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Workplace Social Dialogue as a Form of 'Productive Reflection'

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This paper takes another look at the concept of employee participation in European Workplaces. It does so by combining a review of the research literature and case study material to describe contemporary practice inside enterprises, and documents the variety and differentiated forms of workplace social dialogue that exist. That review and research suggests that whilst the more formalistic kinds of structures have declined in recent years, interest in and the operation of workplace social dialogue have burgeoned. The article investigates how participative structures are adapting to current enterprise reality and use the term "productive reflection" as another way of describing the process of participation. This draws attention to the possibility that dialogue can take place within different spaces and at different levels of the organisation. The article suggest that, for it to be effective, productive reflection requires a number of pre-conditions, including equality of esteem and high levels of trust relations between actors.

Key words: employee participation, workplace, social dialogue

Introduction

This paper emerged out of work undertaken for the European Foundation to consider the role of social dialogue in European workplaces. The concept paper that emerged from that work sought to provide the basis for questions to be posed to managers and worker representatives in the 2012 European Company Survey. In the course of the research, two key conclusions regard-

ing employee involvement and participation emerged: firstly that the most substantial and sustained benefits are achieved when participatory practices are adopted systemically throughout the organisation; secondly, few organisations have chosen to pursue such a systemic approach in practice. Here we want to ask why such a situation pertains and more importantly what are the chances for newer forms of social dialogue to find root in European Workplaces. The paper uses both research literature and case study material to explore these questions, the latter enabling us to describe contemporary practice inside enterprises and to document the variety and differentiated forms of workplace social dialogue that exist. What it also allows us to do is look at the ways in which both direct and indirect forms of participation appear and interrelate together, asking to what extent newer, more informal participative practices are important, and how they differ in terms of their impact.

Recent decades have seen shifts towards more direct forms of worker participation, but there are strong elements of continuity, such as the concern for the democratic aspect, and the protection of worker rights in fast changing organisational settings. As Sisson (2002) and others have argued however, the knowledge-based economy that lies at the heart of the Lisbon and Europe 2020 strategies is inconceivable without the active involvement of individual employees. This paper will argue that collective representation can play an important role in securing that involvement. However the form that it takes needs to be more inclusive and based upon democratic dialogue, making social dialogue less of a rights-based mechanism, but increasing the reflective involvement of representatives and workers. What comes to the fore is the increasing importance of sharing and realising the collective expertise of organisational members, whether they are worker representatives, workers or managers. The review of research and cases shows the need for workplace social dialogue to enable both explicit and tacit skills to be realised in collective and group fora, in such a way that makes gains for all of the parties involved. We see forms of workplace social dialogue representing an active and productive force: a form of 'productive reflection' that can be decisive in creating enterprise success.

Here we begin by sketching the wider context to workplace social dialogue in terms of the changes happening in the nature of work, the balance between the forms of participation, and the changing character of workplace social dialogue.

The changing context of work

There is a tendency for future-oriented commentators to exaggerate the transformative effects of globalisation, technology or social change on the world in general, and the workplace in particular. Short of catastrophe or spectacular innovation, the EU in 2020 will still be recognisable to the citizens of 2011 just as many aspects of life have not changed substantially over the last decade. But significant changes will occur, both in the nature of day-to-day life and in the deeper structural forces that shape the wider business environment. The way in which enterprises respond to those changes will have much longer term consequences, both for economic competitiveness and for social cohesion. An important part of that response lies in how people engage with their work, and the extent to which we enable work to become a place in which people can use and develop their skills and creativity to the maximum.

Context – Europe: one player amongst many

The rise of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries as global economic powers is well-documented, and the impact on European manufacturing, particularly as a result of China's expanding economy, has been dramatic. Much of the growth in imports into the EU from China has been the result of outsourcing by European firms, providing them with new opportunities to compete in price sensitive markets. For European consumers the cost of many manufactured goods has come down in real terms.

The comfortable assumption in policy circles appears to have been that the competitive advantage of countries such as China and India will remain in the mass production of low value goods and, as imagined in the Lisbon Strategy, that Europe will compete by becoming the world's leading "knowledge economy". However the prospects for excluding the BRIC countries and

others from becoming serious competitors in the knowledge economy seem slim given their large scale investment in research, development and higher education. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, the number of Universities in the country grew from two thousand in 2002 to four thousand just three years later. By 2008 some 16 million students were enrolled in higher education, excluding the considerable number studying abroad.
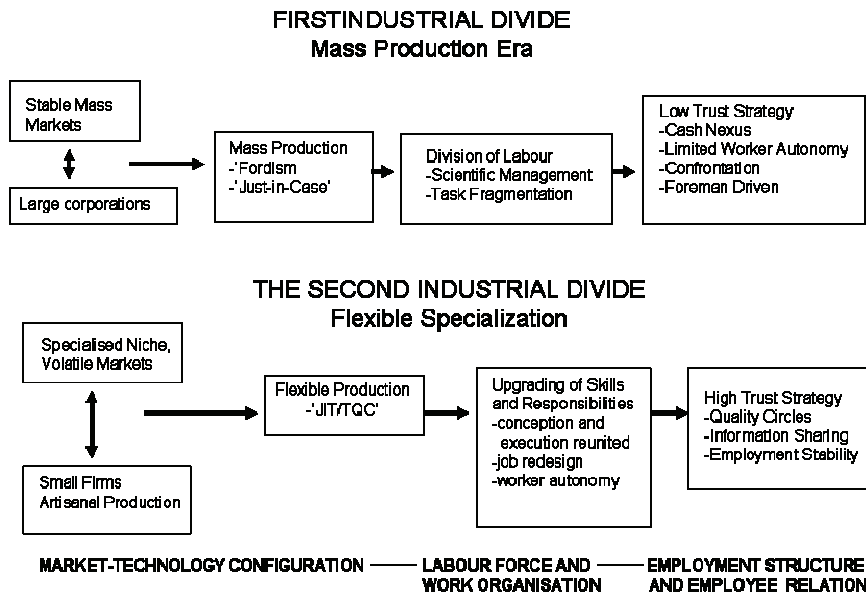
A volatile global economy

Employers and employees alike are facing unprecedented challenges, including a level of volatility in the global business environment which requires constant vigilance, versatility and innovation. To meet those challenges means shifting away those "low road" strategies of cost leadership, speed and standardisation cannot build sustainable competitive. Essentially the value placed on social dialogue reflects deeper structural changes in production paradigms that lead to greater flexibility in work organisations and active knowledge management. Whilst the previous century was dominated by the mass production of standardised goods and services within a highly regulated management mechanism of control, the present day sees the continued existence of such paradigms alongside the growth of alternatives based on flexibility, the near continuous invention and reinvention of knowledge-intensive product and services, and the need for new forms of knowledge distribution and learning at work. In the past century a twin process has occurred: in one dimension a shifting of the forms of work and its significant constituent elements, in another a shift in the use of labour, how it acts in work, what it is valued for and how labour realises value in work. Piore and Sabel gave a seminal description of this movement as far back as 1974 (Figure 1).

