FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

Žiga Vodovnik
Marinko Banjac
Tomaž Pušnik

Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again.

André Gide, *Feuillets d'automne*, 1949

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INTRODUCTION

SECTION OVERVIEW

With global warming exacerbating crises in food security, economic stability, and sustainable development, traditional democratic structures are increasingly under strain. This section explores the interplay between climate change and democratic systems, emphasizing the urgent need for transformative thinking in both ecological and political realms. It argues that addressing climate change requires more than technological fixes; it demands deep social, political, and epistemological shifts, particularly given the democratic backsliding and rise of authoritarian responses to crises.

Climate change not only threatens the physical environment but also endangers the political and social fabric. Scholars suggest that the roots of ecological issues lie in social and political contradictions, challenging us to question the foundations of a "good society" and reimagine citizenship, community, and democratic practices. This section also highlights how youth-led movements and social activists reject conventional political actions, advocating instead for a democracy that permeates everyday life – one that is creative, immediate, and community-centered. Inspired by thinkers like Howard Zinn and Cornel West, the section sees democracy not as an institution but as an active, inclusive practice.

In this chapter, readers are encouraged to re-evaluate democracy beyond its conventional associations with state sovereignty, electoral representation, and national identity. Instead, it suggests a vision of democracy rooted in community engagement, resistance to hierarchical power structures, and a commitment to cognitive justice. By examining the intersection of ecological and social challenges, the chapter fosters a nuanced understanding of democracy as a dynamic process that adapts to the needs of different contexts and cultures. Finally, readers are encouraged to consider democracy not as a fixed system but as an evolving horizon. The chapter aims to inspire hope, resilience, and imagination, urging continual reimagination of democracy amid the existential challenges of climate change and social transformation.

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Despite some effort by the international community, global warming is not stopping and 2023 was a record year in terms of all key climate change indicators. World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Secretary-General Celeste Saulo concluded her presentation of the report with a stark warning: "The WMO community is sounding the Red Alert to the world. Climate change is about much more than temperatures". According to WMO, climate change is the greatest challenge humanity faces as global warming is bringing catastrophic consequences for the food and economic security of all people on the planet (WMO, 2023). Extreme weather and climate events, i.e., heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, intense tropical cyclones, ocean warming, and melting glaciers disappearing at record rates, are undermining all major sustainable development goals (SDGs). We are approaching 2030: the year by which the international community is to have achieved or at least come close to achieving the SDGs, i.e., eradicating global poverty and hunger while solving other socio-economic problems. The dependence on economic growth and pursuit of the dangerous ideals of infinite production and consumption are adding new challenges to the existing ones, with the excessive rise in greenhouse gas emissions and reduction of available natural resources already being the signs of an existential threat.

Given the worrying forecasts, we could reach a tipping point in the near future, followed by unimaginable political, social, and economic crises. Paradoxically, climate change threatens first and foremost our political and social collapse – and it is here that its direct, yet often overlooked danger lies. Numerous authors (Oliver et al., 2023; MacGregor, 2014; Wolf, 2012) therefore warn that our responses to systemic risks must include a reconsideration of a good society, (new) citizenship, political community, and political practices. Their starting point is the thesis that ecological problems have their origins in deeply entrenched social problems, which is why they cannot be understood, let alone solved, without first addressing the social and political contradictions (Bookchin, 2007). Previous studies on climate change generally only examined the environmental and economic impacts while overlooking the social and political dimensions. It is becoming increasingly clear that it is indeed about "much more than temperatures" and that the democratic backsliding and numerous political crises around the world should be placed in the overriding context of climate change. The consequences of the climate crisis are already seen in the ongoing corrosion of the democratic political process, the undermining of political communities and the commons and, last but not least, the reliance on populist and authoritarian mode(l)s to deal with the emergency situation (Willis, 2020; Grove, 2019; Featherstone, 2015).

All of this calls for a new and thorough rethinking of how to establish a completely new relationship between life and work, production and consumption, and, especially, the individual and the communal. It is not surprising that the academic community has recently begun to think systematically about new principles of political, economic, and social organisation, often focusing on the notion and practice of care. It is to this end that the Future of Democracy monograph has been concieved, inspiring readers to think more creatively about democracy. We can agree with the messages of young activists – from Berlin to Honolulu, from Oakland to Ljubljana – that the hegemonic conception of democracy has merely taken over the word, but at the

same time rejected its content. Their democratic projects offer us a very different understanding of democracy, not as a prefabricated institutional order, but as *praxis* – as a free and creative activity in everyday life. Democracy is therefore not only equated with a proper constitution, a certain constellation of centres of political power in society, and the separation of powers into their respective branches, but – to draw on Cornel West (2005) – it is understood as a verb.

In a way, youth movements reaffirm Howard Zinn's insight that democracy does not have to be just explicit political action, but must involve much more. This is also why young people often go beyond classical patterns of political action in imagining a new democracy, thinking democratic change also through music, literature, design, film (culture in the broadest sense!), health, architecture, sexuality, ecology, etc. Democracy is, after all, as Zinn points out, something immediate, because it takes place where we live, where we work:

> It means starting this moment to do away with authoritarian, cruel relationships – between men and women, between parents and children, between one kind of worker and another kind ... It takes place in everyday life, in the tiny crannies where the powerful but clumsy hands of state power cannot easily reach. It is not centralized and isolated, so that it cannot be wiped out by the rich, the police, the military. It takes place in a hundred thousand places at once, in families, on streets, in neighborhoods, in places of work. It is a revolution of the whole culture. Squelched in one place, it springs up in another, until it is everywhere. Such a revolution is an art. That is, it requires the courage not only of resistance, but of imagination. (Zinn, 2009: 712)

It is not surprising that young people see change not only as a political issue, but first and foremost as an epistemological one. They understand that the issue of oppression and discrimination today has not only an economic, social, and political dimension, but also a cultural and, above all, an epistemological one. Unlike past practices, control and domination today does not base only on economic or political power,

but primarily on knowledge or the hierarchisation of knowledge; it is also no longer based on exclusion, but on a specific mode of inclusion that leads to a particular constellation of political community and asymmetries of power within it. Boavantura de Sousa Santos (2015; 2018) thus stresses that economic and political justice must be preceded by cognitive justice. According to Santos, what we are witnessing is epistemological ignorance or what is called *epistemicide*, which reproduces the status quo and at the same time rejects, discredits and trivialises all arguments and solutions that are not in line with the hegemonic idea of truth, objectivity, efficiency and rationality.

This is one of the reasons why we are very late in realising that climate change is about "much more than temperatures". In fact, we are already living in a time of transition, when "we face modern problems for which there are no modern solutions" (Santos, 2015: 44). It is not surprising, then, that ideas of a new beginning, of transformation, of transition, are increasingly appearing in political discourse as well as on our research agendas. In this context, we can understand the biblical Jubilee or Sabbatical year, when debts were cancelled, slaves were freed, and land was returned to its original owners. Similarly, ancient Greek philosophy knew of ordinary time or *chronos*, and *kairos*, which marked the "moment of transition" or the "right time" not only for the replacement of the gods, but also for the fundamental assumptions of political and social order. Let us also not forget the Aymara and Quechua idea of *patchakuti*, which refers to the renewal of the world or rather to the "reversal of space and time". The situation today certainly increasingly resembles such a time of transformation.

The lack of imagination, which some people compensate for with grotesque solutions of techno-utopianism (e.g. Elon Musk's ideas on colonising Mars or Richard Branson's ideas on devices to decarbonise the planet), does not inspire much optimism. As a solution, they offer a technological revolution – or rather a technological restoration – which they see as an opportunity to defend the existing socio-economic relations rather than as an opportunity to transcend them. Only today are we realising that addressing the climate crisis is

at least as much about technological innovation as it is about social and political innovation. This is also why we should begin discussions on climate emergency with reflections on politics and society, opening social sciences themselves to creative adaptations of our categorical and methodological arsenals. This is, after all, also shown by the epistemological and methodological problems identified in the study of young people's political responses to the climate crisis. Finally, these changes force us to undertake a broader transformation of the very logic and role of social science research, which should be primarily concerned with the question of the future.

The Future of Democracy materials are the result of years of our research into the theories and practices of democracy and citizenship. We argue that the current crisis of the hegemonic economic paradigm increasingly reveals a crisis of politics *per se*, understood not as a failure of politics to successfully mitigate the inherent contradictions within the existing economic order, but rather as its inability to transcend the paradigm itself. In this respect, the fact that, despite the rise and strengthening of new democratic projects that we have witnessed in recent years, the crisis of the existing economic project is already understood as a crisis of democracy itself is the best evidence of the fallacies in our understanding of the problem itself and the alternatives that are needed.

John Keane (2015) points out that we need "new thinking" in current debates on democracy. The language, institutions, and normative ideals of democracy have changed completely over the past decades as democratic ideas and practices have evolved and interpenetrated. Old criteria such as the sovereign state, party pluralism, elections, representation, national identity, the market economy, etc. are now completely outdated categories that are no longer in touch with the current dynamics of democratic innovation. A completely new approach is therefore needed, building on new grammar, metaphors, perspectives, theories, and methods. Only by questioning the standard narrative of democracy and uncovering its "hidden" chapters can the idea of democracy be freed from the ideological clutter that has

accumulated over the years of uncritically following the teleology of the "end of history". Only by understanding its universality and the common "ownership" of its history can democracy become not only a universal ideal, but a possibility or a necessity for political action in different contexts. But how? Isakhan and Stockwell answer that addressing the original meaning of democracy and thus a proper understanding of its condition and prospects is only possible

> [b]y encouraging people to engage with their own diverse traditions and indigenous cultures ... to recover those moments, those practices, and customs, those traditions and narratives which emulate the spirit of democracy and are already inherent in their own society. Opening awareness of the breadth of democratic forms gives people the means to deepen, strengthen and develop democratic practice and the opportunity to promulgate democracy more widely. (Isakhan and Stockwell, 2012: 223)

Tormey (2015) agrees that the thesis of a crisis or even death of democracy depends on our perspective. The political class understands the decline in voter turnout, the decline in political party membership, the disinterest in institutional politics and, above all, the complete distrust in the political elite as contours of the decline or even death of democracy. But it is clear that the crisis of representation is not diminishing democracy today or threatening it with a slow demise. In fact, from a hegemonic perspective, subaltern democracy, which is alive and well today, has never been seen or heard of. In fact, alongside the media-mediated explanations of apathetic and selfish citizens, we can quickly frame another/different reality – citizens who are not apathetic, but who no longer want or allow undemocratic policies to be justified or implemented in their name. This is why the new citizens are making their political demands directly. New citizens do not vote, they act. They do not join political parties, but set up new networks, affinity groups, assemblies and projects. They do not wait for elections and politicians' policies, but prefigure their political aspirations here and now. They do not follow the propaganda of the media, because they are the media (ibid., 2).

The monograph thus calls on readers to construct a new chronotope for analysing the state and prospects of democracy. We argue that a completely different chronotope is needed to identify the "pulse" of democracy, one that reveals the danger of equating democracy with representation or even with the state. Only in this way can we demarcate democracy from the crisis of modernity and its political forms, which, with its insistence on nation-states, sovereign territory, hierarchies of power and people, and, finally, the equation of *ethnos* and *dēmos*, is in irreversible crisis today. According to Rancière, this disclosure "can provoke fear, and so hatred, among those who are used to exercising the magisterium of thought. But among those who know how to share with anybody and everybody the equal power of intelligence, it can conversely inspire courage, and hence joy" (Rancière, 2014: 97). It is our hope that this monograph provides precisely that – courage and joy.

But to avoid painting too rosy a picture, allow us to make this comment at the outset. In their attempts to affirm democracy, social movements can also become a revolving door that throws someone out at the speed at which they entered. The problem of the "revolving door" is not simply the result of the mistaken expectations of those who set out to change existing social, political, and economic relations in the naive belief that things can be changed more quickly and easily. The reasons for "burnout", which is often just a euphemism for quitting for other reasons, are also that the most progressive social movements can sometimes be a place of constraint rather than freedom. Retreating into self-isolation and understanding political action in only one way, unfortunately, does not lead to a reconfiguration of the "world of many worlds", but rather to its cheap parody. The reasons for this "burning out" are, after all, also to be found in the fact that too many social movements, and hence their struggles, fall over the smallest and most absurd things. Lack of mutual trust, mutual help, solidarity, respect, willingness to work together on projects because of personality differences and personal resentments are just a few of them.

Now you are probably asking yourself again, why persist on this path at all? Why even think about democracy today? Why even try

to return democracy to its original meaning in the cacophony of interpretations of democracy? Argentinian director Fernando Birri answered a similar dilemma by saying: "[Utopia] is on the horizon. I go two steps closer, she moves two steps away. I walk ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps ahead. No matter how much I walk, I'll never reach her. What good is utopia? That's what: it's good for walking" (Galeano, 1995: 326). We can add: we write an article, a book, and democracy moves away from us. We write a new article, a new book, and it moves away again. Then why is it even worth writing about democracy anymore? So that we do not forget it.

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2

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section explores the evolving concept of democracy, addressing its origins, theoretical foundations, and the dissonance between its ideals and practical applications. Central to this inquiry is the notion of "political agoraphobia" – the apprehension that democratic power can destabilize hegemonic structures and empower marginalized groups, threatening the authority of elite institutions (Dupuis-Déri, 2011). The text examines how democracy's ideals, often rooted in egalitarianism and direct governance by the people, are paradoxically perceived as a risk to stability in Western liberal democracies. This is evidenced in critiques by influential figures such as Michel Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, who argued that an "excess of democracy" can disrupt governance and advised moderation to maintain political control (Crozier et al., 1975).

The U.S. Founding Fathers' vision of government illustrates this tension, reflecting a belief in a minimal state where government protects private property and maintains societal hierarchies rather than enabling radical egalitarian democracy. This approach, as seen in figures like Madison and Jay, prioritized safeguarding elite interests over promoting broad democratic involvement, leading to

the Constitution's limited democratic language (Hofstadter, 1989). Similarly, Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" posits democracy as an inherently Western construct, incompatible with non-Western cultural traditions, and advocates for limiting democratic expansion beyond the West (Huntington, 1993).

The section also examines the contested historical origins of democracy. While traditionally credited to ancient Greece, recent scholarship highlights overlooked Afro-Asian contributions, challenging the Eurocentric narrative of democracy as an exclusively Western concept (Isakhan & Stockwell, 2012). The Athenian concept of "demos" differed significantly from the modern notion of democracy; rather than indicating the majority rule, it reflected the collective ability of citizens to act and shape the public sphere without necessarily adhering to institutionalized representation (Ober, 2007). This interpretation counters the reduction of democracy to procedural formalities, stressing its roots as a mechanism for enabling collective empowerment.

The chapter raises critical questions about democracy's meaning and challenges readers to reassess its historical, cultural, and practical contexts. By examining theories and critiques from various political philosophers, readers will explore how democracy, despite its ubiquity, remains an "empty signifier" – a term applied so broadly that its true essence is often obscured (Polletta, 2002).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

A cursory overview of the main theories of democracy in the "short 20th century" reveals that the seemingly very heterogeneous and mutually exclusive approaches are in fact linked by a similar sentiment – political agoraphobia or the fear of the people (Dupuis-Déri, 2011). What do we mean by this? We are referring to the series of macropolitical transformations that have set in motion in Western liberal democracies the process of devolving decision-making to entirely new actors, free of political control and accountability, usually accompanied by eschatological surrogates of academic elites in the form

of pronouncements of "the end of history", "the clash of civilisations", "the absence of alternatives", and "the preservation of credibility".

In a report entitled *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies*, Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki identified the "excess of democracy" as the main cause of political instability (Crozier et al., 1975: 113). The trio of eminent scholars concluded that normalising the situation with liberal political communities can above all be done with "a greater degree of moderation in democracy" (ibid.). For Huntington, this means a return to the past, when "Truman had been able to govern the country with the cooperation of a relatively small number of Wall Street lawyers and bankers" (ibid.: 98).

Huntington notes that the sources of political power in American society have diversified, so that the " governance of democracy" is threatened by "previously passive or unorganized groups" such as "blacks, Indians, Chicanos, white ethnic groups, students, and women – all of whom became mobilized and organized in new ways to achieve what they considered to be their appropriate share of the action and of the rewards" (ibid.: 61). Huntington concludes that, for democracy to function healthily, "some measure of apathy and noninvolvement [sic!] on the part of some individuals and groups" is required (ibid.: 114). Who these individuals and groups are supposed to be is something Huntington does not need to specifically point out.

Parallels with previous attempts to neutralise democracy are striking. We can go back to the very beginning of the gradual reshaping of the original meaning of democracy, which can be dated back to the late 18th century, when revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic led to the sophisticated subsumption of democracy under the ideal of republicanism. Without reading Thomas Paine, people came to realise that "society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one" (Paine, 1995: 6). Moreover, they were so successful in organising everyday life in post-war times that Benjamin Franklin had to warn

the delegates of the Pennsylvania constitutional convention to expedite the setting up of a new government:

> Gentlemen, you see that in the anarchy in which we live society manages much as before. Take care, if our disputes last too long, that the people do not come to think that they can very easily do without us. (in Krimerman and Perry, 1966: xv)

The Founding Fathers thus soon realised the need to establish a minimum government as soon as possible. With the adoption of *the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union* in 1777 – they came into force in 1781 after they were ratified by all the states – the government was actually set up. During this process, there was a great increase in the influence of the (conservative reading of the) English and French Enlightenment political philosophy. This resulted in a small, yet crucial discontinuity between the radical ideas of the *Declaration of Independence* and the moderate propositions of the new federal constitution (1787) and the *Bill of Rights* (1789). If, according to the Declaration, government was understood merely as an artificial construct necessary to protect the individual's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, then the constitutional dicta already understand government in a completely different way, since it again becomes an instrument for the maintenance and reproduction of social distinctions through the protection of the individual's right to life, liberty, and private property.

In his study of the Founding Fathers, Richard Hofstadter (1989: 6–7) points out that what united them was not only their ingenuity in organising the new nation, but above all that they were virtually all great enemies of democracy.[1] Thus it is not surprising that the main task of government that Madison identified was to "protect the minority of the opulent against the majority", or that John Jay demanded that "people who own the country ought to govern it". The post-revolutionary period did thus not bring about a break with

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1   For more on the anti-democratic inclinations of the Founding Fathers, see Hofstadter's essay *The Founding Fathers: An Age of Realism* (1989, 6–21).

the old regime and a revitalisation of democracy; it did transcend the monarchist sediments, but it nevertheless left all the key issues unresolved. It definitively crushed the humanist ideals of Paine and (partly) Jefferson by building the new political architecture of the USA on a Hobbesian ontology according to which the individual is an egoistic being and society in its natural state a space of war of all against all.

According to Hofstadter (ibid.: 13), the greatest irony of the new constitution was that it was based on a political theory that is a direct counterpoint to American democratic sentiments, according to which democracy is a precondition for freedom. For the Founding Fathers, democracy was first and foremost a threat to limit the freedom of social and economic elites. In the analogy of Paine, the new Constitution built the state, not society, and therefore – despite the hegemonic interpretations of the "consensus historians" – it must be read as the document that finally put an end to the hope of a utopia in the new world. Its sole purpose was to preserve the status quo or, in Staughton Lynd's (2009: 13–14) interpretation, to achieve a historical compromise between rival centres of power (the capitalist North and the slave-owning South) over the preservation of old privileges, the appropriate economic organisation of the new state, the relationship to private property within it, and thus the fate of slavery.

The main thrust of the Constitutional Convention was thus not the general emancipation of the demos, but the propagation of the illusion that the new constitution followed "a principle that governmnet originates from the people; but let the people be taught … that they are not able to govern themselves" (Belknap in Hofstadter, 1989: 9). There is just one thing that the new political elites in the United States cannot be faulted for. In their explanations of the new order, they openly admitted that democracy was not an idea to be defended. As David Graeber (2013: 154) reminds us, the word democracy is not to be found once in the US Constitution – moreover, it can be found in none of all thirteen constitutions of the US states that gained independence after the war.

THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

All the examples we have mentioned above can at least partly answer the question posed by Immanuel Wallerstein (2001): how is it possible that democracy, with its radical aspirations, has today become a widely accepted slogan without any real substance? Wallerstein's rhetorical question is a good reminder that in current debates on democracy, two completely distinct approaches to its treatment can be discerned. The first approach understands democracy as a mere word whose birth can be traced back to ancient Greece while the second approach understands democracy as egalitarian decision-making procedures and everyday practices that only in antiquity gradually came to be labelled as "democratic" (cf. Graeber, 2007). But, as John Keane points out, democracy differs from the things that bear the names of now immortal inventors precisely in that it has no creator. Moreover, "[t]he roots of the family of terms that make up the language of democracy, and exactly where and when the word was first used, remain a mystery. Democracy carefully guards her secrets. Through the fog of the past only random clues appear, in the guise of wild-looking, ungroomed figures" (Keane, 2009: x).

