identify the main strategic priorities of departments and to develop the expected outcomes: the SWOT matrix, the Stakeholder Map, and the department's strategic objectives and related actions. These outputs were presented and discussed in at least two formal collegial occasions in each department to update colleagues on the work and gather feedback. In total, 108 academics were involved in this practice.

One of the main operational tools that stimulated open discussion and encouraged convergence on principles and values was the Department Priority Card (Figure 2). Each participant was asked to fill it out individually, indicating their order of priority with respect to the listed and described values, and then to discuss it with their STT colleagues in order to reach a consensus on a priority hierarchy that reflected the identity of the department in question.

Figure 2 – Example of a Department Priority Card concerning strategic values



This card was useful both for making explicit the existing value orientations within the specific departmental cultures and for helping the STT to adopt a method of collective deliberation that was participatory, and open to different components of the department.

4.2 Platform and process alignment

Strategic planning implies that some managerial techniques are used in order to identify the most relevant information based on which objectives and targets can be identified. These tools, used in a preliminary discussion on main values, included a SWOT analysis, a stakeholder map and the identification of objectives, actions and indicators. Consistently with the intended aim to adopt a shared and participatory approach, the departments were asked to strategize relying on, and according to, tools provided by the strategic planning staff and approved by the academic governance. In addition, they should follow specific processes (including the need to discuss

the development of the Department Strategic Plan in the periodic department meetings in order to update all faculty members).

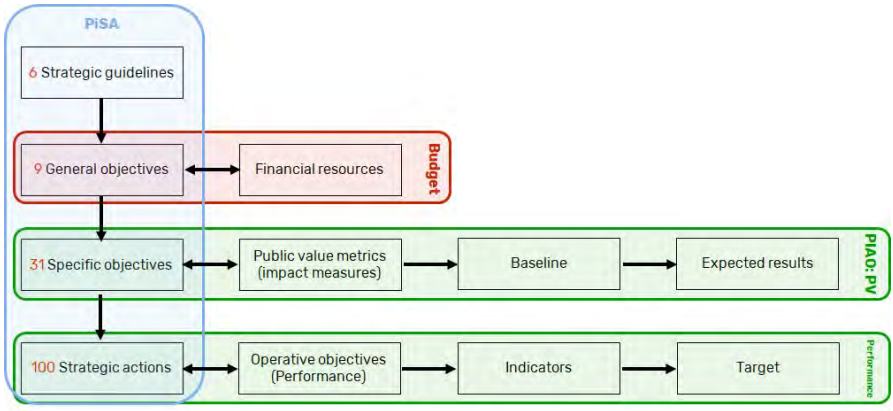
This strategic practice consisted in the *alignment of technical platforms and operational processes* involved in strategizing for internal (performance and quality control) and external (accountability and fundings) purposes, as well as for converging towards aligned administrative and academic objectives. Since 2013, Italy has implemented the Self-assessment, Periodic assessment, Accreditation (AVA) system[3], which focuses on enhancing the quality of teaching and research in universities. The AVA system employs a Quality Assurance model that relies on internal processes for planning, management, self-assessment and improvement of teaching and scientific activities, as well as external verification conducted in a transparent manner. The outcome of this verification process is an accreditation judgement, which recognizes a university as having met the basic quality requirements for its institutional functions, either through Initial Accreditation or Periodic Accreditation.

As such, university strategic planning serves as a critical bridge between the university and its institutional environment, especially with the ANVUR. At the time of writing, the AVA3 system is in force. AVA assigns ratings to university departments, which, in turn, inform funding decisions and provide feedback to universities and research institutions on their research outputs. At the organizational (and administrative) level, the need to comply with AVA requirements is reflected in the adoption of the Integrated Plan of Organizational Activities (PIAO), a comprehensive planning and governance document introduced by Art. 6 of the Legislative Decree n. 80/2021 that outlines timelines, budgets and detailed activity descriptions, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each department involved in implementing the plan. The PIAO, thus, can be considered *externally* as a formal plan lying at the interface between the university and the national level; *internally*, it represents the intersection between strategic objectives and related actions towards public value creation, thus between 'corporate-managerial' values and 'administrative-institutional' values. More precisely, in a cascading process, strategic guidelines are translated into general

[3] The AVA system is developed and managed by ANVUR, the Italian National Agency for the evaluation of universities and research institutes. The AVA system has been modified several times since its introduction. For research, for example, AVA assigns a score to each research product, taking into account various criteria, such as research quality, originality, impact, relevance and publication venue reputation.

objectives (with related allocated financial resources), then into specific objectives (which will be assessed administratively as public value created, based on expected results) and, finally, into strategic actions (to which operational performance objectives correspond, to be assessed through indicators) (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – The link between strategic planning and operational programming at UniBG.



Source: translated from UniBG, Slides 'Premessa e riferimenti normativi', 11 January 2023.

The strategic plan is supposed to influence both functional and individual behaviours, in addition to influencing each university department's plans.

Given the need to identify the specific contents to be included in the PIAO, the departments were asked to translate their strategic priorities into general and specific objectives, and strategic actions, and to identify indicators, targets and expected results. This was done by asking them, again, to fill in a preset (by the PPP in accordance with the Rector) ppt-document.

While some departments, such as those in economics, management and engineering sciences, were already familiar with managerial and administrative language, others, such as those in the humanities, needed more support to integrate these codes and tools into their professional practices. This led to differential needs for support in the use of these devices, a task that required a more extended internal team composed by the PPP, the Prorectorate for University Quality, and the Administrative

Manager responsible for university management control, which, working together, tried to harmonize internal knowledge and to ensure an aligned approach to strategizing. To fulfil its task, the new team organized many meetings and exchanged continuous e-mails and working documents with the university departments, especially through the PPP.

4.3 Emotional coordination

An important aspect that characterized the entire planning process was the group climate, both within the governance board (composed by the Rector, 12 Deputy Rectors, and the main administrative executives) and within the working teams activated in the different phases of the project. Work meetings were coordinated in an informal and friendly way, to develop a climate in which people felt "authorized" to express themselves freely, regardless of their academic and/or organizational function. This strategic practice relied on group psycho-dynamics and on emotional engagement for stimulating team building and sharing ideas. It is widely recognized that emotional aspects in team working can impact team dynamics and ultimately affect the success of a project or organization due to their significant implications for culture and functioning (Davis *et al.*, 2022). This aspect was crucial at UniBg, since in universities formal hierarchy often plays a decisive role in career advancement and professional status. Not taking it into consideration and not taking action to contain it would have risked compromising the project from its foundations.

An emblematic strategic device for emotional coordination was residential events, i.e. full-day meetings attended by the governance team together with the PPP and the administrative staff. These events took place in tourist facilities in the countryside or in university's premises. They were designed to create an immersive experience where team members could fully engage with one another and build a deeper connection (Figure 4). So, the objective was twofold, both cognitive and relational: the first concerned the sharing of principles, values and working methods; the second regarded the mutual knowledge and harmony of the group. The opportunity to spend some time together in a cosy and informal context, having lunch together, walking together in a natural environment helped to create a sense of community and shared purpose among team members.

Figure 4 – Governance, administrative and PPP staff working session during residential event aimed at principles and values sharing.

Maintaining a relaxed and informal working atmosphere was crucial to ease moments of tension that arose during the process, particularly as official deadlines – such as the formal approval of documentation in the university governing bodies – approached (Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Informal lunch during a working day among deputy rectors, administrative managers and the PPP for the definitions of strategic goals.

Additionally, the frequent use of puns and irony during joint work occasions was significant in helping to resolve any internal conflicts and consistently maintaining emotional engagement in a pleasant work environment. For example, "strategic happy hours" originated from a series of puns exchanged during a formal meeting, which then gave the idea to organize informal events open to all colleagues during the aperitif time at the bars around the university campus. They consisted in informal discussion events where the faculty members were invited to a cafe close to the university to share ideas on strategic planning. Formal meetings that extended collective discussion to members of Departments not included in the STT were organized too, named "listening construction sites".

4.4. Organizational diplomacy

Organizational diplomacy refers to activities related to managing how individuals or groups advance their interests or goals within the organizational context. It can imply forming alliances, manipulating information, engaging in power plays and lobbying for resources or influence (Gilbert and Ivancevich, 1999). Organizational diplomacy is related to the Richard Sennett (2012) concept of *everyday diplomacy*, referring to the interpersonal skills and strategies that individuals use in their daily interactions with others to navigate social situations and resolve conflicts. These skills are critical for building and maintaining social relationships and play an important role in environments where people from diverse backgrounds need to work together. Organizational diplomacy in university, thus, requires understanding the cultural norms, values, and expectations of different departments, as well as being able to communicate effectively within them. In the case under analysis, a key strategic device of organizational diplomacy was a communicative pattern that, based on Sennett (2012), can be defined as *dialogic conversation*. This is a type of communicative interaction that emphasizes mutual understanding and exchange of ideas among participants. It involves asking open-ended questions, exploring different viewpoints and acknowledging and building on shared interests and goals. This mode of communication was provided by the PPP, especially during informal occasions, such as lunches, coffee breaks, telephone calls and informal exchanges before and after official meetings. An example is the following excerpt of ethnographic note:

During the usual monthly meeting between the governance and the heads of department in preparation for the university governing bodies' sessions, there was

some disappointment expressed about the allocation of resources for the recruitment of academic staff in the coming years. The heads of department stated that they expected a greater investment in terms of resources to meet the objectives defined in the department's strategic planning process. After the meeting, the Deputy Rector (DR) for participatory planning invited one of the heads of department (HD) for a coffee and to hear his point of view.

DR: *So, what do you think?*

HD: *Well, I was expecting something more.*

DR: *What do you mean?*

HD: *We've been working on the department's strategic plan for a year, and it doesn't seem to me that the investment made by the university responds to our future needs.*

DR: *I understand... Do you think that the budget allocation should have been more consistent? It is also true that this is a very prudent programming.*

HD: *It's true that we have allocated a lot of resources to administrative staff too.*

DR: *But you agree that we couldn't do otherwise. The situation on that front has been unsustainable for years.*

HD: *Yes, but, it's one thing to do programming with abundant resources, another with scarce resources.*

DR: *Well, yes. There certainly is a need for mediation work and criteria sharing for the distribution of points. The risk of conflict is certainly higher. But the process we went through to define the strategic plan did not serve, , in the end, also to arrive at shared priorities?*

HD: *Yes... Well, in one way or another, we'll manage to sort it out, as always.*

DR: *Perhaps now, it is the most challenging phase of mediation, but later the work should simplify.*

HD: *Let's hope so.*

DR: *Let's hope so.*

(Ethnographic note, 22/03/2023).

This interaction is emblematic of the constant work of communicative and dialogic weaving that primarily engaged the Deputy Rector for participatory planning to navigate the complex political levels and dynamics involved in academic organization, to manage conflicts and to build alliances to achieve a shared vision regarding strategic goals.

5. The democratizing potential of participatory strategic planning in universities

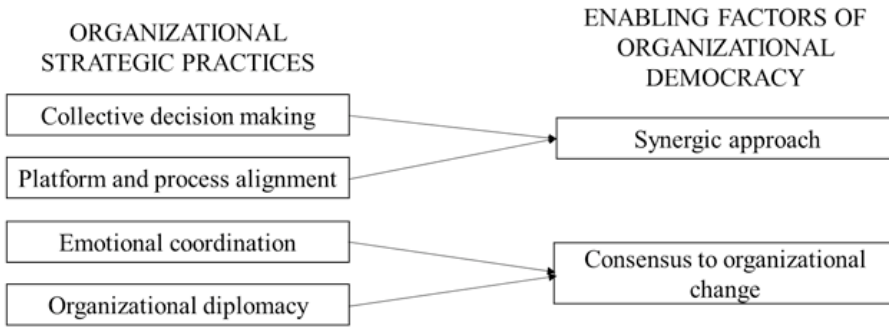
At the time of writing, the strategic planning process analysed in this contribution – interpreting strategy as an organizational practice (Jarzabskowski,

2004) – has just ended, so its actual effects on organizational performance and on enhanced stakeholder commitment cannot be fully assessed. For this reason, the supposed benefits of enhanced organizational democracy at work, such as a higher commitment to the final decisions made, a higher sense of responsibility of organizational members for organizational outcomes, enhanced skills and abilities (see Harrison and Freeman, 2004) still cannot be evaluated in depth. However, the results achieved so far through the participatory approach adopted, together with the related supporting strategic devices, appear to witness a democratizing potential for participatory strategic planning.

We experienced a high degree of stakeholder participation in the strategic planning process and the four strategic practices described played an important role in fostering organizational democracy, promoting effective relationships across different organizational levels and functions. Stakeholders' engagement was also representative, due to the way in which the departmental STTs were composed and due to the many different types of actors involved.

The practices described allowed different actors with different backgrounds and interests to be part of the strategizing process and to have the concrete opportunity of contributing to the process. These practices were essential in promoting a democratic approach to strategy making, especially through the *collective decision making* and *platform alignment* practices. *Strategic work* involved various forms of communication, including conversations, rumours, formal meetings, mission statements and corporate accounts. Discursive interactions are significant in constructing, interpreting and conveying strategy, and are embedded in established conventions such as strategic planning, workshops, meetings and related tools and artefacts. Informal communicative interactions were relevant too, as the *emotional coordination* and *organizational diplomacy* practices show.

Figure 6 – The contribution of strategic practices to democracy in organization.



Our findings point out how the four practices discussed above intervene as enabling factors in the promotion of organizational democracy, involving all aspects of organizational life (symbolic and behavioural, cognitive and affective, formal and informal, human and technological) (Figure 6).

More specifically, two enabling factors emerge, which are linked to the four strategic practices identified in the findings: a synergistic approach that acknowledges the various cultural frameworks, professional backgrounds, and routines present in complex organizations and which comes from collective decision making and platform and process alignment of strategic practices (see Section 5.1); and consensus to organizational change, i.e. the extent to which engagement goes beyond just cognitive reasoning and actively promotes a relational climate and a favourable environment, based on consensus, for organizational change, which in turn comes from strategic practices that were identified as emotional coordination and organizational diplomacy (see Section 5.2).

5.1 Strategic practices for fostering synergic approach

There is a functional interdependence between the governance and the administrative level, a stable relationship and a reciprocal recognition of roles and responsibilities played by both parties. However, during the strategizing process, a misalignment between the administrative time sheet and the strategic planning process timeline emerged. In addition, while the governance was especially interested in identifying the strategic priorities, the administrative level was particularly stressed with the operative implications and the process and quality control. Strategic and operative goals and activities should be coherent to allow the academic governance and the administrative managers to achieve their respective goals in a coherent setting. The *collective decision making* and *platforms and process alignment* practices helped in developing such a *synergic approach* (Hargrave and Van de Ven, 2017). Teamwork, strategic devices and the use of shared tools (e.g. STT, Excel sheets, indicators and AVA3 guidelines) helped in producing such mutual advantage, generating a discursive space of progressive approximation between value systems, linguistic codes and technical infrastructures. A similar process of *approximation distributed over time* has also been pointed out by Paul Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011), who noted that in the communicative interactions between the different components of the university, the cycles of contextualization and

recontextualization that are activated through the drafting of the shared documentation necessary for the institutional fulfilments of strategic planning are essential. In our case, this was also the result of a common awareness of the role of administrative managers who are informing and actively contributing to the achievement of the strategic purposes of the academic governance. An implication of this is that while in high complex organizations professional capital is an important resource (Maassen and Stensaker, 2019), the technical-administrative knowledge also has a key strategic role in the university case, due to its contribution in enhancing the quality of teaching, research and of Third Mission activities. Moreover, both a strong academic executive leadership and a professionalized management structure are important aspects for the success of participatory strategic planning (Enders, de Boer and Weyer, 2013).

The *collective decision making* and *platforms and process alignment* practices allowed the identification of strategic orientation and objectives strongly linked to the administrative planning, as the Excel tabs built jointly by the governance and the administrative managers displayed coherent general and specific objectives (set by the former), and the actions, indicators and related targets identified through the support, and in line with the needs and interests, of the latter. The administrative managers and the Deputy Rectors become co-responsible for the achievement of the university goals. The way in which these two organizational actors engaged in the strategic planning process forced them to share their ideas and perspectives, sometimes contrasting and others simply wrapped in different underlying meanings, leading to an integration between the managerial/administrative and the academic cultures. What the above testifies is how a common difficulty related to the adoption of managerial approaches in public sector organizations in general and, especially, in knowledge-intensive organizations (Kallio, Kallio and Blomberg, 2020) can be overcome.

5.2 Strategic practices for building consensus to organizational change

The relationship between the governance and departments can be considered contradictory, adversarial and asymmetric in terms of systematic power. According to Hargrave and van de Ven (2017), such a relationship should be understood and managed through a *dialectical perspective* where contradictions are addressed through conflict, i.e. mobilizing and using political tactics to resist the process. When the departments were involved in the strategic planning process, as mentioned above, they were asked to

accomplish several tasks through specific (managerial) tools (identified by the academic governance and respecting administrative needs too) with different expected outputs. Not only the process but also the deployment of the specific tools represented an important cause of conflict: in some departments the use of such tools was perceived as unnecessary and a waste of time, thus not an efficient way to take decisions; in others these did not represent usual tools used in the organizational routine. In addition, during the meetings organized with the STT in each department, it emerged that some participants in the working groups had initially interpreted tasks and outputs just as being simply bureaucratic requirements. Thus, the polarization already pointed out in the scientific literature between two organizational subcultures was observed: on the one side, the academic, characterized by professional autonomy, weak leadership and decentralized decision making, and, on the other, the administrative, oriented toward a greater centralization of decision-making processes, stronger executive leadership and professionalized management structures (Enders, de Boer and Weyer, 2013; Kallio, Kallio and Blomberg, 2020). This polarization affected not only the perception of both the process and the tools, but also had political effects, in terms of conservative and defensive attitudes or informal alliances to resist the process. The *emotional coordination* and *organizational diplomacy* practices were essential in enabling the strategic planning process to develop, despite internal resistance to change and to move the organization towards a more democratic culture.

While the above-depicted dynamics characterized the first months of the strategic planning process, over time spontaneous activities that hinted at a greater openness of the departments towards the university strategic planning process were observed, i.e. the "strategic happy hour" and the "listening construction sites". Although additional investigation would be needed to better interpret and understand the dynamics and meanings behind these emerging activities, what emerges is that, over time, the more sceptic and resistant departments also understood the meaning and the importance of the activities requested throughout the strategic planning process, showing that they had started to interpret them not as merely managerial and administrative tools and as a way for the governance to impose its power, but as ways to support a guided and productive discussion within each department, to avoid a fragmented strategic planning process and thus align the department strategic objectives with those of the university, and academic activities with administrative requirements.

Implications and conclusions

Strategic planning is aimed at identifying organizational objectives, actions and outcomes and should affect organizational performance. However, it can also have a democratic potential (Paul Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011). To investigate this latter aspect, the participatory approach to strategic planning at UniBG was investigated. We experienced a high degree of stakeholder participation in the strategic planning process analysed, and the four strategic practices described played an important role in fostering organizational democracy, promoting effective relationships across different organizational levels and functions. Despite their diversity, all the practices described allowed different actors with different backgrounds and interests to be part of the same strategizing process and to have the concrete possibility of affecting the same process. The role played by these practices was fundamental to fostering a democratic approach to strategy-making because «such sociomaterial arrangements are not neutral but rather constitute affordances for who may participate in strategy and in what ways» (Balogun *et al*., 2014: 185–186).

From the study conducted, it emerges that the extent to which those who are involved have the skills and ability to use strategy tools determines their actual contribution to decision making (see also Mantere and Vaara, 2008). Having staff members supporting each department, together with guidelines accompanying the various tools and continuous dialogic conversation proved useful in order to allow concrete participation and to foster internal awareness and understanding. This implies investing in people's time and organizational resources: organizational members need to be educated or trained, collegiate processes require time and sometimes negotiation; they can also encounter resistance due to the request for increased demands and accountability (Harrison and Freeman, 2004).

In sum, four major implications – which can be considered as transversal to the strategic practices discussed – appear significant in order to foster democratic processes through greater active participation of different stakeholders in strategic planning processes: to find points of connection between the academic and the bureaucratic cultures that traditionally coexist in the academy; to integrate the strategic plan with planned organizational actions; to recognize the value of intangible capital; and to consider some relevant supporting organizational conditions.

With regard to the first point, strategizing can benefit from a participatory and democratic process, which gives relevance to both professional/academic capital and technical-administrative knowledge.

The second point regards the integration of the strategic plan with planned organizational actions. In order to manage the relationship between the academic and the administrative levels, the direct involvement of the administrative managers responsible for quality assurance, management control and statistical services proved essential. Indeed, this inter-professional team – composed of administrative managers, the Deputy Rectors in charge of quality assurance and for planning and budget, in addition to the PPP staff – led toward a compromise between objectives and actions as expressed by the academic community in the draft documents of the Strategic Plan, and the managerial standards, practical procedure and operational guidelines expected to guarantee the linearity and clarity of the process involving different departments. It also allowed the alignment between external requirements and internal managerial systems. The results were a higher integration between the managerial and the academic cultures, and a greater control of internal resistance, which is typically high in public sector and in knowledge-intensive organizations, especially when it comes to implementing changes and adopting managerial reforms (Kallio, Kallio and Blomberg, 2020).

As for the third aspect, the process implemented by UniBG supported the recognition of the value of intangible capital within the university (Donna, 2018). This was made possible through the reflections made in several meetings organized during the project, the internal dissemination of documents, the promotion of initiatives aimed at sharing different competences, knowledge, points of view on academic life and on the future of the university. The process was planned and conducted in such a way as to foster an active participation of different stakeholders in taking key decisions and/or identifying key strategic areas, and to valorize plural perspectives, with academics and administrative members invited to collaborate for the achievement of shared strategic objectives. Decision-making transparency of, and the listening to divergent opinions fuelled intense debates and enabled the consolidation of the hierarchical structures, making them more authoritative.

Finally, based on the UniBG experience, being able to extrapolate the effectiveness of the organizational process described here to other organizations would seem to require/necessitate the following supporting conditions: a strong mandate and a clear vision; an appropriate time frame to develop the participatory process; the sharing of decision-making criteria and methods; coherent and timely decisions; and a compromise between suborganization flexibility and standardization.

Overall, we foster the debate on ways of organizing towards

organizational democracy (e.g. Butera, 2021) and show how strategic planning can stimulate active participation. This latter can, in turn, affect strategy, thereby contributing to higher organizational democracy. Thanks to the opportunity to directly observe the process, we were able to report on emergent strategic practices and on the role of material artefacts (strategic tools like PowerPoint slides, guidelines, etc.) in strategy-making, all aspects that have received scant attention in past literature (see Vaara and Whittington, 2012), which here are found to also contribute to organizational democracy. Relying on direct participation can be, however, seen as a study limitation, although the research team was aware of their dual role and tried to limit cognitive biases or role conflicts (through mutual comparison and constant role repositioning). Future studies could use indirect participation to further contribute to the scientific debate. They may also explore how organizational democracy is realized in different types of organizations and maintained once achieved. For example, it would be interesting to investigate whether the participatory approach introduced for the first time at UniBG will be maintained in the monitoring phases aimed at verifying the achievement of the strategic objectives and future revisions of the Strategic Plan. It would also be interesting to investigate how people involved in the process perceived it and if and how it changed their approach to their work, their understanding of the university and their willingness to adopt participatory, transparent and cooperative behaviours in other spheres of organizational life. Of course, the impacts of such a democratic approach to strategic planning will require further assessment.

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Invited contributions

Sezione progetti e politiche organizzative

Beyond workplace democracy: Prefiguring non-capitalist social reproduction within Marx's communist horizon

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Abstract

This contribution argues that, in order to foster a more socially just and sustainable economy and society, management and organization studies need to embrace novel, alternative forms of organizing the economy and society. We first discuss how the scholarship on workplace democracy, which promotes more participatory governance in firms and cooperatives, fails to acknowledge that exploitation and dispossession are constitutive features of capitalist institutions. As these institutions need to abide by the imperative of capital accumulation, they cannot be redeemed. Instead, we propose that our social reproduction should be organized through alternative non-capitalist economic practices. We point to the key role of prefiguration in envisioning alternatives to capitalism, and plead for embedding prefiguration within a 'communist horizon' based on the Marxist principle 'from each according to their possibilities to each according to their needs'. We conclude with a call for bringing alternative economies to the core of management and organization studies, in view of expanding our current understanding of the economy beyond capitalism, as a means to sustain life on this planet rather than for capital accumulation.

