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Non-Domination, Contestation and Freedom:

The Contribution of Philip Pettit to Learning and Democracy in Organizations

Abstract

This article provides a reading of the civic republican ideas of the political philosopher, Philip Pettit in order to make new contributions to learning within organizational life. Our aim is to achieve non-domination in the workplace, and we suggest how Pettit's work, through the provision of a democratic constitution and development of the resources of individuals and groups, might inspire eminently practical ways in which to increase freedom and minimize asymmetries of power at work. Such asymmetries have long been an ingrained feature of organizations, confounding even the most progressive attempts to increase opportunities to learn and act within organizations. We do not, therefore, underestimate the problems involved. Nevertheless we advance our arguments as new– but practicable – contributions to progressive forms of management learning.

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> *free persons … can speak their minds, walk tall among their fellows, and look others* squarely in the eye. They can command respect from those with whom they deal, not being subject to their arbitrary interference (Pettit, 2010:38).

Few would demur from the ideal that people at work should be 'free persons' – free, in the sense used above, by the political philosopher, Philip Pettit. Nevertheless, this ideal has proved elusive, with asymmetries of power remaining a persistent feature of much organizational life, especially for those near the bottom of organizational hierarchies (Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011), and working on highly mechanized routines (Blauner, 1964; Hodson 1996). Since its publication in 1997, Pettit's Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government has had significant influence within political philosophy (see also his latest book On *the People's Terms*, Pettit 2013). It has contributed to a revival in civic republican theory, and has been cited widely across political science and beyond. Importantly for any consideration of its potential for management learning, Petitt's ideas have also enjoyed considerable practical application. Most notably, the former Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, explicitly adopted Pettit's philosophy throughout his tenure in office (between 2004 and 2011). Unfortunately, however, Pettit's ideas have yet to become widely known to those involved in

management or wider organizational life – either as practitioners or as academics. The purpose of this article is to introduce Pettit's work in this field. Our aim is to show how, while explicitly recognising their limitations, ideas inspired by our reading of Pettit might have real applications for practice – applications which improve the chances of more "free persons" being found in organizational life.

It is important to stress that Pettit's ideas are certainly not about, as Huault et al (2012: 2) put it, 'intellectuals enlightening dominated people'. Rather they are about the practical arrangements for everyone involved in organizations to avoid domination. Therefore, while we see resonances between Pettit's work and, for example, that of contemporary French philosopher, Jacques Rancière (as recently reviewed by Hault et al 2012), the distinguishing feature of Pettit is his practical emphasis. In contrast to Rancière – whose work according to Hault et al 'broadens the range of forms of emancipation we [i.e. academics] can study' (2012: 3, italics added), Pettit's overriding aim is to change practices – to enable emancipation. His target audience, therefore, is practitioners as well as academics and this is reflected in the accessibility of his writing style. In contrast with most figures in social theory, people without formal training can relatively easily pick up his writing and know what he is suggesting and why – as did the former Spanish Prime Minister, Zapatero.

Indeed, Zapatero's adoption of Pettit's ideas means that Pettit's work has had a direct and considerable impact in many areas of public policy. Zapatero implemented policies from civic republican philosophy in the economy, the law, the health system and the environment (Marti &

Pettit, 2010; Reisz, 2011). There were also significant policies in relation to combating domination in the workplace in Zapatero's Spain. For example, Zapatero introduced an amnesty for illegal workers to guard them against exploitation – 700,000 were granted amnesty in his first year. He also increased the minimum wage and made it more difficult for companies to offer temporary contracts (Marti and Pettit, 2010; Pettit, 2008**)**. Moreover, Zapatero considered his encounter with Pettit's work a learning process. He invited Pettit to return to Spain three years in to his tenure as prime minister to see the outcomes of his manifesto and to give a review of how effectively his government had realised civic republican ideals in practice. This review included areas that could be improved upon in various ways. Thus Zapatero's relationship with Pettit was a dialogical one, that developed over time; integrating lessons from theory and practice (Macintosh et al, 2012; Marcos and Denyer, 2012).

In this paper, we show how these civic republican ideas, adapted for use in organizations for the first time, have potential to provide a framework for the learning and development of more progressive management practices than are generally encountered in modern organizations (cf. Reedy and Learmonth 2009). As such, they are a critique of standard practice, and yet, following Spicer, et al (2009: 538) the critique also involves "an affirmative movement alongside the negative". Indeed, the potential for application to learning in organizations is extensive. This paper includes, for example, new ideas for the practical creation of: (i) a framework to enable methods of democratic contestation (ii) external and internal checks on power asymmetries (iii) a democratic organizational constitution. Such measures have the potential to provide innovative ways for managers and employees to learn in organizations through 'communities of practice' by

upholding freedom, understood as 'freedom as non-domination', thereby defending individuals (and especially people in marginalized groups) from abuses of power (Driver, 2002).

Power and Emancipation in Organizations

One response to asymmetries of power in the workplace has been to advocate various forms of explicitly humanistic, welfare-centric approaches to management. For example, Greenleaf (1977), who coined the term 'servant leadership' (see Hunter, 2004; Sipe & Frick 2009; Spears & Lawrence, 2004), frames servant leadership as a response to the dysfunctional nature of power and authority in modern organizations. He suggests that 'a new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader (1977: 3/4). To date, the application of republican thought in organizational theory has been almost exclusively from within the so called 'neo-Athenian' republican tradition which similarly emphasises the role of virtue in participating with others in the community, in activities of shared deliberation and decision-making. Graham and Organ (1993), draw on this neo-Athenian tradition to suggest that through participation, employees can internalize the values of the organization and put their individual self-interest to one side to promote the collective good. The approach they defend emphasises virtues such as obedience, loyalty and participation within organizations to achieve these aims (cf. Moore, 2012). Furthermore, Graham (2000: 74) suggests that Greenleaf's servant leadership model is a helpful way of understanding how a strong management can guide its employees towards higher levels of moral reasoning and performance. As such, we believe Will (2012, 287) is correct in suggesting that the consequences of Graham's approach are 'managerialist and, ultimately,

hegemonic' in character, in that they operate 'to frame the interests of the ruling class as universal' (Will, 2012: 294). As with Greenleaf's servant leadership, there is an assumption about the potential benevolence of management that we would not only distance ourselves from but challenge with Pettit's alternative approach.

