

Introduction

Jean De Mauck

Claude Didry

Isabelle Ferreran

Annette Gabart (eds)

"Renewing Democratic
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The Challenge of Social
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Introduction

Jean DE MUNCK¹

Claude DIDRY²

Isabelle FERRERAS³

Annette JOBERT⁴

Democracy cannot be encapsulated in the idea of a freely elected government or a civil society functioning under the rule of law only. It is, incontestably, a political system, but it is also a social and economic project, and the Europe we know today was born of this conviction. It was a conviction shared by the majority of Europe's political leaders as they worked to turn the page on a crisis that, having failed to resolve the social question, had plunged "Old Europe" into a bloody war. This book examines what has become of Europe's project of social and economic democracy from today's political and historical context – which is radically different from the one that mobilised Europe's "founding fathers," from Robert Schuman to Jacques Delors.

1. The (Dis)appearance of Social Dialogue

After democracy's triumph in 1945, economic and social democracy were made a cornerstone of the unification project undertaken in Western Europe. Peace among nations came hand in hand with class compromise in post-war Europe, which was Christian and social democrat. In addition to partial disarmament, this peace was guaranteed by the creation of a common market whose member countries, for the first time in their histories, agreed to live together within stable, clearly drawn national borders. At the same time, Fordist and Keynesian policies brought about class compromise within nations that were opening up to progressively stronger cooperation on the European level. Western European states built governments that included institutions of social dialogue, and though models varied from one country to another, the political goal of including social partners in political decisions remained

¹ Université catholique de Louvain (UCL).

² CNRS.

³ UCL/FNRS.

⁴ CNRS.

the same. Collective bargaining institutions, both at the firm level and nation-wide, were central to the development of participative social democracies. At the European level, the creation of the European Economic and Social Committee sent a strong message of Europe's commitment to this project. When Jacques Delors launched the idea of a single market in 1985, the spirit of Christian social democracy informed his goal of ensuring that Europe's unification efforts be accompanied by social dialogue at the European level (Didry & Mias, 2005).

Yet it must be recalled that between 1945 and 1989, political and social unity in Western Europe grew in the long shadow cast by the clash of East and West. The limits of European unification were set by the Cold War, which imposed certain, unquestionable rules. (For example, Western European nations were obliged to take part the fight against Communism, and had to open their borders to American corporations.) The United States of America kept a close watch on European countries' adherence to these rules.

The collapse of Communism changed everything: in 1989, the Berlin wall fell and brought this chapter of Europe's history to a close. At the dawn of 21st century, Europe has nothing left to fear from Soviet-style totalitarianism. This century's looming threat is globalisation, not a clash between East and West. To be sure, globalisation began long before 1989: the electronic revolution began pushing the capitalist economy toward financialisation and the labour market toward greater flexibility as early as the 1970s (see Sassen 2002 for a historical account of this process). But 1989 marked the end of this ideological partitioning of the world (and in particular of Europe), making it possible for globalisation to become truly global. The practice of capitalism was deeply altered and gained unprecedented scope.

Globalisation weakened European economies and institutions of social dialogue, which before had been protected by strong national borders, colonial revenues, or industrial monopolies. None of these survived the changes of the 1980s and 1990s. Eastern Europe, once it joined the European project, went about the process of making liberal policy based on free elections and the protection of civil rights. The goal of strengthening social dialogue at the European level, a priority for EC President Delors in 1985, lost momentum. The European project of social democracy was marginalised in the 1990s, when priorities switched to protecting Europe's competitive edge and dismantling Eastern Europe's totalitarian regimes. Policy on intra-European competition invaded, occupied, and overran the EU's agenda. The creation of the euro did not, as many had hoped, contribute to the emergence of a concerted macro-economic policy or help protect social democratic institutions. To the contrary, the euro made a Holy Grail of the Europe-

an Central Bank's independence and heartfelt embrace of the global financial Strategy promised Europeans the world's could not hide Europe's glaring lack of in

As a result, the neo-liberal discourse of reduction began to grate on the ears of those who use a concept of Amartya Sen's,⁵ upon which based, European political figures were using very diverse informational bases of social public decisions possible.

2. Two Crises Bring Social Democracy from the Shadows

At the same time, in the first decade did much to remind Europeans that without democracy, political democracy is weak and in crises unfolded rapidly, hitting western economies the other seeped in and ate away slowly model of prosperity. The first crisis is well discussed widely and at length; it came about as Keynesianism abandoned, as it formed Western economies, and as the era of which undermined social cohesion and a second crisis is more diffuse and pernicious: grown as natural resources are depleted and disillusioned with economic growth. It has been of this growth and as to the sustainability of it promises.