This model has structured much of the debate in industrial sociology about the direction of travel of technology and the employment relations it bequeaths. However Piore and Sabel were describing a world that was essentially "post-Fordist", with a dualistic vision still rooted in a mechanistic/flexible opposition. More recent research and analysis derived from the learning organisation and knowledge management debates paint a world with

more complexity and variegation in work organisation, and hence in terms of employee participation.

Figure 1: The new models of industrial organisation

FIRST INDUSTRIAL DIVIDE
Mass Production Era

Stable Mass Markets

Large corporations

Mass Production
-'Fordism
-'Just-in-Case'

Division of Labour
-Scientific Management
-Task Fragmentation

Low Trust Strategy
-Cash Nexus
-Limited Worker Autonomy
-Confrontation
-Foreman Driven

THE SECOND INDUSTRIAL DIVIDE
Flexible Specialization

Specialised Niche, Volatile Markets

Small Firms Artisanal Production

Flexible Production
-'JIT/TQC'

Upgrading of Skills and Responsibilities
-conception and execution reunited
-job redesign
-worker autonomy

High Trust Strategy
-Quality Circles
-Information Sharing
-Employment Stability

MARKET-TECHNOLOGY CONFIGURATION ——— LABOUR FORCE AND ——— EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE
WORK ORGANISATION AND EMPLOYEE RELATION

Source: Thomson & McHugh (1990)

Taking stock

The variety of workplace social dialogue

Previous research alerts us to the complex interrelationships between social dialogue, employee representation and direct employee participation. Despite the attention that workplace partnership has received over the past decade in Europe, there is no agreed definition amongst either researchers or practitioners. Different actors adopt different definitions (Guest & Peccei, 2001) and the elements of partnership and participation appear in diverse combinations in different workplaces. For example "partnership" as a form of workplace

social dialogue simply constitutes a loose label for an approach to union–management co-operation that encompasses a wide range of variants (Haynes and Allen, 2001, p. 167). The plethora of empirical data and case study material that seeks to link partnership to performance actually describes a constellation of activities which at the very least embraces industrial relations, human resources management and work organisation (see for example NCPP 2002; NCPP, 2003; TUC, 2000; IPA 1997; IPA 2007). This is not necessarily a problem provided that the distinctive roles played by the different elements of partnership in enhancing performance are understood.

The secondary analysis of the 2009 ECS by Bryson et al helpfully emphasises variation in the forms of social dialogue by characterising four differentiating aims:

– Social dialogue as promoting democratic processes.

– Social dialogue as redressing power asymmetries.

– Social dialogue as a managerial economic tool.

– Social dialogue as an employee economic tool.

Bryson et al. go on to describe how establishments create different 'forms of engagement' depending upon the respective strengths of these aims where they are present, crucially influenced by other factors such as the degree of representation, employee resourcing, trust between the parties and the depth of indirect social dialogue. They then test the overall breadth and depth of social dialogue against nine specific areas of employment practice.

Our initial starting point in preparing this paper was on the potential role of representative workplace social dialogue in animating, resourcing and sustaining participative work processes. However in acknowledging that social dialogue may be driven by different combinations of the elements cited by Bryson et al we recognise that its concrete forms will be diverse and highly contextualised. Indeed the literature shows participative formats underwriting democratic dialogue (Gustavsen, 1992; Fricke, 2011) on one side whilst on the other being the vehicle for extensive workforce restructuring and redundancies. We also argue that workplace social dialogue cannot simply be characterised by formal, representative structures operating at the

strategic end of the decision spectrum. Rather it can be manifested both formally and informally, and at both strategic and task-based levels of the organisation. It is the relationships and interdependencies between these different forms that have become the principal focus of the paper.

Beyond dualism

Bryson et al.'s work illustrates the conceptual complexity involved in defining a relationship between workplace social dialogue and direct participation. The current policy model, and much of the academic debate, is grounded in an unhelpful dualism between rights-based representative participation and discretionary task-based participation.

There have been significant EU legislative developments in relation to employee rights, the protection of employees' dignity, and opportunities for personal development at work. Directive 2002/14/EC passed by the European Parliament and Council established a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the EU. At Member State level, many of the "old" EU 15 have long had in place mechanisms providing for employee information and consultation at the workplace. These include statutory works councils (for example in Germany and France), encompassing collective agreements backed by legislation which provide the primary means of regulating information and consultation in countries like Denmark and Belgium, and the hybrid Italian model in which a statutory framework allows for sectoral agreements to flesh out the detailed operations of works councils (Broughton, 2005). The UK is the odd one out as it lacks a general, permanent and statutory system of information and consultation or employee representation (Cressey, 2009; Doherty, 2008).

However, as we will argue below, the research suggests that representative participation alone has little impact on either performance or on quality of working life unless it also shapes participative working practices throughout the organisation. We also know from research and survey evidence (such as that from EPOC) that the systemic use of representative and direct participation methods throughout the organisation is rare in most of Europe.

A major factor influencing the impact or otherwise of employee voice and involvement arrangements is the discretionary stance of management and, where present, trade unions. In the inherently unequal employment relationship, management may be unwilling to cede such power to employees let alone to have employees encroaching onto managerial decision making by granting consultation rights. Senior management support plays the predominant role in determining whether the positive effects of voice and involvement arrangements are realised in the individual workplace (Dundon et al., 2006). Similarly the partnership literature has frequently emphasised the importance of partnership "champions" on the management side (Geary and Roche, 2003; National Centre for Partnership and Performance, 2002). Senior management support tends to set the tone for those further down the managerial chain (Exton, 2010).

Trade union resistance to employee voice can also be a factor. Unions, and especially workplace union representatives, can perceive voice mechanisms as a threat to the union's representative status (Kessler, 2005). Furthermore Oxenbridge and Brown (2004) have shown that it can be difficult for unions to sustain robust workplace partnership arrangements. Employee representative who are privy to commercially sensitive information can feel isolated from members since for reasons of confidentiality they may be unable to justify a particular union stance. In other cases, especially where arrangements are shallow, members can become suspicious that workplace representative have "sold out" to management. In an Italian review, nearly all the cases analysed in which there was a direct worker involvement these forms of direct participation are experienced by the workers' representatives as a threat and in some cases lead to open conflicts. Unilateral decisions for the introduction of forms of direct participation can undermine the relations of trust between the actors and as a consequence, the direct participation experience nearly always remains less than effective (Fondazione Istituto per il Lavoro, 2003).