The study of democracy requires changes in the chronotope – i.e. the temporal and geographical framework – of the study of democratic ideas and practices. This is well demonstrated by the important contributions of John Keane (2009), Isakhan and Stockwell (2012; 2015) and Martin Bernal (1987; 1991; 2006), whose treatments do not lose sight of the pre-dating of the history of democracy. They point out that modern democracy has different genealogies, and that the confusion of the democratic idea from the rest of the world – especially the systematic erasure of the Afro-Asian influence on ancient Greece – can be understood as an attempt to assert a Eurocentric discourse on the primacy of "European" culture. In his otherwise excellent treatise *Democracy: Ancient and Modern,* Moses I. Finley concludes:

> It was the Greeks, after all, who discovered [sic!] not only democracy but also politics, the art of reaching decisions by public discussion

and then of obeying those decisions as a necessary condition of civilized social existence. I am not concerned to deny the possibility that there were prior examples of democracy, so-called tribal democracies, for instance, or the democracies in early Mesopotamia that some Assyriologists believe they can trace. Whatever the facts may be about the latter, their impact on history, on later societies, was null. The Greeks, and only the Greeks, discovered democracy in that sense, precisely as Christopher Columbus, not some Viking seaman, discovered America. (Finley, 1996: 13–14)

The historical superficiality that Finley allows himself in the above quotation (and not only in the last sentence) also adorns other attempts to deal with the uniqueness and inseparability of democracy from the European tradition or even civilisation. Since there have been many accounts of these cases and of their deconstruction, it will here suffice to highlight only Huntington's article or book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993/1996). Huntington – once head of the political science department at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and author of the thesis that the devastating bombing of the countryside during the Vietnam War should be understood as urbanization – argues that democracy is a thoroughly Western idea. Moreover, it is such a Western idea that it is incompatible with any other civilisation, and the West should abandon its efforts to extend it:

At a superficial level, much of Western culture has indeed permeated the rest of the world. At a more basic level, however, Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist, or Orthodox cultures. (Huntington, 1993: 40)

It is unnecessary to point out all the arbitrariness in Huntington's interpretation of democracy, and above all in his use of particular concepts (the very concept of civilisation), which only confirms the

criticisms of Eurocentricity or Orientalism in the academic industry.[2] Huntington's analysis is not only arbitrary, but all its biological generalisations, religious and racial prejudices, and cultural constructs border on racism. There are simply too many controversial theses in the book – for example, that Islamic and Confucian civilisations are anti-democratic by their very definition, as they inhibit the spread of democratic norms in society. Such treatments of democracy have nevertheless become the norm or have contributed to the development of the democratic canon as we know it today.

The irony is that the democratic canon has been developed in the past, and even today, by authors who have been deeply sceptical of the very idea of democracy, whether Plato's defence of the philosopher-ruler, Hobbes' justification of the delegation of sovereignty and representation, Schumpeter's elitist interpretations of political struggle, or the aforementioned Huntington's explanation of the (un) democratic inclinations of particular civilisations. These analyses are not only problematic because of their academic weight or the consolidation of a hegemonic research paradigm that consequently trivialises and marginalises all attempts to address the "hidden history" of democracy (Isakhan and Stockwell, 2012). The problem is much larger and more fatal than the discrediting of academic debates, the ideological influence on younger generations, the defence of the field of research, etc. Indeed, such standards of the history of democracy also have important political implications. Through the "privatisation" of the democratic idea, the belief is reinforced that democracy is not universally applicable, as it is a matter of a very specific civilisational milieu, geography, and genetics. This, of course, overlooks its history, distorts its present and, unfortunately, limits its vision of the future.

As Francesca Polletta (2002: vii) acknowledges, democracy is a very elusive concept, and the difficulty of studying it only increases with

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2   Perhaps the most lucid critique of Huntington's theory can be found in Graeber's text "There Never was a West: or, Democracy Emerges from the Spaces in Between". See Graeber (2007).

time, as the inflation of the word democracy loses its content. Polletta's assessment echoes that of T. S. Eliot, who noted decades ago that "[w]hen a term has become so universally sanctified as 'democracy' now is, I begin to wonder whether it means anything, in meaning too many things" (Eliot, 1940: 11–12). Thus, it is not surprising that Finley (1999: 15) goes so far as to conclude that all the semantic changes and abuses have devalued democracy as a concept to the point of analytical uselessness. Democracy is therefore an empty signifier.

If we follow the classical or, according to Bernal (1987), the "Aryan model" of the study of democracy, this dilemma is already evident in the very discrepancy between the etymological origins or original meaning of democracy and its understanding today. Democracy has never really meant the rule of the people, since it was born as a word referring to the power or capacity (*krátos*) of the people (*dēmos*). To be more precise, democracy became a substitute for republicanism only in the 18th and, above all, 19th century, when it also took on its present meaning – i.e. the rule of the people, manifested through political representation, elections and majoritarianism.

One of the best scholars of Athenian democracy, Josiah Ober (2007), points out that the original meaning of democracy is radically different from its republican interpretations. According to Ober, δημοκρατία (dēmos + krátos) is distinguished from other political regimes by the very fact that it has never been grounded in numbers and quantities (cf. Bensaïd, 2012). Unlike monarchy, where monos indicates the rule of one, or oligarchy, where hoi oligoi indicates the rule of a small group of people, dēmos in democracy, according to Ober, means the ability of all (Ober, 2007). According to Ober, it is of course necessary to distinguish between two quite different uses and understandings of dēmos: big-D Dēmos and little-D dēmos. As Ober writes:

> The primary meaning of dēmos to the Athenians was not "Assemblymen", but "the whole of the Athenian citizen body". This latter meaning, which we might characterize as "capital-D Dēmos", was an ideological construct. This Dēmos was real, in that there were

indeed some 20,000 or 30,000 individuals living in fourth-century Athens who enjoyed full citizen rights; but Dēmos could not be perceived by the senses. No one had ever seen Dēmos; it was too big ever to gather in any one place. Therefore, the Athenian Dēmos was not, as M. I. Finley supposed, a "face-to-face society", but an example of what Benedict Anderson has called an "imagined community". (Ober, 1989: 329–330)

Alongside the ideological interpretation of *dēmos*, there was also a purely institutional or, better, operational interpretation, which rejected determinism in the capital-D *Dēmos*. Although understanding *dēmos* as participants in the Pnyx assemblies at first sight suggests a drastic narrowing of the concept of *Dēmos*, this ipso facto opens the possibility for a radical critique of status citizenship and the naturalisation of political community. A similar elaboration of the multiple meanings *of dēmos* is also given by Mogens H. Hansen (1999). According to Hansen, for democrats *dēmos* meant all the people or the Athenian people as a whole while for philosophers and critics of democracy it meant a particular (usually marginalised) social class and was used as a synonym for *ochlos*, *aporoi*, or *plethos*. All subsequent discussions also continue this duality of *dēmos* and the consequent understanding of (Athenian) *dēmokratia*. Thus, for some, democracy is a specific political regime characterised primarily by inclusiveness and participation of the political community while for others, democracy is a political regime characterised by reapropriation and conflict.[3]

We have already mentioned the problematic nature of the widespread definition of democracy as the rule of the people, which is, of course, not confined to political circles, but is a constant feature of hegemonic interpretations in the academic world. Ober cautions that a closer reading of the terminology can lead us to reject not only the "textbook" definition of democracy as the rule of the people, but also

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3   For more on other meanings and uses of dēmos – for example as a political institution, as an assembly, as the lowest level of government or municipality – see also Hansen (2010).

the alternative one, which understands democracy as a pejorative word or a warning against the force of rajas (*hoi polloi*). The original meaning of democracy, according to Ober, is nothing other than "the ability to get things done in the public sphere" – i.e. "empowered people", not just "the power of the people". This is not the case with the definition of democracy as the rule of the people. In his deconstruction of democracy, Ober shows the specificity of *dēmos* while also pointing to the specificity of the suffix *krátos*. *Dēmocracy* is also distinguished from other political regimes by its lack of an *archē* or logic of government. Whereas *monarchy* and *oligarchy* clearly indicate a specific regime of government, *democracy* is based precisely on the lack of this logic, since *krátos* implies a completely different conception of power.

We are back to Newman's observation that (hegemonic) political theory perceives and understands as real only "visible, representative identities situated on an ontological field organized by sovereign power; it is concerned with how we are governed, or with the normative principles or constitutive logics upon which political power is founded" (Newman, 2014: 94). It could be said that he takes the reality of politics too literally, especially considering that the word real derives from the Latin word *regal*, or of kings. Consequently, for much of political theory, only what is "regal" or regal is real while counter-hegemonic political practices and ideas are discredited. In this respect, the academic industry confirms the thesis of a monoculture of knowledge or an epistemology of blindness (Santos, 2015), which is why the original meaning of democracy is nowadays understood as a scandal.

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3

DEMOCRACY OR REPUBLIC?

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section examines the foundational distinctions between democracy as practiced in ancient Athens and the modern representative systems commonly associated with republicanism. Athenian democracy, with its emphasis on direct citizen participation and mechanisms like the lot (random selection) rather than elections, challenges the modern understanding of democratic representation. The section critically explores how Athenian democracy's design aimed to prevent elite dominance and corruption, with institutions like the People's Assembly and the cleroterion fostering a rotation in positions of power.

In contrast, representative democracy as developed in the 18th century places power in the hands of elected officials, a system often seen as inherently aristocratic. Figures like James Madison and theorists such as Bernard Manin and David Graeber highlight how elections tend to privilege social elites, in part due to the aristocratic bias of selecting the "best" candidates. This chapter explores how modern representative democracy, with its emphasis on expertise and hierarchy, diverges fundamentally from the Athenian ideal of political equality and direct participation.

Further, the chapter examines philosophical critiques, particularly those of Jacques Rancière, who argues that true democracy is inherently "ungovernable" and in constant flux, as opposed to fixed institutional forms. Rancière contends that democracy is the process of challenging established hierarchies and continuously redefining political community. In this view, the lot – a random selection process – is the most democratic means of governance, as it embodies the principle of equal access to power.

Throughout the chapter, readers are encouraged to re-evaluate the principles underpinning political systems today, questioning whether representative democracy fulfills the democratic ideal or if it merely replicates elite power structures under a democratic guise.

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From today's perspective, the idea of Athenian democracy remains equally radical and relevant when it comes to the critique of political representation and the rejection of elections as a wholly aristocratic instrument. In pursuing this goal, we will not go into a detailed elaboration of the institutional solutions of Athenian democracy. There are two very simple reasons for this: numerous breakthrough works have been written about this highly relevant question in recent years, with Hansen's *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (1999) itself already being able to completely fill this void. But a much more substantial reason lies in our intention never having been to examine the already known limitation of Athenian democratic practice, whose exclusion of approximately 80–90 per cent of the entire population – that is, women, foreigners, slaves, and others – is too often understood as an argument for its irrelevance.

Our reading will be different because we will focus on the Athenian democratic idea and its lasting relevance. We will argue that the development of Athenian democracy is not to be understood merely through the physical joining of the Acropolis with the city (*polis*) and the countryside (*chora*), since the democratic polis was formed as a political entity primarily by changing the existing political relations.

The introduction of Athenian democracy was only possible after the realisation that the predominating social and political forms limited the overall development (including the spread of freedom) or used it solely to the advantage of privileged aristocratic families. The democratic polis was thus not actually founded on a social contract, as many liberal theoreticians emphasise in their reading, but on conflict. Since Athenian democracy was born out of political struggles between the rich and poor, the powerful and powerless in Athens, it is not surprising that with its introduction, numerous institutions in the service of limiting the power of the richest were developed (e.g. ostracism, graphe paranomon).

In this respect, we fully agree with Finley's (1999: 19) observation that the argument about the slave or oligarchic character of Athenian democracy is justified, but at the same time just as misleading. Given the undeniable limitations of the Athenian project, resulting from the identified exclusion of the majority, the democratic idea as it emerged in Athens in the 5th and 4th centuries BC nevertheless represented an innovation that was rarely repeated thereafter. Thus, the Athenian conception of democracy is characterised not only by the exclusion of the unquestioned majority, but also, at least as much, by the inclusion or extension of the *dēmos*, which resulted in the political equality of socially and economically completely heterogeneous citizens. As Josiah Ober (2007) would argue, the emergence of Athenian democracy must also be understood as an epistemic turn that both influenced and was determined by the way Athenians thought, spoke, and interacted. There are other critiques of the Athenian interpretation of democracy that seek to highlight its irrelevance for contemporary political communities. One of the most common objections is that of the increasing complexity of modern societies. But here again, such objections are mistaken since the problems arising from the complexity of modern societies are primarily technical and not political problems, and the increasing technical complexity of the modern world does not necessarily imply a political diversity of situations (Finley, 1999: 18). It is therefore a case of unjustifiably conflating technical knowledge

and political understanding. Such objections are of course worthy of serious further consideration, but at this point they are beyond the scope or purpose of our reflection on the Athenian democratic idea in its critique of political representation and elections.

In the past, many authors noted that elections are a purely aristocratic instrument, which is fundamentally at odds with the very idea of democracy. Elections are not based on the assumption of equality and relevance of all members of a community, but on the idea of the relevance of the selection of the best, or *aristoi*. Finley does not overlook that the immediacy of Athenian democracy was the best cure for the ills that afflict modern political communities – political elites and corruption. The People's Assembly, the *cleroterion* as an instrument of lot and thus of rotation in positions of power, the absence of a (paid and permanent) bureaucracy, jury trials, etc. were institutional solutions consciously aimed at counteracting the pernicious influence of the financial power centres, the professionalisation of politics, and the rise of bureaucracy.[4]

According to Bernard Manin (1997), the principles of representative government do not represent a departure from the idea of Athenian democracy only in the moment of physical presence or absence, but in fact a deeper discontinuity: the very understanding of political community and the entitlement to inscription in the political process. In Athens, too, some functions were delegated and thus had a representative component, but their institutional derivation was nevertheless based on the idea of the intrinsic equality and relevance of all. In other words, the immediacy or directness of Athenian democracy, which

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4   A similar role was played by ostracism or judgement by shards that enabled exile, but at the same time the preservation of property and the citizenship of those members of the community that had too large an influence or posed some other threat to democracy. We should also recall the graphe paranomon procedure, which enabled a citizen who made an illegal or an antidemocratic proposal at the Assembly to be put on trial. With a conviction adopted by a jury court selected by lot, the vote or even the adoption of the contestable proposition was retroactively annulled, that is, if it had taken place at the Assembly.

is completely at odds with the ideals of republicanism today, does not imply mere physical presence, but rather the logic by which the members of the various organs were recruited – i.e. the logic of the lot.

The problem with elections is not only the freedom of choice, but also the freedom of repeated choice, which prevents the principle of rotation as a basic axiom of the democratic process and thus leads to the gradual professionalisation of politics. Manin even concludes that the difference between the "representative" or "republican" model and the "direct" model is not the number of participants in political decision-making but the method of their selection. Thus, representative systems are not "representative" because of the small number of those who govern on behalf of the people, but because the representatives are chosen solely through elections. If the mechanics of choice were to be assessed in a broader temporal perspective, it might also be seen that it is entirely unjustified to associate elections solely with republicanism, since elections have historically been a matter of feudal tradition.

A similar explanation can be found with James Madison, who repeatedly pointed out in the heated debates before the adoption of the new Constitution that there is an important difference between a democracy and a republic – a representative republic is in fact a completely different, superior political regime. The representative moment in this case should not be understood as a mere technical necessity, conditioned by the impossibility of physically bringing the *demos* together in larger political communities since the aim of representation is to

> refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose. (Madison, 2009: 52)

In *Federalist No. 10,* Madison explains that

> a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction … Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions. (ibid.)

David Graeber (2007: 342), on the other hand, is convinced that representative democracy in all its derivatives is a rarity in the history of political communities, because it is based on two preconditions that rarely coincide: the belief that people should have an equal voice in collective decision-making, and the presence of an apparatus of coercion capable of implementing these decisions and ensuring that they are respected. That there have been few periods in human history when both of these preconditions have coexisted is not surprising to Graeber, since within egalitarian communities such systems of coercion have been perceived as unnecessary and pointless anomalies, while in entities with elaborate mechanisms of control and coercion, political elites and rulers have had no idea of – or need to – comply with and implement the popular will.

THE LOT AND THE LOGIC OF CHANCE

Manin agrees that the usual distinction between direct and indirect forms of governance is often misguided. It is therefore true that the Athenian form of democracy was physically or technically impossible in larger political communities, but even much larger political entities

could retain the democratic logic of chance and rotation even under completely changed conditions. To put it differently, the size of political communities does not provide any real answer to the question of why, in the late 18th century, we are witnessing the paradox of republican governments based on the adoption of an unequal system of allocating positions through elections, at the very time when the political equality of citizens is being proclaimed once again (Manin, 1997: 92).

According to Manin, the fact that in the late 18th century the difference between the lottery and the selection method was not understood in all its complexity, or that the key difference between the two methods was not identified, can be explained by the fact that the distinction between elections and the lottery was not as clear as the distinction between elections and the now abolished system of inheritance. Another possible explanation is that by the late 18th century, the relationship between political positions and citizens was already such that either method – lot or election – meant little choice anyway (ibid.: 91).[5]

But this does not erase the important differences between the two methods and political logics. Representation through elections, as understood in the republican tradition, is based solely on the equality of consent or acquiescence in government that justifies the choice of elections over the lot, which is a counterpoint to the democratic principle of equality of access to power guaranteed by the lotocracy. History offers several examples that show that the principle of representation and the democratic ideal of equality of access to power are not mutually exclusive, or that representation can be linked to principles of choice other than elections.

It should not be forgotten that Athens, even during the "golden age" of democracy, combined the lot and the ballot for political choice, or

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5   That the lot is now seen as an impractical, unsophisticated and outdated custom is something the Church can also be credited with. In 1223, Pope Honorius III abolished lot as the method of selection in ecclesiastical appointments.

that a number of Italian republics continued to use the lot successfully to allocate positions until the end of the 18th century – the Republic of Venice until 1797. Nor can it be ignored that the size of the citizen body in no way diminishes the usefulness or practicality of the jury, as evidenced by its use in jury selection in many judicial systems of modern political regimes. What, then, is the real reason for the separation between the democratic idea and the principles of representation that emerges with the American and French revolutions? Where, then, are the hidden differences between (Athenian) democracy and republicanism? The answer lies partly in the quality of the lot and the often undetected dangers of elections.

Unlike elections, the lot guarantees the democratic ideal of chance and equality of all to power, not just equality of consent. It is a method of allocating positions that does not discriminate and that provides the most effective antidote to the influence of money and manipulation on the political process. It should be stressed that the luck of the draw, as practised in Athens, involved or could only reach those citizens who also consented *a priori* to political candidacy.

Aristotle warned that elections should be understood as an aristocratic or oligarchic mechanism since they introduce the principle of dissociation in rank, wealth, and talent. It is because of the "principle of distinction" that the "chosen" representatives in modern republics must be understood in both senses: not only as the elected representatives of the people, but first and foremost as the excellences or natural aristocracy of the community. As Manin (1997: 132–149) shows, elections have purely aristocratic effects, since they are based on the imposition of discriminatory criteria of validity which, in the elections themselves, determine the (un)suitability of candidates and their (un)ability to participate in the political process. To be more precise, elections are already unequal because of the discriminatory treatment of candidates in the elections.

From today's perspective, the best sign of democracy is universal and free suffrage or the very act of voting, which completely overlooks the aspect of participation in power or election. As mentioned above,

republicanism has thus limited democracy to equality of consent to be governed, not equality of power. Citizenship is consequently reduced to a source of power, to the conferring of legitimacy on each successive power, which does not presuppose our active participation. It is therefore a status citizenship, without political practice. Of course, we know the objection: even today, every citizen can compete on an equal footing for individual political positions without being hindered in any way.

But political reality teaches us that it is through elections that voters can discriminate against candidates on the basis of unclear or controversial criteria. While free elections guarantee us political equality in the act of voting, they also guarantee us the possibility of discrimination in attempts to occupy power. Freedom of choice thus also implies freedom of discrimination, and this is particularly true in the case of secret ballots, where there is no guarantee that the elections will not allow for bias. According to Manin, the intrinsic inequality of elections also derives from the distinction between candidates that the very act of choosing requires. Elections always imply a choice based on a preference for specific characteristics and virtues of the candidates, which are never neutral and universal. By seeking out the *aristoi* or best in the political community, elections lead to the creation of a superior group, an "elected aristocracy", which best fits the hegemonic principle of dissociation in rank, wealth, or talent as a selection criterion. Moreover, elections make it possible to elect candidates with outstanding and rare qualities since candidates with ordinary qualities are indistinguishable from each other and cannot gain the necessary visibility due to too much competition among them.

This brings us back to the earlier dilemma of who has the power to identify the characteristics and virtues that are then perceived as excellent, and how do they do it. Nor should we overlook other aspects of the aristocratic or unequal character of elections, which are linked to the characteristics of contemporary "spectacle societies" and which already call for a different kind of consideration – for example, the preference for actors whose qualities ensure cognitive visibility or

stand out in attracting attention, as well as the financial cost of electoral campaigns, which by definition privileges the richer sections of the community in the electoral contest.

This paradox of representation in a democracy can also be seen from a different perspective. As Rancière (2014: 53) would argue, representative democracy today really seems to be a mere pleonasm, although it has always been an oxymoron. In his recapitulation of Plato and Aristotle, Rancière highlights an important demarcation between the political subjectivities of *dēmos* and *ochlos*, which is not just a simple disjunction between the "power of the people" and the "unification of individual turbulences". According to Rancière, the *dēmos* is not and cannot become a singular subject, and therefore, unlike the *ochlos* or the plurality of individuals in the illusion of the totality of the One, it also has the capacity to denaturalise the existing, i.e. to change it. For Rancière, *dēmos* is therefore the political name for "the part of those who have no part" that does not count (yet). That is because the people is always more and always less than it is since a political community always contains the "part of those who have no part", which can attribute "to itself as its proper lot the equality that belongs to all citizens" (1999: 8).

