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DEMOCRATISING THE ECONOMY IN AN ERA OF DISORDERED ORDER

How democratisation can revive the promise of social progress

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DEMOCRATISING THE ECONOMY IN AN ERA OF DISORDERED ORDER

How democratisation can revive the promise of social progress

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of modern democracies, the promise of social progress and a more prosperous and better future has been at the heart of democratic societies.

Since the inception of modern democracies, the promise of social progress and a more prosperous and better future has been at the heart of democratic societies. It served to legitimise the new modern form of democratic decision-making by offering a public that had historically been politically disregarded positive visions for the future. Yet, nowadays this emancipatory reality seems to be lost for an increasing number of people. While the post-WWII world order of the so-called Golden Age consolidated democracies in the Global North by fulfilling its promise of prosperity and stability, the post-Fordist era of financialisation and stagflation that followed gradually eroded the arrangement (Crouch, 2009; Braun, 2020). In this new regime, rising inflation, a general decline in overall economic growth, and a divergence between wages and productivity growth gave way to the erosion of the capital-labour compromise – and with it the democratic promise of social progress for most people (Harvey, 2007; Tauss, 2012).

Under today's financialised economic system, democracies face even greater obstacles to fulfilling the underlying features of social progress, namely distributive justice and political equality (Braun, 2020). With the process of financialisation, in which the financial sector rose from being a mere facilitator of the accumulation process to being the driving engine behind economic growth, decision-making power over investments has been shifted away from democratic institutions. Additionally, internationalisation, constitutionalisation, and power shifts in favour of the executive branch have decreased the influence of parliaments and the scope and depth of democratic control over the last decades. The political scientist Zürn (2021) conceives of the (re)emergence of social spheres that lack democratic ordering principles as a general historical development towards democratic regression.

If we understand the promise of social progress as central to democracy, then we have to ask: How can the (re)democratisation of social spheres and infrastructures that have been excluded or removed from democratic control forge a path towards a more inclusive and prosperous future that contains the promise of social progress?

This question stood at the centre of last year's Innocracy conference "Democratising Democracy", the fifth iteration of Europe's conference on democratic innovation and transformation. Keynote presentations, hands-on workshops, and panel discussions left us with a wide range of thought-provoking and inspiring proposals for how to democratise in and beyond parliaments. To find out more, visit the Innocracy website.

The remainder of this paper sets out to answer this question in four stages: First, the demand for democratisation and social progress is outlined in historical perspective to the general relationship between *pólis* and *oikonomía* in the Golden Age order, the post-Fordist era, and today's era, which we dub "disordered order". Correspondingly, the argument is outlined for why democracies need to be democratised beyond traditional, narrow conceptions of increasing political participation. Next, four guest authors identify key institutions, policy fields, and social spheres that have been excluded or removed from democratic control, and show how they can be (re)democratised by widening, opening up, and ordering democracy. Lastly, we look to the future of our think tank's Innocracy conference, one of Europe's largest conferences on democratic innovation and transformation, and synthesise the broader relevance of reviving the promise of social progress for democracies.

2. DEMOCRATISING THE ECONOMY AND THE PROMISE OF EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL PROGRESS

2.1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PÓLIS AND OIKONOMÍA

Since Aristotle's 'Politics' (Barker, 1968), the relationship between pólis, the sphere of public speech, and oikonomía, the sphere of the household and the economy, constitute the centre of democratic politics (Vogl, 2015). In Aristotle's understanding, the hierarchy between both spheres is clear: Whereas the political sphere's function is to fulfil the common goals of political life, the sphere of oikonomía is subordinated to political ends and is embedded in the form of commonality and reproduction. In fact, oikonomía attains its social role in so far as it is a function of politics. In other words, the political realm should be economic only insofar as it is of political relevance. If we take Aristotle's typology of pólis and oikonomía and use it as a frame to analyse how democracies have lost their promise of social progress historically, three main phases appear in the Western post-WWII democratic history: the Golden age world order, the post-Fordist era, and today's era of disordered order, in which the relationship between pólis and oikonomía has once again been re-negotiated.

2.2. THE POST-WAR WORLD ORDER: THE SO-CALLED GOLDEN AGE AND EMBEDDED LIBERALISM

Until the 1960s, democracies of the so-called 'Golden Age' post-war world order consolidated the promise of social progress in the Global North, taking on the form of a historical compromise between labour and capital. In this 'high wage-high consumption' growth model, a compromise between capital and democratically elected governments was institutionalised on the basis of mutual dependency. This deal assured steady wage growth, collective bargaining rights, and low unemployment – at least for male breadwinners in the Global North – under a broadly Keynesian welfare state (Braun, 2020). In the spirit of Karl Polanyi's (2018) notion that markets are not natural phenomena but historically constructed and tamed by the state, the regime of "embedded liberalism" brought together democracy, technocracy, and capitalism under a strong, regulating state (Braun, 2020; Ruggie, 1982; Tauss, 2012). As a result of the prosperous and relatively stable growth model of the post-war democracies, the promise of social progress towards a better future became reality for many people in the Global North. Crucially, however, the prosperity and freedom in the Global North have not only been founded upon embedded liberalism. They were also consolidated on exploitative and oppressive practices in and towards the Global South (Braun, 2020).

