The DemoCratic Workplace.
Empowering People (*demos*)
to Rule (*cratos*) their own workplace.
Organizing Individual and Group
Decision Processes through
Personal Competence-based Authority.

Rune Kvist Olsen © 2009

Contents.

"The path of truth is a process of mutual collaborative solutions between people in equality, balance and harmony. The truth is a result of shared subjective conceptions about reality where the people join together in a common understanding of reality through acceptance, recognition and valuation of each other as dignified entities.
One is all, and all is one".

1. Preface.

This paper introduces several words, terms and phrases that may initially sound strange, unfamiliar and perhaps awkward to some readers. To prevent misunderstandings and misconceptions, I have included a glossary of the most central words and phrases used in this material to describe different aspects of workplace democracy. I hope that this will help readers to more clearly understand the material. You will find the glossary as a separate chapter at the end of this paper with terms and phrases listed in alphabetical order.

You will note that while this paper deals specifically with the workplace, I have consciously refrained from using the word "worker" or "labor" in relation to the people in the workplace. This is by design. Since the beginning of the industrial era, the role of "workers" or "labor" has been understood to involve submission to the authority of others. So ingrained has this notion become that it is virtually universally understood that to be a "worker" one must of necessity be submissive. This idea is antithetical to the concept of workplace democracy and, I am concerned that use of the term "worker" in discussion about this concept will reinforce notions of subservience just as people need to get their heads around a concept that requires equality and mutuality. For this reason I have chosen instead, when referring to people in the workplace to simply use the word "people" or "individuals".

2. Introduction.

The workplace is where we get our jobs done. How well we perform in our jobs, is dependent of the following factors:

1. How the work processes are organized to produce results.

2. How the workplace is organized to enable people to perform their tasks.
3. How relations between people are organized to enable coordinated actions.

These factors are themselves dependent on the following sub-factors:

1. How the competence of the person corresponds with the task.
2. How the competence of the person is adapted and integrated in the work process.
3. How the competence of the person is engaged and released in the performance of work.
4. How the competence of the people is coordinated in collaborative and cooperative actions at work.

The "*organizing*" of the workplace and of work processes is therefore the main element in finding the answer to the question "How do we get the job done?". There are numerous of approaches and strategies to organizing the workplace. In this paper I will present how we can approach workplace organization through a "*participatory strategy*" which is based on the involvement and engagement of the individual human being in the workplace.

Engagement and involvement of the individual person in the workplace occurs through "*personal responsibility*". When we "*take upon*" ourselves responsibility for our choices and actions, we will also feel responsible for the consequences of our actions. If, however, we are "*given*" responsibility from others, our sense of responsibility will not evolve and develop in the same manner. Therefore there is a significant difference between "*taken responsibility*" and "*given responsibility*" and this affects the way we perceive our responsibility in relation to getting the job done in the workplace. Competent people have the capability to make their own choices and decisions on the basis of their actual competence. The essential criteria for competent job-performance is the ability to think and feel reflectively, analyzing, valuing, estimating, deciding and evaluating within your respective field of work.

Being responsible at work (in the sense of making decisions within a specific field of responsibility), has everything to do with acting as a responsible person when assessing the options and possibilities in a given situation. The ability to be responsible is an integral part of being competent. As long as a person is competent, the person is able to take personal responsibility (in contrast to being given responsibility by others) regarding decisions, choices and in accepting the consequences of his or her actions.

A "*participatory strategy*" in the workplace, incorporated with engagement and involvement of the people, is based on the value of "*taken responsibility*". This value is supported by the belief that all human beings are able to function and act responsibly as long as their working conditions are organized in a way that allows them to do so.

There is a wide range of conceptions about "*the work of leading*" and there is a vast multitude of viewpoints, opinions and beliefs about the character and quality of the subject. The term of "leadership" for example, occurs apparently in nomourus different wrappings with the typical common denomination as the quotation below states: "*The existing literature on leadership is almost universally focused on influence exercised by one or more persons over others (in other words, influence exercised by "leaders" on "followers")*".

In developing the term of "leadership" there have been produced a variety of aspects in the conceptualization of this common notion, f. example "Self-Leadership". The extracted text

below is adapted from the book by Charles C. Manz and Christopher P. Neck. "Mastering Self-Leadership: Empowering Yourself For Personal Excellence (Prentice-Hall, ISBN: 0-13-011087-6), and is presented on the website: *http://www.emergingleader.com/article4.shtml:*

"This is not an article about the leadership of others. Instead, it is about something more fundamental and more powerful---self-leadership. It is about the leadership that we exercise over ourselves. In fact, we argue that if we ever hope to be effective leaders of others, we must first be effective leaders of ourselves. To better understand the process of self-leadership and how we can improve our capability in this area, we should first explore the meaning of the word "leadership".

There are a seemingly endless number of definitions and descriptions of leadership- largely as a result of the vast number of persons who have researched and written on the subject (and their equally vast and differing viewpoints). All of these descriptions have some merit. However, in focusing on the idea of self-leadership, perhaps the most useful definition of leadership is simply "a process of influence" .

This short definition is actually quite broad and meaningful. It recognizes not only the importance of human influence in the determination of what we are and what we do, but also the complex nature of leadership (that is, influence is not an isolated event, but a process involving many parts). The existing literature on leadership is almost universally focused on influence exercised by one or more persons over others (in other words, influence exercised by "leaders" on "followers"). In taking an initial step toward understanding and improving our own self-leadership, we must first recognize that leadership is not just an outward process; we can and do lead ourselves. Indeed, as the opening quotation suggests, our greatest potential source of leadership and influence comes not from an external leader, but from within ourselves!