Management and/or trade union opposition or apathy towards voice and involvement arrangements is identified in the literature as having important knock-on effects. The failure to promote such arrangements can mean that employees have low levels of awareness or knowledge of their existence or

potential (Hall, 2006). This can lead to the under-utilisation of such arrangements where they do exist, and a lack of employee enthusiasm or know-how on whether, or how, to introduce them where they do not. In the latter case, employees may, in particular, fear putting their heads "above the parapet" (Doherty, 2008).

Thus "buy-in" from all sides constitutes a critical success factor (NCPP, 2002). In the UK the strong role of voluntarism in shaping the nature and extent of workplace participation has led policymakers and researchers over many years to seek the holy grail of an evidence-based relationship between employee involvement and organisational performance as a means of "nudging" management thinking in favour of participative working practices.

Direct participation works . . .

Extensive survey and case study evidence demonstrates that the introduction of participative forms of work organisation improves performance and innovation (Totterdill, Dhondt, & Milsome, 2002). Reviews of European, North American and Australian literature for the European Commission demonstrate a clear consensus about the existence of a positive relationship between participative forms of work organisation and performance (Savage, 2001; Brödner & Latniak, 2002). One of the most significant studies, the *Employee Participation and Organisational Change* (EPOC) survey of 6000 workplaces in Europe, confirms that direct employee participation and teamworking can have strong positive impacts on both productivity and quality of products or services (European Foundation, 1997). A Swedish survey (NUTEK, 1996) found a very clear link between flexible, participative forms of work organisation and performance: flexible organisations were more productive (+20-60%), showed a much lower rate of personnel turnover (-21%), and a lower rate of absence due to illness (-24%) compared with traditionally organised operational units. Moreover, flexible organisations were much more effective in using computer technology to reduce lead times as well as delivery times than traditional organisations. The significance for competitiveness was confirmed by a second Swedish study covering operational units with more than 20 employees: "Strategies that focus on decentral-

ising work organisation and on human resource development are positively associated with productivity and growth" (ITPS, 2001).

Macy and Izumi (1993) found that team development initiatives and the creation of autonomous work groups were responsible for the most significant gains in terms of financial performance. Indeed the principle motive of most companies that introduce team working is to enhance the performance and productivity of their organisation (Cotton, 1993; Weldon & Weingart, 1993).

In healthcare, effective teamwork also contributes directly to better patient outcomes. West, Borrill and Unsworth (1998) found that health care teams with clear objectives and high levels of staff participation make a critical contribution to effectiveness and innovation in health care, while enhancing team members' well-being. A further well-known study claimed that post-surgical mortality could be reduced by the combined effect of a bundle of practices including team working, training and appraisal (West, Borrill, Dawson, Scully, Carter, Anelay, Patterson, & Waring, 2002). However, Bartrum, Stanton, Leggat, Casimir, and Fraser (2007) argue that there are limitations with these studies: first, direct causal links between specific HR practices and patient outcome are difficult to prove due to the presence of so many other potential variables, and second, patient mortality alone is an unreliable measure of performance. Several authors also show that effective teamwork, particularly in health care settings, has been difficult to achieve because of barriers and perceived status differentials between professional groups such as doctors and nurses. Gender issues, multiple lines of management, and the lack of organisational systems and structures for supporting and managing teams act as further inhibitors (Borrill, West, Shapiro, & Rees, 2000; McNulty, 2003; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, Wood, & Hawkins, 2005).

. . . but raises complex issues

Research by Dundon et al. (2006, p. 508) argue that employers can choose a "high road" approach to information and consultation (with a mix of direct and representative mechanisms tailored to the organisation and a broad agenda allowing for employee co-operation and participation) or a "low road"

approach (with disjointed processes that minimise employee input into decision making and consolidate management control).

The defining characteristics of the high road lie in the creation of organisational spaces and the liberation of human creativity in ways which achieve a dynamic balance between performance and quality of working life. The low road in contrast also seeks greater functional flexibility but is typically driven by short term profitability and job intensification rather than sustainable performance based on participation and improvement through job enrichment (European Work & Technology Consortium, 1998).

A major problem is that, in the literature and in policy discussions, both are seen as "flexible", "innovative" and "advanced" while the fundamental differences between them are largely ignored. This is a mistake. Both types of company may even use the same organisational tools, but in very different ways. A revealing illustration of this can be found in the case of teamworking. Teamworking can simply mean the multi-skilling of individuals who happen to work alongside each other in an organisation. Workers here can substitute for each other, thereby increasing personnel flexibility and reducing bottlenecks. Task design is narrow and based on very short cycles; human skills, are merely used to enhance highly standardised working procedures. But on the high road, teamworking can mean that a team takes substantial responsibility for all, or part, of the complete product or service. The group thereby gains considerable room for manoeuvre in planning its work and in continuously adapting working procedures to meet actual needs. Even the improvement of existing products or services falls within the operational responsibility of the group, which is given real freedom in terms of the time and other resources required to fulfill this role. One can see these clear contrasts when comparing the narrow functional teams employed within lean production settings with those of the socio-technical inspired craft based forms in the Volvo Udevalla plant (Sandberg, 1995).

Managerialist strategies for direct participation do not always lead to "win-win" outcomes and tend to be less sustainable as participation is often perceived as a technical solution to problems of engagement and productivity, not as a fundamental approach to relations between management and labour. This raises a fundamental question. Should researchers continue the

search for the holy grail of a direct relationship between employee participation and organisational performance? Or should participative work practices and the creation of an informed and democratically active workforce be placed at the heart of business ethics and sustainability?

Towards a new understanding

Management literature has tracked the long term changes in the approaches to workforce competence and learning and the table below indicates a threefold characterisation:

Table 1: Transition from training to learning and reflection

	Pre-1990 emphasis upon:	*1990s emphasis upon:*	*2000s emphasis upon:*
Approach to learning	**TRAINING**	**0RGANISATIONAL LEARNING**	**PRODUCTIVE REFLECTION**
Key Needs	Rule–governed stability	Appreciation of complexity and ambiguity	Managing of complexity and ambiguity
Approach to Competence	Dependent upon stable occupational categories	Dependent upon effective development of human resources	Dependent upon development of distributed and flexible competencies
Approach to Problem solving	Fragmented, mechanistic, directed approach to problem solving	Holistic, recursive, participative approach to problem solving	Reflexive, contingent approach to problem solving
Work Interaction	Single-function specialists	Multi-functional teams	Predominance of flexible project groups
Work Classifications	Job description comprising set tasks and responsibilities	Continuously reviewed and periodic renegotiated assignments	Fluid contracts around changing goals
Learning location	Training/learning largely external	Learning defined within enterprise	Learning contextualised in the workplace

Source: Boud, Cressey, & Docherty (2006, p. 15)

This table allows us to contextualise some of the shifts seen in the employee participation literature, the demands for problem solving forums foreseen by the EPOC studies, the growth of specific organisational structures to manage change, the calls for greater integration of formal and informal inputs into decision making, and the need for flexible and strategically reactive approaches that incorporate forms of workforce resilience.