Keywords: workplace democracy, economic alternatives, cooperatives, prefiguration, social mediation, Marxism

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Abstract. Oltre la democrazia al lavoro: Prefigurare la riproduzione sociale non capitalista all'interno dell'orizzonte comunista di Marx

Questo contributo sostiene che – per promuovere un'economia e una società socialmente più giuste e sostenibili – gli studi organizzativi dovrebbero abbracciare nuove e alternative forme di organizzazione dell'economia e della società. In primo luogo, discutiamo di come gli studi sulla democrazia nei luoghi di lavoro, che promuovono una governance più partecipativa nelle imprese e nelle cooperative, non riconoscono che lo sfruttamento e l'espropriazione sono caratteristiche costitutive delle istituzioni capitalistiche, le quali, dovendo attenersi all'imperativo dell'accumulazione del capitale, non possono essere riscattate o riconvertite. In alternativa, proponiamo che la nostra riproduzione sociale sia organizzata attraverso pratiche economiche alternative non capitaliste. In particolare, sottolineiamo il ruolo chiave della prefigurazione nell'immaginare alternative al capitalismo e chiediamo di inserire la prefigurazione in un 'orizzonte comunista' basato sul principio marxista: *Ognuno secondo le sue capacità, a ognuno secondo i suoi bisogni*. Infine, concludiamo con un appello a portare le economie alternative al centro degli studi organizzativi, con l'obiettivo di espandere la nostra attuale comprensione dell'economia al di là del capitalismo, intendendola dunque come mezzo per sostenere la vita su questo pianeta piuttosto che per l'accumulo di capitale.

Parole chiave: democrazia nei luoghi di lavoro, economie alternative, cooperative, prefigurazione, mediazione sociale, marxismo

Introduction

Debates about the desirability of democracy at work go a long way back in management and organization studies (Dahl, 1986; Lawler, 1986; Pateman, 1970). They have typically resurged at times in which the social and environmental costs of capitalism became so visible to the many that they could no longer be easily dismissed as its unavoidable side-effects, externalities to be endured or at best mitigated by the state. At these moments, corporations, which are commonly portrayed as source of wealth for society, rather come to be seen as the source of its problems and under increased scrutiny. The global economic crisis of 2008 inaugurated such a historical moment: grand narratives of multiple crises permeate today the collective consciousness, ranging from economic stagnation to the pandemic, the current surge of armed conflicts and ubiquitous signs of profound and irreversible climate change threatening life on the planet.

Workplace democracy, the democratization of the corporation and, less frequently, industrial democracy, accordingly feature again at the top of the

academic agenda across a wide range of disciplines, ranging from political theory (Stehr, 2023) to philosophy (Frega *et al*., 2019), history (Berger *et al*., 2019), economics (Wolff, 2012), industrial relations (Lansbury, 2009) and management and organization studies. It has also been at the core of recent multidisciplinary initiatives such as the Global Forum on Democratizing Work held in 2021, The Great Transition conference in Canada in 2022 and the conference on Workplace Democracy since WWII recently held in Paris. In management and organization studies, this renewed interest is reflected in this special issue of Studi Organizzativi, the last initiative of a series including special issues published by Organization on cooperatives in 2014, 21(5) andalternative organizations in 2017, 24(5) followed by contributions in 2020, 27(1) (see Zanoni, 2020), in Business Ethics Quarterly on deliberative democracy in 2019, 29(2), and a special topic section on democracy in and around Organizations as early as 2004, 18(3), in the Academy of Management Executive. It is also visible in the numerous single articles (Battilana *et al*., 2022; Graham and Papadopolous, 2023; King and Griffin, 2023; Pohler, 2022) and books (e.g., Adler, 2022; Alakavuklar, 2024) that have appeared since.

In this contribution, we engage with the bourgeoning literature on workplace democracy as a path towards the transformation of corporations and for social change. Despite our sympathy for its ambition, we hold that theories of democracy within the capitalist workplace do little to erode the hegemony of the corporation and the market as the only way the economy can -- and should -- be organized. On the contrary, by upholding that capitalist institutions can become more democratic, and so be redeemed for their original inequality sin, they *de facto* legitimize them and help sustain their hegemony. To avoid this (unwanted) effect, we argue that management and organization studies should theorize and empirically investigate much more often how the economy can be organized in ways that are outside capitalist relations (Alakavuklar, 2023; Daskalaki *et al*., 2019; Fournier, 2013; Zanoni, 2020; Zanoni *et al*., 2017). This requires abandoning the ambition to reform capitalism. The starting point of our conversation should rather be how social reproduction can be organized through alternative practices and relations, in ways that produce different desires and subjectivities (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Pitts, 2021).

We build our argument as follows. First, we reconstruct how the democratization of work, both in the corporation and in cooperatives, has been traditionally written about in management and organization studies. We then discuss how this perspective focuses on participation in deliberation and more equality in decision making as paths to change, yet does not question the nature of capitalist institutions and relations. In the third part of the text, we propose

to draw from the literature on community economies, which emphasizes prefiguring practices to organize our social reproduction beyond capitalism. We then argue that such practices should be embedded within a communist horizon grounded in the principle 'from each according to their possibilities to each according to their needs'. We conclude with a call for management and organization studies that bring alternative economies to the core of our work.

1. Redeeming the corporation through workplace democracy

Workplace democracy has been conceptualized as those policies and practices that structurally enable workers' involvement, deliberation, participation and voice in work processes in the corporation. Common workplace democratic practices include, among other, employees' participation in decision-making processes, employees' councils, employees' representation in the Board of Directors, and Employee Share Ownership Plans. These practices attempt to partially rebalance the gap in authority and power between management and workers in favour of these latter and their representatives (De Spiegelaere *et al*., 2019). The existing institutional relations between firms, the state and civil society actors shape whether employees have voice through direct participation, their representatives or union channels (Müller-Jentsch, 2008). In contexts such as the USA and Great Britain, workplace democracy generally occurs through voluntary, employer-led direct participation schemes (Casey, 2020; Frege, 2008). In coordinated economies, such as Germany and other continental European countries, some form of co-determination (Mitbestimmung) in corporate policy decision-making is foreseen by the law and generally occurs through trade unions (Frege, 2005). The most advanced form of workplace democracy is however producer cooperatives, which, similar to labour-managed firms or worker-owned firms, combine employee ownership of capital with workers' control (Luhman, 2006). Cooperatives rest on both collective property and collective control, with the same group of people being at once owner, manager and worker. Indeed, they have often been presented as desirable alternatives to the corporation and considered instrumental in reverting capitalist dispossession and envisioning 'real utopia' (Wright, 2013).

A wide array of arguments have been used to plead for workplace democracy, ranging from justice arguments to business arguments and social prosperity arguments (Foley and Polanyi, 2006). Workplace democracy is commonly presented as an essential condition to attain freedom, equality and justice. Comparing economic institutions with political ones, scholars point to the great discrepancy between the rights of citizens and workers. Workers, it is

argued, should not be passive participants in the workplace. They should rather be accorded 'industrial citizenship', that is, rights, dignity, and a stake in the decisions that shape their working lives. Landemore and Ferreras for instance compare employees who lack voice in boards of directors where decisions are taken with "disenfranchised citizens in an undemocratic state" (2016, p. 56). Frega and colleagues (2019) address the importance of workplace democracy in prioritising the rights of employees, keeping the authority relations accountable and promoting more egalitarian relations across the organisation. At a more individual level, they also argue that workplace democracy potentially fosters autonomy, recognition, self-respect and meaning in work.

Next to justice arguments, scholars have also pointed to the potential positive outcomes of workplace democracy for the organization and society. Workplace democracy is often related to increased workers' well-being, motivation and commitment allowing the organization to better tap into their knowhow, increasing productivity (De Spiegelaere *et al*., 2019), and fostering compliance with organizational demands (Müller-Jentsch, 2008). Examining positive effects for society as a whole, workplace democracy has been seen as facilitating democratic participation in the civic sphere, promoting higher labour force participation and innovation, fostering wealth and reducing inequalities (De Spiegelaere *et al*., 2019; Frega *et al*., 2019). Indeed, Jones (1986), points to how higher productivity increases the supply of goods and services, and the better distribution of assets makes income distribution more equitable. Labour-managed firms have moreover been connected to more stable employment levels, as they are likely to generate a diffuse, if smaller, Keynesian multiplier at the organizational level during negative economic cycles. Indeed, by turning workers into owners of the means of production, labour-managed firms actually increase workers' stake in the capitalist system and contribute to strengthening the societal order (Jones, 1986; Luhman, 2006; Müller-Jentsch, 2008).

2. Interrogating workplace democracy

Workplace democracy, both within the corporation and in the form of cooperatives, has also been the object of much debate and critique. The most common objection to more democratic organizations is the idea that democracy diminishes efficiency. This is a particularly important critique in light of a narrative of capitalism that, starting from the key assumption of scarce resources and unlimited needs, consistently portrays classical firms and

the market precisely as the most efficient way to organize the economy (Pek, 2021). Democratic deliberation and decision-making is seen as too time-consuming and potentially causing internal conflicts, leading to the deferral of strategic decisions and their implementation and undermining management's authority. Others have questioned whether workers possess the knowledge and skills required to function in less hierarchical ways, away from the division between the conception and the carrying out of work (Hoffmann, 2016; Meyers and Vallas, 2016). More fundamentally, some hold that workplace democracy is counterproductive as the interests of workers are structurally at odds with those of its owners, managers and other stakeholders. In this perspective, workers are expected to use their power to increase their own well-being and rewards at the expense of the company (Jensen and Meckling 1979; Gorton and Schmid 2004), and the owners of capital will conversely attempt to prevent the emergence of forms of workplace democracy through their influence and power (Jacob and Neuhäuser, 2018).

In the case of cooperatives, next to these critiques, many boundary conditions have been identified that need to be met for democratic practices to be sustained over time, to avoid their 'degeneration' into less democratic ones. They range from shared leadership, collective decision-making schemes, the sharing of information and knowledge, job rotation schemes and regular sharing of expertise, restricting the cooperative's size and growth, and the support of a network of stakeholders (Soetens and Huybrechts, 2022). As cooperatives operate in an institutional environment that is not aligned with their own democratic principles, their survival and success rely heavily on members' commitment (Muñoz *et al*., 2019). Yet the ideology that sustains such commitment paradoxically leads to individual members' sacrifices and the exclusion of individuals that cannot sufficiently commit (Soetens and Huybrechts, 2023; Meyers and Vallas, 2016).

While these critiques well reflect the contradictions that become visible in attempts to reorganize workplaces along the principles of democracy within a capitalist economy (Hyman, 2016), they often conceptualize them as organizational issues that can and should be resolved by the organizations themselves or networks of organizations. Indeed, democratically organized firms resist dominant institutional pressures, yet they often do not explicitly aim at changing the hostile institutional environment they are embedded in (Soetens and Huybrechts, 2022; for an exception see De Coster and Zanoni, 2023). Or they see change as a secondary effect of expanding their operations, 'scaling up', that is, on condition that such expansion does not 'degenerate' them into regular businesses (Pansera and Rizzi, 2020).

Taking a democracy lens allows to expose the inequality in the decision-making between capitalists and workers. However, it frames the problem as one of unequal rights to partake in deliberation, leading to solutions centred on the right and practices to participate in it. The idea of the 'democratic' corporation hides from view that such workplace democracy does not redefine capital, labour or their relations. Necessary for capital accumulation, such relations of dispossession and exploitation are constitutive of the corporation, not accessory to it. While the cooperative form conflates capital and labour into the same collective body, it cannot undo capitalist relations. The organization of the economy through commodities subjects democratic organizations, like any organization, to the 'mute compulsion' of capital accumulation that capitalism brings about (Mau, 2023). Independent of their more or less democratic internal practices, the compulsion to accumulate capital makes organizations come into fundamental contradiction with the social reproduction of life. This idea is well reflected in Moore's (2015) notion of the Capitalocene, "a distinct geological epoch in which the capitalist formula of 'accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake' has penetrated into every nook and cranny of the planet's biophysical environment, to the point where the survival of the capitalist system has come to constitute an existential threat to the survival of humanity as a whole" (Roos and Leverink, 2017: 9-10).

We thus argue that we need, as a scholarly community, to shift our attention towards alternative ways to organize our social reproduction, away from the firm as the central economic unit in need of reform and a commodity-based economy (Janssens and Zanoni, 2021). Our perspective is grounded in those strands of Marxism that understand Marx's critique of political economy as a theory of the historically specific 'social mediation', the particular social forms social production and social reproduction as a whole take under capitalism, rather than merely as a 'material-technical' specific mode of production (Adorno, 2000; Backhaus 1980; Bonefeld, 2014; Postone and Brennan, 2009; Rubin, 1972 in Pitts, 2021). This understanding aligns with the call of Marxist feminists to refocus our analyses on the conditions of social reproduction of labour (Bhattacharya, 2017; Ferguson and McNally 2015; Fraser, 2014, 2016; Leonard and Fraser 2016).

To envision equality and social justice, it is thus essential to question the very tenets of the political economy that mediate all social relations – not only those in the workplace – constituting most of us as holders of labour-power, whose value is validated in the wage obtained in exchange of that labour-power in the market (Marx 1976, p. 274).

3. Post- and anti-capitalist social reproduction as an alternative

To productively think outside 'capitalist social reproduction' (Gimenez, 2019), we draw from Gibson-Graham's (1996, 2006) poststructuralist Marxist feminist intervention, which aims at queering capitalism and the relations and subjectivities it produces. Pointing to the multitude of non-capitalist practices, including household relations, child-raising, non-commodified labour, exchanges based on barter and giving gifts, and indeed cooperative organising, Gibson-Graham (2006) argue that we should not assume the capitalist economic system is unitary and monolithic. They posit that the economy includes non-capitalist activities in a variety of locales which already co-exist alongside capitalist practices to serve the needs of communities through various organising forms. Such organising forms produce multiple, diverse relations and subjectivities. The hegemony of capitalism, or 'capital-o-centricism', however obscures and disavows them as marginal and less valuable and important (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Acknowledging the economy as a set of diverse practices is an essential condition to build a politics of possibility, discovery, and experimentation in our daily relationship with the economy, as it offers a new ontology of difference to practice and theorize the (re)mediation of social relations (Burke and Shear, 2014). This ambition is at the heart of the notion of prefiguration, the making of a different future through every-day practice in the present (Monticelli, 2021). Prefiguration conceives of these practices as constitutive of their ends – solidarity, equality, well-being, the preservation of life – rather than as merely instrumental means to achieve them (Maeckelbergh, 2009). It is a modality of politics that attempts to radically break the political, economic, social and psychic dependence on present institutions to imagine alterity, refusing a dialectical understanding of politics and a teleological vision of history.

McKinnon (2020) argues that "(i)n the diverse economy it becomes important to attend not only to the tasks that earn a wage, but to all the activities people undertake to sustain life, including those that contribute to material needs (for food, shelter and clothing) and those that contribute to social, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs" (p. 116). For us, what McKinnon addresses is the core of non-capitalist social reproduction. Hence, thinking the economy as other-than-capitalism brings forth the importance of use-value, the role of non-commodified labour and the subjectivities that are produced through it (De Angelis, 2019). Engaging with diverse economic practices enacted through our labour results in the emergence of new economic subject positions and their multiplication: we are no longer only

waged workers, but also unpaid family caregivers, volunteers, neighbours… which potentially empowers communities to (re)configure social and political relations (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Healy, Selcuk, and Madra, 2020).

This ontology is grounded in 'weak theory', a non-essentialist engagement with empirical reality without knowing and arguing for a pre-determined result or truth (Roelvink, 2016). It is this modality of engagement that allows for the messiness, diversity, multiplicity and difference of practices to become visible (Zanoni *et al*., 2017), and thus the possibility of multiple interpretations and trajectories concerning social change. It helps us "describe, appreciate, connect and analyse, identifying strengths to build on and constraints to work around" (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski, 2020, p. 9). No longer assuming a concrete 'law of change' (Gibson-Graham, 2006), this ontological position of 'reading for the economic difference' (Gibson-Graham, 2020) in a given historical and political context is radically open. According to Gibson-Graham (2008),

[t]he practice of weak theorising involves refusing to extend explanation too widely or deeply, refusing to know too much. Weak theory could not know that social experiments are doomed to fail or destined to reinforce dominance; it could not tell us that the world economy will never be transformed by the disorganised proliferation of local projects…The choice to create weak theory about diverse economies is a political/ethical decision that influences what kind of worlds we can imagine and create, ones in which we enact and construct rather than resist (or succumb to) economic realities (p. 619).

While experimentation through practice is essential to prefigure 'non-capitalist social reproduction', some commentators have argued that it is in itself not sufficient and questioned its transformative potential (Srnicek and Williams, 2015; Böhm, 2014; Parker 2023). Elsewhere, we have argued that central to the debate on alternatives should be the question of how to articulate multiple forms of non-capitalist, solidary organizing into a broader political project (De Coster and Zanoni, 2023; Zanoni, 2020; Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017; De Angelis, 2019; Monticelli 2021), as opposed to an only loosely organised or non-organized proliferation of alternatives. Ours is in no way a plead for returning to a teleological 'strong theory', but rather a search for meta organizing principles providing a 'horizon' (cf. Dean, 2012).

Here, we would like to propose to ground the experimentation with non-capitalist organizing of social reproduction in Marx's (1875/1977) principle 'from each according to their possibilities to each according to their needs'.

Formulated in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, this principle summarises well Marx's vision of a post-capitalist community society (Devine, 2019), delineating such horizon:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therefore also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (Marx, 1875/1977: 568-569).

In this fragment, Marx argues for a different society in which labour is no longer a commodity. Taking distance from the moral discourse of bourgeois rights, Marx hints at a just society through the reorganisation of reproductive forces. He offers an alternative, solidary distributive justice to overcome the inequalities caused by strict egalitarianism, which does not take into account the intrinsic difference among people, in terms of their ability and their needs (Bellando, 2021). Individuals no longer receive based on what they contribute, in line with the liberal meritocratic ideal. For Screpanti, "only this allocation criterion enables people to obtain maximum freedom in the enjoyment of life" (2004: 186). Missé (2020) emphasizes that this principle goes beyond the mere redistribution of products of labour. It addresses the need to overhaul the capital labour process in which labour represents a commodity that alienates us. As life's prime want, labour should be pleasure, "an object of desire or rather an equivalent of it" (p. 8). Labour's use value sustains non-capitalist social reproduction instead of exchange value sustaining capitalist relations of production. Through pleasure, desire and freedom of labour, another form of social reproduction emerges, in which its (non)material outcomes are allocated differently, no longer appropriated by capital to accumulate.

Marx's communist vision provides a radical ontology of difference that not only helps decentre capitalist relations and the firm as the reference economic institution, but also guides the creation of non-capitalist social reproduction, through other desires and subjectivities (Healy, Selcuk and Madra, 2020). As Gibson-Graham, we remain open for the impact and consequences of experimenting with diverse practices of non-capitalist social reproduction, which we cannot predict or estimate beforehand. Yet, we place

this experimentation within a Marxian, communist horizon – at once Real, in a Lacanian sense, and impossible – making us intelligible in new, post- and anti-capitalist, ways along our individual needs and possibilities.

4. Moving the organizational agenda on alternatives forward

Placing Gibson-Graham's heterogeneous and radically open post-capitalist practice within a Marxian political horizon centred on individuals' unique capabilities and needs fundamentally changes the conversation. In this perspective, the ambition becomes to reimagine organizing practices that re-mediate social reproduction in ways that are grounded in the limitedness of planetary resources and that recognize the relevance of human – and more broadly species – difference. Such practices need to produce frames of intelligibility that enable subjectivities that are not predicated on commodities and their relations and thus challenge value, as established through exchange, as the dominant social form of our being. This entails organizational research that decentres the corporation, moving our analyses to other spaces where the economy and social relations are not done through waged labour, such as the free food store, the theatre and the library (Alakavuklar, 2023; Janssens and Zanoni, 2023), as well as the activist cooperative prefiguring a future without precariousness (De Coster and Zanoni, 2023). What can the organization of life outside the corporation, from each according to their possibilities to each according to their needs, look like? Where is this type of organization today taking place? What are its potentialities and limitations? What are its relations to value as the dominant social form and how can those relations be subverted to counter capitalism's expansion into life? Addressing these questions requires acknowledging existing contradictions without dismissing these spaces and the practices constituting them.

The multiplicity and heterogeneity of these spaces pose the political question of how they should be coordinated to foster social justice and solidarity. This question has increasingly been raised in the scholarship on alternative economies, which has advanced notions such as articulation, assemblage (Featherstone, 2011) and the 'holons' (De Angelis, 2019), among other, to theorize the political organizing of scattered initiatives into something broader, leveraging their capabilities without however 'scaling them up' or denying their uniqueness and specificity. Also at this level, the Marxian principle of radical difference in solidarity appears pertinent. This question can obviously be extended to include corporations enacting

democratic practices, yet these 'democratic workplaces' would here not be gauged solely on the basis of the voice they allow to workers, but rather on their contribution to building post-capitalist social reproduction. Overall, we believe that it is of paramount importance to gain a better understanding of the relations between more or less 'radical' – i.e. explicitly anti- and post-capitalistic – forms of organizing for social justice, to be aware of potential continuities but also contradictions, and strategically leverage the possibilities offered by their coexistence.

Over the years, as scholars who have an ambition to support the emergence of non-capitalistic economic and social practice, we have invested into research projects that make such practices visible and attempt to draw from them theoretical lessons (Alakavuklar, 2023; De Coster and Zanoni, 2023; Zanoni *et al*., 2017; Zanoni, 2020), but also – importantly – into developing academic programmes, courses and lectures that shift the conversation. For instance, we collaboratively developed a master programme on social impact whose tenets are aligned with the argument we have advanced here. We both have developed and are teaching courses in which the economy is conceptualized as a pluralist space composed by multiple practices that go well beyond the market and the corporation. We moreover collaborate with and support a wide array of volunteer, non-profit organizations that attempt to foster change from the margins of capitalism, and which in some cases struggle to survive, retain legitimacy and have impact in their own environment. These forms of engagement are more mundane than the activism of our colleagues in other context, such as Argentina (Esper *et al*., 2017) or elsewhere, yet they remain of utmost importance to build an episteme within which alternatives to capitalism are legitimated and cherished and can flourish.

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Can democracy at work deliver mutual gains in the digital economy?

by *Virginia Doellgast*[*]

Abstract

Digital and AI-based technologies provide new tools to discipline workers, intensify monitoring, and deskill jobs. This article asks under what conditions these technologies can instead be used to generate mutual gains for employers, workers, and the broader public. Two developments are discussed, which provide opportunities for new coalitions in support of strengthened collective worker voice in technology adoption and deployment. First, the growing use of these tools in a range of service occupations provides opportunities for coalitions with customers or service users focusing on technologies' impact on service quality. Second, the importance of worker knowledge and skills as both inputs to and output of new AI-based technologies provides opportunities for a more collaborative approach to improving their accuracy and performance. To realize these opportunities for mutual gains, governments and labor unions first need to place institutional constraints on employers that strengthen bargaining rights and that protect minimum employment standards, workers' privacy and control over data, and job security.

Keywords: digitalization, artificial intelligence, mutual gains, labor unions, worker voice

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Abstract. Democratizzare il lavoro può portare benefici reciproci nell'economia digitale?
Le tecnologie digitali e basate sull'intelligenza artificiale forniscono nuovi strumenti per disciplinare i lavoratori, intensificare il controllo, e ridurre le competenze richieste. Questo articolo si chiede a quali condizioni queste tecnologie possano invece essere utilizzate per generare benefici reciproci per i datori di lavoro, i lavoratori e la società in generale. Vengono discusse due tendenze recenti, che offrono opportunità per nuove coalizioni a sostegno di una maggiore voce collettiva dei lavoratori nell'adozione e nella diffusione della tecnologia. In primo luogo, il crescente utilizzo di questi strumenti in una serie di occupazioni dei servizi offre opportunità di coalizioni con i clienti e gli utenti che si focalizzano sull'impatto delle tecnologie sulla qualità del servizio. In secondo luogo, l'importanza delle conoscenze e delle competenze dei lavoratori, sia come input che come output delle nuove tecnologie basate sull'intelligenza artificiale, offre opportunità per un approccio più collaborativo per migliorarne l'accuratezza e le prestazioni. Per realizzare queste opportunità di benefici reciproci per lavoratori e imprese, i governi e i sindacati devono prima imporre vincoli istituzionali ai datori di lavoro che rafforzino i diritti di contrattazione e tutelino gli standard minimi occupazionali, la privacy dei lavoratori, il controllo sui dati e la sicurezza del lavoro.
Parole chiave: digitalizzazione, intelligenza artificiale, benefici reciproci, sindacati, voce dei lavoratori

Introduction

Democratic structures supporting collective worker voice have long been argued to produce mutual gains for employers and workers, and to generate positive spillovers for society. Collective bargaining and co-determination give workers a set of legally sanctioned tools to block management practices that harm their well-being or to encourage those that increase their pay, security, and discretion or control at work. Meanwhile, companies benefit from a stable and motivated workforce that is more productive due to accumulated skills and experience and that requires less intensive supervision. Scaled up to the industry or national level, democracy at work can underpin flexible production systems relying on an engaged workforce who are motivated to share their knowledge to improve systems and processes or to propose innovations – with high quality products and services then benefiting consumers and the public.