Self-Leadership In Practice: [1] *Self-leadership has been more broadly defined as "the process" of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform.* [2] *Research across a variety of settings, from the educational domain to the airline industry, has shown that the practice of effective self-leadership by employees can lead to a plethora of benefits including improved job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and mental performance.* [3] *Self-Leadership involves "leading oneself" via the utilization of both behavioural and mental techniques. Behavioural self-leadership techniques involve self-observation, self-goal-setting, management of antecedents to behaviour (e.g., cues), modification of consequents to behaviour (e.g., self-reinforcement, self-punishment), and the finding of natural rewards in tasks performed. Mental self-leadership techniques involve examination and alteration of self-dialogue, beliefs and assumptions, mental imagery, and thought patterns (habits in one's thinking).*

It is important to note that effective self-leadership is not founded on narcissistic or "blindly" independent employee behaviours with total disregard to the work group or organization. Rather, effective self-leadership involves a coordinated effort between the employee and the group and/or organization as a whole. [4] *Implicit in this view is a potential trade-off or balance between the self-leadership of an individual employee and the self-leadership of the work group and/or organization as a collective. This suggests that effective self-leadership involves achieving an equilibrium between focusing on the cohesiveness of a work group and/or organization and focusing on the value and identity of each individual employee. Thus, self-leadership does not require*

entirely autonomous behaviour without regard to the team or organization. Nor does it require that the identity and value of each individual employee be entirely put aside in favour of the work group or organization. Rather, an effective self-leadership perspective would encourage individuals to find their own personal identity and mode of contribution as part of establishment of a group or organization that produces synergistic performance.

[5] In sum, self-leadership provides considerable promise for taking the pursuit of employee effectiveness to the next level. Indeed, effectively self-led employees, both behaviourally and cognitively, may offer the best blueprint for achieving employee and organizational effectiveness in the 21st century".

In my earlier paper "*A change from leadership (vertical power-structure) to leadingship (horizontal power-structure) at work. The theory and practice*" in 2006, I introduced an evolution in the conceptualization of the term "leading". The main purpose with this evolutionary exercise was to form a new word that could better describe what "self-leadership" could be about with the aim of preventing preconceptions and misconceptions. The conception of the word "leadership" is ingrained with a lot of associations, assumptions, perceptions and beliefs. I needed a term that precisely and specifically could develop a new understanding and conception of the "*function of leading as a personalized and internalized process*" in contrast to the conventional conception of leading connected to "*the person above in the lead of someone below to be led*". On this background I formed the term "*leadingship*" and developed a specific methodology to illustrate the alternative options in designing and implementing visions, values and actions in organizational life accordingly. You will find the description of the terminology of *"leadingship"* later in this paper.

When people are functioning 100% responsibly and independently at work based on personal freedom and mutual trust, they will have achieved the level of modus operandi in taking charge of him or herself in the workplace. The people will then have gone through a personal process of getting used to being responsible and independent persons within the workplace settings.

At this point there will no longer be a need for anyone in the workplace to give, handing out or delegate responsibility from above. The people will become responsible and gain independence by taking responsibility themselves.

"Control" will be about getting the job done by responsible choices and actions. The practice of "*taking control*" is a significant way in stimulating and inspiring self-esteem and self-confidence in the art of becoming a responsible and independent person. The practice of being "*given control*" by others can easily undermine self-esteem and self-respect with the result that people will be more inclined to resist and avoid responsibility than to assume responsibility. The process of becoming a complete responsible and independent person in the workplace leads to a transformation of control from outside the person to control inside the person. When a person "gets" the concept of self control at work, the person will have evolved his or her personality to a level where responsibility and independence at work have become a natural part of their individual identity. At this point the individual is ready to be an integral part of a "*participatory strategy*" in the workplace.

3. Organizing the workplace.

The application of a "*participatory strategy*" as a way to optimize the outcomes of work-processes, working-performance and collaborative activities, leads to the implementation of a specific organizational form. This form or model must be designed in a way that is congruous with the values of personal responsibility and independence at work. The organizational model must therefore comply with the following requirements:

1. The people in the workplace must participate directly in decision-processes concerning their own jobs.
2. Participation by the people means that the people have the authority to make autonomous decisions within their respective field of work.
3. Participation also means that people have the authority to influence in decision-processes that affect their own field of work.
4. The legitimate authority to perform actions autonomously in the workplace is based upon the competence of the individual.

The organizational form that complies with these characteristics is a model that combines the elements of "*demos*" and "*cratos*". These elements are derived from the Greek word "*dimokratia*". "*Demos*" stands for "people" and "*cratos*" stands for "rule". In designing an organizational form correspondent with the values of "*demos*" and "*cratos*", we must take into consideration the consequences and effects of such a form in connection with the structure and processes of power in the workplace. The objective of the power-structure must support the principle of the "*Rule by the people*", and the governance practices must reflect this principle by shaping the organizational structure accordingly.

This new way of thinking will counteract any attempts to undermine this fundamental democratic principle. For example, it will avoid the implementation of an organizational structure comprised of positions and ranks with superiors above assigned with the sole power to lead and impose decisions upon others, and subordinates below to be led and decided upon. The ability to implement the "*Rule by the people*" principle, demands that the power of authority in the decision-making process is based on the competence of the individual (contrary to positions and ranks). This competence-based structure of power will become the channel through which the flow of power will be distributed among the people (the individuals themselves).

A "*participatory strategy*" in the workplace will consequently be implemented through an organizational model that necessitates a "*DemoCratic*" form of organizing. There are two main types of democratic organizational models. The first is a model that can be characterized as an "*Inner Democracy*". The second model is opposite the first and can be characterized as an "*Outer Democracy*".

An "*Inner Democracy*" is based on the belief in the internalized resources, energy, capacity, capability, and competence of the individual. In other words "*Inner Democracy*" grants everyone in the workplace personal authority to perform their jobs as responsible and independent persons. "*Inner Democracy*" is the source of a "*Participatory Democracy*". A "*Participatory Democracy*" is a direct form of governance where the individual is responsible for his or her respective area of work. The person has within this field of work, autonomous authority to make independent decisions. The unconditional trust of the individual human

being to make autonomous decisions in a "*Participatory Democracy*" can be described as follows:

1. The individual human being is capable of ruling and governing his or her own person and taking responsibility for his or her own actions in the workplace. Each individual operates with personal freedom as a trustworthy member of the working community. Mutual trust and personal freedom are unconditionally granted (in contrast to conditional privileges that are given as rewards or compensation) as a prime value and support in the performance of tasks. These values are the driving factors in developing and maintaining awareness and consciousness of the people's contribution whether it is alone as individuals or together as a collaborative force in the work-process.

2. The individual human being must conceive the fact that all individuals are different as human beings and have unique resources and competencies that are complementary in the processing of work. On this basis it must be acknowledged that everyone's contributions are necessary in achieving the goals of the group as a whole. The effort to release human potential and latent human resources is the enabling mechanism that can ensure that different jobs are done in the organization by the individual person through collaboration with others.