A different sort of response to power asymmetries is also apparent in organizational life and literature – to which we are more sympathetic – and which advocates versions of workplace democracy (Black & Gregorson, 1997; Collins, 1997; Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; Knudsen, Busck and Lind, 2011; Pateman, 1970). While the desirability for managers to act with compassion, as servants, and so on is not denied, it argues that relying solely on managers to act in welfare-centric ways is, in itself, insufficient to redress power imbalances. Rather, the opportunity to discuss and deliberate decisions should be institutionalised; without such changes workers remain vulnerable to domination in that managers retain the ability to act against workers' interests should they wish to do so. Indeed, given the corrupting effects of power and the incentives inherent within modern capitalism, managers might be expected to act in ways that dominate subordinates (Courpasson 2000; Kerr and Robinson, 2012; Reed, 2012; Yu, 2013). Many of these democratic ideals can be traced, in large part, to major figures in social theory, most notably, with theories associated with the Frankfurt School, especially that of Jürgen Habermas (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992a; Edward and Willmott 2008; Fryer, 2012; Palazzo and Scherer, 2006). And, as far as practitioner responses are concerned, at least in the West, trade unions have played an important role from a politico-economic perspective in terms of redressing power asymmetries, typically using collective bargaining in attempts to reduce the

structural domination of employers over employees (Fantasia and Voss, 2004; Fletcher and Gapasin, 2008; Lerner, 2007).

Research in management learning has a long tradition of interrogating power structures within organisations, including debates around the extent to which discourses of emancipation are sufficient in themselves to change oppressive organisational power regimes (See figure I). In examining the relative power of dialogic practices of emancipatory discourses Raelin (2008), for example, argues that we need to merge emancipatory discourse and liberationist ideology to assist marginalized groups to challenge oppressive conditions. Management learning scholars have also drawn on critical theory from within the Frankfurt School to challenge the political significance of management education content (e.g. Grey, 1999; Elliott, 2008) and have provided feminist critiques that unmask the management learning classroom as masculinist space (e.g. Sinclair, 2000, 2007; Perriton and Reynolds, 2004; Swan, 2005). Finally, radical interrogations, with their roots in the work of Paolo Freire, have drawn attention to the significance of class and power in the classroom arguing that processes deployed in the management education setting play as significant a role in transmitting social values as its content (Reynolds, 1997; 2000).

Efforts to promote social justice through management education have also been criticised for focussing too heavily on methods such as emancipation and critique (Toubiana, 2014). However, this ignores the range of practices debated and deployed by researchers drawing on, for example, situated learning theories. It also overlooks the role of communities of practice to re-configure working relationships, critical reflections on the tendency towards ascribing

learning as virtuous and ‘ intrinsically ‘good’’ (Perriton, 2005: 189; Woodall and Douglas, 2000), and poststructuralist reflexive interrogations of the performativity of management and leadership learning interventions (e.g. Cunliffe, 2009; Hibbert, 2013; Stead and Elliott, 2013).

[Insert figure 1 on page 46]

It is within this emancipatory democratic tradition that we seek to demonstrate the potential of Pettit’s civic republican philosophy to inform management learning and practice. Writers in this civic republican tradition (see also, for example, Maynor, 2002; Skinner, 1998; Viroli, 2002) emphasize many shared ideas, most notably the paramount civic republican value of political liberty: freedom as non-domination or independence from arbitrary rule. They also write about the corrupting effects of power and the consequent benefits of checks and balances as attempts to mitigate the effects of these potentially corrosive situations. The civic republican perspective contributes something new to management learning by focusing on how we might use constitutions and democratic contestation to force those in positions of power to act justly towards others. Their ideas are aimed at reinvigorating the political Left and challenging social injustice. We stress this point to distinguish the republicanism that we and Pettit are defending from the ideas espoused by the Republican Party in the USA.

Organizational Democracy: The Debate

There is no shortage of arguments for the just nature of democracy in the workplace – even though, paradoxically, democracy is rarely found there. For instance, Dahl suggests that 'if democracy is justified in governing the state, then it must also be justified in governing economic enterprises; and to say that it is not justified in governing economic enterprises is to imply that it is not justified in governing the state' (Dahl, 1985: 111, italics in original). In an effort to weaken corporate capitalism and its detrimental effects on liberty and democracy, Dahl argued that there should, therefore, be democracy within the workplace. Pateman (1970: 42-3) similarly argues that individual behaviour is learnt and shaped by the institutions one participates in, and, as most individuals spend a significant amount of time in undemocratic, authoritarian workplaces these experiences will influence their behaviour in wider politics, leading to an unwillingness to challenge injustice.

The larger question, however, is not whether democracy in the workplace is just – for the purposes of this article, we assume that it is – but how we might practically achieve democracy in the most appropriate way possible. Dahl has been criticised for not paying enough attention to the mechanics of workplace democracy, and Pateman seems largely pre-occupied with the instrumental effect on wider participation in politics rather than what it can and should achieve for workers on a day-to-day basis (Pateman, 1970: 68). In many respects, in Pateman's account, workplace democracy seems to be a means to an end, rather than empowering individual workers.

