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INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN ITALY AND IN EUROPE*

by Mattia Gambilonghi

The goals of the workers' movement have always encompassed economic and industrial democracy, whose main feature is the intention to extend to the production activity domain, the democratic and participative principles typical of public-sector entities. Being aware of the unclear and authoritarian nature of the management of that domain, the political parties and organisations that were behind the workers' movement - considering both its reformist and social democratic wing, and its revolutionary and communist wing - leveraged the reunification of the political and economic domains to define their own pattern of society. This contribution sets out to summarise the main steps of the evolution of the socialist and communist theories in this specific field. After an overview of the Marxian thought concerning the split between / reunification of the political and economic domains, the author analyses the Middle-European debate in general terms, as well as the different theories developed in Italy between the aftermath of WWI, and the end of the 1980s.

Keywords: industrial democracy, workers' movement, Italian Left, PCI, PSI.

Da sempre tra gli obiettivi del movimento operaio, la democrazia economica e industriale si caratterizza per la volontà di estendere alla sfera dell'attività produttiva la logica democraticopartecipativa propria degli apparati statali. Convinti infatti della natura opaca e autoritaria della gestione di tale sfera, i partiti e le organizzazioni che hanno composto il movimento operaio - sia nella declinazione riformista e socialdemocratica, sia in quella rivoluzionaria e comunista – hanno assunto la ricomposizione tra politica ed economia come bussola per definire il proprio progetto di società. Il contributo si propone di ricostruire sinteticamente alcuni dei principali passaggi che scandiscono l'evoluzione dell'elaborazione socialista e comunista in questo preciso ambito. Dopo una breve ricognizione della riflessione marxiana in materia di scissione/ricomposizione tra politica ed economia, si passerà a esaminare dapprima i termini generali del dibattito mitteleuropeo, per poi scandagliare le differenti fasi dell'elaborazione italiana nel periodo compreso tra primo dopoguerra e la fine degli anni Ottanta.

Parole chiave: democrazia industriale, movimento operaio, Sinistra italiana, PCI, PSI.

1. Introduction

In the framework of the socialist and communist thought and of the tradition of the workers' movement, the implementation of economic democracy has always underlain the ideals and political goals typical of the organisations that were behind it. In spite of

* As to quotations, a courtesy translation from the Italian version (as per the list of references) into English is provided.

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the broad variety of solutions and projects tabled by organisations and States led by the workers' movement – which include the full nationalisation of the means of production as per the soviet model, their socialisation and self-management (as per the Yugoslavian model), and the different forms of "planism" and co-determination implemented in the framework of various European social democratic models –, such proposals share not only the awareness of the fact that the business and operational models of capitalist enterprises are characterised by unclearness and an authoritarian and oligarchic approach, but also the idea that a political system that does not permeate the economic and production domains cannot be deemed a democracy from a substantial point of view. Both wings of the socialist movement have criticised liberalism inasmuch as the latter allegedly limits its fight against despotism solely to the political dimension, without involving the economic one (Cantaro and Carrieri, 1988; Telò, 1988). Incidentally, the main feature of the post-WWII social democratic constitutionalism (which, in my opinion, represents the main outcome of the influence exercised by the social communist workers' movement at that stage) reportedly lies in what Massimo Luciani calls the "seizure of the economic domain" by popular sovereignty (Luciani, 1996). That is, the extension of the liberal principle of power limitation from the state and political dimension to the economic one, thus depriving the economic activity of the privatistic approach within which the liberal theory has framed it, acknowledging its sociability and relevance to the exercise of political sovereignty by workers-citizens, as well as to the formation of decision-making processes, which are the most direct outcome of this sovereignty.

Although the aspiration for democratisation and humanisation of the workplace and productive life has characterised the socialist movement from the very onset (cf. the so-called pre-Marxian "utopians", such as Owen, Saint-Simon, or Proudhon), the split between the political and economic domains, which is inherent to the modern capitalist society, was outlined at a later stage by Marx, thanks to whom the overcoming of such division becomes one of the main goals of the workers' movement. This is in spite of the fact that, as Cerroni has explained, this goal has been pursued both by the social democratic wing and by the communist one in often unsatisfactory and simplified ways, when compared with the original complexity of the Marxian thought (Cerroni, 1973). Such division is identified in detail in Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, one of the first manuscripts by the German philosopher, in which he presents the concept of *concordia discors*: according to such concept, an abstract representative State based on a generalist approach unifies a society consisting of several unrelated and atomised private subjects (Marx, 1977). Thus, a proper disjunctive link that brings two realities together, i.e. the State and civil society, which are separate and based on antithetic principles. The overcoming of such division can be pursued, according to Marx, by developing the contradiction underlying the principle of equal legal capacity, which - once it becomes equal political capacity through universal suffrage - leads privatistic civil society to actually raise itself to an "abstraction of itself, to political existence as its true universal and essential existence" (ibid.), thus putting into question the foundations of the modern capitalist model. By virtue of the disjunctive link referred to above, the demand for dissolution of the abstract political State corresponds to the dissolution of civil society (ibid.) (legally atomised and socially unequal): whereas the former, as an abstract political community, represents a fundamental condition for private subjects to live together (they would otherwise be engaged only in trade relationships), the regaining by society, of the political and administrative role previously mandated to the abstract State would not only entail the evolution of the latter towards an actual political community, but also put in question the "privatistic and mercantile nature of the social order" (Prospero, 2016, p. 150). Although, in the works dating back to the philosopher's mature age, the focus – and thus both the analysis of the social dimension, and the solution descending from it – is placed on criticising the political economy framework, deemed to be the skeleton of civil society, within the Marxian theoretical framework, socialisation of power, and socialisation of the economy will continue to co-exist, as outlined in the works on the Commune, which date back to the philosopher's old age. In such works, the issue of the political pattern of socialism re-emerges as a result of the events occurred at that time. Social emancipation and self-government turn out to be closely intertwined in his thought, leading the Trier-born philosopher to conceive the ultimate goal of communism as a *free association of producers*.