"*Outer Democracy*" is, on the other hand, based on the belief of governance by externalized authorities. The need for superior authorities in charge of subordinates is caused by fear and mistrust about the ability of the individual human being to act responsibly and to be trustworthy through the leading of one self in the workplace. This fear and anxiety of the people's ability to function and operate as responsible and independent persons at work, is the basis for the creation of an organizational regime based on control and command. Consequently the superior authorities confirm their prejudiced misconceptions about people by controlling and commanding the individuals through controllers and control-systems in the workplace. In that way these authorities will think that by controlling the people, they will prevent the anticipated unpredictable and undesirable consequences that would occur if people were allowed to operate as free persons in the workplace.

The best known example of "*Outer Democracy*" is "*Representative democracy*". "*Representative democracy*" is an indirect organizational form of governance that consists of two separate parties in the workplace. The first party is made up of representatives of the employer in the form of managers, supervisors, bosses, chiefs, etc. The representatives of the employees, typically union officials, shop stewards and committee reps act as intermediaries between the employees and the employer. The employer's representatives are employed in the organization in ranked positions as superiors, while the representatives of the employees are elected through voting processes. The superiors have a leadership-role as superiors in ruling and governing the subordinates in daily operations, and another role in representing the employer as adversaries in dealings with the employees' representatives bargaining about wages, working hours, work rules and safety measures.

The representatives of the employees represent the interests of their labour union and the interests of the union members. The system of "*Representative democracy*" is regulated through legislation and specific contracts signed between the "workplace parties" (the employer and the union) regarding working conditions. This system of bargaining between

these adversarial workplace parties, has created a distinct culture and relationship between the representatives of both sides. The system is maintained through a specific structure of power-sharing that gives the "people's party" a voice about workplace issues. Labour legislation in most countries however, gives the employer the absolute right to make decisions, except on issues that are specifically negotiated into a collective agreement (the corporate right to govern). Corporate governance is therefore dominated by the employer in cases where the representatives of the two parties does not reach agreement on issues and gives the employer the upper hand in contract negotiations. This is the nature of "*Representative democracy*" in the workplace.

In "*Representative democracy*" the representatives of each group or party have executive power to make and impose decisions. The people are then obliged to obey these decisions, and lack any real influence on the decision-process. People do have a voice in the election process, but that is not the same as having influence over decisions affecting their jobs. Against this background it can be asserted that "*Representative democracy*" is in a wasy democratic and represents the "*Rule of the people*" because their representatives are involved in what appears to be a cooperative process. However "*Representative democracy*" is anti-democratic because of the non-participation of the people in the decision-making process affecting their working lives. This type of "*democracy*", with its centralization of power in the hands of a few will eventually lead to a certain degree of empowerment for the appointed individuals on the board of representatives. For the people who are left standing outside this representative system, however, their exclusion will reinforce a sense of disempowerment and powerlessness. This delusionary effect on the people's motivation is contrary to the values required for the design and implementation of a "*DemoCratic Workplace*" through a "*participatory strategy*".

The author Wanda Marie Pasz is a specialist in the area of workplace democracy. She has written several papers on the subject, and I will refer to some of hers reflections and perspectives about workplace issues from USA and Canada. She writes:

> "*There is a general assumption that workplace democracy is achievable through unionization. But this isn't so. Unionization, in North America, doesn't even create representative democracy in the workplace, much less real participatory democracy. Indeed, in North America, the objective of the legal framework that governs union-management relations is to control workers and ensure that they accept their subordinate status in the workplace. Yes, the law does give workers certain rights but there's a big trade off - freedom, equality, democracy.*
>
> *I think it's important for people to understand that this misconception of the unionized workplace as a workplace democracy, is a major impediment to people getting their heads around what workplace democracy really is. In a sense, this misconception is similar to the one about those employee participation programs where people assume that because management is now asking workers what they think or involving them in decision-making, that's what workplace democracy is about. Of course we know that this isn't the case, as management is still "in charge" in a hierarchical structure.*
>
> *This is particularly so in North America where unionization of the workplace had nothing to do with workplace democracy. Our labour laws were, in fact, implemented to prevent such a thing from ever happening. I think this is somewhat different from the situation in Europe where unions actually have some "representative" status on*

corporate boards and are somewhat more involved in joint decision-making but of course, this is not workplace democracy either although it is a little bit more participatory than the North American model.

In getting this picture in its right perspective we can take a short look on the history of union-management relations in North America.

Most people are at least dimly aware that the situation of working people in the century following the industrial revolution was not a particularly pleasant one. Workers lived and worked in dreadful conditions, exploited by ruthless factory owners who saw themselves as part of a superior class (not just in terms of money but morally superior as well). Opposition, in the form of collective action, to the "factory system" began early in the 1800's. Workers protested not only their pitiful wages, long hours and unsafe working conditions but also the hierarchical system of management which required them to submit to the authority of overseers or foremen. Apart from their often brutal supervisory methods, a major issue for workers during the 1800's was the idea of having to subordinate oneself to others. This seemed incongruous with the democratic ideals of the newly-founded American republic. Many compared their situation to that of the African slaves which were still in use in the American south during this time. The term "wage slavery" was widely used to describe the new workplace paradigm that had established itself in the industrial era.

More and more workers formed unions to press for better conditions but divisions quickly developed about what the focus of these unions should be. Some advocated a broad socio-economic agenda that included worker control of the workplace, but others stopped short of this, taking the view that unions should limit their efforts to pressing for improved wages, shorter hours and more equitable work rules. This position was staunchly advocated by the tradesmen's or "craft" unions which were more powerful and better organized than other unions of this era (because of their skills, the tradesmen were somewhat better off than unskilled workers, had marginally more autonomy in the workplace, were more accepting of capitalism and were beginning to see themselves as having more in common with the entrepreneurs than the unskilled workers). By the latter part of the 19th century this "business unionist" philosophy became dominant within the North American labour movement and its leading institution, the American Federation of Labor.

Many voices continued to call for worker control of industry and democratization of the workplace but increasingly, they were vilified and brutally repressed by business, government agencies and the business-oriented unions. At the same time, the "scientific" management methods of Frederick Taylor and his acolytes reinforced hierarchical relations in the workplace, set up bigger, more complex hierarchies and introduced more effective methods of domination. Opposition to these developments continued but increasingly the focus of "organized labour" became wages, hours and safety. The hierarchical workplace structure became a given. It actually became something of an imperative - something that would help businesses to thrive and prosper (because of the increases in productivity that Taylor's methods enabled) and was also in line with the corporatist value system which was fast becoming the dominant ideology in the US. The interests of business came first and if those interests were best served by maintaining strict order and discipline in the workplace, then so

it should be. The business unionists bought into this belief system, and so did the large portion of workers who were not unionized.