There are cases in which representative participation drives, resources and sustains "High Road" participative work practices. The "win-win" outcome in such cases lies in integrating the strategic knowledge of leaders with the tacit knowledge of employees. Brödner (2000, p. 8) argues:

> "Direct participation simultaneously serves as discussion process of diverse perspectives and interests, as integration of distributed knowledge and competence for problem solving, as a forum for negotiating and balancing interests, as motivation to act, as space for collective learning, and as transparent horizontal control of events."

According to the Hi-Res study, a meta-analysis of 120 cases of workplace innovation across ten European countries, the common factor in organisations that have achieved a degree of convergence between high performance and high quality of working life is related to the knowledge sharing and dialogue discussed above by Brödner through:

> ". . . a clear concentration on those factors in the work environment which determine the extent to which employees can develop and use their competencies and creative potential to the fullest extent, thereby enhancing the company's capacity for innovation and competitiveness while enhancing quality of working life" (Totterdill, Dhondt, & Milsome, 2002, p. 12).

The development of participative forms discussed above does not take place in a vacuum, indeed the wider consideration of competences, skills and expertise and how they are used bears heavily upon this debate. However, in much literature as in practice the employee participation debate and the organisational use of competence are often seen as separate and distinct. At the heart of both these factors lies the systemic incorporation of opportunities for "productive reflection" throughout the organisation. The concept of productive reflection attempts to unify them by jointly appreciating the role that organisational structures have in articulating employee voice together with the active use of employee's formal and tacit skills and competences in the process of improvement, innovation and change.

Thus productive reflection must not be seen as an abstract concept or a separable subjective event. Rather it is about new forms of self-management, about how competence is distributed inside companies, about the processes of monitoring and intervention that are constructed. Crucially, it is about the

embedding of reflexive approaches to problem solving and change. As the table indicates this embedding of productive reflection draws upon the creation of contextualised workplace learning that allows and releases "the capacity of the workforce, via de-centralised and flexible project groups, the use of multi-functional networks and multiple stakeholder perspectives" (Boud et al., 2006, p. 16).

Productive reflection in organisational contexts means the ability to reflect about and anticipate the impacts of change. Good, resilient and sustainable organisations build a set of internal reflexive mechanisms and they embed them in the organisation to enable smooth transitions to occur. Reflexivity focuses on bringing the thinking and active subject (employee/representative/union) into the centre of work practices, to underline the importance of continuing learning and the necessity to prioritise worker's tacit and explicit knowledge if the organisation is to be sustainable in the long run.

Productive reflection has both an organisational and an individual character. At organisational level it is vitally necessary for innovation and the development and production of quality goods and services. For the individual it means "making sense of one's work" not as a sociological or abstract issue but in finding meaning, a key factor for experiencing a sense of coherence, wellbeing and resilience in the workplace. This may be even more significant for a younger and less deferential generation of workers who are less tolerant of boring, repetitive or badly designed jobs that provide limited opportunities for self expression (Knell, 2000).

Reflexivity is then appropriate within both individual and group settings. The first is a form of self-reflection directed inwards and separated from immediate action and reflection directed outwards at the ongoing situation in which somebody is acting. Collectively it is compatible with the literature on learning organisations and lifelong learning, which demands continuous learning to address continuous change and restructuring.

Reflexivity in this context means conscious, active decisions on measures to promote, facilitate and support reflection and learning. However, the issues of reflection and learning are often not formally allotted priority on the management agenda and the prerequisites for these activities will be steered by values, norms and practices that have simply evolved and are not the

product of clear thought. Hence we need proactive measures for reflection and learning in the form of learning methodologies and mechanisms. These methodologies and mechanisms may entail cognitive, cultural, structural or procedural elements. Learning mechanisms are formalised strategies, policies, guidelines, management and reward systems, methods, tools and routines, allocations of resources and even the design of the physical facility and work spaces.

There are three social dialogue forms, organisational, technical and physical, which should be considered in relation to such reflexivity:

The most common **organisational forms** are forums or arenas that provide legitimacy for reflection and provide the formal opportunity for a collective or group to meet and "discuss things". These include regular team meetings in so far as they provide structured opportunities for reflection and learning about what has gone well and what went badly, or for a routine review of existing practices. Continuous improvement groups and quality circles also fall into this category. Sometimes flexible structures such as task groups or ad hoc "time out" sessions are introduced to cope with the immediate scope, discontinuity, or variability of issues facing enterprises. They may also be coupled to a specific development project, policy revision or planning task, existing "until further notice".

Technical learning mechanisms are generally based on the use of information and communication technology. The Internet has given rise to virtual communities which are essential for many people in their daily work as a basis for knowledge sharing, joint problem solving and dialogue. Virtual networks are often more important to professionals than their social networks at the workplace.

Often overlooked is the *physical design* of the workplace and its role in supporting interaction and collective reflection between members of an organisation. Apart from formal meeting rooms there may be "free areas" where coffee and meal breaks are held; some employers actively discourage staff from eating at their desks to stimulate dialogue in such communal areas at mealtimes. Other places may be provided where people can sit informally, perhaps with access to a whiteboard for "buzz sessions". In one hospital, the paediatric department was designed with wide corridors incorporating seating

and play areas to promote informal interactions between different professions, parents and children. In short the emphasis here is on the creation of settings where reflective dialogues can occur as part of daily work routines.

Nonaka and Konno (1998) describe these as "spaces for learning" or "*ba*", defined as a context in which knowledge is shared, created, and utilised. These may be physical spaces (e.g. an office), virtual spaces (e.g. a teleconference), mental spaces (shared ideas) or any combination.

Embedded collective productive reflection

We have seen above how different phases of participation have moved from a primarily rights based agenda to one that centres upon the production of knowledge and ideas, and joint problem solving. The argument can be developed further to place collective reflection at the core of workplace participative practice. This can be represented as a series of mutually reinforcing practices in which workplace social dialogue sustains, informs and is informed by productive reflection. The concept of productive reflection attempts to unify workplace social dialogue and work organisation by understanding the interaction of organisational structures for employee voice on the one hand and the active use of employee's formal and tacit skills in work and change processes on the other.