These two crises brought the "social question" into the limelight. They stirred up class conflicts, galvanised populist sentiment, and were in place. In the face of these two crises, structures proved both useful and insufficient provided a space for reflection on the public financial and media maelstrom, pushed beyond just thinking. Insufficient, in that they remained overall structure rendered increasingly obsolete systems, and social movements evolved.

⁵ This concept is elaborated at length in the context of the possibility of democratic collective choice.

an Central Bank's independence and helped push for Europe's wholehearted embrace of the global financial market. In 2000, the Lisbon Strategy promised Europeans the world's most intelligent economy, but could not hide Europe's glaring lack of industrial policy.

As a result, the neo-liberal discourse of free markets and public debt reduction began to grate on the ears of the political elite in Brussels. To use a concept of Amartya Sen's,⁵ upon whose work this book is largely based, European political figures were unable to take into account the very diverse informational bases of social justice that make legitimate public decisions possible.

2. Two Crises Bring Social Democracy Back from the Shadows

At the same time, in the first decade of the 21st century, two crises did much to remind Europeans that without economic and social democracy, political democracy is weak and inadequate. The first of these crises unfolded rapidly, hitting western economies at gale force, while the other seeped in and ate away slowly at the roots of the Western model of prosperity. The first crisis is well known and has been discussed widely and at length; it came about as capitalism was financialised and Keynesianism abandoned, as the post-industrial era transformed Western economies, and as the employment crisis unfolded, all of which undermined social cohesion and deepened public debt. The second crisis is more diffuse and pernicious – a subtle one that has grown as natural resources are depleted and ordinary citizens become disillusioned with economic growth. It has raised doubts as to the merits of this growth and as to the sustainability and reliability of the progress it promises.

These two crises brought the “social question” in Europe back into the limelight. They stirred up class conflict, raised old nationalist demons, galvanised populist sentiment, and imperiled the political structure in place. In the face of these two crises, existing social dialogue structures proved both useful and insufficient: useful, in that they provided a space for reflection on the public good that, in the midst of a financial and media maelstrom, pushed beyond corporatist and nationalist thinking. Insufficient, in that they remained inextricably linked to an overall structure rendered increasingly obsolete as economies, political systems, and social movements evolved.

⁵ This concept is elaborated at length in the context of Sen's reflections (2009) on the possibility of democratic collective choice.

3. On the Uses and Abuses of "Civil Society"

As early as the 1990s, a number of European political figures from a variety of different backgrounds began to notice the emergence of a "democratic deficit" that undermined the European community-building process. They saw that traditional forms of participation – by election, through representative parties, and by neo-corporatism, through institutionalised interest groups – were no longer sufficient to lend legitimacy to public decisions. The disastrous referenda held for the ratification of the European constitution were a wake-up call for those who had hitherto turned a deaf ear to democracy's cries of alarm.

This is not to say awareness of this issue was widespread. The "Greek crisis" of 2011 was proof that those cries of alarm had not really been heeded. The policy of stringent reductions in public spending deployed in reaction to this crisis was what Amartya Sen calls the "philosophy of the 'right' corset," and it pushed Europe to the breaking point (Sen, 2011). The European Union, which had seemed to offer a protective barrier against national rivalries and an impetus for development for less industrialised countries, became, in the eyes of public opinion, a synonym for the disintegration of public service, job offshoring, and austerity measures. Proposing to make balanced budgets Europe's "golden rule," European leaders sought to rein in the public interest projects incumbent upon them as public powers, calling instead for budget cuts on all fronts, which was, to them, what the balancing of public accounts required.

In parallel to this, however, toward the end of the 1990s, European governments began to explore another response to these problems. The idea of "civil society" was put forward, developed, nuanced, and propagated in an attempt to gain new purchase on the processes by which democratic will and opinion were formed in post-industrial societies. "Civil society," with its many accepted meanings, became a catchall that facilitated the inclusion of multiple interest groups in the policy-making process both within European member states and in Europe as a whole.⁶ The discourse of civil society became accepted as authentic within the globalised – and therefore the European – world (Nanz & Smismans, 2005). The invention of the Open Method of Coordination in Europe was closely linked to this new discourse (de la Porte & Pochet, 2002).

⁶ For an example of this abundant production by European bodies, see the Commission's publication, *Towards a Reinforced Culture of Communication and Dialogue. General Principles and Minimum Standards for Consultation of Interested Parties* by the Commission, 11/12/2002, COM(2002) 704.