The depression of the 1930's spawned a wave of workplace activism, strikes and union organizing by unions that were not completely onside with the business unionist philosophy. The intensity of labor unrest and renewed interest in socialism during this period prompted US President Franklin Roosevelt to introduce the labor laws which became the foundation of our current system of labour-management relations. These reforms, called the Wagner Act, gave workers and unions certain rights and imposed certain obligations on their employers. For instance, employers now had to negotiate with a union once a majority of workers joined one (in the past, workers could join unions but employers were under no obligation to negotiate contracts with them). Unions and employers were required to engage in collective bargaining and to negotiate in "good faith" to make a collective agreement. The right to strike was protected by law (but during a very narrow period at the end of a collective agreement) and disputes over the interpretation of collective agreement clauses or unfair treatment of workers were to be taken to binding arbitration (a quasi-judicial procedure that was expected to be faster and more equitable than going through the courts). Similar legislation was passed in Canada in 1948.

It's important to note that none of these labor law reforms included any provision for workplace democracy. In fact, an important aspect of these reforms was the recognition in law that management retained the right to manage its enterprise as it saw fit subject only to what it might concede in collective bargaining. As far as I know, no union has ever proposed in collective bargaining the implementation of a democratic structure within the workplace or challenged the hierarchical structure of workplace relations. To this day, every Canadian collective agreement contains a standard clause - "reservation of management rights" - which gives the employer the right to manage the workforce as it sees fit.

The reason that there was nothing about workplace democracy in the Wagner Act or its Canadian equivalent, is that workplace democracy was what North American business and political leaders feared the most. It sounded a lot like communism and, as the post war era dawned and the cold war between the west and the Soviet bloc heated up, nothing was more hated and feared in North America than communism. Fear of creeping socialism compelled FDR to pass the Wagner Act. The Canadian parliament passed its own similar legislation a decade later because of near obsessive fears by leading politicians that a socialist revolution was just around the corner (a huge wave of strikes swept through Canadian industries in 1947-48). Keeping order on the shop floor also became critically important in the post war era to support American (and Canadian) industrial policy which aimed to flood the world with consumer goods (and flood corporate treasuries with profits) - productivity and efficiency were essential in this endeavour. Strikes and other disruptions in the workplace had to be discouraged and blind obedience on the part of workers to workplace authority figures were encouraged in a number of ways.

The new legislation prohibited any form of workplace protest other than strikes that could occur during a narrow window after their collective agreement expired and negotiations reached impasse. Once signed off, workers were expected to be content with what was in their agreement. Agitating for more or for things they didn't win at

the bargaining table was forbidden. Wildcat strikes, sit downs and other work refusals were dealt with harshly (workers could be fired, union leaders could be fined and jailed). Insubordination (refusal to carry out an order or instruction) was a capital offence punishable by immediate dismissal. Although the legislation didn't spell it out explicitly, the hierarchical structure was now firmly in place and even sanctioned by law.

Government agencies, Ministers of Labour and other influential public officials promoted the subservience of unionized workers by preaching about labour-management partnership. It was quite an unequal partnership but one from which all parties would benefit if everyone knew their place. Business leaders and their managers knew best how to run the business. They would do the thinking and planning and manage the business. Workers would carry out their managers' instructions, work quickly and productively. The business would prosper and everyone would win. This was basically the bargain that was put to working people and their union leaders: Do a good job, obey the boss, don't trouble yourselves with politics and deep thoughts and you will receive decent pay, health benefits and pensions and secure employment. As an added bonus, it would also bring peace (the thinking being that as we spread American ideology and consumer goods around the globe, all of the world's problems - including war - would be solved).

A great deal of effort was expended by government on co-opting union leaders into this partnership. Union leaders who cooperated were rewarded with appointments to prestigious commissions and panels and were hailed by government leaders as forward-thinking and patriotic. Most got on board willingly. Those who weren't so easily led were vilified, accused of being communists or communist sympathizers - the mere accusation was enough to ruin reputations and careers that had taken a lifetime to establish. Through this kind of coercion, government officials were able to ensure that only union leaders who saw things their way rose to positions of power within the purported labour movement (which really ceased being a movement at about this time).

Once in place, government leaders wanted to ensure that "right thinking" union leaders stayed in place. Since unions were, by definition, democratic associations of workers it was necessary to ensure that they did not actually fall into the hands of workers. God only knew what might happen then. Although unionized workers adjusted to this new partnership model quite readily, there were still holdouts (especially in Canada where resentment of American unions and their business-oriented philosophy ran hot right through to the 1970's). If these commies and radicals ever got elected and took control of a major union, well there was no telling where things might end up. So government leaders encouraged and rewarded "strong" leadership among union officials. A good union leader was one who kept the members under control and commanded respect or fear or both. Although union members had the legal right to vote on things like whether to accept a collective agreements or take certain grievances to arbitration, it was expected that their leaders would tell them what was best and they'd go along. Union leaders could be as persuasive as they needed to be. If that meant the use of threats and violence, so be it. American and Canadian law enforcement officials were remarkably tolerant of strong arm tactics by union officials and, for a very long time, showed a surprising lack of concern about the links between organized crime and many major unions.

In many unions, a president who knew how to be a "strong leader" could expect to rule for life or as long as he wanted to and to ensure that a hand-picked successor was elected to take his place if he chose to step down. Election rules and governance practices were modified to ensure that no one stood a realistic chance of unseating the ruler or his circle of vice presidents and other executives. Unions became bureaucratized as thousands of advisors, lawyers, business agents and other staffers were hired to administer collective agreements, attend at arbitration hearings and so on. These people were loyal to the ruling leaders and worked actively to make the leaders look good and ensure that troublemakers were gotten rid of. Union corruption became rampant. Union offices were plagued with practices like nepotism and wasteful spending. Union presidents jetted around in private aircraft and held lavish conventions in exotic resorts. Some became mixed up with the organized criminals who looted union benefit and pension funds. Laws that required union democracy were poorly enforced (in Canada, these laws don't even exist). Workers who were fired or beaten up because they advocated taboo subjects like union or workplace democracy had no recourse or protection. Gradually, the subject just sort of disappeared completely.