This stylized picture of employee voice as a key factor in both improving performance and enhancing worker well-being can be seen across the management and employment relations literatures (Budd, 2004; Morrison, 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2020). At the same time, researchers also acknowledge the significant challenges to establishing and sustaining democratic institutions

in the workplace – which have become steeper in recent decades (Dukes and Streeck, 2022). Managers operate in an institutional and economic landscape characterized by increasing options to avoid established collective voice institutions, and countervailing incentives to centralize decision-making, to cut labor costs, and to motivate workers through more low road, discipline-based management practices.

In this article, I discuss past research on mutual gains under Fordism and post-Fordism, and then analyze challenges and possibilities for building mutual gains-oriented, democratic collective voice institutions in today's 'digital economy'. The central purpose of labor unions is of course not to improve the productivity of capital, but to represent and advance workers' interests through different combinations of collective bargaining, class mobilization, or social movement unionism (Hyman, 2001). At the same time, labor has tended to have most success in sustaining collective worker voice in capitalist economies where strong countervailing power, based on the capacity to disrupt production, encouraged an alternative economic model that accommodated some degree of power sharing (Perez, 2003).

New digital and AI-based technologies are increasing employers' options to pursue a more unilateral approach, allowing them to discipline workers via technology-enabled exit strategies, intensified monitoring, and deskilling across a new range of professional jobs. These three factors can potentially further undermine both employer demand and institutional support for collective worker voice. At the same time, two developments provide opportunities for new coalitions around mutual gains that benefit employers, workers, and the public. The first is the growing importance of services in the economy, bringing workers more visibly into the public sphere and customers or public service users into the employment relationship. The obvious harms to both groups from a cost cutting focus in, e.g., public services, schools, hospitals, telecom services, and retail, creates new allies for an approach to technology investments that centers on improving service quality. Second, the importance of worker knowledge and skills as key inputs to and output of new AI-based technologies provides an opportunity for organizing around voice-based approaches to implementing these technologies in more productive and labor complementing or enhancing ways. To realize these opportunities, however, governments and labor unions first need to place institutional constraints on employers that make it more difficult to take the low road through exit threats, intensified monitoring, and deskilling.

In the sections below, I first review the arguments and evidence underpinning older, Fordist and post-Fordist approaches to mutual gains; and discuss challenges to these approaches from technology-enabled exit,

monitoring, and deskilling. I then outline opportunities for mutual gains in the contemporary digital economy, as it is transformed by the second digital revolution. I conclude with a discussion of implications for comparative employment relations theory and practice.

1. Mutual gains from Fordism to post-Fordism

Employment relations (ER) scholars have long argued that collective voice through unions can help promote both improved efficiency and equity. Management researchers have a shared interest in performance outcomes, studying the human resource management (HRM) practices, team arrangements, and supervisor behaviors that motivate employees to work harder and smarter (Batt and Doellgast, 2005) or to engage in 'prosocial voice' that improves 'organizational or work unit functioning' (Morrison, 2011). At the same time, ER scholarship is distinctive in acknowledging the presence of legitimate conflicts of interest between employers and employees. Thus, collective voice through collective bargaining has distinctive value not just in producing 'integrative' or efficiency-enhancing outcomes but also 'distributive', zero-sum outcomes that involve trade-offs for both sides (Kaufman, 2015). This perspective emphasizes the 'mutual' in mutual gains: what do workers get out of voice arrangements that motivate them to share their knowledge and invest discretionary effort in working more efficiently or productively?

The 'Fordist production model' in the post-WWII period combined standardized mass production with high wages, job ladders, and some degree of job security, as collective bargaining and welfare states became more established. The human relations and socio-technical systems movements – emphasizing strategies for enhancing employee motivation and satisfaction through voice and shop floor participation – shaped the culture and practice of management and labor relations (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Emery and Trist, 1960). And labor unions often were lead actors encouraging these alternatives via institution building, including the humanization of work movement in the 1970s (Tchobanian, 1975) and the Quality of Working Life movement in the 1980s (Gilbert, 1989). However, work organization in North American and European manufacturing firms was still largely based on a narrow division of labor and strict hierarchies (Womack et al., 1990).

Following the crisis of Fordism in the 1970s, 1980s-era technological change (e.g. micro-computing and advancements in communications infrastructure) and globalization of markets brought attention to alternative

'post-Fordist' models of work organization that were better suited to producing more customized products for increasingly quality conscious markets (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Sorge and Streeck, 1988)). The global diffusion of lean production from Japan then became the focus of attention from the 1990s, as firms from a range of industries adopted different versions of a model relying on job rotation, self-managed teams, and quality circles, which relied on worker participation in decision-making on and off the shop floor (Berggren, 1993; Dore, 2000).

In the US, these developments inspired a large 'mutual gains' literature. Much of this literature focused on labor management partnership agreements that secured jobs and worker voice in exchange for commitments to work together on (rather than fight over) new technologies and production models that improved efficiency. Kochan and Osterman (1994: 46) write that the term 'mutual gains':

> 'conveys a key message: achieving and sustaining competitive advantage from human resources requires the strong support of multiple stakeholders... employees must commit their energies to meeting the economic objectives of the enterprise. In return, owners must share the economic returns with employees and invest those returns in such a way as promotes the long-run economic security of the workforce.'

A number of studies found that cooperation on high involvement or 'high performance' work systems benefited firms through enhanced efficiency or quality (Gittell et al., 2004); but also workers through improved job satisfaction, job security, and often pay and benefits where collective agreements secured profit sharing or pay for skills (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Batt et al., 2002; Rubinstein, 2000).

At the same time, the hope that equity/efficiency trade-offs could be overcome through mutual gains-enhancing voice always has sat uneasily with the reality of conflicting interests in the employment relationship. Democracy involves redistribution of power and requires the 'consent of the governed' in a system where ultimate authority rests with management and shareholders. A persistent question in the Anglo-American ER literature has been why voice-intensive high involvement practices and labor management partnerships are so difficult to establish and sustain over time -- despite evidence that they improve performance and that there is strong employee demand for more voice at work (Freeman et al., 2007).

The simple answer is that employers find it much easier to pursue more unilateral or low-road approaches to (short-term) profit maximization in the absence of strong laws or institutions that require them to take a more

democratic (long-term) high road. In Anglo-American countries, even where employers were still bound by collective agreements, the broader context of declining union density and decentralized bargaining meant that most efforts to strengthen worker voice were short lived. Studies in the US have shown that entrenched authority structures and managerial self-interest often got in the way of sustaining experiments with employee participation (Batt, 2004) or implementing the voice and 'empowerment' elements of lean production (Vidal, 2007). More critical accounts of 1990s-era labor-management partnerships in the UK and US pointed out that the large power imbalance in many workplaces was typically producing more substantial gains for employers than for workers and unions (Guest and Peccei, 2001; Osterman, 2000; Stuart and Martinez Lucio, 2001). Unions also tended to further lose bargaining power when they moved from conflict to cooperation, leading to concessions and work intensification (Godard and Delaney, 2000; Parker and Slaughter, 1997).

Meanwhile, European researchers documented distinctive approaches to post-Fordist, lean-inspired management rooted in stronger countervailing labor power (Berggren, 1993), particularly in Germany where co-determination rights were most robust (Turner, 1991). Employers gained a competitive advantage from a cooperative and skilled workforce, but this was partially against their will, via 'productive constraints' on markets that were established and sustained by powerful and independent labor unions (Streeck, 1997). The varieties of capitalism literature can be seen as an end of an era attempt to center on the employer side of these mutual gains – with comparative advantage in global markets (circa the late 1990s) depending on complementary national systems of institutions, including those supporting collective voice in continental Europe's coordinated market economies (Hall and Soskice, 2001).

2. Constraints on worker voice in a digital age: Technology-enabled employer exit, monitoring, and deskilling

A central 'Fordist' insight of employment relations is that effective worker voice requires constraints on employer exit from the employment relationship. When workers have job security through collective agreements or employment protection legislation, they are protected from management retaliation when they voice concerns; while they will be more willing to share their shopfloor knowledge to make improvements that might otherwise threaten their jobs (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). The other side of this is that employers' capacity

to exit (or threaten to exit) the employment relationship can be used to discipline workers, either through motivating the internal workforce to increase their performance as a condition of keeping their jobs or through shifting work to less regulated employment contracts, sectors, or locations.

Burawoy (1985) observed that the institutionalization of labor market protections and collective bargaining in the post-war period helped to protect workers from 'market despotism' – where consent to management's productivity goals was predicated on a fear of job loss. One could say, consistent with the labor process tradition, that this pushed management to experiment with different approaches to gain workers' consent, via more normative (voice-oriented) forms of control. But it also represented a compromise underpinned by 'industrial democracy', which required sharing power and productivity gains with workers.

Since the 1970s, we have gradually moved back toward conditions encouraging market despotism, as liberalization, financialization, and globalization – enabled and accompanied by technological change – both open up new exit options and incentivize their use. The first wave of digitalization – or the 'First Digital Revolution' led by advances in computing, telecommunications, and the internet – reduced the costs of outsourcing or offshoring. Digitalization also enabled new forms of performance monitoring, including digital tracking of screen shots and keyboard stroke counting for office workers, GPS tracking for technicians and logistics workers, and automated customer feedback for frontline service workers (Goldman, 2024). Finally, the growing ubiquity of computers (and their application in advanced robotics and document digitalization) across industries and occupations changed skill demands and returns to skills in complex ways, as certain clerical and blue collar jobs were automated and others were offshored, while demand for technical and programming skills increased (Levy and Murnane, 2004). Expanded capacity to fire employees for not meeting performance goals, and expanded options for moving work to new locations or to subcontractors, temp agency workers, and freelancers, helped employers to use 'exit' to substitute for or supplant 'worker voice' as a means of gaining cooperation or consent (Benassi and Kornelakis, 2021; Greer and Doellgast, 2017).

The 'Second Digital Revolution', based on faster internet speeds, cloud computing, and innovations in artificial intelligence and algorithms, is intensifying the above trends, through enabling new forms of employer exit, intensified monitoring, and deskilling. Employers have expanding options to automate jobs or functions that can be performed by AI tools, and certain customer services (taxi, delivery, retail) or IT and programming work have been shifted to 'freelance' contracts. 'Algorithmic management' tools are

becoming ubiquitous in informing or making selection, training, and coaching decisions; directing work; and even conducting performance evaluations attached to pay, sanctions, or dismissals (Litwin et al., 2022). AI-based technologies can also potentially be used to deskill work – or reduce worker control over and returns from their skills. Algorithmic management tools can enable tighter scripting and control but also a narrower division of labor, reducing the capacity of workers to use their own knowledge and exercise discretion (Schaupp, 2023). Generative AI can be used to codify knowledge that in the past would have required longer tenure or experience to master (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023); or to de-value skills in certain creative or professional jobs through assigning higher-value 'creative' work of idea, text, or art generation to a (company-owned) AI tool.

These trends suggest that current innovations in AI are giving employers new tools to discipline workers and cut labor costs. Where employers have expanding opportunities to exit, monitor, and deskill jobs, they also have reduced incentives to seek worker cooperation with these investments in a way that generates mutual gains – through investments in pay, skills, and voice.

However, technology does not have to be used in these ways: it is a tool to achieve goals set by individuals, organizations, and the broader society. Under what conditions are alternative paths possible, that apply new digital and AI-based technologies to achieve more broadly shared benefits?

3. Worker voice and mutual gains in the digital economy

One approach to specifying the conditions for achieving mutual gains under 'second wave' digitalization is to look at existing institutions and their effects in the increasingly globally integrated and post-industrial economies of the global North.

Overall, evidence suggests that 'institutions still matter' for supporting democracy at work and its associated benefits to workers. US Americans want more of a say at work than they have and express growing support for collective voice (Hertel-Fernandez et al., 2022) – but still encounter significant legal and employer-generated obstacles to organizing unions (Kochan et al., 2023). In continental Europe, collective bargaining and co-determination are more robust (Meardi, 2018), although they are also declining in strength and coverage (Howell, 2021). Recent research has continued to find positive impacts of these stronger 'collective voice' institutions on job quality, e.g. through ameliorating general trends of growing work intensification

(Adăscăliței et al., 2022; Green et al., 2022), inequality (Dorigatti and Pedersini, 2021), and precarious work (Doellgast, 2022; O'Brady, 2021).

A more difficult question is whether, and how, alternative employment systems based on collective worker voice support the employer or 'efficiency' side of mutual gains today. Coordinated employment relations institutions are still found to produce more broadly shared economic benefits: supporting comparative advantages for distinct clusters of firms and industries (Witt and Jackson, 2016) and macro-level economic performance (Etzerodt, 2021). According to the growth models literature, strong unions and high bargaining coverage in Nordic countries like Sweden support a more 'balanced' approach to growth based on growing exports and household consumption (Baccaro and Pontusson 2016). However, findings are mixed on the performance or productivity advantages of strong collective voice institutions at the organizational or workplace level (Freeman and Shaw, 2009; Jäger et al., 2022).

A key challenge is connecting the macro- to the meso-level, or specifying how a high road approach to investing in worker skills and voice can support alternative production models, based on distinctive comparative advantages, associated with this more recent wave of technological change. Unions and policymakers have focused on strengthening protective standards: for example, protecting workers' privacy and data rights and placing hard legal or negotiated limits on more invasive, biased, and discipline-focused uses of algorithmic management tools (Bernhardt et al., 2023). They have also sought to extend agreements and legal protections across sectors and workplaces (Doellgast, 2023) – including through new union organizing (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2017) or incorporating platform work under standard employment contracts and collective agreements (Rolf et al., 2022). These efforts are crucial for establishing minimum terms and conditions, or institutional 'constraints' on employer strategies that might push them to search for alternative approaches to organize and motivate workers. However, comparative political economy teaches that a viable economic model is also necessary, in which employee voice is viewed as a resource for gaining competitive advantage, where 'market despotism' is more difficult to implement. What might be the alternative basis for improved performance outcomes – to turn these 'constraints' into 'productive constraints'?

An attempt to answer this question must be heavily qualified by the caveat that digital and AI based technologies, and the laws and institutions regulating their use, are changing rapidly. However, two factors appear to support new coalitions around mutual gains, associated with the specific characteristics of the second digital revolution. First, the importance of service industries in our

'post-industrial' economies opens up new potential shared interests in a high road approach to these technology investments, focused on improving service quality and customer or public outcomes. Second, the importance of worker knowledge and creativity as inputs to AI-based technologies potentially increases the value of worker voice in improving the performance of these tools.

The first component of a high road approach to AI and digitalization should focus on the long-term gains to societal well-being and productivity from investments in service quality. There is a natural coalition between service workers and customers, patients, students, or public service users frustrated by the short-term, cost-cutting focus that drives many contemporary technology investments. In our research in US and Canadian contact centers, we found that employees were more positive about AI-based technologies that helped them to do their work more effectively – for example, to find information quickly and resolve customer problems; or provide more targeted training (Doellgast, O'Brady, et al., 2023). However, they were more negative about both the performance gains and impact on their own stress levels and job quality where these technologies were implemented in a way that further constrained their discretion to resolve calls – for example, through requiring them to tightly follow a script. In qualitative survey comments, we found high reports of AI-based tools that simply did not work as they were supposed to, giving wrong information and bad advice or dinging agents for mistakes they did not make; or that were perceived as making biased 'decisions' on compliance or call routing. In addition, employees reported frequent mistreatment by customers frustrated at being misrouted or forced to interact with bots and other self-service technologies; with higher reported customer mistreatment rates where more AI-based technologies were used in workers' jobs (Doellgast et al., 2023).

In service firms and industries driven by short-term cost cutting pressures, the benefits from partnering with worker representatives to solve these problems – e.g. in loyal and satisfied customers, as well as improved efficiency from better functioning technologies – may not be seen as worth the time and necessary investments. However, both longer term efficiency gains and the broader public good require investments that center on service quality as a key 'outcome' to be maximized. Take for example US health care, where an increased focus on short-term profit extraction connected to private equity (and related) investment models has significantly harmed both workers and public health (Appelbaum & Batt, 2020). Healthcare unions have long advocated (and fought) for high road approaches to restructuring and technology adoption that benefit both patients and workers (Batt et al., 2020; Krachler et al., 2020).

Union campaigns focusing on 'bargaining for the common good' in education, health care, and the public sector draw these connections between more worker voice, better working conditions, and improved investments in the quality of frontline services (Givan and Lang, 2020; Rubinstein and McCarthy, 2016). As employers seek to introduce new technologies in these settings, there is a strong potential coalition of employees, customers, and the broader public, who have shared interests in more carefully planned, high road approaches to AI and digital investments. And the productivity spillovers can be substantial from a healthy and well-educated workforce that is not induced to spend hours online or on the phone accessing services and support.

The second component of a high road approach to AI and digitalization should focus on the importance of human collaboration to productivity gains from generative AI. AI-based technologies are trained on datasets generated through the creativity, knowledge, and experience of workers. And workers often play a central role in refining these datasets, but also engaging with AI tools in their work in a way that requires 'collaborating' with machines. This potentially increases the value of worker voice in improving the performance of these tools.

A large literature in organizational behavior examines the impact of collaboration between humans and new digital and AI-based technologies on productivity or efficiency outcomes. Findings suggest that the overall climate of management and working conditions support better AI performance: high trust, worker autonomy, and investment in skills encourage improved decision-making, individual performance outcomes, and innovations associated with these investments (Bankins et al., 2023). Krzywdzinski et al. (2023) argue that this body of research demonstrates the importance of AI users' participation in developing models, selecting and maintaining data, and interpreting and verifying results – in order to achieve 'transparent and understandable AI in organizations'. But they also observe that these researchers typically do not study the role of collective bargaining and labor market institutions in supporting this kind of positive-sum 'employee voice' in AI adoption.

Meanwhile, comparative employment relations researchers (including Krzywdzinski and colleagues) are beginning to fill this gap through studying case studies of collective bargaining over AI adoption and implementation. Findings suggest that unions are more successful at advancing a high road, mutual gains approach to these technology investments where they can draw on strong bargaining rights, comprehensive collective agreements, and a support network of intermediary institutions that help with developing their knowledge and strategy (Bosch and Schmitz-Kießler, 2020; De Stefano and Doellgast, 2023; Lloyd and Payne, 2019).

In my research with Wagner and O'Brady, we describe alternative approaches to adopting AI in German and Norwegian telecom firms, which involved substantial negotiation with worker representatives. Agreements placed strong restrictions on algorithmic management and established clear data protection rights; but also in the German case, established an AI ethics committee and a joint project to design a new AI-based scheduling tool that gives employees more control over their working time (Doellgast et al., 2023). In interviews with managers in the German telecom company, I heard that these agreements and joint initiatives underpinned a successful approach to implementing a wide range of new digital and AI technologies that had significantly improved the company's customer service rating, as well as other measures of performance: raising efficiency, cutting costs, and more than doubling first call resolution. And both managers and worker representatives attributed this success to strong co-determination institutions and traditions, underpinned by job security, high wages, and investment in training. 'Productive constraints' both closed off the low road of a unilateral approach to cost cutting, but also encouraged management to think more carefully about technology investments in a way that benefited customers and improved job quality.

This example shows that both points above – shared employee-customer interests in service quality and the importance of employee collaboration with AI tools -- can be related in a 'mutual gains' case for strengthening collective worker voice. Workers are the most likely advocates of and partners for an approach to AI and digital investments that centers on the complementarity between labor and technology. And strengthening their voice is a central component to encouraging a longer-term view on returns to these investments, that applies new technology as a complement rather than a substitute for human skill and discretion.

Conclusions

The history of struggles to advance both economic prosperity and social equity is tightly bound up with changing power relations between employers and workers or labor and capital (Johnson and Acemoglu, 2023). As observed earlier in this article, realizing mutual gains is an elusive and always contradictory goal in capitalism. Partnerships are often welcomed by management when they want more cooperation from labor; and thrown aside when restructuring and cost pressures intensify. I am certainly not arguing that unions' main role is to generate profits for firms, but rather that the

sustainability of 'constraints' on employer choice via strong collective bargaining and labor market institutions tends to depend on their capacity to turn those into 'productive constraints' that continue to generate jobs and investment.

I have discussed two factors that could underpin a successful high road, mutual gains approach to AI and digital investments: coalitions with customers or service users focusing on the impact of these technologies on service quality and a 'collaboration' approach to integrating AI with human knowledge and skills. However, encouraging employers to embrace this approach at a broader industry or societal scale requires establishing a strong basic floor of conditions, closing off employer exit or low road approaches to intensify monitoring and deskilling, and supporting stronger worker voice through institutionalized bargaining rights. Achieving these 'necessary' conditions for the high road, in turn, will rest on the organizing and activism of unions, NGOs, and the broader public, to build progressive coalitions between customers, workers, and policy-makers. These are high hurdles, particularly in countries like the US with a starting point of weaker regulation and strong incentives to pursue the exit-based low road. However, the examples discussed in this paper suggest that an alternative economic model is possible and worth fighting for, based on goals of more sustainable prosperity and grounded in democracy at work.

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Democratising Work!
A just economy to save the planet

by *Democratizing Work Italia*[*]

On May 16, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Manifesto entitled "Work: Democratize, Decommodify, Remediate" appeared at the same time in 43 newspapers of 36 countries around the world. The Manifesto, translated into 27 different languages, was signed by more than 3,000 researchers from more than 700 universities and academic institutions.

This initiative was the result of a collective endeavor launched in May 2020 by three scholars and activists – Isabelle Ferreras, Dominique Méda, and Julie Battilana – who felt the need to spur a debate on how to face the unfolding crisis that the world was facing. According to their view, such an exit could only be based on three fundamental principles: democratizing businesses, decommodifying work, and remediating the environment. These three keywords aimed to tackle the root of the polycrisis – in health, climate, the economy, social and political life – that the Covid-19 pandemic was illuminating. The Manifesto conceived the pandemic crisis as an opportunity to rethink our societies, to better focus on the relation between our needs as human beings, our communities and the planet. According to the authors of the Manifesto, what clearly emerged from the pandemic experience, in fact, was the vital need to skip the return to a toxic and destructive normality that was the real responsible of the pandemic. Briefly but pointedly, along a few paragraphs, the Manifesto laid down the limits of contemporary capitalist societies highlighting also concrete and feasible ways to start a necessary process of change.

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[*]Democratizing Work Italia is the Italian chapter of the international Democratizing Work movement, born from the manifesto written in May 2020 by the three academics Isabelle Ferreras, Dominique Méda and Julie Battilana. The movement aims at developing a global conversation around the joint needs of democratizing and decommodifying the the world of work and promoting climate justice. The Italian chapter aims to bring the actions and reflections proposed by the manifesto into the Italian context.
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After its publication, the Manifesto reached over 7,000 signatures in a few weeks. The three authors thus decided to implement the core principles of the Manifesto, creating the Democratizing Work movement.

1. The three principles of the Manifesto

The Manifesto starts by emphasizing what the authors deem to be one of the main lessons of the pandemic crisis, something that capitalism has always sought to render invisible: "human beings are not one resource among many others". Without workers, in fact, there would be no production, no services, no businesses and no society at all. This fact painstakingly emerged during the subsequent lockdowns undertaken to contain contagion, when pledges for social distancing were made possible by the work of those called "essential workers". Despite being the core constituency of the organizations in which they work, the pandemic also made very clear that workers are mostly excluded from participating in the government of their companies – a right which is considered to be a monopoly of capital investors, i.e. shareholders. The exclusive right for the latter to decide on companies' management derives from a conception according to which capital investors are the only "investors" in companies. What the Manifesto argues, instead, is that workers are the key "investors" in companies by investing their labour time and, consequently, their life choices. From this observation follows the first principle of the Manifesto: the bodies representing the interests of workers should be granted similar rights to those exercised by executive boards. "A personal investment of labor; that is, of one's mind and body, one's health – one's very life – ought to come with the collective right to validate or veto decisions."

The second key point of the Manifesto is that work should not be treated as a commodity like others. This also necessarily imply that market mechanisms should not be left in charge of the choices that crucially influence the most basic functioning of our communities. This not only to avoid that humans' working abilities are employed for polluting activities, but also to devote the necessary resources to those sectors that are key for social reproduction. Again, the pandemic offered a crucial example of the detrimental effects of leaving the market and its profit-maximisation logics reign on some of the fundamental sectors of everyday life, such as health and sanitary provision, or social care. From this the call to decommodify those elements that others have called "the foundational economy" (Foundational Economic Collective, 2018), as it represents the fundamental infrastructure of our societies. At the core of these service there is human labor and the Manifesto argues for the need of ensuring

that access to work is provided to everybody. Hence, in order to sustain life, we need to decommodify crucial areas of our societies.