But how to react to this discourse? Two cepted the discourse of civil society whole c many – and often nebulous and ambiguou took the promises of the European *White* (Van Den Hoven, 2003); those who subscr conversation using the very terms privileg sion in its desperate quest for legitimacy (M "civil society" encompasses a range of ide lack cohesion and underestimate the imple plays that are the inevitable stumbling block

The other attitude that emerged was a ki the discourse of civil society is tempered close scrutiny and objectified as a relativ mation of the kind that demands pitiless so 2007; Gobin *et al.*, 2008). In this case, "civi ra, incoherent and misleading, appearing a tool wielded by powerful groups informed democratic practice while weakening any an

The social sciences are often caught up two attitudes, and this book attempts to a analyses from both ends of the spectrum idealism and negative relativism are, in re same intellectual futility, which inevitably l all too real a danger of falling prey to th discourse of civil society as starting point in it; as such, to be theoretically valid and society must be contextualised with other diametric opposition to the supposedly "ar logue; when it is spun out to include even t thus to weigh on a "political agenda" c (Grossman & Saurugger, 2006); when it is of representing private individuals; when it purview of grant-wielding experts – in th comes nothing more than an ideological c all-too-real forms of domination. But when placed in tension – and in cooperation – v when it becomes a citizens' forum for nev toward the greater good by articulating spe see in it an attempt to bring other forms o civil society may well become a starting p democratic goals in post-industrial society.

But how to react to this discourse? Two attitudes emerged. One accepted the discourse of civil society whole cloth, without questioning its many – and often nebulous and ambiguous – meanings. This attitude took the promises of the European *White Book* of 1999 at face value (Van Den Hoven, 2003); those who subscribed to it contributed to the conversation using the very terms privileged by the European Commission in its desperate quest for legitimacy (Magnette, 2003). In this case, “civil society” encompasses a range of ideals that, though legitimate, lack cohesion and underestimate the implementation issues and power plays that are the inevitable stumbling blocks to any collective process.

The other attitude that emerged was a kind of cool detachment; here, the discourse of civil society is tempered and dissected, submitted to close scrutiny and objectified as a relatively exotic ideological formation of the kind that demands pitiless sociological analysis (Michel, 2007; Gobin *et al.*, 2008). In this case, “civil society” becomes a chime-ra, incoherent and misleading, appearing as an underhanded strategic tool wielded by powerful groups informed enough to pay lip-service to democratic practice while weakening any and all forms of contestation.

The social sciences are often caught up somewhere between these two attitudes, and this book attempts to avoid either extreme. While analyses from both ends of the spectrum have their relevance, naïve idealism and negative relativism are, in reality, different forms of the same intellectual futility, which inevitably leads to despair. Europe is in all too real a danger of falling prey to this despair. This book takes discourse of civil society as starting point in the search for a response to it; as such, to be theoretically valid and politically acceptable, civil society must be contextualised with other ideas. When it is placed in diametric opposition to the supposedly “archaic” notion of social dialogue; when it is spun out to include even the narrowest of lobbies and thus to weigh on a “political agenda” considered to be intangible (Grossman & Saurugger, 2006); when it is narrowed down to the point of representing private individuals; when it is imagined as the exclusive purview of grant-wielding experts – in these cases, civil society becomes nothing more than an ideological construct, a smokescreen for all-too-real forms of domination. But when the notion of civil society is placed in tension – and in cooperation – with that of social dialogue; when it becomes a citizens’ forum for new political projects that tend toward the greater good by articulating specific aspects of it; when we see in it an attempt to bring other forms of participation to life – then civil society may well become a starting point for the revival of social democratic goals in post-industrial society.

4. Moving beyond Inherited Models: Two Challenges

With this in mind, this book seeks to help contribute to the proper usage of the idea of civil society, to problematise its contents both empirically and normatively in order to bring civil society to life beyond the realm of the ideological (in the sense that Bourdieu or Marx would have ascribed to that term). Its goal is to set forth a rigorous conceptual and political framework that allows for a remapping of social democracy that takes into account two key challenges.

The first of these challenges is to build a model for work and prosperity robust enough to replace the truisms of Fordism and Keynesianism. Part I of this book tackles this problem head-on: Günther Schmid and Ton Korver discuss flexibility and change in a society where work is significant but not all-important, while Dominique Méda examines how society itself must change if it is to radically redefine its wealth indicators: in both cases the participation of civil society is called for, along with social dialogue. Joel Rogers envisions a model of "productive democracy" that would take up where neo-liberal and social democrat models left off. Moving away from the principle of redistribution of wealth as the sole means for citizens to contribute productively to society, Rogers' model envisions a society in which the egalitarian goals of our democratic states would be renewed through new participative forms which, in particular, would help us face the new challenges posed by internationalisation and the environmental crisis.

If democratic participation is to undergo a shift in content, process, and actors, then modes of government must also be transformed. Part II of this book looks at this question. Simon Deakin, Aristeia Koukoudiaki, Konstantinos Papadakis, and Paul Marginson, all specialists in the subject of social dialogue, describe shifts in the formation and application of laws and collective agreements that are remarkable given the way in which contemporary governance's many levels intertwine. Through concrete case studies, Part II of this book tackles questions of representation within firms; of negotiations as they are carried out within sectors, territories, or across the EU; and of the effects of globalisation on transnational agreements among multinational corporations. Part II therefore privileges analysis at the level of the procedures instituted in labour negotiations, which have been upended by globalisation and "soft law."