So where is the key difference between *dēmos* and *ochlos*, a difference which may also represent a demarcation between the movement and other forms of collective action? *Dēmos* is neither the sum of social partners nor the sum of all differences. In the contrary, it is the power to reveal the contingency and incompleteness of this kind of counting of partners and summing up of differences, since the people "are always more or less than the people". The radical nature of democracy is reflected in the very idea that the principle of distinction by birth, wealth, and knowledge has no place in a democratic world since democracy is always a matter of the declassification of order, a process of political becoming, and the constant counting of a political community that is always more and less than it is. In Rancière's interpretation, democracy is a heart that must constantly beat to survive and develop; any attempt to preserve the status quo, any kind of contraction would mean sudden death.

Rancière points out that this idea gives birth to politics, even though politics (*la politique*) is too often (mis)understood as problematic systems of distribution and legitimation that could instead be called the police (*la police*). Politics as the practice of democracy only emerges with the realisation of the assumption of intrinsic equality that we act as subjects who do not have the rights that they have and who have the rights that they do not have. This already reveals the "scandal of democracy" since in democracy there is no longer an *a priori* justification of fitness for political life. There is no more place for the great or the *aristoi* since the only justification for democracy is the lack of any justification.

To follow Rancière's (2014: 49), democracy is neither a form of society nor a form of government, it is precisely the "ungovernable" on which all power is based. Democracy is always beyond and beneath these forms. This is also why, according to Rancière, the idea of the lot is essentially the most democratic solution for the selection and distribution of positions. In response to contemporary criticisms of the lot, Rancière points out that the lot is the best cure for the ills that afflict modern representative republics and that it can, even in the worst cases, lead to much lesser dangers. The dilemma between the lot and the election must, according to him, be framed in the following way: on the one hand, we are faced with a lot which could indeed potentially lead to a government full of incompetent people; on the other, we are faced with an election, which is certain to result in a government of individuals with specific competences, i.e. individuals whose main competence is an obsession with power. When it comes to the "pathologies" of representation, we should not overlook the findings of researchers working primarily in the fields of social medicine, psychology, and psychiatry. In recent years, we have seen compelling research contributions arguing that neoliberal capitalism and representative democracy enable the rise of sociopaths, pathological narcissists who have no sense of guilt or shame. They assuage their inferiority complex with power and use lies, manipulation, and intrigue to obtain it.

The result of this abberation are the hegemonic notions of democracy today, which have recuperated the word but at the same time rejected its content. Or, as Graeber (2007: 366) would add, this also results in contemporary liberal democracies, within which we find nothing resembling the Athenian *agora*, but which certainly lack no parallels with the Roman *circus*. And architecture was not the only thing he had in mind.

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4

INTERLUDE I: DEMOCRACY AND JAZZ

SECTION OVERVIEW

This chapter draws an analogy between democratic practice and the spirit of jazz, exploring how jazz embodies democratic principles through improvisation, collaboration, and spontaneity. It begins by revisiting foundational democratic concepts, highlighting the often-overlooked "vernacular" knowledge or *mētis*, which reflects a localized, intuitive understanding of democracy in contrast to formalized or theoretical approaches. Jazz, as a form of musical expression rooted in individuality and collective interaction, parallels this democratic *mētis*, emphasizing participation and adaptability over hierarchy.

Using jazz as a metaphor, the section examines democracy as a dynamic, non-hierarchical process where individuals work in harmony without a single conductor or authority figure. Figures like Ralph Ellison and Amiri Baraka argue that jazz exemplifies democracy by allowing individuals to express themselves freely within a collective framework, much as democratic systems rely on the voices of the many to create a cohesive society. This "jazzocracy" suggests that democracy thrives not through rigid adherence to rules but through the flexibility and creativity of its participants.

Readers will also consider critiques of traditional democratic theory, which often focuses on institutional structures and rules. Jazz challenges this by demonstrating that democracy is more than formal institutions; it is an ongoing, lived experience. The section includes insights from theorists like David Graeber, who compare democratic social movements to jazz in their fluid, horizontal organization and rejection of centralized power structures. This model of democracy – like jazz – resists simplification, encouraging readers to view democracy.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In one of his speeches before the attack on Iraq in 2002, former US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld pointed out that in analysing the situation in Iraq, there are things we know we know (*known knowns*), things we know we don't know (*known unknowns*), and – the most challenging and dangerous category – the things we don't know we don't know (*unknown unknowns*). At first glance, it seems that our analysis of the state and prospects of democracy will be very modest compared to Rumsfeld's philosophical sophistication, since it will neither aim to reveal the known unknowns of democracy nor the unknown unknowns about democracy. It will in fact be a rather modest undertaking, concerned solely with the recuperation and re-affirmation of what is already known and sometimes forgotten about democracy. In other words, the original meaning and purpose of democracy and its outgrowth with the emergence of republicanism and representation.

Nevertheless, we have a challenging task ahead of us as addressing what is known and sometimes forgotten about democracy – starting with the very definition of democracy as "rule by the people" – will be an attempt to expose the cracks in the hard-to-penetrate ideological matrix of the existing political and economic paradigm. At the same time, this kind of tackling the original meaning of democracy soon reveals that the treatment of the known knowledge about democracy must in fact include a fourth category of (non)knowledge about democracy – the *unknown knowns* or the things we do not know that we really

know about democracy.[6] In other words, the hegemonic political and academic debates on democracy, which are in fact based on a distrust of the *dēmos* or the very idea of democracy, are accompanied by a "vernacular" knowledge of democracy that is undetectable because of its immediacy, its ordinariness, and also because it is systematically marginalised.

The ancient Greeks had a special name for such knowledge – *mētis*: a practical, local knowledge based on experience or life. Michel de Certeau (1984) would call it *arts de faire* and is often in complete contrast to scientific knowledge about the same thing or problem. *Mētis* does not have universalist pretensions and is, in this respect, also more plural, inclusive, and open to modification than scientific knowledge or *episteme* and, to some extent, *techné*. The latter also differ from *mētis* in the way they are organised, codified, transmitted, and modified. If *mētis* is local, particular, and contextual, then scientific knowledge is a system of universality, standardisation, and disciplinarity, where there is no room for local idiosyncrasies (cf. Scott, 1998). In our case, we are referring to ideas and practices of democracy as they appear in everyday life, in pockets of resistance at the edges of the political map. Democracy is not a matter of memorising definitions, exegesis of sacred texts, or uncritical following of expertise, but a matter of intuition and improvisation. It is not a matter of abstract knowledge, but rather of concrete practice. Not a predefined direction and rhythm, but an incredible dynamism and contingency. Sounds familiar?

As early as 1938, Thomas Mann, in a booklet meaningfully entitled *The Coming Victory of Democracy*, argued that democracy was inextricably linked to jazz, or that the aesthetics and practice of jazz best embodied the democratic idea. Moreover, a number of authors – Ralph Ellison (1964), Cornel West (2005), Stanley Crouch (2006), Walton M. Muyumba (2009), for example – have even concluded that democracy

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6   *The Unknown Knowns* is the title of a 2013 documentary on Donald Rumsfeld, co-written by Erol Morris. Slavoj Žižek has also written about the fourth category of (lack of) knowledge about the situation in Iraq in his critique of Rumsfeld's "epistemology".

is nothing other than the political manifestation of jazz. In reality, jazz practices democracy, develops and expands it, but in a slightly different form. A sonic form. Ornette Coleman admits that his "free jazz" was a democratic experience or, rather, the sound of democracy. Jazz is already democratic in its motives or at least in its consequences. In both cases, the emphasis is on a process based on play, improvisation, listening, adaptation, and invention. Jazz and democracy are thus not reducible to rules – sheet music or a constitution. Nor can they be separated from everyday life. They are therefore not a specific musical or political form, but a particular state of mind, not least a particular attitude towards the world (Berliner, 1994).

What is the link between jazz and democracy? Amiri Baraka (in Magee, 2004: 166) concludes that jazz embodies democratic principles since the very process of jazz, or collective improvisation, is democratic: "It is a singular and collective spontaneity and composition, formal and *mise en scène.*" Ralph Ellison also idefines jazz as:

> … an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest, each solo flight, or improvisation, represents a definition of his identity: as individual, as member of the collectivity and as link in the chain of tradition. Thus, … the jazzman must lose his identity even as he finds it. (Ellison, 1964: 234)

Jazz and democracy do not a passively repeat political and musical rules but transcend or relativise and not preserve parochial identities; they politically subjectify or affirm new rights and identities. The radical democratic nature of the jazz process is best summed up in saxophonist Art Pepper's account of a séance with Sonny Stitt:

> I forgot everything, and everything came out. I played way over my head. I played completely different than he did. I searched and found my own way, and what I said reached the people. I played myself, and I knew I was right, and the people loved it, and they felt it. I blew and I blew, and when I finally finished I was shaking

all over; my heart was pounding; I was soaked in sweat, and the people were screaming, the people were clapping, and I looked at Sonny, but I just kind of nodded, and he went, "All right." And that was it. That's what it's all about. (Pepper in Rinzler, 2008: 176)

 The radical nature of jazz is that, unlike the so-called serious music, the focus is not on performing it, but on creating or improvising it. Its radical character is that it knows no right or wrong improvisations and thus does not lead to hierarchisation and absolutes. The radicality of democracy, compared to other political regimes or logics of government (*axiomata*), is also manifested in its total contingency and the lack of any *arkhē* or basis that determines it or even elevates it to the level of historical necessity.

   That jazz can be understood as a different incarnation of democracy is also confirmed by Kabir Sehgal, who, in a review of political readings of jazz, concludes that jazz is nothing other than democracy in sound (Sehgal, 2008: xxi). Just as jazz emerges through the intersections of musicians' self-expression and simultaneous engagement with others, so too the democratic political process can only be constituted through a dialogue with others, where our self-fulfilment is rooted in our empathy with others. Both arise from the tension between individualism and communalism, spontaneity and order, innovation and tradition, improvisation and composition, unity and plurality, utopianism and realism, the historical approach of how things are (*natura naturata*) and the philosophical approach of how things could be (*natura naturans*), between practice and theory, short-term goals and long-term visions, despair and hope, solitude and solidarity.[7]

> At the same time, "jazzocracy" is fundamentally characterised by a redefinition of the individual and the community that is generally absent from Western political thought. In *The Jazz Tradition*,

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7   In his study The Contradictions of Jazz, Paul Rinzler offers a similar explanati-on of the democratic impulse in jazz. According to Rinzler (2008), jazz is the result of a dynamic tension between individualism and interconnectedness, assertion and openness, freedom and responsibility, creativity and tradition.

Martin Williams points out that jazz

> [d]epends on the individual, [but] it also depends on group co-
> -operation. In all its styles, jazz involves some degree of collective
> ensemble improvisation, and in this it differs from Western music
> even at those times in its history when improvisation was requ-
> ired. The high degree of individuality, together with the mutual
> respect and cooperation required in a jazz ensemble carry with
> them philosophical implications that are so exciting and far-re-
> aching that one almost hesitates to contemplate them. It is as
> if jazz were saying to us that not only is far greater individuality
> possible to man than he has so far allowed himself, but that such
> individuality, far from being a threat to a co-operative social struc-
> ture, can actually enhance society. (Williams, 1993: 263)

Williams points out that the Western tradition is based on an uncritical adoption of the ancient and later Cartesian interpretation of man as a thinking animal whose most important function is pure thinking. On the other hand, the jazz ethos suggests that it is possible to transcend the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, object and subject, since for "a jazz musician, thought and feeling, reflection and emotion, come together uniquely, and resolve in the act of doing" (ibid.). Alongside the unity of mind and body in jazz improvisation, the intersubjectivity that builds the jazz ensemble cannot be ignored. It is therefore an ontological and epistemological position that does not derive from the atomised individual or the anonymous collectivity, but rather from the "majority of one", as Henry David Thoreau might have remarked. According to Williams, jazz cannot exist without the individual – without the individual interpretation of melody, the individual creation of sound and the individual articulation of emotion. But, paradoxically, jazz cannot develop this individualism without a collective collaboration that recognises the uniqueness of each individual and the simultaneous intrinsic equality of all. At its core, jazz is thus a philosophical and aesthetic manifestation of democracy and the democratic collective self (Ellison, 1964; Magee, 2004).

Our brief "jazz excursus" was necessary for clarifying the democratic unruliness that is often marginalised and trivialised in the current discussions on democracy. But we also appropriated the jazz idiom as a convenient metaphor and discourse to highlight the epistemological and methodological challenges of understanding democracy (Burch, 2012: 167). What do we mean by that? If we inattentively listen to a jazz session, we might wrongly conclude that it is only noise that is connecting the ensemble, completely missing the harmony and rhythm co-created and kept alive by all the members. In discussing jazz as a democratic form of music and the "infinite art of improvisation" in jazz, Max Roach points out that:

> [w]hen a piece is performed, everybody in the group has the opportunity to speak on it, to comment on it through their performance. It's a democratic process, as opposed to most European classical music in which the two most important people are the composer and the conductor. They are like the king and the queen. In a sense, the conductor is also the military official who's there to see that the wishes of the masters – the composers – are adhered to, and as a musician your job may depend on how you conform to the conductor's interpretation of the composer's wishes. However, in a jazz performance, everyone has an opportunity to create a thing of beauty collectively, based on their own musical personalities. (in Berliner, 1994: 349)

The scandal of jazz-as-democracy lies exactly in its rejection of any avant-gardist logic (of a conductor or sovereign, for instance) since jazz, like democracy, depends on everyone involved. The problem with hegemonic theory is precisely that it "generally looks for visible, representative identities situated on an ontological field organized by sovereign power; it is concerned with how we are governed, or with the normative principles or constitutive logics upon which political power is founded" (Newman, 2014: 94). Thus, from these positions, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Art Blakey, and others may indeed sound like noise, and the new politics of young environmental activists

appear as inarticulate and self-referential posturing. On the other hand, David Graeber defends the social movements and their reinvention of politics as one defined by a clear political stance, a sophisticated analysis of the status quo, and elaborated alternatives, but which are often completely overlooked due to the new political language, strategy and practice:

> A constant complaint about the globalization movement in the progressive press is that, while tactically brilliant, it lacks any central theme or coherent ideology. (This seems to be the left equivalent of the corporate media's claims that we are a bunch of dumb kids touting a bundle of completely unrelated causes – free Mumia, dump the debt, save the old-growth forests). Another line of attack is that the movement is plagued by a generic opposition to all forms of structure or organization. It's distressing that, two years after Seattle, I should have to write this, but someone obviously should: in North America especially, this is a movement about reinventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization are its ideology. It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy. Ultimately, it aspires to be much more than that, because ultimately it aspires to reinvent daily life as whole. (Graeber, 2002: 70)

The irony is that the humanist spirit of jazz and social movements, which recognises the so-called *déclassé* social elements or Marx's *lumpenproletariat* – from runaway youth, the unemployed, vagabonds, sexual minorities, students, to prostitutes and bohemians is completely alien to hegemonic theories of democracy. Equally incomprehensible and dangerous to them is the localisation of political revolt that unites jazz and democracy in multi-ethnic clubs, gay and lesbian bars, community kitchens, alternative radio stations, free universities, and clinics. Both also include blue or melancholic *notes,* which provide

the necessary dissonance, transgression, and openness of the process itself. Scott Saul (2005) goes so far as to define jazz as an extension of the idea of direct action. Jazz and all its attributes are supposed to signal the end of the stultification of the consensual politics of the post-war era. To embrace jazz was to embrace the idea of action and prefiguration, which rejects liberal-democratic manners and forms in the struggle against hierarchy and domination.

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5

INTERLUDE II: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section critiques conventional approaches to democracy, emphasizing the need for new frameworks to address biases and limitations in mainstream political science. Traditional methods often reduce democracy to institutional structures or the rule of elites, which ignore grassroots democratic expressions and perpetuate a top-down view. Drawing on Boaventura de Sousa Santos' notion of "epistemicide," the section examines how hegemonic views marginalize alternative democratic practices, reinforcing a narrow, economically driven perspective on democracy.

The chapter will explore Santos' "ecology of knowledges," which proposes alternatives to dominant frameworks, highlighting localized, pluralistic forms of understanding and embracing non-Western and subaltern knowledge systems. These ecologies challenge the reductionist nature of the "monocultures" that prioritize Western-

centric views on knowledge, time, social hierarchy, universalism, and economic production. The section also examines the pitfalls of method-driven and theory-driven research, which Ian Shapiro argues can limit our understanding of political phenomena by imposing restrictive frameworks. Instead, readers will be encouraged to adopt a problem-driven approach, focusing on pressing societal issues with flexibility and openness to varied methodologies.

Key thinkers like Howard Zinn and Robert Dahl offer alternative perspectives, advocating for a modest, socially engaged approach to political research. This chapter thus aims to inspire readers to go beyond conventional paradigms, critically examine the myth of objectivity, and pursue epistemological justice as a pathway to social justice.

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How should we explore democracy? How should we study democracy to overcome the Procrustean logic of hegemonic theories that reduce democracy to a specific constitutional arrangement, an appropriate constellation of centres of political power or the separation of powers only? That associate with the idea of democracy a political model of the 1% based on the rule of the excellent or *aristoi*, political representation and, above all, a very specific economic orientation?

As André Gide might have said, everything that needs to be said about democracy has already been said, but since no one is listening, everything has to be said again. Only in this way can we succeed in deconstructing the hegemonic interpretations of democracy which, through sophisticated processes of economisation of everyday life and, above all, theological-moral interpretations, lead to new and as of yet undetected processes of naturalisation of the political. Only in this way can we see that the common denominator of too many political pronouncements and "scientific" theories of democracy is to be found in political agoraphobia (Dupuis-Déri, 2011) or in the oligarchic notions of democracy that merely co-opt the word while rejecting its content. Behind the façade of democratic formalism,

there is in fact a fear of the masses that could threaten the pastoral governments of the neoliberal project. Such a necessarily depoliticised democracy is thus reduced to a set of administrative technologies based on consensus and the denial of ideological differences, the necessary result of which is a decline in political activity, but not in the purely economic engagement of citizen-consumers.

In our attempt to address the original meaning of democracy, we start from the thesis that the study of democracy is a first-class optical challenge. To understand democracy, its condition, and its prospects, conceptual clarity and theoretical precision are not enough; a broader epistemological transformation is required, which, according to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004: 238), is a prerequisite for any social justice. According to Santos, we are witnessing an epistemological ignorance or what is called *epistemicide* (Santos, 2014; Santos, 2018), which reproduces the status quo and at the same time rejects, discredits, and trivialises all arguments and solutions that are not in line with the hegemonic idea of truth, objectivity, efficiency, and rationality.

By analogy with Santos' theory, our solution lies in an approach that transforms the non-existent into the existing, the impossible into the possible, the invisible into the visible, the irrelevant into the relevant. It should therefore reveal social and political solutions, initiatives, and concepts that have been suppressed, co-opted, or trivialised by the dominant political and/or epistemological position since, according to Santos (2004, 238), "what does not exist is in fact actively produced as non-existent, that is, as a non-credible alternative to what exists". If the production of non-existence according to Santos is based on:

> 1. The monoculture of science that turns modern science and high culture into the sole criteria of truth and aesthetic quality, respectively;

> 2. The monoculture of linear time that dismisses as "backward" whatever is asymmetrical and contrary to whatever is declared "forward";

3. The monoculture of classification that attempts to naturalize social differences and hierarchies;

4. The monoculture of the universal and the global that trivializes all particular and local practices and ideas, and renders them incapable of being credible alternatives to what exists globally and universally; and

5. The monoculture of capitalist production and efficiency that privileges growth through market forces and dismisses other systems of production as non-productive; (ibid., 233–239)

then its alternative must be based on:

1. The ecology of knowledges that recognizes other knowledge and criteria of rigour that operate credibly in social practices;

2. The ecology of temporalities that understands linear time as only one of many conceptions of time, and that is not even the most commonly adopted one. The rejection of linear time places other and different political and social practices on the same level as Western political and social practices because they have now become another form of contemporaneity;

3. The ecology of recognition that rejects the colonial ideas of race and sexuality, and tries to articulate the new nexus between the principle of equality and the difference principle, thus allowing for the possibility of equal differences;

4. The ecology of trans-scale that rejects the logic of the global scale and recuperates particular and local practices and ideas as relevant alternatives;

5. The ecology of productiveness that refutes the hegemonic paradigm of development and infinite economic growth. It recuperates and validates alternative systems of production, popular;

6. Economic organizations, workers' co-operatives, self-managed enterprises, etc., that have been trivialized by the capitalist ortho-doxy of productivity. (ibid., 239–240)

In anthropology, too, we can find important ingredients for the epistemological turn necessary for a full understanding of democracy. In their conceptualisation of "other anthropologies/anthropologies of difference", Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar (2005) call for a reflection on the broader epistemic and political field within which the disciplines operate, as well as a reflection on the micro-praxes and power relations within/between the different locations/traditions of the disciplines. To draw on Restrop and Escobar, our treatments of democracy should also include subaltern forms of knowledge, modalities of writing, political and intellectual practices, etc. The solution again lies in an epistemological and methodological transformation that will overcome the "asymmetric ignorance" and "parochial mentality" that still fossilises the social sciences and the humanities from time to time. Such an epistemological as well as methodological transformation would result in new styles of thinking and new forms of organising knowledge. To add to this, it would also result in the appropriation of political practices and ideas that have too often been marginalised and trivialised in the past, and it would be a first step towards the pluralisation and decentralisation of science. Moreover, it would also be a first step towards cognitive justice, which, as we have already mentioned, is a prerequisite for social justice.