Figure 2 demonstrates how productive reflection becomes embedded when workplace social dialogue acts as a bridge for knowledge sharing between different levels of the organisation. In this context representative participation acts as the guarantor and enabler of direct participation and voice at the frontline. Dialogue about knowledge sharing through both formal and informal channels becomes "the new collective bargaining" in which employees offer their tacit knowledge and creativity in return for knowledge of and influence in strategic decision making (see for example the Tegral case below). But here the outcomes of bargaining can be win-win rather than zero sum, offering (in the words of the Hi-Res study cited above) the prospect of workplaces in which "employees can develop and use their competencies and creative potential to the fullest extent, thereby enhancing the company's

capacity for innovation and competitiveness while enhancing quality of working life." (Totterdill, Dhondt, & Milsome, 2002, p. 12).

Figure 2: Workplace social dialogue and productive reflection

This brings into question the union role in encouraging direct participation and reflection in a way that does not contradict collectivism and representation. The issue pulls unions into considering how they can best represent their members in issues previously thought to be outside their accepted sphere of activity: issues of creativity, strategy and internal dialogue that enable active intervention in design and practice. However to do so is also to confront entrenched interests and the barriers imposed in real-life situations which have resulted from accretions of practices and expectations that have grown up over decades and cannot be eliminated overnight.

Evidence should be sought on how unions and worker representatives fulfil their potential role as competent suppliers and guarantors of reflective practices in workplaces. Participation here makes up for lack of dialogue up

and down the line management hierarchy, which can act as a serious limitation on productive reflection. Productive reflection can draw on different authorial voices, for instance combining formal trade union knowledge of the rules with frontline employees' competences and know-how.

The need identified here is for a workforce input that can critically challenge systems thinking rather than celebrate it, in other words for non-formal networks of *dialogue* and *reflection* that operate outside closed system loops. To see the issue of employee involvement from this perspective means a re-alignment of issues around how best to use expertise, how to engage people in specific processes of reflection and dialogue and a finer appreciation of the createdness of enterprise added value. Workplace practices and processes are socially constructed in the sense that they reflect complex interactions of power relations, knowledge and history as well as external influences; those interaction outcomes shape the distinctive character of each workplace and the ways in which dialogue and reflection take place.

Such trends also raise larger questions for future employee participatory forums, including the balance between institutionalisation and active intervention of workers as individuals. Case study evidence points to the existence of companies with no formal structures or procedures relating to information, consultation and participation but in which high levels of dialogue, reflexivity and entrepreneurial behaviour can be found at all levels (see for example the Lindum Group case described below).

The relationship between formal and informal structures at both strategic and task-based levels is summarised in Table 2.

Formal, strategic manifestations represented by Box 1 correspond with rights-based representative participation, but managers may also use other less structured approaches for drawing on employees' tacit knowledge and creativity in high level decision making (Box 2). Likewise formal structures for direct employee participation such as continuous improvement groups (Box 3) may not entirely substitute for more spontaneous forms of engagement in improvement and innovation (Box 4). In short, we need to identify the ways in which both formal and informal structures support knowledge sharing through productive reflection.

Table 2:   Formal and informal workplace social dialogue in strategic and task-based decisions

Forms of social dialogue

Strategic Decisions

1	2
Clear rules	Ad hoc communication
Tangible outcomes	Informal routes
Bounded areas	Spontaneous forms

3	4
Direct forums	Active process of involvement
Improvement groups	Difficult to measure
Defined areas	Intangible
Clear goals	Loosely defined

Formal (left) — Informal (right)

Task-Based Decisions

Looking at past research we can see how the EPOC study in the 1990s rendered Box 3 visible, revealing the development and scope of formally constituted direct participation across Europe. What this paper suggests is that there is a further need to make visible other emergent forms that exist in the boxes towards the right hand side of the table especially box 4. Most of the evidence for these forms comes from case studies, generating what we call the "weak signals" of new corporate practice.

While the traditional debate has placed more emphasis upon the forms and empirical spread of institutionalised participation rather than the constituents of that involvement in terms of reflection, learning and creativity, we can now identify trends in employee participation emanating from those relatively weak signals seeking to bridge that gap.

Case study evidence

To get at those signals indicating the possible emergence of a new formulation of workplace relations we need an elaboration of the conceptual framework drawing on case study evidence. We need to look at instances where

dialogue about the two way distribution of knowledge provides the bridge between representative and direct participation. To identify the organisational processes and structures which integrate workplace social dialogue, participative forms of work organisation and productive reflection**.**

We have discussed knowledge distribution in terms of a bargaining process in which the establishment of mutual trust can allow for the forging and negotiation of win-win outcomes. A graphic illustration of how this might work in practice is illustrated by the case of *Tegral Metal Forming Limited*, a steel cladding and roofing company based in County Kildare, Ireland (O'Dowd, 2010; Totterdill & Sharpe, 1999). Previous industrial relations had taken a traditional path in which every change in employment or working practice was subject to separate agreement, leading to inflexibility and complexity.

In 1996 management and unions entered into a partnership agreement as a result of the company's participation in the ESF-funded *New Work Organisation in Ireland* (NWO) programme. A partnership forum was established with the participation of management and unions (including full time union officials) with the aim of ensuring greater employee involvement in company decisions. This enabled the complex legacy of previous agreements to be replaced by a "gainsharing" arrangement based on "win-win" principles. The partnership climate reduced the time spent by management and unions on industrial relations issues and also enabled the introduction of annualised hours and the elimination of overtime.

Partnership also transcended the industrial relations sphere at Tegral. A series of partnership-based task teams were established to identify operational improvements, including one on the handling of scrap which immediately led to significant waste reduction savings. It was clear from interviews with frontline employees by the independent evaluators of the NWO programme (Totterdill & Sharpe, 1999) that they had known of the potential for such savings for a considerable time. It was only the establishment of partnership culture and practices that encouraged them to bring this to the attention of management.

In a second stage of development, the partnership forum instigated self-organised teamworking throughout the company as a means of extending

partnership culture to the frontline. Employees received training in team-based practice and a layer of supervisory management was removed in order to build team autonomy, closer engagement with customers and control over day-to-day working life. Such participatory forms of work organisation are highly trust-based and, in the case of Tegral, stemmed directly from partnership culture and the practice of gainsharing.

A highly developed example of the nurturing relationship between representative participation and participative teamworking comes from a surprising source. *Kaiser Permanente* (KP) is the biggest non-profit health care organisation in the US. KP has received a great deal of attention amongst European health services for its high standards and cost effectiveness, particularly in the integration of primary and acute services. Less widely reported is the high level of trade union and employee involvement that underpins these achievements, driving the introduction of multidisciplinary teamworking and other service innovations.