2.3. THE POST-FORDIST ERA: STAGFLATION AND FINANCIALISATION

While the post-WWII Fordist era of the Golden Age stabilised democracies in the Global North with the fulfilled promise of prosperity and stability, the post-Fordist era of financialisation and stagflation that followed gradually eroded this arrangement (Crouch, 2009, p. 382; Braun, 2020). In 1973, the disintegration of the Bretton Woods system with its fixed exchange rates and currency pegs marked the beginning of a new era for most industrialised democracies. In the decades that followed,

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rising inflation and a general decline in overall economic growth in most industrialised countries set the foundation for the erosion of the capital-labour compromise – and with it the promise of social progress for most people (Harvey, 2007; Tauss, 2012). The subsequent dynamic of financialisation amplified that erosion (Duménil & Levy, 2005). Whilst the Golden Age era was founded upon a belief

> ***Under the 'Third Way', promoted by the social democratic governments of the Blair and Clinton administrations of the 1990s, the former belief in a broad terrain of democratic rule and policy space gradually disintegrated under the policy regime of neoliberalism.***

in public democratic infrastructures, the post-Fordist era of stagflation and financialisation paved the way for a new conviction. Under the 'Third Way', promoted by the social democratic governments of the Blair and Clinton administrations of the 1990s, the former belief in a broad terrain of democratic rule and policy space gradually disintegrated under the policy regime of neoliberalism (Braun, 2020). As a result, austerity politics, a private debt boom, and central bank independence evolved into the prime political repertoire of what Colin Crouch (2009) has designated «privatised Keynesianism». In this arrangement, key social spheres and infrastructures were further privatised and removed from democratic control and democratic ordering principles under the chiffre of being 'neutral' or apolitical spheres.

2.4. TODAY'S ERA OF DISORDERED ORDER: A DELEGITIMISED PROMISE OF EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL PROGRESS

Nowadays, a democratic vacuum is present in many social spheres and infrastructures such as the workplace, housing, fiscal policy, monetary policy and central bank planning. This has culminated in an era of disordered order. A crucial characteristic of this era is that power has fragmented between democratic and non-democratic spheres towards a kind of «floating arcanum», as Vogl (2014, p.153) puts it. In this regime, sovereignty has not simply become placeless but relates to the decision-making potential of non-democratically legitimated actors, institutions, and structures whose actions reside in the sphere of disordered order – the in-between of market dynamics and state structures (Vogl, 2014). In a state of disordered order, non-democratically accounted actors do not attain their sovereignty by means of deciding on the state of exception, as Carl Schmitt (1932) conceptualised it. Rather, as Vogl argues, they can directly transform "[their] own risks into the dangers of all others" (Vogl, 2014, p. 153).

Sovereignty has not simply become placeless but relates to the decision-making potential of non-democratically legitimated actors, institutions, and structures whose actions reside in the sphere of disordered order – the in-between of market dynamics and state structures

Nowhere has the era of disordered order played out more evidently than during the Great Recession 2008. During this crisis, central banks instead of governments played the central role in circumventing a breakdown of the financial system. Another example are the quantitative easing programmes of the European central bank that - against the proclamation of central bank independence - have had effects on wealth and income distribution (Adam & Tzamourani 2016).

Nonetheless, while central banks have been and are executing tasks of democratic relevance without being democratically elected institutions, they are limited by their mandate and the instruments at their disposal. The result is a state-market power configuration in which no one is really in charge and decisions are made under conditions of disordered order (Richtmann & Krahé, 2020).

Another example of disordered order has emerged with the trend of financialisation and what Braun (2021) has subsequently called «asset manager capitalism». Within a financialised economic system, democracies face an even greater obstacle to achieving distributive justice, political equality, and the transition to climate-neutral economies (Braun, 2020). The reasons for this are clear: The process of financialisation has transferred decision-making power over investments to shareholders, financial institutions, and growing asset managers such as BlackRock, Vanguard, or State Street (Braun, 2021). These can then externalise risks to democratically elected governments, as has been exhibited in the context of the bailout programmes following the Great Recession.

To put it simply, today's era of disordered order is marked by two aspects: On one hand, non-democratically accounted institutions fulfil crucial tasks of democratic relevance, which stratify and order social spheres and infrastructures. One the other hand, this order attains its disordered character through a lack of democratic control and ordering principles, despite the institutions' central democratic relevance. Therefore, the traditional distinction between the political and the economic is "not sufficient [anymore] to grasp the power structures in the current financial-economic regime" (Vogl, 2015, p. 24).

More generally, Zürn (2021) describes today's trend towards social spheres lacking democratic ordering principles as a general democratic regression. This trend, Zürn argues, has two central dimensions: a shift from majoritarian to non-majoritarian institutions and the underrepresentation of socio-economically marginalised groups. In this account, it is the historical compromise between labour and capital that has brought about a dynamic in which the rise of non-majoritarian

institutions – such as central banks, constitutional courts, and international organisations – have locked in neoliberal policies in most consolidated democracies. Drawing from Zürn's two dimensions of democratic regression, the following will map the social spheres and infrastructures that are in need of democratisation.