Decommodification is also key to reach the goal of decarbonizing the economy. The fundamental idea here is that there are many needed jobs that will not be created by market forces alone, because they are not profitable in an economic sense, although they are fundamental to reproduce nature and life on the planet. In a nutshell, we do not need less work to save the planet – as it has often been argued - we need to use more work for remediating the impact that capitalist development had on the planet.

The connection between the principles of democratizing and decommodifying work and environmental remediation is, in fact, one of the most significant and original arguments advanced by the Manifesto. They are not distinct and separated points, but interconnected pillars of the only possible strategy to overcome the ecological crises of which Covid-19 has been just one of the many symptoms. The democratization and decommodification of work are crucial prerequisites to ensure a real ecological transition, beyond greenwashing and "business as usual" solutions advanced by companies under the hegemony of fossil capitalism. A key linchpin of the Manifesto is that private corporations as we know them cannot be the protagonist of an ecological transition because they are extractive by design. Hence, a successful transition from environmental destruction to environmental recovery and regeneration, one which is deep enough to face the environmental catastrophe that capitalism has caused, cannot come solely by shareholders and capital investors. Therefore, to exit the environmental crisis we need a new model of corporate governance where work investors and capital investors have the same right to decide what to produce and how to produce. Indeed, democratically governed firms are much better positioned to undertake those transformations that are needed to address the environmental emergency. Hence, democratization and transition are crucially intertwined.

In this sense, trade unions need to abandon their usual concern about the risk of unemployment deriving from more sustainable forms of production. Firstly, because, as mentioned above, the ecological transition requires more jobs to remediate the impact that capitalism has on the planet. Secondly, the ecological perspective provides new and effective arguments to support the key role that unionization and workers' representation – two of the main targets of neoliberal policies – play in addressing a democratic and sustainable society.

The Manifesto also argues that all supports given from governments to businesses (at that time, in the attempt to face the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 crisis) should be conditional to deep held changes in the way in which they do business towards "ensur(ing) our survival on this planet".

Unfortunately, the money given with the recovery and resilience plan seem to reproduce what we have seen for decades which is transfer to corporation without any sort of conditioning. This approach, that has dominated the neoliberal view on industrial policies, is not adequate anymore to tackle the social and environmental challenges that are characterizing our time.

2. The path of the Manifesto and the Italian national chapter

After its worldwide publication, the principles of the Manifesto were expanded and articulated in a collective book, *Democratize Work*, which constitutes "an urgent and deeply resonant case for the power of workplace democracy to restore balance between economy and society" (Ferreras, Battilana and Méda, 2022). The book focuses on the tensions between democracy and capitalism, a topic of high relevance that is increasingly receiving attention (Dukes and Streeck, 2022).

The principles of the Manifesto were also further discussed in a Global Forum, held online on October 5-7, 2021, which gathered over 400 speakers from universities, trade unions, public institutions, environmental and human rights NGOs, the media, progressive businesses. 3,000 participants from over 90 countries gave birth to a deep discussion, held in over 100 panels, around the key principles of the Manifesto. This has been an unprecedented experience of building up a proper global discussion, using the potentialities of digital technologies to give everyone the possibility to participate in the discussion irrespectively from the countries where they are located.

Within this global framework, one key goal of the call to action was to develop national chapters which could both translate the key issues addressed in the Manifesto to the specific local contingencies and, at the same time, give rise to local movements that can contribute to reach the global goals. National chapters have then grown in several countries such as Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, France, Germany, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, the USA. The goal of these national chapters is to develop initiatives that bring to life the three principles of the #DemocratizingWork Manifesto and that translate them into the specific local contexts. This is done in different ways, such as scientific studies, writing and reporting, various forms of networking, debate, and community engagement.

The Italian chapter of the Democratizing Work movement is committed to spread the principles of the Manifesto also in our country, multiplying the opportunities for discussion both in the academic field and beyond. Several initiatives have been undertaken, starting from the organization of the Italian

chapter in the Global Forum, to the first Italian assembly held in Bologna on September 30, 2022 and the first cycle of webinars in Spring 2023. In these moments, *DemocratizingWork Italia* discussed about workers'' participation, the platform society, recovered factories, cooperativism, logistics and trade union struggles, the health crisis, the energy crisis, the need to build a society of care, the invisibility of cultural workers and the potentials of energy communities in decarbonising production. All these events have included academics as much as trade unionists, activists, established networks and local initiatives. Crucially, the Italian chapter has developed a deep-seated collaboration with the Italian activists of Fridays for Future and with the workers' collective that is manning the GKN plant in Tuscany after the decision of the management to close it in 2021 (AAVV 2022). During these two years, these workers have not only been able to attract a wide solidarity in their struggle, but have also developed an "ecological plan" to ensure the future of the plant. This is one of the best examples of the powerful convergence between the environmental and the labour movement, one that overcomes the often-held assumption of an inevitable clash between environmental protection and employment, ecological transition and social wealth.

DemocratizingWork Italia aims at highlighting and supporting economic and social actions that the dominant rhetoric tends to conceal and marginalise. Once again, the pandemic offered important examples. The measures undertaken by the states and by the European Union on the Covid pandemic, the suspension of the European agreements on the management of public budgets and the introduction of a European solidaristic funding measure for the economic recovery have shown that the political will might generate space for action. Similarly, the peaceful welcome of six million Ukrainian refugees in Europe highlighted how the alleged invasions of migrants was just rhetorical and instrumental.

However, this political will is not permanently out there, it should be supported and expanded by large networks such as *DemocratizingWork*. The solution is not at hand: there is no expert, organization, politician or international ally able to cope with such deep-rooted problems alone. It seems clear that the free market and growth at any cost - as set out also in the Recovery and Resilience Plans developed by several national governments, including the Italian one that has been one of the main beneficiaries - are rather part of the problem. No one can save themselves alone, just as no party, union or association can be self-sufficient. Alliances and coalitions that can influence society, fostering solidarity and democracy day within local communities, are strategic. Social imagination is a collective endeavor; therefore it requires a democratic, participatory, horizontal, inclusive discussion.

The researchers and activists of *DemocratizingWork Italia* want to provide a cultural infrastructure for all the individual and collective actors interested in implementing the three principles of the Manifesto, as a common basis for addressing the challenges that contemporary life presents and supporting just, inclusive, sustainable economic and social processes.

3. Future prospects and the role of academia

After three years from its inception, the reasons that spurred the publication of the Manifesto are more present than ever. The war in Ukraine, the rise of inflation rates, the crises of SVB and Credit Suisse make democratization, decommodification and decarbonization even more urgent and necessary. This is not to be taken for granted, considering that similar attempts emerged during the pandemic did not continue, while the Democratizing Work Manifesto is still generating initiatives that are tackling some of the crucial contradictions of our time involving individual and collective actors around the globe.

Against the status quo, a collective of social scientists has mobilized to become not only an agitator and an orchestrator of the necessary change, stimulating the academic world to provide its contribution. Democratizing Work is, in fact, first and foremost a call to action that persuasively advances the critical need to democratize firms, decommodify work, and decarbonize the environment. On the one hand, this call to action interrogates the academic community, claiming the duty and the right to contribute to building a better society. On the other hand, it emphasises the need to build broad and articulate coalitions to foster economic and social transition both sustainable and democratic. A key question for the research community is how it engages in nurturing the democratic nature of society (Burawoy, 2005). In this sense, the Democratising Work initiative can be seen as part of those scholarly initiatives that arise from the idea that science must serve society. This should firstly lead to open the University to critical stands coming from the "outside", such as those workers and social movements that already operate towards democratizing, decommodifying and decarbonizing the economy. This means sharing their expertise, making visible the contradictions that are usually hidden by dominant discourses, but also learning from the critical capabilities of social actors. This is for example the direction taken by the UK national chapter that opened the UK Hub for the Global Democratising Work Movement. In this perspective, Democratizing work represents a promising epistemological path to pursue the search of alternative social and economic models, prefiguring at the same time

a broad rethinking of the role the academia can play in aggregating multidisciplinary intelligences that actively contribute to a paradigm shift.

The social and environmental challenge characterizing our age will not be solved by isolated experts or by illuminated sovereigns. It requires a deep rethinking of the way in which our societies produce and consume, work and live, in view of ensuring ecological security and social equity. The next step of the movement will then be the promotion of international discussions in significant places such as the GKN plant. Quoting an expression from the GKN Factory Collective, one of the pillars of Democratising Work network is the creation of a 'socially integrated academic research', where the production of knowledge is challenged by the imperative of both ecological transition and a new-found social justice. In times of global crisis, we think it is crucial to create opportunities of international exchanges, building bridges between struggling experiences happening across the globe. We do not only see new challenging issues, but also a mushrooming of social conflicts that are essential in building democratization processes. The project of democratization is not simply a matter of new institutional arrangement. Neither decarbonization is a goal that can be achieved just by imposing limits to the current model of development. We need to cultivate conflicts, alternative perspectives, critical strands as these are the only way to build solutions that nowadays do not even appear possible. As Walter Benjamin argued "the real catastrophe is to let everything continue as before" (Benjamin, 2014, p. 114). Thus, we should not waste the opportunities of change this crisis is providing and work for just economy.

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Book Reviews

Democracy at Work: Contract, Status and Post-Industrial Justice, by Ruth Dukes and Wolfgang Streeck. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022. Pp.182

by *Guglielmo Meardi*[*]

In 1996, as a side study of my PhD research, I happened to follow the parliamentary works on the new Polish Labour Code, which had to replace the communist times' one. The liberal opposition was vocally critical of the whole thing: in a free society, they explained, no labour code is needed, because contract law is more than enough. The most eloquent response, meticulously elucidating that private contracts can never be adequate for such an uneven relationship as the employment one, did not come from the ruling social-democrats, but from another rightwing opposition MP, who happened to be a professor of Labour Law: Lech Kaczyński, future founder with his twin brother of the Law and Justice party, and President of the country in 2005-10.

Reading *Democracy at Work* reminded me of that almost forgotten debate, and not only because the Introduction of the book is similar, in its appeal for a just regulation of employment, to Kaczyński's speech. It made me realise how an idea (that labour law could be buried and replaced by free individual contracts), which 25 years ago appeared as the outlandish reserve of overzealous neo-converts to the free market, has now become such an important matter that it has to be taken most seriously by leading scholars. And it made me notice that the vigorous responses tend to come, rather than from the centre-left that had originally contributed most to labour legislation, from more unlikely corners, such as 'populists' like Kaczyński (or now Conte in Italy) and politically heterodox scholars like Wolfgang Streeck.

This short, very readable book by two authors from different disciplines, countries and generations, tries to explain the importance of the issue of legal classification of work, and to argue for a renewal of labour law. It is elegantly organised into five chapters. The introduction explains the approach that is

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interdisciplinary in the best sense of the word, combining the best labour law reflections with those of political economy into an 'economic sociology of labour law' that seems particularly well-suited to the task. The following two chapters are respectively on the socio-legal and the political economy contributions, and the last two look at the present, providing first the diagnosis of today's problems and then some recommendations for the cure.

The socio-legal chapter focuses on the contributions by Philip Selznick from US legal sociology and by Hugo Sinzheimer of the Weimar School of labour law. In different historical contexts and from different intellectual perspectives they both argued for the role of the law in civilising work. Selznick focused more on the two-way relation between formal law and social norms as they emerge from the workplace, while Sinzheimer looked more concretely at the institutions that can support a 'labour constitution', in particular associations through collective bargaining. Both elaborations were noticeably ill-fated. In the case of Selzheimer, the Weimar experiments were soon brutally interrupted by Nazism, and if they were in part resumed after the war, it was only in the more conservative spirit of Western Germany, aimed at stabilisation and not at social progress. In the case of Selznick, his main book was followed a year later by Friedman's shareholder theory that heralded the rise of neo-liberalism with its re-commodification of labour. Dukes and Streeck provide convincing insights of both contingent and deep-rooted reasons of why this happened, a starting point for learning the lessons and elaborating new attempts.

The political economy chapter focuses on industrial relations theories of the 1970s-80s, and especially the radical and corporatist ones. This chapter in part resumes the content of the seminal work by Streeck on status and contract of a few decades ago (the first version of 1986 and the full one of 1992, although the most read one is probably the 1987 article in *Work, Employment and Society*). At the time, Streeck had argued for the social superiority of 'status'-based social regulation of work as industrial citizenship over the 'contract' market-based one that the emerging neoliberal recipes promoted back then. Looking back to that work self-critically, the book points at how that theorisation had assumed 'status' to be inherently better than 'contract' for workers, overlooking the attractiveness that, rightly or wrongly, flexibility and entrepreneurship could exert. The industrial relations scholarship had taken the homogeneity of the working class around the Fordist 'male breadwinner' model for granted, and the disappearance of that homogeneity opens up, too, the space for renewing the foundations of social regulations of work.

The fourth chapter presents a rapid but effective picture of what has happened to work under neoliberalism. Dukes and Streeck reject the terms 'dualisation' as imprecise and prefer, after Weil, the one of 'fissuring', which specifically indicates how employers can exploit different classifications of workers to their advantage. The chapter illustrates this with four examples of professions that have radically changed, and whose significance comes from being from disparate ends of the labour market: gig workers, Amazon warehouse workers, care workers and university professors (the fact that references come from both Germany and US is also an implicit criticism to 'Varieties of Capitalism' approaches: the problems are with capitalism tout court).

Finally, we arrive to the chapter with the 'solution', with bold ideas under the title of 'post-industrial justice?' but no illusion about difficulties and limitations. Dukes and Streeck look for the roots for social norms of work, which can interact with labour law to provide new forms of social status for workers that can free them both *from* the vagaries of the market and *to* participate in organisational and economic decisions. They find these roots in occupational communities and they explain in depth why. The conclusion is that, to have a chance of establishing robust foundations of new norms about work, occupational communities need, most of all, strong rights of freedom of association (including of collective bargaining and strike). Unlike those of industrial society, these democratic rights must account for demographic and organisational differences, including workers with different attitudes to work, whether formally employed or not, so long as they are characterised by economic dependence on firms.

The book is not only a recommended short and enjoyable reading for anybody approaching the subject, but also an important theoretical and political milestone. Theoretically, it is an example of the return to 'big thinking' that has emerged from the recent economic crises. This work is at the same time parsimonious and well-grounded in classic theories. While it includes some canonical references to Marx, its spirit is much more Weberian than Marxist. Its pillars are Weberian ideas of 'labour constitution' and of 'status', and further elaborations by people like Michels and Rokkan. While it also includes more qualified references to thinkers like Durkheim and Polanyi, it is explicitly critical of some tenets of Marxist labour process theory, especially of Braverman's assumption of labour homogenisation and more generally of labour process theorists' neglect of the 'normativity' of social relations of work. For Dukes and Streeck capital, while a strong 'juggernaut', is far from being the only player in the workplace, especially given its own contradictions. But it is in Weberian insights, rather than in the

'all-or-nothing' Marxist ones, that they find answers and hope. Make no mistake, their approach remains a conflict-based one rather than a functionalist one: the 'labour constitution' of norms about work is not merely about 'pacifying' conflict, but also, and even more, about allowing conflict to be expressed openly.

These theoretical insights are extremely valuable references for the expanding field of studies of precarious work, which while very rich empirically, are still mostly under-theorised. In particular, the systematic argumentation on 'occupational communities' may orient the focus on the ways groups of workers (whether freelancers, platform workers, self-employed etc) manage to socialise their needs and establish from bottom up some rules about how work is to be performed (EP Thompson would have used the term 'moral economy'). It also can sharpen the focus on those workers who intentionally choose self-employment and who are still understudied in comparison to those who mobilise for employment status. More broadly, it can help to conceptually refine recent attempts, notably by Eurofound, to build indicators of 'industrial democracy' and link them to outcomes in terms of quality of work, and it can inspire and orient the emerging studies on the role of worker voice in global labour governance initiatives. Finally, the attention to differentiation of work orientations can complement the insights of intersectional approaches to issues of age, gender, ethnicity in labour organising.

The book also has an important policy dimension. The proposals in the last chapter are ambitious but not as far-fetched as 'smash capitalism'-style ones. In post-industrial societies, the focus on rights of expression and association may well have both more traction, and more future potential, than focus on redistribution or on social protection from above. It may be asked what Dukes and Streeck would say on other proposals that currently dominate the debate, such as basic income schemes or national minimum wages. The fact that they never mention either is in itself significant (as it is noticeable that they never mention Guy Standing, a promoter of basic income who also wrote on proletarian and salaried status following a Polanyian approach). They also largely neglect the welfare state, which scholars like Esping-Andersen saw as key for the de-commodification of labour. The only exception is a quick but revealing discussion of Marshall in the final pages: here they are explicit that 'social citizenship' (through the welfare state) is not only politically unrealistic today, but also inherently unable to compensate for the lack of 'industrial citizenship' and workplace rights. In this logic, both basic income schemes and minimum wages appear therefore as the wrong route: they are measures from the top neglecting that real labour

power can only come from the bottom, and that social norms can be legitimate and effective only if they are responsive to the actual needs of workers, wherever they are and whatever their contractual conditions, rather than based on assumptions of what those needs are. The social foundation of post-industrial democracy is the collective agency of workers, and both political and empirical efforts should focus on that: on establishing the workplace rights, against all new organisational and managerial devices that hamper them, to socialise, share information, express demands. Then, and only then, the fight will be back on.

The Democratic Organization. Democracy and the Future of Work by Thomas Diefenbach. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2020. Pp. 276.

by *Simone Pulcher*[*]

Contemporary organisations can be considered a collision point between the values and aspirations of democratic societies and capitalism, a place where the seductive idea of an equal distribution of rights and power among citizens suddenly collides with the pragmatic necessity of 'getting things done'. Given the enormous amount of time and resources we physically and virtually devote to organisations, and the impact of our organisational experiences on our lives in general, one might wonder what 'democracy' actually means in a world dominated by hierarchical organisations, whereby discrimination and inequality are systematically reproduced (Archer, 2006; Amis, 2020). In other words, while many argue that 'democracy stops at the factory gate', the inequality produced unfortunately does not. That is why striving to envision more democratic ways to organise work could be a good investment against an oligarchic society. The challenge is by no means simple, since democratic attempts at organising represent a tiny minority to date, and are certainly not free of contradictions. In this respect, Thomas Diefenbach's *The Democratic Organization. Democracy and the Future of Work* represents a bold and ambitious work.

Diefenbach's work starts from the assumption that traditional, hierarchical organisations, which he refers to as 'orthodox organisations', are essentially flawed if considered from a democratic perspective: "In such places, the insufficiencies, organisational misbehaviour, maltreatment, and injustices are not just individual incidents but inherent, systemic features of a fundamentally flawed and highly dysfunctional system" (p. 4). As an alternative to orthodox organisations, then, Diefenbach conceptualises a

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general model of the democratic organisation, that he defines as a "nonhierarchical organisation that pursues and serves multi-dimensional (social, political, legal, economic, and/or environmental) purposes in considerate, balanced, and sustainable ways and that is owned, managed, and controlled individually, collectively, and democratically by all of its members, who have equal rights, and are equally empowered, to participate fully in the governance and management of the organisation, organisational affairs, and activities" (p. 31). In his view, this is the only type of organisation consistent with the fundamental principles and values of a democratic society and several arguments in favour of both its desirability and viability are provided throughout the book.

In the first introductory chapter, Diefenbach provides a typology of democratic, non-orthodox organizations, which he divides into interest-oriented democratic organisations (i.e., associations, cooperatives, and partnerships); ownership-oriented democratic organisations (e.g., worker-managed companies); and social and solidarity economy organisations (e.g., NGOs and non-profit organisations). In their ideal-typical manifestations, these organisations share some key criteria, based on which Diefenbach builds his general model of democratic organisation. Chapters 2 to 7, which constitutes the first part of the book, are devoted to each of these criteria and to their systematisation into a general model of democratic organisation. The key criteria identified by Diefenbach are: a libertarian constitution; democratic governance; democratic management; measures favouring the equal empowerment of its members; and considerate conduct of business. According to Diefenbach, combining these criteria should give birth to organisations that are not only inherently morally better and more legitimate, but also do better for society and perform better with respect to their goals compared to orthodox organisations.

Chapters 8 to 10, which make up the second part of the book, focus on the attractiveness, legitimacy, and vulnerabilities of the democratic organization. In Chapter 8, Diefenbach dismantles a series of common arguments against democratic organisations, and then lists their several strengths and advantages. Chapter 9 deals with the level of legitimacy of different types of organisations, intended as their alignment with "the principles and laws of the wider social system they belong to and operate in" (p. 193); in these terms, the democratic organisation reaches the highest level of legitimacy in a free and democratic society. Chapter 10 finally focuses on what the author identifies as the major threat for democratic organisations: 'disproportional empowerment', meaning "the formal, psychological, and/or social empowerment of some (a few) members of a social system and the

formal, psychological, and/or social disempowerment of many other members of the social system" (p. 208). This threat, Diefenbach argues, originates from 'anti-social interests' imputable to specific, identifiable individuals; these individuals can be classified as 'anti-social perpetrators', who contribute intentionally to disproportional empowerment; 'unreflective doers', whose contribution is unintentional; and 'disengaged', who let it happen without opposing it. In the author's view, however, democratic organisations are best equipped to cope with disproportional empowerment and the individuals that contribute to it.

The first section of the book is the most stimulating and thought-provoking. As Diefenbach claims, the democratic organisation represents a novelty in that the attempt to provide a general model of such an organisation has never been made before. The effort made by the author in this respect is conspicuous: the model he depicts looks coherent and convincing, also because each of its key components is presented in depth and is well connected to organisation studies and social sciences literature at large. Orthodox organisations have been extensively criticised for decades but attempts to provide comprehensive theoretical alternatives are still limited. Based on the democratic principles of subsidiarity and separation of powers, the democratic organisation envisioned by Diefenbach is attractive and legitimate; individual freedom here is articulated in terms of confrontation and consent, rather than competition and imposition. By means of its democratic model, Diefenbach frees us from the perception of hierarchy as an organisational necessity, providing an alternative that looks much more pleasant, just and sustainable.

From a theoretical standpoint, Diefenbach does a great job as the general model of the democratic organisation is attractive and legitimate. However, where its viability is concerned, I found his arguments less compelling and, at times, rhetorical. In general, Diefenbach seems to rely on the theoretically presumed well-functioning of its model to confront the inconvenient empirical fact that democratic forms of organisations are much less popular than orthodox ones, and are not immune from disproportional empowerment themselves, as he admits. For example, he argues that "overall and on balance" democratic decision-making outperforms autocratic or oligarchic decision-making "by far" (pp. 178-179), without specifying in what terms and under what circumstances that is the case. In the end, the author resorts to individual psychology to account for the present shortage of democratic organisational forms; yet, if we agree that models should serve people and not vice versa, I am not sure how blaming individuals for their scarce application could help to prove their viability. I think the book would have

ultimately benefited from a more comprehensive consideration of the theoretical and historical limits of democracy, both inside and outside organisations.

Overall, I suggest all readers interested in alternative forms of organising should engage with this book, as it provides a very detailed and well-crafted ideal type of democratic organisation as a reference (cf. Parker, 2022). Action researchers and organisational designers, for instance, could rely on the general model of the democratic organisation and its components as a starting point for organisational development projects. The model could also be used as a reference point for the analysis of empirical cases of non-orthodox, alternative organisations, such as cooperatives and associations. More generally, the book contains many interesting ideas about non-hierarchical modalities of work and it will certainly provide the reader with a different perspective on organisations.