How about political science? If political science is defined as the systematic study of power and influence relations in society, then our "object" of study is first and foremost characterised by an incredible complexity. Not so much the aforementioned "optical challenge", which is the study of political phenomena in a globalised world, but the most elementary aspects of methodological complexity:

1. The number of possible power and influence relationships between the relevant units;

2. The fluidity of the relationships themselves and of the units (relationships and units are not static!);

3. Contingency, which plays an incredible role in society, preventing simple mechanistic explanations of political phenomena.

Decades ago, Alberto Melucci (1989: 44) warned of the danger of a "myopia of the visible", where social sciences are only concerned with visible and familiar political subjectivities and practices. In his analysis of the state of political science, Saul Newman comes to similar conclusions. As noted earlier, he argues that political theory in recent decades has been reduced to perceiving and engaging only with "visible, representative identities situated on an ontological field organized by sovereign power; it is concerned with how we are governed, or with the normative principles or constitutive logics upon which political power is founded" (Newman, 2014: 94). But as Frances Fox Piven (2004) points out, the problem is even deeper, as contemporary political science is often reduced to policy science or uncritical, instrumental social research. This is not just a fragmentation of the political science community into sub-disciplines and theoretical and methodological orientations, but a tacit collaboration of the political science community in the defence of existing socio-economic relations and in the inhibition of politics. To what extent current research policies contribute to this – e.g. underfunding of basic, theoretical research, or the pauperisation of certain parts of the political science community – is another question, beyond the aims and scope of this chapter and the subject matter.

Robert Dahl (2004) recognises that the research on the political needs to be built on entirely new, more modest epistemological and methodological grounds. His attempt to identify these starting points at the high-profile conference "Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics", organised by Yale University in 2002, is even more illustrative. Dahl's paper starts from the thesis that the study of political phenomena – like the idea of democracy – must epistemologically and methodologically transcend the pursuit of physics and economics, or

rather the envy of both disciplines, which hide their shortcomings under a thin veneer of scientism. Our aim should not be to try to build a grand theory of politics that would allow us to explain and even predict the political in mechanistic and econometric terms since such an exercise is not only a waste of our time but also a way of moving away from a better understanding of political phenomena. Dahl goes on to say that one of the dangers is theoretical and methodological monism, which stems from the belief that the incredible complexity of the field can be overcome precisely by this kind of self-limitation. This brings us to Dahl's final warning that we need to move beyond reductionism in our understanding of the political or attempts to explain the workings of complex systems in terms of a single factor.

A recapitulation of Dahl's contribution is necessary as it identifies all the limitations and fallacies of hegemonic explanations of democracy, perhaps best reflected in the theories of Adam Przeworski and, above all, Seymour Martin Lipset, which can be found in their purest form in an article entitled *Some Social Requisites for Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy* (1959) or his book *Political Man: Social Bases of Politics* (1960).[8] Although the titles of both works are promising as they suggest a multiplicity of social factors that can be used to explain the state and perpsectives of democracy, Lipset concludes both differently. Simplified, he argues that democracy can be fully explained by only one factor: the economic development of the state. Lipset's work is based on two theses: firstly, that in a country where democracy has not yet been established, a sufficiently high economic return can lead to its establishment; and secondly, that in the countries where democracy has already been established, economic development contributes to the legitimacy and stability of the regime.

Lipset's theory, one or another derivation of which is still the basis for hegemonic explanations of democracy today, displays all the errors or pretensions identified in his call for humility in explaining political

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8   Cf. Adam Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*, 2000.

phenomena: 1. Lipset's theory of democracy is the best evidence of economic reductionism and the pretensions to econometric modelling in political science; 2. It aims at establishing a universal theory of democracy that erases local idiosyncrasies or vernacular democratic practices; 3. In anticipating the further study of democracy, it advocates a theoretical and methodological monism that stems from the conviction that the incredible complexity of democratic sentiment can be easily eliminated by this kind of self-limitation; 4. It is a reduction of complexity through the use of one explanatory factor *par excellence*. On the basis of the above, we can perhaps better understand the epistemological and methodological orientation of the top-ranked political science journals according to the so-called Impact Factor, as well as the staffing policies of many political science departments and programmes, which increasingly recruit their juniors from among PhD students in economics and law.

Ian Shapiro's (2008) warning that there are three distinctly different logics in the study of political phenomena: *method-driven*, *theory-driven*, and *problem-driven* research, is also relevant for recalibrating the theories and methods that will underpin our reading of democracy. According to Shapiro, contemporary social sciences and humanities are too often guided by the first two logics – method-driven and theory-driven research – which are safe and inviting orientations for researchers, but at the same time highly problematic for research itself as they lead to a "flight from reality".

According to Shapiro, method-driven research leads to the utilitarian construction of problems, the (mis)use of data and other pathologies. Methodological fetishism thus overdetermines research problems or, at best, the very quality of their explanation. A well-known methodological adage – also called Kaplan's Law of the Instrument, as Abraham Kaplan often used it in his texts and speeches – is: if the only tool we know is a hammer, then every research problem will look like a nail. Even today, in political science, it can be seen that the safest (publications) and consequently the most useful (promotions) for researchers is a quantitative methodological orientation towards

already defined problems and methods of understanding them. The shadow side of doing this is a tacit collaboration in the defence of existing socio-economic relations and in the inhibition of politics as it marginalises and trivialises political subjectivities and forms of action from an ontological register that refuses the establishment of sovereign power.

According to Shapiro, theory-driven research leads to similar aberrations. Let us stress that by theory-guided research Shapiro does not mean the application of theory to research, but rather a theoretical fetishism that necessarily results in a preselection of the visible or relevant research topics and problems. Theoretical fetishism therefore limits researchers in their perception of political reality – what is relevant, what is worth researching at all. Through the lens of a particular theory, many aspects of political reality can be perceived and sharpened, but at the same time this lens can also obscure too many problems, especially when it comes to new and different topics or topics that are neglected by theory. But this is not the end of the limitations of theoretical fetishism. Shapiro points out that theory-driven research necessarily leads to the establishment of research paradigms (cf. Kuhn, 1962), which determine not only the selection of problems, but also the selection of the right methods to investigate them. It is a kind of theoretical-methodological monism, a self-referentiality that does not acknowledge the potential fallibility of the theory itself.

Shapiro concludes that we can avoid both dangers – the *Scylla* that is the methodological orientation and the *Charybdis* that is the theoretical orientation – by adopting a completely different orientation in our research – i.e. problem-driven research. This is simply the recognition that social sciences must address the key problems of contemporary societies, and in addressing them methodologically and theoretically, a degree of innovation, improvisation, and eclecticism is allowed, as the research of the particular problem requires. This is an original understanding of Paul Feyerabend's (1975/1993) epistemological and methodological admonition that in the study of a given problem anything goes; at the same time, the admonition points

to the arbitrariness that otherwise characterises the methodological and theoretical orientation of academia. In explaining political reality and uncovering current problems, social sciences must subordinate methods and theories to problems, not the other way around. By taking a problem-oriented approach, we are also, *inter alia*, offering a radical critique of the canon of authority/authorisation that reproduces dominant political theory while rejecting the idea of inter- and transdisciplinarity, which implicitly still builds on the separateness of individual disciplines and methodologies.

The main reason why contemporary social science is still characterised by two opposing research logics – Anne Norton (2004) would remark that it is more appropriate to speak of opposing research labels – is, according to Shapiro, the uncritical adoption of the myth of objectivity or the "noble dream", as Peter Novick (1988) called the illusion of objectivity. In this way, Shapiro follows the epistemological position of Howard Zinn, who argues that objectivity is neither possible nor desirable in the field of social sciences. According to Zinn (1990), objectivity is not possible because of the methodological fact that any analysis implies a kind of subjective and only partial selection of relevant data from an infinite set (market) of all available information. Each analysis is determined by our own subjective beliefs about what is relevant and what is not, thus already contradicting the required "myth" of objectivity. Hypothetically, objectivity could only be achieved by capturing all individual subjectivities or partial objectivities. Even if "objectivity" – understood as passivity and disengagement – were possible, it would not be desirable according to Zinn. Science should never be an end in itself but should contribute to the spread of human values such as liberty, equality, justice, and fraternity, and to the solution of the fundamental problems facing humanity, such as hunger, warfare, and poverty.

For Zinn, "bias" does not mean that research omits, fabricates, or invents new (historical) facts. Nor does it mean that we do not adhere to scientific standards (cognitive and evidential procedures) when analysing the material at hand. It only means that we do not begin

analysis with preconceived (desired) answers, but with preconceived (useful) intentions and questions, including the one on how we can reveal the undemocratic, even anti-democratic tendencies of the status quo by affirming the original meaning of democracy.

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6

DEMOCRACY, STATE, AND CITIZENSHIP

SECTION OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the evolving concepts of democracy and citizenship beyond the traditional constraints of the state, exploring the potential for a new, inclusive, and pluralistic form of citizenship. Namely, traditional political science often frames democracy and citizenship within the rigid boundaries of the nation-state, equating citizenship with a static territorial identity. However, global interconnectedness and increasing influence of non-state actors demand a rethinking of these terms.

The chapter introduces concepts like "translocal citizenship," emphasizing forms of political belonging and participation that transcend national boundaries, aligning more closely with the needs of a globalized world. Drawing on Boaventura de Sousa Santos' idea of "equal differences," this new citizenship balances equality with the recognition of diverse identities, rejecting universal citizenship models that homogenize individuals. Instead, "new citizenship" is rooted in local, municipal participation, allowing people to engage with their communities while acknowledging global ties.

The chapter will also analyze how the state has evolved under global capitalism, becoming both local and global in its functions and facing challenges in maintaining its role as the primary political entity. This includes a critical look at the "territorial trap" of viewing the state as a static geographical entity and the "scalar shift" that redefines its place in a multi-level global context. Drawing on thinkers like James C. Scott and Henry Lefebvre, the section also examines the inherent tension between democracy and the state, highlighting how states often act as obstacles to democratic empowerment.

Through these discussions, the section encourages readers to envision a form of citizenship that emphasizes participation and plurality over (legal) status and (national) identity, one that aligns with modern social challenges and enables more inclusive political communities.

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The aim of this chapter is to liberate democracy and citizenship from the narrow statist framework. Linked to this is an attempt to reflect on the main coordinates of a "new citizenship". We will explore possible rearticulations of equality and differences, focusing on the meta-rule of equal difference (Santos, 2008) as one plausible articulation. In addition, we will look at practices of translocal citizenship as the altered nexus between the local, the regional, and the global requires a more detailed elaboration or conceptualization of post-national citizenship.

Today it is not only possible to talk about the multiplicity of citizenship, but also, finally, about its re-divergence from the national and its constitution according to new criteria. This is why we will contribute the idea of translocal citizenship or subaltern cosmopolitanism to the debates on post-national citizenship. This is the idea and practice of a municipalised citizenship that constitutes itself past the state, sometimes in opposition to it, but always distancing itself from the idea of nationhood and in doing so transcends the parochial forms of political community that ignore or even preclude global connectedness.

DEMOCRACY AND THE STATE

If political science has often suffered from the myopia of statism throughout history, it has witnessed a myopia of a different kind in the last few decades, and especially with the acceleration of globalisation processes. Political science has often overlooked the state in its analyses of global processes. It has either dismissed the state as a "dinosaur waiting to die" (Ohmae, 1995), or naturalised it and treated it as a given, immune to environmental change. At best, the state has been explained using outdated methods, theories, and vocabulary. But today it is clear that the state has been fundamentally redefined and redistributed in the few decades of the neoliberal or, rather, neoconservative project.[9]

Today, it is clear that the state has neither increased nor decreased, but has become very different. It is no longer the sole centre of sovereignty and the place where key decisions are taken since it has been rivalled by the growing power of corporations, (global) cities, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, and social movements. Thus, we have witnessed the gradual emergence of entirely new territorial vectors that make the political topography more complex than ever before. As the state has been simultaneously globalised and localised by these processes, it is now faced with the challenge of "multi-scalar meta-governance" (Jessop, 2009) in order to adapt to current spatial and level restructurings. In other words, the state still functions as the main form of territorialisation of capitalism, but the expansion of the capitalist economy and its transformation of territoriality require a simultaneous de-/re-territorialisation of the state at different levels. These are complex and above all contradictory processes that should not be misinterpreted as the collapse or erosion of the state. This means that the political science community faces the difficult task of (re)understanding and reconceptualising the state in the 21st century, as well as recalibrating its categorical and methodological arsenal.

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9   We can therefore agree that the state did not die with the rise of the neoliberal project, as it is a constitutive element of its expansion.

In the mainstream of political science, research on the state is still based on (geographical) assumptions that limit or even define the state and its exercise of power to a geographically delimited and fixed territory. Instead of understanding the state in its various historical mediations, political science has typically resorted to a naïve reification of the state, or what Edward W. Soja and Costis Hadjimichalis (1979) call "spatial fetishism" and John Agnew (1994) calls the "territorial trap". In his elaboration of the "territorial trap", Agnew points out that contemporary political science is "too geographical and not sufficiently historical". Political science is trapped in an understanding of the state that emerged from traditional Westphalian conceptions of the state, further reinforced by the development of mercantilism and industrial capitalism, the Enlightenment, and romantic tendencies towards popular rule and nationalism (Agnew, 2005: 441/456). Conventional research thus relies on three problematic geographical assumptions that are challenged by current developments:

a) the ahistorical or naturalised understanding of states as fixed sovereign spaces; b) binary logic delimitating inside/outside or domestic/foreign; and c) states regarded as "containers" of societies.

Neil Brenner makes a similar point in his seminal study *New State Spaces* (2004), arguing that political science lost its analytical edge when it treated the state "as a pre-constituted geographical unit of analysis". The state is viewed "as the self-enclosed geographical container of socioeconomic and politico-cultural relations" and frequently as the only one preventing researchers from seeing beyond state-centric modes of inquiry. In attempting to construct "new modes of analysis", Brenner brings together fragments of heterodox, interdisciplinary, and even post-disciplinary methodologies that reject *spatial fetishism*, *methodological territorialism*, and *methodological nationalism* and thus *state-centric epistemologies*. It is becoming evident that new territorial constellations, nexuses, and vectors are producing a new "geography of strategic spaces", which Sassen (2012) also refers to as a "new geography

of centrality", where the position and role of the state is fundamentally redefined. Here, it is useful to paraphrase an important if not crucial question that Sassen asks in his analysis of new configurations of territoriality and transnational politics: are we able to detect the emergence of new *political* forms already within old or existing *political* conditions?

In fact, numerous studies have succeeded in going beyond the state-centric geographical assumption, but as Brenner (1999: 41) points out, the old errors have been overcome by introducing a new one: the conceptual negation of the state. In other words, the new reconceptualisations perceived emergent spatial forms and, consequently, new political geographies, but completely overlooked the role of the state in them – that is, the new position of the state and, therefore, new forms of its de-/re-territorialisation and transformation. Brenner argues that the expansion of capitalism must be seen as a complex, conflictual process that not only involves transcending regulatory systems at the national level – this is what we usually see and study – but also produces new sub- and transnational modes of accumulation and (state) control that are necessary to reinforce and coordinate this process.

With the "scalar shift", Brenner points out that in the current wave of globalisation, the global level depends on a simultaneous re-territorialisation at the sub-global level, mostly at new sub- and supra-national levels, and no longer exclusively at the national level (ibid., 62). Moreover, we are witnessing a reversal in the relation between capital and the state, as "it is no longer capital that is to be molded into the (territorially integrated) geography of state space, but state space that is to be molded into the (territorially differentiated) geography of capital" (Brenner, 2004: 16). (Post)modern statehood thus entails a complex and continuous transformations, "up, down, sideways, diagonally, directly from high to low, or low to high" (ibid.: 63), resulting in polymorphic institutional geographies (ibid.: 66). The processes of globalisation and the spread of capitalism thus need to be seen as a contradictory socio-spatial dialectic that continuously produces new configurations of territoriality. Research on emergent spatial and political forms thus reveals that the contradictions of

neoliberalism (in the short term) on the one hand, and the broader project of modernity (in the long term) on the other, simultaneously lead to: a) expanding and accelerating movements of goods, services, labour, and capital; and b) creating and imposing a (relatively) fixed socio-territorial infrastructure for enabling and controlling these processes:

> Globalization therefore entails a dialectical interplay between the endemic drive towards space-time compression under capitalism (the moment of deterritorialization) and continual production of relatively fixed, provisionally stabilized configurations of territorial organization on multiple geographical scales (the moment of reterritorialization). (Brenner, 1999: 43)

In the introduction to his De l'État, a work of more than 1600 pages, Henry Lefebvre asks a simple but very complex question: "What is the State?" He answers:

> Enumeration of hypotheses. The State? A conscience, the consciousness of the nation? A 'moral' or 'legal' person? A 'substance' or a set of relations? A reality? A firm? A 'subject'? An 'object'? Or the name for an absence, a simulation? For 'being' or collective presence? Would it be the 'reflection' or the result of a social structure (classes)? A sum of functions? The exercise of Power? Or 'something' else, to be discovered and defined? (Lefebvre, 2009: 95)

In this light or taking into account the incredible complexity of the research raised by the question of the state, we must also understand Brenner's call for a (meta)theoretical, epistemological, and methodological pluralism that would allow the analysis of the state to reach a much broader and deeper understanding of statehood as a process that goes beyond the territorial reification of the state. This only confirms Appadurai's (2004) point about research imagination (or a lack thereof), revealing that the political science community faces not only a unique political and theoretical challenge but above all an epistemological one. What is needed is not just conceptual clarity and

theoretical depth, but a broader epistemological transformation that will enable intersectional research capable of traversing and merging disciplinarily demarcated theoretical and methodological registers. A holistic understanding of the processes of de/re-territorialisation and redefinitions of the state requires new concepts, methods, and even research logics "where conceptual tools and methodological strategies are adopted with reference to the challenges of making sense of particular social phenomena rather than on the basis of traditional disciplinary divisions of labor" (Brenner 2004: 23).

It is clear that democracy has always had a troubled relationship with the state because it has been closer to a philosophical concept of praxis as a free and creative activity in fluid polities. It was only later that it became integrated into state-building projects and strenghtened the belief that there was no difference between the two. According to James C. Scott (1998; 2010), politics beyond the state is not an exception but rather the rule of history. The concept of a single, homogeneous state politics is a modern invention and emerges as a political or, better, depoliticizing tool, which is usually forgotten by contemporary political science explanations of the state and democracy. Scott argues that the tension between politics and the state should be understood as an "uneasy bargain" that has led to entirely new forms of political membership and legibility:

> Statecraft proved difficult in these conditions of vernacular measures and vernacular resistance to assessment … It is no exaggeration to claim that the conquest of illegibility is the most momentous achievement of the modern state. This required the standardization of weights and measures against determined local resistance. It required elaborate censuses and population rolls, cadastral surveys of landed property, and, not least, the institution of individual freehold properly adapted to cadastral science. The project of legibility allowed the state to "see" the human activity of interest to it through the simplified approximation of documents, lists, and statistics. (Scott, 2013: 97)

In a brief and rough sketch of his voluminous work *De l'État*, Henry Lefebvre points out that the modern state is based precisely on the "principle of equivalence", which guarantees unity, identity, and political integration. In his reflections on the state in the modern world, he contrasts the dominant Marxist theorisations of the state, which, even in the 1970s, saw the state as a form of "heavenly life" as opposed to the "earthly life" of civil society:

> Foundations of the modern State: The (forced) equivalence of non-equivalents: the (forced) equalization of the unequal, the identification of the non-identical … The logic of homogenization and identity as the logic and strategy of State power. The State as reducer (of diversities, autonomies, multiplicities, differences) and as integrator of the so-called national whole. (Lefebvre, 2009: 108)

It is thus not surprising that state projects have always required different strategies and policies to pacify the recalcitrant *demos*. They have strived for "synoptic transparency", as Scott would say, which has enabled them to effectively exercise their main functions – e.g. taxation, conscription, monopoly of coercion. The processes of depoliticisation that accompany state-building projects must nevertheless be understood as complex and multidimensional transformations, not necessarily characterised by a lack of the political. In this light, future treatments of the state and democracy need to understand the processes of depoliticisation more precisely, that is, not merely as non-politics, but rather as anti-politics or the marginalisation of alternative politics.

They will need to consider depoliticisation as the inhibition of politics when it marginalises and trivialises political subjectivities and forms of action from an ontological register that rejects the establishment of sovereign power. Yet the state can constitute a public space in which people participate, organise, and influence political processes, albeit on a limited scale and in unrestricted ways. As Colin Crouch (2004) has observed, in a "post-democratic" world, the state constitutes a bulwark against the complete subordination of politics to the interests of capital, which is manifest today in attempts to economize all social structures,

spheres, and practices. This is also why we have had to engage in this excursus with a discussion on the "uneasy bargain" between the state and democracy, while addressing the question of democracy's original meaning and its hollowing out through the expansion and deepening of statist projects.

CITIZENSHIP BEYOND THE STATE?

The subsumption of politics under the state and statecraft, which many theories have made in the past, has not been without unintended consequences. As Murray Bookchin (2007, 93–94) and James Scott (2010, ix–x; 1-39) note, however, politics and the state are not only fundamentally different but in complete opposition. This is not to say that there is no politics within the state today, but it does call into question the myopic ahistorical treatment of the two concepts and their relationship to each other, which also understands the present situation as a constant of the past. Historically speaking, politics has not and could not have developed within the state, since it has always been – also etymologically speaking – closer to the philosophical concept of practice as the free and creative activity of individuals within smaller and fluid political entities. On the other hand, we forget that the modern state developed as a counter-revolutionary and absolutist reaction to the democratic impulses of Renaissance humanism, and that it has thus always constituted an obstacle to the expansion and strengthening of democracy (cf. Mertes, 2002). Richard Day (2005: 38) even goes so far as to add that the attempted dismantling of the community, i.e. of democracy and politics, by the state, has remained a key struggle even in the (post-)modern condition.