3. MAPPING SOCIAL FIELDS AND INFRASTRUCTURES THAT ARE IN NEED OF (RE)DEMOCRATISATION

In order to overcome the floating arcanum of disordered order, we have to find ways of democratically addressing the two trends identified by Zürn (2021), namely the shift towards non-majoritarian institutions and the structural underrepresentation of marginalised groups in democratic decision-making. To do so, we have to go beyond the notion that democratising the economy means improving democracy in terms of widening and opening up the *possibilities of participation*. While the question of who is able to participate in democratic decision-making processes is crucial, it should not divert our attention from the equally important question of what ought (not) to be democratically decided upon. Thus, we can understand the process of democratising the economy as the trias of *widening, opening up,* and *ordering* social spheres that are of public relevance. First, the shift

> ***We can understand the process of democratising the economy as the trias of widening, opening up, and ordering social spheres that are of public relevance.***

from majoritarian to non-majoritarian institutions has to be reversed. In this way, democratising describes a process of expanding democratic principles and practises to social spheres that are so far not stratified in accordance with democratic ordering principles. Secondly, it does matter who sits at the table when politics is being made. Therefore, democratisation means opening up the structures, that is, ending the underrepresentation of marginalised groups in democratic decision-making. Thirdly, democratisation also entails the ordering of social spheres and infrastructures in accordance with democratic principles that so far are situated in the "in-between" of disordered order. Only this way, will we be able to fully democratise the economy, and thereby bring back the promise of social progress to the heart of democratic politics. The following anthology brings together some of the most important and inspiring proposals of democratic innovations and transformations that emerged in the fields of the workplace, housing, fiscal policy, monetary policy as well as democratic representation and participation at the Innocracy 2021 conference "Democratising Democracy".

3.1. EXPANSION: DEMOCRATISATION AS WIDENING

Democratising property: the case for economic democracy by Niklas Angebauer

Democracy vs. property?

Public discourse often treats property and democracy as antagonists. The recent referendum on the property expropriation of the big real estate companies in Berlin is a perfect example: On one hand, you have owners who claim to defend their freedom against "violation" by the public; on the other hand, you have a *demos* calling for their expropriation. It can quickly seem as if the choice was between either property and freedom or their violation in the name of democracy. Property and democracy, in other words, seem to stand in an unresolvable tension.

This conclusion, however, is wrong. It is wrong on both a historical and a normative level. In the liberal tradition, property and democracy are not opposed to one another, but are actually closely connected. They are two parts of the solution to one problem: the problem of how to secure self-determination under conditions of limited resources and conflicting interests. The solution lies in striking a balance between individual and collective forms of *self-determination*, that is, in reconciling property and democracy. This text discusses the available reconciliatory strategies and makes the argument that economic democracy bears the greatest potential.

Property without democracy is incomplete

How is a self-determined life possible, if one must compete with others for the earth's scarce resources? The long and complex history of Western liberalism has developed a twofold answer to this question: On one hand, *individual self-determination* must be secured by means of property. On the other hand, *collective self-determination* must be secured by means of democracy.

Liberal property secures individual self-determination by enabling people to control goods and reap their benefits without outside interference, thereby liberating them from arbitrary rule. However, any distribution of property claims immediately gives rise to regulatory questions: Who can be an owner? What can be owned, and how? And what can and can't owners do with their property? In order to protect potential owners from arbitrary rule (thereby nullifying their self-determination), such questions can only be decided democratically by the potential owners

themselves. In other words, property without democracy is incomplete: It doesn't allow for self-determination, but instead, lets in arbitrary rule through the back door.

To close this back door, liberal property requires liberal democracy. Liberal democracy solves the problem of arbitrary rule by submitting people only to rules they have given themselves in a free and fair collective process. For if you only adhere to rules you have given yourself, then you "remain as free as before" (to use Rousseau's famous phrase). In liberal democracies, property regulation is thus an expression of freedom, or more specifically, of collective self-determination.

This second step of the liberal answer, however, has important consequences for the relation between property and democracy: If property cannot legitimately exist but under conditions of liberal democracy, then democratic regulation is not an external limitation of property, but its *raison d'être*. Therefore, if the *demos* decide to change property regulations, it can thereby change the very meaning of property. Importantly, this is not a radical position; in fact, it is the standard view of the German Federal Constitutional Court. But then, there is no necessary antagonism between property and democracy; reconciling both must be possible. To do so means to strike a delicate balance between individual and collective self-determination.

Reconciling property and democracy: Three models

Political philosophers have come up with three standard models of how to strike this delicate balance: (i) the welfare state, (ii) property-owning democracy, and (iii) economic democracy.

(i) The welfare state uses redistribution to stabilise liberal market societies by mitigating their worst effects and securing everyone a social minimum. Here, the state awards owners all (or most) control rights over the means of wealth production but redirects a fraction of the profit thereby generated towards non-owners. However, as Rawls (2001, p. 138) and others have famously argued, this leaves "the control of the economy and much of political life ... in few hands," effectively privileging property over democracy rather than reconciling both.

(ii) Rawls offers an alternative: "property-owning democracy". This model aims not at a re-distribution of profits, but at changing the ex-ante-distribution of capital: Here, it is the means of wealth production themselves that are to be distributed more equally; for example by a universal "capital endowment" at everyone's 25th birthday (as Thomas Piketty has recently proposed).