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Invitati dalla redazione

La cultura gestionale di un grande evento: il Giubileo.
Intervista a Francesco Rutelli e a Mons. Rino Fisichella

*di Barbara Maussier**

Abstract

Hanno segnato come pietre miliari il cammino della Chiesa e continueranno a farlo nel futuro, sono i Giubilei. Come è avvenuto in occasione di tutti gli Anni Santi, anche il Giubileo del 2025 sarà un evento importante non solo per gli aspetti propriamente religiosi e spirituali, ma anche dal punto di vista organizzativo, urbanistico e culturale. Roma si sta preparando in tal senso con significativi interventi atti a migliorare la qualità delle infrastrutture, delle strutture di accoglienza dei visitatori e dell'offerta culturale e turistica in genere anche grazie alle misure previste dal Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (P.N.R.R.) con i fondi della Comunità Europea "Next Generation Eu" stanziati in seguito alla pandemia da COVID-19. Ma qual è la macchina organizzativa che c'è dietro ad un evento di questa portata? Quali sono gli obiettivi che si vogliono raggiungere? Quali le risorse necessarie, il tipo di *governance* e gli strumenti di comunicazione più efficaci? Per rispondere a queste domande l'autrice ha intervistato a Roma, il 2 marzo 2023, Francesco Rutelli, ex-Sindaco di Roma che ha coordinato, in qualità di Commissario Straordinario, gli interventi del Giubileo Ordinario del 2000 e, il 28 marzo 2023, Mons. Rino Fisichella, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione della Nuova Evangelizzazione, delegato da Papa Francesco all'organizzazione del Giubileo Ordinario del 2025. Attraverso queste interviste, si sono approfonditi gli aspetti chiave che costituiscono la cultura gestionale di un evento di grande rilevanza spirituale e sociale come il Giubileo, esaminando il caso del Grande Giubileo del 2000 e i primi sforzi organizzativi del Giubileo del 2025. Il seguente lavoro si articola in quattro sezioni: il *primo paragrafo* comprende la descrizione degli obiettivi della ricerca e l'approccio metodologico utilizzato per la raccolta dei dati. Il *secondo paragrafo* rappresenta i risultati relativi all'analisi della dimensione

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organizzativa, che include gli aspetti relativi alla storia dell'evento, l'evoluzione della struttura organizzativa, gli obiettivi prefissati, il sistema di *governance*, l'analisi del sistema d'offerta, le sedi e il periodo di svolgimento. Il *terzo paragrafo* afferisce ai risultati relativi all'analisi della dimensione comunicativa, che include l'identità dell'evento (*concept*, logo e messaggio di base), il *target* (numero, tipologia e provenienza dei partecipanti), gli strumenti di comunicazione utilizzati, i simboli e i segni oltre ai sistemi di comunicazione interna. Il *quarto paragrafo* si riferisce agli aspetti relativi alla dimensione economica, che include fonti di finanziamento, spese previste e sistema di gestione dell'evento. Conclude il testo un'analisi degli insegnamenti tratti dall'esperienza organizzativa del Grande Giubileo del 2000 che possono essere interpretati come dei suggerimenti da implementare nei primi sforzi organizzativi messi in atto per il prossimo Giubileo della Speranza del 2025.

Parole chiave: Giubileo, Event Management, Social Change, Comunicazione, Organizzazione, Roma.

Abstract. The management culture of a great event: the Jubilee. Interview with Francesco Rutelli and Mons. Rino Fisichella

The Jubilees have marked the path of the Church as milestones and will continue to do so in the future. As has happened on the occasion of all Holy Years, the Jubilee of 2025 will also be an important event not only for the strictly religious and spiritual aspects, but also from an organisational, urban and cultural point of view. Rome is preparing it self in this sense with significant interventions aimed at improving the quality of the infrastructures, the visitor facilities and the cultural and the tourist offer, also thanks to the measures envisaged by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (P.N.R.R.) with the funds from the European Community "Next Generation Eu" allocated following the COVID-19 pandemic. But what was the organizational machine behind an event of this magnitude? What are the goals of the event? What are the necessary resources, the type of governance and the most effective communication tools? To answer these questions, the author interviewed in Rome on 2 March 2023 Francesco Rutelli, former Mayor of Rome who coordinated, as Extraordinary Commissioner, the Ordinary Jubilee of 2000 and on 28 March 2023 Mons. Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, delegated by Pope Francis to organize the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025. Through these interviews, the key aspects of the management culture of an event of great spiritual and social importance as the Jubilee were explored, examining the case of the Great Jubilee of 2000 and the first organizational efforts of the Jubilee of 2025.

Keywords: Jubilee, Event Management, Social change, Communication, Organization, Rome.

Introduzione

In occasione del ventisettesimo Giubileo ordinario del 2025 è stata impostata questa indagine sociologica, di tipo esplorativo descrittivo, con l'obiettivo di analizzare la cultura gestionale di un grande evento, identificandone gli aspetti chiave nella *dimensione organizzativa, comunicativa ed economica*. Per raggiungere questo obiettivo, l'autrice ha intervistato Francesco Rutelli, ex-Sindaco di Roma che ha coordinato in qualità di Commissario Straordinario, gli interventi del Giubileo Ordinario del 2000 e Mons. Rino Fisichella, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione della Nuova Evangelizzazione, delegato da Papa Francesco all'organizzazione del Giubileo Ordinario del 2025. Attraverso le interviste ai testimoni privilegiati, semi-strutturate con risposta aperta, si sono approfonditi gli aspetti chiave che costituiscono la cultura gestionale di un evento di grande rilevanza spirituale e sociale, esaminando il caso del Grande Giubileo del 2000 e i primi sforzi organizzativi del Giubileo del 2025.

1. La dimensione organizzativa

Hanno segnato come pietre miliari il cammino della Chiesa e continueranno a farlo nel futuro, sono i Giubilei. Nella Chiesa cattolica il Giubileo è l'anno della remissione dei peccati, della riconciliazione, della conversione e della penitenza sacramentale.

Riprende il nome dal Giubileo ebraico. Nell'ebraismo, *Yovel*, il Giubileo (Treccani, 2023) (in ebraico: *yovel* significa montone in riferimento al suono del corno di montone utilizzato per dare inizio alle cerimonie sacre) è l'anno al termine dei sette cicli dei sette anni sabbatici (*Shemittah)*, quindi ogni quarantanove anni. Secondo il *Levitico*[1] (Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, 2023), l'anno successivo, il 50º, coincideva con un anno di riposo della terra, per rendere più forti le coltivazioni, contemporaneamente gli schiavi venivano liberati, le terre confiscate restituite, i debiti condonati, in modo che le disuguaglianze fossero appianate. Nel corso del primo millennio, non ci sono tracce, nella Chiesa cristiana, di pratica giubilare. Il Giubileo, così come oggi è celebrato, risale a Bonifacio VIII nel 1300 e fu incentrato soprattutto intorno alla pratica del pellegrinaggio (con cui i cristiani - i

[1] Che è il terzo libro della Torah ebraica e della Bibbia Cristiana, contenente quasi esclusivamente leggi religiose e sociali, ad uso dei sacerdoti e dei leviti, che Mosè diede agli Ebrei durante il soggiorno nel deserto del Sinai.

cosiddetti *romei* - si recavano a Roma per visitare la tomba degli apostoli e invocare il perdono dei peccati. Il pellegrinaggio da sempre è metafora del vero "cammino dell'uomo", per sua natura *viator "viaggiatore"*, in cerca di sé stesso) e delle "indulgenze", distanziandosi dalla originaria concezione ebraica. Per la Chiesa cattolica il Giubileo è un anno di grazia, legato alla concessione dell'indulgenza plenaria, cioè alla remissione dei peccati e alla liberazione dalle pene. Il Giubileo indica anche gioia, perché la Chiesa gioisce della salvezza che viene concessa da Dio agli uomini che si pentono e che, confessati e comunicati, pregano nelle quattro basiliche maggiori di Roma, secondo le intenzioni del Pontefice. Iniziato come abbiamo detto nel 1300 il Giubileo è giunto fino ai giorni nostri essenzialmente immutato. Qualche cambiamento c'è stato, ad esempio nell'intervallo temporale. Il Giubileo istituito da Bonifacio VIII ebbe cadenza secolare. Clemente VI stabilì che il Giubileo si celebrasse ogni 50 anni a partire dal 1350. Successivamente fu Urbano VI a portarlo a 33 anni. La scadenza dei tradizionali e attuali 25 anni tra un Giubileo e l'altro è in vigore dal 1450. Fu Paolo II a stabilirlo nella Bolla *Ineffabilis Providentia*, affinché ogni generazione possa vivere almeno un anno Santo. Variazioni nel tempo sono avvenute anche nella modalità per ottenere l'indulgenza dei peccati. Bonifacio XVIII nel lontano 1300 stabilì che si sarebbero dovute visitare le Basiliche di San Pietro e San Paolo per i Romani nell'arco di 30 giorni continui o saltuari, per i pellegrini stranieri nell'arco di 15 giorni. Il Giubileo del 1625 viene ricordato come momento in cui la pratica dell'indulgenza non è più legata al pellegrinaggio nella città di Pietro e Paolo perché Papa Urbano VIII stabilisce che quanti sono impediti a raggiungere Roma possano ugualmente accedere al dono dell'indulgenza. Nei secoli muta anche il numero delle basiliche da visitare. Inizialmente Bonifacio VIII indica quelle di San Pietro e San Paolo, per il Giubileo del 1350 Clemente VI aggiunge la basilica di San Giovanni Laterano, mentre Gregorio XI, con la bolla dell'aprile del 1373, aggiunge alla pratica giubilare la visita della basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore perché scrive "...anche la Vergine sia venerata dai pellegrini" (Ziantoni, 2022). I Giubilei sinora celebrati sono stati 122, di questi 26 ordinari (legati a scadenze prestabilite) e 96 straordinari (indetti per qualche avvenimento di particolare importanza). Gli ultimi anni santi sono stati quelli celebrati nel 2000 con Giovanni Paolo II e nel 2015 quello straordinario con Francesco, il Giubileo della Misericordia. Il prossimo ordinario del 2025 avrà come motto *Pellegrini di Speranza* e sarà il ventisettesimo Giubileo ordinario. Per conoscere le date ufficiali di inizio e fine del prossimo Giubileo, occorrerà attendere il 9 maggio 2024, Festa dell'Ascensione, quando il Papa promulgherà la Bolla. L'Anno santo si

aprirà, in ogni caso, con l'apertura della Porta Santa della Basilica di San Pietro, nel mese di dicembre del 2024.

Il calendario dell'Anno giubilare, già pubblico sul sito web https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/it/pellegrinaggio/calendario-giubileo.html presenta unicamente le date dei "grandi eventi giubilari", senza segnalare le centinaia di manifestazioni giubilari che vedranno coinvolte le diocesi, i gruppi parrocchiali, le singole associazioni e i singoli pellegrini.

L'evento Giubileo è un sistema complesso perché in grado di aggregare "attori" diversi nei diversi livelli organizzativi. Dal punto di vista organizzativo la struttura di un evento può essere studiata a vari livelli (Maussier, 2010): la *microstruttura* riguarda l'articolazione interna delle singole unità operative, la *mesostruttura* riguarda l'articolazione interna tra le direzioni intermedie e la *macrostruttura* riguarda l'articolazione dell'organizzazione con l'ambiente esterno. Secondo Getz (2005) l'organizzazione dell'evento, oltre a prevedere una dimensione interna che include la scelta del programma dell'evento e il sistema di gestione interno delle risorse, si relaziona con una dimensione esterna, ovvero forze, condizioni e risorse disponibili, che ne influenzano la definizione. Per quanto concerne l'evoluzione organizzativa di un evento, Gibson e Connel (2004) evidenziano come, in funzione del tempo e delle risorse disponibili, lo sviluppo prevederà l'origine, la costituzione di un'organizzazione informale, l'emergere di una *leadership*, la formalizzazione dell'organizzazione e la professionalizzazione degli organizzatori. Questo modello ipotizza che al crescere dei fattori chiave come il tempo (età dell'organizzazione) e le risorse disponibili, crescerà il livello di professionalizzazione.

La professionalizzazione, secondo Getz (2005), può essere misurata prima di tutto attraverso il livello di formalizzazione dei ruoli organizzativi e delle procedure e, per gli eventi, con la presenza di uno staff pagato, di un orientamento al mercato e di una pianificazione strategica. Per pianificazione strategica si intende una programmazione consapevole (condivisa anche con i residenti) degli obiettivi che l'iniziativa vuole raggiungere e degli effetti che tali obiettivi comporteranno. La capacità organizzativa acquisita durante l'esperienza del Giubileo Ordinario del 2000 dunque dovrebbe essere letta in chiave di apprendimento a favore dei primi sforzi organizzativi messi in atto per l'organizzazione del prossimo Giubileo del 2025. Il modello organizzativo degli eventi riporta a una struttura che consente alla creatività, intesa come sintesi di fantasia e concretezza, di essere organizzata in modo fluido ma strutturato e che preveda lo scambio continuo tra la dimensione organizzativa e quella comunicativa, riportando inevitabilmente al concetto di *Comunicazione Organizzativa o Integrata*, ben delineato da Invernizzi

(2000). L'evento inteso come momento di aggregazione, come creazione di spazio pubblico di condivisione e soprattutto come "impresa culturale", è capace di innestare meccanismi di connessione fra le realtà dislocate sul territorio. A metà fra il nomadismo di un circo e la varietà di un carnevale, secondo una felice metafora di De Masi (2003), gli eventi sono capaci di creare uno spazio pubblico di aggregazione, mantenendo però un sistema di lavoro estremamente orizzontale, dove le competenze del singolo non entrano in rotta con quelle degli altri, ma si completano a vicenda. L'organizzazione e il personale degli eventi possono variare di molto a seconda del *budget* a disposizione. Tendenzialmente l'organizzazione di un evento è costituita dalla compresenza di una minoranza di professionisti e da una maggioranza di volontari che, insieme, interagiscono per portare a termine la realizzazione degli eventi (Getz 2005). Dall'analisi della letteratura sugli eventi e dalle diverse ricerche empiriche effettuate in prima persona su più casi di studio (Maussier, 2019;2018; 2010) emerge il profilo della struttura organizzativa di un evento. Le attività *core* (principali) di un evento possano includere cinque funzioni principali: supporto operativo *frontline* (a contatto con il pubblico), supporto operativo *backline* (retro-ufficio), *marketing*, amministrazione e finanza. Queste cinque aree poi possono essere suddivise in altre sotto aree. Il settore *marketing* si occupa delle attività di vendita, di ricerche di mercato e biglietteria. L'amministrazione elabora i bilanci, cura tutta la parte economica di controllo e fiscale, provvede alla selezione, formazione e retribuzione del personale. Il supporto operativo provvede alla realizzazione tecnica e pratica degli eventi programmati. La finanza cura tutta la parte finanziaria. La comunicazione tra questi cinque settori deve essere trasversale e frequente affinché si raggiunga l'efficienza. Ruoli e competenze devono essere ben definiti e chiari a tutti sin dall'inizio. In questo tipo di struttura organizzativa, i membri chiave dello staff o i manager principali tendenzialmente sono le uniche persone dello *staff* pagate, la restante parte dello *staff* è costituita da volontariato. Questa struttura è lo scheletro intorno al quale ruotano le attività e le persone coinvolte in un evento. Alcune attività possono anche essere esternalizzate (Maussier, 2010).

D.: *A distanza di più di vent'anni, in qualità di ex Sindaco di Roma in quegli anni e di Commissario Straordinario del Giubileo, mi può raccontare cosa è stato il Giubileo del 2000? Quali erano gli obiettivi che si volevano raggiungere dal punto di vista culturale e sociale e quali sono stati raggiunti?*

Rutelli: «Che ci sarebbe stato un Giubileo nell'anno 2000 lo si sapeva da tempo, nel senso che, se pure i Giubilei sono stati indetti con cadenza straordinaria, ovvero per circostanze particolari, nella storia, quelli ordinari, sono passati dallo svolgimento centenario, a partire dal primo del 1300 indetto da Papa Bonifacio VIII, a 75, 50, 25 anni di cadenza…diciamo che il primo Giubileo millenario era sicuramente atteso come una scadenza rilevante. Inoltre, fu un Giubileo fortemente voluto da Papa Giovanni Paolo II come occasione per fare un bilancio del suo lungo e importante pontificato e per definire e presentare al mondo il cammino della Chiesa Cattolica all'appuntamento millenario. Non dimentichiamo che nello stesso periodo il mondo viveva la preparazione al Giubileo con il panico tecnologico del *Millennium bug* (rivelatosi poi una paura infondata), oltre all'affiorare di idee catastrofiche associate alla fine del millennio. Per la Chiesa Cattolica il Grande Giubileo fu un momento importante per comunicare al mondo le proprie intenzioni per il nuovo millennio...Papa Wojtyla, con la sua personalità carismatica riconosciuta in tutto il mondo, voleva trametterе alcuni messaggi fondamentali come, per esempio, le scuse per crimini e genocidi commessi dai cattolici, e altri temi più specifici attraverso l'organizzazione di numerose celebrazioni, i "giubilei" dedicati alle principali categorie della società civile (politici, mondo della salute o dello sport, ecc.) in chiave globale. Vennero a Roma, infatti, da ogni parte del mondo i principali rappresentanti di ogni categoria, i quali assistettero a incontri con il Papa, svolsero convegni, conferenze e altro. Quindi fu un appuntamento in cui il passaggio di millennio determinò una gigantesca attenzione. Per la nostra amministrazione pubblica, almeno dal mio punto di vista, il Giubileo sarebbe stata l'occasione per sancire definitivamente la collaborazione tra la Roma laica e la Roma cattolica, un conflitto superato ormai da decenni, in particolare da quando Paolo VI dichiarò che lo Stato pontificio era un fatto del passato e che il potere temporale era da considerarsi irreversibilmente superato. Quindi, dal mio punto di vista, fu il primo Grande Giubileo che sancì il superamento delle barricate tra la Roma laica e la Roma cattolica. Il dialogo tra le istituzioni pubbliche e quelle religiose, nonostante le varie polemiche, permise di avvicinare la doppia universalità di Roma in quanto città mondiale e cattolica...e cattolico letteralmente vuol dire universale. Dal lato della nostra amministrazione, sin dal primo momento, fu chiaro che il Giubileo avrebbe generato un grande interesse per la città e che sarebbe stato una grande occasione per Roma, da non perdere limitandosi a recepire le aspettative della Santa Sede. Sapevamo che sarebbero arrivati moltissimi visitatori (alla fine il dato sarà di circa 26 milioni di arrivi con quasi 70 milioni di presenze, che significa in media due

giorni e mezzo a persona), quindi ci disponemmo immediatamente per gestirlo non sul piano filosofico, concettuale o culturale (…laicismo contro religiosità) ma sul piano organizzativo. Per noi sarebbe stato l'appuntamento civile del passaggio del millennio, che sarebbe coinciso con il Giubileo cristiano, al quale la nuova amministrazione, eletta alla fine del 1993 (io sono stato eletto sindaco nel dicembre del 1993 e poi rieletto nel 1997), si sarebbe dovuta presentare con una città rinnovata e più efficiente. Il lavoro che facemmo pertanto fu di puntare a massimizzare i benefici per la città che sarebbero derivati dagli appuntamenti legati all'afflusso dei pellegrini e alla gigantesca ricaduta comunicativa globale collegata al fatto che in quell'anno sarebbero venuti a Roma tanti personaggi di rilievo globale. Profittando della ricorrenza del 2000 molte grandi organizzazioni internazionali programmarono a Roma degli eventi nell'arco dell'anno 2000. Questa ricorrenza, quindi, generò una fortissima attenzione sulla città, con il rischio che i cittadini vivessero questa pressione internazionale e l'arrivo di decine di milioni di persone in termini di disagio. Ci fu una dialettica con pronostici infausti "...andiamo via da Roma perché sarà invivibile" da parte di alcuni, che alla prova dei fatti fallirono completamente. Ancora oggi, se si interpellano le persone che hanno vissuto quel Giubileo, raccontano che Roma era ordinata, pulita, con le opere terminate e il ricordo del Giubileo è sicuramente un ricordo positivo».

D.: *Quali sono stati le fasi di programmazione dell'evento e come si è costituita la macchina organizzativa? Da chi era composta e qual era il sistema di* governance*? Come erano distribuiti i compiti? C'era un organigramma?*

Rutelli: «La città aveva utilizzato l'occasione del Giubileo per migliorare se stessa rispetto a tante carenze e tanti ritardi o problematiche di varia natura relativi alla mobilità, il sociale, i servizi, la manutenzione e le opere pubbliche…il tentativo che facemmo sin dall'inizio con una conferenza pubblica al Teatro Argentina indetta nel 1995, ben prima della disponibilità di una legge speciale e di strumenti adeguati, fu quello di rendere trasparente questo processo di preparazione, coinvolgendo tutte le categorie sociali, forze sindacali, associazionismo, comitati di quartiere, raccogliendo tutte le progettualità e le idee che esistevano in quel momento. La mia attenzione, dopo essere stato nominato commissario del Giubileo nel settembre/ottobre del 1996, fu dedicata a selezionare tra le opere e gli interventi proposti quelli che avrebbero potuto essere stati completati con certezza entro il 30 novembre 1999. Se avessimo sforato e avessimo fatto

trovare la città ai residenti e ai visitatori (la miscela era inseparabile) con strade scoperchiate, servizi non funzionali, autobus non sufficienti, parcheggi di scambio non completati e così via, stazioni sfasciate o inefficienti, l'impatto di tutte queste persone e la contro-narrazione sulla città sarebbero stati disastrosi. Sin dall'inizio ci dedicammo ad un programma scelto in base alla sua utilità per la città e fattibilità nei tempi, in modo coerente con le risorse assegnate. Le risorse non erano tante, abbiamo avuto 3500 miliardi di lire, pochi rispetto ad oggi (sono state rese disponibili molte più risorse tra PNRR e Giubileo per la città). Noi riuscimmo a spendere bene i soldi e alla fine siamo riusciti a completare il 96% delle opere alla scadenza che ci eravamo dati del 30 novembre 1999[2]. Inoltre riuscii a creare un meccanismo per il quale i proventi dei ribassi delle gare per le opere pubbliche, ovvero la percentuale di sconto del vincitore della gara, invece di tornare allo stato (Ministero dell'Economia) sarebbero rimasti alla città di Roma per comprare nuovi autobus e nuovi mezzi dell'Ama che, ancora oggi (ahimè a distanza di un quarto di secolo), si vedono circolare per la città. L'attenzione alla dimensione organizzativa fu sin dall'inizio la nostra priorità assoluta, a tal fine creammo una macchina organizzativa di supporto al sindaco, nominato anche Commissario Straordinario del Giubileo, per decreto del Presidente della Repubblica e su proposta del governo (che allora era presieduto da Prodi), costituita da una squadra di primissimo ordine. Nacque così *l'Agenzia Romana per la Preparazione del Giubileo*[3] nella quale abbiamo messo al lavoro tutte le diverse istituzioni. Il presidente era Luigi Zanda (con importanti esperienze organizzative pregresse): a lui venne affidata anche la responsabilità diretta dei piani di coordinamento dell'afflusso e della gestione dei turisti. L'Agenzia rispondeva al mio indirizzo come Commissario Straordinario. Nell'organigramma diramato il 26 aprile del 1999, la consistenza del personale era di 69 unità con contratto a tempo indeterminato e 55 a tempo determinato; 10 unità distaccate da società ad integrale partecipazione pubblica; 63 unità con rapporto di

[2] La legge Giubileo Lazio del 1996 stabiliva il definanziamento di tutti gli interventi che non fossero stati portati a termine entro il 31 dicembre del 1999, ciò implicò un tasso di successo elevato.