   The difficulties in understanding the relationship between the concept of citizenship and the state are even greater in contexts where, even at the linguistic level, political membership has been reduced to national or even ethnic belonging, even though the etymological origins of the word – from the concept of *civitas*, *civitatus*, to the modern

citoyen – have always linked political membership to smaller and more fluid political communities.[10] However, at its origin, citizenship has never been tied to the state or the nation, but has exclusively meant a specific "urban relationship" between rights and duties in the city (Delanty, 2006: 12). Citizenship has therefore meant membership in the city, which can also be understood as the historical argument for the re-municipalisation of politics. This is also why, according to Bibič (1997: 38), it is a mistake to speak only of the "citizen of the state", but other forms of "citizenship", constituted according to other criteria, such as territorial or functional ones, should also be highlighted.

A "NEW" CITIZENSHIP?

Gerard Delanty (2006; 2007) notes that one of the most important aspects of the "new citizenship" is the reconfiguration of the relationship between equality and diversity – the shift from equality to diversity. Today, citizenship is perhaps the most important site of contestation around identity and the recognition of (group) differences, which the previous model of multiculturalism could not resolve or could only transcend, in an era of economic conjuncture. Today, it is clear that the project of (liberal) multiculturalism in its hegemonic version has failed, but unlike conservative and nationalist objections, its inadequacy can be seen elsewhere. For instance, multiculturalismstill locates citizenship within the framework of the (nation) state only, while ignoring that the inclusion of the other and the different can imply their simultaneous exclusion or subordination; it is a Eurocentric approach to the reconfiguration of equality-diversity, which does not recognise Western universalism as just another particularism in the line of all the others. The categorial apparatus of multiculturalism risks reproducing the inequalities and exclusions that multicultura-lism is supposed to transcend, especially in cases where hegemonic

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10   For more on the genealogy of citizenship, see Turner (2002: 199–226).

concepts and categories (e.g. culture, democracy, freedom) are used in a completely unreflective way.[11]

The new citizenship rejects both the idea of multicultural citizenship and the idea of universal citizenship, since the latter leads to homogenisation and uniformity of the political community but not to justice and inclusion of its members. Certainly, universal citizenship has, by broadening the bearers of political rights and duties, at some point represented an important advance. However, the process of the simplified inscription of political subjects in the field of the political must be understood in its historical context, since it reveals that it was not only undertaken to empower political subjects, but also and above all out of concern for the fate of a new political innovation – the nation state.

According to Scott (1998: 32), universal citizenship is thus nothing but an unfortunate abstraction, which can be compared to the invention of the metre, the kilogram and other units of measurement, standards and reforms that were convenient for the administrative, economic and cultural standardisation of fluid political entities and their sedentarisation. Universal citizenship can thus be seen as the political equivalent of the metre, introduced by the revolutionary decree which proclaimed: "The centuries old dream of the masses of only one just measure has come true! The Revolution has given the people the meter!" If the tape measure erases the differences in the units it measures, universalism erases and denaturalises the differences between the now indescribable and one-dimensional citizens. The affirmation of equality and universalism thus does not necessarily imply emancipation, since it can lead to a loss of identity. Of course, the affirmation of difference and relativism does not necessarily mean emancipation either, since it can lead to the other extreme – justifying discrimination and exclusion. Where, then, can a solution be found?

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11 For more on the critique of multiculturalism – as a political project and a description of social reality – see Santos, Nunes, and Meneses (2008: xxiii–xxiv).

According to Santos, Nunes, and Meneses (2008), a "new citizenship" will be formed at the new intersection of equality and diversity. Although numerous innovative attempts to reconfigure equality and difference can already be found in feminist theories of citizenship, it is nevertheless necessary to shed light on Santos' (2007) meta-level of equal difference. The starting point of his overcoming of the limitations of universalism on the one hand and relativism on the other can be found in the idea of diatopic hermeneutics (cf. Panikkar, 1999). It is thus a *détournement* of perspective, as the hegemonic position from which we previously defined the relationship between equality and difference is replaced by a multiplicity of perspectives and a "dialogic dialogue" between them. In doing so, it follows the recognition that *topoi*, or sites of (self-)understanding within a given culture and tradition, cannot be understood with the tools and categories of other *topoi* but that there must be a mutual passing between *topoi*.

On the basis of the movement between *topoi* (*diatopoi*) or diatopic hermeneutics, Santos (2008: 28) identifies a meta-rationality of equal difference that manifests itself in practice in legal pluralism and, consequently, in the recognition of alternative forms of normativity. It is based on two fundamental axioms that transcend the relation equality *versus* difference into a relation equality *et* difference, as it

> 1. Emphasises equality where differences would lead to discrimination and inferiority;

> 2. Highlights differences where equality would lead to a loss of identity. The differences that would remain after the abolition of inequality and hierarchy thus become an important denunciation of the differences that the status quo requires and needs in order not to disappear in the first place.

But the reconfiguration of the equality-diversity relationship is not the only feature of the "new citizenship". Another important innovation is the loosening of the link between rights and duties or the understanding of citizenship beyond this mechanical link. Although

it is possible to trace different understandings of this bond within traditional theories of citizenship – the preponderance of duties in the case of the republican tradition or of rights in the case of the liberal tradition – the bond between rights and duties is nevertheless established and perceived in a purely mechanical way. Citizenship as a special status is thus not possible without the assumption of duties. Although such an understanding of citizenship seems logical, it is problematic in several respects. The current processes of economic globalisation have forced the nation-state to redefine its position and purpose, thereby fundamentally changing the space of political participation.

We can believe that the state is an illegitimate institution, but we still have to agree with the objections that without opposing the neoliberal project it can become even more illegitimate, violent, and unjust. Today, the state still offers a public space in which people can participate, organise, and influence public policies, albeit in limited ways and to a limited extent, and it is therefore necessary to defend the state against the attacks from multinational corporations that want to destroy the democratic and social institutions of the state once and for all, however limited their effects may be. This task must be taken *cum grano salis* since it is nevertheless necessary to address and expose those forms of state authority and oppression that are a relic of an era when their existence was justified in the interests of security, survival, or economic development, but which contribute to material and cultural impoverishment today.

If citizenship is indeed understood as a bond between the state and its citizens, the content of which is rights and duties, then the content of this bond also transforms with the changes in political topography. Since citizenship can only be acquired by the subjects who are also capable of assuming duties, national citizenship does not extend to subjects who are incapable of assuming duties. The logic of reciprocity thus makes it impossible for children, future generations, nature, etc., to become full members of the political community. Similarly, the identification of the individual as a subject with rights and duties

does not allow for the recognition of group rights and group identity, which further excludes many indigenous communities who do not want to enter the political community without their identity.

TRANSLOCAL CITIZENSHIP

The "new citizenship" abandons the nation-state as its territorial point of reference, without constituting itself within any new supranational entities. Rather, it rejects the idea of fixity and territoriality. The changed nexus between the local, the regional, and the global not only allows for the multiplicity of citizenship, but also, finally, for its re-divergence from the (nation-)state and its constitution according to new criteria. Translocal citizenship does thus not mean the apoliticisation of political membership but, on the contrary, the recharging of a concept that has been reduced to a legal concept for decades.

In this respect, the idea of translocal citizenship or subaltern cosmopolitanism, to use Santos' phrase again, evokes the German anarchist theorist Gustav Landauer, Already at the beginning of the 20th century, Landauer claimed the state must be understood as a "condition, a relation between people" that must be addressed as soon as possible rather than rejected for its theoretical purity or ontological principality. For Landauer, the state is not something that can be abolished by a single revolution, and therefore a free society cannot be achieved simply by replacing the old order with a new one, but only by expanding the spheres of freedom to such an extent that they finally dominate the whole of social life.

> One can overturn a table and smash a windowpane; but they are puffed-up word-spewers [Wortemacher] and gullible word-adorers [Wortanbeter], who hold the state for such a thing – akin to a fetish – that one can smash in order to destroy. The state is a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to each other; and one destroys it by entering into other relationships, but behaving differently to each other. . . [W]e must

> recognize the truth: we are the state – and are it as long as we are not otherwise, as long as we have not created the institutions that constitute a genuine community and society of human beings. (Landauer in Graham, 2005: 165)

Landauer's solution is therefore a prefigurative adventure into new, municipalised political structures and practices that are already drawing the contours of the world we aspire to one day achieve. Today, Landauer's position is largely subsumed within Bey's conception of the spontaneous and subversive tactic of constructing a "temporary autonomous zone" that "liberates a part (of land, of time, of imagination), and then it dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen before the State can crush it" (Bey, 2011: 63).

Translocal citizenship thus represents a departure from classical theories of citizenship as it is based on inclusion and participation instead of identity and emphasises diversity or equal difference instead of equality. As Darren O'Byrne (2003: 227) argues, it rather "embraces plurality without being relativistic, universality without being deterministic, and identity without being unduly subjectivistic."

CITIZENSHIP AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTION

Our reconsideration of political membership in the 21st century shows that the "new citizenship" is not only a political but first and foremost an epistemological question; just as the question of exclusion, oppression, and discrimination today does not have only an economic, social, and political dimension but also a cultural and above all an epistemological one. Unlike past practices of control and domination, it is no longer based on economic or political power but primarily on knowledge or the hierarchisation of knowledge; it is also no longer based on exclusion but on a specific mode of inclusion that leads to a particular constellation of the political community and the asymmetry of power within it.

Conceptual clarity and theoretical precision are thus not enough to imagine a "new citizenship"; this task requires a broader epistemological or cognitive transformation. Even if the epistemological position is not a garment that we simply change but our skin, as Furlong and Marsh (2002) remind us, this is a necessary precondition for reimagining citizenship. This brings us back to Landauer (2010: 88) and his insightful observation that social change concerns every aspect of human life, not just the State: "The way to a newer, higher form of human society passes by the dark, fatal gate of our instincts and the *terra abscondita* – the 'hidden land' – of our soul, which is our world. This world can only be constructed from within." In a sense, the "new citizenship" is therefore already here, it just needs to be rescued from the shackles of our epistemological ignorance.

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7

INTERLUDE III: SOUS LES PAVÉS, LA PLAGE! (UNDER THE COBBLESTONES, THE BEACH!)

SECTION OVERVIEW

This chapter investigates the emergence of new forms of citizenship and political community beyond the nation-state framework, focusing on urban spaces as sites of political experimentation and community-building. Traditional models of citizenship have often restricted political participation to the boundaries of the nation-state, where legal and social rights are tightly linked to national identity. However, in an increasingly globalized world, cities have become strategic spaces for fostering non-state political communities, allowing marginalized groups and migrant communities to engage in the political process.

Through examples like the Beyond the Construction Site project in Ljubljana, which transformed an abandoned lot into a vibrant community garden, the section highlights how urban projects can serve as laboratories for new forms of citizenship. These spaces can be understood as "exilic spaces," as they provide platforms for disenfranchised communities to create alternative social, political, and

economic structures independent of both state control and capitalist accumulation. Such spaces enable "translocal citizenship," where political membership transcends national identity and creates inclusive, flexible communities that connect diverse groups.

The section delves into concepts like "municipalized citizenship," where citizenship is shaped not by legal status but through active participation and shared responsibility in local communities. Drawing on theorists like Saskia Sassen, we explore how urban environments foster a more immediate, accessible political space where marginalized voices can contest dominant power structures. We critically assesses how communal spaces, such as the Loisaida Garden in New York and Ashram Acres in Birmingham, serve as powerful symbols of inclusivity and cultural pluralism, fostering intercultural dialogue and collective agency. Ultimately, this section invites readers to rethink citizenship as an evolving, context-sensitive practice that challenges rigid national boundaries, focusing on local and urban spaces as potential sites of democratic engagement.

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In recent years, there has been increased interest in new conceptions and practices of citizenship that digress form the nation-state (e.g. Soysal, 1994; Isin, 2000, Carter, 2001; O'Byrne, 2003; Delanty, 2006), with notions of post-national citizenship and de-nationalization of citizenship as two major theoretical orientations. Gerard Delanty (2007: 25) maintains that, in a global age, political, social, and economic transformations "have brought in their wake responsibilities that go far beyond duties to the state." A growing number of authors posit that cities are, once again, becoming strategic sites, where not only new kinds of politics but also new political subjects, new norms, and new identities are made. When Sassen examines the "spatialization of global power projects", she concludes that one of the major advantages of cityness is that "the space of the city is a far more concrete space for politics than that of the nation. It becomes a place where nonformal political actors can be part of the political scene in a way that is much more difficult at the national level" (2001: 19).

Because of its immediacy and concreteness, urban politics enables that "those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities, can gain presence in global cities, presence vis-a-vis power and presence vis-a-vis each other. This signals … the possibility of a new type of politics centered in new types of political actors" (ibid.). Hence, cities with the politics built in their very physicality are the most appropriate sites for occupiers to re-politicize society and re-invent democracy. In this brief excursus, we will elaborate on our thesis that new forms of citizenship increasingly separate political membership from the state and constitute it according to completely new criteria. The "new citizenship", which we have called translocal citizenship, is constituted beyond the state, sometimes in opposition to it, but always beyond the parochial forms of political community that make global cohesion impossible.

As an introduction to this discussion, we will focus on the Beyond the Construction Site project, in which KUD Obrat and the Bunker Institute transformed an abandoned construction site in the center of Ljubljana into a community garden. The project started in 2010 as part of a programme by the Bunker Institute, entitled Garden By the Way, is a good example of translocal citizenship in practice. The project ended in 2022 in new forms of political membership, which proved to be better suited for intercultural dialogue and the integration of migrant communities than the nation state.

We build on the recent scholarly attention given to the notion of nonstate spaces, which we have chosen to call exilic spaces (Vodovnik and Grubačić, 2015; Grubačić and O'Hearn, 2016) because they are populated by communities that voluntarily or involuntarily attempt to escape from both state regulation (the focus of much anarchist analysis) and capitalist accumulation (the focus of Marxism). Exilic spaces can be defined as those areas of social and economic life wherein people and groups attempt to extricate themselves from capitalist economic processes, whether by territorial escape or by attempting to build structures that are independent of capitalist accumulation and social control.

This observation is all the more important given that, in recent decades and with increasing levels of – usually forced – mobility of the global *dēmos*, we have witnessed only a partial integration of political subjects into political communities. This in turn leads to a hierarchisation of the members of the political community or an increasing number of non-legal members of the community. Revealing the limitations of status citizenship while critiquing the status determinism that lies at the very genesis of national citizenship must not imply understanding translocal citizenship as a statusless category since, as the project *Beyond the Construction Site* shows, it is first and foremost an attempt to municipalise democracy and political membership.

KUD Obrat and the Bunker Institute have recuperated an abandoned construction site in the centre of Ljubljana and turned it into a community space – a community garden. The aim of the project was not only the transformation of the space, but also a new way of living that would allow the construction of a "temporary experimental community". The creation of a community urban garden on publicly owned land can be understood first and foremost as an attempt to critique hegemonic architectural and urban planning practices and at the same time to reconfigure an alternative to them. The project can, however, also be understood as a political laboratory "not only about urban gardening and ecology, but also about sharing the management of a space and its processual and participatory organization" (Kud Obrat 2011b: 102). Moreover, the community garden can be understood as a new political community, where new practices of political membership as well as new political grammar that accompanies and emerges from them, successfully reveal the *doxa* of private property and the atomisation of contemporary social arrangements.

The project was initiated as series of events within the Tabor neighbourhood with the intention of making people more aware of the green parts of the city, encouraging urban gardening, and providing support for social urban spaces. The abandoned construction site in the immediate vicinity of the main railway station initially sought to "test and represent the potentials of urban degraded areas and

their revaluation through temporary and community interventions" (KUD Obrat, 2011a). The project's objectives did not remain at the level of transforming degraded urban space or learning about food production or self-sufficiency only, as new forms of socialising and community building beyond market transactions were becoming the focus of the project: "[J]ust as gardening is an activity, community is also an activity – a process and an effort to establish relationships and linkages – not only among the participants in *Beyond a Construction Site*, but also *beyond* that the project" (ibid.). The project's main objectives were to create new forms of socialising and community building beyond market transactions.

Conversations with people living and working near the "construction site" revealed a desire for gardens and non-commercial spaces for socialising. Since the project's genesis was to challenge conventional spatial planning, the key question of how to plan the layout of the site arose from the outset. In this respect, the project was based on the active participation of the participants. The project attracted relatively few participants in the first few months, especially in the phase when the space had to be cleaned and tidied up. It was not until spring 2011 that the project received a major response, when the Do Your Own Garden invitation targeted "the desire for gardening, which has a long and rich tradition in our country". Although the project is based on the principle of direct democracy and horizontality, the collective KUD Obrat, as the initiator of the project, has established three basic rules for sharing the space at *Beyond the Construction Site*: everyone builds their own garden bed or participates in the construction of a garden bed if they are unable to do so themselves; the use of chemical means is prohibited in gardening; and each participant must take care of their own garden while also taking care of the common space.

At first glance, the project seems to have reproduced the status quo, this time leaving certain rights to those who did not have them before. But it is precisely in the intersection of "no more" and "not yet" that we find the first ruptures between the hegemonic interpretations of the political community and the concreteness of the emerging ones.

In the first place, a rupture is revealed between the insufficiency of the insistence on identity (however inclusive) and the democratic potency of concrete relations and collective action. At the same time, KUD Obrat explains that the aim of the project was not to build a new homogeneous collectivity without disagreement, but rather a heterogeneous community that would reveal disagreements and link equality with diversity and vice versa:

> A homogeneous community erases differences and contradicti-ons as well as the productive conflicts and negotiations that are inevitably linked to the sharing of space, tools, water, tasks, time, etc. This aspect of conflict and negotiation is important because it has more to do with negotiating relations between differences and less to do with affirming commonalities based on similarities. In contrast to the idea of community based on the idea of iden-tity and belonging (being in), which is always exclusive of others/outsiders, the project strives for a community that produces more open and fluid relationships and, in this way, fosters a sense of being with. Just as the gardens in *Beyond the Construction Site* do not have a unified image, so the community that develops through and in the project is made up of fragments. (ibid.)

The project revealed the insufficiency of the nation-state as the only center of sovereignty and space where key political decisions can be made or, paraphrasing Sassen (2012), at the very least signaled "the emergence of different territorial vectors." Maybe the most subversive aspect of the project was the reappropriation of public space as a new spatial format for political inclusion. The garden "has freed up territory both as category and as capability; it has turned it into a space for remaking the social and the political by those who lack access to the established instruments of power within the frame of national sovereign territory" (ibid.). The garden should not be perceived as a physical site only. Because space is produced – both in its physical disposition and its social meaning – by the very activities that can/can't realize there, the garden were as important also as symbolic sites

of contention over the meaning of (public) space (Juris, 2012: 268; Hammond, 2013: 500).

According to Pleyers (2010: 40), reclaimed spaces become "places sufficiently autonomous and distanced from capitalist society and power relations which permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity." They encourage a different understanding of polity: that community should not be based on the vague notion of identity (no matter how inclusive), but rather on a concrete relationship and common action. In times of intensified migration flows and unprecedented mobility of the demos, the idea and practice of municipalized citizenship as demonstrated in *exilic spaces* across the globe can indeed be understood as a much needed panacea for the shortcomings of national citizenship.

In its reflection on the project, KUD Obrat pointed out that community empowerment and community involvement in decision-making processes on development and spatial planning were among the most important aspects of the project. It also points out that this assessment is again not a naive romanticising of participation per se because, as they note, participation too often becomes a standardised and institutionalised practice. The performative dimension of *Beyond the Construction Site* can also be understood in political terms as a challenge to the republican interpretation of citizenship as universal membership, which commands rather than encourages *dēmos* to participate in *res publica*, as the *levée en masse* (1793) and La Marseillaise ("Aux armes, citoyens!") remind us to this day (cf. Walzer, 1995: 211-212). The collective thus warns that participation

> cannot and should not become a standardised norm or technique, as this presupposes a standardised participant. Since there is no abstract community of participants, there can be no common method of participation. Instead of looking for universal instruments and tools for introducing a kind of dialogue into architectural and urban planning processes, we should strive to create a participatory practice as a practice of change (a term

used by Doina Petrescu) – which means a critical spatial practice that is aware of power relations, asks ethical questions, assumes social responsibility, and reinvents itself again and again with each new project that is carried out in a new context. (KUD Obrat, 2011a)

Chris Carlsson (2008: 82) argues that in exilic spaces – communal gardens, for instance – "time opens up for conversation, debate, and a wider view than that provided by the univocal, self-referential spectacle promoted by the mass media". Gerard Delanty (2007: 24) also agrees that citizenship "takes place in communicative situations arising out of quite ordinary life experiences". For Delanty, new citizenship is no longer a national citizenship only, as new forms of political membership are not "realized ... as a condition secured by the state but ... also pertinent to subnational levels, such as local and regional levels. In this regard, what is particularly important is the level of the city as a basis of citizenship" (ibid.: 26).

The political practices that emerge between the plots of *Beyond the Construction Site* remind us of Todd May (2014) and especially Haig Patapan (2007), whose conceptualisations of citizenship as friendship stress that citizenship can only thrive in the most concrete relationships. Finally, *Beyond the Construction Site* reminds us that the garden is not only a space of "toil and pain" but also of "enlightenment and pleasure" (Burrell and Dale, 2002: 107; cf. Munro, 2002). As a space of political innovation and prefiguration, rather than merely a space of filling leisure activities, the project enabled the immigrants to make their first contacts in the neighbourhood and, on this basis, to develop relationships of community and empowerment. Not surprisingly, in the initial phases, a family from Russia was among the most active participants but later, along with other denizens and marginalised people, a family from Japan also became an important part of the community.