KP's *Labor Management Partnership* (LMP) involving managers, workers and physicians is the largest and most comprehensive agreement of its kind. The LMP was formed in 1997 after years of labour turmoil within Kaiser Permanente combined with growing competitive pressures in the sector. Two years earlier, 26 local unions representing KP workers had joined together in the *Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions* to coordinate bargaining strategy more effectively. Kaiser Permanente and the Union Coalition created the LMP as a means of transforming their relationship and the organisation as a whole. Today it covers more than 92,000 union employees, including some 20,000 managers and 16,000 physicians across nine states and Washington D.C.

Partnership in KP goes far beyond traditional industrial relations. On a day-to-day basis partnership means that workers, managers and physicians engage in joint decision making and a problem-solving process based on common interests. KP's Value Compass, originally formulated by the LMP to set the direction for improving organisational performance by focusing on subscribing members of the public and patients. The Value Compass is now driving the Corporate Agenda, based on the concept of the balanced score card to maximise performance and so create value:

Kaiser Permanente
"Value is with the workers"

The Value Compass

Workplace social dialogue at KP takes place at three interdependent levels: the *strategic and policy level* provides a platform for whole systems change and continuous improvement, the *meso level* is the locus for union representation and management in the day-to-day operation of the business, and the *microsystems* level comprises *Unit Based Teams* (UBTs) as the basic building block.

Unit Based Teams were introduced in 2005 following extensive discussion in the LMP and provide the platform for performance improvement across Kaiser Permanente. More than 90,000 employees now work in 34,000 unit-based teams. A team includes all the participants in a natural work unit or department, including supervisors, union stewards and staff members, physicians, dentists and managers. The team supports the regional business strategy and goals for performance, service quality, efficiency and growth. Because teams increase consistency and standardisation of treatment, they also improve care. A dramatic reduction in sepsis has been attributed to the introduction of UBTs, as has the success of the design and implementation of the integrated IT electronic patient record system.

At UBT level there is an expectation that everyone will contribute to building the vision for the future direction of the business. Unit Based Teams tap the creativity, skills and experience of their members in a process that consistently engages frontline workers in improving performance. The LMP ensures the quality of dialogue and participation at team level through a

system of *Inclusion Control and Openness*. Unions credit the arrangement not only with improving patient care and satisfaction, but in making Kaiser Permanente a better place to work.

The significance of KP for this study is that it demonstrates the way in which workplace social dialogue can permeate the whole organisation even in a context where partnership is somewhat antithetical to the national system of industrial relations. Representative partnership in the form of the LMP acts as both the stimulant and guardian of direct participation at the frontline with demonstrable benefits for organisational performance, staff and patients.

An example from the healthcare sector in Europe demonstrates that *regional* social dialogue can play a comparable role in driving direct participation, in this case involving significant service redesign and restructuring. At *Guastalla Hospital* in Italy, an agreement signed by management in the Reggio Emilia Local Area Health Authority, by the trade union confederations Cgil, Cisl and Uil, and by the doctors' unions led to a partnership-based process of service appraisal and redesign in order to achieve a better and more efficient service, as well as improved job satisfaction and working conditions. Highly participative change methods such as Search Conferences and inclusive task groups enabled the knowledge and experience of staff at all levels to be engaged in the redesign of work organisation and the reduction of hierarchical and professional demarcations. As a result, high involvement work practices emerged which achieved integrated patient pathways as well as enhanced cooperation and mutual learning. Quality of care and patient satisfaction improved while lead-times and inefficiency were reduced (Telljohan, 2010).

In the Netherlands, the *CAO-wasstraat* programme developed by the Centre for Social Innovation provides further insight into the way in which formal workplace social dialogue structures are shaping working practices. 'CAO' means a collective agreement on employment conditions and 'wasstraat' is a car wash, representing a metaphoric cleansing of obstacles to flexibility and autonomy at work. In practice the programme offers participating organisations a rigorous appraisal of collective agreements (CLAs) and the systemic removal of restrictive paragraphs. In addition new measures are added to reinforce flexible behaviour, mobility and training, involving dia-

logue between employees and line managers. CAO-wasstraat is a programme that enables negotiators to realise collective agreements that provide opportunities for productive reflection in working life, starting with the construction of a common vision.

In three Carwash sessions of four hours, delegations of social partners are supervised by two consultants. The three sessions globally follow the pattern of "establishing a common vision", "what do other collective agreements do?" and "establishing the route to get there, although each programme is tailor-made to suit the specific situation of the case. The sessions concentrate on what parties have in common rather than stressing their differences and they are held prior to formal collective bargaining. Delegations consist of union representatives, sometimes a few shop stewards, HR managers, or heads of employers associations and other representatives. Half the costs are funded by the Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs, the other half is paid for by the social partners taking part in the process. Five carwashes have been completed in the period 2009-2011 and the phrase 'carwash' has increasingly become a coined phrase in social partnership circles.

Tegral, Kaiser Permanente, Guastalla Hospital and the CAO-wasstraat programme each illustrate the potential role of formal structures from partnership forums to improvement groups in instigating, resourcing and sustaining direct employee participation. However Table 2 also drew attention to the importance of informal processes at both strategic and task levels.

The following example from the vehicle components sector in Flanders illustrates the interaction of the formal and informal. *Tower Automotive* underwent dramatic transformation since a period of severe crisis in 2008/9. Edwin Van Vlierberghe joined Tower in 2009, the eighth plant leader in 8 years. His priority was to break with precedent and become visible on the shopfloor, creating opportunities for employee dialogue. Edwin invited the plant's trade unions to discuss the financial situation, sharing information openly to enable them to reach their own conclusions about the need for redundancies. He worked with employees and unions to find creative solutions to the crisis, including functional flexibility and temporary outplacements to neighbouring companies until demand returned.

Edwin's management of the crisis earned considerable respect amongst employees and unions, and opened new, trust-based approaches to communication and dialogue. He has gradually transformed organisational culture, retraining line managers from a top-down approach to one in which their role is to empower and engage employees. Closing the gap between management and frontline workers' perceptions and experience is a key component in this culture change. Managers are encouraged and resourced to "think as an operator"; frontline employees are asked to reflect on the types of management behaviours that would enable them to work more effectively. Where necessary he has not hesitated to remove those managers unable to make the transition. Edwin's willingness to drive this transformation, and his consistency of approach, clearly lies at the heart of its success.

Edwin's underlying goal has been to create an organisation in which quality, improvement and innovation are everyone's concern, improving company performance through job enrichment. Frontline employees are as much responsible for driving improvement as they are for performing their functional tasks. Critically Towers' approach recognises that spaces for productive reflection and dialogue have to be built into the everyday working life of each employee and that these cannot be confined to occasional participation in formal structures.