This idea of reunification of the political and economic domains – which entails the extension to the economic sphere, of the democratic principles inherent to the most developed political sphere – was (attempted to be) implemented under various forms during the 20th century, with significant differences in relation to the choice (closely linked to the political culture of each party and to the "transition strategy" descending from it) of favouring the micro-economic dimension rather than the macro-economic one, or viceversa. Going through the wide range of solutions and proposals, and moving from one end to the other, it is possible to observe participatory or in some cases self-management patterns aimed at promoting workers' control of production and at establishing industrial democracy (understood as participation and relevance of the worker's point of view in the decision-making processes that take place within the company), as well as, on the other hand, the planistic and planning proposals aimed at extending the decisional powers of elective assemblies and Parliaments to the management of the large economic blocs, public or private.

It is evident that two different (albeit complementary) solutions and movements come into play: one of them features a strongly *State-related* nature, the other one is instead based on the *social* dimension, with the former hinging upon a *top-down* approach, whereas the latter upon a *bottom-up* approach. In other words, they are two opposite movements, which at some point end up merging together. Beyond the different national variants, the basic idea that will unite the different democratic government solutions of the economy, adopted by European left-wing parties and the Western European workers' movement, is that, through this double movement (State-related and social) governing the economic patterns and through the introduction into the capitalist valorisation process, of "subjects and purposes contrasting pure market logic", it is possible both to limit the space and the role played in the management of enterprises by purely economic calculation and by a mere accounting logic, and to react, by curbing and limiting it, to the transformation of the labour force into a commodity and "to the negative effects [...] of the private management of capitalist accumulation" (Barcellona and Carrieri, 1982, p. 5).

2. Industrial democracy and workers' movement in the post-WWI period: between Weimar and Austromarxism

Although, between the end of the 19^{th} century and the beginning of the 20^{th} century, several reflections and attempts to frame, from a theoretical point of view, the issue of a democratic and state form focus on the self-government of industrial clusters and factories

(or, in any case, on giving them an important role in the context of a wider requalification process of the representative system) developed within the workers' movement (cf. Fabianism and *Industrial Democracy* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb) (Marucco, 1986), the Weimarian experience is the first, at least in the capitalist world, to grant political and institutional relevance to workers' councils and to the various forms of industrial democracy (Arrigo, 2018; Gambilonghi, 2020; Herrera, 2002 and 2008; Marramao, 1976; Vardaro, Arrigo, 1982). A significant exception to the above is represented by the soviet case, which, despite originating from workers' councils, considering them as the backbone of the new proletarian State in embryonic form, almost immediately downsizes its political role for a number of reasons, objective (the needs in terms of economic reconstruction, the high illiteracy rate of the population, and the state of permanent exception imposed by hostile liberal powers) and subjective (the Leninist and Bolshevik concept, which is extremely avant-garde in nature, and therefore inclined to grant a first-class role to political parties, which represent a context for class consciousness, rather than to workers' self-government bodies).

Being a forerunner of the democratic and social constitutionalism referred to above, the Weimar Constitution not only legally crystallises what has been said to be the most characteristic feature of the new constitutionalism (the "seizure of the economic domain"), but tries to carry to the extreme the principle of social functionalisation of property by deploying its scope of action at the core of the production process. This is the very meaning of the "economic constitution" scattered among the sections of the Constitution: through the (alleged and likely) equality between capital and labour, as guaranteed by workers' councils, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) (both the "mainstream" wing and the "independent" one) holds that it is possible to open up to the constitutionalisation of economic and labour relations, this being the premise of their consequent democratisation.

This pattern is based on the theoretical framework developed by Hugo Sinzheimer, a labour law scholar who became famous in previous years for theorising collective bargaining as a form of decentralised law making, a process of "social self-determination of law" that was supposed to reduce the gap between the "living law" typical of a complex and dynamic society, and the static nature of central power (Herrera, 2002; Mezzadra, 2000). In other words, by interpreting from a social and trade union perspective the principle of pluralism as developed by Preuss and von Gierke, Sinzheimer deems it possible to broaden the social and legitimacy base of the State through the "'substantial integration' of pre-State law": the social law area created through collective autonomy should act as a junction between the State and society (Vardaro, 1984, p. 11). The constitutionalisation of workers' councils, effected through Article 165, represents the highest achievement of this ambitious pluralistic and corporative attempt to "implement political democracy [...] with a 'social democracy' [so as to envisage] a functional proliferation of sources of law". Rejecting the traditionalistic and organicistic assumption of a "chamber of interests", in Sinzheimer's view, workers' councils become the "structures of the autonomous social order", which are supposed to integrate state will and political democracy through the exercise, by them, of a "maximum range of public tasks". In short, there emerges "a sort of social parliamentarianism, through which the ideal of self-determination of social groupings can be implemented" (Bolaffi, 1985, pp. 1077-8).