To achieve this aim there have also been practical efforts to encourage participation in the workplace. In the 1960s and 70s, influenced by crises in declining industries, support for workplace democracy schemes like co-operatives, worker takeovers and worker control increased (Coates, 1976). This movement suggested that management should be ratified by worker committees and issues such as pay, dismissal, promotion, hiring etc should be determined by elected committees. Thus, the 'workers and unions both have the powers of scrutiny and veto, and so [democracy] allows for the extension of worker's influence on management beyond the limitations of collective bargaining' (Scanlon, 1968: 5, see also Varman and Chakrabarti 2004). This movement initially grew out of trade unionism, but similar initiatives were co-opted, in time, by those on the Right who today adopt the rhetoric that 'co-operatives could be independent small businesses, representing conservative values of self-help and enterprise, and which, if successful, represent an extension of the property-owning democracy' (Carter, 2003: 3). In short, co-operatives might now be read as having become legitimisations of the capitalist system, with little focus on securing non-domination for employees. In recent years, anything other than tokenistic workplace democracy has become "but a faint whisper among contemporary scholars in the social and management science…and no longer relevant to our technologically advanced globally networked organizations" (Diamond and Allcorn, 2006: 56). It seems that there may be space for a new theory of workplace democracy that provides alternative and less conventional ways of addressing these issues.

Of the accounts defending greater participation in the workplace that have emerged, the most convincing have applied the work of Jürgen Habermas. His communicative framework has been used to suggest improvements to models of democracy within organizations (Alvesson & Spicer,

2012; Alvesson & Willmott, 1992a, 2003; Burrell 1994; Clegg & Higgins, 1987; Fryer, 2012; Shirivistava, 1986). Though not without significant conceptual and practical problems, we (like Pettit) read these accounts broadly sympathetically – as attempts to show how deliberative, democratic concepts might benefit organizational life (Young, 2003; Dunning, 2005). However, in our reading of Pettit we also seek to problematize Habermas's work to identify and challenge some of the assumptions underlying this literature.

Habermas (1987) offers his ideal speech situation (and later his account of deliberative democracy) as mechanisms which can help individuals make sense of the many contradictory ideas that explain and describe the world around them (Habermas, 1992). These devices offer a public space in which participants have equal status and all arguments, defended through reasons, can enable communicative (rather than strategic) action and lead individuals to discover universal truths and consensus from the legitimacy of the lifeworld. However, Habermas (2009: 187) is sceptical about the possibility of radically changing such an ingrained, complex and contradictory system, suggesting that 'it has become impossible to break out of the universe of capitalism …[and that] the only option is to civilize and tame the capitalist dynamics from within'. Indeed, the furthest he goes in his support of any form of workplace democracy is to suggest that we must 'pick up the correct idea of retaining a market economy's effective steering effects of impulses without at the same time accepting the negative consequences of a systematically reproduced unequal distribution of "bads" and "goods"' (Habermas, 1997:141-142). Whilst broadly remaining sympathetic to such a move, he has, in effect, left the development of an account of workplace democracy to others. Indeed, scholars within

organizational studies have sought to apply his ideas in a variety of different ways that influence management and organizational learning.

In this regard, Shrivistava (1986: 374) was among the earliest proponents of Habermasian concepts in the workplace, suggesting that the 'processes of strategy formulation and implementation should involve both theoretical and practical discourse among stakeholders to arrive at a consensual statement of goals and means (resource allocations) for achieving them'. The intention is to undermine ideology within strategic management discourse and in doing so to 'reduce the use of artifice or direct manipulation of communication by dominant groups for furthering their own interests through reflexive monitoring of action' (1986: 365). More recently Fryer (2012), has similarly adopted the Habermasian notion of the ideal speech situation in which, amongst other things, 'no force except that of the better argument is exercised' (Habermas, 1975: 108) in collective exchange. Fryer applies Habermas's work to imagine a form of leadership that would allow a manager to be more democratic and less impositional. In doing so, he hopes that strategic communication can be minimized and that a consensus-oriented, communicatively driven organization can be created 'in which the force of the better argument is allowed to prevail, unaffected by external or internal coercion' (Fryer, 2012: 31). It is hoped that in such an organization, managers and workers would have less barriers to learn new ways to co-operate. In a similar vein, Alvesson & Spicer (2012: 382) propose a form of 'deliberated authority' in an effort to show how this form of collective deliberation can draw out the emancipatory potential of leadership, whilst recognizing that at times the experience and ability of managers may place them in a stronger position to make decisions. They join Habermas (1987) and others in suggesting that during such deliberation, it would be necessary to try to

minimize communicative distortions such as 'false hierarchies, repression of viewpoints, power games, ideological domination and narrow agenda-setting' (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012: 383; see also Deetz, 1992). Nevertheless, they envisage deliberation playing a key role in deciding and helping us to learn when leadership would be invoked and when it would not be, allowing for 'autonomy and supportive horizontal relations in combination with organizational structures and cultural meanings and norms to take care of most things at work' (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012: 383).