One UK company has made strides in this direction with a remarkable absence of formal structures and procedures. The ***Lindum Group*** is a fascinating case involving transformation from a traditional construction company to a diverse and entrepreneurial organisation. In the early nineties Lindum was not a high performing company. According to one long serving manager the dominant management style "was about control really . . . it was hands on from the top management-wise". However these top managers "couldn't see everything and couldn't control everything . . . things went wrong because the staff didn't really have the authority or the empowerment to do anything about it."

When David took over from his father as Chair in the early 1990s he was determined to do things differently, and to create an environment where employees can thrive and be creative. Lindum has consistently appeared in the *Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work for* list over several years.

Senior management attributes this to a dramatic culture shift achieved by changing the leadership approach to empower employees. This shift included a transformation of the leadership structure, an increase in stakeholder involvement through employee share ownership and an equal profit-related bonus for all employees. Lindum has grown by enabling and resourcing its employees' talents and creativity.

Lindum is remarkably free of formal rules, protocols or procedures: the emphasis is on "what works". One of David's early tasks was to remove the separate operating companies and bring them under one Executive Board in order to reduce complexity and bureaucracy. Under the old structure the fourteen different boards had given frontline employees little opportunity to come forward with their own ideas. Although the Executive Board is a tightly bound team, the different trading divisions pursue their own direction with limited central co-ordination. Meetings throughout the company also tend to be relatively informal, ad hoc and inclusive.

On the other hand, informal dialogue and consultation is widespread. One rule which the company does try to enforce is that "the best argument should win no matter who makes it", whether addressing factors that shape the strategy and culture of the organisation as a whole or those that shape the ways in which employees engage with colleagues and work tasks. According to Warren Glover, Lindum's General Manager, "this is more than words; this means managers can't just insist on pushing through an idea without being able to justify it, and all employees have a voice."

Lindum recognises that innovative organisations are those which provide opportunities for employees at all levels to exercise imagination and creativity, and to use the full range of their knowledge and "know how". Employees are actively encouraged and resourced to identify potential service and process innovations. For example the manager responsible for maintaining the company's construction plant realised that there was a potential market if existing resources could be expanded to service heavy goods trucks and emergency vehicles. He was given training and support to develop a business plan and subsequently established a new trading division within Lindum.

The company is prepared to take risks and to look on failure as a learning and development opportunity. Individuals or teams are not "punished" in

such circumstances because this would only serve to reduce creativity and the impetus to innovate. Warren Glover is clear about the benefits of such a culture: "that's over 440 pairs of eyes looking out for new market opportunities, new parcels of land or cost saving ideas". The business has diversified into several new markets based on employee generated ideas and initiatives and now has 12 trading divisions including construction, joint venture commercial property, house building, plant, joinery and maintenance within East Anglia and the East Midlands.

Reflections on the cases

These cases only begin to describe the diversity of workplace social dialogue contexts and practices that exist in Europe. The cases add weight to our argument that workplace social dialogue cannot only be understood in terms of formal, rights-based structures. Rather it can exist in less tangible ways and that it embraces both strategic and task-based decision making.

Tegral, Kaiser Permanente and Guastalla add direct insight into the question that lies at the heart of this paper. Both cases demonstrate that representative workplace social dialogue can stimulate and shape the development of participative work practices where there is shared understanding of the need to drive management-union partnership beyond the confines of traditional industrial relations. In terms of Table 2, these three cases demonstrate a clear connection between Boxes 1 and 3, but also lead to the less tangible culture changes represented by Box 4. The arrows are two-way because representative partnership both shapes and is shaped by direct participation (Figure 2.1).

The Tower case places much greater emphasis on the informal side of the Table. Formal structures were in place at Tower including a works council and team-based production systems, but Edwin realised that dialogue and culture change at the informal level were required to build the reflexivity and creative solutions required at both task-based and strategic levels if breakthroughs were to be achieved. His starting point was therefore to create spaces for informal dialogue with trade union and employee representatives

as a means of transforming formal practices. Again the two-way arrows suggest the existence of mutually reinforcing practices (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1: Tegral, Kaiser Permanente and Guastalla Hospital

Forms of social dialogue

Strategic Decisions

	1	2	
Formal	Clear rules	Ad hoc communication	Informal
	Tangible outcomes	Informal routes	
	Bounded areas	Spontaneous forms	
	3	**4**	
	Direct forums	Active process of involvement	
	Improvement groups	Difficult to measure	
	Defined areas	Intangible	
	Clear goals	Loosely defined	

Task-Based Decisions

Figure 2.2: Tower case

Forms of social dialogue

Strategic Decisions

	1	2	
Formal	Clear rules	Ad hoc communication	Informal
	Tangible outcomes	Informal routes	
	Bounded areas	Spontaneous forms	
	3	**4**	
	Direct forums	Active process of involvement	
	Improvement groups	Difficult to measure	
	Defined areas	Intangible	
	Clear goals	Loosely defined	

Task-Based Decisions

Lindum presents a very different case: formality is largely absent yet dialogue is rich, pervasive and intended to be inclusive within the informal sphere, an evolving bridge between the strategic concerns of senior management and the tacit knowledge of employees (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: The Lindum Group

Forms of social dialogue

	Strategic Decisions	
	1	**2**
Formal	Clear rules	Ad hoc communication
	Tangible outcomes	Informal routes
	Bounded areas	Spontaneous forms
	3	**4**
	Direct forums	Active process of involvement
	Improvement groups	Difficult to measure
	Defined areas	Intangible
	Clear goals	Loosely defined
	Task-Based Decisions	Informal

Each case demonstrates in different ways how diverse forms of workplace social dialogue (formal/informal; strategic/task-based) combine in mutually reinforcing ways when knowledge sharing and the co-production of innovation and improvement become the bridge between direct and indirect forms of participation. What is sometimes missing in analysing positive case studies is what Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen (2010) calls 'dissensus' an emphasis upon the two sided nature of democratic dialogue that has to encompasses both consensus and dissensus. The latter acts as a necessary genuine and critical voice in the participative process but one that can be effaced if stakeholders respect power boundaries that deny democratic dialogue, effectively self-censoring themselves, or acting as a form of disciplinary agent exercising 'concertive control' over others (Barker, 1999). The conditions where open participation and teamwork counteract that 'conspiracy of silence' are rare but these cases show such spaces are emerging in organisations.

Walls and ceilings: why representative participation doesn't have more influence on the shopfloor

Tegral and Kaiser Permanente are remarkable because they are unusual: they remain "weak signals" indicating a possible but as yet uncertain future. Most representative social dialogue structures appear unable to transcend traditional industrial relations spheres of activity.