A strongly critical stance towards the Weimarian social compromise in relation to labour law and the role played by workers' councils, as well as towards Sinzheimer's view on the combination-integration between political democracy and economic democracy, is taken by Karl Korsch, a labour law scholar who was a member of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and then of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) (Cerroni, 1973; Marramao, 1977; Rusconi, 1974; Vacca, 1979). His stance is based on considering the outcome of constitutional integration of workers' councils as a mere "mockery of the 'council system'": the reformist actions implemented by SPD do not incorporate the idea of "constitutionalism of work", but remain within the bourgeois ideology of "free work contract", thus depriving workers' councils of their original "revolutionary core", which allow them to move towards proper economic citizenship (Korsch, 1922, Italian translation 1970, pp. 214-9). Except for a company's internal representative bodies, the Weimarian workers' councils address the worker "as a performer of a working activity", and not "the worker as such, as an element that actively participates in the social production process" (Korsch, 1922 [1970], p. 199). Whereas the "mere workers' councils" are assigned a purely "negative" function and the defence of workers' interests, the political functions in the field of economic and social affairs are assigned to equality-based workers' councils originating from the collaborative "working communities". Work citizenship - and not the mere shared participation embodied by the Weimar social democratic compromise - is therefore inseparable from an actual socialisation process, which must however shy away from two specular degenerations (if the survival of spurious and "peculiar" forms of property is to be avoided): on the one hand, its technocratic variant, which can change the nature of property, from private to public, without however affecting the ability of workers to orient production processes; and, on the other hand, the anarcho-syndicalist variant, which results in workers' self-management of a company or of an industrial branch, to the detriment, however, of the rest of society, given the absence of global rebalancing mechanisms. The *industrial autonomy* proposed by Korsch, on the other hand, mediates and synthetises these two degenerations, thus shifting to a community economy – in which each and every type of property disappears – thanks to the interaction between two distinct factors: firstly, the transfer of the ownership of the means of production from private individuals to public officials, and secondly the forms of "public-law limitations" of the functions of the same officials in favour of the community (Korsch, 1922 [1970], pp. 21-9).

In-between are Austromarxist thinkers, who take part in the Weimarian debate because of the several similarities between the German case and the Austrian case (transition from the Empire to the Republic, formation of extremely active workers' councils claiming a sort of dualism of power, and establishment of a Socialisation Commission, tasked with developing a reform plan of economic structures). Despite sticking to Sinzheimer's idea of combination of parliamentary democracy and economic democracy (and not to the complex "council pyramid" with which Korsch intends to reshape the post-capitalist State from the interior), due to the strong influence exercised by Fabian Socialism, the Austro-Marxist thinkers not only recognise the important pedagogical role played by the establishment and implementation of forms of industrial democracy, which gradually pave the way for a form of government in line with the forthcoming revolutionary shift (Adler, 1945 and 1967), but also consider the dimension and the goal of positive freedom and selfgovernment as more important than any other paternalistic and authoritarian conception of social justice. Like Korsch, Otto Bauer divides the socialisation process into two phases: the legal deed of expropriation (socialisation of private property), and the economic deed of gradual rationalisation and conversion of the economic and production process with social goals (socialisation of production). Whereas the former may be effected also with authoritarian and Jacobin methods, the latter - in consideration of its significant social

impacts – needs the broadest consensus possible from the social forces concerned; thus, it should be regarded as the outcome of the industrial self-government implemented within economic units (Bauer, 1978).

Whereas the most progressive and reformist conceptions of democratisation of the economy can be criticised inasmuch as they did not foresee the significant industrial rationalisation and concentration process experienced by Germany in the 1920s, thus being useless tools with regard to actual processes, the most radical positions of council democracy and full socialisation lack both an adequate analysis of the intermediate steps a transition process should usually go through (Vardaro, Arrigo, 1982, pp. 24-6), and a satisfactory understanding (which is the case with both strands of thought) of the actual importance of political democracy and of transformation potentialities inherent to its contradictory nature (which was instead not the case with the original Marxian vision). Whereas, according to the social democratic strand of thought, political democracy becomes an end in itself, the communist strand of thought considers it a mere deception, focusing on a misleading juxtaposition of formal democracy / real democracy and political freedom / economic freedom: whereas the former "integrates" liberal democracy, the latter rejects it in full and "cuts itself off" (Cerroni, 1977, p. 93).

3. From Ordine nuovo to Sette tesi sulla questione del controllo operaio [Seven Theories on Workers' Control]: the first steps of the Italian debate

The abovementioned debate has echoed in Italy and especially in Turin, where in 1919-1921 a strong factory occupation movement copes with the issue of the establishment of participatory and democratic patterns within factories. Throughout such experience, which prompts the Cabinet led by Giolitti, the General Confederation of Workers (CGL), and the Confindustria employers' organisation to engage into a dialogue on a legislative proposal aimed at institutionalising forms of workers' control and participation, the most thorough reflection on the relationship between the role played by workers' councils, and the strategic outlook of the socialist movement is the one made by the Turin-based group named *Ordine nuovo* (literally meaning "new order"), led by Gramsci, Tasca, and Togliatti.

