

Title	Job design and industrial democracy: The case of Norway
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Source	Martinus Nijhoff Social Sciences Division
Pub Date	1976
Brief Introduction	<p>The organization of work is under critique in many industrialized countries. Bureaucracy, specialization, repetitive technology, and hierarchical control structures are criticized by politicians, trade unionists, and social scientists. They argue for improved quality of work, for work democratization, and for the humanization of work. This book evaluates Norwegian field experiments in the area of job redesign which started already in 1964. Norway has therefore a lead in experience compared to most other countries, particularly to the United States, where debates and subsequent experiments revolving around the quality of working life and the democratization of work started only in the early seventies. The Norwegian social scientists who left their academic bastions and started action research drew heavily upon the 'open socio-technical system' thinking as developed by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London. This descriptive evaluation study analyzes the job redesign experiments from an industrial democracy perspective and places the experiments in their national political and labor relations contexts. Special emphasis is given to the actual and potential role trade unions can play in shopfloor job design projects. The industrial relations system of the United States is generally used as reference point in this study.</p> <p>The theory guiding the experiments regards work democratization through job redesign as a first step in a bottom-up process of organizational democratization. This book and similar analyses of experiments in Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, and the United States clearly suggest that shopfloor democratization is hardly possible in a hierarchically controlled organization if top management does not create adequate room to maneuver at the base of the organization. The logic of organizational hierarchy runs counter against the logic of a bottom-up democratization strategy. Our current understanding leads to the conclusion that higher organizational levels will have to re-define their power in order to make democratization at the shopfloor possible. Local unions have an important role to play in establishing the conditions which are necessary for job redesign to contribute to industrial democracy. A 'package approach' towards industrial democracy is presented with as main thesis the mutual supportive roles of representative and participative democratization methods in democratization processes. The Norwegian industrial relations system is analyzed according to this line of thought.</p> <p>For me, this book represents the summation and integration of five years of thinking and research. Naturally many people helped with my research and influenced my thinking during this time. I am in particular indebted to the friendly staff of the Work Research Institutes in Oslo and to Jack Barbash of the University of Wisconsin. Barbash's thinking and stimulation have not only greatly influenced this study, but in fact he and Mike Aiken, also of the University of Wisconsin, made it possible for this study to emerge in its current descriptive form.</p>