[3] Costituita il 20 giugno 1995, sette mesi dopo l'indizione del Grande Giubileo, era una società per azioni totalmente pubblica i cui azionisti erano il Ministero del Tesoro, il Comune di Roma, la Provincia di Roma, la Regione Lazio, la Camera di Commercio di Roma, il Comune di Firenze, il Comune di Napoli. L'oggetto sociale dell'Agenzia per il Giubileo era la preparazione di Roma e del Lazio allo straordinario flusso di pellegrini e visitatori attesi per l'anno 2000. L'Agenzia ha operato per conto delle istituzioni pubbliche italiane ed in stretto contatto con la Santa Sede. Durante l'anno 2000 l'Agenzia ha provveduto alla gestione dei flussi e all'organizzazione degli eventi di maggiore rilevanza.

collaborazione coordinata e continuativa; 125 unità con rapporto di lavoro interinale dal mese di dicembre del 1999. Nel 2000, a seguito dell'ampliamento delle attività da svolgere per la preparazione del Giubileo la consistenza del personale subì un ulteriore incremento nel settore del lavoro interinale, mentre si riduceva il numero dei rapporti di lavoro di altra natura pervenendosi al seguente quadro: 44 unità a tempo indeterminato; 37 unità a tempo determinato; 195 unità lavoro interinale; 7 unità distaccate da società pubbliche e 43 collaboratori (per approfondimenti vedi Agenzia romana per la preparazione del Giubileo S.p.A., 2001, p.29). L'Agenzia per il Giubileo, sotto l'impulso di Luigi Zanda, istituì il Centro Gestione Accoglienza *Sala Operativa* con il compito di analizzare e prevedere tutte le situazioni critiche che avrebbero potuto verificarsi nel 2000, programmare le attività, informare l'opinione pubblica e gli operatori dei servizi e della sicurezza sullo svolgimento degli eventi. La Sala Operativa venne allestita in tempi *record*, inizialmente nei locali di via Baccelli e poi in una palazzina dietro la FAO verso Santa Balbina. Era una vera e propria "sala situazione[4]" in cui affluivano le immagini delle telecamere dislocate su tutta la città e tutte le informazioni degli organismi che ne facevano parte, ovvero Comune di Roma, Provincia di Roma, Regione Lazio e le aziende pubbliche fornitrici di servizi e utenze. Fecero parte della *Sala operativa* anche altri enti: polizia municipale, sicurezza pubblica, sanità, autostrade, aeroporti, ferrovie dello Stato…tutti sedevano lì con un loro rappresentante per un coordinamento generale. La *Sala Operativa* era un organismo collegiale che, non sovrapponendosi alle varie centrali operative delle forze dell'ordine e dei vigili del fuoco, svolse un essenziale ed efficace compito di raccordo di collegamento tra tutti gli enti che erano preposti all'organizzazione del Giubileo. La direzione dell'organismo operativo fu affidata al Prefetto di Roma Enzo Mosino. Oltre al Comune di Roma, gli altri grandi soggetti pubblici cui è stata demandata l'organizzazione del Giubileo, oltre allo Stato del Vaticano, furono la Provincia di Roma, la Regione Lazio e lo Stato

[4] La Sala Situazione Italia del Dipartimento della Protezione civile è un centro di coordinamento nazionale che raccoglie, verifica e diffonde le informazioni di protezione civile. Ha il compito di individuare le situazioni emergenziali e allertare immediatamente le diverse componenti e strutture operative del Servizio nazionale della protezione civile che concorrono alla gestione delle emergenze. Vi partecipano il Dipartimento della Protezione civile e le strutture operative del Servizio nazionale della protezione civile. Si mantiene in costante raccordo con le regioni e le prefetture, e con gli operatori delle strutture di comunicazione - es. compagnie di telecomunicazioni, centri di primo soccorso, autostrade, ferrovie - con l'obiettivo di raccogliere e diffondere, in tempo reale, notizie sulle situazioni di emergenza e gli interventi in corso, a livello nazionale e locale.

italiano con i vari ministeri interessati. Questi soggetti iniziarono fin dal 1995 a formulare i piani di rispettiva competenza, dando via all'attuazione dei provvedimenti legislativi successivamente proposti dal governo e approvati dal Parlamento. Tra i principali strumenti di gestione della *Sala Operativa*:

- il *sistema di previsione dei flussi dei visitatori* (forniva dati aggiornati su quantità, provenienza, tempo di permanenza media, alloggio, mezzo di arrivo);
- *il sistema unitario di prenotazione collegato a Internet* che consentiva di accedere ai sistemi di prenotazione di alberghi, strutture ricettive, musei ed eventi culturali, mezzi di trasporto, parcheggi e manifestazioni per avere un quadro aggiornato dei movimenti;
- *la banca dati centrale dell'agenzia* con tutte le informazioni su eventi programmati per il 2000, i luoghi di culto, i cantieri per il Giubileo, la rete stradale di Roma e del Lazio, i servizi di trasporto, di sicurezza, di accoglienza e ristoro, di igiene urbana, gli alberghi e altre strutture ricettive. Ricordo che chiesi che il coordinatore della sicurezza dei cantieri fosse il Prefetto di Roma. Questa scelta è stata importantissima dal punto di vista organizzativo perché il Prefetto aveva la capacità di intervento: se un qualsiasi soggetto avesse dovuto effettuare un controllo su un cantiere ne avrebbe dovuto dare immediata notizia all'ufficio del Prefetto, in quanto responsabile del coordinamento del controllo sui cantieri. Il Prefetto Mosino a sua volta avrebbe immediatamente chiamato tutti gli altri che avrebbero potuto effettuare ulteriori controlli accorciando così i tempi e scongiurando blocchi dei lavori scoordinati e in successione;
- *i centri di informazione per i visitatori* dislocati nei principali luoghi di accesso alla città come aeroporti, autostrade, stazioni e nelle principali aree di interesse dei visitatori e dei pellegrini a Roma e nel Lazio e *le campagne informative per i residenti.*

Per quanto riguarda *la ricettività e l'ospitalità*, il Giubileo, grazie alla legge della Regione Lazio (140 miliardi di lire) fu una importante occasione per adeguare, ampliare e rinnovare le strutture turistico alberghiere ed extra-alberghiere di Roma e di tutto il Lazio**.** Inoltre, grazie ad un'altra legge regionale i proprietari di case private poterono fornire ospitalità a pagamento con la formula del *bed and breakfast* (che in Italia nacque proprio in quel periodo). Per il *coordinamento dei flussi turistici,* tutte le strutture ricettive

(alberghi, *residence*, campeggi, ostelli, case per ferie religiose e i *bed and breakfast*) erano tenute a comunicare i dati delle prenotazioni alla cabina di regia. Dal punto di vista dei *trasporti e delle infrastrutture* feci in modo che venissero finanziate anche infrastrutture limitrofe a Roma, come il porto di Civitavecchia per il quale pretesi il finanziamento per il rifacimento della banchina, poiché un certo numero di persone potesse arrivare a Roma anche con le navi oltre che con gli altri mezzi. Per i pullman prendemmo una decisione radicale ovvero quella di vietarne l'accesso nel centro storico; il loro accesso era consentito solo in aree esterne dove c'erano dei parcheggi di scambio e si potevano prendere i mezzi di trasporto pubblici. Questa scelta suscitò grandi polemiche all'epoca. Per trasferire i grandi flussi organizzati dei pullman privati sul trasporto pubblico abbiamo realizzato nel tempo tante opere. Sono nati circa 300 km di linee di Ferrovie Metropolitane arricchiti di nuovi treni e con una profonda ristrutturazione delle stazioni, di cui inizialmente si sarebbero serviti i visitatori per accedere ai grandi eventi e successivamente sarebbero rimasti un bene a disposizione della popolazione locale».

D.: *Ripercorrendo le fasi progettuali, abbiamo parlato della costituzione di questa cabina di regia, possiamo identificare le fasi salienti citandone gli anni?*

Rutelli: «Già a metà degli anni '90, prima della costituzione dell'Agenzia Romana per il Giubileo, con un comitato scientifico dettammo la traccia per la legge speciale che ancora non esisteva. Di questo comitato facevano parte Giancarlo Lunati (che era Presidente del Touring Club), Alberto Ronchey (grande personalità critica del Giubileo) e tanti altri. Nel 1995 ci fu l'indizione del Giubileo da parte di Papa Giovanni Paolo II e il Comune di Roma creò lo strumento operativo pubblico per la progettazione e gestione organizzativa dell'evento ovvero "*L'Agenzia Romana per la preparazione del Giubileo*" che operò dal 20 giugno 1995 al 6 gennaio 2001. L'Agenzia, presieduta da Luigi Zanda, era composta da una squadra di alto livello con grandissime capacità organizzative. Tutta la squadra capitolina era di alto livello: una volta ricevuto il mandato di Commissario, il mio vicecommissario era Guido Bertolaso; l'assessore al Giubileo era Paolo Gentiloni, il vicesindaco e assessore alla mobilità era Walter Tocci, l'assessore alla cultura meraviglioso (purtroppo è venuto a mancare), era Gianni Borgna. L'Agenzia era necessaria, come abbiamo visto, perché il Giubileo non avrebbe significato per la città solo una vastissima serie di cerimonie religiose, ma comportava la necessità di organizzare i trasporti, la

ricettività, la ristorazione, l'informazione, la sicurezza, l'ambiente e la cultura. Nell'assetto definitivo (marzo 1997) di questa agenzia facevano parte, con diverse quote azionarie, il Ministero del Tesoro (23%), la Regione Lazio (21%), la Camera di Commercio (7%), la Provincia di Roma (7%), il Comune di Roma (35%) e inoltre il Comune di Napoli (3,5%) e quello di Firenze (2,1%), perché si era previsto che il visitatore di Roma per il Giubileo avrebbe anche potuto sfruttare il viaggio per visitare le grandi città vicine di Napoli e Firenze. Sette istituzioni pubbliche quindi si unirono per occuparsi dell'organizzazione generale e diretta dell'accoglienza. Secondo quanto previsto dalla legge del 1996 "*Misure urgenti per il Grande Giubileo del 2000*" l'Agenzia avrebbe dovuto presentare ogni sei mesi una relazione al Parlamento per illustrare le sue attività. Ne scrisse nove e sono pubblicamente consultabili. Il piano di interventi del Giubileo è stato approvato l'8 luglio 1996 e reso efficace nella seconda metà del 1997. L'agenzia non doveva progettare nessuna delle opere pubbliche ma progettare e guidare l'architettura del sistema organizzativo. Quanto al Commissario straordinario del Giubileo, la mia nomina entra in vigore il 31 dicembre 1997. Io nomino dei vicecommissari e coordino l'*Agenzia* e la *Sala Operativa*. Un ruolo di grande importanza durante il Giubileo è stato svolto dai *volontari* e dalle loro associazioni, nell'ambito di un progetto congiunto tra Santa Sede e Agenzia. La presenza dei volontari venne organizzata soprattutto nelle aree delle grandi basiliche, nei luoghi dove si svolgevano le cerimonie, nei punti di accesso alla città (aeroporti e stazioni), in prossimità dei monumenti e dei beni ambientali e storici. I volontari si occuparono di accogliere, informare e orientare pellegrini e visitatori sugli eventi, collaborando all'organizzazione delle grandi celebrazioni, all'assistenza di anziani, disabili e bambini. Si sono contati circa 70.000 volontari provenienti da tutte le parti del mondo. Le stime del numero di volontari per il Giubileo del 2000, secondo la *Prima Relazione Semestrale al Parlamento sulle attività svolte dall'Agenzia per la preparazione al Giubileo* (1996), avevano indicato un fabbisogno medio giornaliero di 1000 persone, per oltre 2.5 milioni di ore/uomo di lavoro volontario. Per i grandi eventi (da 500.000 a un milione di pellegrini) si prevedevano anche 5000 volontari al giorno. I volontari vennero reclutati e formati tramite le reti delle organizzazioni religiose e laiche del terzo settore, non vennero retribuiti ma il loro utilizzo si stimò che avrebbe comportato un costo di 30 miliardi di lire, destinato a coprire le spese di vitto e alloggio, i rimborsi, l'acquisizione di mezzi e attrezzature logistiche e le assicurazioni, oltre ai costi della struttura centrale di coordinamento (il *Centro del volontariato internazionale per l'accoglienza* costituito dall'Agenzia per il Giubileo in collaborazione con il Comitato Tecnico della

Santa Sede). Dal punto di vista culturale il Giubileo fu un'occasione per riqualificare una parte significativa del patrimonio archeologico, architettonico, artistico e monumentale di Roma e del Lazio, migliorare le proprietà private (grazie ai finanziamenti per la manutenzione straordinaria dei palazzi e delle facciate) e l'offerta culturale della città. L'agenzia gestì in prima persona alcune mostre di livello internazionale. Su proposta dell'Agenzia chiedemmo al Quirinale di donare le Scuderie del Quirinale al Comune di Roma per far nascere un nuovo museo. L'intervento di restauro, progettato dall'architetto Gae Aulenti e diretto dalla Soprintendenza per i beni architettonici e ambientali di Roma, consentì di recuperare un'opera architettonica in una straordinaria posizione urbana e di valorizzare spazi che per prestigio e dimensioni costituiscono un luogo espositivo di ineguagliabile valore. L'iniziativa che ha portato al restauro integrale dell'edificio risale al 20 febbraio 1997, data in cui la Presidenza della Repubblica concesse in uso al Comune di Roma le Scuderie. Il 10 luglio dello stesso anno il Comune affidò all'Agenzia per il Giubileo l'utilizzo e la gestione dell'edificio settecentesco. Dopo due anni e mezzo di lavori, il 21 dicembre 1999, alla presenza del Presidente della Repubblica Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, si inaugurò la nuova sede espositiva con una mostra sui capolavori dell'*Ermitage*. Questa fu un'altra delle tante cose rimaste alla città dopo l'evento».

D.: *Come era strutturato il sistema d'offerta del programma del Giubileo del 2000? Ovvero quali erano le attività principali, quelle secondarie e i servizi qualitativi previsti (trasporti, accoglienza, traduzione, accessibilità disabili ecc.)? Quali furono le sedi principali degli eventi?*

Rutelli: «Innanzitutto vennero organizzati numerosi giubilei di settore (150). Inoltre, tutte le grandi organizzazioni presenti sul territorio, consapevoli del fatto che in quell'anno sarebbero transitati a Roma milioni di pellegrini, oltre ai turisti ordinari (e agli stessi romani), organizzarono convegni, conferenze o appuntamenti con i loro dirigenti e aderenti, con la motivazione del richiamo del grande evento giubilare. Gli eventi-chiave furono l'apertura della Porta Santa di San Pietro il 24 dicembre 1999, l'apertura delle Porte Sante delle altre quattro basiliche il 25 dicembre, Capodanno a Piazza del Popolo, la Maratona di Roma il 1° gennaio e poi i numerosi Giubilei dedicati alle specifiche categorie; tra questi mi ricordo il Giubileo dei bambini, dei malati, dei lavoratori a Tor Vergata, degli artigiani (il giorno di San Giuseppe), della famiglia, degli sportivi allo Stadio Olimpico, dei parlamentari, oltre alle Giornata Mondiali della Gioventù (dal 15 al 20 agosto). Per quanto riguarda la classificazione delle diverse tipologie

di eventi ci furono 1615 celebrazioni cattoliche, 143 celebrazioni proprie del Giubileo, 4 quelle ebraiche e 1 musulmana, 455 concerti (classica, rock, pop e jazz), 109 congressi e convegni, 292 eventi culturali, 109 eventi sportivi, 121 feste, 27 fiere e mercati, 33 manifestazioni civili, politiche e sindacali, 240 mostre, 49 opere liriche balletti e 160 rappresentazioni teatrali. Si investì molto anche sull'innalzamento degli standard dei servizi di base (sanità, sicurezza, protezione civile, igiene urbana, mobilità e trasporti, illuminazione e approvvigionamento idrico) che dovevano essere garantiti a milioni di persone con diverse esigenze (anche speciali per anziani, bambini e disabili). Si è quindi investito sugli ospedali, i pronto soccorso, le strutture di accoglienza temporanea ecc. È importante osservare che per la preparazione del Grande Giubileo abbiamo dovuto operare secondo le procedure di amministrazione ordinaria, tenendo conto che i soldi sarebbero stati stanziati e resi disponibili solo nella seconda metà del 1997. Io sono entrato in carica come Commissario straordinario il 1° gennaio del 1998, l'approvazione del programma da parte della Commissione Roma Capitale fu assunta l'11 marzo 1998. Il Ministro dei lavori pubblici firmò il decreto l'8 maggio 1998, la Corte dei conti lo registrò il 9 giugno 1998, la delibera pubblicata sulla Gazzetta Ufficiale il 30 giugno 1998. Rendiamoci conto che era solo un anno e mezzo prima del Giubileo, quindi se non avessimo cominciato il lavoro di preparazione al Giubileo per tempo sarebbe stato tutto molto più complicato. La direttrice dell'ufficio Roma Capitale del Comune di quegli anni ci ricordò che per l'erogazione dei finanziamenti, una volta deciso lo stanziamento dopo la vittoria di una gara, occorrevano almeno 13 passaggi per la progettazione e 18 per la fase realizzativa. Quindi decidemmo di puntare non su opere di grandi dimensioni ma solo sugli interventi fattibili nel tempo previsto. Purtroppo, dopo il grande evento del Giubileo del 2000 ci fu l'attentato dell'11 settembre che paralizzò tutti i benefici che l'evento aveva portato a Roma dal punto di vista turistico».

D.: *A quando risale l'origine del Giubileo, che significato aveva e quale significato avrà il Giubileo del 2025?*

Fisichella: «Il Giubileo ha una storia molto antica. I primi tratti li ritroviamo nel Libro del Levitico, cioè uno dei primi cinque libri della Sacra Scrittura nell'Antico Testamento, dove appunto si fa il calcolo che l'anno della celebrazione sarebbe stato il 50° al termine dei sette cicli dei sette anni sabbatici. Il numero sette è un numero importante per la sacra scrittura, perché 3+3+1 sta a significare il completamento della dimensione della perfezione ovvero la dimensione del riposo che deve essere rispettato. Anche

Dio si riposò dopo 7 giorni! Il Giubileo, quindi, avrebbe dovuto significare il riposo totale, della terra, degli animali, degli uomini nel senso del rispetto per la natura, per l'uomo e soprattutto per santificare il giorno del Signore. Il Giubileo nella sacra scrittura, quindi, nasce come un ulteriore elemento che rapporta il popolo di Dio al Signore, quindi il riposo da tutte le preoccupazioni per rivolgere maggiormente il pensiero a Dio. Oltre a questo, il Giubileo era una sorta di rivoluzione sociale: le terre dovevano ritornare ai proprietari precedenti, i carcerati dovevano essere liberati e tutto doveva riportare al senso originario ovvero che la terra e la vita appartengono solo a Dio, nessuno può impossessarsi di quello che c'è perché siamo tutti pellegrini su questa terra. Questo è anche uno degli elementi per cui noi non abbiamo riscontro dell'attuazione di questo Giubileo nella Sacra Scrittura, cioè non abbiamo testi che ci diano la prova della realizzazione del Giubileo biblico. Quello che abbiamo è soltanto una descrizione che sembra non abbia mai trovato storicamente riscontro. Il primo riscontro lo abbiamo nel 1300, più precisamente a dicembre del 1299, dove a Roma si ebbe un grande movimento di popolo. Il Giubileo, infatti, possiamo dire che nacque come un movimento di popolo quando, nell'occasione del completamento del secolo, il popolo chiese a Papa Bonifacio VIII la grande indulgenza. Dobbiamo ricordare però che a quei tempi il termine "indulgenza" era sinonimo di misericordia e perdono di Dio, non aveva niente a che fare con la contestazione che avverrà poi da parte di Lutero tra il 1500 e il 1600 sulla vendita delle indulgenze.

Quindi il popolo di Roma chiese questa indulgenza. Dal testo che il Cardinale Stefaneschi (2001) scrisse sul primo Giubileo, Papa Bonifacio VIII chiese dei documenti per poter indire il Giubileo, ma documenti non se ne trovarono; dunque, vennero portati due uomini centenari che dissero di ricordare un Giubileo dato alla fine del secolo precedente. Non sappiamo quanto possa essere stato romanzato questo racconto e quanto di storico possa esserci, certamente però noi sappiamo che Bonifacio VIII nel febbraio del 1300 pubblicò la Bolla *Antiquorum habet* con la quale, probabilmente per la prima volta con un valore retroattivo a partire dal Natale del 1299, indisse il primo Giubileo. Da qui poi abbiamo una lunga storia dei Giubilei che ho raccolto nel mio volume "*Gli anni santi attraverso le bolle*" (Fisichella, 1999). In questo testo ho raccolto tutte le Bolle[5] di indizione degli Anni Santi che sono il documento ufficiale con il quale il Papa indice il

[5] Le Bolle sono la documentazione degli anni giubilari che, dal 1300, costellano la storia della Chiesa Cattolica. In questi testi pontifici si evidenziano, insieme alle contingenze dei tempi, le finalità che ispirano il Giubileo e si indicano i mezzi per conseguirne i benefici spirituali.

Giubileo e attraverso il quale spiega i motivi per i quali lo indice. Il Giubileo, quindi, inizia in questo modo, come dono per sperimentare la misericordia di Dio. Ecco perché l'indulgenza gioca un ruolo particolare».

D.: *Quali sono gli obiettivi principali del Giubileo della Speranza 2025 dal punto di vista spirituale?*

Fisichella: «Innanzitutto il Giubileo del 2025 è un Giubileo ordinario, quindi si inserisce all'interno di quella ordinarietà della scadenza dei 25 anni. Negli ultimi secoli però ogni Giubileo si caratterizza anche per una tematica particolare. Nel Giubileo del 1950 Pio XII diede il grande segno della ripresa e della rinascita dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, nel 1975 Papa Paolo VI volle comunicare il grande tema dell'unità della Chiesa, perché dopo il Concilio Vaticano II (inaugurato nel 1962) incominciò il periodo delle grandi tensioni e della contestazione sociale del '68. Nel Giubileo del 2000 Giovanni Paolo II ha voluto ricordare e quindi dedicare il Giubileo ai 2000 anni della nascita di Gesù Cristo e quindi all'ingresso della Chiesa nel terzo millennio della sua storia. Il Giubileo del 2025 sarà caratterizzato dalla Speranza perché il mondo intero ha vissuto e sta ancora vivendo un'esperienza di dolore, di fragilità, di imprevedibilità che ha fatto scoprire quanto l'uomo possa essere fragile. Qui si inserisce inevitabilmente il grande tema della pandemia, che ha toccato il mondo per alcuni anni lasciando ancora oggi delle conseguenze molto forti nello stile di vita delle persone, e il tema delle grandi guerre che sono sparse in tutto il mondo e che portano Papa Francesco a parlare di una "guerra mondiale a frammenti". Questo Giubileo vuole fare propria una virtù fondamentale nella vita della Chiesa, la Speranza[6]. La Chiesa, in questo momento, chiede ai cristiani di farsi testimoni nel mondo, di essere "pellegrini di speranza", questo è il motto che il Papa ha scelto per il prossimo Giubileo».

D.: *Quali sono gli obiettivi principali del Giubileo della Speranza 2025 dal punto di vista sociale, urbanistico e culturale che giustificano i finanziamenti pubblici? Quale la* legacy *auspicata?*

[6] Le sette virtù fondamentali per il cattolico sono le 3 teologali (Fede, Speranza e Carità) e le 4 cardinali (Prudenza, Giustizia, Fortezza e Temperanza). Esse determinano il legame tra uomo e Dio e l'agire morale cristiano
https://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism_it/p3s1c1a7_it.htm

Fisichella: «Come ogni Giubileo anche questo comporterà diversi lavori strutturali che porteranno sollievo e giovamento alla città di Roma. Alcuni grandi lavori verranno effettuati nelle zone limitrofe al Vaticano, a giugno inizieranno i lavori di pedonalizzazione di via della Conciliazione per facilitare il transito dei pellegrini da Castel Sant'Angelo fino alla porta Santa: con questo intervento si restituirà alla città una gran parte del territorio che non verrà più assediato dalle macchine. Grazie a dei sottopassaggi il turista e il pellegrino avranno la possibilità di godere della maestosità della Basilica di San Pietro e dell'ampiezza del Colonnato del Bernini, avvicinandosi sempre di più alla meditazione e alla riflessione. Questa è la condizione di esperienza spirituale che vogliamo dare. Il pellegrinaggio è un momento per riflettere su se stessi e sulla propria vita, è comprendere che l'uomo è un pellegrino, non un errante senza meta, l'uomo deve avere una meta da raggiungere e quindi si fa pellegrino. C'è quella bella espressione *homo viator*, che ci dice che l'uomo è in cammino e camminando a piedi incontra altre persone con le quali crea rapporti interpersonali. Ci saranno anche dei lavori dalla parte di Piazza Risorgimento per agevolare il flusso di chi verrà con la metropolitana. Certo i lavori sono importanti, sono strutturali, ma devono anche essere realizzati per consentire di vivere un'esperienza più spirituale di cui fa parte anche la bellezza della città di Roma. Far vivere la bellezza della *via pulchritudinis,* è un'esperienza per noi di grande evangelizzazione. La bellezza, infatti, non fa fermare sull'opera ma rimanda oltre, rimanda a cogliere il significato profondo che l'opera d'arte vuole dare. Roma è un museo a cielo aperto e tanti lavori che verranno realizzati per il Giubileo saranno proprio dedicati al restauro di tante opere d'arte (cfr. Programma Interventi Giubileo 2025) che consentiranno ovviamente un percorso di bellezza quanto mai significativo».