By making everyone a shareholder, Rawls' model allows for a more equal distribution of income than the welfare state. However, giving everyone a share isn't the same as giving everyone a say. Just like with the welfare state, Rawls' emphasis is on profit rights, not control rights. This leaves most of the incentive structures of modern companies intact: Most people would still spend a third of their lifetime working in companies that are owned and controlled by absent shareholders. This, however, opens yet another back door for arbitrary rule to creep in, albeit to a lesser degree, since it is now limited to the workplace.

(iii) Therefore, a full reconciliation between property and democracy must go one step further. This brings us to the third model: economic democracy. Just like the second model, it operates with ex-ante distribution; but this time, the major companies are not just owned by anyone, but by the workers of those companies themselves (or, in the case of 'Deutsche Wohnen & Co Enteignen', by tenants, workers, and other stakeholder groups). Neither control rights nor profit rights are awarded to outsiders by default; instead, they remain with the workforce.
By liberating people from arbitrary rule both in their private, political, *and* economic life, economic democracy allows for a full realisation of self-determination. Liberalism's normative promise therefore realises itself only under conditions of economic democracy.

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Pushing for economic democracy

We have reached two conclusions: First, property and democracy are not necessarily antagonistic. Instead, they are necessarily intertwined: Only together can they solve the problem of self-determination. Therefore, if property is to be grounded in self-determination, it must be reconciled with democracy.

Second, since property is about profit and control, a full reconciliation of property and democracy must go beyond securing a social minimum (welfare state) or giving

everyone a share in a society's income (property-owning democracy). Rather, a full reconciliation of property and democracy would imply a more egalitarian distribution of *both* profit and control rights. That is what economic democracy is all about.

Of course, from where we stand now, every push for property-owning democracy – and often even towards a more robust welfare state – bears emancipatory potential, insofar as they aim for a more complete realisation of self-determination. There is a spectrum of forms this struggle can take, from co-determination to steward ownership, workplace democracy and democratic worker cooperatives up to the democratisation of whole sectors. What the case for economic democracy renders visible, however, is that such struggles have a shared normative vanishing point: What they ultimately aim for (or at least *should* aim for) is economic democracy. And yes, it is a long way to get there. But if we can learn one thing from the resounding success of 'Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen', it is that what seemed unthinkable yesterday might become reality tomorrow.

Text by Niklas Angebauer, research associate at the University of Oldenburg and speaker at Innocracy 2021

Changing the narrative: how to speak progressively about economic policies by Carmen Giovanazzi

Recently, my mother asked me how it was possible that the government was going into such massive debt to combat the Covid-19 crisis. She said she herself could not go into debt indefinitely. And who was going to pay for it all? My mother is a smart woman; she is interested in economics. And yet, the fundamental truth that a state budget functions differently and copes with other tasks and challenges than a private household had passed her by.

Looking at news coverage and listening to politicians, this is hardly surprising. Conservative narratives on economic policies dominate public discourse. This began during the financial and euro crises, when Greeks and Portuguese were told to tighten their belts and the Spanish and Italians were failing to do their homework. "You should have just asked the Swabian housewife," then German Chancellor Merkel said in 2008. "She would have told us a life lesson: You cannot live beyond your means in the long run". Then German Finance Minister Schäuble, himself a Swabian, also flirted with this figure of speech.

From a democratic theory perspective, the underlying problem of conservative language dominance is severe. Think of any policy field: Usually, there is public debate on an issue that may feed into policy proposals from political parties or civil society organisations. Depending on the distribution of political power and the willingness for change, those are translated into legislation. This process is dynamic; its outcomes can be reversed according to the power balance of differing political dispositions, and more generally depend on the specific constitution of a democratic system.

In the case of economic policies, however, other rules prevail. This is particularly significant since they are most decisive for the limits and possibilities of other policy fields, for the stability of our societies, and especially, for our very well-being. Both monetary and fiscal policy are largely organised around rule-based and ostensibly apolitical institutions. Whereas monetary policy in the euro area is determined by an independent European Central Bank that primarily pursues the objective of price stability, fiscal policy in the European Union is subject to the Stability and Growth Pact, in particular to the Maastricht criteria (60 percent debt-to-GDP ratio, 3 percent annual government deficit-GDP ratio), and sanctioning options in case of breach.

Linguistically, either technocratic and exclusive manners of speaking or conservative narratives are employed in these policy areas. Unsurprisingly, the former are incompatible with an accessible, democratic exchange of views. The latter, however, fulfil a specific function: Conservative narratives legitimise the existing set of fiscal rules that has poor economic grounding and is based on at best time-specific political, and at worst arbitrary considerations.[1] The illustrative character of these narratives helps to anchor them in the public sphere as an unchangeable necessity and truth. Thereby, the room for democratic exchange on differing fiscal and monetary policy approaches is reduced and any deeper engagement of the interested but nonprofessional public prevented. Moreover, conservative narratives deliver admonitions with a wagging finger and seek to establish a relationship of unequal counterparts. In the financial and euro crisis, they served to create and maintain a