We can find similar instances of exilic spaces in many urban projects that became "catalysts of community development, as the networks and other social capital formed ... are deployed to ... serving other community needs" (McKay, 2011: 182). Take, for example, the *Loisaida*

Community Garden in New York – the garden's name derives from immigrant pronunciation of Lower East Side – which facilitated and later nurtured interaction and cooperation between different migrant communities in the megapolis, while preserving their particularised cultures. Benedict Anderson's (1992) response that this was merely a confirmation of his thesis of long-distance nationalism would not have been satisfactory. *Loisaida* was not only a community project that enabled the diaspora to defend particular identities but also an attempt to translate between different cultures – for example through language, cuisine, vernacular gardening skills, and also design. Take the example of the *Loisaida* garden houses. For Latin American communities, small *casitas* garden houses are a symbol of their culture and lifestyle. Over the years of encounters between different cultures, *casitas* have also acquired new features and design additions, the result of translations from other cultures. *Casitas* have been given new/different owners who have preserved and respected the idea of the old house – the old owners and their culture – but have nevertheless enhanced them with their own local idiosyncrasies.

A similar degree of plurality and inclusiveness can be found in the *Ashram Acres* community garden in Birmingham, UK. The community garden dates back to 1982 and remains one of the best examples of intercultural translation and integration of migrant communities. Citizenship practices such as those developed at *Ashram Acres* success-fully defend the delusions of liberal multiculturalism as they do not locate citizenship within the framework of the (nation) state; they go beyond a Eurocentric approach to reconfiguring equality-diversity; and they are not apolitical as the project itself is the result of the asymmetries of political power, inequality, exploitation, and exclusion in society. The garden, which is the result of a joint engagement between local activists and migrant communities, has brought together and mobilised a section of British society that is otherwise not addressed by the state and the market. Because they are not, as a rule, citizens, and because they are, as a rule, poor. According to Sassen (2011: 574), political practices exercised in the context of community projects aim toward

the production of 'presence' by those without power and with a politics that claims rights to the city and to the country rather than protection of property. What the two situations share is the notion that through these practices new forms of the political (for Weber, citizenship) are being constituted and that the city is a key site for this type of political work. The city is, in turn, partly constituted through these dynamics. Far more so than a peaceful and harmonious suburb, the contested city is where the civic is made.

As McKay points out, the garden has enabled communities to maintain their cultural identity (including through the crops they grow) while ensuring that they operate beyond narrow cultural boundaries, as the project has been based on working with people from other parts of the world, again with other/different crops: "Nobody gets any 'wealthier'– but everybody is enriched" (McKay, 2011: 181–82). Let us conclude this post scriptum with an observation by Colin Ward (2011: 30), who points out that the choice between libertarian and authoritarian solutions arises every day and at every turn. The extent to which we remain their helpless victims in the face of crucial problems and challenges depends solely on our choices and, above all, our ingenuity in finding alternatives to authoritarian solutions to small problems.

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8

THE PARADOXES OF DEMOCRATISATION

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section critically examines the process of democratisation in Slovenia, tracing its roots from the late 20th century through the post-independence period, and analyzing the paradoxes that have surfaced in Slovenia's democratic development. By dissecting the conflicts between New Social Movements (NSMs) and emerging civil society during the 1980s, the chapter explores the tension between participatory, grassroots democracy advocated by the NSMs and the more hierarchical, "majority democracy" model adopted by civil society as Slovenia approached independence.

The section begins by contextualizing the NSMs as a driving force in Slovenia's early democratisation, emphasizing their emphasis on participatory democracy and individual sovereignty. Contrasted with this, the new civil society movement in the late 1980s reoriented towards a state-centered approach, prioritizing national sovereignty over individual democratic engagement. This transition also marked a shift from an inclusive, pluralistic civil society to a more homogenized and oppositional civil society, ultimately aligning more closely with traditional power structures.

Additionally, the chapter investigates the ongoing impact of these ideological rifts, exploring how contemporary Slovenian democracy grapples with challenges such as rising ethnocentrism, populism, and authoritarianism. TThrough this analysis, readers are encouraged to question the interplay between economic reforms, political pluralism, and the maintenance of democratic culture, examining how Slovenia's democratic "success" narrative overlooks critical issues that continue to shape its political landscape. By examining NSM's legacy and the paradoxes in Slovenia's democratisation, the section ultimately aims to provoke broader reflections on democracy as an evolving and contested process, rather than a fixed achievement.

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Reflecting on the state and prospects of democracy in Slovenia is at least as urgent today as it was two decades ago when the different conceptualizations of democracy became the core of disputes between the New Social Movements (NSM) and the emerging "bourgeois" civil society of the second half of the 1980s. The section starts from the assessment that, in order to understand and overcome the current political crisis in Slovenia, it is necessary to highlight the discontinuities between the NSM and the "new" civil society precisely at the level of understanding democracy. A quick analysis of the 1980s reveals that there was a clash between two political imaginaries that understood democracy and democracy in completely different ways: while the "new" civil society of the late 1980s understood democracy as "majority democracy" or democracy from above as it defended the sovereignty of the people or the nation, the NSM understood democracy primarily as participatory democracy or democracy from below, which defended the sovereignty of the individual. It could also be argued that the NSM are already identifying new imaginings of political membership and democracy in a globalised, postmodern world, which are being built upon by post-Seattle social movements through theoretical and practical innovations.

Even though Slovenia is often considered as the most economically successful post-communist country, this can today no longer safely be

claimed for the success of its democratic transition and consolidation. As the varnish on the post-transitional image is cracking, it is possible or even necessary to offer a few assessments about our political/social/economic reality that will reveal the inherent tension or paradox in the democratisation of Slovenia. Why the paradox of democratisation?

Bernik, B. Malnar and Toš (1997) identify three parallel and not necessarily complementary processes in the process of democratisation in Slovenia: the democratisation of society itself, state-building, and the change of the economic system. If the process of building new political institutions can be recorded and, after the changes have been achieved, politically shared and personalised, the same cannot be said of the democratisation of society. Democratisation is a complex, multidimensional process that does not allow for simplistic explanations since it does not have a single symbolic source, a beginning, a manifestation, and especially not a clear goal that can mark its end.

At this point, the contours of our analysis are becoming clearer. It will follow Thomas Pain and his understanding of democracy as split between society and the state. It was already at the end of the 18th century that, in his pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, Paine emphasised that we "have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them" even though "they are not only different, but have different origins" (1995: 6). We will thus proceed from the thesis that, with a different "chronotope" of analysis – that is, a different temporal and topographical framework of analysing the political/economic/social changes in the 1980s and 1990s –, we can identify NSMs as the key player in initiating and directing democratic transformation even though they began to be marginalised already before the secession but especially after the consolidation of a "new" or "bourgeois" civil society. This is precisely why we will further reflect on the thesis that the duality of the process of democratisation identified above can also be translated into a temporal sequence, with the role of NSMs in the process of gaining independence – if we understand it as the introduction of political and economic changes after 1988 – already

being minimised, but nevertheless crucial for the achievement of this stage or the transition into this stage.

Many authors – e.g. Bibič (1992), Fink-Hafner (1992), Mastnak (1992), Tomc (1994), Jalušič (2001), Repe (2003), Hribar (2003), Vurnik (2005), Rizman (2006) – point out that the NSM were the main source of democratization in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Later, we can detect a sporadic transition into a "new" civil society when some NSMs found protection from arbitrary interventions of the state in institutionally connecting with the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (LSYS) or when a circle of writers, academics, journalists, and professional associations – with a completely different ideological orientation, different modes of political operation and different political aspirations – integrated in part of NSMs. According to Bibič (1992), the most important change in these reconfigurations and reorientations was perhaps a gradual equation of the question of political pluralism with the Slovenian national question, which led to the final break between NSMs and civil society. This is also why Rizman's (2006: 82) division of civil society into the "old" and the "new" is so appropriate. With this conceptual and analytical demarcation, we stress the ideological and political break between NSMs and the phenomenon of "civil society" of the mid-1980s, which we will try to additionally reflect on in our analysis and at the same time affirm Bibič's (1992: 705) thesis that NSMs had "a pioneering role in launching the idea and practice of civil society."

The genealogy of Slovenian politics and political thought inevitably leads to an analysis of forgotten and undetected factors that have had a significant impact on its development in the past, yet (for various reasons) their weight has been overlooked or reduced to a minimum. At the same time, such a genealogy should not be conceived merely as an attempt to recuperate all the undetected political ideas and practices that have influenced the political power relations in Slovenia throughout history but should also be an attempt to go beyond myopia in understanding the political and what determines the political. By broadening the analysis or by shedding light on the contextual

determinants of the political, it must follow the suggestion that the political imagination – and thus Slovenian politics and political thought – is determined by a multitude of factors, many of which do not have an explicit political identity.[12]

This is a justified focus of our analysis as a multidimensional analysis of past processes is necessary for evaluating the state and prospects of democracy in Slovenia as well as for any extrapolations of trends in its further development. In doing so, we must start from a new chronotope of analysis which will broaden the temporal and topographical analysis of democratisation processes.[13] In other words, alongside the classical historical narrative, which analyses familiar actors and political events linked to the democratisation process, the analysis must also include the changes that often go beyond the classical patterns of political action. Many of the key changes that made democratisation possible at the level of theory and practice at the end of the 1980s were also initiated through music, literature, design, culture in the broadest sense, health, architecture, sexuality, ecology, etc. Our analysis must therefore include also Radio Študent, Tribuna, the OHO Group, Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije, punk and new wave, Problemi, ŠKUC, Mladina, Časopis za kritiko znanosti, LGBT collectives, Katedra, Laibach – Irwin – Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre or rather the entire Neue Slowenische Kunst, FV, the peace, environmental, and feminist movements, spiritual movements, film, and theatre.

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12   Such an attempt must also go beyond the limited scope of analyses that only consider social movements and political ideas within statist frameworks, overlooking the global structure and functioning of social movements, their international networking, and, ultimately, their universal aspirations. Such a study would consequently free itself from narrow national frameworks since political ideas can only be fully understood in relation to the global constellation of political forces.

13   We agree that we cannot understand 1988 without the '68 era; that political change at the level of institutional politics cannot be understood without a change at the level of social movements.

FROM NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TO A "NEW" CIVIL SOCIETY

We have already mentioned the relevance of Rizman's (2006: 82) division of civil society into "old" and "new" as this conceptual and analytical demarcation highlights the ideological and political break between the NSM and the "civil society" of the mid-1980s. So where are the key points of (dis)continuity between the movement's (anti) politics and the emerging civil society?

According to Mastnak (1994: 94), NSM can be regarded as the "alternative scene" or "alternative" whose protagonists were mainly young people and intellectuals of the '68 generation. Their anti-politics was constituted around scepticism towards any form of avant-gardism. Their critique did not end with the fetishisation of economic exploitation and class antagonism, but instead placed its point of reference in the concept of domination, which in turn detected or included exploitation that did not necessarily have an economic meaning – for example, the domination of men over women, the domination of the bureaucracy or of the technocracy over the workers. The NSM thus posed a much broader and more important question: not simply questions of class antagonism or political pluralism but of hierarchy and domination as such.

According to Mastnak, a distinctive feature of the "alternative scene" was the role of propulsive social and political theory, which was quite constitutive of alternative culture. At the same time, the "alternative" in Slovenia, especially in comparison with other socialist countries, was also characterised by the absence of so-called dissidents since this phase of political pluralisation was not perceived as (oppositional) positioning towards the centres of power at all.

Contemporary social movements follow the idea of prefiguration or prefigurative politics as a way of organising and acting politically to create a future in the present or at least partly to prefigure the social change we seek. Claus Offe and Joachim Raschke (1985: 825) claim that the novelty of the NSM must be sought in a new political paradigm (*Paradigm der Lebensweise*), where the intrinsic value of action itself

is paramount and which, as a consequence, links political change to the revolution of everyday life. We can also speak of anti-politics, as defined by György Konrád, since it is a political activity in which the signifier "anti-" refers to

> the actions of those who do not want to become politicians and do not want to take power. Anti-politics refers to the emergence of independent forums that can challenge political power; it is a counter-power that cannot take power and does not want to take it. It already has power, here and now, because of its moral and cultural weight. (Konrad in Benderly and Kraft, 1994: xi)

The NSM are also characterised by a pluralism of social composition and a pluralism of ideological orientations, which has been crucial to their success in initiating and steering the democratic transformation. In his analysis of the "punk" element of the NSM, Gregor Tomc (1994) also highlights the non-ideological or, rather, post-ideological orientation of the movements. By analogy with the "post-Seattle" alterglobalization movement, it could be said that the NSM of the 1980s is also best characterised by "post-ideological anarchism" as the only real and meaningful response to the changed political, economic, and social conditions that render traditional ideological currents in some respects obsolete. To follow Tomc (1989: 150–51), the NSM as an "alternative" phenomenon is characterised by new "post-ideological" orientations, which can also be identified as points of rupture between the NSM and civil society, as points of rupture between the "subcultural" and the "dominant" worlds:

> 1. *Self-realisation vs. orientation towards others*: the former follows a prefigurative logic, the latter merely follows instrumentalised and alienated activities out of responsibility towards others;

> 2. *Autonomy vs. freedom*: autonomy is a scepticism towards goals that are beyond individual existence because it follows historical realism in the sense of a reflection on individual autonomy, which again does not imply self-referentiality and egoism; freedom is a following of the tradition of society or the ultimate goal;

3. *Retreat vs. belonging*: subcultures do not have a specific (positive or negative) affiliation to the status quo, which allows aspirations to spread and deepen;

4. *Plurality vs. elitism*: plurality is guided by a new logic in evaluating choices – both tactical and strategic. If, in the past, actions and choices were determined by the consideration of the impact on others, then subcultures are guided in their choices by the consideration of the impact on themselves. "The former values spontaneity, pleasure and fun, while the latter sees this as a sure sign of vulgarity, trivialisation and a lack of a sense of proportion … For the former, no substance is inherently inappropriate and sublime, while the latter equates everything mass with the mediocre and everything elite with the exceptional" (ibid.);

5. *Independence vs. dependence*: in the case of the "alternative" of the 1980s, its social embeddedness is more than clear, but it was not based on the logic of avant-gardism, ideological monism, and political representation. "If the first is a populist who … succeeds through the public and fails sooner or later in the public, the second creates for future generations, for eternity, in the midst of a totally uncomprehending and vulgar mass" (ibid.).[14]

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14   In his analysis, Vurnik (2005: 263–4) also concludes that the NSMs in Slovenia were most characterised by openness and fluidity – i.e. the principles laid down by the Working Group on Peace Movements at its plenary meeting in October 1984: 1. Spontaneity, which enabled NSMs to be more operative, to respond quickly to the changes in the environment but above all to be open to detecting and integrating new initiatives; 2. Directness, which enabled operation "without the filtering of authentic interests and without classical political representatives and mediators"; 3. Pluralism of the ideal, scientific and political thought, which enabled NSMs their currency by opening always new political topics; 4. Autonomy, which emphasised that NSMs have no aspirations to avant-gardism and the representation of any part of society since in their essence they do not even constitute themselves as political opposition. They did not see themselves as a special, privileged part of society, which in its mission instrumentalises other segments of society in order to achieve historical goals; 5. Utopia, without which "there are no revolutionary changes."

From the above outline of the NSM, it is clear that the movements drew strength from what had taken it from them in the industrial age: The rejection of a single solid organisation turns into a plurality of organisational forms of resistance; the refusal to effectively occupy the levers of power turns into a prefiguration of parallel living and communal spaces; the lack of focus on the strategic goals of the revolution turns into a diffuse counter-power; and, finally, theoretical inconsistency evolves into a heterogeneous experiential learning of direct action (Zadnikar, 1998: 5).[15]

A TRULY "NEW" AND "CIVIL" SOCIETY?

According to Mastnak (1994), ideological differentiation and proliferation appears only in the so-called "bourgeois" phase of the construction of civil society, which was completely different from movement politics in its composition, functioning, and aspirations. It is at this time that there is a move away from the "grassroots" politics of the NSM towards the centrality of the so-called dissidents and intellectuals. NSM is no longer a prefigurative anti-politics but already shows signs of classical oppositional action aimed at taking over the centres of power. This is evident in the fact that civil society action has primarily addressed public opinion, aided by petitions, programmes, and manifestos that have been the entry points for political contestation with communist power. Mastnak goes even further and assesses that "[t]he civil society movement began to hegemonise various democratic or democratising, reformist, emancipatory, autonomist, etc. projects", pointing to the takeover of the NSM:

> When it went beyond the self-defined sphere of its own action, when it mastered the field of "socio-political" discursivity, the

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15 This raises a new dilemma, following Offe (1985): with such a transformation, to what extent does the demarcation between the "state" and the "civil society" or between the "political" and the "private" still make sense – a dilemma worthy of separate consideration and which in many ways relativises our theoretical-methodological approach.

> hitherto hegemonic discourse was attached to it; in other words, and from a different perspective: the integration of civil society into its conceptual antagonism began. On the one hand, civil society is now a node of the various discourses of civil society, on the other a discursive field in which struggles for hegemony take place. (Mastnak, 1994: 91)

Reflecting on civil society in Slovenia, Vlasta Jalušič (2001) points to the dilemmas that arise with different conceptual uses of civil society, especially in recent decades, when "we are confronted with the extraordinary popularity and widespread use of the discourse of civil society" (Jalušič, 2001: 173). Even at the most general level, the heterogeneity of "civil societies" is thus evident, as civil society

> represents, on the one hand, a locus of "controlled change" (non--violent, self-limiting revolution) in authoritarian regimes and a moment of revitalisation of Western democracies, and on the other hand, an important institutionalised and organised counterweight to the state and the economy, a medium between the state, the economy and the individual, which is supposed to complement and support the state apparatus, while at the same time ensuring corrections, control of the state apparatus, or to block the tendencies of the modern modern state towards post-imperialism. (ibid.: 176–7)

This "meta-definition" is useful because it shows the different forms civil society takes as well as the different stages of its development. It is an important and necessary theoretical-analytical insight which, according to John Keane (1998), is too often missing from analyses of civil society. In the case of Slovenia, its temporal condensation occurred in the 1968–1985 period, when we move from an "alternative"

civil society that was "heterogeneous and plural" to a "homogenising" civil society.[16]

Mastnak (1992) argues that the NSM were the "initial and key" actors of civil society in Slovenia. Civil society thus first established itself as a purely "alternative concept", while at the level of political theory – especially through post-Marxism – it demonstrated alternatives to the dominant political theory and ideology and at the same time it already "prefigured" a new model of social and political action in practice. Alongside the external factors of the reinvention of civil society in Slovenia – the post-Marxist debates on civil society in the West and the influence of Solidarity in Poland and the Hungarian and Czech democratic opposition – it was the "alternative" of the NSM that was a key factor in drawing attention to the differences between the state and civil society.[17] However, in the slow transformation of the "alternative" civil society into a national civil society, we can detect significant changes in political discourse and political culture, which is returning from "fluidity" to historical establishment or to the classical constellation of political camps (cf. Lukšič: 2006).[18]

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16 This is, of course, without overlooking the important systemic change that, according to Jalušič (2001: 183), partly explains the decline of civil society after the democratic transition: the first Law on Political Association still allowed the registration of non-partisan associations as political, but with the consolidation of the party arena, the political is limited to political parties. This naturally leads to the abolition of some initiatives that still played a more fluid role of mediation between the state and civil society in the past. Of course, it can be added that the changes have also been brought about by the political actors' own transformation, taking on the role of parties and abandoning the old (hybrid) ways of acting as alliances/movements/counterparties.

17 In particular, the repression of punk and other parts of the NSM served as an important mobilising and formative factor.

18 According to Lukšič (2006), we can identify the division of Slovenian society into three main historically and politically mediated ideological currents, which are organised into social pillars. For Lukšič, such a bloc structure with its "impenetrable borders" represents "a material force for the regeneration of the 'exterminating', 'devouring' element in the political culture of Slovenians", which was already manifested in the conflict in the 1980s, when "the defenders of socialism were ready to attribute too much good to socialism, while the modern opponents attributed nothing good to the development of political culture". In the second half of the 1980s, it is thus once again evident that we are unable to accept or come to terms with this historical constellation of political forces in Slovenia – i.e. the establishment of society.

At the time of democratisation, the project of political pluralism is thus soon diverted to the Slovenian national question, but this ideological reconfiguration cannot overlook the broader Yugoslav and international context. This change resulted in the homogenisation of politics and political space, as the democratisation wave became less and less "alternative" and more and more "oppositional", less and less "plural" and more and more "goal-oriented" (Mastnak, 1994: 107). The political functioning of the "second wave" thus resembles classical cadre organisations, which do not focus on process and deliberation but, instead, on discipline and political success measured in terms of the percentage of votes in elections. With ideological reconfiguration, democracy is slowly being flattened into an ethnocracy, and a plural and at the same time inclusive *Gesellschaft* is being replaced by a pure and monolithic *Gemeinschaft*.

The mutual recognition of the social pillars as legitimate and necessary actors in the creation of the social, political, and economic development of society, which must contribute their share to the achievement of the principle of *amicabilis compositio*, or friendly communication, was thus short-lived in Slovenia – certainly such a moment was the final act of the democratic transition or independence itself. At the end of the 1980s, and especially with independence, the historical struggle between the identified social pillars returned, but it was never a struggle for consensus and a path to common progress, but a struggle for the destruction of the enemy – a struggle that was and still is the main obstacle to the full development of democracy, society, and its individuals.