D.: *Dal punto di vista organizzativo quali sono le fasi di programmazione del Giubileo del 2025 e in che fase ci troviamo oggi?*

Fisichella: «La programmazione del Giubileo coinvolge lo Stato della Città del Vaticano e lo Stato italiano. Innanzitutto, si è realizzato un tavolo bilaterale tra il governo italiano e la Santa Sede per poter dialogare più facilmente su tante questioni che coinvolgono una pluralità di dicasteri con competenze differenziate, dove ognuno si muove a seconda della propria autonomia, nella reciprocità della cooperazione: per lo Stato italiano partecipano rappresentanti dei diversi ministeri (Interno, Esteri, Salute, Turismo, Cultura), la Protezione civile, il Comune di Roma e la Regione Lazio; per quanto riguarda la Santa Sede, Papa Francesco ha scritto a me una

lettera l'11 febbraio del 2022, nella quale ha incaricato il Dicastero per l'Evangelizzazione, che presiedo, della preparazione e organizzazione del Giubileo[7]. Sin da subito il nostro dicastero ha istituito quattro commissioni con l'obiettivo di essere di supporto nella progettazione del Giubileo secondo le loro competenze. Abbiamo una *Commissione pastorale* che è un gruppo di lavoro composto in prevalenza dai rappresentanti di ciascun Dicastero della Curia Romana e dai referenti di alcune realtà ecclesiali. La collaborazione con il Dicastero è in funzione dell'ideazione delle diverse celebrazioni giubilari, per un maggiore coinvolgimento delle diverse parti del Popolo di Dio; una *Commissione ecumenica* che fornisce supporto al Dicastero nell'organizzazione di attività e celebrazioni per porre in risalto il XVII anniversario del Concilio di Nicea (325-2025), che cade proprio in concomitanza dell'anno del Giubileo ordinario è costituita prevalentemente da esperti su questo tema. Si occupa anche della condivisione del tema della Speranza nel dialogo interreligioso; una *Commissione culturale* che contribuirà all'ideazione e all'elaborazione di attività culturali di vario genere, come mostre, concerti e rappresentazioni, che abbiano al centro la tematica della speranza e anche della mancanza di speranza, perché la mancanza di speranza ne suscita il desiderio. Queste iniziative affiancheranno e arricchiranno il programma giubilare. L'obiettivo è quello di accogliere e coinvolgere i pellegrini anche sul piano culturale; una *Commissione della comunicazione* riunisce giornalisti di varie testate, accademici ed esperti dei nuovi media, per il supporto del Dicastero sul piano informativo e comunicativo; un *Comitato tecnico* che è un tavolo di lavoro operativo che si occupa di supportare il Dicastero per quanto riguarda il piano logistico degli eventi giubilari e quindi la gestione delle Basiliche, la sicurezza, la sanità, i volontari ecc. Da ultimo vi sono delle *Commissioni allargate che comprendono i delegati delle Diocesi italiane e delle Conferenze episcopali del mondo* che hanno funzione di raccordo tra il Dicastero, il territorio italiano e quello mondiale. Il ponte è fondamentale per

[7] Il Dicastero per l'evangelizzazione è uno dei *16 dicasteri* (gli altri sono il dicastero per la dottrina della fede, per il servizio della carità, per le Chiese orientali, per il culto divino e la disciplina dei sacramenti, per le cause dei santi, per i vescovi, per il clero, per gli istituti di vita consacrata e le società di vita apostolica, per i laici, la famiglia e la vita, per la promozione dell'unità dei cristiani, per il dialogo interreligioso, per la cultura e l'educazione, per il servizio dello sviluppo umano integrale, per i testi legislativi, per la comunicazione) sorti durante il pontificato di Papa Francesco con la costituzione apostolica *Praedicate evangelium* (19 marzo 2022) della *Curia romana* (complesso di organi e autorità che costituiscono l'apparato amministrativo della Santa Sede, che coordina e fornisce l'organizzazione necessaria per il corretto funzionamento della Chiesa cattolica e il raggiungimento dei suoi obiettivi. Viene generalmente considerata "il governo della Chiesa").

agevolare l'organizzazione e lo scambio di informazioni tra il Dicastero, le diocesi e viceversa. Oltre alla nostra organizzazione interna c'è la collaborazione con lo Stato italiano, il Comune di Roma e la Regione Lazio che, nella loro autonomia, stanno realizzando opere di restauro e di lavori strutturali di cui il territorio ha particolarmente bisogno. Da un paio di mesi, ogni 15 giorni, ci si incontra a Palazzo Chigi con un tavolo organizzativo suddiviso in 8 per quanto riguarda il Comune di Roma. Da parte nostra stiamo andando avanti con le sottocommissioni per l'organizzazione dei singoli eventi».

D.: *Come è strutturato il sistema d'offerta del programma del Giubileo del 2025? Ovvero quali sono le attività principali, quelle secondarie e i servizi qualitativi previsti (trasporti, accoglienza, traduzione, accessibilità disabili etc.)?*

Fisichella: «Il programma del Giubileo 2025 è costituito dai *grandi eventi*, ovvero quelli che prevedono una partecipazione da 10.000 a mezzo milione di persone, sono quelli che vanno oltre le migliaia di persone che avremo quotidianamente a Roma per la presenza dei gruppi organizzati delle diocesi e dei singoli pellegrini; i *Cammini* per i quali prevediamo l'arrivo a Roma di circa 100.000 persone a piedi o in bicicletta. Per questi pellegrini stiamo svolgendo parecchi incontri con le diverse associazioni; i *Giubilei dedicati alle singole categorie* (come per esempio il giubileo delle Famiglie, dei Giovani, dei Movimenti, delle Confraternite, delle Vite Consacrate, dell'Imprenditoria, dei Governanti ecc.) organizzati attraverso una rete di rapporti internazionali (ricordiamoci che il Giubileo non è solo per l'Italia) che include associazioni, gruppi e movimenti delle categorie per le quali verranno celebrati questi eventi. Infine, i *servizi qualitativi* puntano molto sulla gestione dei flussi, sulla comunicazione e sull'organizzazione. Dobbiamo tenere conto che il modo di viaggiare negli ultimi decenni si è modificato molto, possiamo dire che almeno il 40-50% delle persone organizza il proprio viaggio in modo autonomo quindi, tra i servizi qualitativi che abbiamo predisposto per i visitatori, abbiamo puntato molto sulla comunicazione attraverso la creazione del nostro *Portale ufficiale* e di una *Applicazione* attraverso la quale tutti coloro che andranno alla Porta Santa dovranno iscriversi. Questo sistema sarà molto utile per la gestione dei flussi sia durante i grandi eventi che nel flusso quotidiano di visitatori che include diverse tipologie di partecipanti. Attraverso l'Applicazione sarà possibile comunicare direttamente con i singoli pellegrini e con i responsabili dei gruppi dei pellegrini.

2. La dimensione comunicativa

L'informazione e la comunicazione sono ormai un elemento centrale di ogni processo organizzativo. Nell'impegno organizzativo così complesso dell'accoglienza per il Giubileo del 2000, l'informazione venne destinata a svolgere tre funzioni essenziali: assicurare la trasparenza delle attività pubbliche di preparazione dell'evento, garantire un efficace servizio informativo all'opinione pubblica sui programmi, facilitare la gestione dei flussi del territorio. Secondo quanto riportato nel Rapporto *Le attività dell'Agenzia Romana per la preparazione del Giubileo. Relazione Conclusiva* (2001), l'ampio programma messo a punto dall'Agenzia per il Giubileo del 2000 si basò sulla realizzazione di alcune importanti iniziative:

1. *centri informativi*: spazi in cui il cittadino romano, il turista e il pellegrino, avrebbero potuto accedere a tutte le informazioni disponibili sul Giubileo, sulle attività legate alla preparazione dell'evento, sui servizi di accoglienza utilizzabili, sulle manifestazioni in programma. Venne previsto l'allestimento di una sede provvisoria presso il Museo del Risorgimento al Campidoglio, una sede secondaria presso l'Accademia di Santa Cecilia in via della Conciliazione e una sede definitiva presso l'Ala Mazzoniana della Stazione Termini. Inoltre, vennero allestiti un numero congruo di punti informativi periferici a Roma e nel Lazio così distribuiti: 12 a Roma (localizzati nei luoghi di maggior afflusso) e 25 in corrispondenza dei principali svincoli autostradali e in diverse località del Lazio;
2. *centro servizi stampa:* la città di Roma non disponeva di una struttura di servizi mirati all'informazione e ai mezzi di comunicazione di massa per un evento di portata mondiale nel centro di Roma, venne quindi progettata la sede presso i locali dell'ex Cinema Castello, riconvertito ora in una delle sedi della Università LUMSA (Libera Università Maria Ss. Assunta);
3. *campagna di informazione e comunicazione:* insieme al sistema delle prenotazioni, fu uno strumento essenziale per ogni possibile forma di autoregolamentazione dei flussi. Infatti, solo se informati per tempo e con completezza delle diverse situazioni che avrebbero trovato, pellegrini singoli e gruppi organizzati avrebbero potuto scegliere in quale periodo programmare la visita, dove dormire, quale programma di visita adottare. Nel 2000 per contenere i costi l'Agenzia scelse di proporre

campagne informative molto mirate, finalizzate esclusivamente a tre obiettivi fondamentali:

- *l'informazione agli organizzatori dei gruppi di pellegrini e visitatori:* in collaborazione col Touring Club Italiano, l'Agenzia aveva previsto numerose indagini specifiche sui possibili destinatari dei flussi informativi e, subito dopo, l'avvio di speciali campagne informative destinate principalmente a: organizzazioni di pellegrinaggi (associazioni cattoliche, parrocchie, diocesi che avrebbero gestito circa il 60% del flusso complessivo), comunità di riferimento dei circa 20 milioni di italiani che risiedono all'estero (una parte dei quali mantiene forti legami col paese d'origine e sarebbe stata interessata a partecipare al Giubileo); *tour operator*. Il contenuto delle campagne, realizzate d'intesa con i competenti organi della Santa Sede, riguardò prevalentemente informazioni sull'accoglienza e sul calendario degli eventi, sempre con l'obiettivo di facilitare quella pianificazione anticipata dei flussi che rappresentò il principale obiettivo strategico delle campagne di informazione;
- *la comunicazione all'opinione pubblica*: il programma che l'Agenzia aveva progettato per l'informazione diffusa ai pellegrini, ai visitatori e ai residenti di Roma durante l'intero anno 2000 aveva previsto un comunicato stampa giornaliero (nel quale venivano rese note le attività religiose e laiche previste per il giorno dopo), una pubblicazione settimanale con distribuzione in edicola e in altri possibili centri di vendita, per illustrare, con il formato della confezione editoriale del *Magazine*, l'attività della città e della regione nella settimana successiva, un programma radio tematico RAI interamente dedicato al Giubileo, la produzione di filmati documentari coprodotti da RAI e agenzia sull'accoglienza ai pellegrini da trasmettere nei Centri Informativi. La RAI aveva inoltre una propria postazione di lavoro nel centro servizi stampa dell'Agenzia;
- *il coinvolgimento dei residenti*: consapevoli che il successo dell'accoglienza sarebbe stato determinato non solo da una buona organizzazione, ma anche dal livello di partecipazione attiva e di coinvolgimento dei cittadini di Roma e del Lazio, l'Agenzia programmò sin dal 1998 varie iniziative di comunicazione specifiche per i diversi target e l'attivazione di "*panel*" costituiti da gruppi qualificati di interlocutori, attraverso cui attuare la verifica delle modalità e degli strumenti di comunicazione individuati.

4. *l'allestimento di una speciale segnaletica di orientamento per il Giubileo:* la progettazione e l'installazione di una segnaletica stradale speciale per l'anno del Giubileo, che integrò o sostituì quella esistente, fu un aspetto centrale del progetto di comunicazione. Pensata per dirigere e orientare il traffico dei pedoni, delle vetture private e soprattutto dei bus turistici lungo i percorsi giubilari, indicava gli itinerari da seguire, la loro praticabilità e gli eventuali tragitti alternativi.

Target dei vari strumenti di comunicazione erano i potenziali partecipanti dell'evento, ovvero i residenti, i visitatori giornalieri, i turisti i pellegrini, oltre agli operatori turistici. Il *logo* del Giubileo venne selezionato nel 1996 tramite un concorso pubblico: vinse la proposta di Emanuela Rocchi, classe 1974, romana, all'epoca allieva della Scuola dell'Arte della medaglia dell'Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato. Il simbolo presenta cinque colombe policrome stilizzate e unite in una figura unica (rappresentazione dei cinque continenti terrestri), sovrapposte a una croce anch'essa policroma (che idealmente "sostiene" le colombe) e ad un cerchio azzurro (rappresentazione dell'universo); attorno a tale emblema è riportato il motto dell'anno giubilare (*Christus heri, hodie, semper*, ovvero "Cristo ieri, oggi, sempre") e, all'esterno dell'insieme, la scritta *Iubilaeum A.D. 2000*. *L'inno* ufficiale del Grande Giubileo del 2000 fu il brano *Gloria a te Cristo Gesù*, composto da Jean-Paul Lécot e presentato per la prima volta al pubblico da Andrea Bocelli[8]. Anche l'accoglienza per il Giubileo 2025 sarà caratterizzata fortemente dalla qualità che i servizi di informazione potranno raggiungere. I segni come elemento comunicativo sono molto importanti nella vita quotidiana nonché nella tradizione della chiesa. Sono uno strumento che permette di cogliere il significato profondo che è nascosto e che le parole a volte non riescono ad esprimere. A partire dal primo Giubileo del 1300 fino a quello del 2015 alcuni segni legati alla tradizione dell'anno Santo sono stati trasformati, mentre altri aggiunti o modificati. Gesti semplici, da un grande significato teologico. Il pellegrinaggio, la visita alle basiliche, il passaggio per la Porta Santa, la preghiera con cui ricevere l'indulgenza, rimangono certamente segni permanenti del Giubileo. Per quanto riguarda i primi sforzi organizzativi per la pianificazione della Comunicazione per il Giubileo del 2025, ad oggi, oltre ad essere identificato il messaggio chiave nella Speranza, è stato definito il logo e a fine marzo 2023 gli esiti del secondo concorso per la scelta dell'inno ufficiale del Giubileo. Nel mese di maggio 2023 è stato

[8]Il logo per il grande Giubileo del 2000- *vatican.va*, 12 novembre 1996 www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents consultato il 1° febbraio 2023

presentato il portale ufficiale del Giubileo, che fornirà informazioni e servizi sull'evento. Inoltre, si punterà molto sulle potenzialità della comunicazione digitale anche tramite un'applicazione ufficiale dell'evento, che consentirà, attraverso l'iscrizione, di facilitare la gestione dei flussi, fornendo ai visitatori un supporto nel reperimento di informazioni aggiornate in tempo reale.

D.: *A livello comunicativo qual era il messaggio che si voleva trasmettere con il Giubileo del 2000?*

Rutelli: «La nostra amministrazione comunale voleva migliorare la città di Roma con un impianto assolutamente laico; avevamo già iniziato da tempo un percorso di trasformazione e riqualificazione urbana (erano in cantiere decine di opere importanti come l'Auditorium), di miglioramento della mobilità e di creazione di grandi parchi. Questa scadenza non ci avrebbe condizionato in modo "apocalittico", ma doveva far parte della programmazione e della vita ordinaria della città. Gli investimenti ordinari in manutenzione urbana (viabilità, depurazione, verde) erano per noi importantissimi. Il Giubileo è stato un acceleratore di un processo che era già partito per il miglioramento della città».

D.: *Quanti e che tipologia di partecipanti (attivi, passivi, professionali e amatoriali, turisti religiosi e non religiosi ecc.) erano stati previsti e quanti e quali hanno poi realmente partecipato? In che modo è stata organizzata l'accoglienza? Quali strutture e servizi sono stati previsti?*

Rutelli: «Il modo con cui è stata organizzata l'accoglienza, quindi anche le strutture e i servizi, è stata molto differenziato. Abbiamo fatto un piano di rifacimento di tutti gli alberghi dell'area di via Veneto con una delibera unitaria che li incentivò, con tempi più rapidi, a migliorarsi: questa era un'iniziativa rivolta ad un certo tipo di turisti; però milioni di persone son venute anche in campeggio, nelle case per ferie, nei monasteri, nelle strutture più diverse. Tutto questo però doveva essere coordinato: i visitatori si sarebbero spostati, chi tramite trasporto pubblico, chi con i taxi o con le auto a noleggio. Tutti i dati dovevano essere trasmessi alla *Sala Operativa*. Inoltre, come già detto, in quegli anni fu inserito per la prima volta il modello di ospitalità del *bed and breakfast* che prima non esisteva, ne incentivammo la diffusione con una delibera».

D.: *Quali sono stati gli strumenti di comunicazione e i segni più efficaci?*

Rutelli: «Come abbiamo visto, in occasione del Giubileo 2000 venne realizzata la sede del centro stampa, trasformando i locali di un ex cinema (oggi sede dell'Università LUMSA). La direzione del centro stampa la affidammo al presidente della stampa estera di allora Erich Kush. Tra le varie iniziative di comunicazione vennero predisposti dei *punti informativi* diffusi su tutto il territorio e collegati in rete per dare informazioni. Al 30 settembre 2000 avevano usufruito di questo servizio circa 300.000 visitatori, che sono stati censiti e registrati. Un patrimonio organizzativo considerevole. Vennero realizzate poi 3 milioni e mezzo di copie della mappa in scala di "Roma Giubileo", le guide, la carta dei rioni (un milione di copie) fatta con il Touring Club e con i commercianti, Roma sicura (371.000 copie), le informazioni sull'assistenza sanitaria pubblica (mezzo milione di copie), non c'era né *Google* né le applicazioni, internet era ancora agli albori, il visitatore girava con lo zainetto pieno di materiali informativi! Tra gli strumenti di comunicazione più efficaci abbiamo creato la *segnaletica speciale* in tutta la città; in tutti i parcheggi c'era una segnaletica dedicata. Per quanto riguarda la viabilità ricordo che ci fu una vivace discussione con il segretario di Stato del Vaticano sul divieto di accedere con i pullman a via della Conciliazione. Fu un momento piuttosto impegnativo in cui spiegai che per quanti avrebbero dovuto accedere al Vaticano per gli eventi propri della Santa Sede, avremmo realizzato il parcheggio Gianicolo, con i suoi accessi dedicati. Vicino piazza del Risorgimento abbiamo pedonalizzato l'accesso a San Pietro e anche in quell'occasione mi ricordo che inizialmente questa opera non venne capita. Ma fu poi ben accettata; abbiamo riorganizzato il giardino a Piazza Risorgimento, potenziato la stazione metro. Era chiaro che lì ci sarebbe stato un flusso pedonale importante verso San Pietro, i Musei Vaticani ecc. Mi ricordo che il piano di accessibilità alla Santa Sede all'inizio non venne accettato immediatamente, ricevetti un discreto *forcing* perché ci fosse una liberalizzazione degli accessi; poi però la finalità delle nostre iniziative venne compresa e apprezzata. Sul piano organizzativo creammo gruppi di lavoro per coordinare gli orari del commercio, dei mercati, della pulizia per le strade, della raccolta dei rifiuti, della manutenzione dei servizi, delle manifestazioni della città. Il coordinamento era tassativo; mi ricordo che convincemmo i sindacati a fare la grande manifestazione del 1° maggio a Tor Vergata anziché a San Giovanni e andò molto meglio: quella fu un'occasione per collaudare l'area di Tor Vergata evitando di portare le persone a San Giovanni. Tra le altre iniziative di comunicazione che mi ricordo, nell'aprile del 1998 i volontari del Giubileo imbucarono nella cassetta della posta dei romani una *brochure* per informare la comunità locale delle attività che erano previste per il Giubileo del 2000. Alla popolazione dell'area interessata

inoltre venne dato un fascicolo specifico per informare su quanto fatto solo per Tor Vergata grazie al Giubileo (oltre ai 252 miliardi di lire della legge Giubileo, il Comune di Roma finanziò viabilità, illuminazione pubblica e soprattutto le fognature per regolarizzare i servizi per le borgate che erano nate negli anni dell'abusivismo!). La comunicazione interna infine fu fondamentale per far funzionare questa macchina organizzativa. Il carattere di eccezionalità del Giubileo portava con sé una complessità di ruoli e di interventi da parte di una moltitudine di soggetti, ciascuno con la propria cultura organizzativa e con livelli difformi di informatizzazione, con la conseguente necessità di creare le condizioni operative migliori per l'impiego degli strumenti informatici. Allo stesso tempo, la progettazione doveva tener conto dell'enorme rapidità del cambiamento tecnologico e dotarsi altresì di uno strumento idoneo di conoscenza dell'utenza che, con congruo anticipo, fornisse stime sui flussi di visitatori attesi, sulle quali dimensionare il complesso dei servizi di accoglienza. Nel contesto così delineato, l'Agenzia svolse un approfondito lavoro istruttorio insieme ai principali soggetti istituzionali e operativi, chiamati a compiti di preparazione e gestione degli eventi, con lo scopo di determinare le modalità di cooperazione, disponibilità e fabbisogni di informazioni, in modo da indirizzare la realizzazione delle strutture dei servizi informatici. Questo approccio ha guidato la progettazione e la realizzazione della *Sala Situazione* di viale Baccelli come centro di una rete telematica raccordante circa 50 enti preposti alla pianificazione e gestione delle risorse e dei servizi di pubblica utilità, che hanno potuto disporre dell'ausilio di un insieme di strumenti informatici e telematici realizzati *ad hoc*: il *sistema di monitoraggio dei flussi dei visitatori*, la *banca dati delle risorse e dei servizi per l'accoglienza*, il *sistema informativo territoriale dell'area metropolitana di Roma*, il *calendario degli eventi dell'Anno Santo* (Agenda 2000), i *modelli di gestione della mobilità*. I sistemi, le tecnologie e le procedure operative messe in opera per rispondere alle condizioni di eccezionalità del 2000 a Roma assommarono un'esperienza ampiamente positiva che, al di là delle strutture e degli strumenti realizzati, ha proposto un *modus operandi* innovativo per la pianificazione e la gestione delle risorse del territorio. La *Sala Situazione*, come abbiamo visto, era la cabina di regia che raccoglieva tutte le informazioni; nessuno ovviamente poteva agire in modo separato e tantomeno unilaterale. L'archivio informatizzato raccoglieva dati utili sui sistemi per il monitoraggio dei flussi; per il dimensionamento dei servizi di accoglienza abbiamo fatto anche delle indagini campionarie, chiedendo alla gente cosa si sarebbe aspettata e quali sarebbero state le loro esigenze. La banca dati informatizzata aveva tutti i dati sulla localizzazione dei servizi

igienici, dei cassonetti, delle isole ecologiche; inoltre, vi erano informazioni sul volontariato relative ai turni orari e alla localizzazione. La rete intranet ed extranet che collegava le varie istituzioni: dalla Finanza all'Italgas, le Province, la Radio Vaticana… tutti dovevano stare a bordo».

D.: *A livello comunicativo qual è il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con il Giubileo del 2025 e in che modo?*

Fisichella: «Abbiamo già realizzato il *logo*, selezionandolo attraverso un concorso internazionale al quale hanno partecipato più di 300 persone di diversa natura (bambini, anziani, studi di grafica, artisti ecc.), a fine marzo, inoltre, si concluderà il secondo concorso internazionale per musicare le parole dell'inno ufficiale del Giubileo per il quale abbiamo ricevuto circa 200 spartiti musicali. Il *logo* è intuitivo. È difficile rappresentare la Speranza. Nella storia dell'arte la Speranza è stata rappresentata con l'immagine dell'ancora, dell'elmo e a volte della spada. Nel logo ufficiale del Giubileo è stata scelta una croce, la croce è il segno dell'amore, è il segno della speranza che viene data a tutti, ma la croce è fatta a forma di vela, è una croce che si piega per riprendere anche un dato biblico per cui la speranza è una vela che spinge verso l'incontro con il Signore. C'è questa navicella che viene portata avanti, però questa croce a forma di vela termina anche a forma di ancora che mette le sue radici. Diciamo così, che poggia su un mare che è agitato, quel mare agitato sono le vicende del mondo che vengono vissute, ma ci sono quattro espressioni, dai quattro punti della terra, c'è l'umanità che si aggrappa a quella speranza. Uno si abbraccia all'altro, ma ovviamente il primo si abbraccia alla croce. La croce si muove verso un incontro, è la rappresentazione dell'umanità che va incontro a Cristo e Cristo a sua volta è rappresentato come una vela di salvataggio e un'ancora che dà sicurezza e va verso l'umanità».

D.: *Quanti e che tipologia di partecipanti sono previsti e in che modo vengono coinvolti? (attivi, passivi, professionali e amatoriali, turisti religiosi e non religiosi ecc.); In che modo state organizzando l'accoglienza? Quali strutture e servizi state prevedendo?*

Fisichella: «In generale le proiezioni delle presenze a Roma per il Giubileo del 2025 parlano di almeno 32 milioni, tra questi vi sono i *last minute* che vogliono celebrare il Giubileo senza averlo programmato in anticipo, le famiglie che vengono nel fine settimana, i turisti che scoprono

che c'è un Giubileo e diventano pellegrini, i gruppi organizzati dalle diocesi ecc.».