1 The Maastricht criteria were developed in 1981 under President Mitterrand, they suited the economic situation of France at the time and did not come into being due to economic considerations, see: https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/wirtschaftswissen/3-prozent-defizitgrenze-wie-das-maastricht-kriterium-im-louvre-entstand-12591473.html

cleavage between those states with sustainable finance and those with ostensibly excessive debt levels. In such framing, the moral burden is attributed to the latter. After all, if you are in debt, you are guilty.[2]

Debt aversion is particularly strong in Germany, and for its understanding it is worth taking a look at history. In the 19th century, during the height of industrialisation, rapid population growth, and pauperism, the virtue of thriftiness was institutionalised in the form of savings banks. On one hand, they served as hedging institutions for life planning and risk reduction of ordinary people. On the other, they were an educational tool that served to contain the political ambitions of the working classes and sought to integrate them into bourgeois society. Savings deposits were regarded as a "dam against communist desires and revolutionary thoughts, as they arise in those who have nothing to lose" (German State Dictionary 1865). In addition, protestant ethics, especially in its Calvinist imprint, revolves around an ascetic lifestyle including restraint, industriousness, and diligence as means to attain the grace of God. Inversely, abundance, excess, and worldly luxury corresponded to idolatry and sinfulness. If savings were virtuous and austerity was given lustre, incurring debt now meant evading the civic order and became something morally reprehensible in need of punishment.

This historic, influential, and morally charged framing of a creditor-debtor relationship that informs conservative narratives makes any open discussion of different approaches to monetary and fiscal policy practically impossible. The consideration that there might be equivalent goals of monetary policy besides price stability, such as full employment, or that a balanced government budget is not a desirable macroeconomic constitution given a corporate sector that is saving, is no longer amenable to open debate among equals.

However, in terms of policy, times have changed. The economic policy responses to the Covid-19 crisis were very different to the imposed austerity measures after the euro and financial crises: The Stability and Growth pact was suspended, the EU leaders agreed on both a short-term recovery package (Next Generation EU) as well as an increase in the EU budget for 2021-2027, and the ECB rapidly launched further expansive monetary policies (PEPP). Some even speak of a paradigm shift. As expected, conservative voices rapidly called for a quick return to fiscal discipline and emphasised the exceptionality of the measures in face of the crisis. However, the expansionary economic policy responses have revealed a historic moment that progressives should take advantage of. A key task now is to seize this window of opportunity, to expose conservative narratives as false, to counter them, and thus to reopen fiscal and monetary policy to democratic debate.

A first step is to detect errors in the metaphors employed by fiscal conservatives. The Swabian housewife may not spend more than she earns on consumption. But wouldn't she take out a loan to buy a house, especially in an environment of zero interest rates?

A second step is to offer reinterpretations of existing images. The state is not a private household. It is a centralised political organisation that owns or can put at its service the societal capital stock, consisting of infrastructure (bridges, lanes or highways), human capital (teachers, policemen, judges), socially necessary institutions (administration, hospitals, schools), and land. It is a state's duty to not let the capital stock decay but to take care of it and expand it, to the benefit of all of us. This can certainly be done with the money of future generations (government debt), because future generations will also profit from these investments. That is what we understand as generational justice. To achieve this goal, a reform of European fiscal rules is inevitable.

It is a state's duty to not let the capital stock decay but to take care of it and expand it, to the benefit of all of us. This can certainly be done with the money of future generations (government debt), because future generations will also profit from these investments.

Third, we should build our own narratives. For example, we can think of the democratic state as a living body. Each citizen is one of the body's cells, and the heart is democracy. To live, we need not only good organs that fulfil a certain function, that is, state institutions. For the cells to produce energy, we also need a supply of oxygen, that is, financial resources. If too little is invested, cells in certain parts of the body suffer. Maybe our hand becomes numb because it is supplied with too little

2 This notion is strong in German, where the words for debt ("Schulden") and guilt ("Schuld") have the same origin.

oxygen. And maybe that hand is a region that has been let down by the state.

Finally, we should use simple, positive, and confident language to widen the democratic space with respect to economic policies. Whether it is high taxation at the upper income and wealth distribution or higher government spending to combat the climate crisis, we should make sure that our message is understood. Progressives develop ideas for a better living for all. Let us be confident about what we are proposing. For my mother, this made perfect sense.

Text by Carmen Giovanazzi, doctoral student at the University Duisburg-Essen and speaker at Innocracy 2021

3.2. INCLUSION: DEMOCRATISATION AS OPENING UP

Why we need workplace democracy in the platform economy: Lieferando and workplace co-determination by Semih Yalcin

Since the 1970s, massive global labour market transformations, structural changes in the mode of work, and the rise of digital platforms have contributed to the proliferation of precarious labour relations. With the entry of digital platforms into the delivery sector, a new sphere of work relations emerged, marked by a lack of democratic co-determination and clear employment status.