THE DUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

It should not be overlooked that civil society is not homogeneous and not identical with democracy, since "[t]he heterogeneity of civil society is not only that it encompasses a plurality of different positions; in addition to this heterogeneity of actors and institutions, there is a crucial heterogeneity between democratic and anti-democratic positions

within it" (Mastnak, 1987: 91). The paradox is therefore that we have a range of civil societies, including those that lead to "totalitarianism from below", and yet it is impossible to imagine democracy without civil society. However, we must bear in mind that any "outside" of the state, however undemocratic, does not necessarily mean the potential for opening up political space, the potential for achieving a democratic (civil) society. Slovenia is thus an exemplary case that clearly shows how the state's failed repression of the "alternative scene2 or civil society can be translated into the repression of the "new" civil society against the "alternatives" of the NSM.

Although the NSMs have been a dynamiser of civil society, their marginalisation and exclusion from the democratisation project has shaped the subsequent course of political development and thus the political topography of today. An important part of civil society, which should have been actively involved in changing political, social, and economic relations, was no longer allowed to do so. Here, Mastnak should be quoted in full as he sums up the complexity of the purifying obsession within the "new" civil society:

> The initiators and promoters of these actions were first and foremost citizens or local residents: they acted either as an anonymous "moral majority", as an organised social pathology, afraid of AIDS, demanding night-time peace, chasing the scavengers around corners, intolerant of people with unkempt appearance and non-standardised behaviour, etc.; further, as an incendiary *vox populi* (for example, in letters from readers); and, of course, as self-organised "masses" in communities of tenants, local communities, local "socio-political" bodies – as organised socialist consciousness, or the nation's conscience. The activists of this spatial cleansing were also the workers' organisations, their self-governing bodies or simply the workers, the owners, managers or founders of the premises, etc. Not a single space of the alternative scene was taken away by the state. The liquidation of the social spaces of otherness was the success of spontaneous actions by the lowest organs of popular power, in which the state is already subordinated. (Mastnak, 1987: 95–6)

Bernik, B. Malnar and Toš (1997: 70) note that the paradox of democratisation in Slovenia is further intensified because the basic dilemma remains unaddressed: what dynamised the process of political, social and economic change in the first place – was the decision for a democratic regime the result of our moral choice or was it rather the result of a rational choice that limits the myth of democratisation to a story of the maximisation of particular interests (political, economic, ideological, etc.)? It is significant that, according to the 1991 Slovenian Public Opinion Survey, 61.4% of the respondents identified the improvement of the economic situation as an important element of democracy, while only 47.1% identified sexual freedom as an important element of democracy, which can also be interpreted as a second-order tolerance of others and of the different (cf. Ramet and Fink-Hafner, 2006).

Today, it should be clear that this dilemma remains unresolved, which is why the historical conflict of the 1980s continues in post--independence Slovenia. Today, however, the struggle within civil society does not take place through the discourse of democracy and civil society but is adequately replaced by the discourse of multiculturalism and Europeanisation. The solution was and remains today in the recuperation of a subaltern civil society, otherwise civil society will continue its fatal reckoning with its own democratic potentials. The solution was and remains today in the recognition that our understanding of totalitarianism is deeply flawed because the Slovenian example already shows the dangers of totalitarianism, which can be promoted by (civil) society and not by the state as totalitarianism is usually conceptualised in liberal political thought. It is therefore a lack of sensitivity to totalitarianism "by which society defends itself not against the state but against its own democratisation; totalitarianism that arises through the affirmation of civil society; totalitarianism that occurs when coercion 'from above' is removed, when coercion becomes directly democratic" (Mastnak, 1987: 97).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Our analysis of Slovenian democratisation process has shown that political pluralism and economic development are not sufficient guarantees for democratic consolidation as there can be a large discrepancy or asymmetry between them. Thus, we are once again witnessing a perverse situation which constitutes a material force for the regeneration of undemocratic and even anti-democratic elements within the contemporary Slovenian political community. The key is therefore to rehabilitate the word democracy or to go beyond its reduction to a legal concept that can only be achieved and then sustained by an appropriate institutional architecture. Democracy is not "something" that we have already achieved and, consequently, have forever. Democracy is a process, a tendency in our daily lives, where deliberation with others and with those who are different is not only an option in times of abundance, but – also and above all in times of crisis – a prerequisite for it.

This dilemma is probably also the reason why it is only today that we are very belatedly to what extent the building of new political institutions and solutions has also meant a simultaneous change in political culture or a change in democratic sentiments. Moreover, we are belatedly asking to what extent the political and economic changes have contributed to overcoming/deepening inter-ethnic relations, which the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey measures by the (rising) levels of ethnocentrism and xenophobia in Slovenia. To what extent is a "democratised" political culture, as Sabrina Ramet (in Rizman, 2006: xvii) points out, ready to accept democracy as a process where tolerance of ethnic, religious, and gender differences is not seen as a luxury but as a basic foundation of a democratic system? To what extent is post-transitional society capable of empathy, *inter alia*, with LGBT, migrants, single women, the unemployed, religious, and other minorities?

If we now try to revisit our question, we can conclude that the role of the NSM was crucial in bringing about political change in Slovenia.

We have identified the NSM as a key actor in initiating and guiding democratic transformation, even though these movements were already marginalised before the independence, especially after the consolidation of the "new" or "bourgeois" civil society. The political imaginary of the NSMs by no means ended at the demands for party pluralism for they demanded only a redefinition of politics and life. Consequently, the NSMs also understood democratisation in terms of a plural and at the same time inclusive political community – i.e. democracy rather than ethnocracy or, to cite Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gesellschaft* rather than monolithic *Gemeinschaft*. The NSM represented a radical departure from classical (liberal) theories of democracy, emphasising inclusion and participation instead of identity, and diversity instead of equality or, according to Santos (2008: 28), "equal diversity".

Although many studies treat Slovenia as a success story, past and especially current political events are a timely reminder that books should be read in their entirety and that even consolidated democracies can quickly be plunged into the abyss of authoritarian populism by a superficial understanding of democracy. The situation is both worrying and ironic as it confirms the conclusions of numerous studies according to which democracy in Slovenia is not threatened by the remnants of the "totalitarian system of communist one-party rule" but by the cynicism and nihilism of political parties or the *Führerpartei* and their Leaders, who replaced *a res public* with a *res private* some time ago. In a study by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, which is well known for spreading neoliberal ideas, we read that the greatest danger to democracy in Slovenia is posed by certain political parties that spread xenophobia, homophobia, Romophobia, religious intolerance, and sexism, as well as attempts to abolish the constitutionally established separation of church and state.

In a way, the situation in Slovenia today is best summed up in the book The New Class, written in the mid-1950s by the Montenegrin political dissident Milovan Đilas. He developed a theory of a completely new phenomenon, hitherto unknown in history – a new social class founded

by a political party and not the other way around. The peculiarity of this social class is that it bases its hegemony solely on political power since it does not own the means of production at all or, rather, its means of production is political power itself. According to Đilas (1982), the "new class" has a poorly developed class consciousness but it draws its coherence from a collective fear of losing easily and quickly acquired privileges and therefore subordinates all other interests and classes to this goal. In this light, can we understand the obsession with power better?

James Gow and Cathie Carmichael conclude their study on the democratisation of Slovenia with a reminder that Slovenia's move to the fringes of European integration has brought it to a point where it has to realise that Slovenian identity and "cultural conservation" must no longer outweigh other factors in the political project, just as the blame for the current situation can no longer be found elsewhere: "There is no longer an empire, a kingdom or a communist federation to which responsibility can be shifted" (Gow and Carmichael, 2000: 219). Gow and Carmichael go on to argue that the project of democratisation will retain its duality, even its "schizophrenic nature," until we admit that Slovenia's independence was not only the realization of the "hundred-year" dream of the nationalist project (i.e. independent state), but at least as much a result of the democratization of society, economic liberalization and the promotion of human rights. In this sense, the resolution of the existing political crisis in Slovenia remains the touchstone for the political community and political theory, correcting the mistakes of the past. The crisis revealed not only the ossification of our political institutions and solutions but also the petrification and impotence of our understanding of democracy.

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9

BRAVE NEW WORLD: DIGITALIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section explores the transformative effects of digitalization, algorithmization, and datafication on democracy, assessing both their empowering potential and the inherent challenges they pose to democratic principles. As digital technologies increasingly permeate political, social, and economic life, they challenge conventional democratic frameworks, complicate political geography, and introduce new power dynamics. The chapter argues that, although digitalization promises increased participation and empowerment, it often reproduces or even intensifies existing social inequalities, raising questions about transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the digital age.

The chapter examines John Keane's concept of "monitory democracy," which anticipates the emergence of power-monitoring mechanisms that shift decision-making beyond traditional state boundaries. While initially optimistic about digital technologies' democratic potential, Keane and others acknowledge that these tools can also support authoritarian tendencies, from algorithmic discrimination to data

monopolies. The rise of social media platforms and information bubbles demonstrates how algorithms can fragment public spaces and create "echo chambers," increasing political polarization and limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints.

Key attention is given to how digitalization reshapes political spaces, including de/re-territorialization processes that redefine the role of the state. Case studies like the U.S.-China tensions over TikTok illustrate how digitalization challenges national sovereignty, prompting states to navigate new regulatory spaces and multi-scalar governance structures.

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A cursory review of the main theories of democracy reveals that they are generally quite outdated, out of touch with the current dynamics of change, especially in the light of the exponential increase in the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the digitalization of virtually all aspects of our social, economic, and political reality. The chapter starts from the thesis that debates on digitalization, algorithmization, and datafication need to be situated in a broader political context that will reveal the political mediation of technologies and their role in maintaining or changing political relations. The implications of digital technologies range from their inherent potential for democratisation, empowerment, and inclusion, to the reproduction of inequalities, discriminations, and exclusions otherwise familiar from the "offline" world.[19] What is more, digitalization can reinforce these aberrations or even allow entirely new forms to emerge. We argue that the processes of digitalization, algorithmization and datafication have generally resulted in the polarisation of political communities and the negation of the commons, while (paradoxically) at the same time depoliticising them by suspending the democratic political process or by transferring political decision-making to entirely new actors without any political control or accountability.

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19   Bearing in mind that the distinction between the "online" and the "offline" world is merely an analytical demarcation. It is clear that we are witnessing a social and political "ecosystem" in which both areas coincide, reinforce, and complement each other.

In the second part, the chapter focuses on understanding changes in political space, levels, and scales in the context of digitalization processeses, which are also significantly changing the democratic process as we have known it. We problematize the "territorial trap" (Agnew, 1994; Brenner, 2004) or the dominant (geographical) interpretations of the state that still limit or even define it as merely a geographically delimited and unchanging territory. Note the loss of analytical sharpness in such treatments of the new political geography as they completely overlook processes of de/re-territorialisation and spatial restructuring, where the state is also forced to adapt to new economic dynamics and no longer the other way around. Indeed, the state has often been naturalised, understood as a static and ahistorical entity that is resistant to changes in the environment or naively dismissed as a form of political organisation that withers away with the processes of globalisation and digitalization. In both cases, the processes of redefinition and redistribution of the state, and thus its de-/re-territorialisation and spatial restructuring, have gone unnoticed.

THE JANUS FACE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The study of democracy has undergone significant changes in recent years in its approach and, above all, in the temporal and geographical context in which democratic ideas and practices are explored. This is well illustrated by John Keane's (2009) magisterial *The Life and Death of Democracy*, which draws attention to the forgotten pre-Athens history of democracy. As we mentioned at the beginning of this course, he argues that modern democracy has different genealogies and that the delimiting of the democratic idea from the rest of the world – especially the systematic erasure of the Afro-Asian influence on ancient Greece – can be understood as an attempt to assert a Eurocentric discourse on the primacy of "European" culture. But more than its historical correction, the work resonated because of its attempt to rethink democracy in the context of the rise of ICT and digitalization.

Keane notes that we are witnessing paradoxical and contradictory processes that lead to completely new modalities of democracy. According to Keane, the macro-political changes that have triggered the process of transferring decision-making to entirely new actors in Western liberal democracies and above all the development of new technological possibilities for influencing the political process (Keane speaks of power-monitoring devices), have led to the emergence of a new form of democracy. Monitory democracy, as the author defines it, is based on "the multiplication and dispersal of many different power- monitoring and power-contesting mechanisms, both within the 'domestic' fields of government and civil society and beyond, in cross-border settings that were once dominated by empires, states and business organisations" (Keane, 2008).

In the past, social science in general and political science in particular produced rather optimistic explanations of the relationship between democracy and digital technologies, which have overlooked the negative consequences of digitalization, algorithmization, and datafication.[20] Keane's work is no exception to this, as he only later corrected the optimistic conclusions with new treatments of these processes, which have also detected in the digital revolution the ingredients for a "new despotism" (Keane 2020). Instead of strong democracies that foster freedom, social and political equality, heterogeneity, and simultaneous inclusiveness, Keane believes that digitalisation may contribute to an erosion of the democratic political process and a slide towards authoritarianism (cf. Crouch, 2004; Wästberg, 2019; Eike, 2020; Schlumberger et al., 2023). In Keane's defense, we should highlight the fact that his *tour de force* was written in a very specific context: just two years after the launch of Twitter and four years after the launch of Facebook, so the full dimensions of the economic and political concentration of power in social media were not as clear before the study was completed as they are today. We should also bear in mind

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20   This is not surprising, since as Frances Fox Piven (2004) points out, contemporary political sciencehas increasingly become aligned with policy science or uncritical, instrumental social science research.

that the study was written before the end of the global economic and financial crisis and the significant redistribution of wealth and political power, before the rise of the global Occupy initiative, and the fiasco of the Obama administration, which promised to reaffirm democracy.

Keane's optimistic conclusions can also be understood in the context of earlier debates about digital technologies and their potential, which were never fully open and democratic. The initial debates on solutions and democratic contributions of the digitalization of everyday life did not problematise the design (coding) of algorithms that are not immune to prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion from the physical world and therefore digital technologies themselves tend to reproduce the inequalities of the "offline" world. Noble (2018) therefore points out that inequalities are built into the very foundations of algorithms and the result is their (re)production in the "online" environment, so her thesis of "algorithms of oppression" is entirely justified. In this respect, Keane's assumption of sequentialism, according to which the introduction of digital technologies will lead to the strengthening of democracy, was also wrong. As Sunstein (2018) points out, it is first necessary to democratise the algorithms themselves and their coding, while ensuring data sovereignty (data as a public good) and ensuring that the production, distribution, and use of digital technologies themselves are transparent. Only democratised digital technologies can serve democratic goals.

This is not forgetting the fact that, despite the illusion of "digital epochalism" (cf. Morozov, 2013), the digital divide is persisting or even widening (as, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic) (Hargittai, 2021). With digitalization, the political divide is also increasing because, as many authors have pointed out (Barberá, 2020; Sunstein, 2018; Pariser, 2011), digital technologies are contributing to the decline of shared spaces or rather of the public as such. Digital platforms offer information bubbles and echo chambers as a substitute as algorithms reinforce the integration of (politically) like-minded individuals. The political content thus delivered reinforces bias and polarisation as citizens are only exposed to content that reinforces their political

views and their interpretation of political reality, while they are isolated and safe from dissenting content or individuals with opposing views. Barberá (2020: 35), however, also points to the more nuanced conclusions of some empirical studies which show that even in the digitised media and political landscape, there is an intense exchange of different information and views and that the widespread explanation of polarisation on social media should therefore be taken *cum grano salis*. Moreover, some research even problematises this thesis, finding more frequent interactions beyond particular ideological and political clusters as well as an increased exposure to different content than is otherwise the case with other types of media (Barberá, 2015; Barberá, Jost et al., 2015).

In this context and situation, the issue of digitalization has increasingly defined our research agendas and priorities and the research field has grown exponentially as a result. Since a systematic review of the research conducted on the political aspects of digital technologies is beyond the aims and scope of this chapter, let us limit ourselves to research that has intensively examined the democratic potential of digital technologies and their role in redefining citizenship (Van de Donk et al., 2004; Garrett, 2006; Loader, 2008; Staggenborg, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012; Collin, 2015). At the forefront of these efforts has been a consideration of the changing role of digital media in political practices and the "repertoires of contestation" (Tilly, 2006) that citizens and young people in particular use to influence power. In other words, as modes of political participation and political repertoires evolve in parallel with the development of technologies, recent research has also focused on "electronic repertoires of contestation" (Rolfe 2005), analysing the role that digital media and new ICTs play for citizens and their political choices.

In the case of the 2010–2012 Arab Spring, Gerbaudo (2012: 15) found that the protagonists were cosmopolitan, internet-connected, and ICT-savvy youth, or *shabab-al-Facebook* (Facebook youth). Although debates about the role of digital technologies in new politics have been characterised by entirely exclusive readings – technological

determinism versus social constructivism – Gerbaudo argues for a dialectical stance that recognises both the technological and social aspects of Arab youth's political innovations. He considers that digital technologies have had a significant impact on recent social movements and thus on youth political activism but goes beyond "Twitter fetishism" by stating that social media, for example, have only complemented existing forms of encounter and communication and not replaced them.[21] To paraphrase Graeber, it can be argued that young people's democratic practices followed the horizontality and rhizomaticity of digital infrastructures or were immanent to the anti-authoritarian principles of their political action (Graeber, 2013).

More recent research (cf. Pajnik et al., 2020) also shows that new actors, especially young people, act out of an impulse to realise their own "distinctive imaginary" when using digital technologies. This includes alternative forms of action such as horizontality, the absence of a leader, non-representative action, transnationalisation, and embeddedness in an international environment, as well as intersectionality or the contextual integration of different themes, e.g. precarisation, solidarity with minorities, care for the environment. A new logic thus guides them in their assessment of policy choices – both tactical and strategic action. If actions and choices used to be determined by the consideration of the impact on others, the new democratic policies of young people are guided in their choices by the consideration of the impact on themselves. And this is also true for their digital practices. Instead of the media's struggle against the hegemonic narrative, the inward-looking practices of young people seem to be the most fascinating aspect of their recreation of democracy.

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21   Not overlooking the fact that communication at street level can often be initiated and coordinated by young people on social networks, where they can also connect with the "offline" parts of society. At the same time, the development of technologies has also influenced the ways in which movements connect with each other and address social issues.

DIGITALIZATION AND DE-/RE-TERRITORIALISA-TION

Writing in the late 1980s, at the height of the ICT and digitalization boom that enabled the integration of the international economy into global networks, Manuel Castells described digital technologies as a key torus of a new political topography defined by the antagonism of "placeless power and powerless places" (Castells and Henderson, 1987: 7). In this section, we will focus on an often-overlooked aspect of digitalization: understanding the changes in political space, levels, and scales that are also having an impact on redefining the democratic process as we have known it. The complexity of these changes – of space, levels, and scales – is best illustrated by the case of Project Texas or the dilemmas of managing TikTok. TikTok is a digital platform for sharing video clips with a duration of 3 seconds to 10 minutes, owned by Byte Dance, a Chinese company, which has become popular in recent years, especially with teenagers and young adults (Generation Z and Millennials). The popularity of the platform in the US is best summarised by a press release issued by TikTok in early 2023:

> TikTok is a special place where Americans come together to learn, be entertained, grow their business, as they continue to create, discover and connect with a broader global community. Today, we're celebrating our mission as we continue to inspire creativity and bring joy across the United States for more than 150 million people.
>
> We're honored to be a home for our immensely diverse community in the United States, made up of nearly half the country's population, including book lovers, foodies, families, emerging artists and so much more. This milestone would not have been possible without the hard work and unwavering commitment of almost 7,000 TikTok employees in the US, as well as our incredible community in the country and around the world. TikTok has evolved into the preferred platform for nearly 5 million

businesses seeking expansion and success, including countless small businesses. (TikTok, 2023)

In light of the strained US–China relations and the growing popularity of the app among the US youth, the Congress expressed concern in early 2023 that US users' data could be exposed to unauthorised access and collection and that the platform could allow influence and manipulation by foreign entities, which could pose a threat to US national security. Among the solutions proposed was a ban on the platform, which would directly affect all 150 million TikTok users in the US. As a compromise solution, Project Texas was adopted: a $1.5 billion restructuring of the platform which transferred ownership of part of TikTok, and in particular the management of US users' data, to Oracle, an American company with headquarters in the State of Texas and servers on US soil. An American subsidiary of TikTok, U.S. Data Security Inc. (USDS), was set up to protect the data of American users and manage TikTok's transition to Oracle's "cloud". A key issue in deciding the future fate of TikTok in the US was where to store US user data or how to ensure that US user data would be moved to US servers so that it would never pass through Chinese servers. As this example illustrates, processes of digitalization are leading to a whole new geopolitics of social media (Lee et al., 2023) as well as complex processes of de/re-territorialisation and new configurations of territoriality. This is also why, in her analyses of the new political topography, Saskia Sassen (2012) asks an important, if not crucial question that we need to keep repeating in our further explorations of the political implications of digitalization: *are we able to detect the emergence of new political forms already within old or existing political conditions?*

As we have already mentioned, political science has often suffered from short-sightedness of statism, seeing only the state. But in recent decades, and especially with the advent of globalization and digitalization, we have witnessed a different kind of myopia. With a few exceptions, political science has often completely overlooked the state in its analyses of these processes. Political science has either dismissed

the state as a "dinosaur waiting to die" (Ohmae, 1995) or naturalised the state and treated it as a given, immune to changes in the environment. At best, it has been explained using outdated methods, theories, and vocabulary. But today it is clear that the state has been fundamentally redefined and redistributed in a few decades of producing "power without the city and cities without power".