Such arguments suggest to us that forms of deliberative management inspired largely by Habermas – were they ever to happen in practice – would be preferable to the status quo. The collective deliberation involved would undermine strategic forms of communication and reduce instances of manipulation and domination. However, such accounts still rely on the goodwill of managers to introduce and use them. Thus, these Habermas-informed ideas about management practice can be read, in that sense at least, merely as variations upon the welfare-centric theme (such as Greenleaf's servant leadership) with which we started this article. They do not directly challenge conventional power structures (Leflaive, 1996). Habermasian workplace democracy (in consulting widely and seeking a consensus) might not, on the face of it, seem to be welfare-centric. However, as many criticisms of Habermas's work suggest, the effect of power relations and emotions will often mean that the more persuasive and influential members within a deliberative forum (or workplace) will dominate proceedings (Pellizoni, 2001; Griffin, 2012a). Added to this, the possibility of group polarization through deliberation (Sunstein, 1999) or the role that individual values play in exchange (McCarthy, 1998), and it suggests that there are numerous obstacles for organizational scholars when trying to incorporate Habermas and his

theories into their account of workplace democracy. The cumulative effects of these factors will inevitably seep through and shape what people learn and the way that people behave. We argue, therefore, that unless there are other defensive mechanisms in place that give individuals and groups the space and capacity to learn, then these Habermasian perspectives are more likely to fall broadly in line with how management frames issues and sets the agenda within the organization.

However, given the potential benefits that could be gained through greater deliberation and democracy in organizational life (such as increased autonomy, improved decision making and, of course, reduced domination), it would be wrong simply to reject the possibility of extending participation towards a deliberative ideal. What we suggest is required, is a more practical democratic framework, one that also seeks to change power structures. In other words, we think there needs to be a framework that gives individuals – other than managers – greater incentives to "buy-in" to the wider organization. That is, to actively contribute as representatives but to do so in an effort to increase the potential for deliberation and contestation, and in the process to open up spaces where learning can take place. In this sense, there also needs to be systems for ensuring that people have the time and the protection to develop awareness, familiarity and a capacity to use democracy with confidence – and in an environment in which they are less likely to be manipulated or dominated. It is here that we believe Pettit's civic republican theory can be developed into an account of workplace democracy that could play a central role in counteracting such negative possibilities.

Pettit's Civic Republicanism

Pettit's approach (like Habermas's) is not intended specifically for the workplace. It is meant to defend much more generally against arbitrary state interference in the affairs of citizens. However, of interest to management learning scholars, the civic republican democratic approach emphasises the insight that individuals who are not subject to proper checks and balances can be corrupted through power. Moreover, it combines this insight with an optimistic appraisal of human potential and an individual's desire to be free from the arbitrary judgment and decisions of others. Indeed, the approach is perhaps most attractive to us because: a) it takes as its starting point issues of power and freedom., and b) it links the attainment of freedom (as non-domination) to education and the development of capacities. It does so in a way reminiscent of Paulo Freire in his assertion that:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (1972: 14).

Indeed, if employees are to attain freedom within the workplace, they will need to break with the conformity of the undemocratic workplace that is so pervasive today.

But what, more precisely, constitutes 'freedom' in Pettit's sense? Pettit himself presents his civic republican conception of freedom as an alternative to the two types of 'freedoms' described by Isaiah Berlin (1969). For Pettit, the civic republican conception of freedom is an alternative both to what Berlin (1969: 138), influenced by Rousseau (1997/1762) and Hegel (1991/1821), calls 'positive freedom' ('self-mastery, the elimination of obstacles to my will') as well as an alternative to the 'negative freedom' that Berlin (1969: 121) describes as 'without interference by other persons.' In other words, civic republican freedom is not freedom in a neo-Athenian republican sense, in which citizens develop skills and virtues that enable active participation and represent an all-encompassing vision of the good life – this would be an unacceptable feature of domination in society to civic republicans like Pettit. Nor is it freedom understood merely as a lack of constraints, where the citizen – or the worker – must be free from all external interference.

According to Pettit, these latter approaches are flawed in two important ways. First, they assume that all interference is bad, thereby failing to consider the possibility that the interference might be a conscious decision to improve a situation. (Pettit uses the example of a man who asks his partner to hide chocolate from him so not to tempt him to indulge. Any subsequent interference on the part of his partner to refuse to disclose the location of the chocolate is not arbitrary, it simply implements the policy that was requested in the first place.) Second, these sorts of approaches assume that direct interference is the only way another party might dominate and reduce individual freedom. In contrast, Pettit emphasises that more subtle techniques of control (and even intimidation) may be employed to hold sway over an individual's actions shaping their behaviour (Pettit, 2010: 38-39). This sort of normative control has been well-documented within

organizations, showing how senior management can use discourse and strategy to manipulate behaviour and attitudes over time (see for example Ford and Harding, 2007; Fleming and Sturdy 2011).

As an alternative, therefore, Pettit presents the civic republican conception of freedom as non-domination. From this perspective, 'being unfree consists in being subject to arbitrary sway: being subject to the potentially capricious will or the potentially idiosyncratic judgment of another' (Pettit, 1997: 5). It is not only actual interference that Pettit is concerned about, it is enough for there to be a capacity for (or a possibility of) interference for there to be domination. In Pettit's account it therefore follows that three characteristics need to be present for someone to be considered unfree or (as its corollary) to hold dominating power over another.

First, there must be a capacity to interfere (it need not be actual interference as in Berlin's account) and interference must be intentional and make things worse for the other person. As examples of interference, Pettit includes:

> coercions of the body, as in restraint or obstruction; coercion of the will as in punishment or the threat of punishment as well as manipulation like agenda fixing, the deceptive or non-rational shaping of people's beliefs or desires, or rigging of the consequences of people's actions (1997: 53).

In the workplace such interference might include anything from a manager being involved in organizing forced labour to someone deciding (or having the capacity to decide) the agenda of a meeting and manipulating its outcomes through what he or she includes or omits. Interference, in other words, includes managers limiting the capacities of employees to participate or resist and in doing so reduces their capacity to learn and develop.