5. Elaborating a Response

In the face of these crises, one must ask whether a response based on democratic deliberation is viable and normatively desirable. The answer, though it may be in the affirmative, requires careful distinction,

nuance, and testing, and Part III of this book just these nuances, beginning with a bit from De Munck and Isabelle Ferreras. From an analysis that is distinct from negotiation, but any model must find a way to fit together the notions of deliberation and negotiation. In consonance with this idea, but broken free of the confines of traditional forms, Annette Jobert and Claude Didry show that a deliberative component that paves the way for civil society faces in today's businesses, industries, and territories. Serafino Negrelli examines this idea from a normative perspective, while Lucio Baccaro discusses the empirical difficulties raised by its implementation.

The final section of this book (Part IV) returns to this discussion. These questions concern the conditions for institutions, no matter how they are created, without the people who work for them. In the United States and Europe, discursive spaces are emerging that link the world of work with the world of politics. These practices are not without their ambiguities, stumbling blocks to political mobilisation in the 21st century. Described and explained by Louis Chauvel and Philippe Pochet, these practices sketch a new political regrouping of forces that may in time become an alternative in Europe.

This brings our book to a close – but it is only the beginning of a conversation, which will be of the utmost importance for society in the years ahead. Indeed, our conclusion is that the work that lies before us, whether we are to breathe new life into the project of civil society in Europe, we must continue exploring other questions. Our book is a beginning. It raises broad-ranging questions, and gathers preliminary thoughts that should help us to avoid vacillating unproductively between idealism and hopeless cynicism.

This book is the fruit of the European Commission's initiative, financed by the European Commission and directed by Amartya Sen. Its goal was to use Amartya Sen's capability approach as a springboard for building a new approach to economic democracy. On November 9, 2010, at the meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee, the debate on this subject at the EESC headquarters was moderated by the help of Jean Lapeyre, who is a major figure in the field.

nuance, and testing, and Part III of this book opens up a discussion of just these nuances, beginning with a broad proposal from Jean De Munck and Isabelle Ferreras. From an analytic perspective, deliberation is distinct from negotiation, but any model of democracy must find a way to fit together the notions of deliberation, negotiation, and experimentation. In consonance with this idea, but in more concrete terms, Annette Jobert and Claude Didry show that social dialogue has already broken free of the confines of traditional forms of negotiation, bringing a deliberative component that paves the way to the broader issues civil society faces in today's businesses, industries, and geographic territories. Serafino Negrelli examines this idea from a philosophical perspective, while Lucio Baccaro discusses the empirical problems and political difficulties raised by its implementation.

The final section of this book (Part IV) introduces a new set of questions to this discussion. These questions concern political actors and their coalitions, for institutions, no matter how sophisticated, are nothing without the people who work for them. Slowly but surely, in both the United States and Europe, discursive structures and practices are emerging that link the world of work with that of "civil society." These practices are not without their ambiguities, but they do confront the stumbling blocks to political mobilisation and public action in the 21st century. Described and explained by Lowell Turner, Béla Galgóczi and Philippe Pochet, these practices sketch out the early stages of a political regrouping of forces that may in time become a viable political alternative in Europe.

This brings our book to a close – but it certainly does not close the conversation, which will be of the utmost importance in European society in the years ahead. Indeed, our conclusion will offer a brief discussion of the work that lies before us, which has only just begun. If we are to breathe new life into the project of building social democracy in Europe, we must continue exploring other dimensions, and raising new questions. Our book is a beginning. It raises crucial issues, asks broad-ranging questions, and gathers preliminary results – all of which should help us to avoid vacillating unproductively between inconsequential idealism and hopeless cynicism.

This book is the fruit of the European Capright project, which was financed by the European Commission and directed by Robert Salais. Its goal was to use Amartya Sen's capability approach as an intellectual springboard for building a new approach to the issue of social and economic democracy. On November 9, 2010, Mario Sepi, the president of the European Economic and Social Committee, graciously hosted a debate on this subject at the EESC headquarters in Brussels. Without the help of Jean Lapeyre, who is a major figure in the field of European

social dialogue and a true intellectual luminary, this encounter would never have been such a material or intellectual success. This collaborative project was an opportunity for the researchers who contributed to it to build strong relationships and to commence work that will continue in the years to come. We extend our gratitude to Michel Genet (Greenpeace Belgium), Emmanuel Julien (MEDEF), Matthieu de Nanteuil (Université catholique de Louvain), Bob Hancke (London School of Economics), who took part in this conference.

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PART I

FIRST CHALLENGE THE CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND PROSPERITY