We have witnessed the emergence of entirely new territorial vectors that make political topography more complex than ever. As the state has been simultaneously globalised and localised by these processes, it is now faced with the challenge of "multi-scalar meta-governance" (Jessop, 2009) in order to adapt to current restructurings in terms of spaces and levels. In other words, the state still functions as the main form of territorialisation of capitalism but the expansion and digitalization of the capitalist economy and its transformation of territoriality require a simultaneous de-/re-territorialisation of the state at different levels. These are complex and above all contradictory processes that should not be misinterpreted as the collapse or erosion of the state. This means that the political science community must face the difficult task of (re)understanding and reconceptualising the state in the 21st century, as well as recalibrating its categorical and methodological arsenal.

The processes of globalisation and digitalization – including the aforementioned Texas Project – confirm Brenner's thesis of a "scalar shift", where the intensification of these processes makes the global level dependent on simultaneous re-territorialisation at new sub- and supra-national scales and no longer exclusively at the national level (Brenner, 1999: 62). Moreover, we are witnessing a reversal in the relationship between capital and the state, as "it is no longer capital that is to be molded into the (territorially integrated) geography of state space, but state space that is to be molded into the (territorially differentiated) geography of capital" (Brenner, 2004: 16). (Post)modern statehood thus entails a complex and continuous transformations, "up, down, sideways, diagonally, directly from high to low, or low to high" (ibid.: 63), leading to polymorphic institutional geographies (ibid.: 66). The processes of globalisation and the digitalisation of capitalism

thus need to be seen as a contradictory socio-spatial relation that continuously generates new configurations of territoriality.

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10

DEMOCRACY IN THE END TIMES: CARE AS POLITICS

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section explores the deep connections between climate change, political instability, and the evolving concept of care as a transformative political and economic force. While traditional climate studies have often emphasized environmental and economic impacts, this chpater shifts focus to the social and political dimensions of the crisis, arguing that the climate emergency threatens not only ecological balance but democratic structures and social cohesion worldwide. Increasingly, populist and authoritarian approaches are emerging as responses to climate-induced crises, highlighting the urgent need for new models of political and social organization.

A central theme of the chapter is the re-emergence of care as a vital concept for rethinking political community and social relationships. Drawing from thinkers like David Graeber and Joan Tronto, the section examines care not only as an ethical commitment but as a basis for alternative political economies. Readers will investigate how care, once confined to the private sphere or seen as a moral duty, is now envisioned as an inclusive, democratic force that counters

neoliberal individualism and advocates for communal responsibility. Graeber's concept of a "caring politics" and Tronto's notion of "caring democracy" offer blueprints for a society where mutual aid, solidarity, and egalitarian access to resources replace profit-driven models.

Additionally, the section examines youth activism in climate politics, noting how young people engage in "prefigurative politics" – acting as if the changes they desire are already real. These forms of activism are often decentralized, intersectional, and digitally coordinated, signaling a break from traditional political engagement and offering fresh perspectives on climate justice. The section also addresses the ethical and methodological challenges of studying youth movements and their novel practices.

Through this section, readers will be encouraged to critically examine whether current political systems can adapt to address both the care and climate crises or whether entirely new frameworks are needed. This exploration into care as a radical political concept urges a rethinking of citizenship, labor, and economy in the face of profound environmental and social challenges.

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In recent years, discussions about climate change have typically focused on environmental and economic impacts. However, many scholars now emphasize that climate change also has major social and political implications. Rebecca Willis (2020), Jairus Grove (2019), and David Featherstone (2015) highlight that the crisis involves "much more than temperatures," influencing democratic institutions, community resilience, and political stability. Climate change intensifies existing issues, such as the erosion of the democratic process, while also introducing new challenges. In response to the pressures of the climate emergency, some societies have even seen a shift toward populist or authoritarian governance as a perceived quick fix, illustrating the deep social and political dimensions of climate change.

As these developments unfold, scholars argue that we need a new way to structure society, particularly around relationships between

individuals, communities, work, and life. Increasingly, academics are turning to the concept of "care" as a basis for future political, economic, and social organization. Care is now being discussed not only as a private responsibility but also as a political concept linked to practices like mutual aid (Spade, 2020), accompaniment (Farmer, 2013; Lynd, 2012), friendship (May, 2012; Schwarzenbach, 2009), camaraderie (Dean, 2019), mālama (Osorio, 2021), and solidarity (Inouye et al., 2023). Despite these discussions, there is often an overlooked dimension: the role of young people, whose activism and innovations offer unique potential for advancing a politics of care in response to the climate crisis.

In this chapter, we explore the notion that care – or lack of care – will become essential in shaping the political and economic models needed to adapt to climate change. We examine how the idea of care can be both empowering and ambiguous, allowing for various interpretations. Scholars like Emejulu and Bassel (in Jupp, 2022) describe care as "a double-edged sword of domination and resistance," emphasizing the complexities of using care in political contexts. Following this, we delve into David Graeber's (2020) proposal to replace "production and consumption" with "care and freedom" as the foundation of a new economy. Finally, we consider the specific challenges in understanding young people's contributions to this new politics of care, given that their activism often does not fit into conventional political frameworks.

CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE NEED FOR NEW POLITICS

The effects of climate change extend beyond environmental damage, affecting the very foundations of democratic societies. Scholars like Featherstone (2015) argue that climate change has intensified political instability, sometimes even eroding democratic institutions. As the crisis worsens, public trust in democratic governance has often weakened, with some societies turning toward strong leaders who promise rapid solutions – even if it means bypassing democratic processes. The

increasing reliance on populist and authoritarian models reflects how deeply climate change can reshape political landscapes, emphasizing that climate change is not just an environmental issue but a political one as well.

In this context, some scholars argue that care could play a transformative role in political renewal. For example, David Graeber's work suggests a profound reimagining of the economy, prioritizing care and freedom over production and consumption (Graeber, 2020). Graeber questions why economic structures should focus on the endless production of goods instead of the well-being of people. He proposes that society should orient its goals toward helping people care for each other, fundamentally shifting the values that drive economies and political systems.

The Care Collective (2020) supports this view, describing care as an essential principle that could counter the competitiveness and individualism of neoliberal societies. They argue that care can challenge both the excessive individualism encouraged by neoliberalism and the paternalistic tendencies of state structures. Instead of treating people as isolated individuals or dependents of the state, a care-centered framework encourages cooperation, collective responsibility, and solidarity.

THE COMPLEXITY AND AMBIGUITY OF CARE

While care has the potential to reshape political and economic systems, it is also a complex and sometimes ambiguous concept. Akwugo Emejulu and Leah Bassel (2022) highlight that care is "a double-edged sword of domination and resistance." This means that while care can foster mutual respect and responsibility, it can also be co-opted for control or manipulation. For instance, care services may be privatized and offered as commodities, turning care into a profit-driven industry rather than a genuine, reciprocal relationship.

In the hands of neoliberal agendas, care can sometimes become what Christopher Paul Harris (2021) describes as the "pantomime of

care" – a performance that appears to support community needs but ultimately serves corporate or political interests. In this context, care might be promoted as a marketable service, undermining its true value as a relational, interdependent practice. For care to be transformative, scholars argue, it must transcend commercial motives and focus on genuine connection and support for individuals and communities.

THE ROLE OF CARE IN DEMOCRACY

The relationship between care and democracy has been explored by Joan Tronto, who argues that both care and democratic processes are essential to the health of a society. She points to the twin crises of "democratic deficit" and "care deficit" in contemporary Western societies and suggests that the solution lies in combining care with democratic principles (Tronto, 2013; Tronto, 2015). Tronto's concept of "caring democracy" emphasizes that democracy should not only be a matter of voting or legal rights but should also involve active participation in both public life and caregiving.

For Tronto, "caring citizenship" is a vital concept, proposing a model of citizenship that goes beyond formal status and includes relational and participatory dimensions. As Tronto explains, "The purpose of the economic life is to support care, not the other way around" (Tronto, 2013: 170). She argues that economic and political systems should focus on supporting care practices that foster collective well-being, rather than pursuing growth at any cost. In Tronto's view, a caring democracy does not diminish citizenship; rather, it redefines it, expanding the responsibilities of citizens to include both political engagement and caring for others.

Ruth Lister (1998) builds on this perspective, contrasting the concept of "citizenship-as-status" with "citizenship-as-practice." Lister argues that reducing citizenship to a legal designation trivializes its significance. Instead, citizenship should be seen as an active practice that includes responsibilities toward others and participation in collective decision-making.

RETHINKING LABOR AND VALUE THROUGH CARE

In his influential book *Bullshit Jobs* (2018), David Graeber criticizes modern economies for valuing jobs that have little social benefit while neglecting essential care work. He argues that many jobs today exist mainly to keep people busy, serving no meaningful purpose for society. This "factory labor theory of value," as Graeber calls it, prioritizes the production of goods over the well-being of people. In contrast, essential roles like nursing and teaching – jobs that contribute directly to human welfare – are often undervalued.

Graeber (2020) advocates for a new labor theory of value that prioritizes care work. He argues that society should measure the value of labor by its ability to help people thrive, rather than by its contribution to economic output. "What happens if we, when thinking about the creation of value, shift the emphasis to the mutual production of people?" Graeber asks (Graeber, 2020: 58). By redefining labor as care-oriented, society could focus more on meaningful interactions and the well-being of its members, creating an economy that supports human flourishing.

Julie Anne White (2020) further argues for a shift from "productive time" to "caring time." She critiques the dominance of "productive time" under neoliberalism, which leaves little room for caregiving activities. White suggests that in a caring democracy, time should be allocated to activities that nurture relationships and support community well-being, allowing people to engage fully in both political and caregiving roles (White, 2020: 161).

YOUTH AS THE "CARING GENERATION"

Young people are often at the forefront of climate activism, bringing a unique perspective to the politics of care. Dena Arya and Matt Henn (2023) describe youth environmental activists as part of a "caring generation." These young activists don't just focus on environmental

issues but also challenge social norms and political structures, looking for ways to make societies more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

Youth climate activism often takes the form of decentralized networks and grassroots movements rather than traditional political channels. This approach can be understood through the concept of "infrapolitics," which James C. Scott (1990) defines as subtle, low-profile resistance that operates outside formal political systems. Infrapolitics enables young people to engage in activism without relying on traditional structures, allowing them to respond creatively and adaptively to urgent issues like climate change.

By focusing on community-based action and mutual aid, young activists exemplify a new politics of care. Rather than seeking political power, they aim to build communities that prioritize well-being, environmental responsibility, and social justice. Their focus on "caring goals" over economic or political gain reflects a significant shift in values, pointing to a future where care is central to both individual and collective identity.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND NEW POLITICAL SPACES FOR CARE

Digital technology has become a vital tool for young activists, particularly in the context of climate change. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok provide spaces for young people to share information, organize events, and connect with others who share their concerns. However, Paolo Gerbaudo (2012) warns against "Twitter fetishism," noting that social media alone cannot replace the personal interactions and community-building essential for effective activism. Digital tools can complement traditional forms of activism but cannot fully substitute the in-person efforts required to foster true solidarity and trust.

Young activists often use digital platforms to create what Brett Rolfe (2005) calls "electronic repertoires of contention." These online actions,

while visible, also support less overt forms of resistance that focus on building solidarity and collective care. For instance, young activists might use social media to share mental health resources, promote mutual aid networks, or offer practical advice on sustainable living. By blending digital engagement with care-centered practices, young people are redefining what it means to be politically active.

Despite their innovative approaches, young activists often face challenges from established institutions that fail to recognize their contributions. Traditional political frameworks often overlook alternative forms of activism, labeling them as "apolitical" or "non-serious." Scholars like Trine Wulf-Andersen et al. (2021) argue that this "myopia" limits the scope of political research, focusing only on familiar forms of engagement and ignoring less visible but equally meaningful actions.

Understanding young people's activism requires new theoretical and methodological tools that capture the full range of their political practices. This includes recognizing how young people use care as a guiding principle in their activism. Instead of viewing youth activists as passive or uninformed, scholars and policymakers should acknowledge their capacity to drive change by prioritizing community well-being and environmental sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The concept of care offers a powerful framework for addressing the political, social, and environmental challenges posed by climate change. Scholars like David Graeber, Joan Tronto, and the Care Collective argue that care should be the foundation of a new societal structure, shifting the focus from economic growth to collective well-being. By reimagining care as a central political value, society could foster a culture that emphasizes human connection, solidarity, and environmental stewardship.

Care has the potential to redefine citizenship and democracy, encouraging individuals to see themselves as part of an interconnected

community rather than as isolated agents. As Graeber puts it, "Why not use the ideas of care and freedom as the paradigm for our new economy?" (Graeber, 2020: 57). This shift requires both theoretical rethinking and practical action, but it offers a vision for a more just and sustainable world.

Young people, as key advocates of this emerging politics of care, demonstrate that care can be a radical force for change. Their activism highlights the importance of rethinking political engagement and social organization in ways that prioritize the planet's future and collective welfare. By recognizing the potential of a care-based society, we can begin to build a world that responds not only to the immediate demands of the climate crisis but also to the broader challenges of justice, equity, and resilience.

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11

CONSTRUCTING YOUTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AS PROBLEM, RISK, AND OPPORTUNITY

SECTION OVERVIEW

This chapter explores how the category of youth has been historically and politically constructed, focusing on the shifting perceptions of young people as a problem, a group at risk, and a resource. It begins by introducing the conceptual and theoretical challenges in defining youth, followed by a historical analysis of how youth emerged as a distinct social category in need of regulation. Finally, it examines how these historical understandings continue to shape contemporary European Union youth policies, where young people are simultaneously viewed as vulnerable individuals and as valuable assets for social and economic development.

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The topic of young people young people and their political engagement often raises the question of who young people are in the first place. Answering this question quickly turns into a dilemma even within the specific academic field focusing on researching youth (youth studies)

(Chisholm et al., 2011; Côté, 2014; Wyn and White, 2014). Although it is convenient to define youth in terms of years in a life stage "between the pre-rationality of childhood and the rationality of adulthood" (Chisholm et al., 2011, p. 15), authors (Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998) have shown that key transitions in life are increasingly less related to the age of a particular person, but are strongly influenced by the socio-political, economic, and cultural environment (Boyden, 1990, p. 184). It therefore makes sense to view "youth" as a social construct with concrete yet fluid social and political meanings (see Bourdieu, 1993; Bessant, Pickard and Watts, 2020). In this respect, historical research (Gillis, 1974; Hebdige, 1983; Chisholm et al., 2011) has brought insights that the understanding of who young people are has been subject to considerable change. As a consequence, different "trends" in scholarship have emerged to address young people and their role in society and political processes (Lesko and Talburt, 2012, p. 11; Côté, 2014, p. 10). Historical insights into the study of youth show – and many authors in the field of youth studies agree – that the concept of "youth" is very stretchable and fluid, and dependent on the (scientific) angle from which it is considered.

THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTH AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Historically sensitive analyses (see Gillis, 1974; Hebdige, 1983; Chisholm et al., 2011) locate the emergence of the signifier or concept of youth, which gave rise to the need to regulate young people's agency, in the period of transition from pre-industrial to industrial societies. The processes of modernisation, or more specifically urbanisation, developments in the labour market, and changes in living conditions and modes of production, have played a key role. These processes allowed the individual's life to be divided into measurable units that included the period of youth (Chisholm et al., 2011, pp. 12–13). During this period, the establishment of the concept of youth was influenced by the processes of educational reforms, the various state interventions

that necessitated and consequently established the category of youth, the regulation of working conditions, especially child labour, the recognition of leisure as a specific feature of the period of youthfulness, etc. (Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998).

The processes that led to the establishment of youth as a homogeneous social group during the Industrial Revolution, as Hebdige (1983) shows in his genealogy of youth using the example of Great Britain, brought about a specific understanding of youth that is still present today. The emergence of the youth signifier occurred in the contexts of the emergence of working class urban masses as new alienated subjects in society, of which young people were a part – identified and defined as a potentially delinquent group. Youth as a concept and a social category was thus established in the perception of youth as a problem, with various initiatives, including government-funded educational programmes and institutions aimed at converting young delinquents, being set up in order to "improve the impoverished classes on the one hand and to control them on the other" (ibid., p. 73). Within these frameworks, an administration was established that treated young people as a problematic social group, requiring "a mass of evidence, statistics, and documentation of details about the most intimate aspects of individual lives" (ibid., p. 74). However, in line with the recognised need to learn about the new urban masses and the possibility of treating young people as potential delinquents, youth research was established from the nineteenth century onwards, when "social explorers began to venture into the 'unknown continents', the 'jungles' and 'Africas' – the phraseology used at the time – of Manchester and the other ghettos of East London" (ibid., p. 72). The concept of youth was thus established through research, administration, and a number of newly created institutions and professions, having in common the treatment of youth as a problem.

The most influential in embedding the perception of youth as a problem in contemporary contexts were the so-called new social movements or the labour and student protests of the 1960s. As Furlong (2000, p. 139) highlights, "growing student activism and

the development of alternative social and political agendas among youth" established the perception that young people were seen "as a direct threat to the political order". In fact, through protests and other forms of political activism, young people were establishing a so-called counterculture, the broadest definition of which represented a rejection of technocratic society and the establishment of an "alternative society" with new values. In this position, young people established a collective consciousness, a common belonging, and a generational identity, and were recognised as a revolutionary class and as initiators and promoters of social and cultural change (see Jones, 2009; Chisholm et al., 2011). On the other hand, by advocating different values and establishing different movements and subcultures, they were identified as those who caused "moral panic" and were conceived "as 'folk devils', responsible of the corruption of societal values and made scapegoats for a wide range of social problems" (Chisholm et al., 2011, p. 18). That such perceptions of young people remain crucial in contemporary contexts is also recognised by Wyn and White (2014, p. 21), who point out that "the idea that young people are a problem for society and for themselves is a central theme to which both the media and youth researchers return".

CONTEMPORARY POLICY PERSPECTIVES: YOUTH AS PROBLEM, RISK, AND RESOURCE

Finally, the topic of youth as a problem can be identified in contemporary EU youth policy contexts. For example, in its White Paper, the Commission (2001, p. 5) stressed that "it is now time for youth to be seen as a positive force in the construction of Europe, rather than as a problem", reflecting a recognition that youth has been predominantly seen as a problem in the past. At the same time, contemporary EU documents also define and perceive youth as a problem. Reflecting on a new perspective for European cooperation in the youth field, the Council of the EU (2017, p. 35) recognised that "the financial and economic crisis /.../ has had a disproportionately greater impact on

young people, and in particular on young people with fewer opportunities, resulting in high levels of unemployment and increasing the risks of social upheaval, political alienation, and even violent radicalisation and extremism, which undermine democratic values and social cohesion". Even in the contemporary EU context, young people are thus perceived as potential delinquents and sources of social upheaval, not just as a group at risk.

It is based on recognising youth as a problem, that the perception of young people as a vulnerable group at risk has emerged (see Kelly, 2001; Wyn and White, 2014; Banjac, 2017). As Wyn and White point out (2014, pp. 22–25), the discourse on youth as a problem implied the need to monitor and control them, and in this context, various experts and institutions were established, including youth welfare services, institutions dealing with the needs and problems of young people, as well as youth professions and various counsellors helping young people in the adolescent phase. In doing so, "the monitoring of young people has inevitably led to the idea that some young people can be identified as 'at risk'" (ibid., p. 22). The discourse and perception of young people as a group at risk is also a contemporary feature of youth policies, with Banjac (2017, p. 471) underlining that the same is also true at EU level: through "different publications and political statements at the EU level, young people are continually characterised as being confronted with the risk of unemployment, social exclusion, marginalisation and poverty". The key difference from perceiving young people as a problem being that "not all young people are a problem, only a group who are not growing up in the way that they should" (Wyn and White, 2014, p. 22), and at the same time that learning and behavioural difficulties, unemployment and other various factors that put young people at risk do not reside "in social, political, economic, and educational institution, but rather in the child" (ibid., p. 57). This means that young people's problems are individualised and perceived as a consequence of their own choices (see Kelly, 2001; Banjac, 2017).

With the rise of individualisation and self-responsibility of young people, a third feature of contemporary perceptions of youth has emerged: the view of youth as a resource and an opportunity (see Wallace and Bendit, 2009; Loncle, Cuconato, Muniglia and Walther, 2012). A key feature of such perceptions is the design of policies that will transform young people "into active citizens as a resource for society" (Wallace and Bendit, 2009, p. 1). With this in mind, it is important to stress that valuing "youth as a resource always implies the notion of youth as problem", as it leads to the instrumentalisation of society, in which young people are perceived as a problem insofar as they do not add value for social or economic goals (Loncle, Leahy, Muniglia and Walther, 2012, p. 23).

This view and perception of young people also underpin contemporary youth policies in the EU. For example, the 2010–2018 EU Youth Strategy recognises "all young people as a resource to society" (Council of the EU, 2009, p. 1), whereas the 2019–2027 Youth Strategy emphasises that "Europe cannot afford wasted talent /…/. Young people should not only be architects of their own life, but also contribute to positive change in society" (European Commission, 2018, p. 1). This is also the basis for the perception that "youth policy can contribute to successfully meeting the vision of a continent where young people can seize opportunities" (ibid.). In this way, defining and treating young people as a resource lead to a complete economisation of young people's actions since they are perceived as human capital who must determine their future on the basis of their own choices. On the other hand, they must pursue and realise the Community's predetermined economic objectives through their own choices. This, like the perception of young people as a risk-taking group, leads to a shift of responsibility to individual young people, while those who fail or resist are at the same time perceived as a problem.

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