Attempting to reinterpret from a national perspective the "sovietist" strategy adopted by Russian Bolsheviks, Gramsci holds that, in order to shape and emphasise the socialist State, which was already in embryonic form, the "social life institutions of the working class" should be coordinated and centralised, ensuring "autonomy and organisational patterns as needed", however paying due consideration to the issue of their subordination to a "hierarchy of competences and powers". By enhancing the pedagogic capability of this well-developed network of proletarian institutions, which is fundamental for the working class to be trained on (self-)government and business administration issues, and also in order to attain a "radical transformation of the psychology" of the working class itself, it is possible to outline a proper workers' democracy "effectively and actively contrasting the bourgeois State, ready to replace the bourgeois State in all its basic functions in terms of management and control of the national heritage" (Gramsci, 1919a). The main qualitative change of this new form of workers' State should consist, according to Gramsci, in the overcoming of economic privatism and in the already described reunification of the political and economic domains. Such reunification is opposed by the liberal State, in

which the supremacy and social power of landowners is based on the split between those domains. The new socialist institutions shall replace

the capitalist in relation to administrative functions and industrial power, and effect the autonomy of the producer within the factory; institutions capable of assuming managerial authority of all the functions concerning the well-structured system of relations of production and exchange that link together the various branches of a factory, representing a single basic economic unit, that intertwine the various activities of the farming industry, that – through horizontal or vertical planes – must build the well-balanced structure of the national and international economy, freed from the cumbersome and parasitic tyranny of private landowners (Gramsci, 1919b).

The halt put to the council movement by the fascist regime and by the elimination of political and union freedoms underlying the implementation of such forms of grassroots democracy lasts until the end of the 20-year-long fascist dictatorship. During the last years of WWII, Management Councils are established, representing an evolution from firmlevel National Liberation Committees, through which workers and employees of different companies try to ensure continuity in the production activity, in the absence of managers and owners. According to left-wing parties (the Italian Socialist Party, PSI, the Italian Communist Party, PCI, and the Action Party, PdA), their undoubtedly fundamental role in that period puts into question "the narrow-minded concept of industry [...] representing the exclusive domain of owners' action and interests", taking precisely the opposite stance, according to which industry is "a social phenomenon and collective strength of labour" (Morandi, 1979, p. 98). In the opinion of socialists and communists, the fact that they arose spontaneously and developed in the framework – and in spite – of the "destruction of the State" and the "annihilation" of its structure grants Management Councils an "irrefutable ground for constitutional primacy" (Morandi, 1978, p. 102). This is why Rodolfo Morandi, Minister of Industry in the socialist cabinet, tables – in the framework of national unity governments – a legislative proposal aimed at recognising their existence from a legal point of view. More in detail, Articles 18 and 19 of this bill give Management Councils significant information and consultation tasks: this means that the ownership of the company is not affected, but, as a result, a form of counter-power of balancing and influence is institutionalised within the firm. Hence, this bill "does not eliminate the capitalist's management power within the firm, but includes into it something that significantly changes the corporate life and the relationships with the outer economic world" (Sereni, 1979, p. 141). Management Councils represent, especially in Morandi's view, the "broadest and most thorough structural reform" (Morandi, 1978, p. 222): this is because they are supposed to lay the basis for the inception of a broader extra-company democratisation process of the economy: their internal control shall be aimed at providing data and at ensuring the implementation of an economic coordination plan, thus enabling an "organic connection in the production cycle", as well as framing each and every company "within the planning and general rules of the reconstruction process" (Morandi, 1978, pp. 102-3).

The attempt to give "constitutional primacy" to the new democratic patterns within firms is destined to fail from a two-fold point of view: Morandi's bill remains dead letter not only due to the opposition from company owners, and the exclusion, since 1947 onwards, of left-wing parties from the government, but also owing to the unsatisfactory compromise reached, within the Constituent Assembly, in relation to Article 46, which is supposed to constitutionalise participation patterns. The prevalence of the moderate wing – which

leads to the use of the term "collaborate" instead of "participate", the latter term being the one initially chosen within the relevant sub-commission – makes that article unenforceable. The joint provision according to which collaboration is linked to an action to be performed "in harmony with the needs of production" leads the majority of the Italian trade union movement to fear a revival of the institutionalist and corporative principles that "inspired the Civil Code" in 1942 (Leonardi, 2006, p. 116). As will be explained below, preference is given to an external industrial democracy model based on bargaining and conflict.

It is evident that the approach to the industrial democracy issue, adopted by Italian left-wing parties after WWII, clearly differs from the approach based on the alternative between representative State and council State, that had characterised the "Sovietism" of Ordine Nuovo. It rather envisages the enlargement, requalification, and thorough reorganisation of parliamentarism and of the representative dimension – typical of the democratic and constitutional State, which is far different from the liberal and monarchic one – through economic and "grassroots" democracy patterns. At the end of the 1950s, starting from the modalities through which such interactive and dynamic relationship between Parliament, on the one hand, and participation and industrial democracy bodies, on the other, Raniero Panzieri and Lucio Libertini initiate the other important chapter of the Italian debate on the role played by workers' councils in the framework of a social transformation approach.

In the framework of the strand of thought initiated by the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and by the de-Stalinisation process, Sette tesi sulla questione del controllo operaio – in opposition to the majority of PSI members, who after the congress held in Naples in 1959 get closer and closer to the political left - deals with the issue of the relationship between democratic power within firms, and a broader construction strategy of socialism. Rejecting the putschist conceptions, the views based on the theory of capitalist collapse, as well as the theories – schematic and mechanistic, in the authors' opinion - envisaging a linear and undoubtable process leading from bourgeois democracy to socialist democracy (which, in the Italian case, corresponds to Togliatti's plan to finalise the incomplete bourgeois revolution), Panzieri and Libertini focus on the need to establish, through the strategic primacy given to workers' councils and the forms of workers' control, the "continuity in the political fight methods before, during, and after the revolutionary shift" (Libertini and Panzieri, 1969a, p. 43). The construction of new forms of power, more specifically of workers' power, cannot be postponed to the postrevolutionary phase, but shall regulate the process leading to the "shift"; otherwise, the socialist State would degenerate into mere bureaucracy, which may turn into "reformist subordination", or stick to the "conception of 'lead' (lead party, lead State)" (Libertini and Panzieri, 1969a, p. 46). Although the two authors consider pivotal the issue of training the working class on how to exert power, they make it clear that such training is not "neutral": in other words, in cannot be implemented within any institution whatsoever, but shall be organised in the framework of the institutions originating and established by the working class itself, in the framework of "its institutions", through which it learns how to play "a managing role within production structures". It is thus possible to qualify in a socialist perspective the new State solely by ensuring that it is based on a "workers' democracy ground", so as to neutralise the Stalinist or social democratic bureaucratic paternalism (ibid.). Since self-management and the gradual elimination of the State are among the main features of socialism, the direct democracy implemented through workers' control is both "form and substance" of socialist democracy, thus qualifying "socialism as the most complete and concrete form of democracy" (Libertini and Panzieri, 1969b, pp. 178-81).