Ideologically, this new (post WW2) breed of union leaders and their followers were in step with business leaders and managers. They were firm believers in "management's right to manage". (Interestingly, even in the great social upheaval of the 1960's, there was no real talk of workplace democracy or union democracy. The union leaders of that era were staunch conservatives, opposed to the black civil rights movement and the women's equality movement).

Today, most North American unions pay lip service to union democracy. They all claim to be democratic but, with only a handful of exceptions, they aren't. With the evolution of the Internet, union democracy groups have sprung up in many large unions but all have met with a wall of opposition from union leaders, government agencies and the so-called labour movement (really more of a "labour establishment"). Most see the kinds of reforms that the union democrats advocate as unrealistic and naive. After a decade of very intense online and offline activism, union democrats have had no real success and have found themselves stymied at every turn. Union leaders have taken further steps to insulate themselves from democracy-seeking members some of whom have not been deterred by firings, threats, violence and other forms of persuasion.

How likely is it that union leaders who have this most undemocratic mindset are going to advocate for workplace democracy? Not bloody likely. In fact, I can't think of a single union leader on this continent who has ever done so or who ever will. Union leaders who themselves sit at the top of a hierarchy, are not about to advocate for the elimination of hierarchy in the workplace. Such a thing would be unimaginable and anyone bold enough to suggest it would be laughed off the podium - not just by managers and businessmen but by union leaders.

The hierarchical structure is so deeply ingrained in our consciousness that it's hard for people to think of the workplace without it. Even as we become more and more aware of the downside of hierarchical relations, we just can't shake the monkey off our backs. We continue to try hard to wedge democratic practices into the autocratic

system and hope that some good will come of this - participative management, employee centred management, open door policies and other human resources management innovations are all half-baked attempts at democratizing the cell block and making the prisoners feel a little bit free.

Union leaders similarly can't even grasp the subject. I'm not sure if they're conscious of it, but I think they also fear workplace democracy because in a truly democratic workplace, there will be no need for union leaders with large salaries, big cars, fancy offices and legions of loyal apparatchiks. If there's democracy in the workplace, the workers will determine what's fair. Indeed, there will no longer be "workers" in the conventional sense since the role of people in a democratic workplace will change from obedient servant to empowered contributor. A lot of fat cats are going to be looking for other things to do if that happens.

So union leaders and their fans have their own definition of workplace democracy. For them, workplace democracy is something that happens when workers are allowed to vote for a union. This is what the Employee Free Choice Act is about – it's a law that makes it somewhat easier for workers to unionize and that's all that it's about. While voting for a union (or anything for that matter) is a democratic act, it's not exactly workplace democracy. It doesn't give workers any more say in how their workplace is run and certainly doesn't do away with the hierarchy of authority or the obligation to be subservient. In fact, once in a union the workers may find themselves subject to a boat load of undemocratic practices both at work and in the union hall.

Most other pro-union people operate under the mistaken assumption that joining a union furthers workplace democracy because there is this belief that unions are democratic. Once in a union, the members can press for whatever they want. If enough of them are in a union, the greater their leverage, the more likely they are to achieve whatever they want to achieve. So presumably if they want a non-hierarchical workplace, they can achieve it. This view ignores a lot of unpleasant realities however - like the fact that no union leader on this side of the globe would ever permit members to press for real workplace democracy, or that most employers can ignore workers' demands with threats of business closures or other activities. Most academics have little understanding of how union-management relations actually operate "on the ground" and have fanciful notions about unions and their relationship with their members. It's not surprising that workplace democracy isn't high on any of their agendas and most, if they were honest, would tell you that such things couldn't possibly happen in our world. There would be chaos. It would be a big fiasco - the entire economy would grind to a halt.

The irony of this is that the entire economy is grinding to a halt already and the only thing that might save us from economic ruin is...workplace democracy. With the capitalist/corporatist (they're actually two quite different things but most people use them interchangeably) ideological myth-book in tatters and the air thick with talk about sustainability and the need for a more humane and balanced economic order, the time has never been better to promote this "DemoCratic Workplace" concept. If we want sustainability, we must abandon the corporatist notions of maximum profitability, limitless consumption, ever increasing production of all kinds of stuff. If these old priorities are abandoned then there is no further need or use for Mr. Taylor's scientific management, or the hierarchies of authority or management

methods designed to keep reluctant workers tethered to their machines. If enterprises are expected to be mindful of their impact on people and communities, then people and communities must play a part in deciding how those enterprises operate, what they do, how they do it... and all of this means that we will need ways of working together that no longer involve imposed decisions. The situation seems to cry out for workplace democracy - the real kind."

4. Power-structure and organizational structure in the workplace.

In my earlier paper "*A change from leadership (vertical power-structure) to leadingship (horizontal power-structure) at work. The theory and practice*" in 2006 I presented a conceptualization of the relationship between "power-structure" and "organizational structure". The following is an extract about this model:

"The organizational structure in a company is a reflection of its power-structure. The shapes and forms of organizational structures are a consequence of the actual power-principles that govern the distribution of empowering authority (the right to make decisions) in the organization.

When a vertical power-structure is chosen the organization will automatically form a hierarchical and authoritarian organizational structure. When a horizontal power-structure is chosen the organization will form an egalitarian and humanitarian organizational structure. In other words the power-structure is the shaper of the organizational structure and the organizational structure is the reflector of the power-structure.

When leaders of organizations talk about self-directed teams or work-groups as a means of developing horizontal organizations, but keep the vertical power-structure intact, the team or group will be organized in a hierarchical manner with superiors (in the form of team-leaders or group-managers) and subordinates (as team-members). These organizations may believe that they are developing new ways of working, but in reality they are just modifying their current organizations with new hierarchical lines. Flattening the hierarchy does not make the organization and the workplace less vertical even if the number of hierarchical levels is reduced. The power-structure in the organization continues in the same manner with the same practices as before. When however, a horizontal power-structure is established in the organization, the organizational structure must be based on relationships with equality and mutuality between people who are now all at the same level. That shift will require a fundamental change in how we relate to and view each other, and will be the starting point for the end of our superficial playing around with lines on organizational charts.