More recently, workers' struggles for workplace democracy have shaken up the platform economy delivery sector in Germany. At Lieferando, I - together with other riders - formed works councils that were able to democratise our workplace. With the new work councils we pushed for improved working conditions with the help of the Food, Beverages and Catering Union (NGG). In the past, Lieferando reacted irritably to the workers' representatives who wanted to enforce their legal claims: A say for the workers was not foreseen and is still not appreciated. While the company itself tries to evade, contain, or at least slow down ambitions for workplace democracy, more and more of the couriers' claims are enforced via company agreements and court rulings. A struggle by us workers in favour of democratising our workplace is necessary because we were able to fight for fairness, transparency and participation - the three pillars of a democratised workplace:

Demanding occupational health and safety measures at work

The safety of us couriers was, as in many delivery companies in the platform economy, one of the biggest problems while I worked for Lieferando. Our occupational health and safety measures had suffered under cost-cutting measures. After the fatal accident of a colleague, the company took tough action. In response to our demands with the works councils, Lieferando agreed on risk assessments, bike checks, and company integration management. The measures are now to be extended to other cities. Nonetheless, while emails to couriers repeatedly stressed how important the health of individuals supposedly was, regulators threatened fines and entity closures until the necessary measures were put in place. Clearly, nothing would have changed in terms of health and safety without the external and internal pressure that we were able to exert by demanding democratic co-determination.

Pushing for official work equipment

Since the founding of Deliveroo and Foodora, the platform logistics industry has faced the question: Who has to provide the work equipment? Given that most couriers brought their private smartphones and vehicles to work, a mixed model seemed to be the solution. Each employee with private work equipment gets compensation and the other part of the fleet gets work equipment from the employer. As the negotiations on wear and tear costs took a long time, some couriers decided to take legal action. Fed up with subsidising the company with their private work equipment, they sought help from NGG. In November 2021, the time had come: The Federal Labour Court ruled that the employer has to provide the work equipment. Now, Lieferando wants to provide every courier with a smartphone by the end of March 2022 and continues to compensate for the private use of bicycles. Again, the courts had to be called upon to make the changes demanded by us; Lieferando itself saw no reason to take action.

Implementing permanent contracts and a living wage

Meanwhile, market competition in Germany had become fiercer and Lieferando needed to become a more attractive employer. One possible measure was to make the employment contracts permanent; after all, the measure did not cost anything. There had already been many such disputes in recent years, and the works councils were putting pressure on management: Since the company was happy to replace workers after the one-year contract expired, the works councils blocked new hires in favour of existing staff. This ultimately led to extra work in recruiting drivers and costly settlements

in court. In August 2021, a far-reaching management decision was made: All couriers in Germany received permanent contracts. Once again, management made a decision to the advantage of the workforce only through our employee and market pressure. Yet not only has the market situation and contract types changed - also the fleet itself. It consists not anymore mostly of students and singles. Nowadays more employees have families including children. This raises the question of social affairs significantly, especially a fair living wage higher than the minimum payment.

Demanding data sovereignty

Currently, the main issue for employee representatives at Lieferando is to secure data sovereignty for the riders who use the so-called Scoober app. How are routes defined? How often are drivers tracked? Which IT-systems are used and what data is generated for the company as a basis for evaluation, business planning, and product improvement? Lieferando has so far refused to cooperate, but following a complaint from a driver is being investigated by the data protection authorities.

Fighting for transparency and co-determination rights

Furthermore, a large issue has been the lack of transparency towards and co-determination rights for the workforce. Importantly, since the workforce is very young and the number of foreign couriers is very high, many riders are not familiar with German regulations and are mercilessly exploited by delivery services. For instance, the company outsourced drivers, not informing them about developments in the company itself or what is done with the data they produce for the company during their shifts. In fact, the lack of transparency about who makes decisions is deliberate. Therefore, enforcing legal standards, transparency towards the workforce, and, with the help of the work council, achieving a living wage for this exhausting job, is the main task for works councils. Their presence in the company will force management to change their strategy towards the fleet, so that the issues facing the workforce will play a more important role than before. This will result in more transparency in the beginning, while more participation has to be demanded and enforced in a later period by the works councils e.g. through participation rights defined in labour agreements.

On a concluding note, employees all over Germany will be up for works council elections, also at Lieferando in 2022. Despite successes so far, democratic practices in delivery services are still very much in their infancy. It is a good example of how the economy can be made fairer and better working conditions achieved through legal means. Participation and democratic principles are crucial in the platform economy because this is also a testing ground for democratically shaping future working environments. That is why democratic practices belong in companies, where they can achieve direct, visible changes for the benefit of employees and set positive examples for democratically opening up the workplace and closing the representation gap.

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Text by Semih Yalcin, chairman of the works council of Lieferando and speaker at Innocracy 2021

If you're not at the table, you're on the menu: Democratising our futures by Ouassima Laabich-Mansour

When I ask younger people around me what to feel and think about the democratic future, then some of the answers are the following: “What future? I am busy coping with the present!” or “I am scared of it, with all the racism, colonial continuities, injustices, high inflation, and bad pension policies” or “I try to stay optimistic, I need to stay hopeful, I mean, what else can I do?”
I tend to identify with the latter response. I grew up in spaces where people were busy making ends meet, navigating structural, institutional, and individual barriers, discrimination, classism, and racism. These people were supporting families across oceans, affected by decision-making processes in different time zones. Therefore, I learned very early on that there are parallel presents

existing, that this here is only one cosmos within many, influencing one another, sometimes unknown or deemed not important, European, white enough for others. I learned to think of pasts in the plural, and therefore to imagine futures in millions of possible pieces - eventually coming together or not.