Second, the interference must be arbitrary. In this sense, the 'interference was chosen … without reference to the interests, or opinions, of those affected' (Pettit, 1997: 55). In other words, standard corporate management practices are typically cases of arbitrary interference and therefore examples of domination in the workplace (cf. Grey, 1995). However, for Pettit, if the interference is part of a democratic process then it is no longer arbitrary and so no longer an example of domination. For example, the creation of a controversial agenda item for a meeting, to use the above example, is interference; but if this interference is done through a democratic process, with a right to contribute to and contest the agenda, then Pettit would not deem such action domination.

Third, the arbitrary interference will lead to a constraint on certain choices of an individual or a group of individuals, so that the interference is a conscious effort to reduce their realm of freedom. However, as a result, domination will often occur in only one sphere (or upon one set of choices), without extending to other situations. So, for instance, 'the husband may dominate the wife in the home, the employer may dominate the employee in the workplace, whilst that domination does not extend further – not, at least, with the same level of intensity' (Pettit, 1997: 58). Nevertheless, it does not matter that as a dominated employee I can go home to a loving

family and a happy social life. Injustice and domination can, and often will, be confined to single spheres, often making them more difficult to identify. But such injustice and conscious acts of interference should not be dismissed on this basis and should be addressed with the same conviction to uphold freedom from arbitrary rule.

This notion of freedom is grounded in an optimism about human potential but a scepticism about what individuals might do with their freedom once they reach positions of power. Habermas shares this optimism about human potential and what we might gain from free exchange in deliberative arenas. However, arguably, he lacks this second element of scepticism and we believe this difference is significant in terms of organizations and how individuals might react and practically employ different models of democracy. Importantly, then, Pettit's theory does not rely upon a benevolent manager. He and his fellow civic republicans are more aware of the corruptibility of power, especially when introducing what might seem to be empowering and helpful democratic structures. These structures are only valuable insofar as they advance the cause of human freedom understood as non-domination.

In Republicanism, Pettit briefly provides a number of examples in relation to employment and work. For example, he highlights the way that employers have the ability to dominate employees through blacklisting (1997:141); he also mentions the implications of collective bargaining (1997: 142) and unions (1997: 62), along with the vulnerability of the uneducated in being open to manipulation and subjugation by bosses willing to exploit their labour (1997: 159). Nevertheless, Pettit mentions these almost in passing and does not discuss either organizational learning or workplace democracy, per se. It has been left up to others to work out how civic

republicanism and the principle of non-domination could play a role within the workplace – the issue to which we now turn. What is proposed in the next section, therefore, is necessarily speculative. However, our proposals are offered as a tentative first cut – we expect them to be developed and refined through further debate and, perhaps more importantly, through use in organizational life. In this sense, similar to Zapatero's application of Pettit, we believe this theory of workplace democracy would be best developed in practice through interactions between the parties involved, potentially as a piece of action learning (Willmott, 1994). We now turn to developing Pettit's account for the workplace by suggesting specific strategies that might be employed within a republican democratic workplace.

Towards civic republican strategies for non-domination in organizations

Pettit proposes two different types of strategies to combat or avoid instances of domination, which, when considered in an organizational context could have direct relevance and force. First the strategy of constitutional provision (i.e. an elected body to uphold a written constitution embodying the principle of non-domination). Second, the strategy of reciprocal power (which tries to make resources equally available so that all individuals can defend themselves against arbitrary interference). In each case, these mechanisms act as checks and balances to ensure that they contribute towards non-domination. Pettit does not apply these strategies to workplaces (he focuses on their application in government), so our contribution is to provide our own reading and application of his work based on what we take to be the thrust of his ideas. We will show how the strategies can be employed in a way that supports workplace democracy perhaps

through a 'community of practice' involving all relevant parties (Driver, 2002; Swan et al, 2002). Most importantly, however, the success of these strategies does not rely upon the goodwill of managers. The strategies are intended to work from the bottom-up, providing a space for learning and action by enabling contestation and focussing on developing the resources and capacities of individuals and groups.

Strategy of constitutional provision

The first strategy is one of constitutional provision – an elected authority charged with the role of ensuring that arbitrary power does not occur and that if it does it is challenged and punished accordingly. Traditionally, there have been few opportunities for ordinary workers to challenge management decisions within organizations. Instead, arbitrary decisions are regularly made by managers and if workers feel particularly aggrieved and that their rights or job status is being threatened they might seek to involve their union, a body that typically sits outside of the organization. Whilst unions have an important role to play for workers, Pettit offers a route towards a more radical workplace democracy, less reliant on antagonistic and dominatory collective action and with an increased emphasis upon ongoing individual action (and protection) within the organization. In many respects, the system we are proposing is a radical version of co-determination in which works councils with elected worker representatives are consulted when decisions are being made about employee rights and status. We believe that the introduction of a constitution with Pettit's principle of non-domination at its core will provide a strong foundation and a workplace democracy that genuinely empowers employees.

There are well-known examples of organizations that have sought to introduce constitutions that protect workers' rights. In the UK, the John Lewis Partnership, for example, has had a constitution since 1928. The original document was designed to protect employees by providing intelligible guidance as to how they can draw upon different sources of power so that their organizational rights are not violated arbitrarily. In many respects, the 1928 constitution was a classic example of a constitution in a political (and republican) sense. It was aimed at minimising the possibility of arbitrary interference and domination by providing clear guidelines, principles and rules built in to a framework of checks and balances. However, despite the longevity and durability of the John Lewis constitution (numerous updated versions have been published since, most recently in 2012) it is still not common for organizations to have one in place.