Far from representing a revival of the initial doctrine, workers' control is, according to Panzieri and Libertini, a topical issue considering the forms through which the power of "monopolies" is exercised, both within the production unit, where it takes an extremely authoritarian outlook, and outside the production unit, due to the strong interpenetration of monopolies with state structures, influencing the latter, and making the latter's planning and rationalising actions in line with their own interests. Moreover, only the strengthening of bodies ensuring workers' control over production makes it possible to have truly rational and balanced economic development, inasmuch as, by holding together the "economic development" and the "parallel transformation of relations of production", the "increase in accumulation" and the resulting industrialisation process would emancipate themselves from the constraints imposed by capitalist social relations. Once the particularistic patterns of such relations have been set apart, economic development could finally take place in the interest of the community (Libertini and Panzieri, 1969a, p. 48).

The strategic approach proposed by the two socialist authors does not manage to persuade the Italian workers' movement and its parties: both PCI and the majority of PSI consider a solution entirely centred on the role of workers' councils to be not only unviable but also the cause of particularist degenerations and firm-level corporatism. In addition to underestimating the role of Parliament – considered, instead, "inseparable from the struggle in the country for [...] an extension of the actual power of workers" (De Martino, 1969, p. 55) – within the transition process, the primacy given to workers' councils and workers' control bodies would call into question the "steering role" of the party, the only element – especially for PCI – capable of reconciling economic and political aspects of the class struggle, and thus of providing it with a global reach (Barca, 1969, p. 194).

4. The Italian left between conflicting participation and the German model: the debate in the 1970s and in the 1980s

The 1970s represent the period during which the development, by Italian left-wing parties, of theoretical approaches to industrial democracy - or, as it was often called at that time, "producers' democracy" - reaches its peak, prompted by the events and the context that developed following the union struggles of the so-called "Hot Autumn" (1969) and the promulgation of the Workers' Statute by socialist Minister Brodolini (1970). The synergy between these two factors - the thrust towards a democratic and participatory approach, imparted by the former, and the legislative framework guaranteed by the latter to trade union activity and social conflict within the factory - leads to a profound innovation as to industrial relations and forms of representation in the workplace (the socalled "union of councils"), starting from which, in the following years, left-wing parties developed their proposals (Anderlini and Sechi, 1976; Causarano et al., 2009; Trentin, 1980). The disputes over the contractual renewals in 1968-1969 favour the structuring of new representative institutions within which the most recent practices of struggle and claim settlement consolidate - practices based on strong reliance on assemblies, as well as on a high participation level. The election of delegates by the so-called "homogeneous group" of workers within the different branches of the factory marks a break with the traditional centralisation of negotiations that characterised the confederal unions, forcing and inciting them to restart from a more democratic and participatory approach, precisely from the new works councils. This is exactly what happens in 1972, when, on the basis of

a federative agreement between the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions (CISL), and the Italian Labour Union (UIL), the three unions decide to give works councils full powers in relation to firm-level bargaining.

Beyond the higher or lower degree of prominence and centrality given by each of the Italian left-wing parties to the development of forms of workers' control in the framework of their strategy, producers' democracy is unanimously considered a fundamental factor for the establishment of a socialist society. When briefly outlining the general conceptions within which PSI and PCI placed their respective proposals on industrial democracy, as to the former, it is necessary to refer to the idea of self-management and to the libertarian and liberal inspiration that marks and characterises the new socialist course initiated by Bettino Craxi; as concerns PCI, on the other hand, the focus should be placed on the idea of an "organised, mass democracy", i.e. of a democracy that is aimed at attaining greater articulation than in the case of traditional parliamentarism, and rests, as per Togliatti's vision, on organised entities and intermediate bodies, i.e. parties and unions (Gambilonghi, 2017).

As for socialist self-management, ambitious and radical positions – albeit not likely to be translated into concrete terms – have emerged. Among them, that of Lombardi (2009), who considers self-management as a strategy aimed at disseminating within society socialist counter-powers capable of withstanding the physiological alternation, at government level, of political forces and coalitions being far different from each other; or that of Giorgio Ruffolo (Ruffolo, 1976), who, in the development of forms of self-management, sees the tool through which, by adopting a reticular and no longer pyramidal approach, the political systems can be redesigned, in order to broaden the channels for the collection of social claims. However, the position that is adopted by the new leadership of PSI and that enables its concrete political action is the one outlined in those years by Giuliano Amato (1976, 1978b, and 1979a). Amato establishes a very strong link between self-management and pluralism (in opposition to organicism and monism, which he instead ascribes to the communist tradition), and, on the basis of Proudhon's federalism, he considers selfmanagement as a renewed socialist version of the liberal principle of checks and balances. This conception entails the prevalence over the various parties, of the areas within which a civil society deemed to have a sufficient degree of maturity and secularisation (and, for this reason, no longer prone to being shaped by the party itself) develops.