I argue that the demand for democratisation always has to be combined with an approach that conceptualises futures as a plural. Only in this way do the possible and preferred futures stay open, a presupposition for political action in the present. As the futurologist Sohail Inayatullah (2022) phrases it: "[...] The task is not so much to better define the future but rather, at some level, to 'undefine' the future, to question it". By thinking of futures in many, there's automatically more space for a variety of political demands for how our societies, politics, and environment should look. This allows for political contestation. The plurality of futures also prohibits the continuation of today's cruelty, power dynamics, and injustices - not fully, of course - but the futures become our playground, too and not only of the ones who already set today's agendas, those who organise and uphold power structures and resources.

Acknowledging the plurals, the complexities, and interwoven realities shapes my view on democratising: In order to transform and cultivate democratic, just, and inclusive societies, the many views, complexities, and interwoven realities need to inform the democratic decision-making process itself. By cultivating (through regulations and policies, for example) these futures as the playground of the many, we are forced to negotiate, claim, and acknowledge the different approaches, spaces, and imaginations. We are more willing to find the best paths for all and not only for a few. This is not about idealistically preaching, because inviting people to the table is and will never be enough. Nonetheless, it *matters* who sits at the table when decisions are being made. Therefore, we cannot only hope on the good will of some to invite and include all parts of our society and change discriminatory policies because they like to; we need powerful instruments like policies and regulations to enable the democratisation in and beyond parliaments.

What does this mean for democratic decision-making processes? It starts with the question of how we want to think, who is thinking, in which dimensions, and what about? Does everybody have the same access to relevant information, knowledges, networks, and the same resources to invest time and energy into this process? Do we like to sit on the floor, prefer many languages (including sign language); how are the futures defined; what role do the pasts and presents play in it?

One example of how we could democratise by opening up the futures are Civic Dialogues. In these forums, randomly chosen citizens are invited to come together to discuss and develop policy recommendations for city officials. I have been to these forums many times as a moderator and participant myself. Can you imagine who was accepting these invitations without any compensation and was able to invest time and emotional capacity? Simply put, those who were probably not joining were care-workers, busy single mothers, non-native speakers, working-class people or multiple marginalised community representatives. Of course, it is easier for an older white man with a secured income to accept such an invitation. But what we (dis-)miss are all the other perspectives and their right to be included in these processes, too.

This is not about favours but about preserving the right to participate. In order to create spaces in which people are invited to participate, to re-imagine, to pose criticism, we need to compensate them with financial means, resources, and networks. What we also need is the promise that the time and energy invested will be rewarded by implementing the ideas and recommendations. This is not easy, but if it is not the goal to implement the recommendations, why set up Civic Dialogues in the first place?

I am a firm believer in the opportunity of co-creating spaces in which many different knowledge pools come together, situated knowledge is appreciated, and differences are seen as a strength and source for change. Sounds like a diversity management campaign, does it? But what I envision is the contrary. It is about democratically involving marginalised communities from the beginning, choosing intersectionality as a premise, and thinking globally, holistically, and radically when it comes to organising people, ideas, and futures. These spaces are essential for (up)holding/(re-)gaining communities' own power and the power over deciding on preferable futures. These imaginations open up the various possibilities of how society, politics, economics, and power structures will look like, who will (not) decide, how and what we will transform, and when.

This openness of the future is the basis for agency and action in the various presents; it is the foundation for emancipation fights and social transformation processes. And in these processes, of course, representation (in its radical sense) is fulfilled: Because, if you are not at the table, you are on the menu. The policing of Muslim women's

body (and the so called neutrality law) and their (religious) clothing decision in Germany (and beyond) serves as a good example for underlining this phrase. It is known that Muslim women were not included in the decision-making process. Had Muslim women been given a say in this discussion, their diverse views on clothing and religious practices and their right to them would have been represented - grounded in the German constitution. It would have been more clear that the real consequences of racist policies like occupation bans under the banner of 'neutrality' are cutting into their lives and dreams.

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Just and inclusive democratic decision-making acknowledges the process, input, and output legitimacy at the same time. This process also needs to entail that what was collectively developed will be translated into democratic policies. It is not enough to just create spaces and invite (unpaid) experts of their own realities to talk, exchange, and dedicate their time without tangible outcomes. We do not need another format which - like a checklist - is then put ad acta; "diversity promotion for 2022: checked". In order to democratise social spheres that have been removed from democratic control, we have to open up the futures for change.

Text by Ouassima Laabich-Mansour, expert for anti-racism work and political participation and speaker at Innocracy 2021

To find out more about critical futures thinking and feminist approaches, have a look at futuress.org, Superrr Lab gGmbH and future_s e.V.