But the example of John Lewis helps us to imagine how this strategy that Pettit envisaged at a constitutional level could be replicated on a more local scale within a typical organization. It would, of course, be less binding or mandatory than a constitution at a wider state level (which would be supported by a formal legal framework), but it would work in a similar way by holding a community (of practice) together under common rules and expectations. The starting point of the strategy of constitutional power within the workplace might well be the creation of an organizational constitution that all members would deliberate over and contribute towards, ultimately enabling them to sign up to it. In part, such a document could be similar to those that already exist in many organizations (such as "mission statements" and so on) – outlining what the organization does, why it exists and where it wants to go. Importantly, however, the sort of constitution we are proposing would also set down guidelines and a guarantee of a right to participate and contest decisions. It should also guarantee that within this contestatory

democratic structure, reasons will be provided for any decision that affects individuals (or their interests). In proposing these rights of participation and contestation, the intent is to reduce the threat of arbitrary interference or domination in the workplace. These measures would try to ensure, in other words, that the procedure does not itself become a feature of domination – primarily by ensuring that the interests of all those affected are tracked.

To support this first strategy, we read Pettit's work to imply that in the context of workplace democracy there should also be mechanisms that enable employees (and employers) to uphold the constitution and challenge any breaches. Following the civic republican model, the first of these mechanisms would be an elected body which contains representatives of employees across the organization, but could also include representatives of shareholders, chambers of commerce and other stakeholders (including the local community). They would become an important channel through which people could challenge unfair or improperly made (or defended) decisions, as well as more serious breaches of a dominatory kind either within the company or potentially upon other businesses or groups in wider society. While it could never ensure the end of domination (and we discuss some of the practical problems the approach faces in the next section), it is submitted that this aspect of civic republicanism does make it rather more likely that oppressed groups within the organization would find a democratic space to challenge instances of domination and learn new languages of resistance –although there can be no guarantees.

Another way to support this strategy, influence decision making and uphold the constitution, would be to participate directly and deliberatively in the organization. Of course, participation

would not be mandatory and Pettit was clear that some participants may wish merely to uphold the checks and balances and the electoral systems that also maintain non-domination. Nevertheless, the opportunity to contest decisions and the requirement to provide reasons for decisions would be a defining feature of the civic republican organization. These formal and informal arenas would be places where the interests of individuals and groups within the organization could be tracked. They would be sites for reviewing decisions and future courses of action, as well as being opportunities to hold management to account and exchange information publicly. Finally, they would provide a forum for management to convince others about the rationale for their decisions and provide reasons for their actions in a non-dominatory fashion.

Strategy of reciprocal power

The second strategy, Pettit suggests, would be a strategy of reciprocal power. The main intention of this strategy is to 'make the resources of dominator and dominated more equal' (Pettit, 1997: 67). As we interpret this, in an organizational context, it might involve making resources more equally available so that workers would have opportunities to defend themselves against certain types of interference. It is through such a strategy that Pettit wishes to realise a situation where all individuals 'can speak their minds, walk tall among their fellows, and look others squarely in the eye' (Pettit, 2010: 38). It would be achieved primarily through ensuring that everyone is equal before the constitution, but also by improving the capacities of all members within the organization, with an emphasis on those who have the least and are therefore most vulnerable to manipulation and domination.

In his own (otherwise supportive) account of civic republican democracy, Maynor (2003) suggests that Pettit undervalues this second method of addressing domination. Indeed, Pettit is wary of relying too heavily on the virtues in ways that his neo-Athenian republican counterparts have done, fearing that anything beyond an instrumental valuation of the virtues could become a feature of domination. Other authors have certainly done more to define how we might realise a strategy of reciprocal power in the civic republican framework. Dagger (1997), for example, offers a restrained account of civic virtues for the republic that are built around notions of autonomy and fair play, each of which improve the capacity of individuals to make a contributory role in society. Maynor suggests that developing civic virtues and a republican citizenship is both our duty (so that our interests are tracked within the democratic procedures) but also that we go out of our way to track other people's interests when we make decisions. He considers it essential that 'as I publicise my interests to others to ensure that they are being accounted for and tracked, I am secure in the knowledge that others will take my non-dominating life and me as I am' (Maynor, 2003: 54). In this respect, the reciprocal understanding that we are all looking out for each others' freedom is a central pillar of the approach and extremely important for its long-term success.

In practice, the reciprocal strategy of non-domination relies, in part, on the development of skills within individuals so that they are less likely to be dominated and less likely to dominate others. Ideally, in an organizational context, this will extend from ordinary workers to top-level managers and will directly influence how they think about their actions. In this sense, the strategy is both defensive (it allows individuals to learn how to ward off others who seek to dominate them) and progressive (it enables individuals to learn how to actively identify

potentially dominatory relationships). Griffin (2011) directly criticises the Habermasian alternative, accusing it of making too many assumptions about the educational development of the capacities required for a fair and successful deliberative system. In our view, Pettit's account makes no such assumptions about the inevitability of development either on an individual or societal level. It is therefore much more conducive to strategies that actively seek to equalize capacities through a range of different mediatory measures.

More specifically, what tactical strategies can be put in place so that the resources of the dominator and dominated might start to become more equal? Drawing on the principles discussed above from the work of Pettit and other civic republicans we make the following practical suggestions:

- **Make permanent employment contracts available for all workers**. Fixed-term, temporary contracts etc need to be curtailed because insecure employment status is a form of domination and it makes it harder for employees to contest decisions.
- **Minimize symbolic and material markers of different status and prestige**. For example, explicit limits could be placed on the difference in pay between the lowest and highest paid worker; and where benefits (say company cars) are available they should be available to everyone. Such measures would reduce the risk of reinforcing traditional power-based hierarchies.
- **Promotions – especially to managerial positions – should be made on the basis of ballots among all staff affected**. Reappointments to management positions should also be dependent upon continuing staff support (formally tested at regular intervals).