As concerns the communist concept of "organised, mass democracy" as a transition platform towards socialism, it aims to develop constitutional provisions further and to outline a kind of "mixed democracy", in which the representative dimension of Parliament is revamped and revived by several different forms of grassroots democracy – this term is used to refer both to various forms of decentralised democracy at territorial level (Municipalities, neighbourhood committees, and school councils), and to works councils and democratic representation forms in workplaces. PCI thus recognises the need for a deeper and more radical democracy, but fears at the same time the spontaneity and particularism that may arise from it: for this reason, great importance is attached to the synthesis and reunification role played by elective assemblies and by collective bodies like trade unions and (especially) parties (Barcellona, 1977; Cerroni, 1977; Occhetto, 1976; Vacca, 1979).

In this phase, the set of proposals concerning producers' democracy, tabled by communists and socialists, tend to converge – in spite of their specific features – on what can be called "Italian model" of industrial democracy, the so-called "conflicting participation"

(Giugni and Cafagna, 1977; Berlinguer *et al.*, 1976). This is a model that envisages a form of participation in decision-making processes that is external to a company's steering bodies (board of directors and shareholders' assembly). The industrial democracy expressed by this model does not point to the maximalist idea of an immediate eviction of capital and shareholders from corporate management and ownership structures, but implies an action aimed at impacting on managerial strategic decisions, a form of participation targeted at negotiating investments and work organisation, and relying on the works council as the main actor, which in those years became the basic unit of the unitary trade union. Conflicting participation centred on works councils is thus based on what has been defined "single channel" in the literature on industrial relations, i.e. a single channel for union representation (although there are open union structures in place, like works councils, that are legitimated by all employees – and not only by those of them who are members of a trade union). The peculiarity of this model as against other ones - e.g. the German one does not lie in the fact of engendering a "strong" rather than "weak" form of participation, but rather in the type of relationship that it establishes with the whole set of economic trends and processes. Producers' democracy is seen as the basic and "primordial" element of the wider democratic governance process of the economy, which, on the side of the State, takes the form of a democratic programming proposal (Occhetto, 1978). This perspective draws inspiration from, and is based on the system and philosophy of the Constitution, and in particular the joint provisions of Articles 1, 3, 41, and 46 (which is precisely revived through a joint and systematic reading of the whole constitutional text).

In summary, the main characteristics of conflicting participation can be identified in three elements: a) the centrality of bargaining, which recalls that it stems from trade unions; b) the key role of information rights, which translate into a demand for ongoing sharing, by the top management, of the data relating to investment choices and to decisions implying changes to work organisation – data that unions claim and on which they can base their negotiation activity; and c) the autonomy of the social partners, and the absolute freedom in terms of strikes and social conflicts – this is an element that profoundly differentiates the Italian model from the German one, where, by virtue of joint responsibility in relation to the management of the company, the exercise of the right to strike is subject to a series of limitations and where, for instance, political strike (whose legitimacy has been recognised by the Constitutional Court pursuant to Article 3) is prohibited.

Given the features of the "common pillar" of the Italian model, what are the differences between PCI's and PSI's proposal? In a first phase, which stretches from the beginning of the 1970s up until 1978-1979, it is possible to maintain that the difference between the two proposals lies mainly in the entity to which primacy is given: civil society, in its autonomous and free expression, or intermediate bodies, with their reunification and synthesis action? And, therefore, is primacy given to the social or to the political dimension? In the case of PSI, the libertarian and self-management approach that inspires the Italian socialist strand of thought means that, in the context of this investment negotiation action and of economic "union replacement in the [economic] plan", primacy and centrality are given to works councils. Gino Giugni, in his famous work on industrial democracy, points to the need to spread forms of social control complementary to, but not coinciding with, the political-party dimension and in a dialectical relationship with it (Giugni and Cafagna, 1977). In relation to this aspect, instead, PCI, while recognising the importance of the various forms of producers' democracy, fearing the particularistic and corporative degenerations of the various dimensions of direct and grassroots democracy if they were left without control,

and allowed to develop spontaneously, identifies a connection and link between investment negotiation at company level, and economic planning at national level. At the beginning, communists believe that this connection can be effected in the framework of "production conferences", i.e. informal discussion forums where works councils address these issues jointly with political forces and local institutions, thus trying to formulate in general terms the claims emerging at firm level, always in the framework of that constant tension towards the "unitary rearrangement" of the Italian society, tension that innervates and permeates the entire strategy of the so-called "Historic Compromise" (Smuraglia, 1978).

However, starting from the end of the 1970s, also due to the scarcity of outcomes of this workers' control strategy, which hinges upon the "information rights" granted in collective agreements, the idea began to spread among socialists that the only form of participation and control capable of allowing workers to have full knowledge of entrepreneurial strategies, as well as influence over them, is co-management (based on the German model), which provides for the inclusion and participation of workers in corporate steering bodies (Amato, 1977 and 1978a). This idea, too, is connected to the concept of self-management, widespread within PSI, which sees self-management as a renewed version of the liberal principle of checks and balances: the "co-management shift", implying the transition to the dual channel of workers' representation, at both union and company level, is effected inasmuch as it is considered the easiest way to achieve a balanced reconciliation of the different interests of the corporate community. However, looking at the Soviet experience, it can be stated that the abovementioned idea is linked to the will to protect workers' interests through a clear differentiation between the control role and the management role played by workers' representatives, therefore in the framework of a conception of power that is not monistic, but pays attention to its multifaceted and complex nature (Amato, 1977 and 1978b; Mancini, 1977). At the same time as this shift occurs, the idea of a constant link between industrial democracy and national economic planning gradually disappears from PSI's proposals (as emerges, for instance, from the proposal tabled in the 1980s by Carinci and Pedrazzoli). Such an idea had characterised the approach adopted by PSI since Rodolfo Morandi's statements onwards.