D.: *Quali sono gli strumenti di comunicazione e i segni più efficaci sui quali vorrete puntare?*

Fisichella: «Nella storia vediamo che ci sono dei *segni* che accompagnano la celebrazione del Giubileo. Primo fra tutti, è quello del pellegrinaggio. Il *pellegrinaggio dei Romei* (così vengono chiamati i pellegrini che vengono a Roma sulla tomba degli Apostoli Pietro e Paolo) segna il momento dell'incontro con la Città Santa e il momento della preghiera; successivamente al fenomeno del pellegrinaggio si incomincia ad inserire il simbolo dell'apertura della *Porta Santa*. Con molta probabilità, dai documenti che abbiamo, la prima Porta Santa era a San Giovanni in Laterano, ma da qui passa subito a San Pietro, per l'ovvia ragione della presenza delle reliquie dell'Apostolo Pietro, successivamente la Porta Santa viene inserita nelle quattro basiliche. Quindi esiste un *rito* del Giubileo, questo rito equivale a un pellegrinaggio, ad attraversare la Porta Santa, a fare la professione di fede per poter ottenere il perdono e quindi l'indulgenza. Dal punto di vista comunicativo certamente la cultura digitale ormai ci fornisce parecchie possibilità. Abbiamo previsto un *Portale* dedicato all'evento, un'*Applicazione* (che sarà già operativa dal prossimo mese di settembre) grazie alla quale ci si potrà iscrivere. Essa consentirà una più facile gestione dei flussi fornendo anche indicazioni su servizi di trasporto e di ospitalità disponibili per chi arriverà a Roma per il grande evento. In questo portale faremo anche formazione: spiegheremo per esempio il significato del Giubileo, si forniranno indicazioni sui vari percorsi giubilari che abbiamo costituito all'interno della città. Seguendo questi percorsi si avrà la possibilità di fermarsi nelle chiese giubilari, li vi saranno i sacerdoti sempre a disposizione per le confessioni nelle diverse lingue o per introdurre i pellegrini che vengono da soli a una catechesi, in modo che il passaggio della Porta Santa non sia una cosa meccanica, ma sia realmente un'esperienza dell'incontro con Cristo. La porta è Cristo. Gesù ha detto nel Vangelo "Io sono la porta, chi passa attraverso di me otterrà la salvezza". Infine, direi che il messaggio principale che vogliamo trasmettere è quello della speranza nella risurrezione. Oggi l'Occidente vive in un momento di profonda crisi di fede nella quale si inserisce anche la tematica fondamentale del senso della vita e del senso della vita dopo la morte, quella vita che dura per sempre perché è la vita che ci è stata data nel giorno del battesimo. Come sono solito

dire dobbiamo parlare dei contenuti della fede rivestendoli con gli abiti della speranza e questa è una grande sfida perché ovviamente il linguaggio della speranza deve essere carico di fede e trascinare anche a una profonda testimonianza di carità».

3. La dimensione economica

Tra le spese principali per un grande evento come il Giubileo, oltre agli investimenti per la riqualificazione delle strutture e infrastrutture del territorio che ospiterà l'evento, occorre prevedere delle risorse per l'organizzazione, la sicurezza pubblica, la protezione civile, la sanità, l'igiene pubblica, l'assistenza, l'informazione e la comunicazione. Secondo il Rapporto *Le attività dell'Agenzia Romana per la preparazione del Giubileo. Relazione Conclusiva* (2001, p.38), per il Grande Giubileo del 2000, alla data del 6 gennaio 2001, l'Agenzia Romana per la preparazione al Giubileo aveva gestito finanziamenti e realizzato attività per complessivi 220.881 milioni di lire comprensivi di IVA. In particolare, nell'ambito del Piano degli interventi approvato ai sensi della legge n. 651 del 23 dicembre 1996 (e successive modifiche e integrazioni) ha avuto assegnati compiti e relative risorse finanziarie per complessivi 176.128 milioni di lire per realizzare specifici interventi e progetti nel settore della cultura, dell'informazione, dell'informatica e del supporto tecnico all'organizzazione degli eventi giubilari (81.917 milioni di lire) e attività organizzative legate al piano di accoglienza per conto del Comune di Roma, della Provincia di Roma e della Regione Lazio, ai sensi dell'art. 4, comma 1 della città legge n. 651 del 1996 (90.700 milioni di lire). L'Agenzia ha inoltre ricevuto incarichi di consulenza e assistenza tecnica dal Comune di Roma con risorse finanziarie non comprese nel piano degli interventi per il Giubileo per complessive 13.037 milioni di lire e dal Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali per 216 milioni di lire. Infine, a seguito della pubblicazione della legge n. 488 del 23 dicembre 1999 (finanziaria per l'anno 2000) che prevedeva lo stanziamento di 80 miliardi di lire per la copertura dei maggiori costi conseguenti all'aumento della domanda di strutture e di servizi connessi all'accoglienza dei pellegrini in relazione agli eventi giubilari, con decreto della Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri del 28 giugno 2000, sono stati assegnati all'Agenzia 35 miliardi di lire (G. U. n.196 del 23 agosto 2000). L'Agenzia svolse la propria attività utilizzando principalmente i finanziamenti pubblici stanziati con la legge n. 651 del 1996. Tuttavia, per la

realizzazione di alcuni interventi e a seguito di una mirata attività di contatti, volta a evidenziare l'importanza dei progetti programmati, l'Agenzia è riuscita ad ottenere: flussi aggiuntivi di finanziamenti attraverso contratti di sponsorizzazione con i più importanti operatori economici e finanziari; particolari condizioni di vendita in termini di sconti sui corrispettivi o di controprestazioni di sponsor. Per quanto riguarda il Giubileo della Speranza del 2025 un grosso contributo verrà dato dallo Stato italiano attraverso un capitolo dello *stato di previsione del Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze* e un *investimento del Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza* (PNRR). Il PNRR è il piano strategico che il governo italiano ha presentato alla Commissione Europea per accedere ai finanziamenti messi a disposizione dall'Unione Europea nell'ambito del *Recovery Fund*, finalizzati a sostenere la ripresa economica e sociale post-pandemia. Il PNRR per il paese Italia è stato approvato con decisione del Consiglio dei ministri ECOFIN (*Economic and Financial Affairs Council*) dell'Unione Europea del 13 luglio 2021 e si articola in 16 Componenti, raggruppate in 6 Missioni (Digitalizzazione, innovazione, competitività, cultura e turismo; Rivoluzione verde e transizione ecologica; Infrastrutture per una mobilità sostenibile; Istruzione ricerca; Inclusione e coesione; Salute). La Missione 1 prevede 3 Componenti: Digitalizzazione, innovazione e sicurezza nella PA; Digitalizzazione, innovazione e competitività nel sistema produttivo; Turismo e cultura 4.0. I progetti in materia di turismo del PNRR rientrano nella M1C3 "Turismo e Cultura 4.0" e nello specifico nella misura "*Turismo 4.0*". Il Ministero del Turismo è amministrazione titolare della Misura "*Turismo 4.0*" (costituita da 1 riforma e 3 investimenti) e, nello specifico, dell'investimento *Caput Mundi – New Generation EU per grandi eventi turistici* dedicato ad interventi collegati al Giubileo 2025. Il Ministero del Turismo ha concertato con il Commissario Straordinario per il Giubileo e Sindaco di Roma Roberto Gualtieri (nominato con decreto del Presidente della Repubblica il 4 febbraio 2022 al fine di assicurare gli interventi funzionali alle celebrazioni del Giubileo della Chiesa cattolica per il 2025 nell'ambito del territorio di Roma Capitale e in carica fino al 31 dicembre 2026) la lista degli interventi approvati e lo ha delegato all'attuazione degli stessi. Per gli interventi relativi al Progetto *Caput Mundi* sono stanziati complessivamente 500 milioni di euro per il recupero, la valorizzazione e la fruizione del patrimonio monumentale di Roma e del Lazio in coincidenza con la celebrazione del Giubileo cattolico. L'investimento prevede sei linee di intervento: *Patrimonio Culturale Romano per EU-Next Generation*, che riguarda la rigenerazione e il restauro del patrimonio culturale e urbano e dei complessi di alto valore storico-architettonico della città di Roma (52

interventi); *Percorsi giubilari dalla Roma pagana a quella cristiana*, finalizzati alla valorizzazione, messa in sicurezza, consolidamento antisismico, restauro di luoghi e edifici di interesse storico e percorsi archeologici (149 interventi); *La Città Condivisa*, che riguarda la riqualificazione di siti in aree periferiche (61 interventi); *Mi tingo di verde*, che copre interventi su parchi, giardini storici, ville e fontane (55 interventi); *A mano tesa*, finalizzata ad aumentare l'offerta di proposte culturali alle periferie per l'integrazione sociale (4 interventi); *Roma 4.0*, che prevede la digitalizzazione dei servizi culturali e lo sviluppo di app per i turisti (14 interventi). Lo strumento finanziario è costituito da un contributo a fondo perduto. Le spese previste sono principalmente per restauro e messa in sicurezza, abbattimento barriere architettoniche, incremento efficienza energetica delle strutture e illuminazione, riqualificazione antisismica e digitalizzazione. Il progetto è ripartito in 335 interventi su 283 siti archeologici/culturali da realizzarsi a cura di vari soggetti attuatori (Ministero del Turismo, Ministero della Cultura con il coinvolgimento delle varie Soprintendenze, Parco Archeologico del Colosseo, Parco Archeologico dell'Appia Antica, Diocesi di Roma, Regione Lazio e Roma Capitale) che a loro volta potranno avvalersi di altre stazioni appaltanti (Ministero del Turismo, 2022). Inoltre, in relazione alle celebrazioni del Giubileo della Chiesa cattolica per il 2025, per la pianificazione e la realizzazione delle opere e degli interventi funzionali all'evento, nonché per la realizzazione degli interventi di cui alla Misura M1C3-Investimento 4.3 del PNRR, ferma restando la dotazione pari a 500 milioni di euro in favore del predetto investimento, è stato istituito nello stato di previsione del Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze un apposito capitolo con una dotazione di 285 milioni di euro per l'anno 2022, di 290 milioni di euro per ciascuno degli anni 2023 e 2024, di 330 milioni di euro per l'anno 2025 e di 140 milioni di euro per l'anno 2026. Nel già menzionato stato di previsione è altresì istituito, per le medesime celebrazioni, un apposito capitolo per assicurare il coordinamento operativo e le spese relativi a servizi da rendere ai partecipanti all'evento, con una dotazione di 10 milioni di euro per ciascuno degli anni 2022, 2023 e 2024, di 70 milioni di euro per l'anno 2025 e di 10 milioni di euro per l'anno 2026 (cfr. Legge234_2021 commi 420-443). Il programma dettagliato degli interventi connessi alle celebrazioni del Giubileo della Chiesa cattolica per il 2025 di cui all'articolo 1, comma 422, della legge 234 del 2021 si compone dall'Allegato 1, recante gli interventi essenziali e indifferibili connessi alle celebrazioni del Giubileo della Chiesa cattolica e dall'Allegato 2 recante gli interventi relativi alla Misura M1C3, Investimento 4.3. "Caput Mundi – Next Generation EU per grandi eventi

turistici" del PNRR (cfr. per approfondimenti Programma Interventi Giubileo 2025. Per quanto concerne il sistema di gestione delle risorse per il Giubileo 2025, oltre alla nomina del Commissario straordinario, sono stati costituiti un *Tavolo istituzionale per il Giubileo* (Ministeri Esteri, Economia, Interno, Trasporti, Beni Culturali, Turismo, Regione Lazio, Comune di Roma, 3 deputati e 3 senatori) e un *Cabina di Coordinamento* (Sindaco del comune di Roma, Presidente della regione Lazio, un soggetto di vertice della società «Giubileo 2025», il prefetto di Roma, il Capo del Dipartimento della protezione civile, il presidente del Consiglio dei lavori pubblici e un rappresentante della Santa Sede. Per gli interventi relativi alla Misura M1C3-Investimento 4.3 del PNRR, la composizione della Cabina di coordinamento è integrata dal Ministro del Turismo) presieduti dal Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri o da un Ministro o dal Sottosegretario di Stato alla Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri all'uopo delegato, la *Conferenza dei servizi* e la *Società Giubileo 2025* (Società pubblica interamente partecipata dal Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze a supporto del Commissario Straordinario di Governo per il Giubileo)[9]. Vi sono inoltre le *stazioni appaltanti* e i soggetti attuatori che dovranno rendicontare, attraverso il sistema *ReGiS*, sviluppato dalla Ragioneria Generale dello Stato, come verranno utilizzate le risorse dei progetti finanziati dal PNRR. Infine, tra i finanziamenti vi sono anche delle risorse previste per la costituzione di *Task force* a supporto delle Amministrazioni centrali e territoriali, gli uffici e le strutture coinvolte nell'attuazione dei progetti (cfr. Legge 234/2021, art.1 commi 420-443).

D.: *Per quanto riguarda la dimensione economica quanti e quali sono stati i finanziamenti predisposti per il Giubileo e per quali obiettivi erano stati stanziati? Qual era il sistema di gestione di questi finanziamenti? Come e quando venivano liquidati?*

Rutelli: «Oltre alle risorse finanziarie previste dalla legge speciale, le diverse amministrazioni ci mettevano le loro risorse con il bilancio ordinario. Le opere pubbliche sono molto importanti, ma una città può sopravvivere anche se le manca un'opera pubblica. Muore certamente invece se sicurezza, sanità, igiene pubblica e mobilità non funzionano bene e non funzionano bene tutti i giorni. Personalmente attribuisco il successo del 2000 a tre punti di forza importanti: la qualità del lavoro organizzativo, la consapevolezza della dimensione internazionale e la scelta oculata delle opere da fare. Questo

[9] cfr. per approfondimenti https://www.societagiubileo2025.it

è stato l'elemento più importante: l'efficienza dei servizi pubblici e dell'organizzazione della città che ha consentito a tre milioni di romani di continuare a vivere svolgendo le loro attività ordinarie nei 12 mesi del Giubileo. Quindi c'è stata una convergenza di vari finanziamenti statali (fondi per il Giubileo) e finanziamento del Comune di Roma. Tante sono state le opere pubbliche realizzate per il 2000 e sono ancora tutte lì a dimostrare la loro utilità nel tempo: il sottopasso davanti a via della Conciliazione e sotto il tunnel di Porta di Cavalleggeri, la terza corsia della Roma Fiumicino e di parte del Raccordo Anulare, diverse opere di viabilità e parcheggi. Abbiamo citato il riassetto delle aree intorno alle quattro basiliche giubilari, l'allestimento delle Scuderie del Quirinale, il rinnovo delle facciate dei palazzi e delle case del centro storico. Più stazioni ferroviarie, più treni, centinaia di restauri di importanti beni culturali, riqualificazione degli ospedali, sistemazione di complessi religiosi per l'accoglienza, strutture sociali e sanitarie, aree verdi, e tanto altro ancora. Ai finanziamenti pubblici poi si sono aggiunti anche tanti privati che hanno finanziato vari progetti collegati ma non sovrapposti agli interventi del Giubileo. Il coordinamento serviva anche a questo. Gli operatori turistici quindi con il Giubileo poterono contare su un nuovo sistema di infrastrutture e di organizzazione che si era introdotto nella città. Grazie a una legge regionale, la legge 20 del '97, sono stati concessi incentivi, supporti amministrativi, semplificazioni agli operatori turistici. Solo nella nostra città sono state approvate 200 domande per apertura e ristrutturazione di alberghi, 120 nel centro storico, 30 nel semicentro, 50 in altre parti della città, con 5563 nuove stanze. Lì ebbe inizio il *boom* del turismo della città di Roma, che ancora continua perché non si è utilizzato il Giubileo solo per costruire case per ferie o ostelli per i pellegrini, ma si è investito sul turismo come motore dello sviluppo della città e del territorio. Gli investimenti negli alberghi di Roma da parte dei privati, proprio grazie a queste procedure di sostegno, furono pari a 800 miliardi di lire. Ho ricordato che decidemmo di sacrificare una parte delle risorse destinate inizialmente a Roma per realizzare a Civitavecchia il nuovo molo portuale per le grandi navi, consapevoli che lo sviluppo di questo snodo logistico sarebbe stato strategico per la crescita del turismo nazionale e mediterraneo».

D.: *Per quanto riguarda la dimensione economica quanti e quali sono i finanziamenti predisposti per il Giubileo e per quali obiettivi sono stati stanziati? Qual è il sistema di gestione di questi finanziamenti?*

Fisichella: «I finanziamenti di fatto riguardano solo lo Stato italiano. Da parte nostra il Giubileo al momento viene realizzato solo ed esclusivamente con la buona volontà di chi vede il nostro lavoro e fa la sua offerta per aiutarci. Stiamo solo cercando di fare un *fundraising* per cercare di trovare la sensibilità di persone, associazioni e persone generose che aiutino le nostre iniziative. Poi c'è il grande capitolo dei finanziamenti pubblici per la realizzazione di numerose opere, ma questo riguarda lo Stato italiano dove per legge sono stati finanziati dei lavori».

Conclusioni

Per trarre le conclusioni, come ultima domanda è stato chiesto agli intervistati un parere sull'esperienza tratta dal Giubileo Ordinario del 2000 e sulle eventuali indicazioni che tale esperienza potrebbe suggerire per l'organizzazione del Giubileo 2025.

D.: *Che lezione ha imparato dall'esperienza del Giubileo 2000 che vorrebbe suggerire agli organizzatori del Giubileo 2025?*

Rutelli: «Preparazione per tempo, scelta delle opere pubbliche e di manutenzione straordinaria effettivamente realizzabili, coinvolgimento di tutte le istituzioni e dei soggetti interessati e super gioco di squadra».

D.: *Che lezione avete appreso dall'esperienza del Giubileo 2000 che vorreste utilizzare per l'organizzazione del Giubileo 2025?*

Fisichella: «Il Giubileo del 2000 aveva delle sue caratteristiche specifiche perché Giovanni Paolo II aveva iniziato a pensare a quel Giubileo sin dal giorno stesso della sua elezione. Nella sua prima Enciclica *Redemptor Hominis* si trova un paragrafo dedicato proprio al Giubileo del 2000, perché lui vedeva in quell'occasione l'ingresso della Chiesa nel terzo millennio della sua storia. Per quel Giubileo (per il quale ho fatto parte del Comitato centrale, come vicepresidente della Commissione teologica storica e quindi lo ricordo bene) la preparazione iniziò con 5 anni di anticipo. Ci fu l'attivazione di una grande macchina organizzativa che non è quella di questo Giubileo, che è un Giubileo più ordinario, dove la macchina organizzativa è importante ma è stata affidata solo a un dicastero, non si è creata una struttura *ad hoc* solo per il Giubileo, c'è il dicastero della Curia, a cui sono stati aggiunti alcuni giovani che vengono ad aiutarci esclusivamente per il

Giubileo. Di quel Giubileo certamente l'esperienza della gestione del volontariato e di come sono state pensate e organizzate le giornate è stata e sarà molto utile per l'organizzazione del prossimo Giubileo, ma questa esperienza dovrà fare i conti con i 25 anni che sono passati e di come sia cambiato completamente il volto della città, il volto di Tor Vergata. Tutti ricordano i milioni di giovani presenti a Tor Vergata, ma Tor Vergata oggi non è più quella. Nel frattempo, a Tor Vergata si è costruita una Università, un Policlinico, dei nuovi quartieri e quindi ovviamente anche questo dovrà portare a ripensare la gestione della celebrazione degli eventi. Dall'esperienza del Giubileo ordinario del 2000 e di quello straordinario della Misericordia del 2016 sicuramente, noi che vi abbiamo lavorato, ci portiamo appresso una grande bagaglio di esperienza. Per questo prossimo Giubileo auspico che, oltre agli investimenti per la dimensione strutturale, si possa ricevere il profondo entusiasmo che caratterizzò quel Giubileo (determinato ovviamente in gran parte dalla coincidenza con l'inizio di un nuovo secolo e dalla sensazione di vivere un evento veramente straordinario). Speriamo di poter recuperare questa dimensione ispirando, proprio con il tema della speranza, un'iniezione di entusiasmo, di ripresa di fiducia nei rapporti tra le persone, che possa far venir meno la grande violenza a cui quotidianamente si assiste nelle grandi città e che possa portare a recuperare in profondità il senso del valore della vita».

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Obituary

Domenico De Masi (†)

di *Federico Butera**

Improvvisamente ci ha lasciato Mimmo De Masi e mi sembra incredibile.

Avevo conosciuto Mimmo nel 1970 al congresso di Sociologia di Varna. Da allora per me è stato fraterno amico, studioso di riferimento sui temi del lavoro e dell'organizzazione, collega all'Università Sapienza di Roma con cui condividevamo studenti e ricerche, animatore di eventi colti e intelligenti come i Seminari di Estate di Ravello cui partecipavo spesso. Abbiamo dialogato tutta la vita con il massimo piacere intellettuale e con il più grande rispetto reciproco, anche quando molto spesso non eravamo d'accordo. Ho sempre imparato molto da lui. Condividevamo il giudizio critico sulle organizzazioni burocratiche e sul lavoro opprimente, ma dissentivamo sulle soluzioni: lui era per la riduzione della pervasività del lavoro e degli orari e per lo sviluppo dell'ozio creativo, io anche per la faticosa riprogettazione e professionalizzazione del lavoro. Sempre però eravamo d'accordo su alcune proposte concrete, come lo smart work, la formazione dei manager, la de- gerarchizzazione e molto altro

Leggo molti commenti di attualità che riducono la sua persona a proposte che ha animatamente sostenuto (per es. il reddito di cittadinanza) o che tendono ad "intestarsi" politicamente l'eredità culturale. Esse non rendono l'idea della grande statura di Mimmo De Masi. Mimmo era molto di più di quello che faceva e diceva: era una persona straordinaria e vera, he *was larger than life*. Ma di

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fronte a tali riduzioni, voglio ricordare alcune principali dimensioni essenziali di ciò che era e che ha fatto.

Mimmo innanzitutto è stato uno scienziato di primo piano delle scienze del lavoro e dell'organizzazione, noto in tutto il mondo: partendo dalla grande cultura e erudizione e padronanza di dati e fatti e dalle ricerche che animava e dalle relazioni che teneva, i suoi lavori interpretavano in modo innovativo e multidisciplinare il mondo del lavoro e delle organizzazioni e formulavano proposte di grande respiro volte ad un cambiamento profondo della società. Alcuni suoi principali temi sono stati lo sviluppo della società postindustriale, il lavoro innovativo della conoscenza, l'ozio creativo, la felicità. Ha pubblicato in italia e all'estero decine di libri alcuni dei quali sono monumentali testi istituzionali come il "*Trattato di sociologia del lavoro e dell'organizzazione*", FrancoAngeli e *Il lavoro del XXI secolo*" Einaudi, altri che rompevano convenzioni e prassi diffuse come *L'emozione e la regola* Rizzoli e *La felicità negata*, Einaudi.

Mimmo è stato un grande maestro: non solo dei suoi studenti a Napoli e a Roma che impegnava in didattica attiva e in ricerche sul campo e dei dottorandi che partecipavano alla sua scuola S3 e che sono andati poi a innovare un gran numero di organizzazioni pubbliche e private. Ma anche maestro di persone esperte che partecipavano ai suoi seminari sia nelle singole organizzazioni sia aperte a partecipazioni multiple di cui il più famoso è stata la serie dei seminari di Ravello: una modalità straordinaria di imparare ascoltando lezioni di alto livello, ascoltando musica e prendendosi il tempo di discutere fra i partecipanti nella incantata cornice di Ravello, che lui ha contribuito a lanciare come una città internazionale della cultura e della bellezza ottenendo gratuitamente da Oscar Nimeyer , l'architetto di Brasilia ,il progetto per l'Auditorium.

Mimmo è stato un promotore di sistemi sociali: adottando il metodo del *seductive design* più che quello del consigliere operativo: ha avuto il coraggio non solo di fare proposte anche ardite al mondo della politica e del governo pur senza l'attitudine a controllarne l'esecuzione, accettando il rischio di trovarsi schierato ma senza mai farsi schiacciare entro appartenenze partitiche. È rimasto sempre solo un uomo di sinistra seppur deluso dalle sue espressioni storiche ma senza mai però appartarsi in orgogliosa distanza. Ha accetto per questo di partecipare al dibattito politico con giudizi sempre acuti, talvolta estremi, talvolta sbagliati, diventando talvolta destinatario di polemiche e incomprensioni. Come ha ribadito lui stesso più volte, era un intellettuale libero

che volava sopra la congiuntura: erano gli altri che adottavano le sue idee.

Mimmo è stato animava eventi culturali originali e creava comunità. La ampia comunità di allievi, amici, estimatori è una realtà organizzativa light ma robusta: si è visto alle sue esequie e sui social.

Mimmo è stato un formatore manageriale e un maieuta. Dall'IFAP alla infinità di eventi formativi, Mimmo si aspettava che i manager realizzassero le sue idee: sempre erano affascinati ma raramente erano in grado di attuarle in assenza di cambiamenti strutturali. È stato presidente dell'Associazione Nazionale Formatori e a 85 anni si stava avviando a varare un prestigioso programma di formazione sul lavoro.

Mimmo è stato un divulgatore e un polemista: sempre capace di attirare l'attenzione e di provocare gli interlocutori, sia nei convegni sia in televisione. Era difficile ascoltarlo senza essere colpito dalla sua brillantezza e non esser "smossi" da lui, nell'accordo o nel disaccordo.

Insomma , oltre alle tante altre cose che era e che faceva e da cui la sua persona "sporgeva" , io con questa nota voglio qui solo ricordare che era un celebre professore di scienze dell'organizzazione e del lavoro che studiava e interpretava la realtà del lavoro e delle organizzazioni, che formava in modo creativo un gran numero di persone, che promuoveva eventi sociali e comunità sui suoi temi, che si comprometteva a proporre soluzioni, che comunicava a un largo pubblico le sue idee e polemizzava. Ossia un professore di altissimo livello impegnato nel mondo.

Ma, per me Mimmo è stato soprattutto un grande amico. RIP

Federico Butera

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