- **Training and education budgets should be shared equally among all staff**. It would be important, also, for staff to be able to spend their budgets on education that helps them participate more effectively in the organization's democratic mechanisms (e.g. general education) – not just on instrumental training that is directly job-related.
- **Publishing wages of all staff and making information (such as minutes of meetings) freely available within the organization.** Transparency will ensure that all staff members are aware of what is happening within the organization and all have the same information from which to make, understand and contest decisions.
- **Staff members will be paid for time spent on democratic activities in the workplace.** They will not be expected to read information in the evenings or at the weekend. Instead, the participatory nature of the organization will be worked in to duties and responsibilities of the job from the outset.

Summary

We submit that these civic republican strategies would open up a space for a new type of management and leaning to emerge within the organization. Although Pettit does not address the theme of management in a sustained manner, he does differentiate briefly between two types of leadership. He suggests that historically republicanism 'downplayed the Augustinian fear of an inherently wayward people who require strong leadership if anarchy is to be avoided. But it enthusiastically countenanced the Ciceronian spectre of a corruptible leadership which requires careful containment if there is not to be a tyranny or despotism' (Pettit, 1997: 210). Essentially, for Pettit, power corrupts most men and women, and whilst republicans are optimistic about the potential of human beings, they are also fearful of what happens when people are given new

powers to influence and make decisions. Individuals therefore require very specific checks and balances that are both internal and external to themselves.

Thus, in our version of a Pettit-inspired organization, people would not be as dependent upon managers choosing to act in benevolent ways. We argue that the constitution and other checks and balances in the system would more or less force managers to participate in the democratic process; should they fail to do so they could be removed from their management positions. This means that management learning from the civic republican perspective will (as a condition of the role) necessarily involve learning to be adept at implementing and abiding by strategies of constitutional power (external checks) and strategies of reciprocal power (internal checks). Good management, then, would be redefined (King & Learmonth, 2014). It would involve being active and participating in the contestatory democratic structures within the workplace, challenging instances of domination through the implementation of the constitution. It would also require that managers make every attempt not to dominate decisions through the imposition of their will – or through a failure to track the interests of others. At the same time, however, managers (encouraged by the constitution and other checks and balances in place) should be adept at bringing others (particularly the marginalised) in to conversations and deliberations within the organization, noticing when members are undermining the contestatory system.

Discussion and Conclusion

We have introduced a civic republican model of workplace democracy – an approach which focuses on the individual and attempts to protect them from the sorts of domination that is still

widely experienced within organizations. In particular, it tries to eliminate arbitrary decision making, with its unfair and discriminatory consequences. In its place the civic republican model defends the introduction of deliberative and contestatory democratic mechanisms that empower individuals in the workplace alongside organizational constitutions that guarantee a commitment to democracy. This model provides us with an alternative to the dominant Habermasian perspectives that organization scholars have largely drawn upon over the past few decades when theorizing organizational democracy. Whilst Habermas may have had an indirect influence on deliberative democratic practice in public and civic life (see NCDD.org) and in social network development (see e-deliberation.com), it is hard to imagine practitioners reading and directly applying his work. Pettit's approach, meanwhile, has proven to be accessible and has greater potential to spread democracy within organizations.

However, we are hardly offering this reading of Pettit's work as some kind of panacea for all the ills of organizational life. We recognise that there are a range of problems – both conceptual and practical – with the proposals being made. The most obvious problem, perhaps, is the fact that Pettit's work would for most organizations demand radical changes in management (and other allied practices within organizations) were it to be taken seriously. It may also require wider societal changes that would enable and support such a system, and these may be difficult to introduce on a large scale. Furthemore, such changes would not necessarily be seen as furthering the interests of many of the most powerful groups within organizational life. The example of Zapatero's Spain is relevant in this regard. Many of the Pettit-inspired reforms his government spearheaded were hotly contested by corporate interests before and after their introduction. For example, Zapatero had to reduce corporation tax rates from 35 to 30 percent in order to make

many of the workplace reforms more palatable to the business community. Moreover, despite labour reforms encouraging businesses to end temporary contracts, companies managed to work around new legislation: by the end of Zapatero's seven years in office, temporary workers still accounted for over 25 percent of workers in Spain (Gonzalez, 2012). It was a learning experience, therefore, not only for a political leader but for Pettit as well who witnessed the practical obstacles that blocked the full implementation of his ideas (Marcos and Denyer, 2012; Zundel, 2013).

In this light, it is telling to note that the only author who has attempted explicitly to apply Pettit's work in a workplace context does so in what appears to be a very conservative manner; a manner which, we speculate, is due to a perceived need to make concessions to the power structures that exist in most corporations. The account is provided by Hsieh (2005), where he develops a form of workplace republicanism, which suggests that 'workers should have a basic right to protection from arbitrary interference at work…[through]…a system that constrains managerial decision making' (2005: 116). In short, he offers a right to contest decisions rather than a right to contribute to the governance of enterprises. However, we feel that this renders Hsieh's republican approach extremely weak. After all, if contestation exists without a capacity to influence the governance of an enterprise directly, then what exactly would be the point of the contestatory or democratic system? It may occasionally limit actual interference on important issues like working conditions, promotion, relocation, but on larger issues such as senior appointments and strategic decision making it could be used to justify an 'engagement with the workforce' without any real influence on the eventual decision. The capacity for interference

would be ongoing therefore, in Hsieh's version of republicanism, and workers would remain at the mercy of the goodwill of their employers.