As to PCI, apart from the already mentioned tension towards episodes and mechanisms of reunification of grassroots claims, its placement within the Italian trade union tradition is motivated by an extremely negative judgment of the German model. The latter, defined as a "bourgeois" model of economic democracy, is deemed to be a driver for "collaborationism" between the various classes, as well as a factor of capitalist integration of the working class, but above all is regarded as a model framing worker participation within the company dimension only, without seeking connections and links with the places where the economic and industrial policy is defined. A narrow dimension according to Italian communists, as it would frame workers' and trade union action within a pre-set and hardly questionable context, implying its political and social subordination (Galgano, 1977). In the communist conception, however, industrial democracy must be based on a unitary and circular vision of the governance of economic processes, and this constant search for connection between the local and the national levels as regards the determination of production trends and investment policy, was certainly inspired by Ordine Nuovo and Gramsci. More specifically, this inspiration can be identified in the idea that workers' councils and forms of democratic power, if framed within a more global pattern, represent the tool through which the working class can assert and demonstrate its national leadership function (Ferri, 1978).

At that stage, PCI features the prevalence of the will not to establish procedures for consultation and joint examination between trade unions and top management in order not to crystallise processes that could evolve and expand further. Instead, a reform of corporate financial statements is implemented in order to fully unblock the information flow from the company top management to the works council. A set of measures, therefore, aimed at disaggregating data of corporate financial statements, making them more readable and understandable, turning them from final statements into preliminary budget proposals, so as to allow councils and unions to formulate development strategies for the future (Galgano, 1978; Smuraglia, 1978).

At a later stage, more or less starting from 1980, also PCI starts to be aware of the weakness of a solely contractual strategy based on negotiation between the social partners, and to adopt a scheme envisaging a contractual approach to external and conflicting participation, and based on legislative codification. All of this leads to the business plan proposal (Trentin et al., 1980), initially within CGIL, and then adopted by PCI and included in its planning documents (Trentin et al., 1980). The business plan would establish, for companies that take advantage of tax, credit, and financial benefits of a public nature (the group of beneficiaries was very broad in Italy at that time), an obligation to provide prior information on a forecasting plan both to unions – with a view to carrying out a joint examination of the plan – and to national economic planning bodies. The mandatory information requested of companies would concern data relating to investments, target markets, financing methods, etc. Through this twofold "institutionalisation" - "of the relationship between enterprises and trade unions and between enterprises and public planning bodies" (Cantaro and Carrieri, 1980, p. 599) – the business plan intends, on the one hand, to contribute to outlining an economic plan without technocratic principles (inasmuch as it ensures dialogue between workers and managers, dialogue based on, among others, exchange between the social partners), and, on the other, to limit the neo-corporatist drift that, especially according to Trentin, is characterising the Italian industrial relations system (reformulating the triangular pattern of concertation so as to give prevalence to elective assemblies and legislative power, which represents social complexity better).

5. Industrial democracy, "Wage Earners' Funds", and accumulation governance: Italian left-wing parties and the reception of the Meidner Plan

Starting from the end of the 1970s, Italian left-wing parties begin to show increasing interest for the Swedish debate on the proposal tabled by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) (inspired and promoted by, among others, Rudolf Meidner) concerning the establishment of the so-called "Wage Earners' Funds" as a way to implement forms of economic democracy and social ownership of companies (Meidner, 1976 and 1980; Quirico, 2012; Borioni, 2015). Initially, in the years of the "struggle for reforms" and for planning, waged by unions, the representatives of left-wing parties and unions consider without enthusiasm the Scandinavian proposals on the plans for the progressive socialisation of property. Whereas Gino Giugni, for instance, believes that a transfer of ownership, or the paritarian management of corporate capital is not enough, on its own, to effect a "relocation of the concrete relations of power within the company" (Giugni, 1977, p. 9), in those same years Trentin highlights the conflict of interest – which, in his opinion, could not be tackled – triggered by a similar perspective: in other words, the conflict between the

union "that 'manages' a share of 'capital-power'" and the "union [conceived] as a worker representative" (Trentin, 1980, pp. 112-3). This situation would not only lead to a potential conflict between the union and workers, but also, in the absence of a programming policy reforming the system of pros and compatibilities, as well as without the redefinition of management criteria, the union would be forced to "undergo, in order to safeguard its assets, the iron laws of maximum immediate profitability or maximum savings". Both among socialists and among communists, the shareholder control by workers or their representatives does not coincide with industrial democracy, since the latter aspires to a more organic connection between the macro and micro level of industrial and investment policies.