What do we mean by the term "power-structure"? A power-structure in an organization refers to:

How power is distributed and shared:

1. *Distribution of power between functions and levels.*
2. *Sharing of power between persons.*
3. *The decision making system.*

Vertical power-structure:

1. *The distribution of power according to management level (top – upper – middle – front line – team) in the organization.*
2. *The sharing of power according to positions and ranks.*
3. *A system of external governance in decision-making (decisions are set outside of the person by people of superior rank).*

Horizontal power-structure:

1. *The distribution of power among all people in the workplace.*
2. *The sharing of power according to the respective responsibility area of the person based on his or her competence.*
3. *A system of internal governance in relation to decision-making (decisions are made by the individual person or collaboratively with others where the people always operates as equals and peers).*

When the vertical power-structure is chosen, the organizational structure is shaped by the vertical principle that there has to be someone (a superior) who has the authority to impose decisions on other persons (subordinates) and those other persons must submit to the decisions made by the superior person. In executing decisions on behalf of others, the superior acts on the authority vested in his or her leadership-role. This formal and externalized authority enables the leader to impose decisions on others.

When the horizontal power-structure is applied, the organizational structure is shaped by the horizontal principle meaning that every person in the workplace has individual authority to make autonomous decisions within his or her respective area of responsibility. All persons function independently and responsibly in relation to their own actions or in collaboration with the others, and relate to their leadingship-role as real participants and accountable partners in adding value to the objectives of the enterprise. People relate to each other as equals and peers on the same level.

The term "organizational structure" relates to a number of activities within an organizaton:

1. *How work processes are organized.*
2. *How work areas are described*
3. *The description of jobs.*
4. *How competencies are identified.*

When the vertical power-structure is implemented, the organizational structure becomes hierarchical and authoritarian. Superiors and subordinates form a line - a chain of command and control - which winds its way into work-processes and influences the way we perceive and describe job functions, job acions and working

competencies. These considerations, in turn, influence how we value work and assumptions that we make about the importance (or lack thereof) of specific functions within an organization . "Hierarchical" refers to the relationship between persons as superiors and subordinates, while "authoritarian" refers to a top-down approach to decision-making.

When a horizontal power-structure is implemented, the organizational structure becomes egalitarian and humanistic. Work-processes are organized with the individual person as the core resource in enabling the "the heart and brain" of the organization. Individuals work together as equal members in individual and joint efforts performing as contributors in the delivery of services. "Egalitarian" refers to the relationship between persons as equals and peers, while "humanistic" refers to the belief in the dignity and worth of all people and the commitment to their welfare.

As I have mentioned, it is essential to understand the coherence between power-structure and organizational structure and how the power-structure in an organization will inevitably be enforced through its organizational structure. The organizational structure is the power-structure in practice. Therefore when considering how organizations function, we must be aware of the significant connection between power-structure and organizational structure. This is especially important if and when we set out to design structures intended to create a new reality at work.

As long as the power-structure is unchanged and remains intact in the organization, working conditions in the organization will correspondingly remain unchanged. The vertical power-structure will preserve itself irrespective of token efforts intended to enable change. Changing the vertical power-structure to horizontal is the only real option that will enable substantial transformation of the workplace. It is pointless to talk about transforming how we can relate to each other in new ways and how we can work in new ways as long the fundamental principles of power remain untouched."

In relation to the distinctions between "*power-structure*" and "*organizational structure*" we can apply this model in the description of "*Participatory Democracy*" and "*Representative Democracy*". We will find the following characteristics;

A "*Participatory Democracy*" will have a horizontal power-structure with an "*egalitarian and humanitarian organizational structure*". A "*Representative Democracy*" will have a vertical power-structure with a "*hierarchical and authoritarian organizational structure*". In designing and implementing a "*participatory strategy*" to pursue an "*Inner Democracy*", the necessary requirements will consequently demand a horizontal approach in the structuring of power and an egalitarian approach in the structuring of the relations within the organization.

5. Design of the "DemoCratic Workplace".

The overall objective of the design process will be to develop a:

Shared Conception of Reality between all the people involved and engaged in the process of design and the ensuing process of implementation.

The design phase is where we prepare the blueprint or system specification for the new workplace reality, while the implementation phase is where we adapt and apply our blueprint with its vision and values in practical ways that will help us get our work done.
In developing a Shared Reality Conception between the individuals, the required driver will be the application of a "*participatory strategy*", as follows;

1. Personal involvement of everyone in the process from the start.
2. Personal identification and engagement from everyone.
3. Personal responsibility from everyone.
4. Personal ownership by everyone throughout the process.
5. Personal and mutual understanding of the direction and commitment towards the common goal.

The essential belief in designing the "*DemoCratic Workplace*" is that communication and collaboration between people can only be achieved if and when the people develop a shared conception of their desired workplace reality. If people are rigid and inflexible in their own individual beliefs, convictions and perceptions of reality, they will be inclined to counteract and exclude each other's conceptions instead of embracing and including different reality conceptions in expanding their owns views of that reality. It is essential, therefore, in the design phase to establish openness in seeing the workplace reality as a whole consisting of many different conceptions by many different people. Our perception of reality is the basis for our subjective beliefs and assumptions. Acknowledging and understanding of the reality that includes all individual points of view, is something that will lead to a common understanding of our reality as a whole. In my paper "*A change from leadership (vertical power-structure) to leadingship (horizontal power-structure) at work. The theory and practice*", I summoned up the significant value in the creation of a *Shared Reality Conception*. There I state:

> "*People view their reality differently as individuals with different conceptions and perceptions. But when people are able to communicate as persons on the same level, they will evolve a joint view of their reality on the basis of a vision that has emerged and emanated through real participation among all the individuals in the organization. The people will reach a common conception of their reality the moment the individual person accepts and acknowledges others conceptions of the reality as an integral part of his or her own reality. This is because a shared reality conception that develops through communication will inevitably create awareness inside the individuals as members and partners of the same reality context. In other words, a collective conception of reality occurs when individuals accept that others perceptions of their reality can be as real and true as their own. This is a fundamental factor in creating a joint effort in shaping a common consciousness in the organization as a base for integrated and coordinated individual actions and collaboration between the individuals*".

The development of a Shared Reality Conception among people in the workplace can be done through a survey where the individual employees are able to present and share their personal experiences about working conditions and work-situations. The answers are provided in writing anonymously. The topics are selected by the people and are organized within a questionnaire format. Topics may include:

* The process of leading oneself and others.
* Access and flow of information
* Communication – understanding and being understood.
* Staffing and recruiting.
* Organization of work-processes.
* Coordination of work activities
* Competence coverage.
* Application of competence.
* Responsibility and independence.
* Personal freedom and mutual trust.
* Participation, involvement and engagement.
* Structure and distribution of power.
* Knowledge sharing and experience exchange.
* Building, developing and maintaining relationships.
* Collaboration and cooperation.