And yet, Pettit's ideas – in all their radicalism – are intended for application. So while we would hardly expect them to be immediately and enthusiastically endorsed by numerous top managers in large corporations we think that they could still be of direct interest to many in organizational life (see worldblu.com for examples of democratic organizations). For example, the ideas presented in this article might provide a framework that groups in corporations (trade unions and other workers' representatives) could use as their preferred model – towards which they would push (what might well be an initially sceptical) management. Following Spicer at al (2009: 552), such groups might achieve their aims 'based on small steps and negotiated discrepancies [enabling a change which might have] slowly been brought into being.' And, of course, there are many organizations with values and practices rather different to those typically enacted by big corporations. These include organizations 'that emerge as the outcomes of radical social ideas or grass-roots movements ... [which] tend to use arrangements which privilege factors such as individual autonomy, democratic decision-making, equality and collaboration over narrow objectives defined by economic efficiency' (Reedy & Learmonth, 2009: 224). In this sense, managers and others in these kinds of organizations may find much in our reading of Pettit and his civic republican understanding of freedom that would be valuable in providing a systematic framework for guiding their practices (see also, Soule, 2012; van Bommel and Spicer, 2011).

The civic republican model's defence of deliberative and contestatory democratic mechanisms to empower individuals in the workplace mirrors the spirit of management learning practices which seek to contest prevailing asymmetries of power within organisations. Nevertheless, many people in modern Western societies are notoriously indifferent to their democratic rights and (for a variety of complex reasons) many do not take advantage of voting and similar rights within wider society. Union representation has also been falling for some time. Unfortunately, both of these trends are especially marked among people in low income groups. There is no particular reason to believe that Pettit's version of democracy would overcome such problems in organizational life. Indeed, Learmonth's (2009: 1002) ethnography of a group of low-status employees showed how they were able to construct a certain kind of obliviousness to the running of the organization. Perhaps such obliviousness was a symptom of (and a response to) the fact that their voices were more-or-less ignored within the wider organization. It is possible, therefore, that people in such groups would engage more positively if the extent to which their views were actively sought (and taken seriously) was not at the mercy and good will of top management. Nevertheless, we acknowledge it is far from certain, whether all (or even most) individuals within a workforce would engage with Pettit's democratic mechanisms.

Also many dominant discourses in society construct and legitimate certain forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that typically support elite versions of reality (Oakes, Townley & Cooper, 1998). This may well mean that certain issues and concerns would remain difficult to voice – even in entirely democratic forums – because suitable languages of contestation have not been established. For example, in a recent study of a science organization in which women scientists were in the majority (except – of course – at senior levels, where women were more or less

absent) Bevan and Learmonth (2013: 138) found that the women did not question their disadvantageous position. The authors speculated that one of the reasons for this lack of questioning was that they were unaware of feminist literature. This lack both of awareness and of appropriate learning opportunities meant that 'the scientists interviewed in our study ... (both women and men) ... appear[ed] to favour theories of women's 'lack' to explain gendered inequality' (see also Van Laer and Janssens, 2011). In these circumstances, perhaps the best we can do for the moment is to recognise the vulnerability of low status groups and the possibility that they might not have a language to speak for themselves.

Overall, we feel that Pettit's proposals provide a practicable and achievable alternative containing numerous checks and balances to counteract dominatory forces. They provide a variety of incentives to behave in appropriate ways and would, in an ideal world, be reinforced by a wider educational programme in society to encourage civic virtues from an early age (Griffin, 2012b). Within organisations this would not only promote freedom, but would lead to the mobilisation of critical forms of action learning (Willmott, 1994; Ram and Trehan, 2009) and communities of practice whose membership crosses traditional hierarchies and whose purpose would be to encourage the sustainability of democratic processes. Thus, we do not see the civic republican approach we are proposing here as a quick fix. However, it is an attempt to begin the learning process involved in institutionalising a method of deliberative participation in which workers are less likely to be dominated and where decisions are taken on a non-arbitrary basis and can be contested by all whose interests are affected.

In the traditions of critical theory and radical pedagogy, the civic republican perspective contributes something new to management learning by focusing on how we might use constitutions and democratic contestation to force those in positions of power to act justly towards others. The potential of Pettit's work in this context should therefore not be underestimated. Here, we have a philosopher who has written a book that was serendipitously read by a political leader. As a result of the lucidity and strength of the arguments provided it led directly to changes in the public policy of a whole nation, helping to undermine instances of domination that would have otherwise remained unchallenged. It is in this spirit that we wish to introduce the work of Pettit to those with an interest in management learning, as a voice new to our field that could help to revitalise workplace democracy and to challenge domination.

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"Interrogating Power through Management Learning"

Perspective	**Key Themes**	**Key Authors**
Critical Theory	Challenges to management as a neutral process. Emancipatory 'cognitive' interest and emancipatory potential of critical reflection	Alvesson and Willmott (1992b) Reed and Anthony (1992) Grey and Mithev (1995) French and Grey (1996)
Radical Pedagogy	Potential for educational process to question received wisdoms. Recognition of the connected nature of knowledge, power and domination.	Freire (1972) Giroux (1992) Reynolds (1997; 1998; 2000) James and Snell (1994)

Feminist Critiques	Masculinity of the management learning classroom. Reflections on gender normativity in management and leadership learning	Sinclair, (2000); Swan (2005); Perriton and Reynolds (2004); Kelan (2012)
Poststructuralist interrogations	The performativity of management learning content. Processes of subjectivity and identify formation in management learning. Management as relational activity	Vince (2001); Gagnon (2008); Cunliffe (2009); Warhurst (2011); Hibbert (2013); Stead and Elliott (2013)

Figure 1