However, at the end of the decade, such an assessment changes. The crisis of the Keynesian social compromise and of its statistic and redistributive approach pushes left-wing parties into seeking solutions capable, at the same time, of going beyond a bureaucratic conception of economic governance, and of challenging entrepreneurial powers (left intact by post-war social compacts) in relation to the governance of the accumulation process. In a writing of those years, an authoritative communist intellectual, Pietro Barcellona, initiates a deeply self-critical reflection on the workers' movement tradition by, on the one hand, putting into question the role of the State and of the concept of programming, and, on the other, looking precisely at intuitions, such as Meidner's, to define "new forms of communication between labour and society, between production and needs, not mediated by state management" (Barcellona and Carrieri, 1982, p. 28). In other words, forms that provide for direct intervention on accumulation mechanisms by employees, to be understood to an increasing extent as an "autonomous subject of economic management" (Barcelona and Cantaro, 1984, p. 203).

Socialists, once again at the helm of the country after the end of the so-called "national solidarity period", face the accumulation governance issue through the implementation of an entity - the "Solidarity Fund" - inspired by the second (and more moderate in its reforming intentions) version of the Meidner Plan: i.e. the one aimed not so much at the progressive socialisation of property rights, but rather at supporting the accumulation level through funds set up thanks to the annual allocation of wage shares (and not of profits, as in the original version of the Swedish plan). The prospect opened up by the fund – which envisages a form of union participation in the managing body – should make it possible, according to socialists, to move from the claim-oriented and contractual approach to a participatory and managerial approach they have been demanding for several years, finding legislative and concrete solutions for the issue of information rights in their role as a trade union tool for codetermination of corporate and national programming. However, once the debate around this measure is over (eventually, such a measure is not given a structured outlook or the role, at system level, of promoting forms of economic democracy and intervention on accumulation processes), PSI gradually drops the issue, which during the 1980s is dealt with only in a few lines in conference documents, thus attracting far less attention than industrial democracy did in the previous decade. Socialists rather focus on the proposal to adapt the German codetermination model to the Italian context - through the dual reform of the corporate structure of companies, and the attribution of control powers to a specific supervisory board – along the lines of the proposal tabled in 1983 by Carinci and Pedrazzoli (1983).

Instead, PCI, getting closer and closer to European left-wing parties and the Socialist International in the second half of the 1980s, develops an intense debate internally –

triggered above all by the research activity conducted by the affiliated research centres (i.e. the Centre for Research and Initiative for the Reform of the State, CRS, and the Centre for Economic Policy Research, Cespe) – around the forms of economic democracy that, following the Swedish example, could consolidate thanks to a well-designed system of Wage Earners' Funds. The Swedish experiment of investment socialisation is attractive for Italian communists in that its focus on the issue of capital formation and allocation, going beyond the traditional social-democratic redistributive model of State, reconciles with the search for a "third way" being alternative to both Soviet communism and traditional social democracy, inaugurated by Berlinguer in the last years of his life. This corresponds to the concept of "strong reformism", through which the communist ruling class tries to legitimise its dialogue with social-democratic parties – above all those, such as the German and the Swedish ones, that are more committed to reforming and overcoming both the redistributive conception of the State, and a merely quantitative conception of economic development, while safeguarding the specificity of its own tradition. An update of the old category of structural reforms, the term "strong reformism" means a set of interventions capable of stimulating a different type of development in terms of quality – touching upon elements such as the new eco-friendly approach of the economy, the relationship between working time and life time, the humanisation of work and of its meaning, and sexual differences. This is mainly due to the fact of intervening upstream, and not downstream, of economic processes, where the capital accumulation to be regulated occurs (Occhetto, 1987, 1989, and 1990). This triggers the socialisation of the accumulation process with a view to redefining the relationship between the State and the market, emerged during the 1945-1975 period, and to avoiding that "public intervention [is identified] with state ownership" and that the former is framed within the latter (Occhetto, 1987, p. 128).

Economic democracy outlined by Swedish experiments becomes a tool for PCI to reflect, in a self-critical manner, on the limits of the industrial and producers' democracy project promoted, without significant and long-lasting outcomes, in the previous decade. Such type of democracy does not consolidate both due to a purely contractual strategy - and, precisely for this reason, exposed to the fluctuation and variability of the power relations that were supposed to support it – and because of the excessive focus of these forms of external control on companies taken individually. On the other hand, the success of an industrial democracy strategy within a company has proven to be strictly dependent on the ability to "redistribute [...] the power of the system of companies as a whole [italics added, author's note] for the benefit of collective subjects and collective goals", thus establishing a form of co-essentiality between industrial democracy and economic democracy, with the latter in a dominant position (Carrieri, 1988, p. 27). Such an ability of influencing the whole system of companies is owned by Swedish funds by virtue of their supra-corporate and regional dimension. Among others, the proposal put forward by Michele Magno for a reform of the severance pay system goes in this direction: this reform is aimed at transferring the resources contained within them towards specific "Workers' Funds" (of a territorial and supra-corporate nature), pursuing a dual purpose: "to meet their [workers'] needs in terms of pension and to promote investments with a strong social impact" (Magno, 1988, p. 36). Magno does not exclude, in his proposal, a further transformation of the financing instruments of funds in terms of capital sharing: the transformation of extra profits into "venture capital in the form of suitable securities" could allow workers, once acquired the aforementioned securities from the funds, to control "shares representing [...] ownership" of companies (Magno, 1988, p. 37). Such a system of economic democracy

would contribute to a more significant increase in the power of workers to influence "the definition of the overall decisions at country level" (ibid.), thus giving new impetus to research on the issue of the "extension of democracy beyond its traditional borders". Such an issue can be identified in the reconstruction of "a modern and completely renewed perspective of socialism" (Di Siena, 1988, p. 9). This system, however, remains just an outline, given the rapid marginalisation affecting the economic democracy issue following the birth of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS).

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