When the questionnaires are completed, the responses are analyzed by an impartial external specialist and a report is prepared showing the range and scope of individual conceptions in the workplace.

The next step would involve arranging an assembly of all the people where they can review the report together and understand and accept their common conception of their workplace reality. Through this acknowledgement the people will be able to create a shared vision of their desired workplace reality (by sharing and accepting their views and those of others based on their acceptance of the worthiness and truthfulness of the views expressed). The people will then be on their way in shaping their common future together. When they have obtained the necessary insights from each other's perceptions of reality, they will be ready to start implementing the practical measures required to achieve a genuine *"DemoCratic Workplace"*.

The design phase can begin with a less comprehensive methodology than a questionnaire. It's possible, for instance, to get started with an assembly of the people to discuss a selection of more general questions based on the topics noted above. The assembly can be arranged as a workshop to develop a blueprint for a *"DemoCratic Workplace"*:

Program

Target group:

Everybody.

Content:

*Discussion of ideas and values for a New Workplace Reality.
*Investigating and understanding our own perceptions, values and assumptions about the potential of developing a true "DemoCratic Workplace".

Questions:

1. Can you envision a workplace where all people are empowered by their own abilities to be self-directing and able to make autonomous decisions within their own respective area of work?

 2. Can you envision a workplace *without* superiors and subordinates where people no longer have power over others by virtue of their positions and ranks?

3. Can you envision a workplace reality where the power to make decisions is linked exclusively to personal competence and not to positions and ranks?

4. How do you envision your personal transition towards a workplace where all people relate to each other on an equal footing and in mutually beneficial ways?

5. How do all of you together envision your transition as a group in organizing your workplace, where all people share power in personal and group decision-making?

The answers can be summed up in a "*Workplace Review*" where comments, ideas and experiences can be captured. This document will be the cornerstone for creating and building a new workplace reality based on a "*participatory strategy*".

6. Implementation of the "DemoCratic Workplace".

During the implementation phase we can apply the inputs from the workplace survey in organizing work-processes, working-relations, working-areas, competence adaptabilities, coordination of functions and tasks, and compatibilities between individual competence and personal responsibilities. These elements can be incorporated within the frame of an egalitarian and humanitarian organizational structure where people relate as peers and equals. The overall values of an egalitarian community or society can be explained as follows:

> *Personal autonomy and individual empowerment through internalized authority are the core driving force in attaining personal and common goals and objectives. Each person is responsible to one self and assumes and shares responsibility with others for the achievements and performance of the group as a whole. Recognition for one's contribution can be a driver in optimizing personal contributions, but must not be used to gain personal power and advantage over others. No individual or group controls more access to wealth, power and resources than any other. Positions and ranks are non-existent.*

The structure of the egalitarian organization can be divided in the following steps:

1. Clarifying and describing of organizational functions:

- Technological
- Financial
- Production
- Material
- Information systems
- Safety and security
- Marketing
- Administration
- Human relations
- Purchase
- Customer relations

2. Clarifying and describing individual responsibility in people's areas of work:

- Function
- Tasks
- Performance
- Role
- Competence

3. Clarifying and describing workplace relations:

- Work-schedules
- Work agreements
- Work collaboration
- Work coordination

The methodology used in structuring the egalitarian organization is a concept called *"Leading-ship"*. *"Leading-ship"* is consistent with the principles of a *"participatory strategy"*. The vision of *"Leading-ship"* is as follows:

> *"Leading-ship" is a force of internalized willpower generated by the person from inside. In comparison, the notion of "Leader-ship" is a force of externalized power imposed on the person from outside. "Leading-ship" is the expression of freedom and trust exercised by the individual human being as an autonomous person. "Leader-ship" is on the contrary the expression of subjugation to a superior authority in control of the individual human being as a subordinated person.*

> *"Leading-ship" acknowledges the people's rights to self-direction within their respective field of work. "Leading-ship" means that people use their will-power and work-power in their contribution to the pursuit of common goals whether alone or together with others. The participative character of "Leading-ship" establishes and maintains the values of personal influence, involvement, engagement and encouragement that are critical factors in motivating creativity, productivity and*

efficiency among people. Self-determination is the main outcome of leading through participation, where the individual makes self-directed decisions within his or her own area of responsibility.

The significance of "Leading-ship" is power-sharing. Sharing of power through competence-based authority enables everyone to become empowered leaders throughout their actions in their respective workplaces. When the people are in charge of their own leading-processes, they are able to assume responsibility for themselves and share responsibilities with the others in the workplace community.

"Leading-ship" requires that people are treated on the basis of <u>their person</u> - as unique and equal individual human beings – as opposed to being treated on the basis of their positions and ranks. "Leading-ship" enforces consequently a system where people are getting self-organized through a structure that acknowledges and grants individuals their right to work and function as sovereign and autonomous human beings. This self-organized structure will provide and ensure equal and mutual access to personal freedom and individual independence for everybody.

"Leading-ship" in practise amounts to "getting things done through oneself in collaboration with others". The model of "Leading-ship" is therefore based on the principles:

1. *The right to lead one self.*
2. *The duty to support each other in the leading of themselves.*

The outcome of "Leading-ship" in the workplace is that everyone in the organization, gets their work done through their independent and responsible actions as equal members and partners of the organizational community. In the process of "Leading-ship" people are treated as the persons they are and not as the persons others have decided they should be".

The "*Leading-ship*" approach can be the construction tool for implementing an action oriented improvement process for change in the workplace that includes the following steps:

1. Reflection (identifying and analyzing shared concerns regarding the results of the earlier mapping of views from the individuals).
2. Planning (identification of critical improvement activities).
3. Action (implementation of improvement measures - how, when and whom).
4. Observation (following the progress of those actions).
5. Evaluation (critically analyzing the results with a focus on deviation between identified problems and implemented solutions).
6. Re-examination (reinforcing new actions to strengthen further improvement activities).