Many different types of wall and ceiling can be found in organisations. It is well understood that HR and IR often operate in an organisational silo, only seen as relevant to operational managers, or even to Boards, when something goes wrong. The economic, technological, market or regulatory forces which drive change in organisations are often far removed from the language of industrial relations: IR often has to deal with the consequences of innovation but there may be little shared understanding of how it is shaped.

HR may also try to establish its own corporate legitimacy and profile by establishing "employee voice" initiatives and may not wish to share ownership with partnership structures, hence actively reinforcing the dualism between discretionary direct participation and rights-based representative participation described above. Declining union membership has renewed interest in the fundamental importance of voice (Budd, 2004) but the rise of non-union voice mechanisms has sparked several concerns over the functioning and legitimacy of alternative forms (Gollan, 2006). Managers may seek involvement only on "their terms" and only on management-driven agendas (Dundon et al., 2006). In such cases, employees may perceive that partnership structures become mere "talking shops" with a resulting lack of tangible and visible outcomes (Tailby et al., 2004). In many cases what happens in these forums is not effectively communicated to the workforce at large, either because they are management-dominated or because of failures of articulation on the employee/union side (Oxenbridge & Brown, 2004).

The competence of trade union and employee representatives in terms of work organisation should also be considered. It may be difficult (particularly in non-union organisations) to find employees willing and able to serve in such a capacity without strong management support for fair and transparent selection procedures and, especially, providing proper training (NCPP, 2004). The quality of employee representatives is obviously crucial for effective voice arrangements, particularly where they are expected to deal with complex issues driven by economic performance, technological change and new working practices (Gollan, 2006). Doherty (2008) argues that where voice and involvement or partnership arrangements are in place, a lack of effective employee representation and management or trade union commitment can quickly lead to a lack of faith in the arrangements.

Employee Participation has formal and informal aspects with the more formal ones stressing worker oversight and rights to be involved in decisions. However when you ask what is the active element of participation, what do employees and their representatives bring to the table in both the formal and informal structures and processes then one must speak of the skills and creativity that 'productive reflection' is conceptualising. This approach does direct one to choose the informal route rather than the formal but to see that in both and in their combination the greater force of productive reflection can be unleashed to everyone's benefit. Hence it is not sufficient for managers to grant employees opportunities for productive reflection narrowly focused on achieving targets set remotely. This entirely reinforces the necessary interdependence of direct and representative participation. Without the latter, the former is discretionary and highly conditional, no more than a technocratic management tool. In combination however there is the potential to create a new collective bargaining agenda, one in which the tacit knowledge and creativity of workers are traded in return for intrinsic quality of working life, including the ability to negotiate business models and targets that support competitiveness without imposing unacceptable burdens of stress. The question is whether trade unions can develop the understanding and competence required to deliver this high road of bargaining on behalf of their members, and the answer from across Europe is very mixed.

Embedding productive reflection as a function of workplace social dialogue

In this paper we suggest that workplace social dialogue is not static and that shifts in its form are occurring. Just as the EPOC study revealed extensive development of direct forms of dialogue in the 1990s, we suggest that other variants of social dialogue are appearing but with less defined and tangible characteristics. We have coined the term "productive reflection" in order to draw attention to the possibility that dialogue can take place within different spaces and at different levels of the organisation. We also suggest that, for it to be effective, it needs to utilise the collective resources of the organisation. Productive reflection requires a number of pre-conditions including equality

of esteem and high levels of trust relations between actors. It leads us to seek out more distributed kinds of leadership: each actor has competence and can lead the necessary changes in conjunction with others. At the organisational level this also means accounting for different organisational cultures of reflection, often highly specific to the markets and context of the individual enterprise. Such issues raise problems for research which must therefore probe increasingly varied and informal forms of dialogue. This demands forms of action research that go beyond surveys to be sensitive to these 'preconditions for democratic participation', here Fricke (2011) has demonstrated such factors including the creation of spaces free of normal power relations, non-hierarchical forms of cooperation, time to reflect, change that meets workers interests and education seen as both reflection and action. Such a perspective shifts the focus away from institutional participation towards understanding the active and constitutive role of participants in change processes. There are research approaches that take the debate about employee participation into a concern with the process and methodology of participation. Gustavsen (1992, 2005) gives a good account of many of the programs of action research since Lewin, and privileges one form of action research that he entitles "democratic dialogue". Romme (2003) builds on this analysis, advocating collective reflection within a design-oriented methodology of intervention. His work was carried out in a Dutch enterprise that sought to go beyond the limited form of institutional participation. However there are few such well-evidenced examples to account for the possible changing forms of workplace dialogue. Available evidence is primarily based upon case study material that offers rich qualitative insight.

Through the analysis of research and case study evidence we have begun to build a conceptual framework using dialogue, knowledge sharing and productive reflection to break through the dualism between formal, rights-based representative structures and discretionary direct participation. However the empirical shape that this emergent relationship takes in actual organisations remains hard to characterise because, as we say above, it is highly contextualised. As Palshaugen states, the market demands that enterprises meet external competitive conditions but "it is not absolutely prescribed *how* to meet them – here is the space for innovation" (2000, p. 9). As the concep-

tual framework developed it also became clear that informal, spontaneous and much less tangible practices play a critical role, alongside formal structures, and of course these are harder to capture, measure or describe. Hence the need for cases that point forward and give clues as to the forms of participative regimes that are emerging to deal with contemporary complexity.

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Peter is an Associate Professor and Reader at the University of Bath. He is also Chair of the *UK Work Organisation Network* (UKWON). He has a long history of research and publication in areas of social research primarily in the area of European comparative industrial relations, social dialogue and organisational learning. He has undertaken projects for the EC, ILO, SALTSA and the European Foundation. He is currently engaged in an EU Framework 7 project on Social Innovation as well as qualitative and longitudinal research on UK third sector organisations.

Peter Totterdill

Peter is Chief Executive of the *UK Work Organisation Network* (UK-WON), a not-for-profit coalition of employers' organisations, trade unions, professional bodies, public agencies and universities committed to developing and disseminating new ways of working. He is a Director of UKWON's sister company *Workplace Innovation Limited*, a consultancy specialising in sustainable organisational change through employee engagement.

Peter maintains close academic links with universities across the UK and Europe, and especially through his role as Visiting Professor at *Kingston University London.*

Rosemary Exton

Building on more than thirty years' experience as a clinician, manager and trade unionist in the UK National Health Service, Rosemary brings considerable experience of employee involvement and people-centred change to her roles as researcher and facilitator. She has worked with *UKWON* on a diverse range of projects and initiatives since 2001 and was appointed as a Director in 2008. Rosemary is also a founding Director of *Workplace Innovation Limited*, and a Director of the *Royal College of Midwives.* Her research interests include enterprising behaviour in the workplace and she is a regular speaker at international conferences and workshops.

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