

A right to strike in democratic corporations

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 - how can democratic structures, once brought about, be made to last?

- 1 Degeneration as a problem for democratic workplaces

- ① Degeneration as a problem for democratic workplaces
- ② A strategy against degeneration: the right to strike

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- ③ The efficacy of the strike
- ④ The permissibility of the strike
- ⑤ An objection

The promises of workplace democracy

- more equal status

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- more democratic decision-making

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- more democratic decision-making
- accountability of those in power

The experience of workplace democracy I

“[Sharing ownership in the firm] means nothing to me [...] I only go to the annual meetings of the General Assembly because it's required. Everybody goes because they have to. If we didn 't have to, we wouldn 't go.” - Sharryn Kasmir, *The Myth of Mondragón* (1996) p. 122

The experience of workplace democracy II

[W]orkers at Clima spoke of definite inequalities in their plant. They most often talked about “los de arriba” (those on the top) versus “los de abajo” (those on the bottom). Workers also spoke of themselves as “curelas” (working stiff) and called managers “jefes” (bosses). “Jefes” was used interchangeably for managers and engineers as well as for the elected representatives to the Governing Council and the Management Council, suggesting that workers perceived them as management-controlled bodies rather than democratic organs that represented workers’ interests. - Kasmir 1996 p. 151

The experience of workplace democracy III

“No, of course we are not equal. We are in no way different from other businesses. No matter how equal we are in theory, in reality we are not. I believe that we are less equal among ourselves than the workers in a capitalist firm: being members, many of us often have to put up with things that workers in other firms would not tolerate. [...] Those above make the rules, those below obey them.” - Davydd J. Greenwood and José Luis Gonzalez Santos, *Industrial Democracy as Process* (1989), p. 133

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 - the informal norms of the organization become inegalitarian and undemocratic
 - a managerial caste emerges and captures resources and positions
- the empirical picture: it happens, but factors are complicated

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- especially realist contributions
- democracy is not trivial to realize!
 - policy is made more for elites rather than for ordinary citizens
 - elections are a flawed mechanism for accountability
 - voters largely don't vote based on policy but based on identity

A rationale for strikes

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 - permissibility

The effectiveness of strikes

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- democratic managers too will have an interest against this
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- strikes can thus be effective

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- including an *ultima ratio* kind of means
- the strike is an effective means
- we should thus fix it as part of the institution

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- but blocking strike breakers is permissible
- because that is undemocratic

Other constituencies?

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- but, practically speaking, strikes require necessary contributions

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- might be replaced by more antagonistic social norms
- we have data on what can happen without contestation: degeneration!
- having purely cooperative norms seems unachievable, at least for now

The end

Thank you for your attention!

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- strikes are an *ultima ratio* means against capture
- they can effectively pressure elites
- they are morally permissible
- this might shift norms away from pure cooperation but those are not realistic anyway