3.3. DEMOCRATISATION AS ORDERING: REVIVING THE PROMISE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

Next to the widening and opening up of democratic decision-making, democratising the economy also entails the democratic ordering of social spheres and infrastructures that so far are situated in the "in-between" of disordered order. On a theoretical level, this entails filling the floating arcanum by (re)democratising the "in-between'' of state and market in order to stop the transfer of risks from non-democratic to democratic actors. To do so, two major developments towards democratising the economy have to be undertaken. First, we have to realise that many key social spheres and infrastructures such as the workplace, housing, fiscal policy, monetary policy and central bank planning, which have been deemed neutral or non-political spheres, are in fact of democratic relevance and therefore have to be ordered democratically. They are of democratic relevance because fundamental questions of how we want to work, live, invest, and produce as a society in the future are negotiated in these spheres and infrastructures. Concretely, this could entail embedding central bank planning in democratic principles by democratising their mandate and expanding the scope and depth of fiscal and financial policies of governments to create a more democratic and less crisis-prone macrofinancial system. On a European level, for instance, a promising political discussion on democratising the European Central Bank and the European fiscal and deficit rules has already been set into motion by multiple civil society organisations and political parties.[3]

We have to realise that many key social spheres and infrastructures such as the workplace, housing, fiscal policy, monetary policy and central bank planning, which have been deemed neutral or non-political spheres, are in fact of democratic relevance and therefore have to be ordered democratically.

3 See, for example: https://www.positivemoney.eu/democratize-european-central-bank/; https://europeancitizensbank.eu/?locale=en; https://transformative-responses.org/

Second, the ordering of the social spheres and infrastructures according to democratic principles in today's context of disordered order sets the basis for reviving the promise of social progress. Crucially, the capital-labour compromise has to be revitalised in a democratic manner. This could entail guaranteeing that wages grow in accordance with productivity growth, to institutionalise democratic co-determination in more spheres of life, and to ensure that parliaments (re)gain their supposed scope and depth of democratic control. These two developments of 'democratising as ordering' could pave the way towards democratising the economy and thereby, bringing back the promise of social progress to the heart of democratic politics.

4. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The aim of this paper was to offer answers to the question: How can the (re)democratisation of social spheres and infrastructures that have been excluded or removed from democratic control forge a path towards a more inclusive and prosperous future that contains the promise of social progress? In a first step, we analysed how the promise of social progress has been weakened historically throughout the post-war world order, the post-Fordist era until today's era of disordered order. Drawing from this analysis, it became clear that democracies need to be democratised beyond traditional, narrow conceptions of increasing political participation. In order to democratise the economy, we have to widen, open up, and order democratic decision making-processes in and beyond parliaments. To do so, four authors outlined their take on how to (re)democratise key institutions, policy fields, and social spheres that have been excluded or historically removed from democratic control. Niklas Angebauer set out the argument for economic democracy on the grounds that property and democracy belong together and only when reconciled can solve the problem of self-determination. In this way, a full appeasement of property and democracy implies a more egalitarian distribution of both profit and control rights. Carmen Giovanazzi looked at the broader democratic relevance of economic policies and argued that in order to democratise fiscal and monetary policy, we have to democratise the way we talk about both. Drawing from his experience of working in the platform delivery sector, Semih Yalcin, then, outlined his argument for why we need workplace democracy in the platform economy. Nonetheless, democratising the economic realm also means to open up democratic decision-making processes because if you are not at the table, you are on the menu, argued Ouassima Laabich-Mansour. A crucial part of bringing back the promise of social progress to democracies is to conceive of futures in the plural to open up the possibility of democratic co-determination in the present. All in all, Innocracy 2021 showed that it is not enough to increase possibilities of participation when pushing for democratisation. The answer to the challenges of living in an era of disordered order has to be to widen, open up and order democratic rule over social spheres and infrastructures in and beyond parliaments. In this way we can democratise the economy and bring back the promise of social progress to the heart of democratic politics.

Looking forward, one thing is clear: Innocracy has always been a series of learning events, which means that thoughts, theses and questions have been continuously transferred from one meeting to the other, in order to develop further. We have decided to spend some more time with the present thoughts, theses and questions around the politics of democracy this year than usual. Instead of having another Innocracy Conference in 2022, we decided to intensively reflect, evaluate and reshape, before coming back in 2023. In this process, we once again want to ask some of the big questions such as: What should Innocracy stand for in the future? Should there be thematic or methodological innovations? And, more fundamentally, which democratic transformations are needed in light of the socio-ecological challenges of the climate crisis?

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Das Progressive Zentrum is an independent, non-profit think tank founded in 2007, devoted to establishing new networks of progressive actors from different backgrounds and promoting active and effective policies for economic and social progress. It involves especially next generation German and European innovative thinkers and decision-makers in the debates. Its thematic priorities are situated within the three programmes Future of Democracy, Economic and Social Transformation and International Dialogue, with a particular focus on European integration and the transatlantic partnership. The organisation is based in Berlin and also operates in many European countries as well as in the United States.

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Over the past four years, Das Progressive Zentrum has established Innocracy as one of the largest conferences on democratic innovation and transformation in Europe. During that time, the think tank connected with a variety of brilliant people and organisations from all across Europe, who work in this field. Together, the participants have managed to develop a better understanding of the challenges liberal democracies are facing today and the ways to overcome them. Our consensus: It takes both incremental change through democratic innovation and fundamental transformations through radical reform. But most importantly, politics in liberal democracies need direction – a democratic debate about clear and bold ideas of what our future societies should look like.

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