While "*Leader-ship*" is a task connected to the person as a "*leader*", "*Leading-ship*" on the other hand is a function connected to the "*process of leading*". "*Leading-ship*" as a function can be described as follows:

A. Leading of processes at work (Assuming personal responsibility for making decisions and for the outcomes of one's own choices and actions).

*B. Leading-ship relationships (T*o achieve, perform, contribute and share power. Gaining mutual trust and personal freedom by self-directing one's own work-process and working situation).

C. Leading-ship role (Performer of services).

D. Leading-ship resources (The resources people require in enabling the production of goods and delivery of services to customers).

E. Leading-ship competence (The necessary personal knowledge, skills and capacities in the production and delivery of services).

F. Leading-ship learning (Learning and education for everyone. Development of the individual competence on the job, and participating in activities to develop human relation abilities).

7. Conclusion.

Democratization of the workplace requires that the people in the workplace identify their vision, principles, values, goals, and develop a shared understanding as to how the "*DemoCratic Workplace*" can and should be organized. The ultimate design and implementation will be the practical outcomes of the people's shared beliefs on how the individual human being in the workplace should be viewed and valued. Our reality is an inevitable consequence of our perceptions and beliefs. Therefore a change of practice at work will first emerge when we are willing to change our belief system – from our current reality to our desired reality. Every new creation in history has evolved because we as human beings have been ready and attuned to replace old belief-systems with new belief-systems.

 "*Inner Democracy*" can lead us towards envisioning the "*DemoCratic Workplace*" as a community with equal dignity for all people regardless of their differences or similarities. The "*Equal Dignity Organization*" as an organizational framework for the "*DemoCratic Workplace*", bases its structures and processes on the creation and construction of a shared conception of reality. This common reality conception is dependent on the structure of the relationship between the people and their processes of communication and collaboration. To enable a joint reality conception where people are reciprocally connected at work, people must relate to each other as equals and peers on the same level in their organization (in contrast to superiors and subordinates above and below each other). The organization must therefore set the standard of mutuality and equality as the core principle in human relationships, in which people can conceive and regard each other as human beings on equal footing.

A shared and common conception of our Workplace Reality is the basis of cooperation, solidarity, collaboration, communication and dialog between people in the workplace, where they view and conceive the same reality based on the existence of an equal dignity

relationship (or level playing field). A shared reality conception depends on tolerant humane attitudes that appreciate and embrace the diversity and the magnitude of human potential in the workplace. The realization and unfolding of latent individual potential through the principles of "*Demos*" and "*Cratos*" in the evolution of the ultimate form of organization, will lead the people and the workplace to a reality context that is in continuous expansion. This expansion will reach far beyond the present conception of the limits of human performance. Our belief-system will be the only limit to what the individual human being is capable of at work and will enable us to expand and reach beyond ourselves in achievements and performance. Nothing more, nothing less.

"So let there be truth in the heart of the people when the common reality is unveiled through shared and mutual manifestation between the enlightened ones. One is all, and all is one".

8. Glossary of terms and phrases.

Autocratic regime: Rule and governance by people dominating other people through superior positions and ranks.

Authority: The power to determine or decide something.

Authoritarian: A person designated as being in charge and given superior power in an autocratic regime.

Competence: Knowledge, skills, ability, capacity and personal interest in a given activity, service or initiative.

Dignity: Personal need for decent and proper treatment as an autonomous human being.

Egalitarian: The organizational relationship between equals and peers.

Equality: Equal access to resources and opportunities to enable personal performance or contribution and to release one's own resources, potential and competencies..

Equal dignity: The equal right for the individual human being to participate in decision processes.

Given responsibility: Responsibility that is delegated or handed down from others.

Hierarchical: The organizational relationship between superiors above and subordinates below.

Humanitarian: A human value that promotes treating all human beings as sovereign and autonomous individuals with the authority to lead or direct themselves.

Inner democracy: Personal authority to make and take individual decisions within one's field of work.

Leading-ship: The ability to self-lead or self-direct ones own activities and decisions or to do so collaboratively with others based on authority generated from inside the individual person (as opposed to authority that is bestowed on the person by a superior or through a job description or rank).

Leader-ship: The duty to lead others based on authority bestowed on a person who is then in charge of subordinated people. .

Mutuality: The reciprocal relationship between individual human beings as equals and peers.

Organizational structure: The formal organization of work processes, work relations and working conditions.

Outer democracy: The rule and governance of authorities outside the individual person.

Participatory democracy: Rule and governance based on participation where everyone is granted the authority to make individual decisions and the ability to influence collective decisions.

Participatory strategy: Involvement and engagement of the individual human being in all aspects of workplace organization.

Personal authority: Authority that comes from within the person, based on his or her competence in a field of endeavour.

Personal ownership: The personal acknowledgement of decisions as one's own.

Personal responsibility: Taking responsibility and feeling responsible for your own choices and decisions, and the consequences of your actions.

Power-structure: The distribution and flow of power throughout an organization, within functions, levels and competencies.

Representative democracy: The rule and governance by representatives of the employer and the employees.

Shared reality conception: Sharing of individual perceptions of reality and pursuit of a joint understanding of reality.

Taken responsibility: When you take responsibility upon yourself and feel responsible for your own actions and the consequences of those actions.

Will-power: The inner energy that drives the individual human being to fulfil her and his own desires and expectations.

Workplace reality: The individual and collective perceptions of people's working circumstances and surroundings. How people understand the workplace, how things get done and the extent to which they are treated fairly.

9.References.

1."None to Command and Control – A New Paradigm for a New Workplace Reality",
   Rune Kvist Olsen, 2006

2."From a vertical and hierarchical order to a horizontal and egalitarian order in structuring
   and shaping power in the organization – Getting things done at work – myth and
   realities", Rune Kvist Olsen, 2006

3."A change from Leadership (vertical power-structure) to Leadingship (horizontal
   power-structure) at work. The Theory and Practice", Rune Kvist Olsen, 2006

4 "A Leadingship Credo in The New Workplace Reality", Rune Kvist Olsen, 2007

5."Peer to peer organizational forms of power", Blog P2P Foundation, Michel Bauwens,
   2007

6. "The Equal Dignity Organizational Concept. A Theoretical Framework in developing The
   Equal Dignity Organization", Rune Kvist Olen, 2008

7. Comments from Wanda Marie Pasz on "Workplace Democracy", 2009

8 "Mastering Self-Leadership: Empowering Yourself For Personal Excellence",
   Charles C. Manz and Christopher P. Neck, 2009